SERMONS OF THE CURÉ OF ARS (A SELECTION)

St. John Vianney

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Tome II — Low Sunday through the 11th Sunday after Pentecost

Low Sunday (Quasimodo) — On the Easter Confession

Erat autem proximum Pascha, dies festus Judæorum. The feast of the Passover, which was the great feast of the Jews, was near. (John 6:4)

What a happy time, when so many Christians have left sin and the devil, and have torn their poor souls out of the claws of hell, to place themselves again under the loving yoke of the Savior! Ah! would to God that we had been born in the happy days of the first Christians, who looked forward to this moment with a holy gladness! O beautiful day! O day of salvation and of grace, what have you become? Where are those holy and heavenly joys that make the happiness of the children of God?

Yes, my dear brethren [mes frères], this time of grace will either turn to our salvation or to our ruin: it will be the cause of our happiness if we correspond to the graces offered us in this precious moment, or it will turn to our loss if we do not profit by them, or if we abuse them.

But, you will say to me, what does this word *Pascha*—Easter—mean? Do you not know it, my friend? Well then, listen, and you shall know. It means *passage*: that is to say, a going out from the death of sin and a passing over to the life of grace. With that in mind, you will see whether your Easter duties are well done, and whether you can be at peace—especially you, our "good people," who are content with fulfilling the Church's commandment by making only one confession and one Communion for Easter.

Why is it, my dear brethren, that the Church has established the holy season of Lent? It is, you will tell me, to prepare us to celebrate worthily the holy time of Easter—a time when the good God seems to redouble His graces, and stirs the remorse of our consciences to make us leave sin. That is very well, my friend; that is what your catechism teaches you. But if I asked a child what sin those commit who make no Easter duties, he would answer quite simply that it is a great mortal sin; and if I said to him: How many mortal sins does it take to be damned? he would say: A single one is enough, if one dies without having obtained pardon for it. Well then, my friend, what do you say to that? You have not made your Easter? — Ah no! you will tell me. — But since you have not made your Easter, and since to miss it is a mortal sin, you will therefore be damned. What do you think of that, my friend?

Is it not so? Does that not move you at all? — Ah! you are quite right, you say within yourselves; but if I am damned, I shall not be damned alone. — Very well then [à la bonne heure]: if that means nothing to you, if you would just as soon be damned as saved, one must needs console oneself about it; if you hope to soften your misery by flattering yourself that you will not be alone, then you need no longer torment yourself. Poor soul! what do you say of the language held by this body of sin in which you have the misfortune to dwell? Oh! what tears you will shed throughout eternity! Oh! what groanings! Oh! what howlings you will raise in the flames, with no hope of coming out! Oh! how unhappy you are to have cost Jesus Christ so much, and to have separated yourself from Him forever!

Why, my brother, have you not made your Easter? — It is, you will tell me, because I did not choose to. — But if you die in that state, you will be damned. — So much the worse! — Well then, tell me:

do you believe that you have a soul? — Ah! I know well enough that I have a soul. — But perhaps you think that when you are dead, everything will be finished? Ah! you think within yourselves: I know well that our soul will be happy or unhappy, according as it has done well or ill. — And what can make it unhappy? — It is sin, you will tell me; you feel yourself guilty of sin; therefore I conclude that you are damned.

Is it not so, my friend? You did come to confession once or twice; but you stopped there. Why was that? It is that you would not correct yourself, and that you would just as soon live in sin and be damned as leave it in order to be saved. You wish to be damned? Well then, do not worry: you will be, sure enough. — Is it not so, my sister? You let Easter go by without confessing; you lived through Lent in sin, and through Easter as well; why was that? Here is the reason: it is that you no longer have any religion, that you have lost the faith, that you think of nothing but taking a little pleasure in the world while waiting to be cast into the flames. We shall see you, my sister—yes, we shall see you one day. Yes, we shall see your tears, your despair. I shall know you again, I think; you will have ruined yourself; you are quite mistress of that. Yes, my dear brethren, let us lift the bandage from our eyes [tirons le bandeau]; leave all these foul things hidden in the darkness until the day of judgment.

Let us now examine what the confession and Communion of those who are content with once a year really are, and we shall see whether they have reason to be at peace or not. My friend, if to make a good confession it were enough to ask God's pardon, to declare one's sins, and to do a little penance, sin—of which religion makes such a monster for us—would have nothing so frightening about it; nothing would be easier than to repair the loss of God's grace, and to follow the road that leads to heaven—which, according to Jesus Christ Himself, is so difficult. Listen to the language He holds to that young man who asked Him whether many would be saved, and whether the road that leads to heaven is very hard to follow. What does the Savior answer him? "Oh! how narrow that road is! Oh! how few there are who follow it! Oh! how among those who begin it, few go through to the end!"

Indeed, my dear brethren, after having lived a whole year without restraint, without constraint, occupied only with your temporal affairs, your goods, or even your pleasures, without taking the trouble to correct yourselves or to labor to acquire the virtues you lack—you will come only in Easter fortnight, always as late as you can, to tell your sins in the same way you would tell a story; you will read a few prayers from a book, or you will say a few others for a certain time. With that, everything will be done; you will go on in your ordinary way; you will do what you have done; you will live as usual: people have seen you in games and taverns, they will see you there again; people have found you in the dance and at balls, they will find you there again; and so with all the rest. Next Easter you will repeat the same thing. Thus you will carry on this trade until death: that is to say, the sacrament of Penance—where God seems to forget His justice in order to show only His mercy—will be for you nothing more than a game or an amusement. You feel very well, my friend, that if your confessions have nothing better about them, you may very well conclude that they are worth nothing—not to say something worse.

But to convince you still more, let us examine the matter more closely. To make a good confession that can reconcile us with God, we must detest our sins with all our heart—not because we are obliged to tell the priest things we would rather hide even from ourselves; but we must repent of having offended so good a God, of having remained so long in sin, of having despised all His graces

by which He was urging us to leave it. That, my dear brethren, is what ought to make our tears flow and break our heart.

Tell me, my friend: if you had that true sorrow, would you not hasten to repair the evil that is its cause, and quickly return to God's grace? What would you say of a man who, having wrongly fallen out with someone, claimed it was all the same to him whether he were on good or bad terms with that person? The comparison is plain. The one who has had the misfortune to fall into sin, whether by weakness or surprise, or even by malice—if he has a true regret, can he remain long in that state? Will he not at once have recourse to the sacrament of Penance? But on the contrary, if he remains a year in sin, and does not even see the holy time of Easter come without reluctance, because he must go to confession; if, far from presenting himself at the tribunal of penance at the beginning of Lent, so as to have some time for doing penance and not to pass straight from sin to the holy table; if he will hear of confession only at Easter, and even then will try to put it off until the fortnight, when he will come forward with the same dispositions as a criminal being led to death—what does that mean, my friend? Here it is. It means that if Easter were prolonged until Pentecost, you would confess only at Pentecost; or that if it came only once every ten years, you would confess only once every ten years; and finally, that if the Church did not make it a commandment for you, you would confess only at death. What do you think of that, my brother?

Is it not so, my friend, that it is neither regret for having offended God that makes you confess, nor the love of God that makes you do your Easter duties? — Ah! you will tell me, it is something after all; we do not do them without knowing why. — Ah! you know nothing at all about it; you do them by habit, so as to say that you have made your Easter—or, if you would tell the truth, you would say that you have added to your old sins a new sin. It is therefore neither the love of God, nor regret for having offended Him, that makes you confess and do your Easter duties, nor even the desire to lead a more Christian life. Here is the proof. If you loved the good God, could you consent to commit sin with so much ease and even with so much pleasure? If you had a horror of sin, as you ought to have, could you keep it a whole year on your conscience? If you had a true desire to lead a more Christian life, would one not see at least some little change in your way of living?

No, my dear brethren, I do not wish to speak to you today of those unhappy people who tell only half their sins, for fear of not making their Easter or of being sent away—perhaps even to cover their shameful life with the veil of virtue; and who, in that state, approach the holy table and go to consummate their reprobation, deliver their God to the devil, and cast their cursed soul into hell. No, I dare hope that does not concern you; but still I will go on to tell you that yearly confessions have nothing that can put you at ease.

— But, you will say to me, what must one do so that a confession may be good? — You wish to know, my friend; here it is; listen well, and you will see whether you are safe. For your confession to deserve pardon, it must be humble and sincere, accompanied by a true sorrow caused by regret for having offended God—and not because of the punishments that sin deserves—with a firm purpose of sinning no more in the future. From that I say that it is very difficult for all these dispositions to be found in those who confess only once a year: you are going to see it.

What is a Christian at the feet of the priest to whom he makes the avowal of his sins? He is a sinner who comes with sorrow in his heart, and throws himself at the feet of his God like a criminal before his judge, to accuse himself in order to ask for grace. How will he accuse himself? Here it is: I am a

criminal unworthy to be called a child; I have lived until now in a manner altogether opposed to what my religion commanded me; I have had only disgust for everything that had to do with the service of God; the holy days of Sunday and feast days have been for me only days of pleasures and debauchery —or, to speak more truly, I have done nothing until now; I am lost and damned if God does not have pity on me. Those, my dear brethren, are the sentiments of a Christian who holds sin in horror.

But tell me: is it in that way that those accuse themselves who find that it is not enough to remain twelve months in sin, who find that Easter always comes too soon? Alas! my God, You see these yearly confessions that these poor wretches make, who make them only with a deadly disgust. Oh! no, no, my friend, it is no longer a criminal covered with shame and pierced with sorrow for having offended God, who humbles himself, who accuses himself, who asks a pardon of which he recognizes himself infinitely unworthy; but, alas! shall I dare to say it? it is a man who seems to be telling a story—and telling it badly—who tries to disguise himself and to appear as little guilty as he can. Listen to him: it is not he who committed that sin of impurity; it is another who solicited him—as if he had not been master of refusing to follow that advice. It is not he who flew into a rage; it is his neighbor who said a cutting word to him. He missed Mass, it is true; but it is company that is the cause. Once he ate meat on a forbidden day; if he had not been urged, he would not have done it. He spoke ill; it is the one who was standing near him who made him sin. Let us say it better: the husband accuses the wife, the wife the husband; the brother, the sister, and the sister, the brother; the master, the servant, and the servant tries as hard as he can to shift the blame onto his master [se décharger dessus son maître]. In saying their *Confiteor*, they accuse themselves, saying: It is through my fault; two minutes later, they excuse themselves and accuse others. No humility, no sincerity, and no sorrow: those are precisely the dispositions of those who confess only once a year.

A poor pastor will see clearly that, from the way they accuse themselves, they have by no means the dispositions necessary to receive absolution. If he wishes to give them some time so as not to make them commit a sacrilege, what do they do? Listen to them: they murmur, saying they have no time to come back, and that another time they will be no better disposed; and they end by telling you that if you will not receive them, they will go to another who will not be so scrupulous, who will let them through easily [qui les passera bien]…. As if he could not live without them—poor blind people!… Judge from that what their dispositions are.

The priest sees clearly from the way they accuse themselves that they do not tell everything; he is obliged to ask them a thousand questions; they give neither the number nor the circumstances that change the species. There is a certain sin they would neither like to tell nor to hide. What do they do? They tell it by halves, as if the priest could know what is going on in their heart. People are content to recount their sins in bulk, without even distinguishing thoughts from desires. The priest will say to him: Have you never had thoughts of pride, of vanity, of vengeance, or of impurity? You know well that all these things are mortal sins when one dwells on them willingly. Have you committed any of these faults? — Perhaps so, he will say, but I do not remember. — But you must give the number approximately, otherwise your confessions are worth nothing. — Ah! Father, how do you expect me to recall all the thoughts I have had during the year? That is impossible for me. — Ah! my God, how many confessions—or rather, how many sacrileges!…

No, my dear brethren, almost never do people accuse themselves of the circumstances that aggravate the sin and that can make the sin mortal. Listen to how they accuse themselves: I got drunk, I

calumniated my neighbor, I committed the sin against the holy virtue of purity, I quarreled, I took revenge; if the confessor asks no questions, there is nothing more. But the confessor will say to him: How many times has that happened to you? Have you committed these sins in church? Was it on a holy Sunday? Was it in the presence of your children, of your servants? Were there many people? Has your neighbor's reputation suffered any damage from it? Did these thoughts of pride come to you in church, during holy Mass? Did you dwell on them a long time? Were these thoughts contrary to the holy virtue of purity accompanied by evil desires to commit the act? Was that other sin by surprise or by malice? Did you not add sin upon sin, thinking it would cost you no more to confess many than few?

There are some who are not content with giving no detail of their sins; they tell you they have nothing to reproach themselves with, that they have no time, that they must be going. You have no time, my friend—well then, go away. Whether you go or stay, one is as good as the other [l'un vaut autant que l'autre].

O my God! what dispositions! O my God! are these sinners who come to weep for their sins? One must admit, however, that there are some who do all they can to examine themselves well, and who tell their sins as best they can; but with such indifference, such coldness, and so great an insensibility that it tears the heart of a poor priest. No sighs, no groanings, no tears! not a single sign that announces the sorrow their sins give them! For the priest to give them absolution, he must be persuaded that they have better dispositions than they show. I know well that tears and sighs are not infallible marks of contrition or of conversion. It happens only too often that there are some who weep for their sins at the tribunal of penance, and who are no more Christian for it. But it is also very hard to recount with so much coldness and indifference what must necessarily sadden us and draw our tears.

If a man were sure of receiving his pardon by making the avowal of his crimes, I leave you to think whether he could even declare them without letting his tears flow, in the hope that his outward appearance would touch the heart of his judge, who would grant him pardon. See a sick man, when he uncovers his wounds to his physician: at once you hear his sighs and you see his tears flowing. See a friend who will tell you the story of his troubles: his gestures, his tone of voice, his manner of expressing himself—everything about him depicts his grief and his sorrow. Why is it, my dear brethren, that nothing of all that appears when we accuse our sins? Is it not so, my friend—you know nothing about it? Often you are astonished at it. Well then! I am going to teach you: it is that your heart is no more touched than your words, and that your interior is like your exterior, that your sins give you no more sorrow than you show. That is easy enough to understand, since after your Easter you are so little Christian, and you are neither wiser nor less a sinner than before.

We have said that regret for having offended God, if it is true, must necessarily contain a sincere will to sin no more; that if this will is sincere, it will lead us to keep on our guard; to reject all those evil thoughts, whether of vengeance or of impurity, as soon as we perceive them; to flee the occasions that had led us into sin; or else to neglect nothing in order to correct ourselves of our bad habits. Well then, my friend, your will not to offend the good God any more has therefore not been sincere, since people have seen you in the taverns and still see you there; people found you in that company where you committed that sin, and you still appear there today. You will agree with me that you have made no effort to live better than you did during the year. Why is that, my friend? Why? Here it is: it

is that you have no desire whatever to correct yourself; that your confession was only a lie and your contrition a phantom of penance [un fantôme de pénitence].

Do you want a second proof? Here it is. Of what did you accuse yourself last year? Of drunkenness, of impurity, of pride, of anger, of negligence in the service of God? And of what do you accuse yourself this year? Of the same thing. And of what will you accuse yourself next year if you are still alive? Again of the same thing. Why is that, my dear brethren? It is that you have no desire whatever to lead a more Christian life; but you confess only as a formality [par manière d'acquit] and so as to say that you have made your Easter; or, if you told the truth, you would say that you confess each year in order to add a new sin to your old ones: then, saying that, you would be saying what you do. Do you not see, then, that it is the devil who is deceiving you? If he proposed to you to give everything up, you who have the habit of confessing every year, you would have a horror of that; you would not want to believe it. But in order to have you one day, he is content to keep you always in your bad habits. Do you doubt what I tell you? Examine your conduct and see whether you have corrected yourselves of any sins in all the years you have been confessing every year; or if I said it better, each year sinks you deeper into the abyss.

But, you will say to me, all that is not very encouraging for making us do our Easter duties. — Quite so; but why deceive you? There is already enough of the devil who deceives you, without my putting myself with him as well. I tell you the truth as it is; afterward you will do with it what you will. I behave toward you like a physician in the midst of a great number of sick people: he begins by proposing to each of them the remedies suitable for restoring their health; those who despise these remedies, he leaves aside; but those who wish to take them, he instructs in the manner of taking them; he tells them the great good they will do them if they receive them with all the preparations he will indicate, and at the same time the harm these remedies will do them if they do not do all that he orders before making use of them.

Yes, my dear brethren, I do the same thing: I make you consider how great are the advantages the sacraments promise us; or, to speak more truly, that if we do not frequent the sacraments, we shall never see the face of God, and we are sure of being damned. For those who, whether through ignorance or through impiety, despise these salutary remedies alone capable of reconciling them with the good God, I do as that physician who leaves aside those who will not have his remedies. But to those who show the desire to take them, one must absolutely make known to them the dispositions that must be brought to them. I think, my dear brethren, that perhaps all I have just told you will give you some uneasiness about your past confessions: I desire it with all my heart, so that, being deeply touched by the grace of the good God and by your remorse of conscience, you may take the means God still offers you today to leave sin.

But, you will say to me, what must one do to repair all that? — Do you wish to know it and to do it, my friend? Here it is. It is to begin your confessions over again, from as far back as you can judge you made them without contrition; you will accuse yourself of the number of confessions and Communions; and you will say clearly whether you disguised any sin, whether you made any efforts not to fall again. For your confessions to be able to console you, each confession must have worked some change in you; you must do as the Easter Gospel tells us, speaking of Jesus Christ—that once He had come out of the tomb, He entered it no more; likewise, having confessed your sins, you must not commit them again.

You must cause to be born in your heart sweetness, goodness, and charity, in place of that anger, that air of contempt you showed at the least injury done you. You used to miss your morning and evening prayers; people saw you say them without attention and without respect; now, if you have truly left sin, people will see you say your prayers every morning and every evening with that respect and that attention which the thought of God's presence ought to inspire in you. On the holy days of Sunday people often saw you come to church when the offices were already well advanced; now, if you have made your Easter well, people will see you early beginning to prepare yourself to assist holily at that great action. One will see that mother, instead of running from house to house, going over the conduct of one and another, occupied with her household, with instructing her children—or, to speak more truly, virtue will appear in everything she does.

She will do as that young girl did who, for some time, had given herself over to pleasures, even the most shameful; but having reflected on the frightful state into which she was plunging herself, having a horror of herself, she was converted. Some time afterward she met a young man with whom she had often run after pleasures; he began to speak to her in the same language as before. She looked at him with an air of contempt and indignation, remembering how much that wretched man had been the cause of her offending the good God. Quite astonished, he told her that no doubt she no longer knew him. "Ah! wretch, I have known you only too well! I see clearly that you are still the same, buried in the mire of crime; but as for me, thank God, I am no longer the same; I have left that cursed sin which had so disfigured my poor soul. Ah! no—rather a thousand times die than fall back into my old sins!" O beautiful model for a Christian who has had the misfortune to sin!

What must we conclude from all this? Here it is, my dear brethren. If you do not wish to be damned, you must not be content with confessing once a year; because every time you were in a state of sin you would run the risk of perishing in it and of being lost for eternity. If you have been so unhappy as to have hidden some sin through fear or shame, or have confessed your sins without contrition, without the desire of correcting yourselves; or even, if for so many years that you have been confessing you have known no change in your life: conclude from that that all your confessions are worth nothing, and consequently have been only sacrileges and abominations that will cast you into hell.

For those who make no Easter duties, I have nothing to say to them; since they absolutely wish to damn themselves, they are masters of that. Let us weep over their misfortune, let us pray for them: the charity we ought to have for one another obliges us to it. Let us ask of God not to fall into such blindness! Let us resist courageously the world and the devil! Let us sigh without ceasing after our true homeland, which is heaven—our glory, our reward, and our felicity. That is the happiness I wish you.

Tome III — 12th through 23rd Sunday after Pentecost

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost — On the First Commandment of God

Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your strength. (Deut. 6:5)

Why, my brethren, does the Lord give us a commandment to love Him with all our heart—that is to say, without reserve, in the very manner in which He Himself has loved us; with all our soul and with all our strength—promising us an eternal reward if we are faithful to it, and an eternal punishment if we fail in it? For two reasons: first, to show us the greatness of His love; second, that we cannot be happy except in loving Him, and finally that this love is found only in the keeping of His commandments. Yes, my brethren, if so many evils crush us in this world, it is because we violate the commandments of God; for He Himself tells us: "If you keep My commandments faithfully, I will bless you in every way; but if you transgress them, you will be cursed in all that you do." So that, my brethren, if we wish to be happy in this world—at least as far as it is possible to be so—we have no other means than to observe faithfully the commandments of God; and we shall see that so long as we turn aside from the path which the commandments of God have traced out for us, we shall always be unhappy, for soul and for body, in this world and in the next. I am going, then, to show you, my brethren, that our happiness is bound up with our fidelity in observing the commandments which the good God has given us.

If we open the holy books, my brethren, we shall see there that all those who made it their duty to observe well what the commandments of God prescribed for them have always been happy, because it is very certain that the good God will never abandon the one who makes it his duty to do all that He commands him. Our first father, Adam, gives us a fair example of this. So long as he was faithful in observing the Lord's orders, he was happy in every way: his body, his soul, his mind, and all his senses had no other inclination than toward God; the very angels came down from heaven with joy to keep him company. So would the happiness of our first parents have continued, had they been faithful to their duties; but that moment, a thousand times blessed, did not last long. The devil, jealous of such happiness, soon ruined them and stripped them of all those goods which were to last for all eternity. As soon as they had the misfortune to transgress the Lord's commandments, everything went wrong for them [tout alla de travers]: sorrows, sicknesses, the fear of death, of judgment, and of another unhappy life took the place of their first happiness; their life was thenceforth only a life of tears and of pains. The Lord said to Moses: "Tell My people that if they are faithful in observing My commandments, I will overwhelm them with every kind of blessing; but if they dare to transgress them, I will overwhelm them with every kind of evil." The Lord said to Abraham: "Because you are faithful in keeping My commandments, I will bless you in everything; I will multiply your children like the grains of sand that are on the seashore. I will bless all who bless you; I will curse all who curse you; from your race shall be born the Savior of the world." He had it said to His people when they were about to enter the Promised Land: "The peoples who dwell in this land have committed great sins; that is why I wish to drive them out in order to put you in their place. But take great care not to violate My commandments. If you are faithful in observing them, I

will bless you in everything and everywhere. When you are in your fields, in your towns, and in your houses; I will bless your children, who will love you, respect you, obey you, and give you every kind of consolation. I will bless your fruits and your cattle. I will command the heavens to give you rain in due season, as much as shall be needed to water your lands and your meadows: everything will prosper for you." In another place He tells them: "If you keep My commandments faithfully, I will watch without ceasing over your preservation; you will be without fear in your houses; I will prevent wild beasts from harming you; you will sleep in peace: nothing will be able to disturb you. I will always be in the midst of you. I will walk with you. I will be your God and you will be My people." Further on He says to Moses: "Tell My people that if they observe My laws well, I will deliver them from all these evils that crush them." And the Holy Spirit Himself tells us "that he who has the happiness of keeping well the Lord's commandments is happier than if he possessed all the riches of the earth." Tell me, would you ever have thought that the good God had so much at heart that we should keep His commandments, and that He would promise us so many goods if we are happy enough to observe them well? You will agree with me that we ought to place all our happiness in keeping His commandments faithfully.

To convince you still better, my brethren, that as soon as we transgress the commandments of God we can only be unhappy, see what happened with regard to David. So long as he was faithful in walking in the path which the commandments of God had traced for him, everything went well for him: he was loved, respected, and heeded by his neighbors. But from the moment he chose to leave off observing the commandments of God, at once his happiness ended, and every kind of evil fell upon him. Troubles and the remorses of his conscience took the place of that peace and that calm which he had enjoyed; tears and sorrow were his daily bread [son pain de tous les jours]. One day, when he was groaning so much over his sins, word was brought to him that his son Amnon had been stabbed in his drunkenness by his own brother Absalom. Absalom even sought to destroy his father, to take his life in order to reign in his place; David was forced to go and hide in the forests to escape death. The plague carried off an almost infinite number of his subjects. If you go further, see Solomon: so long as he was faithful in keeping the commandments of God, he was the wonder of the world; his reputation reached to the ends of the earth, since the queen of Sheba came from so far to be a witness of the marvels which the Lord worked in him; but we see that as soon as he had the misfortune to cease following the commandments of God, everything went ill for him. After so many proofs drawn from Holy Scripture, you will agree with me, my brethren, that all our evils come only from our not observing faithfully the commandments of God, and that if we wish to hope for some happiness and some consolation in this world—at least as far as it is possible to have any, since this world is only a tissue of evils and of pains—the only means of procuring these goods for ourselves is to do all that we can to please God by doing what He orders us through His commandments.

But if we pass from the Old Testament to the New, the promises are not less great. On the contrary, we see that Jesus Christ makes them all for heaven, because nothing that is created is capable of satisfying the heart of a Christian, which is made only for God, who alone can satisfy it. Jesus Christ strongly urges us to despise the things of this world in order to attach ourselves only to the things of heaven, which never end. We read in the Gospel that Jesus Christ, finding Himself one day with persons who seemed to think only of the needs of the body, said to them: "Do not be so anxious about what you shall eat or what you shall put on." And to make them understand well that all that concerns the body is of very little account: "Consider," He said to them, "the lilies of the field; they

neither spin nor take care of themselves; see how your heavenly Father takes care to clothe them; for I assure you that Solomon in all his wealth and his power was never so well clothed as one of them. Look also at the birds of the air, which neither sow nor reap nor store anything in their barn; see how your heavenly Father takes care to feed them. Men of little faith, are you not more than they?… Seek first the kingdom of heaven—that is to say, observe My commandments faithfully—and all the rest will be given to you in abundance." What do we mean by that, my brethren? That for a Christian who seeks only to please God and to save his soul, what is necessary for the needs of the body will never fail him. — But, you will perhaps say to me, when we have nothing, no one brings us anything. — First, I will tell you that all that we have, we hold from the goodness of God, and nothing from ourselves. But tell me, my brethren, how do you expect the good God to work miracles for us? Would it be because there are some who dare to carry their unbelief and their impiety so far as to wish to believe that the good God does not exist—that is to say, that there is no God? because others, less impious without being less guilty, say that the good God pays no attention to what happens on earth, that the good God does not concern Himself with so little a thing; and finally, because others will not admit that this great Providence is bound up with the observance of the commandments of God, and that they count for everything on their work and their cares? (which it would be very easy for me to prove to you by your Sunday labors, which truly show that you count nothing on God, but everything on yourselves and on your work.) There are some, however, who believe in this great Providence, but who put an impenetrable barrier before it by their sins. Do you wish, my brethren, to experience the greatness of God's goodness toward His creatures? Make it your duty to observe well all that the commandments order you, and you will be astonished to see how much care the good God takes of those who seek only to please Him.

If you wish to see the proofs of it, my brethren, open the holy books and you will be perfectly convinced. We read in Holy Scripture that the prophet Elijah, fleeing the persecution of Queen Jezebel, went to hide in a wood. Being there, deprived of all human help, will the Lord let him die of misery? No, certainly, my brethren; the Lord, from the height of heaven, does not fail to keep His eyes upon His faithful servant. At once He sends him an angel from heaven to console him and to bring him all that he needed for food. See the care the Lord takes to feed the widow of Sarepta. He says to His prophet: "Go find that good widow, who serves Me and observes My commandments with fidelity; you will multiply her flour, lest she suffer." See how He commands another prophet, Habakkuk, to go and bring food to the three children who were in the furnace of Babylon. If you pass from the old law to the new, the marvels which the good God works for those who take care to observe His commandments well are not less great. See how the good God feeds thousands of persons with five loaves and two fishes; that is not hard to understand, since they sought first the kingdom of heaven and the salvation of their soul in following Jesus Christ. See how He takes care to feed a Saint Paul the hermit for forty years by the ministry of a raven—a very clear proof that the good God never loses sight of those who love Him, in order to furnish them with all that is necessary for them. When Saint Anthony went to see Saint Paul, the good God sent him a double portion. O my God, how You love those who love You! how You fear that they should suffer! Tell me, my brethren, who commanded that dog to go each day and carry the little provision to Saint Roch in a wood? Who commanded that doe to go every day and give her milk to the child of Genevieve of Brabant in her desert? Is it not the good God, my brethren? And why, my brethren, does the good

God take such care to feed all these saints, if not because they were faithful in observing all the commandments He gave them?

Yes, my brethren, we may say that the saints placed all their happiness in observing the commandments of God, and that they would rather have suffered every kind of torment than violate them; we may also say that all the martyrs were martyrs only because they would not violate the commandments of God. Indeed, my brethren, ask Saint Regina, that young virgin, why she endured so many torments—which were all the more painful to her because it was her father who was her executioner. He had her hung by her hair to a tree, where he had her beaten with rods until her poor little innocent body was nothing but a wound. After these cruelties, which made even the pagans who witnessed them shudder, he had her led to prison, in the hope that she would do what he commanded her. Seeing her unshaken, he had her brought back to the tree, and ordering that she be fastened as the first time by the hair, he had her flayed alive. When the skin was separated from her body, he had her thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil, where he watched her burn without pity. If you ask me, my brethren, why she bore so many cruelties—ah! my brethren, here it is. It is because she would not transgress the sixth commandment of God, which forbids all impurity. Why would the chaste Susanna not consent to the desires of those two infamous old men, and why did she prefer death instead? Is it not for the same reason? What was the cause that the chaste Joseph was defamed, calumniated before Potiphar his master, and led to prison? Is it not still for the same reason? Why did Saint Lawrence let himself be laid upon a brazier of burning coals? Is it not because he would not transgress the first commandment of God, which orders us to adore God alone and to love Him more than ourselves?

Yes, my brethren, if we run a little through the books in which the deeds of the saints are gathered, we see there admirable and astonishing examples of their fidelity in observing the commandments of God, and we see that they preferred to suffer all that executioners could invent rather than fail in them. We read in the history of the martyrs of Japan that the emperor had twenty-four Christians arrested in the same place, to whom they made suffer all that the rage of the pagans could inspire. The martyrs said to one another: "Let us take great care not to violate the commandments of God in order to obey those of the emperor; let us take courage; heaven is well worth a few sufferings that last only a few moments. Let us hope firmly, and the good God, for whom we wish to suffer, will not abandon us." When they had been led to the place where they were to be questioned, the one who had brought them, calling the roll and thinking that one was missing, cried aloud: "Matthew? Where is Matthew?" A soldier who had long desired to make himself known as a Christian cries out: "Here I am; what does the person matter, besides?" he said; "I am also called Matthew and I am a Christian like him." The judge, all in a fury, asked him whether he said it in earnest. "Yes," answered the soldier, "I have long professed the Christian religion; I hope never to leave it; I desire only the moment to manifest it outwardly." At once the judge had him put among the number of the martyrs. He had so much joy from it that he died of joy before dying in the torments.

Among that number there was a child of ten years. The judge, seeing him so young, did not wish for some time to put him on the list of those who were to die for Jesus Christ. This child was inconsolable at seeing himself deprived of that happiness; he protested so strongly that he would never change and that he would die in that religion; he did so much that he forced, so to speak, the judge to put him among the number of the martyrs. He had so great a joy from it that he seemed no

longer able to contain himself [ne pouvoir plus se posséder]; he always wanted to be first, always to answer for all; he would have wished to have the heart of all men in order to sacrifice them all to Jesus Christ. A pagan lord, having learned that this child was destined to die with the other Christians, was touched with compassion. He himself went to find the emperor, to beg him to have pity on this child, saying that he did not know what he was doing. The child, who heard him, turned against him, saying: "My lord, keep your compassion for yourself; think only of having yourself baptized and of doing penance, without which you will go to burn with the demons." This lord, seeing him so firmly resolved upon death, left him. The child, being present when their sentence was read to them—which ordered that their noses and ears should be cut off, and that they should be led about on carts through the whole city, to give greater horror of the Christian religion, and so that the pagans might overwhelm them with insults—this poor little one had so great a joy that it seemed as if he had just been told of the possession of an entire kingdom. The pagans themselves were astonished that a child so young should have so much courage and feel so much joy at dying for his God. The executioners having come to carry out the emperor's orders, all these holy martyrs went and presented themselves to their executioner to be cut, with as much tranquillity and joy as if they were being led into a banquet hall. They let their noses and ears be cut off with the same tranquillity as if a piece of their garment were being cut. Their poor body was all covered with blood, which horrified even the pagans who witnessed it. One heard these cry out from time to time: "O what cruelty! O what injustice, to make persons suffer so who have done no harm! Do you see," they said to one another, "see what courage that religion which they profess gives them."

Whenever they were questioned, they answered nothing except that they were Christians and that they knew how to suffer and to die, but that never would they violate the commandments of their God, because they placed all their happiness in being faithful to them. Alas! these poor martyrs, after they had been led about the city on those carts, their body was all covered with blood; the stones were all bloodstained and the earth was all red with the blood that flowed in abundance from their wounds. As their sentence ordered that they should each die upon a cross, the one who had led them the first time recognized these Christians. What touched him greatly was that child of ten years. He approached him, saying: "My child, you are very young; it is a great pity to die at so early an age; if you wish, I will undertake to obtain your pardon from the emperor, and what is more, a great reward." This child, hearing him speak in that way, began to laugh, telling him that he thanked him well, but to keep all his rewards for himself, since he had no hope for the other life; but that as for himself, he despised all that as being too little a thing; that all his fear was of not having the happiness of dying, like the other martyrs, for Jesus Christ. His mother, who was a witness of all this, although a Christian, was inconsolable at seeing her child die upon a cross. This poor little one, seeing his mother so distressed, called her to him, telling her that it was little edifying for a Christian mother to weep so much over the death of a child-martyr, as if she did not know the whole price of such a sacrifice; that she ought, on the contrary, to encourage him and thank the good God for such a grace.

This child of blessing, a moment before dying, said things so beautiful and so touching on the happiness of those who die for Jesus Christ that the pagans as well as the Christians all melted into tears. When he was brought near his cross, before being fastened to it, he embraced that cross, he kissed it, he watered it with his tears, so great was the joy he had at seeing that he was truly going to die for his God. When they were all upon their crosses, a troop of angels was heard singing the

Laudate, pueri, Dominum, with their heavenly music; which was heard by all the pagans. What a spectacle, my brethren—heaven in admiration!… the earth in astonishment!… the bystanders in tears, and the martyrs in gladness, who leave the earth—that is to say, all the sufferings and miseries of life—to go and take possession of a happiness that will last as long as God Himself… Well then, my brethren, tell me, what led all these martyrs to endure so many torments, if not the resolve not to violate the commandments of God? What shame for us, my brethren, when Jesus Christ confronts us with them—us, whom so often a mere human respect, a cursed "what will people say?" [qu'en dira-t-on], makes blush, or rather makes us deny that we are Christians, to put ourselves among the number of renegades.

But let us examine this, my brethren, a little more closely, and we shall see that if the good God orders us to keep His commandments faithfully, it is only for our happiness. He Himself tells us that they are easy to fulfill, and that if we fulfill them we shall find in them the peace of our souls. If, in the first commandment, the good God orders us to love Him, to pray to Him, and to attach ourselves only to Him, and if we ought to pray to Him evening and morning, and often in the course of the day —tell me, my brethren, is that not the greatest of all happinesses for us, that the good God should be willing to allow us to present ourselves every morning before Him, to ask Him for the graces that are necessary for us to spend the day holily? Is it not a grace that He grants us? Is it not that grace which the good God gives us in the morning that makes all our actions meritorious for heaven? Is it not what makes us find them less hard? If this same commandment orders us to love God alone and to love Him with all our heart, is it not because He knows that He alone can satisfy us and make us happy in this world? See a house where all live only for God: is it not a little paradise? You will therefore agree with me, my brethren, that this commandment has nothing but what is sweet and consoling for the one who has the happiness of observing it with fidelity.

If we pass to the second, which forbids us every kind of swearing, blasphemy, imprecation, and cursing, and every kind of anger, recommending to us gentleness, charity, and thoughtfulness toward all who surround us: tell me, my brethren, who are the happier—those who give themselves up to all these excesses of anger, outbursts, and curses, or those who, in all they do or say, show that evenness of temper, that goodness, and who continually study to do the will of others? We see then that this commandment contributes only to make us happy ourselves and those who are with us. If we come to the third, which orders us to spend the Sunday holily, by ceasing every kind of manual work in order to occupy ourselves only with what concerns the service of God and the salvation of our soul: tell me, my brethren, is it not for our good—since we cease to work for this world which is nothing? since we are only an instant upon the earth, and since by praying or doing good works we heap up for ourselves a treasure for heaven which we shall never leave, and thereby we draw down upon our work of the week every kind of blessing? Is that not already a means for our happiness? This same commandment also orders us to employ this holy day in weeping over our sins of the week, in purifying ourselves from them by the virtue of the sacraments: is it not, my brethren, forcing us, so to speak, to seek only our good, our happiness, and our eternal felicity? Are we not more content when we have spent the holy day of Sunday well in praying to the good God, than if we have had the misfortune to spend it in pleasures, games, and debaucheries? The third commandment, then, has nothing but what is consoling and advantageous for us.

If we pass to the fourth, which orders children to honor their parents, to love them, to respect them, and to wish and procure for them all the goods of which they are capable: tell me, is that not a just and reasonable thing? Parents who have done so much for their children—is it not just that these same children should love them and give them all the consolations of which they are capable? If this commandment were well observed, would not these families be a little paradise through that respect, that love which the children would have for their parents? If this same commandment orders parents to take great care of the souls of their children, and tells them that one day they will render a strict account of them, is that not a just thing—since these souls have cost Jesus Christ so much to save them, and since they will be the joy and the glory of their parents throughout all eternity? If this same commandment orders masters and mistresses to take great care of their servants, to regard them as their children—are not these masters too happy to be able to help in saving souls that have cost a God made man so many torments for us? Let us say better, my brethren: if this commandment were well observed, would not heaven come down upon earth through the peace and the happiness that we should taste there?

If we pass to the fifth, which forbids us to wrong our neighbor in his goods, his reputation, and his person, is that not a very just thing—since we ought to love them as ourselves—and at the same time a thing very advantageous for us, since Jesus Christ tells us that the goods of another will never enter into heaven? You see that this commandment has nothing hard in it, since by it we secure heaven for ourselves. If we pass to the sixth commandment, which forbids us all impurity in thoughts, desires, and actions: is it not for our peace and our happiness that the good God forbids us all these things? If we have the misfortune to give ourselves up to some of these vile and infamous sins, is not your poor soul as if in a hell? Are you not tormented both day and night? On the other hand, are not your body and your soul destined to be the dwelling of the Most Holy Trinity—ought they not, I say, to go and spend an eternity with the angels, near Jesus Christ who is purity itself? You see then that this commandment is given us only for our good and our rest, even from this world!

If the good God tells us, my brethren, by the voice of His Church: "I command you never to let more than a year pass without going to confession"—tell me, is this commandment not meant to show us the greatness of God's love for us? Tell me, even if the Church had not made this commandment, can one live at peace with sin in the heart and heaven closed against us, being exposed at every instant to fall into hell? If the good God commands us to receive Him at Easter—alas! my brethren, can a soul live well, making only one meal a year? My God, how little we know our own good, our happiness! If the Church orders us to deprive ourselves of eating meat, to fast on certain days—is that an unjust thing, since being sinners we must of necessity do penance in this world or in the next? And is it not, in that, exchanging, for small pains or privations, evils that are very rigorous in the other life? Will you not agree with me, my brethren, that if the good God has given us commandments and obliges us to observe them, it is only to make us happy in this world and in the other? So that, my brethren, if we wish to hope for some consolations and some softenings in our miseries, we shall find them only in observing with fidelity the commandments of God; and so long as we violate them, we shall be only unhappy, even from this world.

Yes, my brethren, even if a person were mistress of half the world, if she does not place all her happiness in observing the commandments well, she will be only unhappy. See, my brethren, which was the happier—Saint Anthony in his desert, given over to all the rigors of penance, or Voltaire in all

his goods and his pleasures; and, as Saint Paul tells us, in his abundance and his debauchery. Saint Anthony lives happy, dies content, and now enjoys a happiness that will never end; while the other lives unhappy with all his goods, dies in despair, and now, according to all appearance, without our judging him, suffers like a reprobate. Why, my brethren, this great difference? It is that the one places all his happiness in observing faithfully the commandments of God, and the other puts all his care into violating them and making them despised; the one, in poverty, is content; and the other, in abundance, is very miserable—which shows us, my brethren, that God alone can satisfy us and nothing else.

See the happiness we have if we observe faithfully the commandments of God, since we read in the Gospel that Jesus Christ tells us: "He who observes My commandments loves Me, and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father; We will come to him and make Our abode with him." What happiness can be greater and what grace more precious—since by keeping the commandments of God we draw all heaven into ourselves? The holy king David had good reason to cry out: "O my God, how happy are those who serve You!" See again how much the good God blesses the houses of those who observe His divine laws. We read in the Gospel that the father and mother of Saint John the Baptist kept the commandments so well that no one could reproach them with the least thing; therefore the good God, in reward, gave them a child who was the greatest of all the prophets. It was an angel who came from heaven to announce to them this happy news. It was even the eternal Father who gave him the name of John, which means child of blessing and of happiness. Scarcely is Jesus Christ conceived in His Mother's womb when He Himself goes into that house to pour out there every kind of blessing. He sanctified that child before he was born, and filled the father and mother with the Holy Spirit. Do you wish, my brethren, that the good God should visit you and overwhelm you with every kind of blessing? Strive to put all your care into observing well the commandments of God, and all will go well in your house.

We read in the Gospel that a young man asked Jesus Christ what he must do to have life. The Savior answered him: "If you wish to have eternal life, keep My commandments with fidelity." Our Lord, conversing one day with His disciples on the happiness of the other life, said that the road which leads to heaven is narrow, that there are very few who truly seek it, and among those who find it, very few who are on that road; "it is not all those who say, 'Lord, Lord,' who will be saved, but only those who do the will of My Father by keeping My commandments. Many will say to Me on the day of judgment: Lord, we have prophesied in Your name; we have cast demons out of the bodies of the possessed and we have done great miracles. I will answer them: Depart from Me, workers of iniquity. You have done great things; but you have not observed My commandments; I do not know you." Jesus Christ said to the beloved disciple: "Be faithful to Me until the end, and I will give you the eternal crown." You see then, my brethren, that our salvation is absolutely bound up with the observance of the commandments of God. If you have any doubt whether you will be saved or damned, take the commandments of God and confront them with your life. If you see that you are walking in the path they have traced for you, trouble yourself only about persevering; but if you live in a manner altogether opposite, you may torment yourself as you will—you will not fail to be damned.

We say that if we wish to have peace of soul, we must keep the commandments of God, because the Holy Spirit tells us that he who has a pure conscience is as if in a continual banquet. It is very certain,

my brethren, that he who lives according to the laws of God is always content, and what is more, nothing is capable of disturbing him. Saint Paul tells us that he is happier and more content in his prison, in his sufferings, his penances, and his poverty than his executioners are in their liberty, their abundance, and their debauchery; that his soul is filled with so much joy and consolation that it overflows on every side. Saint Monica tells us that she was always content although she was often ill-treated by her husband, who was a pagan. Saint John of the Cross tells us that he had spent the happiest days of his life where he had suffered the most. "But on the contrary," the prophet Isaiah tells us, "he who does not live according to the laws of the Lord will be neither content nor happy. His conscience will be like a sea stirred by a furious tempest; troubles and remorses will follow him everywhere." If these persons wish to tell you that they are at peace, do not believe them, because they are liars; because the sinner will never have peace. See the proof of it, my brethren, in Cain. As soon as he had the misfortune of having killed his brother Abel, his sin was all his life his executioner, which left him only at death to drag him into hell. See again the brothers of Joseph. See even Judas: after having sold his divine Master, he was so tormented that he went and hanged himself on a fig tree, so much was life a burden to him. We read in history that a young man, in a fit of fury, killed his poor father. His sin gave him no rest day or night. He seemed to hear his father crying to him: "Ah! my son, why have you slain me?" He went himself to denounce himself so that they might put him to death, thinking that hell would not be more rigorous. Alas! my brethren, if we have the misfortune not to keep the commandments of God, never shall we be content, even with the greatest goods. See Solomon, and so on. But—strange thing, my brethren—man may be tormented as he will and know the remedies that must be taken to have peace with his God and with himself; he prefers to begin his hell rather than have recourse to the remedies which Jesus Christ has given us. You are unhappy, my friend—why do you wish to remain in that state? Return to Jesus Christ and you will find again the peace of soul which your sins have robbed from you.

We say that if we do not keep the commandments of God, we shall be unhappy all the days of our life. See the proof of it in Adam. As soon as he had sinned, the Lord said to him: "Because you have violated My laws, the earth for you shall be cursed; of itself it will produce only thorns and thistles. You shall eat your bread in the sweat of your brow, and that all the days of your life." See Cain; the Lord said to him: "Cain, the blood of your brother cries for vengeance; you shall be a wanderer, a vagabond, and a fugitive all the days of your life." See again Saul… So that, my brethren, as soon as we cease to follow what the commandments of God order us, we ought to expect every kind of spiritual and temporal evil.

Fathers and mothers, do you wish to be happy? Begin by observing well the commandments of God yourselves, so that you may be able to give yourselves as models to your children, and that you may always be able to say to them: "Do as I do." If you wish them to say their prayers well, give them the example. Do you wish them to be very modest in church? Give them the example; put them beside you. Do you wish them to observe well the holy day of Sunday? Begin yourselves. Do you wish them to be charitable? Be so yourselves. Alas! my brethren, if so many evils crush us, let us seek no other reasons than the multitude of sins that we commit by transgressing the commandments of God. Let us pity, my brethren, those who will come some centuries after us. Alas! it will be still much worse. Do we wish, my brethren, that God should cease to chastise us? Let us ourselves cease to offend Him; let us do as the saints who sacrificed everything rather than violate His holy laws. See a Saint Bartholomew and a Saint Regina, who were flayed alive rather than offend God. See a Saint Peter and

a Saint Andrew, who were crucified upon a cross. See all those crowds of martyrs who endured a thousand torments rather than transgress the commandments. See all the combats which the holy Fathers of the deserts sustained against the devil and their inclinations. When Saint Francis of Assisi was on a mountain to pray, the inhabitants of the neighborhood came to ask him to deliver them, by his prayers, from a quantity of wild beasts that were devouring all they had. This saint said to them: "My children, that comes only from your having violated the commandments of God; return to God and you will be delivered." Indeed, as soon as they had changed their life, they were delivered.

Likewise, in finishing, let us say that if we wish our spiritual and temporal evils to end, let us finish offending the good God; let us cease to transgress His commandments. Cease, my brethren, to give over your heart, your mind, and perhaps even your body to impurity. Cease, my brethren, to frequent games, taverns, places of pleasure. Cease, my brethren, the labors of Sunday. Let us cease to keep away from the sacraments. Let us cease, my brethren, to make a game of violating the laws of fasting and abstinence; let us leave the road which the pagans follow, to whom the commandments are not known. Let us seek, my brethren, our true happiness, which can be found only in God alone, by fulfilling the commandments faithfully. Let us cease, my brethren, to labor at making ourselves unhappy for eternity. Let us return to God, my brethren, and let us think that we are Christians and that consequently we must combat our inclinations and the devil, flee the world and its pleasures, live in tears, penance, and humility. Let us say like the holy king David: "Yes, my God! I have gone away from Your commandments by my sins; but, my God, help me; I will return to You by tears and penance, and I will walk all the days of my life in the way of Your commandments, which will lead me to You never to lose You." Happy, my brethren, is he who will imitate this holy king, who, having returned to God, never left Him again! That, my brethren, is what I wish for you.

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost — On the First Commandment of God (Second Sermon)

Diliges Dominum Deum tuum. You shall love the Lord your God. (Luke 10:27)

To adore God, my brethren, and to love Him, is the fairest function of man upon the earth; since by this adoration we make ourselves like the angels and the saints who are in heaven. O my God! what an honor and what a happiness for a vile creature, to have the power to adore and to love a God so great, so powerful, so lovable, and so beneficent! No, my brethren, no—it seems to me that God ought not to have made this commandment, but only to have suffered us prostrate in His holy presence. A God, my brethren, commanding us to love Him and to adore Him!… Why that, my brethren? Does God have need of our adorations and our prayers? Tell me, my brethren, is it we who place those rays of glory upon His head? Is it we who increase His greatness and His power, since He commands us to love Him under pain of eternal chastisements? Ah! vile nothingness, creature unworthy of this happiness, of which even the angels, holy and pure as they are, acknowledge themselves infinitely unworthy, and who, if God permits them to prostrate themselves before Him, do it only trembling! O my God! how little man knows his happiness and his privilege!… But no, my brethren, let us not leave our ordinary simplicity. Ah! my brethren, this thought—that we can love and adore a God so great—seems to us so far above our merits that it draws us out of the way of simplicity. Ah! my brethren, to be able to adore God, to love Him and to pray to Him. O my God,

what happiness!… who will ever be able to understand it?… No, my brethren, all our adorations and all our friendship add nothing to the happiness and the glory of our God; but, as the good God wills only our happiness here below, He knows that it is found only in the love that we shall have for Him, and that all who seek it outside of Him will never find it. So that, my brethren, when the good God orders us to love Him and to adore Him, it is that He wishes to force us to be happy. Let us see then all together, first, in what this adoration consists which we owe to God and which makes us so happy, and second, how we ought to render it to Him.

If you ask me now, my brethren, what it is to adore God—here it is. It is at once to believe *that* God is, and to believe *in* God. Note well, my brethren, the difference there is between believing that God is and believing in God. To believe that God is—which is the faith of the demons—is to believe that there is a God; that He exists, that He rewards virtue and punishes sin. O my God! how many Christians have not even the faith of the demons! They deny the existence of God, and in their frightful blindness and their frenzy dare to maintain that after this world there is neither punishment nor reward. Ah! unhappy ones, if the corruption of your heart has carried you to such an excess of blindness, go, question one possessed by the devil; he will teach you what you ought to believe of the other life; he will tell you that of necessity sin is punished and virtue is rewarded. Oh! what a misfortune, my brethren! When faith is extinguished in a heart, of what extravagances is one not capable? But when we say "believe in God," it is to acknowledge that He is our God, our Creator, our Redeemer, and that we take Him for our model; it is to acknowledge Him as the One on whom we depend in all things, for soul and for body, for spiritual things and for temporal; as the One from whom we expect everything, and without whom we can do nothing. We see in the Life of Saint Francis that he spent whole nights making no other prayer than this: "Lord, You are all, and I am nothing; You are the creator of all things, You are the conserver of the whole universe; and I am nothing." To adore God, my brethren, is to offer Him a sacrifice of our whole selves—that is to say, my brethren, to be submitted to His holy will in crosses, afflictions, sicknesses, losses of goods, and to be ready willingly to give our life for His love, if need be. Let us say still better, my brethren: it is to make Him a universal offering of all that we are—I mean, of our body by an exterior worship, and of our soul with all its faculties by an interior worship. Let us explain that, my brethren, in a simpler manner. If I asked a child: When must one adore God, and how must one adore Him? he would answer me: "Morning and evening, and often in the course of the day—that is to say, always." That is to say, my brethren, that we ought to do upon earth what the angels and the saints do in heaven. The prophet Isaiah tells us that he saw Our Lord seated upon a beautiful throne of glory; the seraphim adored Him with so great a respect that they covered their faces and their feet with their wings, and they sang continually: "Holy, holy, holy, is the great God of hosts; glory, honor, adoration be rendered to Him throughout all ages." We read in the Life of the Blessed Victoria of the Order of the Incarnation that there was a religious of her order who was very devout and filled with divine love. Being one day in prayer, Our Lord called her by her name; this saint answered Him in her ordinary simplicity: "My divine Jesus, what do You wish of me?" The Lord said to her: "I have seraphim in heaven who praise Me and bless Me and adore Me without ceasing; I wish to have some also upon earth; I wish that you should be of that number." That is to say, my brethren, that the function of the blessed in heaven is to be occupied only in blessing the good God in all His perfections, and that we ought to do the same while we are upon the earth—the saints triumphing and enjoying, and we fighting. Saint John tells us that he saw so great a troop of saints that it would be impossible to count

them; they were before the throne of God, saying with all their heart and with all their strength: "Honor, blessing, thanksgiving be rendered to our God."

I say then, my brethren, that we ought often to adore God, first, with the body: that is to say, we must put ourselves on our knees when we wish to adore God, to show Him the respect we have in His holy presence. The holy king David adored the Lord seven times a day, and he remained so long on his knees that he himself confesses that by force of praying, and in praying of remaining on his knees, his knees had become weak and infirm. The prophet Daniel, being at Babylon, turned toward Jerusalem and adored God three times a day. Our Lord Himself, who had no need at all to pray, to give us the example, often spent whole nights praying, on His knees, most often with His face to the ground, as He did in the garden of Olives. There have been a number of saints who imitated Jesus Christ in His prayer. Saint James often adored God not only on his knees but even with his face to the ground; so that his forehead, by force of touching the earth, had become hard like the skin of a camel. We see in the Life of Saint Bartholomew that he bent the knee to the ground a hundred times a day and as many at night. If you cannot, my brethren, adore the good God so often and on your knees, at least make it your duty to do so evening and morning and from time to time in the day, when you are alone in your houses, to show Him that you love Him and that you acknowledge Him as your creator and your conserver.

Above all, my brethren, after having given our heart to God on waking, having rid ourselves of all thoughts that have no relation to God, having dressed with modesty without losing the presence of God, we must make our prayer with as much respect as possible, and a little long if we can. We must take great care never to do anything before having said our prayers—such as making one's bed, a part of one's housework, putting the pot on the fire, calling one's servants or one's children, going to feed the animals—nor ever to command anything to one's children and servants before they have said their prayer. (If you did so, you would be the executioners of their poor souls, and if you have done it, you must confess it and not return to it.) Remember well that it is in the morning that the good God prepares for us all the graces that are necessary to spend the day holily. So that if we say our prayer badly or if we do not say it, we lose all the graces that the good God had destined for us to make our actions meritorious. The devil knows how advantageous it is for a Christian to say his prayer well; he forgets no means of making us say it badly, or miss it. He said one day, by the mouth of a possessed person, that if he could have the first moment of the day, he was sure of having all the rest. To say your prayer as it ought to be said, you must take holy water in order to drive the devil away from you, and make the sign of the cross, saying: "My God, by this holy water and by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ Your Son, wash me, purify me from all my sins." We must well persuade ourselves that if we do it with faith, we shall blot out all our venial sins, assuming that we have no mortal ones. O my God! can a Christian well commit a mortal sin which robs him of heaven, separates him from his God for all eternity!… O my God, what a misfortune, and yet so little known by the sinner! I say that we ought to say our prayer on our knees, and not lying on a chair or against a bed, nor before the fire; although one may rest one's hands on the back of a chair. We must begin our prayer by an act of faith, the liveliest that is possible for us; by penetrating ourselves vividly with the presence of God—that is to say, with the greatness of a God so good, who is willing to suffer us in His holy presence, us who for a long time have deserved to be sunk in hell. We must take great care never to disturb ourselves, nor to disturb those who are saying their prayer, unless it is truly necessary: because one

causes them to occupy themselves with us or with what we say to them; they say their prayer badly, and consequently we are the cause of it.

If now you also ask me how one must manage to adore—that is to say, to pray to God continually, for one cannot be on one's knees the whole day—nothing is easier; listen to me a moment, and you will see that one can adore God and pray to Him without leaving one's work, in four ways; but that, after having said one's prayer well on one's knees. I say in four ways: by thoughts, by desires, by words, by actions.

I say first, by thought. When one loves someone, does one not find a certain pleasure in thinking of him? Well then! my brethren, what prevents us from thinking of God during the day, now thinking of the sufferings that Jesus Christ endured for us; how much He loves us, how much He desires to make us happy, since He was willing to die for us; how good He was to make us be born in the bosom of the Catholic Church, where we find so many means of making ourselves happy—that is to say, of saving ourselves—while so many others have not the same happiness. From time to time, in the course of the day, let us carry our thoughts and our desires toward heaven, to contemplate there in advance the goods and the happiness that the good God prepares for us there after a moment of combat. This single thought, my brethren—that one day we shall go there to see the good God, and that we shall be delivered from every kind of pain—ought it not to console us in our crosses? If we are laden with some burden, let us think at once that we are in the train of Jesus Christ, carrying His cross for love of us; let us unite our sufferings and our pains to those of this divine Savior. Are we poor? Let us carry our thought into the crib: let us see and contemplate our lovable Jesus lying on a handful of straw, without any human resource. And if you wish, look at Him again, dying on a cross, stripped even of His garments. Are we calumniated? Let us think, my brethren, of the blasphemies that were poured out against Him during His Passion, Him who was holiness itself. From time to time during the day, let us make our heart pronounce these sweet words: "My God, I love You, and I adore You with all Your holy angels and all Your saints who are in heaven." Our Lord said one day to Saint Catherine of Siena: "I wish that you should make a retreat in your heart and shut yourself up there with Me, and keep Me company." What goodness, my brethren, on the part of this good Savior, to take pleasure in conversing with a poor frail creature! Well then! my brethren, let us do the same; let us converse with the good God, our lovable Jesus, who is in our heart by His grace. Let us adore Him, by giving Him our heart; let us love Him, giving ourselves wholly to Him. Let us never pass a day without thanking Him for so many graces that He has granted us during our life; let us ask His pardon for our sins, praying Him to think of them no more, but to forget them for eternity. Let us ask Him for the grace to think only of Him, and to desire only to please Him, in all that we shall do throughout our whole life. "My God," we ought to say, "I desire to love You as much as all the angels and all the saints together. I wish to unite my love to that which Your holy Mother had for You while she was upon the earth. My God, when shall I have the happiness of going one day to see You in heaven, in order to love You more perfectly?" If we are alone in our houses, what prevents us from putting ourselves on our knees? Even if we only said: "My God, I wish to love You with all my heart, with all its movements and all its thoughts and its desires; how long the time seems to me until I go to see You in heaven!" Do you see, my brethren, how easy it is to converse with the good God and to pray to Him continually? That, my brethren, is what it is to pray the whole day.

Second, we adore God by the desire of heaven. How not to desire to possess God, to see Him, which is all our happiness?…

Third, we say that we ought to pray by words. When we love someone, have we not a great pleasure in conversing about him and speaking of him? Well then! my brethren, instead of speaking of the conduct of this one and that one—which we almost never do without offending the good God—what prevents us from turning our conversation toward the things of God, either by reading some Life of a Saint, or by recounting what we have heard in an instruction, in a catechism? Let us converse especially about our holy religion; about the happiness we have in the Christian religion, about the graces that the good God grants us in it. Alas! my brethren, if it takes only a bad conversation to ruin a person, often it takes only a good one to convert her, or make her avoid sin. How many times, after having been with someone who has spoken to us of the good God, have we felt ourselves wholly drawn toward the good God; have we thought of doing better?… That is what made so many saints at the beginning of the Church; all the conversations, all the discourses were of the good God. By that, Christians animated one another; they always conceived a new taste for the things of God.

Fourth, we have said that we ought to adore God by our actions. Nothing is easier, nothing more meritorious. If you desire to know how that is done, here it is. In order that our actions may be meritorious and may be a continual prayer, we must first, in the morning, offer all our actions in general—that is to say, all that we shall do during the day. We say to the good God, before beginning: "My God, I offer You all the thoughts, the desires, the words, and the actions that I shall do during this day; grant me the grace to do them well and in the sole view of pleasing You." Then, from time to time during the day, we renew our offering, saying to God: "You know, my God, You know that I promised You from the morning to do everything for love of You." If we give some alms, let us direct our intention, saying: "My God, receive this alms, or this service that I am going to render to my neighbor; it is to ask You for such-and-such a grace." Once you will do them in honor of the death and Passion of Jesus Christ, to obtain your conversion or that of your children, of your servants, or of other persons who interest you; another time, in honor of the most holy Virgin, to ask her holy protection for yourself and for others. If something is commanded us that is distasteful to us, let us say to the good God: "My God, I offer You that to honor the moment when they made You die for me." Are we doing something that tires us much? Let us offer it to the good God, that He may deliver us from the pains of the other life. When we rest a moment, let us look at heaven which one day will be our dwelling. See, my brethren, if we had the happiness of behaving in this manner, how much we should gain for heaven, by doing only what we do—but doing it solely for God, and in the sole view of pleasing Him.

Saint John Chrysostom tells us that three things make themselves loved: beauty, goodness, and love. "Well then!" this great saint tells us, "the good God encloses all these qualities." We read in the Life of Saint Lidwina that, feeling very violent pains, an angel appeared to her to console her. She herself tells us: his beauty appeared so great to her, and she was so ravished by it, that she entirely forgot her sufferings. Valerian having seen the angel who preserved the purity of Saint Cecilia, his beauty so charmed him, and so touched his heart, although he was still a pagan, that he converted on the spot. Saint John, the beloved disciple, tells us that he saw an angel of so great a beauty that he wished to adore him; but the angel said to him: "Do not do that; I am only a servant of God like you." When Moses asked the Lord for the grace to let him see His face, the Lord said to him: "Moses, it is

impossible for a mortal man to see My face without dying; My beauty is so great that any person who sees Me will not be able to live; his soul must leave his body by the mere sight of My beauty." Saint Teresa tells us that Jesus Christ had often appeared to her; but that never will any man be able to form an idea of the greatness of His beauty, so much is it above all that we can think. Tell me, my brethren, if we had the happiness of forming an idea of the beauty of God, could we fail to love Him? Oh! how blind we are! Alas! it is that we think only of the earth and of created things, and not of the things of God, which would raise us up to Him, which would demonstrate to us a little of His perfections, and which would touch our hearts. Listen to Saint Augustine: "O beauty ancient and ever new! I have loved You so late!" He calls the beauty of God ancient because it is from all eternity, and he calls it always new because the more one sees it, the more one finds it beautiful. Why is it, my brethren, that the angels and the saints will never tire of loving God and contemplating Him? It is, my brethren, that they will always feel a new taste and a new pleasure. And why, my brethren, should we not do the same thing upon the earth, since we can? Ah! my brethren, what a happy life we should lead while preparing heaven for ourselves!

We read in the Life of Saint Dominic that he had renounced himself so entirely that he could think of, nor desire, nor love anything but God alone. After having spent the whole day kindling in hearts the fire of divine love by his preachings, he flew away at night into heaven by his contemplations and his conversations with his God. That was all his occupation. In his journeys he thought only of God; nothing was capable of distracting him from this happy thought: that God was good, lovable, and that He well deserved to be loved. He could not understand how there could be found men upon the earth who could fail to love the good God, since He was so lovable. He shed torrents of tears over the misfortune of those who would not love a God so good and so worthy of being loved. One day, heretics having sought the means of making him perish, but the good God having saved him by a miracle, one of them asked him what he would have done if he had fallen into their hands. He answered him: "I feel so great a desire to love the good God, I would so much wish to suffer and die for Him, that I would have begged you to kill me, not with a single blow, but to cut my members into as many little pieces as you could, then to tear out my tongue and my eyes, one after the other, and after having rolled the trunk of my body in my blood, to cut off my head; and I would wish that all men were in the same disposition as I, because God is so beautiful and so good that never will one do anything that can approach what He deserves." Well then! my brethren, is that loving the good God —to be in so fair a disposition? Is it not loving Him in good earnest, with all one's heart and more than oneself? Tell me, my brethren, do we love Him like this saint—we who seem to make a kind of pleasure of offending Him, we who will not make the least sacrifice to avoid sin? Tell me, my brethren, do we love the good God by missing our prayers, by saying them without respect and without devotion? How many times do we not even put ourselves on our knees? Do we love the good God, my brethren, when we do not even give the time to pray to the good God to our servants or our children? Did we love the good God, my brethren, when we ate meat on the forbidden days?

Tell me, my brethren, do we love the good God when we work on the holy days of Sunday? Do we love the good God when we are without respect in church, when we sleep there, chat and turn our heads, or when we go outside during the offices? Alas! my brethren, let us say it with groaning—how many phantoms of adorers! Alas! how many Christians who are Christians only in name!

In the third place, we say that we ought to love the good God because He is infinitely good. When Moses asked the Lord to let him see His face, He said to him: "Moses, if I let you see My face, I will show you the abridgment and the assemblage of all goods." We read in the Gospel that a woman, having prostrated herself before Our Lord, called Him "Good Master." Our Lord said to her: "Why do you call Me Good Master? There is only God alone who is good"—wishing to tell us that He is the source of every kind of good. Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi tells us that she would wish to have enough strength to make herself heard at the four corners of the world, in order to tell all men to love the good God with all their heart, because He is infinitely lovable. We read in the Life of Saint James, religious of Saint Dominic, that he went into the countryside and into the woods, crying with all his strength: "O heaven! and you, O earth! do you not love the good God as well as the other creatures, since He is infinitely worthy of being loved? O my Savior! if men are so ungrateful as not to love You, O you, all creatures, love your Creator, since He is so good and so lovable!" Ah! my brethren, if we could once understand how happy one is in loving the good God, we should weep night and day at having been so long deprived of this happiness!… Alas! how miserable man is! a mere human respect, a little "what will people say?" [qu'en-dira-t-on], will prevent him from showing his brethren that he loves his God!… O my God! can one well understand it?…

We read in history that while tormenting Saint Polycarp, his executioners said to him: "Why is it that you do not adore the idols?" — "It is," he said to them, "that I cannot; because I adore only one God, creator of heaven and of earth." — "But," they said to him, "if you do not do what we wish, we will make you die." — "I consent willingly to die, but never will I adore the devil." — "But what harm do you find in saying 'Lord Caesar' and in sacrificing, to save your life?" — "I will not do it; I prefer to die." — "Swear by the fortune of Caesar," the judge said to him, "and say insults to your Christ." The saint said to him: "How could I say insults to my God? I have served Him for eighty years, and He has done me only good." The people, all in a fury at hearing the manner in which he answered the judge, cried out: "He is the doctor of Asia, the father of the Christians; deliver him to us." — "Listen, judge," the holy bishop said to him, "here is my religion: I am a Christian; I know how to suffer, to die, and not to say insults to my Savior Jesus Christ who has so loved me and who so deserves to be loved!" — "If you will not obey," the judge said to him, "I will have you burned alive." — "The fire with which you threaten me lasts only a moment; but you do not know that of the justice of God, which will burn the impious eternally. Why do you delay? Here is my body ready to receive all the torments that you can invent." All the pagans began to cry: "He deserves death; let him be burned alive." Alas! all these unhappy ones prepare the pyre like men in despair, and during that time Saint Polycarp prepares himself for death and thanks Jesus Christ for making him share in His chalice. The pyre being ready, they took our saint and threw him into it; but the flames, less cruel than the executioners, respected our saint and made around him as it were a veil, so that his body received no harm from them: which obliged the persecutor to have him stabbed in his pyre. The blood flowed with such abundance that the fire was wholly extinguished by it. That, my brethren, is what is called loving the good God perfectly—it is to love Him more than one's very life. Alas! where should we find Christians, in the unhappy century in which we live, who would do that for the good God? Alas! how thinly sown they would be [qu'ils seraient semés bien clairs]! But also, how few there are who will go to heaven!

We ought to love the good God because of the goods that we continually receive from Him. First, our first benefit is our creation. We have the happiness of being endowed with so many fair qualities: a

body and a soul formed by the hand of the Almighty; a soul that must never perish, that is destined to go and spend its eternity with the angels in heaven; a soul, I say, that is capable of knowing God, of loving Him and of serving Him; a soul that is the fairest work of the most holy Trinity, a soul that God alone surpasses. Indeed, all the creatures that are upon the earth will perish; whereas our soul will never be destroyed. O my God, if we were ever so little penetrated with this benefit, would we not spend our whole life in thanksgivings, at the sight of a gift so great and so precious? Another benefit that is not less, my brethren, is the gift that the eternal Father has made us of His Son, who suffered and endured so many torments to redeem us, after we had sold ourselves to the devil by the sin of Adam. What other greater benefit could He do us than to establish a religion so holy and so consoling for all those who know it and who have the happiness of practicing it? Saint Augustine says: "Ah! fair religion, if you are despised, it is truly because you are not known." "No, my brethren," Saint Paul tells us, "you are no longer yourselves; you have all been redeemed by the blood of a God made man." "O my children," Saint John tells us, "what an honor for vile creatures to have been adopted as the children of God Himself, as the brothers of Jesus Christ! What charity," he tells us, "that we should be called children of God and that truly we should be so; and that with this quality so glorious He should still promise us heaven!" Examine again, if you wish, all these particular benefits: He made us be born of Christian parents; He preserved our life, although we were His enemies; He has so many times forgiven our sins; He has lavished so many graces upon us throughout our whole life. After all that, my brethren, is it well possible that we should not love a God so good and so beneficent? O my God! what misfortune is comparable!

We read in history that a man had drawn a thorn from the paw of a lion; this same lion was taken after some time to be put with the others in the pit. This man who had drawn his thorn was condemned to be devoured by the lions. Being in the pit to be devoured there, this lion recognized him. Far from devouring him, he threw himself at his feet, and let himself be devour by the other lions while defending his benefactor. Ah! ungrateful as we are, is it well possible that we should spend our life without living in such a way as to show the good God that we are grateful to Him for all His benefits? Understand, if you can, my brethren, what our shame will be one day, when the good God shows us that the beasts without reason have been more grateful for the least benefits they have received from men, and that we, overwhelmed with so many graces, lights, and goods, far from thanking our God for them, do nothing but offend Him! O my God! what misfortune is comparable to that! It is related in the Life of Saint Louis, king of France, that having gone to the Holy Land, one of his cavaliers having gone hunting, he heard the groanings of a lion. Having approached, he saw this lion which a great serpent had wrapped with its tail and was beginning to eat. This cavalier found means to kill the serpent. This lion was so grateful for it that he put himself in his train, like a lamb that follows its shepherd. As this cavalier was obliged to cross the seas, the lion not being able to enter the vessel put himself to swimming following his benefactor, until he had lost his life in the waters. What an example, my brethren: a beast losing its life to testify its gratitude to its benefactor! —and we, far from testifying ours to our God, do not cease to offend Him by sin, which does Him so many outrages! Saint Paul tells us that he who does not love God is not worthy to live; indeed, either man must love his God, or he must cease to live.

We say that we ought to love the good God because He commands us to. Saint Augustine cries out, speaking to us of this commandment: "O lovable commandment! My God! who am I, that You should command me to love You? If I do not love You, You threaten me with great miseries; is it then a small

misery not to love You? What! my God, You command me to love You? Are You not infinitely lovable? Is it not already too much that You should wish to permit us to? O what happiness for a creature as miserable as we to be able to love a God so lovable! Ah! inestimable grace, how little you are known!" We read in the Gospel that a doctor of the law said one day to Jesus Christ: "Master, what is the greatest of all the commandments?" Jesus Christ answered him, here it is: "You shall love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." Saint Augustine tells us: "If you have the happiness of loving the good God, you will become, in some sort, like Him; if you love the earth, you will become wholly earthly; but if you love the things of heaven, you will become wholly heavenly." O my God! what happiness to love You—since loving You we receive every kind of good. No, my brethren, let us not be astonished if so many great ones of the world have left the tumult [brouard/tumulte] of the age to go and bury themselves in forests or between four walls, to do nothing else any longer than love God. See a Saint Paul the hermit, whose whole occupation for eighty years was to pray and love the good God day and night. See again a Saint Anthony to whom it seems that the nights are not long enough to praise, in silence, his God and his Savior, and who complains that the sun comes too quickly. To love the good God, my brethren—ah! what happiness when we shall have the happiness of understanding it. Until when, my brethren, shall we have a repugnance for doing a work that ought to make all our happiness in this world and our felicity in eternity?… To love God, my brethren—ah! what happiness!… My God, give us faith and we will love You with all our heart.

I say that we ought to love the good God because of the great goods that we receive from Him. "God," Saint John tells us, "loves those who love Him." Tell me, my brethren, can we have a greater happiness in this world than to be loved by God Himself? Thus, my brethren, the good God will love us according as we love Him—that is to say, if we love Him much, He will love us much; which ought to lead us to love the good God as much as we can, and as we are capable of. This love will be the measure of the glory that we shall have in paradise; it will be in proportion to the love that we shall have had for Him during our life; those who shall have loved the good God more in this world will have a greater glory in heaven, and will love Him more; because the virtue of charity will accompany us throughout all eternity, and it will receive a new degree in heaven. Oh! my brethren, what happiness to have loved the good God much during our life!—we shall love Him much in paradise. Saint Anthony tells us that there is nothing the devil fears so much as a soul that loves the good God; and that he who loves the good God carries with him the mark of a predestined soul; since there are only the demons and the reprobate who do not love the good God. Alas! my brethren, the greatest of all misfortunes is that they will never have the happiness of loving Him. O my God, can one well think of it and not die of regret!…

We read in the Life of Saint Catherine of Genoa that, being present when a possessed person was being exorcised, she asked him what his name was. The demon answered her that he was called: Spirit without love of God. "What!" the saint said to him, "you do not love the good God who is so lovable?" — "Oh! no, no," he cried. — "Ah! I would never have believed that there was a creature who did not love the good God." She fell dead. Having come to herself, when she was asked what had made her faint, she answered that never would she have been able to believe that there was a creature who did not love the good God; that that had so surprised her that her heart had failed her. But tell me, my brethren, was she not right?—since we are created only for that alone. As soon as we cease to love the good God, we are not doing what the good God wishes us to do. Indeed, my

brethren, what is the first question that was put to us when we came to catechism to be instructed in our religion? "Who created you and has preserved you until now?" We answered: "It is God." — "And why still?" — "To know Him, to love Him, to serve Him, and by that means to acquire eternal life." Yes, my brethren, our only occupation upon the earth is to love the good God—that is to say, to begin to do what we shall do throughout all eternity. Why still ought we to love the good God? It is, my brethren, that all our happiness is found and can be found only in the love of God. So that, my brethren, when we do not love the good God, we shall always be unhappy; and if we wish to have some consolations and some softenings in our pains, we shall find them only in the love that we shall have for God. If you wish to convince yourself of it, go find the happiest according to the world; if he does not love the good God, he will be only unhappy; and on the contrary, if you go find the most unhappy in the eyes of the world, if he answers you that he loves God, he is happy in every respect. O my God! open then the eyes of our soul, and we shall seek our happiness where we can find it!

But, you will say to me in finishing, how then ought we to love the good God? How must one love Him, my brethren? Listen to Saint Bernard; he himself is going to teach us, telling us that we ought to love God without measure. "As God is infinitely lovable, we shall never be able to love Him as He deserves. But Jesus Christ Himself teaches us the measure with which we ought to love Him, telling us: 'You shall love your God with all your soul, with all your heart, with all your strength.'" You will engrave these thoughts well in your mind, and you will teach all these things to your children. Saint Bernard tells us that to love the good God with all our heart is to love Him courageously and with fervor—that is to say, to be ready to suffer all that the devil and the world will make us suffer, rather than cease to love Him. It is to prefer Him to everything, and to love nothing except for love of Him. Saint Augustine said to God: "When my heart, O my God, shall be too great to love You, then I will love something else with You; but as my heart will always be too small for You, and as You are infinitely lovable, I will never love anyone but You." We ought to love the good God not only as ourselves, but even more than ourselves, and to be always in the resolution of giving our life for Him.

We may say that all the martyrs have truly loved Him, since they preferred to suffer the loss of their goods, contempt, prisons, scourges, wheels, gibbets, iron and fire, and finally all that the rage of tyrants could invent, rather than offend Him. It is related in the history of the martyrs of Japan that when the Gospel was announced to them and they were instructed in the greatness of God, His goodnesses and His love for men; above all when they were taught the great mysteries of our holy religion, all that the good God had done for men—a God being born in poverty, a God suffering and dying for salvation—"Oh! how good He is," they cried, "how good is the God of the Christians! Oh! how lovable He is!" But when they were told that this same God had made us a commandment by which He ordered us to love Him, and that if we did not love Him He threatened us with an eternal chastisement, they were so astonished and so surprised that they could not recover from it. "What!" they said, "to make to reasonable men a precept of loving God, who has so loved us!… is it not the greatest of all misfortunes not to love Him, and is it not the greatest of all happinesses to love Him? What! are not the Christians always at the foot of the altars to adore their God, penetrated with so much goodness and all inflamed with His love?" But when one came to teach them that there were Christians who not only did not love Him, but even who spent almost their whole life offending Him: "O ungrateful people! O barbarous people!" they cried with indignation, "is it well possible that Christians should be capable of such horrors! Ah! in what cursed land then do these men without heart and without feeling dwell?" Alas! my brethren, if these martyrs reappeared now upon the earth,

and if one made them the recital of all the outrages that Christians do at every instant to God—to a God so good who wills and who seeks only their eternal happiness—alas! my brethren, could they well believe it? Sad thought, my brethren: until now we have not loved the good God!….

Not only must a good Christian love the good God with all his heart; but further he must make every effort to make Him loved by other men. Fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses must use all their power to make Him loved by their children and their servants. Oh! what merit a father and a mother will have before the good God, if all those who are with them love Him as much as it is possible!… Oh! what blessings the good God would pour out upon these houses!… Oh! what goods both for time and for eternity!… But what are the marks by which we shall recognize that we love the good God? Here they are, my brethren. It is if we think often of Him, if our mind is often occupied with Him, if we have much pleasure, if we love to hear speak of Him in the instructions, and in all that can recall Him to us. If we love the good God, my brethren, we shall greatly fear to offend Him; we shall always be on our guard; we shall watch over all the movements of our heart, for fear of being deceived by the devil. But the last means is to ask it of Him often, since His love comes from heaven. We must carry our thought there during the day, even at night on waking, by producing acts of the love of God, saying to Him: "My God, grant me the grace to love You as much as it is possible that I should love You." We must have a great devotion to the holy Virgin who loved the good God, she alone, more than all the saints together; have a great devotion to the Holy Spirit, especially at nine o'clock in the morning. That was the moment when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles, to inflame them with His love. At noon, we must recall the mystery of the Incarnation, where the Son of God became incarnate in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, asking Him to descend into our hearts as He descended into the womb of His blessed Mother. At three o'clock, we must represent to ourselves this good and charitable Savior, who dies to merit for us an eternal love. We ought, in that moment, to produce an act of contrition, to testify to Him the regret we have at having offended Him. Let us conclude, my brethren, that since our happiness can be found only in the love that we shall have for God, we ought greatly to fear sin, since it alone makes us lose it. Go, my brethren, draw this divine love from the sacraments that you can receive! Go to the holy table with a great trembling and with a great confidence, since He is our God, our Savior, and our Father, who wills only our happiness; I wish it for you…

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost — On Love of Neighbor (Third Sermon)

Vade, et tu fac similiter. Go, and do likewise. (Luke 10:37)

A doctor of the law, Saint Luke tells us, presented himself to Jesus Christ, saying to tempt Him: "Master, what must one do to have eternal life?" Jesus Christ answered him: "What does your law contain? What do you read there?" He answered Him: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself." — "You have answered very well," Jesus Christ replied to him; "go, do that, and you will have eternal life." Then the doctor asked Him who was his neighbor, and whom he ought to love as himself. Jesus Christ proposed to him this example: "A man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho; he fell into the hands of thieves, who, not content with having stripped him, pierced him with wounds, and left him half dead on the spot. At that moment there passed a priest who was coming down by the same road.

This one, having seen him in that pitiful state, did not even look at him. Then a Levite, having perceived him, passed likewise; but a Samaritan who was following the same route, having seen him, approached him, and was sensibly touched with compassion; he came down from his horse, and set about assisting him with all his power. He bathed his wounds with oil and wine, bound them; having put him on his horse, he carried him to an inn where he commanded the master to take all necessary care of him, telling him that if the money he gave him was not enough, on his return he would repay him what he had spent beyond." Jesus Christ said to the doctor: "Which of the three do you think was the neighbor of this man who fell into the hands of thieves?" The doctor answered Him: "I believe it is the one who exercised the works of mercy toward this man." — "Well then! go," Jesus Christ said to him, "do likewise, and you will have eternal life."

That, my brethren, is the perfect model of the charity that we ought to have for our neighbor. Let us see then, my brethren, whether we have this charity which assures us eternal life. But, to make you feel its necessity better, I am going to show you that our whole religion is only a false religion, and that all our virtues are only phantoms, and that we are only hypocrites in the eyes of God, if we have not this universal charity for everybody—that is to say, for the good as for the bad, for the poor as for the rich, for all those who do us harm as for those who do us good. No, my brethren, there is no virtue that makes us know better whether we are the children of the good God than charity; and the obligation that we have to love our neighbor is so great that Jesus Christ makes us a commandment of it, which He places immediately after that by which He commands us to love Him with all our heart. He tells us that the whole law and the prophets are enclosed in this commandment of loving our neighbor. Yes, my brethren, we ought to regard this obligation as the most universal, the most necessary, and the most essential to religion, to our salvation; because in fulfilling this commandment we fulfill all the others. Saint Paul tells us that the other commandments forbid us adultery, theft, insults, false testimonies; if we love our neighbor, we shall do none of all that, because the love that we have for our neighbor cannot suffer that we should do him harm.

I say first that this commandment, which orders us to love our neighbor, is the most necessary to our salvation, since Saint John tells us that if we do not love our brother—that is to say, everybody—we remain in a state of reprobation. We see again that Jesus Christ has so much at heart the fulfillment of this commandment that He tells us that it is only by the friendship that we shall have for one another that He will recognize us as His children. Second, I say, my brethren, that what imposes upon us so great an obligation to love one another is that we all have the same creator, all one same origin; that we are all but one same family, of which Jesus Christ is the father, and that we all bear His image and His likeness; that we are all created for one same end, which is eternal glory, and that we have all been redeemed by the death and Passion of Jesus Christ. After that, my brethren, we cannot refuse to love our neighbor without outraging Jesus Christ Himself, who commands it of us under pain of eternal damnation. Saint Paul tells us that since we all have one same hope, which is eternal life, one same Lord, one same faith, one same baptism and one same God, who is the father of all men, we ought therefore to love all men as ourselves, if we wish to please Jesus Christ and save our souls.

But perhaps you are thinking: in what then does the love consist that we ought to have for our neighbor? — My brethren, this love consists in three things: first, in wishing well to everybody; second, in doing them good whenever we can; third, in bearing with, excusing, and hiding their

faults. That, my brethren, is the true charity due to the neighbor, and the true mark of a true charity, without which we can neither please God nor save our souls.

First, we ought to wish well to everybody, and to be much afflicted when we learn that some harm happens to him, because we ought to consider all men, even our enemies, as our brothers; we ought to show a good and affable air toward everybody; not to envy those who are better off than we; we ought to love the good because of their virtues, and to love the wicked in order that they may become good; to wish perseverance to the first and conversion to the others. If a man is a great sinner and a wicked man, we may hate the sin, which is the work of man and of the devil; but we must love his person, which is the image of God.

Second, we ought to do good to everybody, at least as far as we can; which is done in three ways that regard the goods of the body, the goods of honor, and the goods of the soul. With regard to the goods of the body, we ought never to wrong our neighbor, nor prevent him from gaining something, even when that profit could come back to us. There are no Christians so pleasing to God as those who have compassion on the unhappy. See Saint Paul: he tells us that he wept with those who wept, and rejoiced with those who were in joy. As for the honor of the neighbor, we ought to take great care never to harm his reputation by evil-speaking, and still less by calumnies. If we can prevent those who speak ill of him, we must prevent them; if we cannot, we must leave them, or else say all the good that we know of these persons. But for the goods of the soul, which are a hundred times more precious than those of the body, we can procure them these goods by praying for them, by turning them from evil by our counsels, and above all by our good examples; we are especially obliged to this toward those with whom we live. Fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses are obliged to it in a particular manner, because of the account they will have to render to God of their children. Alas! my brethren, can one well say that fathers and mothers love their children, when they see them live with so much indifference for all that concerns the salvation of their souls? Alas! my brethren, a father and a mother who had the charity they ought to have for their children—could they live without shedding tears, night and day, over the unhappy state of their children who are in sin, who live, alas! as reprobates, who are no longer for heaven, who are only for hell?… Alas! my brethren, how will they love to procure their salvation for them, since they do not even think of their own salvation?

Alas! my brethren, how many fathers and mothers who ought to groan and pray continually over the state of their poor children, and who turn them from good and lead them to evil, by entertaining them with the wrongs, the disputes, the insults that their neighbors have said or done to them, with their bad faith, with the means they have employed to avenge themselves: which often leads the children to wish themselves to be avenged, or at least to keep hatred in the heart. Oh! my brethren, how far the first Christians were from all that, because they felt the price of a soul! Ah! my brethren, if a father and a mother knew the value of a soul, could they leave those of their poor children or of their servants to be lost with so much indifference? Could they make them miss their prayer in order to make them work? Would they have the courage to make them miss the holy offices? O my God! what are they going to answer Jesus Christ when He is going to show them that they preferred a beast to the soul of their children! Ah! what am I saying—a handful of hay! Ah! poor soul, how little one esteems you! No, no, my brethren, these blind and ignorant fathers and mothers have never understood that the loss of a soul is a greater evil than the destruction of all the creatures that exist upon the earth. Let us judge, my brethren, of the dignity of a soul by that of the angels: an angel is so

perfect that all that we see upon the earth and in heaven is less than a grain of dust in comparison with the sun; and yet however perfect the angels may be, they have cost God only a word; whereas a soul has cost the value of His adorable blood. The devil, to tempt the Savior, offered Him all the kingdoms of the world, saying to Him: "If you will prostrate yourself before me, I will give you all these goods"; which shows us that a soul is infinitely more precious in the eyes of God, and even of the devil, than the whole universe with all that it possesses. Ah! what shame for these fathers and mothers who esteem the soul of their children less than the devil himself esteems it! Yes, my brethren, your soul is of so great a price that Saint John Chrysostom tells us that, even if there had been only one man upon the earth, his soul is so precious to Jesus Christ that He would not have thought it unworthy of Him to die to save it. "Yes," he says, "a soul is so dear to its Creator that, if it loved Him, He would rather annihilate the heavens than leave it to perish." "O body," Saint Bernard cried, "how you are honored to lodge so fair a soul!" Tell me, my brethren, if you had been at the foot of the cross, and if you had gathered the adorable blood of Jesus Christ in a vessel, with what respect would you not have preserved it? Now, my brethren, we ought to have as much respect and care to preserve our soul, because it has cost all the blood of Jesus Christ. "Since," Saint Augustine tells us, "I recognized that my soul was redeemed by the blood of a God, I resolved to preserve it, even at the expense of my life, and never to sell it to the devil by sin." Ah! fathers and mothers, if you were well convinced that you are the guardians of the souls of your children, could you well leave them to perish with so much coldness? My God, how many persons damned for having left poor souls to be lost, which they could well have prevented if they had wished! No, my brethren, we have not the charity that we ought to have for one another, and especially for our children and our servants.

We read in history that in the time of the first Christians, when the pagan emperors questioned them to know what they were, they answered them: "You ask us what we are—here it is: We make only one people and one family, which the bonds of charity unite together; as for our goods, they are all in common: he who has gives to him who has not; no one complains, no one avenges himself, no one speaks ill of another, and no one does harm to another. We pray for one another, and even for our enemies; instead of avenging ourselves, we do good to those who do us harm; we bless those who curse us." Ah! my brethren, what has become of those happy times? Alas! how many Christians now are possessed only by love of themselves, and have none for the neighbor!

Do you wish, my brethren, to know what the Christians of our days are? Listen to me—here it is. If two persons who are together are of the same humor, of the same character, or else have the same inclinations, you see them loving each other well, living together; that is still not difficult. But if the humor or the character do not agree, there is no longer either peace, or friendship, or charity, or neighbor. Alas! my brethren, these are Christians who have only a false religion: they love their neighbor only insofar as he is of their inclination, and enters into their sentiments and their interests; otherwise, one can no longer see one another, bear with one another: one must separate, they say, to have peace and save one's soul. Go, poor hypocrites, go, separate yourselves from those who are not, you say, of your character, and with whom you cannot live; you will not go as far from them as you are from God. Go, your religion is only a phantom, and you yourselves are only reprobates. You have never known either your religion, or what it commands you, or the charity that you ought to have for your brother in order to please God and save yourselves. It is not very difficult to love those who love us, and who are of our sentiments in all that we say or do; for in that there is nothing more than the pagans—they did just as much. Saint James tells us: "If you give a good welcome to a rich man, and

despise a poor man; if you greet with good grace the one who has done you some good, while you scarcely greet the one who has done you some insult; you neither fulfill the law nor have the charity that you ought to have; you do nothing more than those who do not know the good God."

— "But," you will say to me, "how then ought we to love our neighbor?" Here it is. Saint Augustine tells us that we ought to love him as Jesus Christ loves us: He consulted neither flesh nor blood, but He loved us to sanctify us and to merit eternal life for us. We ought to wish and desire for our neighbor all the good that we can wish for ourselves. Yes, my brethren, we shall know that we are on the road to heaven and that we truly love the good God only insofar as, finding ourselves with persons entirely opposed to our character, and who seem to contradict us in everything, we nevertheless love them as ourselves, we see them with good grace, we speak well of them and never ill, we seek their company, we anticipate them and we render them service in preference to all those who enter into our interests and contradict us in nothing. If we do that we may hope that our soul is in the friendship of God and that we love our neighbor in a Christian manner. That is the rule and the model that Jesus Christ has left us and that all the saints have followed; let us not deceive ourselves —there is no other road that leads us to heaven. If you do not do that, do not doubt for a single instant that you are walking in that of perdition. Go, poor blind ones—pray, do penance, assist well at the offices, frequent the sacraments every day if you wish; give all your goods to those who love you —you will not fail to go and burn at the end of your life! Alas! my brethren, how little true devotion there is! how many devotions of character, of inclination! There are people who give everything, and who are ready to sacrifice everything, when it is for persons who suit them or who love them. Alas! how few there are who have this charity which pleases God and which leads to heaven!

Hold, my brethren—do you wish a fair example of Christian charity? Here is one that can serve you as a model all your life. It is related in the history of the Fathers of the desert that a solitary met on the road a poor cripple all covered with ulcers and rottenness; he was in so miserable a state that he could neither earn his living nor drag himself along. The solitary, touched with compassion, carried him into his cell, gave him all the reliefs he could. The poor man, having recovered his strength, the solitary said to him: "Do you wish, my dear brother, to remain with me? I will do all that I can to feed you, and we will pray and serve the good God together." — "Oh! how much joy you give me," the poor man said to him; "how happy I am to find in your charity a resource for my misery!" The solitary, who already had much trouble earning his living, redoubled his work to have enough to feed his poor man; and he tried to feed him as well as he could and much better than he fed himself. But after some time this poor man began to murmur against his benefactor, complaining that he fed him too badly. "Alas! my dear friend," the solitary said to him, "I feed you better than myself; I can do nothing else for you than what I do." Some days later this ungrateful one began his complaints again, and poured out against his benefactor a torrent of insults. The solitary suffered all that with patience, without answering anything. The poor man was ashamed of having spoken in that way to so holy a man, who did him only good; and he asked his pardon. But he soon fell again into the same impatience and took such a hatred against this good solitary that he could no longer bear him. "I am weary of living with you," he said to him; "I want you to carry me back to the road where you found me; I am not accustomed to being so badly fed." The solitary asked his pardon, promising him that he would try to treat him better. The good God inspired him to go find a charitable townsman of the neighborhood, to ask him for food a little better for his cripple. The townsman, touched with compassion, told him to come every day to fetch what was needed to feed him. The poor man seemed

content; but after some weeks he began again to make new and sharp reproaches to the solitary. "Go," he said to him, "you are only a hypocrite; you pretend to go seek alms for me, and it is for yourself; you eat the best in secret, and you give me only your leftovers." — "Ah! my friend," the solitary said to him, "you do me wrong; I assure you that I never ask anything for myself, that I do not even touch a morsel of what is given me for you; if you are not content with the services I render you, at least have patience for the love of Jesus Christ, while waiting until I do better." — "Go," the poor man said to him, "I have no need of your remonstrances," and at once he seized a pebble and threw it at the solitary's head, who avoided the blow. Then this unhappy man took a great stick, which he used to drag himself along, and gave him so rude a blow with it that he made him fall to the ground. "May the good God pardon you," the good solitary said to him; "as for me, I pardon you well, for the love of Jesus Christ, the ill treatments that you do me." — "You say that you pardon me; but it is only with the tip of the lips [du bout des lèvres], because I know that you would already wish to see me dead." — "I assure you, my friend," the good solitary said to him tenderly, "that it is with all my heart that I pardon you." This good solitary wished to embrace him to show that he loved him. In that moment the poor man took him by the throat, tore his face with his nails, and wished to strangle him. The solitary having freed himself from his hands, the poor man said to him: "Go, you will never die except by my hands." This good solitary, who was always touched with compassion and filled with a truly Christian charity, took patience with him for three or four years. During that time, God alone knows how much he had to suffer from the poor man. He told him at every moment that he wanted him to carry him back to the road where he had found him, that he would rather die of hunger or of cold, or else be devour by the beasts, than live with him. This good solitary did not know what to decide; on one side, his charity represented to him that by carrying him back to the place where he had found him, he was going to perish of misery; on the other side, he feared to lose patience in this combat. The thought came to him of going to consult Saint Anthony on the course he ought to take to be most pleasing to the good God; he feared neither the pain nor the outrages that he received for all his benefits; but he wished only to know the will of God. Being near Saint Anthony, without telling him anything, this one, by whose mouth the Holy Spirit spoke, said to him: "Ah! my son, I know what brings you here, and why you come to find me. Take great care not to follow the thought you have of sending this poor man away; it is a hard temptation of the devil, who wishes to take away your crown; if you had the misfortune to abandon him, my son, the good God would not abandon him." It seemed, according to what Saint Anthony said to him, that his salvation was bound up with the cares he gave to this poor man. "But, my father," the solitary said to him, "I fear to lose patience with him." — "And why would you lose it, my son," Saint Anthony replied to him; "do you not know that it is toward those who do us the most harm that we ought to exercise our charity most generously? My son, tell me, what merit would you have in having patience with a person who would never do you any harm? Do you not know, my son, that charity is a courageous virtue, which does not look at the vices of the one who causes us pain, but which looks only at God alone. Therefore, my son, I strongly urge you to keep this poor man: the more wicked he is, the more you ought to have pity on him; all that you do for him by charity, Jesus Christ will hold as done to Himself. Make it appear, my son, by your patience, that you are the disciple of a suffering God. Remember that it is by patience and by charity that one knows a Christian. Look upon this poor man as the one of whom God wishes to make use to make you work for your crown." The solitary was very satisfied to know from this great saint that it was the will of God that he should keep his poor

man, and that all that he did toward him was very pleasing to God. He goes to find his poor man, and forgetting all the insults and the ill treatments that he had received from him until that day, showing him a charity that no longer had bounds, he served him with an admirable humility, and did not cease to pray for him. The good God saw in this young solitary so much patience and charity that He converted this poor man; and thereby showed His servant how pleasing to Him all that he had done was, since He granted this unhappy man his salvation and his conversion.

What do you think of that, my brethren? Is that a Christian charity, yes or no? Oh! how this example, on the great day of judgment, is going to confound Christians who will not even suffer a word, bear for eight days the bad character of a person, without murmuring, without perhaps wishing him harm. One must leave each other, one must separate to have peace, they say. O my God! how many Christians damn themselves by the lack of charity! No, no, my brethren, even if you worked miracles, you will never be saved if you have not charity. No, my brethren, that is not knowing one's religion; that is having only a religion of caprice, of humor, and of inclination. Go, go—you are only hypocrites and reprobates! Without charity, never will you see the good God, never will you go to heaven!… Give your goods, make great alms to those who love you or who please you, assist every day at holy Mass, communicate every day if you wish; you are only hypocrites and reprobates; continue your road and you will soon be in hell!… You cannot bear the faults of your neighbor because he is too trying; you do not love to be with him. Go see, go, unhappy one—you are only a hypocrite; you have only a false religion, which, with all the good that you do, will lead you to hell. O my God! how rare this virtue is! Alas! it is as rare as those are rare who will go to heaven.

"I do not even like to see them," you will say; "at church they give me distractions with all their manners." Ah! unhappy one, say rather that you have not charity, and that you are only a wretch who loves only those who enter into your sentiments or your interests, who contradict you in nothing, and who flatter you about your good works, who love to thank you for your benefits and who pay you with gratitude. You will do everything for these; you do not even fear to deprive yourself of your necessities to relieve them; but if they despise you or pay with ingratitude, you no longer love them, you no longer wish to see them, you flee their companies; you are content to cut short the conversations you have with them. O my God! how many false devotions that can lead us only among the reprobate! If you doubt it, my brethren, listen to Saint Paul, who cannot deceive you: "Though," he tells us, "I should give all my goods to the poor, though I should work miracles by raising the dead, if I have not charity, I am nothing other than a hypocrite." But to convince you of it better, run through the whole Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, see all the Lives of the Saints—you will find none who have not had this virtue: that is to say, who have not loved those who insulted them, who wished them harm, who paid them with ingratitude for their benefits. No, no, you will not see one who has not preferred to do good to the one who will have done him some wrongs. See Saint Francis de Sales, who tells us that if he had only one good work to do, he would choose the one who has done him some outrage, rather than the one who has rendered him some service.

Alas! my brethren, how far a person who has not charity goes for evil! If a person has given him some pain, you see him examining all her actions; he judges them, he condemns them, he turns them to evil, always believing he is right. — But, you will say to me, there are many times when one sees that they act badly; one cannot think otherwise. — My friend, as you have no charity, you believe that they do badly; but if you had charity, you would think quite otherwise, because you would always think

that you can well be mistaken, as that happens so often; and to convince you of it, here is an example that I beg you never to erase from your mind, especially when you think that your neighbor does badly. It is related in the history of the Fathers of the desert that a solitary named Simeon, having remained several years in solitude, the thought came to him of going into the world; but he asked the good God that never in his life should men know his intentions. The good God having granted him this grace, he went into the world. He counterfeited the fool; he delivered the possessed from the devil, and he healed the sick; he went into the houses of women of bad life, made them swear that they would love only him, giving them all the money he had. Everybody looked upon him as a solitary who had lost his mind. One saw every day this man, who was more than seventy years old, playing with the children in the streets; at other times he went and threw himself into the midst of public dances to jump with the others, telling them some words that well showed them the evil they were doing. But one looked upon that as coming from a madman, and one only despised him. At other times he mounted upon the theaters, from which he threw stones at all those who were below. When he saw persons who were possessed by the devil, he put himself with them, and counterfeited the possessed as if he himself had been so. One saw him running into the inns, putting himself with the drunkards; in the markets he rolled on the ground, and did a thousand other things all very extravagant. Everybody condemned him, despised him; some looked upon him as a madman, others as a libertine and a bad subject who deserved only prison. And yet, my brethren, in spite of all that, he was a saint, who sought only contempt and to win souls to God, although everybody judged ill of him. Which shows us that although the very actions of our neighbor appear bad to us, we ought not ourselves to judge ill of them. Often we judge them bad, while in the eyes of God they are not. Ah! how he who had the happiness of having charity, that fair and incomparable virtue, would take good care not to judge and to wish harm to his neighbor!

— But, you will say to me, his character is too bad; one cannot bear it. — You cannot bear it, my friend—do you then believe yourself to be a saint, and without fault? Poor blind man! You will see one day that you have made those around you suffer more than they have made you suffer. It is the ordinary thing that the worst believe that they make others suffer nothing, and that they have everything to suffer from others. O my God, how blind man is when charity is not in his heart! On the other hand, if you had nothing to suffer from those who are with you, what then would you have to present to the good God? — When then will one be able to know that one is on the road that leads to heaven? — No, no, my brethren, so long as you do not love those who are of a humor, of a character altogether different from yours, and even those who contradict you in what you do, you will be only a hypocrite and not a good Christian. Do as many other goods as you wish—that will not prevent you from being damned.

Besides, see the conduct that the saints held, and how they behaved toward their neighbor; here is an example that shows us that this virtue alone seems to assure us heaven. It is related in history that a solitary who had led a very imperfect life, at least in appearance and in the eyes of the world, found himself at the hour of death so consoled and so content that his superior was much astonished at it. Thinking that it was a blindness of the devil, he asked him whence this great contentment could come; that he knew well nevertheless that his life had scarcely anything to reassure him, seeing that the judgments of God are so terrible, even to the most just. “It is true, my father,” the dying man said to him, “that I have not done extraordinary works, and even that I have almost done nothing good; but I have tried all my life to practice this great precept of the Lord, which is to love everybody, to

think well of all, to bear with faults and to excuse them and to render them service; I have done it whenever the occasion presented itself; I have tried to do harm to no one, to speak ill of no one and to think well of everybody: that, my father, is what makes all my consolation and my hope in this moment, and what, in spite of all my imperfections, gives me the hope that the good God will have pity on me." The superior was so astonished at that that he cried out with transports of admiration: "O my God! how fair and precious this virtue is in Your eyes!" "Go, my son," he said to the solitary, "you have done everything and accomplished everything, in accomplishing this commandment; go, heaven is assured for you." Ah! my brethren, if we knew this virtue well, and what its price is in the eyes of God, with what eagerness would we not seize all the occasions to practice it, since it encloses all the other virtues and assures us heaven so well? No, no, my brethren, we are only hypocrites so long as this virtue does not accompany all our actions.

But think within yourselves: whence comes it that we have not this charity, since it already makes us so happy in this world by the peace and the union that reign among those who have the great happiness of having it? — My brethren, three things make us lose it, namely: avarice, pride, and envy. Tell me, why is it that you do not love that person? Alas! it is because she does not enter into your interests; because she will have said some words against you, or done something that did not suit you; or else because you asked her some service that she refused you; or else that she will have made some profit that you hoped to make: that is what prevents you from loving her as you ought. You do not pay attention that so long as you do not love your neighbor—that is to say, everybody—as you would wish to be loved, you are such that if you came to die, you would be damned. Yet you still love to nourish in your heart sentiments that are not very charitable; you flee these persons; but take great care, my friend, that the good God does not flee you also. Never lose sight of the fact that for as much time as you do not love your neighbor, the good God is in fury against you; if you came to die, He would cast you at once into hell. O my God! can one well live with hatred in the heart!… Alas! my friend, you are no longer anything but an abominable one in the eyes of God, if you are without charity. Is it because you see great faults in your neighbor? Alas! my friend, be well persuaded that you have still much greater ones in the eyes of God and that you do not know. It is true that we ought not to love the faults and the vices of the sinner; but we ought to love his person; for, although a sinner, he does not cease to be the creature of God and His image. If you wish to love only those who have no faults, you will love no one, because no one is without faults. Let us reason, my brethren, as better Christians: the more a Christian is a sinner, the more he is worthy of compassion and of possessing a place in our heart. No, my brethren, however bad those with whom we live may be, we ought not to hate them; but, after the example of Jesus Christ, to love them more than ourselves. See how Jesus Christ, who is our model, behaved toward His enemies: He prayed for them and He died for them. What led the apostles to cross the seas, and to go finish their life by martyrdom? Is it not love for their enemies? See the charity of Saint Francis Xavier, who left his country and all his goods, to go dwell among barbarians, who make him suffer all that it is possible to make a Christian suffer, short of death. See a Saint Abraham, solitary, who left his solitude to go preach the faith in a country where no one had been able to make it received. Was it not his charity that was the cause that he was struck and dragged on the ground until he was left half dead? Could he not leave them in their blindness? Yes, without doubt, but his charity, the great desire to save their poor souls, makes him suffer all these insults. Yes, my brethren, he who has charity sees no faults in his brother, but only the necessity of helping him to save his soul, whatever it may cost.

We say that if we love our neighbor well, we shall take great care not to scandalize him and to do nothing that can turn him from good to lead him to evil. Yes, my brethren, we ought to love everybody and do him good as far as we can for soul and for body; because Jesus Christ tells us that when we do some good to the neighbor in his body, we do it to Himself; but all the more when we help him to save his soul. Never lose sight of these words of Jesus Christ, who tells us in the Gospel: "Come, you blessed of My Father; I was hungry, you gave Me to eat," and so on. See the charity of Saint Serapion, who left his habit to give it to a poor man; he met another, he gave him his under-habit; having nothing left but his book of the Gospel, he goes to sell it in order to be able to give still. His disciple asked him who had stripped him thus. He told him that he had read in his book: "Sell and give all that you have to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven; that is why I have sold even my book." He went still further: he gave himself to a poor widow to have himself sold, so that she might have enough to feed her children; and being led among the barbarians, he had the great happiness of converting a great number of them. Oh! fair virtue! if we had the happiness of possessing you, how many souls we should lead to the good God!…. When Saint John the Almsgiver thought of this fair action of Saint Serapion: "I had believed," he said to his friends, "that I had done something, in giving all my money to the poor; but I recognized that I have still done nothing, because I have not given myself as the blessed Serapion, who gave himself to feed the children of a widow."

Let us conclude, my brethren, that charity is one of the fairest virtues, and the one that most assures us the friendship of the good God; with other virtues, we can still be on the road to hell; but with charity, which is universal, which does not flee, which loves its enemies as its friends, which does good to those who do it harm, as to those who do it good… he who possesses it is sure that heaven is for him!… That is the happiness that I wish for you.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost — On Absolution

Quorum remiseritis peccata, remittuntur eis; et quorum retinueritis, retenta sunt. The sins will be remitted to those to whom you remit them, and they will be retained to those to whom you retain them. (John 20:23)

How much it has cost this divine Savior, my brethren, to give efficacy to these words: "The sins will be remitted to those to whom you remit them, and retained to those to whom you retain them!" Alas! what torments, what opprobrium, and what a painful death!… But we are so blind, so coarse, so little spiritual, that most believe that it depends only on the priest to give or to refuse absolution as he pleases. No, my brethren, we deceive ourselves grossly; a minister of the sacrament of Penance is only the dispenser of the graces and merits of Jesus Christ; he can give them only according to the rules that are prescribed to him. Alas! with what fright ought a poor priest to be seized, in exercising a ministry so formidable, where he is in so great a danger of losing himself while wishing to save others. What a terrible rendering of account for a poor priest, when the judgment comes and all these absolutions are put back before his eyes by God Himself, to examine whether he has not been either too prodigal of the graces of heaven, or too severe. Alas! my brethren, how difficult it is always to walk quite straight! How many priests, at the judgment, will wish they had not been priests, but simple laymen! How many of the faithful are also going to find themselves guilty, who perhaps have

never prayed to God for their pastors who have exposed themselves to being lost in order to save them!…

But if a priest has the power to remit sins, he also has the power to retain them, and Saint Gregory the Great tells us that a priest must carefully examine what the dispositions of the sinner are, before giving him absolution. He must see whether his heart is changed, whether he has well taken all the resolutions that a converted sinner ought to have. It is therefore evident that the minister of penance must defer or refuse absolution to certain sinners, under pain of damning himself with his penitent. I am going then to show you or teach you, first, what absolution is; second, who are those to whom it must be given or refused: a matter very interesting, since it is a question of your salvation or of your loss.

How happy man is, my brethren—but how guilty he is! I say that he is happy; since, after having lost his God, heaven, and his soul, he can still hope to find means so easy to repair this great loss, which is that of an eternity of happiness. The rich man who has lost his fortune often cannot, in spite of his good will, reestablish it; but has the Christian lost his eternal fortune? He can recover it without its costing him anything, so to speak. O my God! how You love sinners, since You furnish us so many means of recovering heaven! I say that we are very guilty to be able to gain so many goods and to despise everything! You have lost heaven, my friend—and why do you wish to live in such poverty?… My God! how the sinful man can avoid his misfortune, and what facility he has to be able to repair it!

If you ask me what absolution is, I will tell you that it is a judgment that the priest pronounces, in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, and by which our sins are as remitted, as blotted out, as if we had never committed them, if the one who confesses them receives it with the dispositions that this sacrament demands. Ah! my brethren, who of us will be able to keep from admiring the efficacy of this judgment of mercy? O happy moment for a converted sinner!… Scarcely has the minister pronounced these words: "I absolve you," when the soul is washed, purified of all its stains, by the Precious Blood that flows upon it. My God! how good You are toward a sinner!… Let us say again, my brethren, that our poor soul is torn from the tyranny of the devil and reestablished in the friendship and the grace of its God; it recovers peace, that peace so precious, which makes all the happiness of man in this world and in the other; innocence is restored to it, with all its rights to the kingdom of God, which its sins had robbed from it. Tell me, my brethren, ought we not to be penetrated and softened even to tears at the sight of so many marvels? Would you have been able to think that, each time a sinner receives absolution, all these goods are granted him? But all that is given and ought to be given only to those who deserve it—that is to say, who are sinners, it is true, but converted sinners, who regret their past life, not only because they have lost heaven, but because they have been led to outrage Him who deserves to be infinitely loved.

If you desire to know when one ought to defer or refuse you absolution, here it is: listen to it well and engrave it in your heart, so that each time you go to confess, you may know whether you deserve to be absolved or sent away. I find eight reasons that ought to lead the priest to defer you absolution; it is the Church Herself who has given these rules over which the priest must not pass; if he exceeds them, woe to him and to the one he leads: it is a blind man who leads another; they both cast themselves into hell. The duty of the minister is to apply these rules well, and yours, never to murmur when he does not give you absolution. If a priest refuses it to you, it is because he loves you and truly desires to save your poor soul, and you will know that only on the day of judgment: it is

then that you will see that it was only the desire he had of leading you to heaven that led him to defer you absolution. If he had granted it to you, as you desired, you would be damned. You ought therefore never, my brethren, to murmur when a priest does not give you absolution; on the contrary, you ought to thank the good God for it, and work with all your strength to deserve this happiness.

I say first, that those who are not sufficiently instructed do not deserve absolution: the priest must not give it to them, and cannot without making himself guilty; because every Christian is obliged to know Jesus Christ with His mysteries, with His doctrine, His laws, and His sacraments. Saint Charles Borromeo, archbishop of Milan, tells us expressly that one must not give absolution to those who do not know the principal mysteries of Christianity, and the particular obligations of their state: "especially," he tells us, "when one recognizes that their ignorance comes from their indifference for their salvation." The laws of the Church forbid giving absolution to fathers and mothers, to masters and mistresses who do not instruct their children or their servants, or who do not have them instructed by others in all that is necessary to be saved; who do not watch over their conduct; who neglect to correct them of their disorders and their faults. To tell you that those who do not know what is necessary to be saved do not deserve absolution is as if I said to a person that she is in the precipice without giving her the means of getting out of it. I am going then to show you what you ought to know to get out of this abyss of ignorance; engrave it well in your hearts, so that it may never be erased from them, that you may teach it to your children and that your children may teach it to others.

Let us renew, my brethren, what I have already told you several times: a Christian must know the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed, the *Confiteor*, the three acts of Faith, Hope, and Love, the Commandments of God and of the Church, and his act of Contrition. I do not mean only the words—because one would have to be furiously ignorant not to know them; but it is necessary that, if one questions you, you may be able to give an account of the explanation of each article in particular, and of what they mean. That is what is asked of you, and not merely to know the words. You must know that the Our Father was composed by God Himself; that the Hail Mary was composed, one part by the angel, when he came to find the holy Virgin to announce to her the mystery of the Incarnation, and the other part by the Church; you must know that the Creed was composed by the Apostles after the descent of the Holy Spirit, before dispersing themselves into the world; which makes it that in all places of the world the same religion and the same mysteries are taught. It encloses the abridgment of our whole holy religion, the mystery of the holy Trinity, which is one God in three persons—that it is the Father who created us, that it is the Son who redeemed us by His death and His sufferings, and that it is the Holy Spirit who sanctified us in holy Baptism.

When you say: "I believe in God the Father almighty, creator," and so on, it is as if you said: I believe that the eternal Father has created everything, our bodies and our souls, that the world has not always been, that it will not always last, that one day everything will be annihilated. "I believe in Jesus Christ"—it is as if you said: I believe that Jesus Christ, the second person of the holy Trinity, made Himself man, that He suffered, that He died to redeem us, to merit for us the heaven that the sin of Adam had robbed from us. "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church," and so on—it is as if you said: I believe that there is only one religion, which is that of the Church, that it is Jesus Christ Himself who established it, that He has enclosed all His graces in it, that all those who are not in this Church will not be saved, and that this Church must last until the end of the world. When you

say: "I believe in the communion of saints," it is as if you said: I believe that all Christians share their prayers, all their good works; I believe that the saints who are in heaven pray to the good God for us, and that we can pray for those who are in the flames of purgatory. When you say: "I believe in the remission of sins," it is as if you said: I believe that there are, in the Church of Jesus Christ, sacraments that remit every kind of sin, and that there are no sins that the Church of Jesus Christ cannot remit. In saying: "The resurrection of the flesh," that means that our same bodies, which we have now, will rise again one day, that our souls will reenter them to go into heaven, if we have had the happiness of serving the good God well, or to go into hell to burn there throughout eternity if… In saying: "I believe in eternal life," it is to say: I believe that the other life will never end, that our soul will last as long as God Himself, who is without end. When you say: "From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead," it is as if you said: I believe that Jesus Christ is in heaven in body and in soul, and that it is He Himself who will come to judge us, to reward those who will have done well and to punish those who will have despised Him.

You must know that the Commandments of God were given to Adam in creating him—that is to say, that God engraved them in his heart, and that after Adam had sinned, God gave them to Moses written on tables of stone, on Mount Sinai. They are the same that God Himself renewed when He came upon the earth to save us all.

I say that you must know your three acts, of Faith, of Hope, and of Charity. I do not mean simply the words (who does not know them?) but the sense of these acts. Faith makes us believe all that the Church teaches us, although we cannot understand it; it makes us believe that God sees us, watches over our preservation, that He will reward us or punish us according as we shall have done well or ill; that there is a heaven for the good and a hell for the wicked; that God has suffered and that He died for us. Hope makes us do all our actions in the view of pleasing God, because they will be rewarded throughout all eternity. We must believe that neither faith nor hope will any longer be necessary in heaven, or rather that we shall have neither faith nor hope: nothing to believe because there will be no more mysteries, nor anything to hope, since we shall see all that we ought to have believed and shall possess all that we shall have hoped; there will be left only love, which will consume us throughout all eternity: which will make all our happiness. In this world, the love of God consists in loving the good God above all that is created, preferring Him to everything, even to our life. That, my brethren, is what one means when one says that you must know the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed, the *Confiteor*, the One God, and your three acts. If you do not know that, you do not know what is necessary to save yourselves; it is necessary at least that if one questions you on what I have just told you, you may be able to answer.

That is not yet all: you must know what the mystery of the Incarnation is and what this word Incarnation means. You must know that this mystery means that the second person of the holy Trinity took a body like ours in the womb of the most holy Virgin Mary, by the operation of the Holy Spirit. We honor this mystery on the 25th of March, the day of the Annunciation; for it is on that day that the Son of God united, joined His divinity to our humanity; that He took a body like ours, except sin, and that He charged Himself with all our sins to satisfy the justice of His Father. You must know that it is on the 25th of December that Jesus Christ came into the world, at midnight, on Christmas Day. You know that three Masses are said that day, to honor the three births of Jesus Christ: the first, in the bosom of His Father, which is from all eternity; the second, His bodily birth in the crib; and the

third, His birth in our souls by holy communion. You must know that it is on Holy Thursday that Jesus Christ instituted the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist. The eve of His death, being with His apostles, He took bread, blessed it, changed it into His body. He took wine with a little water, changed it into His blood, and gave to all priests, in the person of His apostles, the power to do the same miracle whenever they would pronounce the same words: which is done during holy Mass when the priest pronounces the words of consecration. You must know that it is on Good Friday that Jesus Christ died—that is to say, that He died as man and not as God; because, as God, He could not die;—that He rose again on the holy day of Easter, that means that His soul reunited itself to His body, and that after remaining forty days upon the earth, He ascended into heaven on Ascension Day; that the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost. You must, if one questions you and asks you when the sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ (or when they) had their effect —that is to say, communicated all His graces to us—be able to say that it was only after Pentecost. — If one asked you who instituted them, you must answer that only Jesus Christ could have instituted them; it is neither the holy Virgin nor the apostles. You must know how many there are, what the effects of each sacrament are, and what dispositions one must have to receive them; you must know that Baptism blots out in us original sin, which is the sin of Adam, and which we have in coming into the world; that Confirmation is given us by the bishop, and that it gives us the Holy Spirit with the abundance of His graces; that Penance is given us when we confess, and that, while the priest gives us absolution, if we are well prepared, all our sins are blotted out. In the holy Eucharist, we receive, not the holy Virgin, nor the angels, nor the saints, but the adorable Body and the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. As God, we receive there the three persons of the holy Trinity—that is to say, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—and as man we receive only the Son: that is to say, His body and His soul united to His divinity. — The sacrament of Extreme Unction is the one that helps us to die well, and is instituted to purify us from the sins that we have committed by all our senses. That of Holy Orders communicates to men the same power that the Son of God gave to His apostles. This sacrament was instituted when Jesus Christ said to His apostles: “Do this in memory of Me, and whenever you pronounce the same words, you will work the same miracle.” The sacrament of Matrimony sanctifies the Christians who unite themselves together according to the laws of the Church and of the State. There is still to be said to you that there is a difference between the sacrament of the Eucharist and the others. In that of the Eucharist, we receive the adorable Body and the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, whereas in the others we receive only the application of His Precious Blood. One also gives the name of sacraments of the dead to some, and to others the name of sacraments of the living. Here is why one says that Baptism, Penance, and sometimes Extreme Unction are sacraments of the dead: because our soul is dead in the eyes of God by sin. These sacraments raise our soul again to grace; and the others that one calls sacraments of the living, it is because one must be in the state of grace to receive them—that is to say, without sin. You must still know that when Jesus Christ suffered on the cross, neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit suffered, nor died; but it is only the Son who suffered and who died as man and not as God. Well then! my brethren, if I had questioned you, would you have answered well to all that?… If you do not know all that I have just told you, you are not sufficiently instructed to save yourselves.

We have said that fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses must be instructed in all that concerns their state in order to save themselves. A father, a mother, a master, a mistress must know all the obligations they have to fulfill toward their children and their servants—that is to say, know

their religion perfectly, in order to teach it to their children and their servants; without which, they are only poor unhappy ones who cast themselves all into hell. Alas! how many fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses who do not even know their religion, who wallow with their children and their servants in a crass ignorance, and who have nothing to expect but death to be cast into hell! Saint Paul tells us that he who is ignorant of his duties deserves to be ignored by God. You will agree with me that all these persons are unworthy of absolution, and, if they have the misfortune to receive it, it is only a sacrilege that falls upon their poor soul. O my God! how ignorance damns people! We are quite sure that this single sin will damn more than all the others together; because an ignorant person knows neither the evil she does in sinning, nor the good she loses; so that an ignorant person is a lost person!

Second, I say that one must defer absolution to those who give no mark of contrition—that is to say, of regret for the sins they have committed. First, experience teaches us that we ought scarcely to trust all the promises and all the protestations that are made. All tell us that they are sorry to have offended the good God, that they wish to correct themselves in good earnest, and that if they come to confess, it is only for that. The priest, believing them sincere, gives them absolution. What follows from all these resolutions? Here it is: that eight days after they have been absolved, they forget all their promises and return to their vomit [retournent à leur vomissement]—that is to say, to all their bad habits. Thus all protestations are not sufficient proofs of conversion. Jesus Christ tells us that it is only by the fruit that one knows the tree; likewise, it is only by the change of life that one can know whether one has had the contrition necessary to be worthy of absolution. When one has truly renounced one's sins, one must not be content with weeping over them; one must still renounce, leave, and flee all that is capable of leading us to them—that is to say, be ready to suffer everything rather than fall again into the sins we have just confessed. One must see in us an entire change; without which, we have not deserved absolution, and there is every reason to believe that we have only committed a sacrilege. Alas! how few there are in whom one sees this change after having received absolution!… My God! how many sacrileges!… Ah! if at least out of every thirty absolutions there were one good one, how soon the world would be converted! These persons therefore do not deserve absolution who do not give sufficient marks of contrition. Alas! how many times, because they are sent away, they come no more. It is therefore truly because they had no desire to convert themselves, since, far from leaving their confession until another Easter, they would have worked with all their heart to change their life, and to come back to be reconciled with the good God.

Third, I say that one must refuse absolution to all those who keep hatreds, resentments in their heart, who refuse to pardon or to make the first steps to be reconciled; so that, my brethren, one must take great care never to receive absolution when you have something against your neighbor. After having had some difficulty, you must be as well disposed to render him service, and with good grace, as if all your life he had done you only good. If you are content to say that you wish him no harm, but that you leave him as he is; and that you do not greet him with good grace, that you avoid his company, that you prefer others to them: you do not love them as you ought, in order that the good God may pardon you your sins. God will pardon you only insofar as you truly pardon your neighbor, and so long as you feel something in your heart against him, the best is to work to root that out; afterward, you will receive absolution. I know well that one can, and even that one ought, to avoid the companies that can expose us to disputing with one another, where one speaks only of the conduct of the neighbors. With regard to those persons, here is how one must behave: frequent them

only when it is necessary; but wish them no harm, nor speak any; be content to pray to the good God for them. Listen to what Jesus Christ tells us in the Gospel: "If, being on the point of presenting your offering at the altar, you remember that your brother has something against you, or that you have offended him, leave there your offering, and go first be reconciled with your brother. A judgment," Jesus Christ tells us, "is reserved for him who will not have shown mercy to his brother." You understand, my brethren, as well as I, that whenever we have something against someone, we ought not to receive absolution; because that would be exposing ourselves to committing a sacrilege, which is the greatest of all misfortunes.

Fourth, I say that one must treat in the same way those who have done some wrong to the neighbor and who refuse to repair the evil they have done either in his person or in his goods; one cannot even give absolution to a person who is at the point of death, who has restitutions to make and who leaves them to be made by his heirs. All the Fathers say that for him who has another's goods, who could restore them and who does not restore them, there is no pardon nor salvation to hope for him.

Fifth, I say that one must refuse absolution to those who are in the proximate occasion of sinning, and who refuse to leave it. One calls proximate occasion of sinning everything that can ordinarily lead us to commit it, such as spectacles, balls, dances, bad books, dishonest conversations, profane songs, indecent pictures, dishonest ways of dressing, bad companies, the frequentation of persons of different sexes, liaisons with persons with whom one has already sinned, and so on. As are still the merchants who know how to sell nothing without lying or insulting; such are the tavern-keepers who give drink to drunkards and during the offices or at night; as also to servants who are solicited to evil by someone of the house. To all these sorts of persons, the priest must not and cannot, without damning himself, give them absolution, unless these persons promise to leave these things, and to renounce all those that can lead them to sin, or that are for them an occasion of sin. Otherwise, in receiving absolution, they can only commit a sacrilege.

Sixth, I say that one must refuse absolution to those who are scandalous; who, by their words, their counsels, and their pernicious examples, lead others to sin; such are those bad Christians who turn into ridicule the word of God and those who announce it, whether they be their pastors or other priests; who mock religion, piety, and holy things; who say words contrary to the faith or else to good morals; those who hold in their houses evening gatherings, profane dances, forbidden games; who have dishonest, indecent pictures, or bad books; as are still persons of the sex who adorn themselves with the intention of pleasing, who, by their looks, their manners, their pretentious bearing, cause so many fornications and adulteries of the heart to be committed. A confessor, Saint Charles says, must refuse absolution to all these persons, since it is written: "Woe to him by whom scandal comes."

Seventh, I say that one must refuse absolution—that is to say, defer it—to habitual sinners, who fall again for a long time into the same sins, who make no efforts, or at least very few, to correct themselves. Of this number are those who have the habit of lying at every moment, who make no scruple of it, who will take pleasure in telling lies to make others laugh; as those who have the habit of speaking ill of the neighbor, who always have something to say about him; as those who swear these little oaths: My God, yes; my God, no; faith; *pardi*, *parbleu*, and other similar things; those who have the habit of eating at every hour, even without necessity; who lose patience at every moment, for a nothing; those who drink and eat to excess; as those who do not make enough efforts to correct themselves of these thoughts of pride, of vanity, of bad thoughts against purity; finally, I say that one

will refuse absolution to all those who do not themselves accuse their sins, who wait, to say them, until the confessor asks them. It is not for the priest to confess your sins, but for you; if the priest puts some question to you, it is to supply what you could not have known. — Alas! from some one must, so to speak, tear their sins from the bottom of the heart; and there are some who will dispute with their confessor, saying that they have not done great harm. It is evident that those persons are not worthy to receive absolution, and that they have not the dispositions necessary that this sacrament demands in order not to profane it. All the Fathers are agreed on this point, that when there is no change nor amendment in a person who confesses, his penance is false and deceitful. The holy Council of Trent orders us to give absolution only to those in whom one sees the cessation of sin, the hatred and detestation of the past, the resolution and the beginning of a new life. That, my brethren, is the rules from which a confessor cannot depart, without losing himself and his penitents.

But let us see now what are the reasons that are given to engage the confessor to give absolution. Some say that not to give absolution to those who go several times to confess is to destroy religion, and to make appear too difficult to do what it commands us; that it is to rebuff sinners, that one is the cause of their abandoning religion; that it is to cast them into hell; that many others are easier; that at least one would have the pleasure of seeing, in the parish, a great number who would make their Easter duty, and that every year they would make it a pleasure to come back to confess; that by wishing too much, one has nothing. My brethren, all those who reason in that way are, first, those who do not deserve this grace. But, my friends, from the beginning of the Church, all the Fathers have followed this rule: that one must absolutely have left sin to receive absolution. These refusals appear hard only to impenitent sinners; this conduct can rebuff only those who do not think of converting themselves. What results, my brethren, from these precipitate absolutions? You know it yourselves only too well. Alas! a chain of sacrileges. Scarcely have you been absolved when you plunge yourselves again into your old sins; the facility with which you obtained your pardon made you hope that you would obtain it another time just as easily, and you continued your same kind of life; whereas if one had refused you this absolution, you would have entered into yourselves; you would have opened your eyes upon your misfortune, from which perhaps you will never get out. Your poor life is only a succession of absolutions and of falls. My God, what a misfortune! That is where our unhappy facility in absolving you leads you. Is it not rather a cruelty to give you absolution than to refuse it to you, when you are not in a state to receive it? Saint Cyprian tells us that a priest must hold to the rules of the Church, and wait until his penitent gives certain marks that his heart is changed, and that he begins to lead a life altogether different from that which he led before confessing: for Jesus Christ Himself, God though He was, master of grace, granted pardon only to true penitents: He received the good thief, whose conversion was sincere; but He rejected the bad one, because of his impenitence. He pardoned Saint Peter, whose repentance He knew; but He abandoned Judas, whose penance was false. How unhappy it is for a priest and for a penitent, if the priest gives him absolution when the penitent does not deserve it!—if, in the moment when the minister says to the penitent: “I absolve you,” Jesus Christ says: “I, I condemn him!” Alas! how great is the number of those, since there are so few who leave sin after having received absolution, and change their life!

All that is very true, you will say to me; but what will people say of me, after having seen me confess several times and not make my Easter duty? People will believe that I lead a bad life; besides, I know many others, more sinners than I, who have well passed; you have well received such-and-such a one,

who ate meat with me; who well went on Sundays, as well as I, to— The conscience of the other is not yours; if he does badly, you must not listen to him. Would you wish, to save appearances, to damn yourself by committing a sacrilege? Would that not be the greatest of misfortunes? You believe that people notice you, because they have seen you confess several times, and that you do not communicate. Ah! my friend, fear rather the eyes of God, before whom you have done the evil, and pay no attention to all the rest. You say that you know some more guilty than you, who have passed. What do you know of it? Did an angel come to tell you whether God has not changed and converted them? And even if they were not converted, ought you to do evil because they do evil? Would you wish to damn yourself because others damn themselves? My God, what frightful language! — But, say these penitents who not only are not converted, but who do not even desire to convert themselves, but only to save appearances: When then must one come to communicate? I would scarcely wish to wait. — When must one come to communicate? Listen to Saint John Chrysostom; he himself is going to teach us when one must come to communicate. Is it at Easter, at Pentecost, at Christmas? No, he tells you. Is it at the point of death? No, he tells you again. When then is it? It is, he tells you, when you have renounced sin in good earnest, and are well resolved never to fall into it again, with the help of the grace of the good God; when you have restored that good which is not yours; when you have been reconciled with your enemy; it is when you are truly converted.

— Other sinners will say to us: If you are so difficult, we will go to others, who will pass us well enough. Here I have come so many times; I have something else to do than to run the roads; for a long time I will not come back; I see well that you have a grudge against me. What harm then have I done so much? — You will go find another, my friend; you are master to go to whom you please; but do you believe that another will wish, better than I, to damn himself? No, without doubt. If he receives you, it is that he does not know you enough. Do you wish to know what a person is who speaks in that way, and who goes to seek an absolution elsewhere? Listen and tremble. She leaves her guide, who can well lead her, to seek a passport to go straight to hell. — But, you will say to me, here I have come so many times. — Well then! my friend, correct yourself, and he will pass you the first time you come back. — For a long time, you say, I will not come back. — So much the worse, for you alone, my friend. In coming no more, you go with giant steps toward hell. There are some who are so blind that they go so far as to believe that the confessor has a grudge against them, since he does not give them absolution. Without doubt, my friend, he has a will upon you; but it is the salvation of your poor soul that he wants from you; that is why he does not wish to give you an absolution which, far from saving you, would damn you for eternity. — But, you say, what harm then have I done so much? I have neither killed nor stolen… — You have neither killed nor stolen, you say? But, my friend, one also shuts up other persons who have neither killed nor stolen; there is more than these two sins that drag souls into hell. But if we were cowardly enough to give you absolution when you do not deserve it, that would be being the executioner of your poor soul, which has cost Jesus Christ so many sufferings.

Listen, my brethren, to this trait of history, which is going to teach us what are the effects of these precipitate absolutions, without the penitent being disposed for them. Saint Charles Borromeo relates to us that a rich man of Naples led a life that was scarcely Christian. He addressed himself to a confessor who passed for being very indulgent and very easy. This priest, indeed, had no sooner heard this penitent than he gave him absolution without any proof of repentance. The gentleman, although without religion, astonished at this facility which many wise and enlightened confessors

had not had for him, rises abruptly, and drawing some pieces of money from his pocket: "Here, Father," he said to him, "receive these pieces and keep them well until we find ourselves again together in the same place." — "When, and in what place shall we see each other again?" the priest answered him, all astonished. — "Father, it will be at the bottom of hell, where we shall soon both be; you, for having given me the absolution of which I was unworthy, and I, for having been unhappy enough to receive it without having been converted." What do you think of that, my brethren? Let us meditate on it together; there is enough to make both the ones and the others tremble.

— But, you will say to me, when then can one receive absolution? — As soon as you are converted, when you have changed in your manner of living; when you will pray well to the good God that He make known to your confessor what the dispositions of your heart are; when you have accomplished quite exactly all that your confessor will have prescribed to you, and when you will not fail to come back in the time that he has told you. It is related of a sinner who converted in a mission, that after his confession the priest saw him so well disposed that he was going to give him absolution. This poor man said to him: "What! Father, absolution to me! Ah! leave me to weep for some time over the sins that I have had the misfortune to commit; try me, so that you may be assured that my repentance is sincere." In receiving absolution, he thought he would die of sorrow. My God! how rare these dispositions are!—but how rare also are good confessions! Let us conclude that we ought never to press our confessor to give us absolution, because we ought always to tremble at not being ready—that is to say, sufficiently converted. Let us ask the good God to convert us, in confessing, so that our sins may be truly pardoned. That is the happiness that I wish for you.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost — On the Service of God

Quaerite primum regnum Dei et justitiam ejus. Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice. (Matthew 6:33)

Saint Matthew teaches us that Jesus Christ, having one day found Himself with persons who occupied themselves much with temporal affairs, said to them: Do not be so anxious about all that —"seek first the kingdom of heaven and its justice, and all the rest will be given to you in abundance"; wishing to tell them thereby that if they had the happiness of putting all their care into pleasing God and saving their souls, His Father would furnish them all that would be necessary for the needs of the body. — But do you think, how is it that we can seek the kingdom of heaven and its justice? — How, my brethren? Nothing easier and more consoling: it is by attaching yourselves to the service of God, which is the only means left us to lead us to the noble and happy end for which we are created. Yes, my brethren, we all know it, and even the greatest sinners are convinced that they are in the world only to serve the good God, by doing all that He commands us. — But, you will say to me, why then are there so few who work at that? — My brethren, here it is: it is that some look upon the service of God as a very difficult thing; they think that they have not enough strength to undertake it, or that, having undertaken it, they will not be able to persevere. That is precisely, my brethren, what discourages or turns aside a great part of Christians. Instead of listening to those consoling words of the Savior, who cannot deceive us, and who tells us that His service is sweet and agreeable, that in doing it we shall find in it the peace of our souls and the joy of our heart… But, to make you understand it better, I am going to show you which of the two leads a harder, sadder, and

more painful life—he who fulfills his duties of religion with fidelity, or he who abandons them to follow his pleasures and his passions, to live at his liberty.

Yes, my brethren, from whatever side we consider the service of God, which consists in prayer, penance, the frequentation of the sacraments, the love of God and of the neighbor, and an entire renunciation of oneself—yes, my brethren, we find in all that only joys, only pleasures, and only happiness, for the present and for the future, as you are going to see. He who knows his religion and who practices it knows that crosses and persecutions, contempt, sufferings, and finally poverty and death change into sweetnesses, into consolation, and into eternal reward. Tell me, have you ever formed a sensible idea of it? No, without doubt. Yet, my brethren, it is such as I tell you; and to prove it to you in such a way that you cannot doubt it, listen to Jesus Christ Himself: "Blessed are the poor, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them, and woe to the rich, because it is very difficult for the rich to be saved." You see then, according to Jesus Christ, that poverty ought not to make us unhappy, since the Savior tells us: "Blessed are the poor." In the second place, it is not sufferings nor sorrows; since Jesus Christ tells us: "Blessed are those who weep and who are persecuted, because a day will come when they will be consoled; but woe to the world and to those who take their pleasures, because a day will come when their joy will change into tears and into eternal sadness." In the third place, it is not being despised, since Jesus Christ tells us: "They despise Me and they will despise you; they persecute Me and they will persecute you; but far from letting yourselves go to sadness, rejoice, because a great reward awaits you in heaven." Tell me, my brethren, what will that poor man be able to answer now who wishes to tell us that he is unhappy, and who asks us how he will be able to save himself in the midst of so many persecutions, calumnies, and injustices that are done him? No, no, my brethren, let us say it: nothing is capable of making man unhappy here below but the lack of religion; and man, in spite of all that he may experience upon the earth, if he wishes to attach himself to the service of God, will not fail to be happy.

We have said, my brethren, that he who attaches himself to the good God finds himself happier than the people of the world, in the moment when everything goes according to their desires; and even we see that several saints breathed only the happiness of suffering; we have a fair example of it in the person of Saint Andrew. It is related in his life that Aegeas, governor of the city, seeing that Saint Andrew by his preachings made deserted the temple of his false gods, sent to take him. The saint being presented before his tribunal, he said to him with a threatening air: "Is it you who make profession of destroying the temple of our gods, by announcing a religion altogether new?" Saint Andrew answered him: "It is not new; on the contrary, it began with the world." — "Either you will renounce your crucified One, or I will make you die on a cross like Him." — "We Christians," Saint Andrew answered him, "do not fear sufferings; they make all our happiness upon the earth; the more we shall have been conformed to Jesus Christ crucified, the more glorious we shall be in heaven; you will sooner be weary of making me suffer than I of suffering." The proconsul condemned him to die on a cross; but to make his torment longer, he ordered that he not be nailed, but only fastened with cords, so that he might suffer longer. Saint Andrew had so much joy at being condemned to die on a cross like Jesus Christ, his divine Master, that seeing two thousand men who were going to assist at his death, and who almost all shed tears, fearing that one might deprive him of his happiness, he raised his voice to conjure them, as a favor, not to delay his martyrdom. As soon as he perceived the cross on which he was to be fastened, he cried out all transported with gladness: "I salute you, O venerable Cross, who have been consecrated and adorned by the touch of the adorable Body of Jesus

Christ, my divine Savior! O sacred Cross! O Cross so desired! O Cross loved with so much ardor! O Cross that I have sought and desired with so much zeal and without ceasing! it is you who are going to satisfy all the desires of my heart! O well-beloved Cross, receive me from the hands of men to remite me into those of my God, so that I may pass from your arms into those of Him who has redeemed me." The author who wrote his Life tells us that being at the foot of the cross to be fastened to it, he did not change color, his hair did not stand on end, as happens to criminals; he did not lose his voice, the blood did not freeze in his veins, he was not even seized with the least fright; but on the contrary, one saw that the fire of charity with which his heart burned made him cast burning flames from his mouth. When he was near the cross, he stripped himself and gave his garments to the executioner; he mounted without the help of anyone upon the wood where the cross was placed. All the people, who were at least twenty thousand, seeing Saint Andrew fastened, cried that it was an injustice to make so holy a man suffer, and ran to the palace to tear the proconsul to pieces if he did not unfasten him. Fearing for his life, the proconsul goes to have him unfastened. As soon as Saint Andrew saw him coming, he cried out: "O Aegeas, what do you come to do here? If you come to learn to know Jesus Christ, good, come; but if you come to have me unfastened, go no further; know that you will not succeed in it and that I shall have the consolation of dying for my divine Master! Ah! I already see my God; I adore Him with all the blessed." In spite of that, the governor wished to have him unfastened, for fear that the people should make him die himself; but it was impossible to unfasten him: as they approached to unfasten him, their strength failed them; they remained motionless. Then Saint Andrew cried out lifting his eyes to heaven: "My God, I ask You the grace not to permit that Your servant, who is on the cross for the confession of Your name, receive this humiliation of being delivered by the orders of Aegeas. My God! You are my Master; You know that I have sought and desired only You." As he finished these words, one saw a light in the form of a globe that enveloped his whole body, and spread an odor that embalmed all the bystanders, and in the same moment his soul departed for eternity. Do you see, my brethren? he who knows his religion and who is attached to the service of his God does not look upon sufferings as misfortunes; but he desires them and looks upon them as inestimable goods.

Yes, my brethren, even from this world, he who has the happiness of attaching himself to God is happier than the world with all its pleasures. Listen to Saint Paul: "Yes," he tells us, "I am happier in my chains, in my prisons, in contempt and sufferings, than my persecutors are in their liberty, in their abundance and their debauchery. My heart is so filled with joy that it cannot contain it; it overflows on every side." Yes, without doubt, my brethren, Saint John the Baptist is happier in his desert, abandoned of all human help, than Herod on his throne, buried in his riches, and plunged in the happiness of his infamous passions. Saint John is in his desert; he converses familiarly with his God, like a friend with his friend, while Herod is devour by a secret fear of losing his kingdom, which leads him to have so many poor children slaughtered. See again David: is he not happier in fleeing the anger of Saul, though reduced to spending the nights in the forests; betrayed and abandoned by his best friends, uniting himself during that time to his God and putting all his confidence in Him—is he not happier than Saul in the goods and the abundance of riches and pleasures? David blesses the Lord for prolonging his days to give him time to suffer for His love, while Saul curses his life and becomes himself his executioner. Why that, my brethren? Alas! it is that the one attaches himself to the service of his God, and that the other abandons Him. What to conclude from that, my brethren? Nothing other than that it is neither goods, nor honors, nor vanity that can make man happy upon

the earth; but attachment alone to the service of God, when we have the happiness of knowing it and of fulfilling it well.

That woman who is despised by her husband is therefore not unhappy in her state because she is despised, but because she does not know her religion, or because she does not practice what it orders her. Teach her her religion, and as soon as you see that she will practice, she will cease to complain and to believe herself unhappy. Oh! how happy man would be, even upon the earth, if he knew his religion, and if he had the happiness of observing what it commands us, if he considered the goods that it proposes to us for the other life! Oh! what power has not a person before God, when she loves Him and serves Him with fidelity. Alas! my brethren, a person despised by the people of the world, who seems worthy only of being trampled under foot—see her make herself mistress of the will and of the power of God Himself. See a Moses, who forces the Lord to grant pardon to three hundred thousand very guilty men; see Joshua, who commands the sun to stop—the sun becomes motionless: which had never happened and which perhaps will never happen. See the apostles—only because they loved the good God, the demons fled before them, the lame walked, the blind saw, the dead rose again. See a Saint Benedict who commands the rocks to stop in their course—they remain suspended in the air; see him who multiplies the loaves, who makes waters come forth from the rocks, and who makes stones and wood as light as a blade of straw. See a Saint Francis of Paola who commands the fishes to come hear the word of God—they render themselves at his call with so much fidelity that they applaud his words. See a Saint John who commands the birds to be silent—they obey him. See still others who cross the seas without any human help. Well then! put now in comparison all these impious ones and all these great ones of the world with all their fine minds and their science for doing everything: alas! of what are they capable? of nothing at all; and why that? if not because they have not attached themselves to the service of God. Oh! how powerful and happy at the same time is he who knows his religion and who practices what it commands! Alas! my brethren, how unhappy and capable of very little is he who lives at the pleasure of his passions and abandons the service of God! Put an army of a hundred thousand men near a dead man, and let all employ their power to raise him: no, no, my brethren, he will not rise; but let a person who is despised by the world and who is in the friendship of the good God command this dead man to take up life again: at once you will see him rise and walk.

If, to serve the good God, one had to be rich or else learned, many persons could not do it. But no, my brethren, great sciences and great riches are not at all necessary to serve the good God; on the contrary, they are very often a very great obstacle. Yes, my brethren, whether we be rich or poor, in whatever state we be, learned or not, we can please God and save ourselves; and even Saint Bonaventure says that we can do it "in whatever state or condition we be." Listen to me a moment, and you are going to see that the service of God has nothing but what can console us and make us happy in the midst of all the miseries of life. For that, you have no need to leave either your goods, or your parents, or even your friends, unless they lead you to sin; you have no need to go spend your days in a desert to weep there over your sins; if again that were necessary for us, we ought to find ourselves happy to have a remedy for our evils; but no—a father and a mother of a family can serve the good God while living with their children, raising them Christianly; a servant can very easily serve the good God and his master—nothing prevents it; on the contrary, his work and the obedience that he is obliged to give to his masters become a subject of merits. No, my brethren, the manner of living in serving the good God changes nothing in all that we do; on the contrary, we do better all

that we do; we are more assiduous and more attentive in fulfilling the duties of our state; we are gentler, more human, and more charitable; more sober in our meals, more reserved in our words; less sensitive to the losses and the insults that we receive—that is to say, my brethren, that when we attach ourselves to the service of God, we do better all that we do; we act only in a manner more noble, more elevated, and more worthy of a Christian. Instead of working by ambition, by interest, we work only to please the good God, who commands it of us, and to satisfy His justice. Instead of rendering service or giving alms to the neighbor by pride, to be esteemed, we do it only in view of pleasing God and of redeeming our sins. Yes, my brethren, once again, a Christian who knows his religion and who practices it sanctifies all his actions without changing anything in what he does; and without adding anything to it, everything becomes a subject of merit for heaven. Well then! my brethren, tell me, if you had well thought that it was so sweet and so consoling to serve the good God, could you have lived as you have lived until now? Ah! my brethren, what regret at the hour of death, when we shall see that if we had attached ourselves to the service of God, we would have gained heaven by doing only what we have done! O my God! what misfortune for him who will be of the number of these blind ones!

Now I am going to ask you whether it is the exterior of religion that appears to you repulsive and too difficult. Is it prayer, the divine offices, the days of abstinence, fasting, the frequentation of the sacraments, charity toward your neighbor? Well then! you are going to see that of all that there is nothing painful as you have believed.

First, I say: Is it prayer that is painful? Is it not, on the contrary, the happiest moment of our life? Is it not by prayer that we converse with the good God, like a friend with his friend? Is it not in that moment that we begin to do what we shall do with the angels in heaven? Is it not too great a happiness for us that, being so miserable, the good God, who is so great, suffers us in His holy presence, where He shares with us, with so much goodness, every kind of consolation? Besides, is it not He who has given us all that we have? Is it not just that we adore Him and love Him with all our heart? Is it not the happiest moment of our life, since we experience there so many sweetnesses? Is it a pain to offer Him every morning our prayers and our actions, so that He may bless them and reward us for them for eternity? Is it too much to consecrate to Him each week one day? Ought we not, on the contrary, to see that day come with a great pleasure—since it is on that holy day that one teaches us the duties that we are obliged to fulfill toward God and our neighbor, and that one makes us conceive that great desire of the goods of the other life, which leads us to despise what is contemptible? Is it not in an instruction that we learn to know the greatness of the pains that sin deserves? Do we not feel ourselves wholly disposed no longer to commit it, to avoid the torments that are reserved for it? O my God! how little man knows his happiness!

Tell me: is it confession that is distasteful to you? But, my friend, can one find a greater happiness than to see, in less than three minutes, change our unhappy eternity into another eternity of pleasures, of joy, and of happiness? Is it not confession that restores to us the friendship of our God? Is it not confession that extinguishes in us those remorses of conscience that tear us without ceasing? Is it not it that gives peace to our soul, and that gives us a new hope for heaven? Is it not in that moment that Jesus Christ seems to unfold the riches of His mercy even to infinity? Ah! my brethren, without this sacrament, how many more damned and how many fewer saints!… Oh! how grateful the saints who are in heaven are to Jesus Christ for having established this sacrament!

Tell me, my brethren, is it the fasts that the Church prescribes for you that make you find the service of God painful? But the Church does not command you more of them than you can do. Besides, my brethren, if we considered that with the eyes of faith, is it not a great happiness that by small privations we avoid the pains of purgatory which are so rigorous? But how many, my brethren, who condemn themselves to much more rigorous fasts, to preserve their health and to satisfy their love of pleasures or their gluttony? Will one not see a young woman abandon her children into the hands of strangers, and also her household?… Will one not see others often spend whole nights in a tavern, in the midst of drunkards, who often overflow with wine, where they hear only filth and abominations? Does one not find widows who snatch the few minutes that remain to them to live, and that they ought to consecrate only to weeping over the follies of their youth—does one not find some who give themselves over to every kind of vice, like persons who have suddenly lost their head; they serve as a scandal to a whole parish? Ah! my brethren, if one did for the good God what one does for the world, how many Christians would go to heaven! Alas! my brethren, if you had to spend three or four hours in a church praying, as you spend them in a dance or in a tavern, how long the time would seem to you!… If one had to make several leagues to hear a sermon, as one does for one's pleasures or else to satisfy one's avarice—alas! my brethren, what pretexts, what evasions one would take in order not to go! but for the world, nothing costs; and what is more, one fears to lose neither one's God, nor one's soul, nor heaven. Oh! my brethren, how right Jesus Christ was when He said that the children of the age had much more zeal to serve their master who is the world, than the children of light have to serve their Master who is the Lord. Alas! my brethren, let us say it to our shame—one fears neither expenses nor even making debts when it is a question of one's pleasures; but if a poor man asks them, they have nothing: that is what it is—one has everything for the world and nothing for the good God, because one loves the world and not the good God.

But what is the cause, my brethren, that we abandon the service of God? Here it is, my brethren! We would wish to be able to serve God and the world—that is to say, to be able to ally ambition and pride with humility, avarice with that spirit of detachment that the Gospel asks of us; one would have to be able to mingle corruption with the holiness of the divine life, or, to say it better, heaven with hell. If religion commanded or at least permitted hatred and vengeance, fornication and adultery—if that could be done, we should all be good Christians; all would be children faithful to their religion; libertinage, as well as all the other vices, would no longer make reprobates. But to serve the good God, it is not possible to be able to conduct oneself in that manner; one must absolutely be wholly God's or nothing. Although we have said, my brethren, that everything is consoling in our holy religion, as that is very true, yet one must add that we ought to do good to those who do us harm, love those who hate us, preserve the reputation of our enemies, defend them when we see other persons speaking ill of them; and instead of wishing them harm, we must pray the good God to bless them. Far from murmuring when the good God sends us some pain and some sorrow, we must thank Him, after the example of the holy king David, who kissed the hand that chastised him. Our religion wishes that we spend holily the holy day of Sunday, in working to procure for ourselves the friendship of the good God, if we have the misfortune not to have it, or to preserve it, if we are so happy as to have it; it wishes that we look upon sin as our most cruel enemy. Well then! my brethren, that is what appears to us the hardest and the most repulsive. But tell me, in all that, is it not seeking our happiness upon the earth and for eternity? Ah! my brethren, if we knew our holy religion, and the pleasure one has in practicing it, how little all that would appear to us! how many saints have

gone beyond what God asked of them to give them heaven! They have told us that if one had once tasted the sweetnesses and the consolations that one finds in the service of God, it would be impossible to leave it to serve the world with its pleasures. The holy king David tells us that a single day spent in the service of God is worth more than a thousand of those that worldlings spend in their pleasures and their profane joys.

Tell me, who of us would want the service of the world, if we had the happiness, the great happiness of understanding all the miseries that one experiences there in seeking its pleasures, and the torments that one prepares for oneself for eternity? O my God! how blind we are to lose so many goods, even from this world, and still more for eternity!—and that for pleasures that have only the appearance of pleasures, joys that are mixed with so many sorrows and sadnesses. Indeed, who would want the service of God, if one had to suffer as much and undergo as many cares, mortifications, and heart-rendings as for the world? See a man who has set it in his head to heap up goods: there are no winds nor bad weather that stop him; he suffers now hunger, now thirst, now bad weather; he goes even, a number of times, so far as to expose his life and lose his reputation. How many who go at night to plunder their neighbors, who expose themselves either to be killed or to lose their reputation and that of their whole family. Without going so far, my brethren, would it cost you more during the holy offices to be in the church listening to the word of God with respect, than to go outside to chat there about your temporal affairs or about things that are nothing? While we say Vespers, would you not be as happy to come there as to remain at home boring yourselves, while one sings the praises of God?

But, you will say to me, there are still many violences to do to oneself when one wishes to serve the good God. — Well then! I, I will tell you that there is much less to suffer to follow God with His cross than to pursue the world, to follow one's passions, and you are going to see it. You think perhaps that it is difficult to pardon an insult that has been done you; but tell me, which of the two suffers more—he who pardons promptly and with a good heart for the good God, or he who nourishes, for two or three years, sentiments of hatred against his neighbor? Is it not a worm that gnaws and devour him continually, which often prevents him both from eating and from sleeping; whereas the other, in pardoning, has at once found the peace of the soul? Is one not happier in mastering one's impure passions than in wishing to satisfy them? Can one once satisfy them entirely? No, my brethren, never: on coming out of a crime, they lead you to another, without telling you that it is enough; you are a slave; they drag you wherever they wish.

But to convince you of it better, let us go find one of those men who place all their happiness in the pleasure of the senses, and who throw themselves headlong into the filth of the most infamous and shameful passions. Yes, my brethren, if, before such a man had given himself to libertinage, someone had made him the painting of the life that he leads now, could he have thought of it without horror? If you had said to him: My friend, you have two parties to take: either to repress your passions or to abandon yourself to them. The one and the other has its pleasures and its pains—here they are: you will choose which of the two you wish. If you wish to take the party of practicing virtue, you will take great care never to frequent libertines; you will choose your friends among those who think and act like you. All your readings will be from holy books, which will animate you to the practice of virtue, which will make you love the good God; you will conceive each day a new love for Him; you will employ your time holily, and all your pleasures will be only innocent pleasures, which, while

refreshing your body, will nourish your soul; you will fulfill your duties of religion without affectation, but with fidelity; you will choose to lead you in the way of salvation a wise and enlightened confessor, who will seek only the good of your soul, and you will follow with fidelity all that he will command you. That, my friend, is all the pains that you will experience in the service of God. Your reward will be to have always the soul in peace and your heart always content; you will be loved and esteemed by all good people; you will prepare yourself a happy old age, exempt from an infinity of infirmities, which are only too ordinary to those who spend a disordered youth; your last moments will be sweet and tranquil; from whatever side we consider your life, nothing will be able to sadden you—on the contrary, everything will contribute to rejoice you. Your crosses, your tears, and all your penances will no longer be anything but like ambassadors that heaven will send you to assure you that your happiness will be eternal and that you have nothing more to fear. If, in those moments, you carry your looks toward the future, you see only heaven open to receive you; finally, you will leave this world like a holy and chaste dove that goes to bury itself and hide in the bosom of its beloved; you will leave nothing, to take everything. You have desired only God alone and here you are with Him for all eternity.

But now, if you wish to leave God and His service to follow the world and its pleasures, your life will pass in always desiring and always seeking, without ever being content or happy; you may put everything to use for that—you will never succeed in it. You will begin to erase from your mind the principles of religion that you learned from your childhood and that you have followed until now; you will no longer see those books of piety that nourished your soul and that guaranteed it from the corruption of the world; you will no longer be master of your passions, but they will drag you wherever they wish; you will make yourself a religion after your fashion; you will read some bad books, which will breathe only contempt of religion and libertinage, and you will walk in the path that they will have traced for you; you will recall your former days, which you spent in the practice of virtue and of penance and where you made yourself so great a joy of approaching the sacraments, in which the good God overwhelmed you with so many graces, only in regretting not having given all that time to the pleasures of the world; you will go so far as to believe nothing and to deny everything; and to say it all at once, you will be only a little impious one: in that belief, you will loose the bridle to all your passions, saying that since everything ends with life, one must seek all the pleasures that one can taste. Blinded by your passions, you will cast yourself from sins into sins, without even perceiving it; you will give yourself over to all the excesses of a boiling and corrupted youth; you will not fear to sacrifice your rest, your goods, your health, your honor, and your very life; I do not say your soul, because you believe that you have none. You will be the fable of a whole parish; one will look upon you as a monster; one will flee you and one will fear you; no matter—you will mock all that; you will always go your ordinary train, following no longer anything but the way of your passions, which will drag you wherever they wish. Now one will find you near a young person, putting in motion all the artifices and all the ruses that the devil will inspire you with to deceive her, seduce her, and ruin her; now one will see you in the middle of the night at the door of a widow offering her all possible promises to make her consent to satisfy your infamous desires. One will see you even, without any respect for the sacred right of marriage, trampling under foot all the laws of religion, of justice, and of nature itself, and you will be only an infamous adulterer. You will even go so far as to make the members of Jesus Christ the members of an infamous prostitute. You will go still further, because the pains of mind and of heart are not the only pains that you will have to

devour in living in libertinage: the infirmities of the body, an impoverished blood, a languishing old age will be your portion. During your life you have abandoned the good God; death will make reappear that faith that you had extinguished by your bad life… If you recognize that you have abandoned the good God, He will make you see that He has also abandoned you and rejected you forever, and cursed you for an eternity; then the remorses of conscience, which you had tried to extinguish, will make themselves felt and will devour you, in spite of all that you can do to stifle them; everything will trouble you and cast you into despair. If you wish to go back over your life, you will count your days only by the number of your crimes, which will be to you like so many tyrants that will tear you without ceasing; your life will present to you only despised graces and a very precious time that you will have lost; you had need of everything and you have profited from nothing. If you wish to consider the future: the torments with which your soul will be devour will make you believe that the flames that burn the unhappy reprobate seem already to reach you; the world, which you had so loved, to which you had so feared to displease, to which already you had sacrificed your God and your soul, abandons you and rejects you forever. You wished to follow its pleasures: now—that is to say, in the moment when you would have need of so much help—you will be abandoned to yourself; your only resource will be despair, and what is more, you will die, and in falling into hell you will say that the world has seduced you; but that too late you have recognized your misfortune.

Well then! my brethren, what do you think of all that? That nevertheless is the pains and the joys of all those who live in virtue, and those of those who live for the world. Oh! my brethren, what misfortune for him who wishes only the world and who leaves aside the salvation of his soul!… Oh! my brethren, how he who has the great happiness of seeking only God alone and the salvation of his soul spends his life happy! How many fewer pains! how many more pleasures in the service of God! how many remorses of conscience spared at the hour of death! how many torments avoided for eternity!… Oh! my brethren, how happy our life would be, in spite of all that we can experience from the world and the devil, if we had the happiness of attaching ourselves to the service of God, by despising the world and all that follows it! Oh! my brethren, how the service of God makes a great change in him who is so happy as to seek only God upon the earth! If you are with a proud man who will suffer nothing, pray the good God to attach him to His service: then you will see everything change in him; he will love contempt and will despise himself. Are a husband or a wife unhappy in their household? Try to make them embrace the service of God; then you will no longer see them look upon themselves as unhappy, but peace and union will reign between them. Is a servant treated harshly by his masters? Counsel him to give himself to the service of God; from then on you will see him no longer complain—he will even bless the goodness of God for making him do his purgatory in this world. Let us say better, my brethren: a person who knows her religion and who practices it is no longer for herself, but she tends only to make her neighbor happy.

To make you feel it better, here is a fair example of it. We read in history that there was in the city of Toulouse a holy priest, whom his zeal and his charity made considered in the whole city as the father of the poor. Although he was very poor himself, helps did not fail him. One day a devout woman came to announce to him that they had just put her husband in prison and that she had four children left; that if someone did not have pity on her and her children, they could only die of hunger. This holy priest, softened even to tears, although he had already just made the collection, sets out again to ask again, especially of a rich merchant. But in the moment when this priest entered, the merchant had just received a letter that announced to him a considerable loss. The priest, without knowing

anything, makes him the recital of the miseries of this family. The merchant said to him with a surly air: "Here you are again—it is too much." — "Ah! sir, if you knew!" the priest said to him. — "No, no, I wish to know nothing; withdraw promptly." — "But, sir," the priest said to him, "what will become of this poor family? Ah! I conjure you, have pity on their misfortunes!" The other, all occupied with his misfortune, turns against the priest and gives him a rude slap. The priest, without showing the least emotion, presented him the other cheek, saying to him: "Sir, strike as much as you wish, provided that you give to relieve this family." The merchant, all astonished at that, said to him: "Well then! come with me"; and taking him by the hand, he led him into his cabinet, opened his strongbox for him: "Take all that you wish." — "No, sir," the priest said to him humbly, "give me what you wish." The merchant plunges his two hands into his sacks, saying to him: "Come whenever you wish." Ah! my brethren, how precious a thing religion is for him who knows it! Indeed, all that there is of good in the world—it is only religion that has produced it. All these hospitals, all these seminaries, all these houses of education—all that has been established only by those who are attached to the service of God. Ah! if fathers and mothers knew how happy they themselves would be, and how much they would contribute to making God glorified by raising their children holily! Ah! if they were well convinced that they hold the place of God Himself upon the earth, how they would work to make themselves meritorious of the merits of the death and Passion of Jesus Christ!…

Let us conclude, my brethren, by saying that never, in following the world, in wishing to satisfy our inclinations, shall we be happy, nor shall we be able to find what we seek; whereas in attaching ourselves to the service of God, all our miseries will be well softened, or rather, they will change into joy and into consolation, thinking that we work for heaven. What a difference between him who dies after having lived badly and him who dies after having lived well: he has only heaven for his portion; all his combats are going to end; his happiness, which he already sees in advance, is going to begin never to end! Yes, my brethren, let us give ourselves to God in good earnest, and we shall experience these great benefits that God will never refuse to him who will have loved Him! That is the happiness that I wish for you.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost — On the World

Nemo potest duobus dominis servire. No one can serve two masters. (Matthew 6:24)

Jesus Christ tells us, my brethren, that we cannot serve two masters—that is to say, God and the world. You cannot please God and the world, He tells us. In spite of all that you will do, you will not be able to suit both at the same time. Here is the reason, my brethren: it is that they are extremely opposed in their thoughts, their desires, and their actions: the one promises a thing altogether contrary to what the other promises; the one forbids what the other permits and commands; the one makes you work for the present time, and the other for the time to come, which is heaven; the one offers you pleasures, honors, and riches, the other presents you only tears, penance, and renunciation of yourselves; the one calls you into a path of flowers (at least in appearance), and the other into that of thorns. Each, my brethren, asks for our heart—it is for us to choose which of these two masters we wish to follow. The one, which is the world, promises to make us taste all that we can desire during our life (though it always promises more than it gives); but at the same time it hides from us the evils that are reserved for us throughout eternity. The other, which is Jesus Christ, does not promise

us all these things; but He tells us, to console us, that He will help us and that He will even greatly soften our pains: "Come to Me, I will console you; and in My train you will find the peace of the soul and the joy of the heart." That, my brethren, is these two masters who ask us for our heart; to which do you wish to belong? All that the world presents to you is only for the present time. Goods, pleasures, and honors will end with life, and in ending life we are going to begin an eternity of torments. But if we wish to follow Jesus Christ, who calls us, laden with His cross, we shall soon see that the pains of His service are not as great as we well believe: He will walk before us, He will help us, He will console us, and He promises us, after a few little instants of pains, a happiness that will last as long as Himself. But to make you understand it better, my brethren, I am going to show you that it is impossible to please God and the world. Either wholly God's, or wholly the world's: no sharing [point de partage].

It is certain, my brethren, that if Jesus Christ knew well that many would leave the world to give themselves to him, would embrace the follies of his cross, and, following his example, would spend their lives in tears, groans and penitence, to make themselves worthy of the reward he has merited for us; he also knew that many would leave him to give themselves to the world, which only promises them (what it) will never give them, hiding from them the misfortunes of eternity; This is why he wanted to give us only one heart, so that we could only give ourselves to one master. He tells us formally that it is impossible to belong to God and to the world; because when we want to please one, we will become the enemy of the other. The good God, my brethren, to show us how difficult it is to save ourselves among the world, cursed this world, saying: "Woe to the world 1" But let us touch on this a little more closely. You know, my brethren, that the spirit of Jesus Christ is a spirit of humility and self-contempt, a spirit of charity and kindness for everyone. Well, how can you preserve this spirit, if you are going to mingle with a proud person, who will only talk to you about pleasures and honors, who will praise himself and boast of all his so-called good qualities, of all the good he has done and even of that which he has not done. If you hang out with him for a while, necessarily, without realizing it, you will become proud like him. You will continually hear (someone) speaking badly of his neighbor; likewise, without knowing it, you will become a bad tongue, who will bring trouble wherever you are. You know that Jesus Christ, whom you took to be your master, wants us to keep our hearts and our bodies pure for Him, as much as possible; but if you are going to associate with this libertine, who is only busy thinking and saying the dirtiest and most infamous things; how can you maintain this purity that God asks of you? By seeing him, you will become as dirty and as infamous as him. You know that your Master wants you to love and respect religion, and everything related to religion; but, if you attend; an impious person, who mocks everything, despises what is holiest, and turns everything into ridicule; how can you love religion and practice what it commands you, hearing all these impieties? How can you trust the priests, after the impious have slandered you and persuaded you that it is true, and that all priests are the same? Ah! My brethren, woe to him who follows (the world)!

It is lost! Tell me, how will you have respect for the laws of the Church, if you go with these impious people who mock and despise fasting and abstinence, telling you that (all this) is only the invention of men? — The spirit of God, as you know, is to despise created things and to attach himself only to the goods of eternity. Hey! how will you be able to form an idea of it if you associate with this man who is an unbeliever, who believes (although he does not seriously believe it), or who wants everything to end with life. My friend, if you want to save yourself, you must necessarily flee the

world, otherwise you will think and act like the world, and you will find yourself among those who are cursed by God. See, my brethren, when some great sinner does not want to convert, the Church excommunicates him, that is to say, rejects him from her bosom; she no longer regards him as her child, he no longer shares in the graces that the good God distributes to us through the merits of his death and his passion; she does not even want us to eat and drink with him, nor to greet him; she forbids us from having any communication with him, if we do not want to participate in his misfortune. (If such people) die, they are buried in a profane place, and have no right to prayers, because they die as reprobate. Well, my brethren, if we want to follow the world, the same misfortune will happen to us. Besides, my brethren, if you doubt it, see what all the saints did: they regarded the world, its pleasures and even its goods, as a plague for the salvation of their souls, and all those who could left it. What is the cause of the deserts being populated by so many people, who formerly inhabited the cities and the countryside, if not because they feared the world, and left it, in fear that the contagion of the world would destroy them, by giving rise to the same feelings in them and making them act with the same spirit? Yes, my brethren, let us flee the world, or we are sure to get lost like the world. No, my brethren, we will never agree with the world though. we want to save ourselves. We must swear eternal war against him: this is what all the saints have done. Or renounce heaven, or renounce the world!... Here, my brethren, do you want to know how much we are enemies of the world, and how much the world hates us? Listen to me for a moment, and you will see what we must do if we want to hope to one day have heaven. We have a good example of this in the person of Saint Januarius, who was bishop of Benevento.

He was denounced to the governor Timothy, because he did everything he could to strengthen the Christians, and to induce the pagans to convert; he told them that they were among those whom Jesus Christ had cursed (with these words): "Woe to the world!" The governor, transported with anger at this report, ordered the saint to be immediately taken and brought to him, bound hand and foot, before his tribunal. He had an idol placed before the saint, ordering him to immediately worship the gods; or that he should expect to die in the most severe torments that could be invented. The saint answered him without being moved, that he was not born and baptized to follow the party of the world; but to follow Jesus Christ carrying his cross and dying on Calvary; that all these torments with which he was threatened did not retaliate; it was his sharing that would one day make all his happiness. "You," he said to the governor, "are from this world that Jesus Christ has cursed." This response put the governor into such fury that he ordered the saint to be thrown immediately into a lit furnace. But the good God, who never abandons those who are his and not of the world, made Saint Januarius, instead of being burned by the flames, appear to enter a refreshing bath. This saint came out without his clothes, nor even his hair, being damaged in the least: which astonished the whole crowd of pagans who were present. The governor himself was quite astonished; but, thinking that this was done by the devil, he only became more furious, and he had the saint put to torture, to make him suffer such torture as only hell could have inspired him. He ordered that all the nerves of his body be torn out one after the other; then, (seeing that he) could no longer walk except by a miracle, he ordered him to be taken to prison, in the hope of making him suffer even more. The faithful of his diocese, having learned what the holy bishop had been made to suffer, left immediately to visit him and relieve him if they could. The governor having learned of it, immediately sent soldiers to arrest them all and bring them before

This miracle so struck this whole multitude that they were heard to exclaim: “Yes, yes, there is only the God of the Christians who is the true God, and all our gods are only gods who deceive us and destroy us; never have the priests of our idols done anything similar.” The governor, hearing these murmurs, feared for himself, and ordered the martyrs to be led into the public square to cut off their heads; but, as they were being led there, Saint Januarius, passing before the governor, said: “Lord, please take away the sight of this tyrant, so that he does not have the barbaric pleasure of seeing your children die.” Immediately, the governor lost his sight. This miraculous punishment made him recognize the power of this servant of God. Immediately, he ordered to stop the execution of the sentence which had (been) passed against the holy martyrs, and, having brought the saint, he said to him in a suppliant tone: “You who adore the Almighty God, pray to him for me, that he may restore to me the sight of which he deprived me, in punishment for my sins.”

As the saints have neither gall nor hatred, to show by a double miracle the power of the true God, he made a second prayer in favor of the governor. It was as effective as the first. Timothy received his sight immediately. This wonder was not useless for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; almost five thousand pagans, who witnessed it, were converted the same day; but the governor, for whom this miracle had been done, was so hardened that he himself did not convert. Fearing that if he spared the martyrs he would be disgraced by the emperor, he secretly ordered his officers to put the holy bishop to death. While he was being led to the place. to be executed there, a good old man asked him, after throwing himself at his feet, for something that would have served him to preserve him respectfully. The saint, touched by his faith, said to him: “My friend, I only have my handkerchief which will be used to blindfold me; but be sure that afterwards you will have it.” Those who heard him speak in this way began to laugh, and, after having put the saint to death, put their feet on the handkerchief, saying: “Let him now give his handkerchief to this old man to whom he promised you.” But they were very surprised when, as they passed, they saw this old man holding it in his hands. The saint cried out, as his head was cut off: “My God, I commend my soul into your hands.” Well, my brethren, this is the world and Jesus Christ, that is to say, those who have despised the world to follow only Jesus Christ with his cross; those who have truly left the world, its goods and its pleasures, to seek only heaven and the salvation of their soul. See, which way you would turn, if the good God put you to a similar test as Saint Januarius and his fellow martyrs. Alas! my God, how few there would be..... because there are very few who are not of the world, that is to say, who do not love the world, its goods and its pleasures. Is it really possible that, although the world only makes unhappy people, that it promises a lot without ever giving what it promises, and although we are so unhappy in its wake, we still love it! Everyone complains of his perfidy, and despite this, we still seek to please him, and if we cannot satisfy him, we at least want to give him our best years, our youth and often our health, our reputation and even our life. Ah! cursed world, how long will you deceive us by calling us to follow you to overwhelm us with so many evils, to be always unhappy and never happy? O my God! please open the eyes of the soul to us and we will know our blindness in loving the one who only seeks our eternal loss!

But to make you understand even better which of the two parties you must follow, let us consider this world composed of three societies; some are everything for the world, others are everything for the good God as we have just seen, and finally, others are in between; they would like to be in the world without ceasing to be God's, which is impossible, as you will see. We say, first, my brethren, that a part, and perhaps the greater part, are all to the world; and, of this number, are those who are

happy to have stifled all feeling of religion, all thought of the other life, who have done everything they could to erase the terrible thought of the judgment which they will one day have to undergo. They use all their knowledge and often their wealth to attract as many people as they can along their path; they no longer believe in anything, they even pride themselves on being more impious and more unbelieving than they are (in reality), to better convince others, and make them believe, I am not telling the truths, but the falsities that they would like to give birth to in their hearts. Like Voltaire who one day, at a dinner given to his friends, that is to say, to impious people, rejoiced that, of all those who were there, not one believed in religion. And yet he himself believed in it, as he clearly showed at the hour of his death. So he eagerly asked for a priest so that he could be reconciled with the good God; but it was too late for him; the good God, against whom he had unleashed himself with so much fury, had done to him as to Antiochus: he had abandoned him to the fury of the demons. (Voltaire) had, in this terrible moment, only despair and hell to share. "The ungodly," the Holy Spirit tells us, "says within himself that there is no God," but it is only the corruption of his heart that can lead him to such excess; he does not believe it in the depths of his soul. This word: "There is a God," will never fade away. The greatest sinner will often utter it, even without thinking about it; but let us leave these impious ones aside. Fortunately, although you are not as good Christians as you should be, thank God, you are not yet one of them. But, you will ask me, who are those who are sometimes God's, sometimes the world? My brethren, here it is. I compare them (if I dare use that term) to those dogs who give themselves to the first person who calls them. Follow them, my brethren, from morning until evening, from the beginning of the year until the end: these people only look at Sunday as a day of rest and pleasure; they stay in bed longer than the days of the week, and, instead of giving their hearts to the good God, they do not even think about it.

They will think, some of their pleasures, of the people they will see; the others, to the markets they will make or to the money they will carry or receive. They barely make a sign of the cross, as best they can; under the pretext that they will go to church, they will not say prayers saying to themselves: "Oh! I have plenty of time to do it before mass." They always have to do (before) going to mass; they believed that they would have time left to say their prayers, and they are not only at the (beginning) of holy mass. If they find a friend along the way, they have no problem taking him home and leaving mass for another time. However, as they still want to appear Christian in the eyes of the world, they still go there sometimes; but, it is with mortal boredom and disgust. This is the thought that occupies them; "My God, when will this be over?" You see them in church, especially during instruction, turning their heads from one side to the other, asking their neighbor what time it is; others yawn and stretch out, turning the pages of their book, as if to examine whether the bookseller has made any mistakes; others, you see them sleeping like in a good bed. The first thought that presents itself to them is not that they have desecrated such a holy place, but: "My God, this will never end... I will never come back 1..." And finally, others to whom the word of God, (which has converted so many sinners), (gives) pain to the heart: they are obliged to go out, they say, to breathe a little air, to avoid. not die; you see them sad, sorrowful during the holy services; but when the office is over, and often even, the priest has not yet come down from the altar, they rush to the door to see who will come out first; you then see the joy reborn that they had lost at the service. They are so tired that they often do not have the courage to return to vespers. If we ask them why they don't go to vespers: "Ah! they tell you, you should be at church all day; we have something else to do!" For these people, there is no question of catechism, nor rosary, nor evening prayer: all this is regarded by

them as nothing. If we ask them what we said during the instruction: "Ah! They will answer you, he has shouted enough!... he has annoyed us enough. I do not just remember it!... M if it wasn't so long, we would remember it much better; this is what puts people off going to services: (it's) because it's too long." You are right to say: the world, because these people are among those who are of the world, without knowing it.

But, come on, we will try to make them understand better (at least if they want); but being deaf and blind (as they are), it is very difficult to make them hear the words of life, and, being blind, it will still be difficult to make them understand their unhappy state. First of all, with them there is no longer any question of saying their Benediction before the meal, nor their thanksgiving afterwards, nor their Angelus. If, out of an old habit, they do it, if you witness it, it hurts your heart: women do it while working, shouting at their children or their servants; men do it by turning their hat or cap in their hands, as if to examine if they have holes; they think as much of the good God as if they truly believed that there was none, and that it is for fun that they do this. They have no scruples about selling or buying on the holy day of Sunday, although they know very well (or at least they must know) that a somewhat heavy walk done on Sunday, without necessity, is a mortal sin. These people look at all these things as nothing. They will go to a parish, in these holy days, to hire servants; if we tell them that they are hurting: "Ah! they tell you, you have to go there when you can find them." They have no problem going to pay their taxes on Sunday; because, during the week, we should go a little further, and take a few more moments. Ah! you will say to me, we do not pay attention to all that. — You do not pay attention to all that, my friend, I am not surprised, it is because you are part of the world; that is to say, you would like to be God's and please the world. Do you know, my brethren, what these people are? These are people who have not yet entirely lost their faith, and to whom there still remains some attachment to the service of God, who would not want to abandon everything, because they themselves blame those who no longer attend services; but they do not have enough courage to break with the world, and to turn to the side of the good God. (These people) would not want to damn themselves, but they would not want to embarrass themselves either; they hope to be able to save themselves, without doing so much violence to themselves; they have the thought that the good God, being so good, did not create them to ruin them, that he will forgive them all the same; that a time will come when they will give themselves to the good God, that they will correct themselves, that they will leave their bad habits. If, in a few moments of reflection, they put their poor life a little before their eyes, they will groan, and sometimes they will even shed tears.

Alas, my brethren, what a sad life leads those who would like to be in the world without ceasing to be God's! Let us go a little further and you will understand it even better, you will see how ridiculous their very life is. One moment you will hear them praying to the good God or doing an act of contrition, and another moment you will hear them swearing, maybe even God's holy name, if something doesn't go their way. This morning, you saw them at Holy Mass singing or hearing the praises of God, and, on the same day, you see them making the most infamous remarks. The same hands that took holy water, asking God to cleanse them of their sins, a moment later, the same hands are used to make dirty touches on them or perhaps even on others. The same eyes which, this morning, had the great happiness of contemplating Jesus Christ himself in the holy host, in the course of the day will voluntarily focus on the most dishonest objects, and this, with pleasure. Yesterday, you saw this man giving charity to his neighbor, or doing him a service; today, he will try to deceive him, if he can benefit from it. It is only a moment ago that this mother wished all kinds of

blessings for her children, and now that they have thwarted her, she overwhelms them with all kinds of misfortunes: she would never like to have seen them, she would like to be as far from them as she is close to them; she ends up giving them to the demon, in order to get rid of them. One moment, she sends her children to holy mass or confession; another, she will send them to the dance, or at least, she will pretend not to know, or she will forbid it from them while laughing, which means: "Leave." Once, she will tell her daughter to be very reserved, not to mix with bad company, and another time, she sees her spending entire hours with young people, without saying anything to her. Come on, my poor mother, you (are) of the world; you believe that you belong to God, through whatever exterior religion you practice.

You are wrong: you are among those to whom Jesus Christ said: "Woe to the world!" Look at these people who believe they belong to God and who are in the world: they have no scruples about taking from their neighbor, sometimes wood, sometimes a few fruits and a thousand other things; as long as they are flattered in their actions, which they do regarding religion, they even have great pleasure in doing it, they show a lot of eagerness, they are good at giving advice to others; but if they are despised or slandered, then you see them become discouraged, tormented because they are treated in this way; Yesterday, they only wanted good for those who hurt them, and today they can no longer suffer them, nor often even see them or speak to them. Poor world! that you are unhappy, go your ordinary way; come on, you can only hope for hell! Some would even like to attend the sacraments at least once a year; but for that, they would need a very easy confessor, they would just like it and that is all. If the confessor does not see them well enough and refuses them absolution; here they are who are unleashed against him, saying everything that can justify them for not having completed their confession; they will speak ill of it; they know well why they stay on the way, but as they (also) know that the confessor cannot grant them anything, so they content themselves by saying whatever they want. Come on, people, go your ordinary way, one day you will see what you did not want to see. We should therefore be able to divide our hearts in two! But no, my friend, either all to God or all to the world. Do you want to attend the sacraments? Well! leave the games, the dances and the taverns. Besides, you have good grace today to present yourself to the tribunal of penance, to sit at the holy table to eat the bread of angels; and, in three or four weeks, perhaps less, you will be seen spending the night among drunkards who are overflowing with wine, and even more, doing (the most infamous acts) of impurity. Come on, world, come on! you will soon be in hell: you will be taught there what you had to do to go to heaven, which you lost through your own fault. No, my brethren, let us not be mistaken; we must, of all necessity, either sacrifice the world to Jesus Christ, or else make to Jesus Christ the sacrifice of all that we have dearest on earth. But what can the world give you that can compare with what Jesus Christ promises us in heaven?

Moreover, my brethren, among all those who have attached themselves to the world, who have only sought to satisfy their brutal and corrupt inclination, there is not one who is not its dupe and who, at the hour of death, does not repent of having loved it. Yes, my brethren, it is then that we will feel the vanity and the fragility of these things, and we would feel them even from this moment, if we would take a glance at our past life; we would see that life is very little. Tell me, my brethren, you who the years are beginning to make your head bow on your shoulders: during your youth, you ran after the pleasures of the world, and it seemed to you that you could no longer be satisfied; you spent many years seeking only your pleasures: dances, games, taverns and vanity were all your occupation; you have always postponed your return to God. When you reached an older age, you thought about

collecting some good things. So you have reached old age, without having done anything for your salvation. Now that you are disillusioned with the follies of youth; now that you have worked to get something, you think that now you will do better. I do not believe it, my friend. The infirmities of old age which will overwhelm you; your children, who, perhaps, will despise you; all this will be a new obstacle to your salvation. You believed that you belonged to God and you find yourself to be of the world: that is to say, among those who are sometimes God's and sometimes the world, and who end up receiving the reward of the world. Woe to the world! Go, world, follow your master as you have done hitherto. You see very well that you made a mistake in following the world; Well, my brethren, will you be any wiser? No, my brethren, no. If a person deceives us once, we will say: We no longer trust him; and we are quite right; the world continually deceives us, and yet we love it. “Be careful,” Saint John tells us, “from loving the world and attaching yourself to anything in the world.” — “It is in vain,” the Prophet tells us, “that we would bring (light) to this sort of people; they have been deceived and they will be deceived again; they will only open their eyes at the time when they no longer have any hope of returning to God.” Ah! My brethren, if we thought carefully about what the world is, we would spend our lives receiving its farewells and saying ours to it. At the age of fifteen we said goodbye to the amusements of childhood, we considered it silly to chase flies, as children do who build (them) houses of cards or mud.

At thirty, you began to say goodbye to the noisy pleasures of a fiery youth; what you liked so much at that time is already starting to bore you. Let us say better, my brethren, every day we say goodbye to the world; we act like a traveler who enjoys the beauty of the countries he has passed through; as soon as he sees them, he must leave them; it is the same with the goods and pleasures to which we are so attached. Finally, we arrive at the edge of eternity, which swallows up everything in its abysses. Ah! It is then, my brethren, that the world will disappear forever from our eyes, and that we will recognize our folly in having attached ourselves to it. And everything that we have been told about sin!.... All this was therefore very true, we will say. Alas! I have only lived for the world, I have only sought the world in everything I have done, and the goods and pleasures of the world are nothing for me anymore! everything is slipping out of my hands: this world that I loved so much, these goods and these pleasures, which have so occupied my heart and my mind 1.... I must now return to my God!... Ah! My brethren, how consoling this thought is for him who has sought only God alone during his life! but how desperate it is for those who have lost sight of their God and the salvation of their soul! No, no, my brethren, let us make no mistake, let us flee, or we put ourselves in great danger of getting lost. All the saints have fled, despised and abandoned the world all their lives. Those who were forced to stay there lived there as if they were not there. How many great people of the world have left it to live in solitude! see a Saint Arsenius. Struck with this thought: How difficult it is to save oneself in the world, he abandons the court of the emperor, and goes to spend his life in the forests, to mourn his sins and do penance. Yes, my brethren, if we do not flee the world, at least as much as possible, we can only get lost with the world, short of a great miracle. Here is a good example and one capable of making us understand it. We read in holy scripture that Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, made an alliance with Ahab, king of Israel. The Holy Spirit tells us that the first, that is, Jehoshaphat, was a holy king; but he tells us that the second, who is Ahab, was an ungodly man. Nevertheless, Jehoshaphat agreed to go with Ahab to fight against the Syrians. Before leaving, he wanted to see a prophet of the Lord, to ask him what would happen in this fight. Ahab said to him: “We have here a certain prophet of the Lord, but he only predicts misfortunes for us. " - " Well! said

Jehoshaphat to him, send for him, and we will consult him." The prophet being before the king, Jehoshaphat asked him whether he should go and fight against the enemies or not. King Ahab hastens to tell him that all his prophets have assured him of victory. "Yes, says the prophet of the Lord, go, Princes, you will attack your enemies, you will defeat them and you will return victorious and loaded with their riches." King Jehoshaphat saw clearly that this was not what the prophet thought, he asked him to say what the Lord (inspired him to do.) Then the prophet taking the tone of the prophet of the Lord, "Long live the Lord, in whose presence I am!" Here is what the

Lord, the God of Israel, commanded me to say to you: You will fight; but you will be defeated. King Ahab will perish there, and his army will be routed and everyone will return home without a leader." King Ahab said to the other: "I told you that this prophet only announces misfortunes." He had him put in prison, to punish him on his return. But the prophet worried very little about this, for he knew well that the king would not return, but would perish. Having fought the battle, Ahab, seeing that the main body of the army was turning on him, changed his clothes. So they took King Jehoshaphat for Ahab, the only one they wanted. Seeing himself about to be pierced by the enemies: "Ah Lord, God of Israel," he cried, "have mercy on me." Then the Lord helped him and removed all his enemies from him. But he sent his prophet to rebuke him for wanting to accompany this (ungodly) king: "You would have deserved to perish with him, but because the Lord saw good works in you, he preserved your life, and you will have the happiness of returning to your city." For Ahab, he perished in this fight, as the prophet had predicted to him before his departure. This, my brethren, is what it is to frequent the world: which shows us that, necessarily, we must flee the world if we want not to perish with it. With the people of the world we take the spirit of the world and lose the spirit of God: which leads us into an abyss of sin, almost without realizing it; we have a good example of this in history. Saint Augustine tells us that his friend was a young man who lived a perfectly good life. He followed his path as well as a young man can. One day, some of his fellow students were going out with him after dinner; The latter, angry that he did not do like them, tried to drag him to the amphitheater. It was a day when men were having their throats slit by other men. As this young man had an extreme horror for these sorts of curiosities, he initially resisted with all his strength; but his companions used so much flattery and so much violence that, this time, they dragged him away, so to speak, in spite of himself. He said to them: "You can easily train my body and place it among you in the amphitheater; but you cannot dispose of my mind or my eyes, which, assuredly, will never take part in such a horrible spectacle. So I will be there as if not being there, and, through that, I will satisfy you without taking part in it." But Alypius said in vain, they took him away, and while the whole amphitheater was in the transport of these barbaric pleasures, the young man forbade his heart to take part in them, and his eyes from looking, by keeping them closed. Ah I would to God that he had stopped his ears too; because, having been struck by a loud cry which was heard, curiosity got the better of him: wanting to see only that, he opened his eyes, it was enough to ruin him. The more he looked, the more his heart felt pleasure; he went so far later that, far from being asked to go there, he himself led the others. "Alas! my God, cries Saint Augustine, who can pull him out of this abyss? Nothing else, except a miracle of God's grace." I conclude, my brethren, saying that if we do not flee (the world) with its pleasures, if we do not hide as much as we can, we will be lost and we will be damned. But the most convenient route is to be sometimes in the world, sometimes with God, that is to say, doing some practices of piety and following the way of the world: games, dances, taverns, working on Sundays; (nurture) these hatreds, these revenges, these resentments, (note) these small

wrongs. But to be all God's, you must expect to be despised and rejected by the world. Happy, my brethren, he who will be of this number, and who will walk courageously following his Master, carrying his cross; since it is only through this that we will have the great happiness of arriving in heaven. What I wish for you.

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost — On Humility

Omnis qui se exaltat, humiliabitur, et qui se humiliat, exaltabitur. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Luke 18:14)

Could our divine Savior, my brethren, show us in a clearer and more evident manner the necessity of humbling ourselves—that is to say, of having low sentiments of ourselves, whether in our thoughts, or in our words, or in our actions—if we wish to hope to go and sing the praises of God throughout eternity? Being one day in the company of several persons, and seeing, I say, that several seemed to glory in the good they had done and despised the others, Jesus Christ proposed to them this parable which, according to all appearance, was a true history. "Two men," He said to them, "went up to the temple to make their prayer; one of them was a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee standing spoke thus to God: 'I give You thanks, O my God, that I am not like the rest of men, who are thieves, unjust, adulterers, nor even like this publican: I fast twice a week, I give the tithe of all that I possess.'" That is his prayer, Saint Augustine tells us. You see well that this prayer is only an affectation full of vanity and of pride; he does not come to pray to God, nor to give Him thanks; but to praise himself and insult even Him whom he prays to. The publican, on the contrary, standing far from the altar, did not even dare to lift his eyes to heaven; he struck his breast, saying: "My God, have pity on me, who am a sinner." — "I declare to you," Jesus Christ adds, "that this one has returned to his house justified, and not the other." The sins of the publican are pardoned to him; and the Pharisee with all his virtues reenters his house more criminal than he had left it. If you wish to know the reason, here it is: it is that the humility of the publican, though a sinner, was more pleasing to God than all the pretended good works of the Pharisee with his pride. And Jesus Christ concludes from that, that "he who wishes to exalt himself will be humbled, and that he who will humble himself will be exalted." That is the rule, my brethren—let us not deceive ourselves; the law is general; it is our divine Master who comes to publish it. "When you have raised your head up to heaven," the Lord says, "I will tear you down from it." Yes, my brethren, the only road that leads to elevation for the other life is humility. Without humility, that fair and precious virtue, you will enter no more into heaven than without baptism. Let us understand then today, my brethren, the obligation that we have to humble ourselves, and the motives that ought to engage us to it. I am going then, my brethren, to show you: first, that humility is a virtue that is absolutely necessary to us, if we wish that our actions be pleasing to God and rewarded in the other life; second, that we all have reasons to practice it, whether on the side of God, or on the side of ourselves.

Before, my brethren, making you understand the need that we have of this fair virtue, which is as necessary to us as baptism after original sin; as necessary, I say, as the sacrament of penance after mortal sin, I must tell you in what this lovable virtue consists, which gives so great a merit to all our good actions, and adorns so richly all our good works. Saint Bernard, that great saint who practiced it in so extraordinary a manner, who left goods, pleasures, parents, and friends, to go spend his life in

the forests, among wild beasts, to weep there over his sins, tells us that humility is a virtue by which we know ourselves; which leads us to have only contempt for ourselves, and to take no pleasure at all in seeing ourselves praised. I say: first, that this virtue is absolutely necessary to us if we wish that our actions be rewarded in heaven; since Jesus Christ Himself tells us that we cannot save ourselves without humility any more than without baptism. Saint Augustine tells us: "If you ask me what is the first virtue of a Christian, I will answer you that it is humility; if you ask me what is the second, I will tell you that it is humility; if you ask again what is the third, I will tell you again that it is humility; and as many times as you put this question to me, I will give you the same answer."

If pride engenders all sins, we can likewise say that humility engenders all virtues. With humility, you will have all that you need to please God, to save your soul; and without humility, with all the other virtues, you have nothing. We read in the holy Gospel that some mothers presented their children to Jesus Christ to have them blessed. The apostles made them withdraw. Our Lord finding it wrong, said to them: "Let these little children come to Me; for the kingdom of heaven is theirs and those who resemble them." He embraced them and gave them His holy blessing. Why so much welcome on the part of this divine Savior? It is that children are simple, humble, and without malice. Likewise, my brethren, if we wish to be welcomed by Jesus Christ, we must be simple and humble, in all that we do. "It was," Saint Bernard tells us, "it was this fair virtue that was the cause that the eternal Father looked upon the holy Virgin with complacency; and if," he tells us, "virginity drew the looks of God, her humility was the cause that she conceived the Son of God. If the holy Virgin is the Queen of virgins, she is also the Queen of the humble." Saint Teresa asked Our Lord one day why formerly the Holy Spirit communicated Himself with so much facility to the personages of the Old Testament, whether to the patriarchs or to the prophets, and declared His secrets to them, while He no longer did so at present. Our Lord answered her that it was because they were simpler and more humble, and that at present men have a double heart and are filled with pride and vanity. God does not communicate Himself to them; He does not love them as He loved those good patriarchs and those prophets, who were simple and humble. Saint Augustine tells us: "If you humble yourself profoundly, and if you acknowledge that you are nothing, that you deserve nothing, the good God will give you graces in abundance; but if you wish to exalt yourself and believe yourself something, He will withdraw from you, and will abandon you in your poverty." Our Lord, to make us understand well that humility is the fairest and most precious of all virtues, begins the beatitudes with humility, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them." Saint Augustine tells us that these poor in spirit are those who have humility as their portion. The prophet Isaiah says to God: "Lord, upon whom does Your Holy Spirit descend? Is it upon those who have great reputation in the world and upon the proud? No," the Lord says, "but upon him who has a humble heart." Not only does this virtue make us pleasing to God; but further to men. Everybody loves a person who is humble; one takes pleasure in her company. Whence comes it that ordinarily children are loved, if not because they are simple and because they are humble? A person who is humble yields to everything, never contradicts anyone, vexes no one, is content with everything; she always seeks to hide herself from the eyes of the world.

We have a fair example of it in the person of Saint Hilarion. Saint Jerome relates that this great saint was sought by emperors, kings, and princes, by the crowd of the people drawn into his desert by the odor of his holiness and by the brilliance and the noise of his miracles; but that he, on the contrary, fled the world as much as he could. He often changed his cell, in order to live hidden and unknown;

he wept without ceasing at the sight of that multitude of religious and of people who came to him to be healed of their evils. Regretting his former solitude: "I have," he said weeping, "I have returned into the world; I shall receive my reward in this life, since one looks upon me as a person of some consideration." And nothing, Saint Jerome tells us, more admirable than to see him so humble amid so many honors that were rendered him. The rumor having spread that he was going to withdraw into the depth of the desert and that one would no longer be able to see him, twenty thousand men were put to guard him; but the saint said to them that he would take no food before he was left free. They guarded him for seven days; seeing that he ate nothing… He fled into the most remote desert, where he gave himself over to all that his love for God could inspire him. It was only there that he believed he was beginning to serve the good God. Tell me, my brethren, is that a humility, a contempt of oneself? Alas! how rare these virtues are!—but also how rare the saints are! As much as one has hatred for a proud man, so much does one love a humble person, because she always takes the last place, she respects everybody and esteems them all; that is what makes one love so much the company of these persons who have such fair qualities.

Second, I say that humility is the foundation of all the other virtues. He who desires to serve the good God and save his soul must begin to practice this virtue in all its extent. Without which, our devotion will be like some sticks of straw that you will have planted, and which, at the first puff of wind, will be overturned. Yes, my brethren, the devil fears very little these devotions that have not humility for foundation, because he knows well that he will overturn them when he wishes. Which happened to that solitary who went so far as to walk on burning coals without burning himself; but who, lacking humility, fell some time afterward into the most deplorable excesses. If you have not humility, say that you have nothing, that at the first temptation you will be overturned. It is related in the Life of Saint Anthony that the good God made him see the world all filled with snares that the devil had stretched to make men fall into sin. He was so surprised at it that his body trembled like the leaf of the forests, and addressing himself to God: "Alas! Lord, who will be able to avoid so many snares?" He heard a voice that said to him: "Anthony, he who will be humble; because God gives His grace to the humble to resist temptations; whereas He permits the devil to make sport of the proud, who, as soon as they are in the occasion, will fall into sin. On the contrary, he does not dare to attack persons who are humble." When Saint Anthony had fallen, he did nothing but humble himself profoundly before the good God, saying: "Alas! Lord, You know that I am only a miserable sinner!" At once the devil took flight. When we are tempted, my brethren, let us keep ourselves hidden under the veil of humility, and we shall see that the devil will have little strength over us. We read in the Life of Saint Macarius that, going one day into his cell laden with palm leaves, the devil came to meet him with a frightful fury, wishing to strike him, and not being able, seeing that the good God had not given him the power; he cried out: "O Macarius! how you make me suffer; I have not the strength to mistreat you, although I accomplish more perfectly than you all that you do: for you fast sometimes, but as for me, I never eat; you watch sometimes, but as for me, I never sleep. There is only one thing in which I confess that you surmount me." Saint Macarius asked him in what it was. — "It is in your humility." The saint threw himself face to the ground, asked the good God not to succumb to the temptation, and at once the devil took flight. Oh! my brethren, how this virtue makes us pleasing to God, and how powerful it is to drive away the devil! But how rare it is—which is very easy to understand, since there are so few Christians who resist the devil when they are tempted.

But, so that you may not deceive yourselves and that you may know that you have never had it, let us enter into a very simple detail. No, my brethren, it is not all the words and all the fair manifestations of contempt of self that prove to us that we have it. Before beginning, I am going to cite you an example that will prove to you that words signify little. We find in the Lives of the Fathers that a solitary having come to see Saint Serapion would not pray with him, because, he said, I have committed so many sins that I am unworthy of it; I dare not even breathe where you are. Remaining seated on the ground, he did not even dare to sit on the same seat as Saint Serapion. Saint Serapion wishing to wash his feet according to custom, he resisted him still more. There is a humility which, according to us, has every appearance of being very sincere, and you are going to see what this humility comes to. Saint Serapion contented himself with telling him that he would do much better to remain in his solitude than to run from cell to cell living as a vagabond, and to work to live. Then the solitary could not keep from showing that his humility was only a false virtue; he rose up against the saint and left him. Whereupon the saint said to him: "Eh! my son, you were telling me just now that you had done all imaginable crimes, that you dared neither pray nor eat with me, and, for a simple warning, which has nothing that can offend you, you let yourself go to anger! Go, my friend, your virtue and all your good works are stripped of the fairest quality, which is humility." You see, by this example, that there is very little true humility. Alas! how many are there who, so long as one flatters them, praises them, or at least appears to esteem them, are all fire for the practices of piety—they would give everything and strip themselves of everything; but a little reproach, an air of indifference casts bitterness into their heart, torments them, wrings tears from them, makes them take a bad humor, makes them make a thousand rash judgments, thinking that one treats them unworthily, that one would not do it to another. Alas! how rare this fair virtue is among the Christians of our days! how many virtues that have only the appearance and that, at the first blow, are carried away!

But in what does humility consist? Here it is: I will tell you first that there are two sorts of humility, the one interior and the other exterior. Exterior humility consists, first, in not praising oneself for having succeeded well in some work that we have done, in not repeating it to the world; in not recounting our traits of folly, the journeys we have made, our address and our skill, nor what one has said to us perhaps to our advantage; second, in hiding the good that we may have done, such as our alms, our prayers, our penances, the services we have rendered to the neighbor, the interior graces that the good God has granted us; third, in not taking pleasure when one praises us; in trying to turn the conversation, attributing to God the good success of which one praises us; or in making known that that gives us pain, and going away, if we can; fourth, in never saying good or ill of oneself. There are some who often say ill of themselves, so that one may praise them: this is a false humility, which one calls a hooked humility [humilité à crochet]. Say nothing of yourself; be content to think that you are a wretch, that it takes all the charity of a God to suffer you upon the earth. Fifth, one must never dispute with one's equals; one must yield to them in all that is not contrary to conscience; not always believe that one is right: when one would be, one must quickly think that one could well be mistaken, as that has happened so many other times; and above all never obstinately insist on having the last word, which shows a very proud spirit. Sixth, one must never show sadness when one appears to despise us, nor go complain of it to others; that would show that we have no humility, since if we had it, we would never find that one despises us, because never will one be able to treat us as we deserve, because of our sins; on the contrary, one must thank the good God for it, like the holy

king David, who rendered good for evil, thinking how much he himself had despised the Lord by his sins. Seventh, one must be very content when one despises you, after the example of Jesus Christ, of whom it is said "that He filled Himself with opprobrium," and after the example of the apostles, of whom it is said "that they had a great joy at being found worthy to suffer some contempt, some ignominies for the love of Jesus Christ"; which will make all our happiness and our hope at death. Eighth, we ought not to excuse ourselves for our faults, when we have done something that can make us be blamed; not to make people think that it is not so, whether by lies or evasions, or by our air which seems to say that it is not we. Even when we would be accused wrongly, provided that the glory of the good God is not interested in it, we ought to say nothing. See what happened to that young girl to whom one had given the name of Brother Marin. Alas! who of us would have been put to trials like that without justifying himself, being able to do so so easily? Ninth, this humility consists in doing all that is most disgusting, what others will not do, and in loving to be clothed simply. That, my brethren, is in what exterior humility consists.

But in what does the interior consist? Here it is. It consists, first, in having low sentiments of oneself, never applauding oneself in one's heart when one has done something that has succeeded well, but believing oneself unworthy and incapable of doing any good action, founded on the words of Jesus Christ Himself, who tells us that without Him we can do nothing good; we cannot even pronounce a word, such as saying the holy name of Jesus, without the help of the Holy Spirit. Second, being very glad that others know our faults, in order to have the occasion to hold ourselves in our nothingness. Third, being very content that others surpass us in goods, in mind, in virtue, or in all other things; submitting oneself to the will, to the judgment of another, whenever it is not against conscience. Yes, my brethren, a truly humble person must be like a dead person who neither gets angry at the insults done him, nor rejoices at the praises given him. That, my brethren, is what it is to possess Christian humility, which makes us so pleasing to God and so lovable to the neighbor. See now whether you have it or not. And if you have it not, there remains for you, in order to save yourself, only to ask it of the good God, until you obtain it; because without it we shall not enter into heaven.

We read in the life of Saint Elzear that, having been in danger of perishing on the sea, with all those who were in the vessel, the danger being past, Saint Delphine, his spouse, asked him whether he had not been afraid. He answered her: "When I am in such a danger, I recommend myself to God, and all those who are with me; and I tell Him that if there are some who must die, let it be I, as being the most miserable and the most unworthy to live." What humility!… Saint Bernard was so penetrated with his nothingness that when he entered a town, he put himself on his knees to pray the good God not to punish that town because of his sins; he believed that wherever he went, he was capable only of drawing the curse upon the place. What humility, my brethren!—so great a saint, whose life was only a chain of miracles! It is necessary, my brethren, that all that we do be accompanied by this fair virtue, if we wish that it be rewarded in heaven.

In saying your prayers, have you that humility which makes you look upon yourselves as wretches, unworthy of being in the holy presence of God? Ah! if that were so, you would not be content to say them while dressing or while working. No, you have it not. If you had it, when you are at holy Mass, with what respect, with what modesty, with what trembling would you not hold yourselves there? Ah! no, no, one would not see you laugh, chat, turn your head, wander your looks about the church, sleep there, say your prayers there without devotion, without love of God. Far from finding the offices

long, you would no longer be able to leave them, thinking how great the mercy of God must be to suffer you among the faithful—you who deserve, by your sins, to be now among the reprobate. If you had this virtue, when you ask some grace of the good God, you would do like the Canaanite woman, who threw herself on her knees at the feet of the Savior before everybody; like Magdalene, who kissed the feet of the Savior in a numerous assembly. If you had it, you would do like that woman who for twelve years was afflicted with a flux of blood, and went with so much humility to throw herself before the Savior, to touch His mantle humbly. If you had the humility of a Saint Paul, who had been raised up to the third heaven, and looked upon himself only as an abortion, the last of the apostles, unworthy of the name he bore!… O my God! how fair this virtue is—but how rare!…

If you had this virtue, my brethren, when you confess, ah! how far you would be from hiding your sins, from recounting them like a story made for pleasure, and especially from recounting those of others! Ah! with what trembling would you be seized, seeing the greatness of your sins, the outrages they have done to God; and seeing on the other side the charity He has in pardoning you? My God! would one not die of sorrow and of gratitude?… If after having confessed your sins, you had that humility of which Saint John Climacus speaks to us, who, being in a monastery, tells us he himself saw there religious so humble, so humiliated and so mortified, who felt in such a way the weight of their sins, that the noise of their cries, and the prayers they addressed to God were capable of touching hearts as hard as stone. There were some who were all covered with ulcers, from which an unbearable stench came forth; they took so little care of their bodies that they had left only the skin attached to the bones. One heard the monastery resound with the most heartrending cries. "Ah! woe to us who are miserable! With justice, my God, You can cast us into hell!" Others cried out: "Ah! Lord, pardon us, if our souls can still receive some pardon!" They all had the image of death before their eyes; they said to one another: "What will become of us, after having had the misfortune of offending a God so good? Can we have some hope for the day of vengeances?" Others asked to be thrown into the river to be eaten by the beasts. The superior seeing Saint John Climacus said to him: "Well then! Father, have you seen our soldiers?" Saint John Climacus tells us that he could neither speak nor pray: for the cries of these penitents, so profoundly humbled, wrung tears and sobs from him in spite of himself. Why is it, my brethren, that we have no humility, although we are much more guilty? Alas! it is that we do not know ourselves!

Yes, my brethren, a Christian who knows himself well—everything ought to lead him to humble himself. I mean three things: the consideration of the greatnesses of God, the abasements of Jesus Christ, and our own misery. First, who is he, my brethren, who could consider the greatness of a God, without annihilating himself in His presence, thinking that from nothing He created heaven by a single word, and that a single one of His looks could annihilate everything? A God who is so great, and whose power has no bound—a God filled with every kind of perfection—a God with His eternity without end, His justice so great, His providence which governs everything with so much wisdom and which provides for our needs with so much care!—while we ourselves are only a vile nothingness! O my God! ought we not, all the more, to fear, like Saint Martin, that the earth should open under our feet to swallow us up, so unworthy are we to live? At this sight, my brethren, would you not do like that great penitent of whom it is spoken in the life of Saint Paphnutius? This good old man, the author of his life says, having gone to find this sinner, was much surprised to hear her speak of God. The holy abbot said to her: "Do you know well that there is a God?" — "Yes," she said to him; "moreover, I know that there is a kingdom for those who live according to His commandments,

and a hell where the wicked will be cast to burn there." — "If you know all these things, how, in losing so many souls, did you expose yourself then to burning there?" The sinner knowing by these words that it was a man of God, threw herself at his feet melting into tears: "My father," she said to him, "give me such penance as you wish, and I will do it." He shut her up in a cell, saying to her: "Being so criminal as you are, you do not deserve to pronounce the name of the good God; you will content yourself with turning toward the East, and for all prayer you will say: O You who have created me, have pity on me!" That is her whole prayer. Saint Thais spent three years doing this prayer, shedding tears and uttering sobs day and night. O my God! how well humility makes us know what we are!

Second, we say that the annihilation of Jesus Christ ought to humble us still much more. "When I consider," Saint Augustine tells us, "a God who, from His incarnation to the cross, has led only a life of humiliations and ignominies—a God unrecognized upon the earth—I, should I fear to humble myself? A God seeks humiliations—I, a worm of the earth, would wish to exalt myself? My God! of Your grace, destroy this pride which distances us so much from You."

The third motive, my brethren, that ought to humble us is our own misery. We have only to look at it a little closely; we shall find there an infinity of subjects for humbling ourselves. The prophet Micah tells us: "That we carry in the midst of us the principle and the motives of our humiliation. Do we not know," he says, "that nothingness is our origin, that an infinity of centuries have elapsed before we were, and that of ourselves we would never have been able to come out of that frightful and impenetrable abyss. Can we ignore that, created though we are, we have a violent inclination toward nothingness, and that the powerful hand of Him who has drawn us from it must prevent us from falling back into it, and that if the good God ceased to look upon us and to sustain us, we would be erased from upon the earth, with the same rapidity as a straw carried away by a furious tempest." What then is man to boast of his birth and of his other advantages? "Alas!" the holy man Job tells us, "what are we? Filth before being born, misery when we come into the world, infection when we leave it. We are born of a woman," he tells us; "we live little time; during our life, though it be very short, we weep much; death is not long in striking us." — "That is our portion," Saint Gregory the Pope tells us; "judge after that whether we can find place to exalt ourselves in the least thing in the world? so that he who dares to have the temerity to believe that he is something is a madman, who has never known himself, because, knowing ourselves such as we are, we can only have horror of ourselves." But we have no less reason to humble ourselves in the order of grace. Whatever gifts and whatever talents we may have, we hold them all from the liberal hand of the Lord, who gives them to whom He pleases, and consequently we cannot glory in them. A council has declared to us that man, far from being the author of his salvation, is capable only of losing himself, and that of himself he has only sin and lying. Saint Augustine tells us that all our science consists in knowing that we are nothing, and that all that we have we hold from God. Finally, I say that we ought to humble ourselves with regard to the glory and the happiness that we await in the other life, for of ourselves we cannot merit it. If the good God is so good as to give it to us, we can count only on the mercy of God and on the infinite merits of Jesus Christ His Son.

As children of Adam, we deserve only hell. Oh! how charitable the good God is to give us the hope of so many goods, to us who have done nothing to merit them! What ought we to conclude from that? My brethren, here it is: it is to ask the good God well, every day, for humility—that is to say, that He

grant us the grace to know that we are nothing of ourselves, and that the goods, whether of the body or of the soul, come to us from Him… Let us practice humility whenever we can;… let us be well persuaded that there is no virtue more pleasing to God than humility, and that with it we shall have all the others. However sinners we may be, we are sure that with humility the good God will pardon us. Yes, my brethren, let us attach ourselves to this fair virtue; it is she who will unite us to God, who will make us live in peace with our neighbor, who will make our crosses less heavy, who will give us that great hope that we shall see God one day. He Himself tells us: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, because they shall see God!" That is what I wish for you.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost — On the Love of God

Diliges Dominum Deum tuum. You shall love the Lord your God. (Luke 10:27)

We read in the Gospel, my brethren, that a young man, having presented himself before Jesus Christ, said to Him: "Master, what must I do to have eternal life?" Jesus Christ answered him: "What is written in the law?" — "You shall love the Lord your God," the young man answered Him, "with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself." — "But I do all that." — "Well then!" Jesus Christ replied to him, "sell your goods, give them to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven." This word of selling his goods to give them to the poor grieved him greatly. Jesus Christ wished to show him that it is by works and not by words that we show whether we truly love the good God. If, to love Him, Saint Gregory tells us, it sufficed to say that one loves Him, this divine love would not be so rare as it is, because there is not a person who, being asked whether he loves the good God, does not answer at once that he loves Him with all his heart: the just will say it and the sinner also; yet the just will say it only trembling, after the example of Saint Peter; whereas the sinner will say it perhaps with a tone of assurance that will seem to answer for his sincerity; but he is greatly mistaken, because the love of God does not consist in words, but in works. Yes, my brethren, to love the good God with all one's heart is a thing so just, so reasonable, and in some sort so natural, that those among us whose manner of living is most opposed to Him do not fail to claim and to be persuaded that they love Him. Why do all believe that they love the good God, although their conduct is entirely opposed to this divine love? Ah! my brethren, it is that everybody seeks his happiness, and that this love alone can procure it for us: that is why one wishes to persuade oneself that one loves the good God. Yet nothing is so rare as this divine love. Let us see then in what this love consists, and by what we can know whether we love God. To understand it better, let us consider, on the one side, what Jesus Christ has done for us, and on the other, what we ought to do for Him.

It is very certain, my brethren, that the good God has created us only to love Him and serve Him. All the creatures that are upon the earth are created for man, but man is created to love the good God. Why is it, my brethren, that the good God has given us a heart whose desires are so vast and so extended, that nothing created is capable of satisfying it? It is in order to force us, in some sort, to attach ourselves only to Him and to love only Him; because there is only He who can content us. When man possessed the entire universe, he would never be fully satisfied; there would always remain something for him to desire, so that nothing created could fill him. Yes, we are so persuaded that we are created to be happy, that we do not cease, a single instant of our life, to seek happiness,

and to do everything that depends on us to procure it for ourselves. Whence comes it then that, despite all our searches, all our pains and all our cares, we do not yet find ourselves content? Alas! it is that we do not turn our looks nor the movements of our heart toward the object that alone is capable of filling the vast extent of our desires: God alone. No, my brethren, no, never will you be able to content yourselves and be fully happy—at least as much as it is possible to be so in this world—if you do not despise, at least from the heart, created things in order to attach yourselves only to God alone. We ought then to apply all our cares and all the movements of our heart to desire and to seek only God alone in everything we do; without which, our life will pass in vainly seeking a happiness that we shall never find. We have then been mistaken until now; since, despite everything we have done to be happy, we have not been able to be so. Believe me, my brethren, seek the friendship of the good God, and you will have found your happiness. O my God! how blind man is not to love You; since You can so well content his heart!

But, my brethren, to engage you to love a God so good, so worthy of being loved, and so capable of filling all the affections of our heart, let us cast a glance upon what He has done for us; let us follow Him in the course of His mortal life and even after His death. See Him, my brethren, from the moment of His Incarnation until the age of thirty years—are they not great, the proofs of His love for us? What did He do in His Incarnation? He made Himself man like us and for us. In His birth He raised us to the most eminent dignity to which a pure creature can be raised; He became our brother!… O what love for us! have we ever well understood it?… In His circumcision, He made Himself our Savior. My God! how great Your charity is!… In His epiphany, He became our light, our guide. In His presentation in the temple, He became our pontiff, our doctor; oh! what am I saying, my brethren? He offered Himself to His Father to redeem us all. Later—that is to say, in the house of Saint Joseph—He became our model, for the love and the respect that we ought to have for our parents and our superiors. Let us say still better: He showed us how we ought to lead a life hidden and unknown to the world, if we wish to please God His Father. Let us follow Jesus Christ in His active life: everything He did, He did for us: His prayers, His tears, His vigils, His fasts, His preachings, His journeys, His conversations, His miracles; yes, all that was done for us. See, my brethren, with what zeal He sought us, in the person of the Samaritan woman; see with what tenderness He receives all sinners—and we are all such—in the person of the prodigal son; see with what goodness He opposes Himself to the justice of His Father, who wishes to punish us in the person of the sinful woman. In His suffering life, alas! what injuries, what torments has He not endured? He was bound, slapped, accused, condemned, and finally crucified for us. Did He not die for us, in the midst of incomprehensible opprobriums and pains?… Ah! my brethren, who could understand all that His good heart has done for us?…

Let us enter further into the wound of this good heart. Yes, Jesus Christ could satisfy the justice of His Father, for our sins, by a drop of His blood, by a single tear—ah! what am I saying?—by a single sigh; but what could satisfy the justice of His Father could not satisfy the tenderness of His heart for us. It is still His love for us that made Him suffer in an anticipated manner, in the garden of Olives, the sufferings that He was to endure upon the cross. O abyss of tenderness of a God for His creatures!… Did Jesus Christ content Himself with loving us until the end? No, my brethren, no. After His death, the lance, or rather His love, opened His divine heart, to open for us as it were an asylum, where we should come to hide ourselves and console ourselves in our pains, our griefs and our other miseries. But let us go further, my brethren. This divine Savior wishes to shed for us even

to the last drop of His precious blood, in order to wash us of all our iniquities. After having expiated our sins of pride by His crowning with thorns; by the gall and the vinegar, the sins that we have the misfortune to commit by our tongue, and which are in so great a number; all our sins of impurity by His cruel and painful scourging; all those that we have committed by our hands—that is to say, all the bad actions that we have done—by the wounds of His feet and of His hands; He wished still to expiate all our sins by the wound of His divine heart, because it is in the heart that all our sins take birth. O prodigy of love of a God for His creatures!… He is offended by us and He is punished for us, and it is upon Himself that He takes vengeance for the offenses that we have done Him!… Alas! if we were not as blind as we are, we should recognize that it is our hands that truly immolated Him upon the cross. But once more, my brethren, why so many prodigies of love? Ah! you know it; it is to deliver us from all sorts of evils, and to merit for us all sorts of goods for eternity. And if, despite that, we see that we still come to offend Him, that He is ready to pardon us, to love us and to fill us with all sorts of goods, if we wish to love Him. O what love for creatures so insensitive and so ungrateful!…

His love goes still further. Seeing that death was going to separate Him from us, and in order to remain among us, He worked a great miracle: He instituted that great sacrament of love, where He leaves us His adorable body and His precious blood, never more to leave us, until the end of the world. What love for us, my brethren, that a God should be willing to nourish our soul with His own substance and make us live with His own life! By means of this great and adorable sacrament He offers Himself, each day, to the justice of His Father, satisfies anew for our sins and draws upon us all sorts of graces. See still, my brethren, this tender Savior who, dead for our salvation, opens heaven to us. To lead us all there, He Himself is going to be our mediator; it is He Himself who is going to present all our prayers to His Father, and ask grace for us, each time that we shall have the misfortune to sin. Yes, my brethren, He awaits us in that place of happiness, in that abode where one always loves and where one never offends…. No, my brethren, never have you well reflected how the good God loves you. Is it well possible that we live only to offend Him, since we can be happy only in loving Him? Doubtless, if I asked you whether you love the good God, you would tell me that you love Him; but that does not suffice; one must give the proof of it. But where are they, my brethren, these proofs that manifest the sincerity of our love for the good God? Where are the sacrifices that we have made for Him? where are our penances? alas! the little good that we do is done in great part without taste, without having a very upright intention. How many human views!… how many good works done by pure inclination and without true devotion. Alas! my brethren, what poverty!…

Now, my brethren, if you wish to know how we can know whether we truly love the good God, listen well to what I am going to tell you, and afterward you yourselves are going to judge whether you love Him in truth. Behold what Jesus Christ Himself tells us: "He who loves Me keeps My commandments"; but he who does not love Me does not keep them. It is then very easy for you to know whether you love the good God. The commandments of God or His will, my brethren, are only one and the same thing. He orders you and wishes that you fulfill well all the duties of your state, with intentions very pure and very upright, without humor, without impatience, without negligence, without fraud in the truth or in good faith. We ought to have a generous love toward the good God, which makes us prefer death to infidelity. Of that, my brethren, we have examples without number in all the saints, and especially in the martyrs of whom many let themselves be cut in pieces, rather than cease to love the good God. Here is a fair example in the person of the chaste Susanna. Having gone

one day to the bath, two old men, who were judges of the people of Israel, having perceived her, conceived the design of soliciting her to sin; they followed her, proposed to her their infamous design, of which she had horror. Lifting her eyes to heaven, she said: "Lord, You know that I love You, sustain me." "I see myself in pain on all sides," she said to the old men; "we are here in the presence of God who sees us; if I have the misfortune to consent to your shameful passion, I shall not escape the hand of God: He is my judge, I know that He will make me render an account of an action so base and so criminal. If, on the contrary, I do not consent to your desires, I shall not escape your resentments; I see well that you are going to make me die; but I prefer to die rather than offend God." These wretches, seeing themselves thus rebuffed, went out with anger, and at once published that Susanna had been surprised in adultery, that they had seen a young man doing evil with her. Unhappily, alas! they were believed, and, on their testimony, she was condemned to death. When they were leading her to the torment, a child of twelve years, who was the little Daniel, cried out from the midst of the crowd: "What are you doing, people of Israel, why do you condemn the just? I declare to you that I take no part in the crime that you are going to commit, in shedding the blood of this innocent." Young Daniel, having approached the people, said to them: "Make the two old men come." Having made them separate one from the other, he interrogated them. They cut themselves in their words in such a manner that one could not doubt that they themselves were guilty, and not Susanna; they were both condemned to death. Behold what a person does, my brethren, who loves the good God, in showing in the trial that she truly loves Him, that she loves Him more than herself. Susanna could not give a greater mark of it, since she chose death in preference to sin. It is not doubtful that, when only words are needed to say that one loves the good God, it costs little. All believe that they love the good God and all dare to persuade themselves of it; but if the good God put us to the trial, how few would have the happiness of sustaining it!

See still what happened under the reign of Antiochus. This cruel tyrant commanded the Jews, under pain of death, to eat meat forbidden by the law of the Lord. A holy old man named Eleazar, who had always lived in the fear and the love of God, courageously refused to obey; he was condemned to death. "It depends only on you," one of his friends said to him, "to save your life, as we ourselves have done. Behold meat that has not been offered to the idols: eat it; this little dissimulation will appease the tyrant." The holy old man answered them: "Do you believe that I am much attached to life, and that I prefer it to the love that I owe my God? And even if I escaped the fury of the tyrant, do you believe that I could escape the justice of God? No, no, my friends, I prefer to die rather than dishonor my religion and offend my God whom I love more than myself. No, it will never be said that at the age of ninety years I abandon my God and His holy law." When they were leading him to the torment and the executioner was cruelly tormenting him, one heard him cry out: "My God, You know that it is for You that I suffer. Sustain me, You know that it is because I love You; yes, my God, it is for Your love that I suffer!" See his courage in seeing his poor body cut and devour. Well then! my brethren, behold what we call truly loving the good God. This good old man, who gives his life with so much joy for God, does not content himself with saying that he loves Him; but he shows it by his works. We say well that we love the good God; but when everything goes according to our desires, when nothing contradicts us in our manner of thinking, of speaking and of acting. How many times does a single word, an air of contempt, or even a somewhat cold air, a thought of human respect, make us abandon the good God?

We have said, my brethren, that if we wish to testify to the good God that we love Him, we must accomplish His holy will, which is that we be submissive, respectful toward our parents, our superiors, and all those whom the good God has placed above us to conduct us. The will of God is that those who are superiors conduct their inferiors without haughtiness, without harshness; but with charity and with goodness, as we would wish that one conducted us; the will of God is that we be good and charitable toward everybody; and that, if one praises us, far from believing ourselves something, on the contrary, we think that one is mocking us, as Saint Ambrose very well tells us: "If one despises us we must not grieve, but think that if one knew well what we are, one would say much more ill of us than one says." Or as Saint John tells us: "If one insults us, the will of God is that we pardon from a good heart and at once; and that we be ready to render service every time the occasion presents itself." This will is that, in our meals, we never let ourselves go to gluttony; that in our conversations we try to hide and excuse the faults of our neighbor and that we pray for him. The will of God is that, in our pains, we do not murmur, but that we bear them with patience and resignation to His will; that is to say, that in what we do, and in everything that He sends us, the good God wishes that we think that everything truly comes from Him and that all that is for our happiness, if we know how to make a good use of it. Behold, my brethren, what the commandments of God order us. If you love the good God, as you say, you will do all that, you will comport yourselves in this manner; if not, you have good to say that you love Him, Saint John tells you that you are liars and that the truth is not in your mouth.

Let us examine, my brethren, all our conduct and all our life, and let us see in detail all our actions. We must not stop at all our good thoughts, at all our good desires, and at all the sensible movements that we experience, as for example, when we are touched in reading a good book, in listening to the holy word, we form all sorts of fair resolutions: all that is nothing other than illusions, if moreover we do not apply ourselves to doing what God orders us by His commandments, and if we do not avoid what He forbids us there. See, my brethren, how much you are in contradiction with yourselves. In the evening and in the morning you join your hands in saying your prayers, you say: "My God, I love You with all my heart, and above all things"; do you believe you are saying the truth? Yet some moments afterward, your hands are occupied in stealing from your neighbor. Alas! perhaps at some shameful work. How many times have you not employed these hands to fill yourselves with wine and to give yourselves over to debauchery; this same mouth which has just pronounced an act of the love of God is going to soil itself, as soon as the occasion presents itself, by oaths, by reports, detractions, calumnies and by all sorts of words that are going to offend and dishonor this same God, to whom you have just said that you love Him with all your heart. Alas! my brethren, we say that we love the good God with all our heart! where are the proofs that assure us that what we say is true? One says in the world that true friends are known in the occasion; that is true, and that trials are needed to know whether friends are sincere: which is very easy to understand. Indeed, if I told you that I am your friend and that I did nothing to show it to you, and that on the contrary I did a thousand things to give you pain; if, in all the occasions where I could testify my attachment to you, I gave you only marks of aversion, you would not wish to believe that I love you, despite my having often said it to you; it is the same, my brethren, with regard to God. You may well say to Him a hundred times a day: "My God, I give You my heart," that does not suffice. One must give Him proofs of it in what we can do each day, because there are scarcely any days when we are not obliged to make some sacrifice to the good God, if we do not wish to offend Him and if we wish to love Him.

How many times does the demon not give us thoughts of pride, of hatred, of vengeance, of ambition, of jealousy, how many movements of anger and of impatience: how many thoughts or desires against the holy virtue of purity? and, at other times, how many thoughts and desires of avarice? Alas! our miserable body carries us without ceasing to evil, while the lights of conscience and the impressions of grace carry us to good. Well then! my brethren, that is what it is to please God, that is what it is to love Him: it is to combat, it is to resist courageously all temptations. That is how we shall give proofs of the love that we have for the good God; that is what will put us in a continual disposition to sacrifice everything rather than offend the good God. You say that you love the good God, or at least that you desire to love Him—you are a liar. Why then do you let this thought of pride enter into your heart? do you give yourselves over to these murmurings, to these jealousies, to these detractions and to these complacencies in yourselves? it is that you are only a hypocrite. You are angry at it, I well believe it; you will be well angry at it. Alas! how few there are who love the good God!… Let us say it, to the shame of Christianity, there is almost no one who loves Him with that love of preference, always ready to sacrifice everything to please Him, and always in the fear of displeasing Him.

See, my brethren, how Saint Eustace comported himself with all his family, see his constancy and his love for the good God. It is related in his life that being at the hunt, he was pursuing a stag of enormous size; having sprung upon a rock and seeking the means of reaching it, he perceived between its horns a fair crucifix which told him to go have himself baptized and to return, that it would teach him all that he would have to suffer for its love; that he would lose his goods, his reputation, his wife, his children and that he would finish by being burned in the fire. Saint Eustace heard all that without the least fright nor the least repugnance, nor even the least murmur. Indeed, a little time afterward, the plague put itself into his flocks and among his slaves, and spared not one. Everybody began to flee him and no one wished to relieve him. Seeing himself so miserable and so despised, he took the party of going into Egypt where he still had some goods. His wife and he each took their little children by the hand and abandoned themselves to the Providence of the good God. When it was necessary to cross the water, the master of the vessel kept the wife for his passage, and throwing the father and the children to land, set sail another way. Behold our Saint Eustace still deprived of one of his greatest consolations. Bearing all that, without a single murmur against the conduct that the good God held toward him, the author of his life tells us, he took a little crucifix between his hands, and kissing it respectfully, he continued his way. A little further, it was necessary to pass a rather wide river… and the rest… Behold, my brethren, what we can call a true love, since nothing is capable of separating him from his God.

We say, my brethren, that if we truly love the good God, we ought greatly to desire to see Him loved by all creatures. We have a fair example of it in history, and we see there a fair spectacle of divine love. One saw a woman, in the midst of the city of Alexandria, holding in one hand a vase full of water, and in the other a lighted torch. Those who saw her, all astonished, asked her what she pretended to do with all this apparatus. "I would wish," she answered, "with this torch, to set all heaven and all the hearts of men on fire, and, with this water, to extinguish all the fire of hell, so that, henceforth, one might love the good God neither by the hope of the reward, nor by fear of the punishment reserved for sinners; but uniquely because He is good, and because He deserves to be loved." Fair sentiments, my brethren, worthy of the greatness of the soul that knows what God is, and how much He deserves by Himself all the affections of our heart.

One recounts in the history of the Japanese that, when one announced the Gospel to them, when one instructed them concerning God and His lovable qualities, especially when one taught them the great mysteries of our holy religion, and all that the good God had done for men: a God being born in a poor stable, laid upon a handful of straw in the rigors of winter, a God suffering and dying upon a cross to save us; they were so astonished at so many marvels that God had worked for our salvation, that one heard them cry out all transported with love: "Oh! how great He is! oh! how good He is! oh! how lovable is the God of the Christians!" But when afterward one told them that there was a commandment that ordered them to love the good God, and that threatened them with chastisements if they did not love Him, they were so surprised at it that they could no longer recover from their astonishment. "What!" they said, "to reasonable men, to make a precept of loving a God who has so much loved us!… but, is it not the greatest happiness to love Him and the greatest misfortune not to love Him? What!" they said to the missionaries, "are not the Christians always at the foot of the altars of their God, all penetrated with the greatness of His goodnesses and all inflamed with His love?" And when one came to teach them that, not only were there some who did not love Him, but further who offended Him: "O unjust people! o barbarous people!" they cried with indignation, "is it well possible that Christians are capable of such outrage toward a God so good? In what cursed land then do these men without heart and without feelings dwell?" Alas! according to the manner in which we conduct ourselves toward the good God, we only too much deserve these reproaches! Yes, my brethren, a day will come when these distant and foreign nations will call these testimonies against us, will accuse us and will condemn us before God. How many Christians pass their life without loving the good God! Alas! perhaps we shall find several, on the great day of judgment, who will not have given a single entire day to the good God! Alas! what a misfortune!…

Saint Justin tells us that love ordinarily has three effects. When we love someone, we think often, and willingly, of him; we give willingly for him and we suffer willingly for him: behold, my brethren, what we ought to do for the good God, if we truly love Him. I say first, that we ought often to think of Jesus Christ. Nothing is more natural than to think of those whom one loves. See a miser: he is occupied only with his goods or with the means of increasing them; alone or in company, nothing is capable of distracting him from this thought. See a libertine: the person who makes the whole object of his love leaves him scarcely more than respiration; he thinks of it so much that, often, his body is so overwhelmed by it that he is sick from it. Oh! if we had the happiness of loving Jesus Christ as much as a miser loves his money or his lands, as a drunkard his wine, as a libertine the object of his passion, should we not be continually occupied with the love and the grandeurs of Jesus Christ? Alas! my brethren, we occupy ourselves with a thousand things which, almost all, come to nothing; while, for Jesus Christ, we pass hours and even entire days without remembering Him, or, in so weak a manner, that we scarcely believe what we think. O my God, how is it that one does not love You! Yet, my brethren, of all our friends is there one more generous, more beneficent? Tell me, if we had well thought that in listening to the demon who carried us to evil, we have greatly afflicted Jesus Christ, that we have made Him die a second time, should we have had that courage?… should we not have said: How, my God, could I offend You, You who have so much loved us! Yes, my God, day and night my mind and my heart will be occupied only with You.

Second, I say that if we truly love the good God, we shall give Him everything that it is in our power to give Him, and that, with a great pleasure. If we have goods, let us share them with the poor, it is as if we gave them to Jesus Christ Himself; it is He who tells us in the Gospel: "Everything that you will

give to the least of Mine—that is to say to the poor—it is as if you gave it to Myself." What happiness, my brethren, for a creature, to be able to be liberal toward his Creator, his God and his Savior! It is not only the rich who can give; but all Christians, even the poorest. We do not all have goods to give them to Jesus Christ in the person of the poor; but we all have a heart, and it is precisely of this present that He is most jealous; it is that which He asks with so much eagerness. Tell me, my brethren, could we refuse Him what He asks of us with so many instances, Him who has created us only for Himself? Ah! if we thought well of it, should we not say to the divine Savior: "Lord, I am only a sinner, have pity on me; behold me all Yours." How happy we should be if we made this universal offering to the good God! how great our reward would be!…

Third, but nonetheless the best mark of love that we can give to the good God is to suffer for Him; for, if we wished well to consider what He has suffered for us, we could not prevent ourselves from suffering all the miseries of life, the persecutions, the illnesses, the infirmities and poverty. Who would not let himself be touched at the sight of all that Jesus Christ has suffered during His mortal life? What outrages do men not make Him suffer, by the profanation of His sacraments, by the contempt of His holy religion, whose establishment cost Him so much? What blindness, my brethren, not to love a God so lovable and who seeks, in everything, only our happiness! We have a fair example in the person of Saint Magdalene, become celebrated in the whole Church by this great love that she had for Jesus Christ. Once she was His, she never left Him; not only from the heart, but further really: following Him in His journeys, assisting Him with her goods, and accompanying Him even to Calvary. She was present at His death, she prepared the perfumes to embalm His body and went early in the morning to the sepulcher. Not finding the body of Jesus Christ there any more, she takes it out on heaven, on the earth; she begs the angels and men to tell her where they have put her Savior; because she wishes to find Him at whatever price it may be. Her love was so ardent that we can say that it was impossible for Jesus Christ to hide Himself from her; for she thought only of Him, she desired and wished only Him; all things are nothing to her; she had neither human respect, nor fear of being despised or mocked; she abandoned all her goods, she trampled under foot ornaments and pleasures to run in the train of her Beloved; all the rest is no longer anything to her.

Listen still to the lesson that Saint Dominic gives us. This holy patriarch whose love of God had filled all desires, after having preached the whole day, passed entire nights in contemplation; he believed himself already in heaven, and could not understand that one could live without loving the good God, since we find there all our happiness. One day when he was taken by heretics, God worked a miracle to draw him from among their hands. "What would you have done," one of his friends said to him, "if they had wished to make you die?" — "Ah! I would have conjured them not to make me die all at once, but to cut me into as many little pieces as they could; afterward to tear out my tongue and my eyes, and, after having rolled the rest of my body in my blood, to cut off my head. I would have prayed them to leave no part of my body without making it suffer. Ah! it is then that I should have had the happiness of saying truly to the good God that I love Him. Yes, I would wish to be master of all the hearts of men, in order to make them all burn with love." What fair language comes from this heart burning with divine love! All his life this great saint sought the means of dying a martyr, to show the good God that truly he loved Him.

See still Saint Ignatius, martyr, bishop of Antioch, who was condemned, by the emperor Trajan, to be exposed to the beasts. He had so much joy at hearing the sentence that condemned him to be devour

by the beasts, that he believed he would die of happiness. He had only a single fear, it is that the Christians might obtain his pardon. He wrote to them saying: "My friends, let me become the prey of the beasts and let me be ground like a grain of wheat of God to become the bread of Jesus Christ. I know, my friends, that it is very useful for me to suffer; the irons, the gibbets, the fierce beasts must tear my members and break them in my body, and all the torments must come to fall upon me. Everything is good to me provided that I arrive at the possession of God. I begin now to love Jesus Christ; it is at present that I am His disciple. I have no more than disgust for the things of life, I am hungry only for the bread of my God, which must satisfy me throughout eternity; I thirst only for the flesh of Jesus Christ, which is only charity." Tell me, my brethren, can one find a heart more inflamed with the love of God? Indeed, he was devour by the lions, who left only some parts of his body.

What must one conclude from all that, my brethren, if not that all our happiness upon the earth is to attach ourselves to God—that is to say, it is necessary that, in everything we do, the good God be the unique end; since we all know by our own experience that nothing created is capable of rendering us happy, that the whole world with all its goods, its pleasures could not satisfy our heart. Never lose from view, my brethren, that everything will leave us. A moment will come when everything that we have will pass into other hands… Whereas if we have the great happiness of possessing the love of God we shall carry it away into heaven, which will make our happiness throughout eternity. To love God, to serve only Him alone and to desire only His possession: that is the happiness I wish for you.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost — On Charity (Fragments)

Diliges Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart. (Matthew 22:37)

To serve the good God perfectly, ah! it is not enough to believe in Him. It is true that faith makes us believe all the truths that the Church teaches us, and that, without this faith, all our actions are without merit in the eyes of God. Faith is then absolutely necessary to us to save ourselves. Yet this precious faith which discovers to us in advance the beauties of heaven will leave us one day, because, in the other life, there will no longer be mysteries. Hope, which is a gift of heaven, is also necessary to us to make us act with intentions very upright and very pure, in the sole view of pleasing God, in everything we do, whether to gain heaven, or to avoid hell. But charity carries us to love God because He is infinitely good, infinitely lovable and because He deserves to be loved.

But, you will say to me, how then to know whether we have this fair virtue which is so pleasing to God, and which makes us act with so much nobility—that is to say, which carries us to love the good God, not by the fear of the pains of hell, nor by the hope of heaven; but uniquely because of His infinite perfections? What ought to carry us so much to desire and so much to ask of the good God this fair virtue, is that it must accompany us throughout eternity. Still more, it is charity that must make all our happiness, since the felicity of the blessed consists in loving. This virtue so fair, so capable of rendering us happy, even from this world—let us see, my brethren, whether we have it, and let us seek the means of acquiring it.

If I asked a child: What is charity? he would answer me: It is a virtue that comes to us from heaven, by which we love God with all our heart, and the neighbor as ourselves with relation to God. But, you will ask me now, what is it to love the good God above all things, and more than oneself? It is to

prefer Him to everything that is created; it is to be in the disposition of losing one's goods, one's reputation, one's parents and one's friends, one's children, one's husband or one's wife and one's life itself, rather than commit the least mortal sin. Saint Augustine tells us that to love God perfectly is to love Him without measure, when there would be neither heaven to hope for, nor hell to fear; it is to love Him with the whole extent of one's heart. If you ask me the reason for it, it is that God is infinitely lovable and worthy of being loved. If we truly love Him, neither sufferings, nor persecutions, nor contempt, nor life, nor death will be able to snatch from us this love that we owe to God. We feel ourselves, my brethren, that if we do not love the good God we can only be very unhappy, very unhappy. If man is created to love the good God, he can find his happiness only in God alone. When we were masters of the world, if we do not love the good God, we can only be unhappy all the time of our life. If you wish better to convince yourselves of it, see, interrogate the people who live without loving the good God. See those persons who abandon the frequentation of the sacraments and prayer, see them in some grief, some loss—alas! they curse themselves, they kill themselves, or die of grief. A miser is not more content when he has much than when he has little. Is a drunkard happier after having drunk the cup of wine where he believed he found all his pleasure? He is only the more unhappy for it. A proud man never has rest: he always fears to be despised. A vindictive man, in seeking to avenge himself, can sleep neither day nor night. See still an infamous impure man who believes he finds his happiness in the pleasures of the flesh: he goes so far as—I do not say to lose his reputation—but his goods, his health and his soul, without however being able to find wherewith to content himself. And why, my brethren, can we not be happy in everything that seems ought to content us? Ah! it is that, being created only for God, there is only He alone who will be able to satisfy us—that is to say, to render us happy as much as it is possible to be so upon this poor earth. Blind that we are, we attach ourselves to life, to the earth and to its goods! alas! to pleasures—let us say better, we attach ourselves to everything that is capable of rendering us unhappy! How much wiser than we the saints, my brethren, have been to despise everything in order to seek only God alone. How little account he who truly loves the good God makes of everything that is upon the earth! How many great ones of the world, how many even princes, kings and emperors, do we not see, who have left everything to go serve the good God more freely in the deserts or in the monasteries! How many others to show the good God their love have mounted upon scaffolds, like conquerors upon their thrones! Ah! my brethren, how happy is he who has the happiness of detaching himself from the things of the world to attach himself only to God alone! Alas! how many are there among you who are twenty or thirty years old, and have never asked of the good God this love which is a gift of heaven, as your catechism tells you. From then on, we must not be astonished, my brethren, if we are so earthly and so little spiritual! This manner of comporting ourselves can lead us only to a very unhappy end: the separation from God for eternity. Ah! my brethren, is it well possible that we do not wish to turn ourselves toward our happiness which is God alone! Let us leave this subject, though so interesting. Charity makes all the joy and the felicity of the saints in heaven. Ah! Beauty ancient and always new, when is it that we shall love only You?

If now I asked a child: What is charity with relation to the neighbor? he would answer me: The charity for God must make us love Him more than our goods, our health, our reputation and our life itself; the charity that we ought to have for our neighbor must make us love him as ourselves, so that, all the good that we can desire for ourselves we ought to desire for our neighbor, if we wish to have this charity without which there is neither heaven, nor friendship of God to hope for. Alas! how many

sacraments does this lack of charity make profane, and how many souls does it lead into hell! But what must one understand by this word: our neighbor? Nothing easier to understand. This virtue extends to everybody, as well to those who have done us evil, who have harmed our reputation, have calumniated us and who have done us some wrong, even when they would have sought to take our life from us. We ought to love them as ourselves, and wish them all the good that we can desire for ourselves. Not only is it forbidden us to wish them any evil, but we must render them service every time they have need of it and we can. We ought to rejoice when they succeed in their affairs, to sadden ourselves when they experience some disgrace, some loss, to take their part when one says ill of them, to say the good that we know of them, not to flee their company, to speak to them even in preference to those who have rendered us some service: behold, my brethren, how the good God wishes that we love our neighbor. If we do not comport ourselves in this manner, we can say that we love neither our neighbor, nor the good God; we are only bad Christians, and we shall be damned.

See, my brethren, the conduct that Joseph held toward his brothers who had wished to make him die, who had thrown him into a cistern and who had afterward sold him to foreign merchants. God alone remained to him for consoler. But as the Lord does not abandon those who love Him, as much as Joseph had been humbled, so much was he elevated. When he had become almost master of the kingdom of Pharaoh, his brothers, reduced to the greatest misery, came to find him without knowing him. Joseph sees coming to him those who had wished to take his life from him, and who would have made him die if Reuben had not turned them from it. He has all the powers of Pharaoh in his hands, he could have them taken and make them die. Nothing could prevent him from it; on the contrary, it was even just to punish the wicked. But what does Joseph do? the charity that he has in his heart has made him lose the remembrance of the bad treatments that he has received. He thinks only of filling them… he weeps with joy, he quickly asks news of his father and of his other brothers; he wishes, the better to make them feel the greatness of his charity, that they all come near him forever.

But, you will say to me, how can one know whether one has this fair and precious virtue, without which our religion is only a phantom? First, my brethren, a person who has charity is not proud, she does not love to dominate over others; you will never hear her blame their conduct, she does not love to speak of what they do. A person who has charity does not examine what is the intention of others in their actions, she never believes she does better than they do; and never puts herself above her neighbor; on the contrary, she believes that others always do better than she. She does not get angry if one prefers the neighbor to her; if one despises her, she is not less content for it, because she thinks that she deserves still more contempt. A person who has charity avoids as much as she can giving pain to others, because charity is a royal mantle that knows well how to hide the faults of its brethren and never lets one believe that one is better than they.

Second, those who have charity receive with patience, and resignation to the will of God, all the accidents that can happen to them, illnesses, calamities, thinking that all that recalls to us that we are sinners, and that our life is not eternal here below. In their griefs, in their pains, in their illnesses or in the losses of goods, you see them always submitted to the will of God, and never do they despair, thinking that they are accomplishing this divine will. See the holy man Job upon his dunghill: is he not content? If you ask me why he does not let himself go to despair? it is that he has charity in his soul, and that in submitting himself to the will of God, he acquires merits for heaven. See still the holy man Tobias who became blind in burying the dead: he does not despair, and he is tranquil. Why

still this tranquillity? He knows that he is doing the will of God and that in this state he glorifies Him…

In the third place, I say that this one has charity, who is not avaricious and in no way seeks to amass the goods of this world. He works because the good God wishes it, but without attaching himself to his work nor to the desire of hoarding for the future; he rests with confidence in the Providence that never abandons him who loves Him. Charity reigning in his heart, all the things of the earth are no longer anything to him; he sees that all those who run after the goods of this world are the most unhappy. For him, he employs as much as he can his goods in good works to redeem his sins and to merit heaven. He is charitable toward everybody and has preference for no one; all the good that he does, he does in the name of God. He assists the poor who has need of it, whether he be his friend or his enemy. He imitates Saint Francis de Sales, who, being able to make only one alms, remitted it to him from whom he had received some pain, rather than to him to whom he was obliged. The reason for this conduct is that such an action is much more pleasing to God. If you have charity, never examine whether those to whom you give have done you some wrong, or said some injury; whether they are wise or not. They ask you in the name of God, give to them likewise. Behold all that one must do in order that your alms be rendered worthy of being rewarded. We read in the life of Saint Ignatius that one day, being pressed by some affair, he refused alms to a poor man. But he soon ran after this unhappy man to give to him, and from then on promised the good God never to refuse alms, when one asked it of him in His name. But, do you think, if one gives to all the poor, one will soon be poor oneself. Listen to what the holy man Tobias said to his son: Never retain the wages of workmen, always pay in the evening after they have worked; and as for the poor, give to all if you can. If you have much, give much; if you have little, give little; but always give from a good heart; because alms redeems sins and extinguishes the flames of purgatory. Moreover we can say that a house that gives to the poor will never fall into ruin, because the good God would rather work a miracle than permit it. See Saint Anthony who sells all his goods to give them to the poor, and who goes into a desert where he abandons himself entirely into the hands of Providence. See a Saint Paul the hermit, a Saint Alexis, who strip themselves absolutely of goods, to lead a poor and despised life. See a Saint Serapion, who, not only sells all his goods and his garments, but who still sells himself to redeem a captive. How guilty we are when we do not make alms, and when we despise the poor, by rebuffing them, by telling them that they are lazybones; that they can well work!… My brethren, let us make alms as much as we can, because it is the thing that must reassure us at the hour of death, and if you doubt of it, read the Gospel where Jesus Christ speaks to us of the judgment: "I was hungry," etc. Do you wish to leave children happy and wise? Give them the example of being almsgiving and charitable toward the poor, and you will see one day that the good God has blessed them. That is what Saint Blanche understood, saying: "My son, we shall always be rich enough if we love the good God, and if we love to do good to our brethren."

If we truly have charity, this virtue so pleasing to God, we shall not comport ourselves like the pagans who do good to those who do good to them, or from whom they hope it; but we shall do good to the neighbor, in the sole view of pleasing God and of redeeming our sins. Whether one be grateful to us or not, whether one do us good or evil, whether one despise us or praise us: that must do nothing to us. There are some who act entirely humanly. Have they made an alms, have they rendered service to some person, if they do not use reciprocity, that angers them, and they reproach themselves for having been simple. How blind you are! Either you have done your good works for the good God, or

you have done them for the world. If you have done them to be esteemed and praised by men, you have reason to wish to be paid with gratitude; but if you have done them in the sole view of redeeming your sins and of pleasing God; why complain? It is from God alone that you await the reward of them. You ought much rather to thank the good God that one pays you with ingratitude, because your reward will be much greater. Ah! how happy we are! because we shall have given some little thing, the good God gives us heaven in return! Our little alms and our little services will then be well rewarded. Yes, my brethren, let us always prefer to do good to those who will never be able to render it to us, because if they render it to us we risk losing the merit of it. Do you wish to know whether you have true charity? Here is the mark of it: See to whom you prefer to make alms or render some service. Is it to those who have given you some pain, or to those who are united to you, who thank you? If it is to these last, you have not the virtue of charity; and you have nothing to hope for for the other life; all the merit of these good actions is then lost. I am persuaded that if I wished well to enter into the detail of all the faults into which one falls on this point, I should find almost no one who has in his soul this virtue entirely pure and such as God wishes it. To be rewarded in everything that we do for the neighbor, let us seek only God, and let us act only for Him alone. How rare this virtue is among Christians! Let us say better, it is as rare to find it as it is rare to find saints. And what is astonishing? Where are those who ask it of God, who make some prayers or some good works to obtain it? How many are twenty years old and perhaps thirty, and have never asked for it? The proof of it is very convincing. Have those asked for it who have only human views? See yourself what repugnance you have to do, at once, good to him who has just done you some wrong or some injustice. Do you not even conserve a certain hatred or, at least, a certain coldness with regard to him? You scarcely salute him, and consent to speak to him as to another person. Alas! O my God! how many Christians lead an entirely pagan life, and still believe themselves good Christians: Alas! how many are going to be undeceived when the good God will make them see what charity is, the qualities that it ought to have to render all their actions meritorious.

Fourth, it is not necessary to show you that a person who has charity is free from the infamous vice of impurity, because a person who has the happiness of having this precious virtue in the soul, is so united to the good God, and acts so well according to His holy will, that the demon of impurity cannot enter into her heart. The fire of divine love so inflames this heart, her soul and all her senses, that it puts her out of the reach of the demon of impurity. Yes, my brethren, we can say that charity renders a person pure in all her senses. O infinite happiness who will ever understand you!

Fifth, charity is not envious: she does not feel sadness at the good that happens to the neighbor, whether in the spiritual, or in the temporal. You will never see a person who has charity angry that another succeeds better than she, or that she is more loved, more esteemed. Far from afflicting herself at the happiness of her neighbor, she blesses the good God for it. But, you will say to me, I am not angry that my neighbor does his affairs well, that he is very rich, very happy. — Agree however with me that you would be more content that that happened to you rather than to him. — That is still true. — Well then! if that is so, you have not charity such as the good God wishes that you have it, as He commands it to you, and in order to please Him.

Sixth, he who has charity is not subject to anger, for Saint Paul tells us that charity is patient, good, gentle toward everybody. See how far we are from having this charity. How many times for a nothing we get angry, we murmur, we fly into a passion, we speak with haughtiness, and we remain in anger

for several days!… — But, you will say to me, it is my manner of speaking; I am not angry afterward. — Say rather then that you have not charity, which is patient, gentle, and that you do not conduct yourselves like a good Christian. Tell me, if you had charity in the soul, would you not bear with patience, and even with pleasure, a word that one will say against you, an injury, or if you wish, a little wrong that one will have done you? — He attacks my reputation. — Alas! my friend, what good opinion do you wish that one have of you after you have so many times deserved contempt? Ought we not to look upon ourselves as too happy that one is willing to suffer us among creatures, after we have treated the Creator so unworthily!… Ah! my brethren, if we had this charity, we should be upon the earth almost like the saints who are in heaven! Who then knows whence come to us all these griefs that we experience as well the ones as the others; and why are there so many in the world who suffer all sorts of miseries? That comes from our not having charity.

Yes, my brethren, charity is a virtue so fair, it renders everything that we do so pleasing to the good God, that the holy Fathers do not know what terms to use to make us know all its beauty and all its value. They compare it to the sun which is the fairest star of the firmament, and which gives to the others all their clarity and their beauty. Like it, the virtue of charity communicates to all the other virtues their beauty and their purity, and renders them meritorious and infinitely more pleasing to God. They compare it to fire which is the noblest and the most active of all the elements. Charity is the noblest and the most active of all virtues: it carries man to despise everything that is vile, contemptible and of little duration, to attach himself only to God alone and to the goods that must never perish. They still compare it to gold which is the most precious of all metals, and makes the ornament and the beauty of everything rich that we have upon the earth. Charity makes the beauty and the ornament of all the other virtues; the least action of gentleness or of humility, done with charity in the heart, is of a price that surpasses everything that we can think. The good God tells us in Holy Scripture that His spouse had wounded His heart by a hair of her neck, to make us understand that the least good work done with love, with charity in the soul, is so pleasing to Him, that it pierces His heart. The least action, however small it may be, is always very pleasing to Him, since there is nothing so small as the hairs of the neck. O fair virtue! how happy are those who possess you; but, alas! how rare they are!… The saints still compare it to the rose which is the fairest of all flowers, and very odoriferous. Likewise, they tell us, charity is the fairest of all virtues; its odor mounts even to the throne of God. Let us say better, charity is as necessary to us to please God and to render all our actions meritorious, as our soul is necessary to our body. A person who has not charity in the heart, is a body without soul. Yes, my brethren, it is charity that sustains faith and that reanimates it; without charity, it is dead. Hope, like faith, is only a languishing virtue which, without charity, will not last long.

Do we understand now, my brethren, the value of this virtue and the necessity of possessing it to save ourselves. Let us have at least the care to ask it every day of God, since, without it, we do nothing for our salvation. We can say that when charity enters into a heart, it leads there with it all the other virtues: it is she who purifies and sanctifies all our actions; it is she who perfects the soul; it is she who renders all our actions worthy of heaven. Saint Augustine tells us that all the virtues are in charity, and that charity is in all the virtues. It is charity, he tells us, that conducts all our actions to their end, and that gives them access near God. Saint Paul, who has been and who still is the light of the world, makes so much of it and so much esteem, that he tells us that it surpasses all the gifts of heaven. Writing to the Corinthians, he cries out: “Though I spoke the language of the angels, if I have

not charity, I am like a cymbal that resounds, and produces only a sound. Though I had the gift of prophecy, and so much faith that I could transport mountains from one place to another, if I have not charity, I am nothing. Though I gave all my goods to the poor and delivered my body to sufferings, all that would serve for nothing if I have not charity in my heart, and if I do not love my neighbor as myself." Do you see, my brethren, the necessity in which we are of asking of the good God, with all our heart, this incomparable virtue, since all the virtues are nothing without it?

Do you wish a fair model of it? See Moses: when his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam murmured against him, the Lord punished them; but Moses seeing his sister covered with a leprosy which was the punishment of her revolt: O Lord! he said to Him, why do You punish my sister? You know well that I have never asked You for vengeance, pardon her if You please. Also the Holy Spirit tells us that he was the mildest of the men who were then upon the earth. Behold, my brethren, a brother who truly has charity in his heart, since he afflicts himself at seeing his sister punished. Tell me, if we saw someone punished who had done us some outrage, should we do like Moses: should we afflict ourselves, should we ask the good God not to punish him? Alas! how rare are those who have in their soul this charity of Moses! But, you will say to me, when one does us things that we do not deserve, it is very difficult to love the authors of them. Difficult, my brethren?… see Saint Stephen. While one stones him to death with blows of stones, he lifts his hands and prays God to pardon these executioners who take his life from him, the sin that they commit. But, do you think, Saint Stephen was a saint. — He was a saint, my brethren? but if we are not saints, it is a great misfortune for us: we must become so; and so long as we shall not have charity in the heart, we shall never become saints.

How many sins, my brethren, does one commit against the love of God and of the neighbor! Do you desire to know how often we sin against the love that we owe to God? Do we love Him with all our heart? have we not often preferred to Him our parents, our friends? To go see them, without there being necessity, have we not often missed the offices, Vespers, the catechism, evening prayer? How many times have you not made your children miss prayer for fear of making them lose some minutes? alas! to go pasture your flocks in the fields!…. My God! what an unworthy preference!… How many times have we not ourselves missed our prayers, or have we said them in our bed, while dressing, or while walking? Have we had care to refer all our actions to the good God, all our thoughts, all our desires? Have we consecrated ourselves to Him from the age of reason, and have we well given Him everything that we had? Saint Thomas tells us that fathers and mothers ought to have a great care to consecrate their children to the good God, from the most tender age, and that, ordinarily, the children who are consecrated to the good God by their parents, receive a grace and a blessing entirely particular, which they would not receive without that. He tells us that if mothers had well at heart the salvation of their children, they would give them to the good God before they came into the world. We say that those who have charity receive with patience and resignation to the will of God, all the accidents that can happen to them, illnesses, calamities, thinking that all that recalls to us that we are sinners, and that our life is not eternal here below.

We still sin against the love of God, when we remain too long without thinking of Him. How many, alas! pass a quarter and even half of the day without making an elevation of their heart toward God, to thank Him for all His benefits, especially for having made them Christians, for having made them be born in the bosom of His Church, for having preserved them from dying in sin. Have we thanked

Him for all the sacraments that He has established for our sanctification, for our vocation to the faith? Have we thanked Him for everything that He has operated for our salvation, for His Incarnation, for His death and Passion? Have we not had indifference for the service of God in neglecting either to frequent the sacraments, or to correct ourselves, or to have often recourse to prayer? Have we not neglected to instruct ourselves in the manner of comporting ourselves to please God? When we have seen someone blaspheme the holy name of God, or commit other sins, have we not been indifferent, as if that did not regard us? Have we not prayed without taste, without design of pleasing God; rather to rid ourselves of it, than to draw His mercies upon us, and nourish our poor soul? Have we not passed the holy day of Sunday contenting ourselves with Mass, Vespers; without making any other prayer, nor visit to the Blessed Sacrament, nor spiritual reading? Have we been afflicted when we have been obliged to miss the offices? Have we tried to supply for them by all the prayers that we could?… Have you made your children, your domestics miss the offices without grave reasons?… Have we well combated all these thoughts of hatred, of vengeance and of impurity? To love the good God, my brethren, it does not suffice to say that one loves Him; one must, to assure oneself well whether that is true, see whether we observe well His commandments, and whether we make those well observe them of whom we have the responsibility before the good God. Listen to Our Lord: "In truth, I say to you that it is not he who will say: Lord, Lord, who will enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who will do the will of My Father." We love the good God, when we seek only to please Him in everything we do. One must desire neither life, nor death; however, one can desire death to have the happiness of going toward the good God. Saint Ignatius had so great a desire to see God, that, when he thought of death, he wept with joy for it. Yet in the expectation of this great happiness, he said to God, that he would remain as long as He wished upon the earth. He had so much at heart the salvation of souls, that one day not being able to convert a hardened sinner, he went to plunge himself, up to the neck, into a frozen pond in order to obtain of God the conversion of this unhappy man. As he was going to Paris, one of his scholars took from him on the way all the money that he had. This scholar having fallen sick at Rouen, this good saint made the journey from Paris to that city, on foot and without shoes, to ask the healing of him who had taken from him all his money. Tell me, my brethren, is that a perfect charity? You think in yourselves that it would already be much to pardon. You would do the same thing, if you had the same charity as this good saint. If we find so few persons who would do that, my brethren, it is that there are very few who have charity in the soul. How consoling it is that we can love God and the neighbor without being learned, nor rich! We have a heart, it suffices for this love.

We read in history that two solitaries asked of God for a long time, that He would be willing to teach them the manner of loving Him and of serving Him, as one must, since they had left the world only for that. They heard a voice that told them to go into the city of Alexandria where there dwelt a man, named Eucharistus, and his wife who was called Mary. Those served the good God more perfectly than the solitaries, and would teach them how He ought to be loved. Very happy at this answer, the two solitaries betake themselves in all haste into the city of Alexandria. Having arrived, they inquire, for several days, without being able to find these two holy personages. Fearing that this voice may have deceived them, they were taking the party of returning into their desert, when they perceived a woman at the door of her house. They asked her, whether she would not know by chance a man named Eucharistus. — It is my husband, she said to them. — You are then called Mary, the solitaries said to her? — Who has taught you my name? — We have learned it, with that of your husband, by a

supernatural voice, and we come here to speak to you. The husband arrived, toward evening, leading a little flock of sheep. The solitaries at once ran to embrace him, and prayed him to tell them what was his kind of life. — Alas! my fathers, I am only a poor shepherd. — It is not what we ask of you, the solitaries said to him; tell us how you live and in what manner, you and your wife, serve the good God. — My fathers, it is well for you to tell me what one must do to serve the good God; I am only a poor ignorant man. — No matter! we have come from the part of God to ask you how you serve Him. — Since you command it of me, I am going to tell you. I have had the happiness of having a mother fearing God, who, from my childhood, recommended to me to do everything and to suffer everything for the love of God. I suffered the little corrections that one made me for the love of God; I referred everything to God: in the morning, I rose, I said my prayers and did all my work for His love. For His love, I take my rest and my meals; I suffer hunger, thirst, cold and heat, illnesses and all the other miseries. I have no children; I have lived with my wife as with my sister, and always in a great peace. Behold my whole life and it is also that of my wife. — The solitaries, ravished at seeing souls so pleasing to God, asked him whether he had goods. — I have little goods, but this little flock of sheep that my father has left me suffices me, I have of it to spare. I make three parts of my little revenue: I give one part to the church, another to the poor, and the rest makes my wife and me live. I nourish myself poorly; but never do I complain: I suffer all that for the love of God. — Have you enemies, the solitaries said to him? — Alas, my fathers, who is he who has none? I try to do them all the good that I can, I seek to please them in every circumstance, and I apply myself to doing evil to no one. At these words, the two solitaries were filled with joy at having found a means so easy of pleasing God and of arriving at high perfection. You see, my brethren, that to love the good God and the neighbor it is not necessary to be very learned, nor very rich; it suffices to seek only to please God, in everything we do; to do good to everybody, to the good as to the bad, to those who tear our reputation, as to those who love us. Let us take Jesus Christ for our model, we shall see what He has done for all men and particularly for His executioners. See how He asks pardon, mercy for them; He loves them, He offers for them the merits of His death and Passion; He promises them pardon. If we have not this virtue of charity, we have nothing; we are only phantoms of Christians. Either we shall love everybody, even our greatest enemies, or we shall be reprobate. Ah! my brethren, since this fair virtue comes from heaven, let us address ourselves then to heaven to ask for it, and we are sure of obtaining it. If we possess charity, everything in us will please the good God, and by that we shall assure ourselves paradise. That is the happiness I wish for you.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost — On Purity

Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt. Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God. (Matthew 5:8)

We read in the Gospel that Jesus Christ, wishing to instruct the people who came in crowds to learn from Him what must be done to have eternal life, sat down, and opening His mouth said to them: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." If we had a great desire to see God, my brethren, should not these words alone make us understand how much purity renders us pleasing to Him, and how necessary it is to us—since, according to Jesus Christ, without it we shall never see Him? "Blessed," Jesus Christ tells us, "are those who have a pure heart, for they shall see the good God." Can one hope for a greater reward than that which Jesus Christ attaches to this beautiful and

lovable virtue—namely, the enjoyment of the three Persons of the most holy Trinity for all eternity? Saint Paul, who knew its price so well, writing to the Corinthians, said to them: "Glorify the good God, since you bear Him in your bodies; and be faithful in keeping them in a great purity. Remember well, my children, that your members are the members of Jesus Christ, and that your hearts are the temples of the Holy Spirit. Take great care not to defile them by the sin which is adultery, fornication, and all that can dishonor your body and your heart, in the eyes of God who is purity itself." Oh! my brethren, how beautiful and precious this virtue is—not only in the eyes of men and of angels, but in the eyes of God Himself. He sets such store by it that He never ceases to praise it in all those who are happy enough to keep it. Also, this inestimable virtue is the fairest ornament of the Church, and consequently it ought to be the most cherished of Christians. We, my brethren, who in holy Baptism have been sprinkled with the adorable Blood of Jesus Christ, purity itself—in that adorable Blood which has brought forth so many virgins of both sexes; we, to whom Jesus Christ has given a share of His purity by making us His members and His temple… But alas! my brethren, in this unhappy age of corruption in which we live, one no longer knows this virtue, this heavenly virtue which makes us like the angels! Yes, my brethren, purity is a virtue necessary to us all, since without it no one will see the good God. I should like to give you an idea of it worthy of God, and to show you, first, how much it renders us pleasing in His eyes by giving a new degree of holiness to all our actions; and second, what we must do to preserve it.

It would take, my brethren, to make you understand well the esteem we ought to have for this incomparable virtue, to recount its beauty to you, and to make you appreciate its value before God—not a mortal man, but an angel from heaven. Hearing him, you would say with astonishment: How is it that all men are not ready to sacrifice everything rather than lose a virtue which unites us so intimately with God? Let us try, however, to form some idea of it by considering that this virtue comes from heaven, that it brings Jesus Christ down upon the earth, and that it raises man up to heaven by the likeness it gives him to the angels, to Jesus Christ Himself. Tell me, my brethren, after that, does it not deserve the title of precious virtue? Is it not worthy of all our esteem and of all the sacrifices necessary to keep it?

We say that purity comes from heaven, because only Jesus Christ Himself was capable of teaching it to us and of making us feel all its value. He has left us prodigious examples of the esteem He had for this virtue. Having resolved, in the greatness of His mercy, to redeem the world, He took a mortal body like ours; but He wished to choose a virgin for His Mother. Who was this incomparable creature, my brethren? It was Mary, the purest among all, who by a grace granted to no other was exempt from original sin. She consecrated her virginity to the good God from the age of three years, and in offering Him her body and her soul she made Him the holiest, the purest, and the most pleasing sacrifice that God has ever received from a creature on earth. She sustained it by an inviolable fidelity in keeping her purity and in avoiding all that could in the least tarnish its brightness. We see that the Blessed Virgin set such store by this virtue that she would not consent to be the Mother of God until the angel had assured her that she would not lose it. But when the angel had told her that in becoming the Mother of God, far from losing or tarnishing that purity which she esteemed so highly, she would only be the purer and more pleasing to God, she consented willingly then, in order to give a new brilliance to that virginal purity. We see further that Jesus Christ chose a foster-father who was poor, it is true; but He wished his purity to be above that of all other creatures, the Blessed Virgin excepted. Among His disciples He distinguished one, to whom He showed a

singular friendship and confidence, to whom He shared His greatest secrets; but He took the purest of all, and one who had been consecrated to God from his youth.

Saint Ambrose tells us that purity raises us up to heaven and makes us leave the earth, as far as it is possible for a creature to leave it. It raises us above corrupted nature and, by its sentiments and its desires, makes us live the very life of the angels. According to Saint John Chrysostom, the chastity of a soul is of greater price in the eyes of God than that of the angels, because Christians can acquire this virtue only by combats, whereas the angels have it by nature. The angels have nothing to combat in order to keep it, while a Christian is obliged to make continual war upon himself. Saint Cyprian adds that chastity not only makes us like the angels, but also gives us a character of resemblance to Jesus Christ Himself. Yes, this great saint tells us, a chaste soul is a living image of God upon earth. The more a soul detaches itself from itself by resistance to its passions, the more it attaches itself to God; and, by a happy return, the more the good God attaches Himself to it: He looks upon it, He regards it as His spouse and His beloved; He makes it the object of His dearest complacencies and fixes His dwelling there forever. "Happy," the Savior tells us, "are those who have a pure heart, for they shall see the good God." According to Saint Basil, if we find chastity in a soul, we find there all the other Christian virtues; it will practice them with great ease, "because," he tells us, "to be chaste one must impose many sacrifices upon oneself and do oneself a great violence. But once it has won such victories over the devil, the flesh, and the blood, all the rest costs it very little; for a soul that commands with empire this sensual body easily overcomes all the obstacles it meets on the path of virtue." Also we see, my brethren, that Christians who are chaste are the most perfect. We see them reserved in their words, modest in all their ways, sober in their meals, respectful in the holy place, and edifying in all their conduct. Saint Augustine compares those who have the great happiness of keeping a pure heart to the lilies that rise straight toward heaven and spread around them a very pleasing fragrance; the mere sight of them makes us think of this precious virtue. Thus the Blessed Virgin inspired purity in all who looked upon her. Happy virtue, my brethren, which sets us in the rank of the angels, which seems even to raise us above them! All the saints have set the greatest store by it and have preferred to lose their goods, their reputation, and even their life rather than tarnish this beautiful virtue.

We have a fair example of it in the person of Saint Agnes. Her beauty and her riches had caused her to be sought, at the age of twelve, by the son of the prefect of the city of Rome. She made known to him that she had consecrated herself to the good God. She was arrested under the pretext that she was a Christian, but in reality so that she might consent to the young man's desires. She was so united to the good God that neither promises, nor threats, nor the sight of the executioners and the instruments displayed before her to frighten her, made her change her sentiments. Her persecutors, unable to gain anything over her, loaded her with chains and wished to put an iron collar and rings on her neck and hands; they could not succeed, so frail were her poor little innocent hands. She remained firm in her resolution amid these raging wolves, and she offered her little body to the torments with a courage that astonished the executioners. She was dragged to the feet of the idols; but she confessed aloud that she recognized as God only Jesus Christ, and that their idols were only demons. The cruel and barbarous judge, seeing that he could gain nothing, thought she would be more sensitive to the loss of that purity which she prized so highly. He threatened to expose her in an infamous place; but she answered him firmly: "You may well make me die, but you will never be able to make me lose this treasure: Jesus Christ Himself is too jealous of it." The judge, dying of rage, had

her led into that place of infernal filth. But Jesus Christ, who watched over her in a particular manner, inspired so great a respect in the guards that they looked upon her only with a kind of fear, and He commanded one of His angels to protect her. The young men who entered that chamber, burning with an impure fire, seeing an angel beside her fairer than the sun, came out all burning with divine love. But the prefect's son, more wicked and more corrupted than the others, entered the chamber where Saint Agnes was. Without regard for all these wonders, he approached her in the hope of satisfying his impure desires; but the angel who guarded the young martyr struck the libertine, who fell dead at her feet. At once the rumor spread through Rome that the prefect's son had been killed by Agnes. The father, all in fury, came to find the saint and gave himself up to all that his despair could inspire. He called her a fury of hell, a monster born for the desolation of his life, since she had caused his son to die. Saint Agnes answered him calmly: "It is because he wished to do me violence; then my angel gave him death." The prefect, a little softened, said to her: "Well then! pray your God to raise him up, so that it may not be said that it is you who made him die." "Doubtless," the saint said to him, "you do not deserve this grace; but so that you may know that Christians never take revenge, that on the contrary they return good for evil, go out from here, and I am going to pray the good God for him." Then Agnes threw herself on her knees, prostrate with her face against the ground. While she prayed, her angel appeared to her and said: "Take courage." At the same instant the lifeless body took life again. The young man raised by the saint's prayers rushed from the house, ran through the streets of Rome crying: "No, no, my friends, there is no other God than the God of the Christians; all the gods we adore are only demons who deceive us and drag us into hell." Yet in spite of so great a miracle they did not fail to condemn her to death. Then the prefect's lieutenant commanded that a great fire be lighted, and had her thrown into it. But the flames parting did her no harm and burned the idolaters who had run up to be spectators of her combats. The lieutenant, seeing that the fire respected her and did her no harm, ordered that she be struck with a sword-blow in the throat, so as to take her life; but the executioner trembled as if he himself were condemned to death… As the parents of Saint Agnes wept over their daughter's death, she appeared to them saying: "Do not weep for my death; on the contrary, rejoice that I have acquired so great a glory in heaven." You see, my brethren, what this virgin suffered rather than lose her virginity. Conceive now the esteem you ought to have for purity, and how much the good God is pleased to work miracles in order to show Himself its protector and guardian. How this example will one day confound those young people who set so little store by this beautiful virtue! They have never known its price. The Holy Spirit is therefore quite right to cry out: "Oh! how beautiful is the chaste generation; its memory is eternal, and its glory shines before men and angels!"

It is certain, my brethren, that each one loves his like; also the angels, who are pure spirits, love and protect in a particular manner the souls that imitate their purity. We read in Holy Scripture that the angel Raphael, who accompanied the young Tobias, rendered him a thousand services. He preserved him from being devoured by a fish, from being strangled by the demon. If that young man had not been chaste, most certainly the angel would not have accompanied him and would not have rendered him so many services. What pleasure does the guardian angel enjoy who leads a pure soul! There is no virtue for the preservation of which the good God works miracles so numerous as those He lavishes in favor of a person who knows the price of purity and strives to safeguard it.

See what He did for Saint Cecilia. Born at Rome of very rich parents, she was well instructed in the Christian religion, and following God's inspiration she consecrated her virginity to Him. Her parents,

who did not know it, promised her in marriage to Valerian, son of a senator of the city. It was, according to the world, a very considerable match. She asked her parents for time to think of it. She spent that time in fasting, prayer, and tears, to obtain from God the grace not to lose the flower of that virtue which she esteemed more than her life. The good God answered her to fear nothing and to obey her parents; for not only would she not lose this virtue, but that he whom she would have… She consented therefore to the marriage. On the day of her wedding, when Valerian presented himself, she said to him: "My dear Valerian, I have a secret to communicate to you." He answered her: "What is this secret?" — "I have consecrated my virginity to God and never shall a man touch me, for I have an angel who watches over my purity; and if you were to attempt it, he would strike you with death." Valerian was much surprised at this language, because being a pagan he understood nothing of all that. He answered: "Show me this angel who guards you." The saint replied: "You cannot see him because you are a pagan. Go find Pope Urban on my behalf, and ask him for Baptism; afterward you will see my angel." At once he set out. After being baptized by the Pope, he came back to find his spouse. Entering her chamber, he perceived the angel watching with Saint Cecilia. He found him so beautiful, so brilliant with glory, that he was charmed and touched. Not only did he permit his spouse to remain consecrated to God, but he himself made a vow of virginity. They soon both had the happiness of dying as martyrs. Do you see how the good God takes care of a person who loves this incomparable virtue and works to preserve it?

We read in the life of Saint Edmund that, studying at Paris, he found himself with some persons who were saying foolish things; he left them at once. This action was so pleasing to God that He appeared to him under the form of a beautiful child and greeted him with a most gracious air, telling him that He had seen with satisfaction that he left his companions who were holding licentious discourses; and to reward him for it, He promised that He would always be with him. Moreover Saint Edmund had the great happiness of keeping his innocence until death. When Saint Lucy went to the tomb of Saint Agatha to ask the good God, through her intercession, for the cure of her mother, Saint Agatha appeared to her and told her that she could obtain by herself what she asked, because by her purity she had prepared in her heart a dwelling most pleasing to her Creator. This shows us that the good God can refuse nothing to one who has the happiness of keeping body and soul pure.

Listen to the account of what happened to Saint Potamiana, who lived in the time of the persecution of Maximian. This young girl was the slave of a debauched and libertine master, who never ceased soliciting her to evil. She preferred to suffer all sorts of cruelties and torments rather than consent to the solicitations of that infamous master. He, seeing that he could gain nothing, in his fury had her delivered as a Christian into the hands of the governor, to whom he promised a great reward if he could win her over. The unjust judge had this virgin brought before his tribunal, and seeing that all the threats did not make her change her sentiments, he made her endure all that rage could inspire in him. But the good God, who never abandons those who have consecrated themselves to Him, gave the young martyr so much strength that she seemed insensible to all the torments. This iniquitous judge, unable to overcome her resistance, had a cauldron filled with pitch placed on a very hot fire, and said to her: "Look at what is being prepared for you, if you do not obey your master." The holy girl answered without being troubled: "I prefer to suffer all that your fury can inspire in you rather than obey the infamous will of my master; besides, I should never have believed that a judge could be so unjust as to wish to make me obey the designs of a debauched master." The tyrant, irritated by this answer, commanded that she be thrown into the cauldron. "At least," she said to him, "order that

I be thrown into it fully clothed. You will see what strength the good God whom we adore gives to those who suffer for Him." After three hours of torment, Potamiana gave her beautiful soul back to her Creator, and thus won the double palm of martyrdom and of virginity.

Alas! my brethren, how little this virtue is known in the world, how little we esteem it, how little care we take to preserve it, how little zeal we have to ask it of God, since we cannot have it of ourselves. No, we do not know this beautiful and lovable virtue which so easily wins the heart of God, which gives so fair a luster to all our other good works, which raises us above ourselves, which makes us live on earth as the angels live in heaven!… No, my brethren, it is not known to those old infamous and impure ones who drag themselves, roll, and drown in the mire of their turpitudes, whose heart is like those rocks on the mountain-tops roasted and burned by these impure fires. Alas! far from seeking to extinguish it, they never cease to kindle and inflame it by their looks, their thoughts, their desires, and their actions. In what state will that soul be when it appears before a God who is purity itself? No, my brethren, this beautiful virtue is not known to that person whose lips are only a mouth and a pipe of which hell makes use to vomit its impurities upon the earth, and who feeds on them as on daily bread [pain quotidien]. Alas! their poor soul is no longer anything but an object of horror to heaven and to earth! No, my brethren, this lovable virtue of purity is not known to those young people whose eyes and hands are soiled by looks and …… O God, how many souls this sin drags into hell!… No, my brethren, this beautiful virtue is not known to those worldly and corrupted girls who take so many precautions and cares to draw upon themselves the eyes of the world; who by their studied and indecent adornments publicly announce that they are infamous instruments of which hell makes use to ruin souls—those souls which have cost Jesus Christ so much labor, so many tears and torments!… Look at them, these unhappy ones, and you will see that a thousand demons surround their head and their breast. O my God, how can the earth bear such satellites of hell? Still more astonishing: how can mothers suffer them in a state unworthy of a Christian woman! If I did not fear to go too far, I would say to these mothers that they are worth no more than their daughters. Alas! this unhappy heart and these impure eyes are only a poisoned spring that gives death to whoever looks at them or listens to them. How dare such monsters present themselves before a holy God so great an enemy of impurity! Alas! their poor life is nothing other than a heap of grease which they amass to feed the fires of hell for all eternity. But, my brethren, let us leave a matter so disgusting and so revolting for a Christian, whose purity ought to imitate that of Jesus Christ Himself; and let us return to our beautiful virtue of purity which raises us up to heaven, which opens to us the adorable Heart of Jesus Christ, and draws upon us every kind of spiritual and temporal blessing.

We have said, my brethren, that this virtue is of great price in the eyes of God; let us also say that it does not lack enemies who strive to make us lose it. We may even say that almost everything around us works to snatch it from us. The devil is one of our cruellest enemies; as he lives in the filth of impure vices, as he knows that there is no sin which so outrages the good God, and as he knows how pleasing a pure soul is to Him, he lays every kind of snare for us to take this virtue away. On the other hand, the world, which seeks only its ease and its pleasures, also works to make us lose it, often while seeming to show us friendship. But we may say that our cruellest and most dangerous enemy is ourselves—that is to say, our flesh which, already spoiled and corrupted by Adam's sin, drives us with a kind of fury toward corruption. If we are not continually on our guard, it has soon burned and devoured us with its impure flames. But, you will say to me, since it is so difficult to keep

this virtue, so precious in the eyes of God, what then must one do? — My brethren, here are the means. The first is to watch well over our eyes, our thoughts, our words, and our actions; the second, to have recourse to prayer; the third, to frequent the sacraments often and worthily; the fourth, to flee all that is capable of leading us to evil; the fifth, to have a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin. If we do this, in spite of all our enemies and in spite of the fragility of this virtue, we are nevertheless sure of keeping it.

I say, first, that we must watch over our looks; that is not doubtful, since we see that there are so many who have fallen into this sin by a single look, and who have never risen again. Never allow yourselves any liberty without a true necessity. Rather suffer some inconvenience than expose yourselves to sin… Second, Saint James tells us that this virtue comes from heaven and that we shall never have it if we do not ask it of the good God. We must therefore often ask the good God to give us purity in our eyes, in our words, and in all our actions. I say, in the third place, that if we wish to keep this beautiful virtue, we must often and worthily frequent the sacraments; without which we shall never have this happiness. Jesus Christ did not institute the sacrament of Penance only to remit our sins, but also to give us strength to combat the devil; which is very easy to understand. What person is there who, having made a good confession today, will be able to let himself be dragged into temptation? Sin, even with all its pleasures, would fill him with horror. Who is there who, having communicated a little while ago, will be able to consent—I do not say to an act of impurity, but to a single evil thought? Ah! the divine Jesus, who has made His dwelling in his heart, makes him understand too well how infamous this sin is and how much it displeases Him, and draws him away from it. Yes, my brethren, a Christian who frequents the sacraments holily may well be tempted; but to sin is another thing. Indeed, when we have the great happiness of receiving the adorable Body of Jesus Christ, do we not feel that impure fire being extinguished? Can that adorable Blood which flows in our veins do less than purify our blood? Does not that sacred Flesh which mingles with ours divinize it in some manner? Does not our body seem to return to the first state in which Adam was before his sin? Ah! that adorable Blood which has brought forth so many virgins!… Let us be well assured, my brethren, that if we do not frequent the sacraments, we shall fall at every instant into sin.

We must still, in order to defend ourselves from the devil, flee the persons who can lead us to evil. See what the chaste Joseph did when tempted by his master's wife: he left his cloak in her hands, and fled to save his soul. The brothers of Saint Thomas Aquinas, unable to bear that their brother should consecrate himself to God, to prevent him shut him up in a castle and brought there a woman of bad life to try to corrupt him. Seeing himself pushed to the limit [poussé à bout] by the effrontery of that bad creature, he took a firebrand in his hand and drove her shamefully from his chamber. Having seen the danger to which he had been exposed, he prayed with so many tears that the good God granted him the precious gift of continence—that is to say, that he was never again tempted against this beautiful virtue. See what Saint Jerome did to have the happiness of keeping purity; see him in his desert, abandoning himself to all the rigors of penance, to tears and to macerations that make one shudder. This great saint relates to us the victory won by a young man in a combat perhaps unique in history, in the time of the cruel persecution which the emperor Decius let loose against the Christians. The tyrant, after having submitted this young man to all the trials that the devil could inspire in him, thought that if he made him lose the purity of his soul, he would easily lead him to renounce the true religion. To that end he ordered him to be led into a garden of delights, amid lilies

and roses, near a stream that flowed with a soft murmur, and under trees stirred by a pleasant wind. There they put him on a bed of feathers; they bound him with silk cords, and he was left alone in that state. Then they brought a courtesan, adorned as richly and as indecently as possible. She began to solicit him to evil, with all the impudence and all the attractions that passion can inspire. This poor young man, who would have given his life a thousand times rather than soil the purity of his beautiful soul, saw himself without defense since his feet and hands were bound. Not knowing any longer how to resist the attacks of voluptuousness, driven by the Spirit of God, he cut off his tongue with his teeth and spat it into the face of that woman. Seeing which, she was so covered with confusion that she fled. This fact shows us that the good God will never leave us to be tempted above our strength.

See further what Saint Martinian did, who lived in the fourth century. After having spent twenty-five years in the desert, he was exposed to a very near occasion of sin. Already he had consented to it by thought and by word. But the good God came to his aid and touched his heart. He conceived so great a regret for the sin he was about to commit that, having gone back into his cell, he lighted a great fire and put his feet into it. The pain he felt and the regret of his sin made him utter frightful cries. Zoe, that bad woman who had come to tempt him, ran at his cries; and she was so touched that, instead of perverting him, she converted. She spent all her life in tears and penance. But as for Saint Martinian, he remained seven months on the ground without movement, because both his feet were burned. After his cure, he withdrew into another desert, where he did nothing but weep for the rest of his life at the memory of the danger he had run of losing his soul. There, my brethren, is what the saints did; there are the torments they endured rather than lose the purity of their soul. That astonishes you perhaps; but you ought rather to be astonished at the little store you set by this beautiful and incomparable virtue. Alas! this deplorable disdain comes from our not knowing its price!

I say finally that we must have a great devotion to the most holy Virgin if we wish to keep this beautiful virtue; that is not doubtful, since she is the queen, the model, and the patroness of virgins…. Saint Ambrose calls the Blessed Virgin the mistress of chastity, Saint Epiphanius calls her the princess of chastity, and Saint Gregory the queen of chastity…. Here is an example which will show us the great care the Blessed Virgin takes of the chastity of those who have confidence in her, to the point that she never knows how to refuse anything they ask of her. A gentleman who had a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin had made a little chapel in her honor in a room of the castle he inhabited. No one knew of the existence of this chapel. Each night, after a few moments of sleep, without warning his wife, he rose to go to the Blessed Virgin and remain there until morning. This poor woman conceived a great pain from it; she believed that he went out to find some girl of bad life. One day, unable to bear it any longer, she told him that she saw well that he preferred another woman to her. The husband, thinking of the Blessed Virgin, answered her affirmatively. This so wounded her that, seeing no change in her husband's conduct, in the excess of her grief she stabbed herself. Her husband, on returning from his chapel, found his wife bathed in her blood. Extremely afflicted at this sight, he locked the door of his chamber, went back to the Blessed Virgin, and all in tears prostrated himself before her image, crying out: "You see, holy Virgin, that my wife has given herself death because I came at night to keep you company and to pray to you. Nothing is impossible to you, since your Son has promised you that you would never have a refusal. You see that my poor wife is damned; will you leave her in the flames, since it is because of my devotion to you that she killed herself in her despair? Holy Virgin, refuge of the afflicted, restore life to her, if you please;

show that you love to do good to everyone. I will not leave here until you have obtained this grace for me from your divine Son." While he was absorbed in his tears and his prayers, a servant sought him and called him, telling him that her mistress was asking for him. He answered: "Is it quite sure that she is calling me?" — "Hear her voice," the servant replied. The gentleman's joy was so great that he could not tear himself away from the Blessed Virgin. At last he rose, weeping with joy and gratitude. He found his wife in full health; there remained of her wounds only the scars, so that she might never lose the memory of such a miracle worked by the protection of the Blessed Virgin. Seeing her husband enter, she embraced him saying: "Ah! my friend, I thank you for having had the charity to pray for me. I was in hell and condemned to burn there eternally, because I had given myself death. Let us thank well then the Blessed Virgin who has torn me from such an abyss! Ah! how one suffers in that fire! who will ever be able to say it and above all to make it understood!" She was so grateful for this prodigious favor that she spent all her life in tears, in penance, and could not recount the grace which the Blessed Virgin had obtained for her from her divine Son without weeping hot tears. She would have wished to teach everyone how powerful the Blessed Virgin is to succor those who trust in her. Tell me, my brethren, if the Blessed Virgin has the power to tear souls even from hell, could we doubt that she will obtain for us the graces we ask of her, we who are on earth, the place where the mercy of the Son and the compassion of the Mother are exercised? When we have some graces to ask of the good God, let us address ourselves then with great confidence to the Blessed Virgin, and we are sure of being heard. Do we wish to come out of sin, my brethren? Let us go to Mary; she will take us by the hand and lead us to her Son to receive our pardon. Do we wish to persevere in good? Let us address ourselves to the Mother of God; she will cover us with the mantle of her protection and all hell will be able to do nothing against us. Do you want the proof of it? Here it is: we read in the life of Saint Justina that a young man having conceived a violent love for her, and seeing that he could gain nothing by his solicitations, had recourse to a certain Cyprian who had dealings with the devil. He promised him a sum of money if he brought Justina to consent to what he wished. Soon afterward the young girl felt herself violently tempted against the holy virtue of purity; but as soon as the devil solicited her, she quickly had recourse to the Blessed Virgin. At once the devil took flight. The young man having asked why he could not win this girl, Cyprian addressed himself to the devil and reproached him for his little power in this circumstance, whereas in a like case he had always been able to accomplish his designs. — The devil answered him: That is true, but she has recourse to the Mother of God; and as soon as she prays to her, I lose my strength and can do nothing. Cyprian, astonished that a person who had recourse to the Blessed Virgin should be so terrible to all hell, converted, and died a saint in martyrdom.

I finish by saying that if we wish to keep the purity of soul and of body, we must mortify our imagination; never let roll in our mind the thought of those objects which lead us to evil, and take care not to be a subject of sin to others, whether by our words or by our manner of dressing, which concerns especially persons of the [female] sex. If we perceive someone badly arranged, we must turn away from her at once, and not do like those who have impure eyes, who stop there as long as the devil wishes. We must mortify our ears: never take pleasure in hearing filthy words or songs. Ah! my God, how is it that fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses who hear, at the evening gatherings [veillées], the most infamous songs, and see committed actions that would horrify pagans, can suffer them without saying anything, under the pretext that they are childishnesses? Ah! unhappy ones, the good God awaits you on the great day of vengeance!… Alas! how many sins your children and your

servants will have committed for you!… "Blessed," Jesus Christ tells us, "are those who have a pure heart, for they shall see God." How happy are those who have the great happiness of possessing this beautiful virtue! Are they not the friends of God, the beloved of the angels, the cherished children of the most holy Virgin? Let us often ask the good God, my brethren, through the intercession of this most holy Mother, to give us a pure soul and heart, a chaste body; and we shall have the happiness of pleasing God during our life, and of going to glorify Him for all eternity: that is what I wish for you.

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost — On Lukewarmness

Sed quia tepidus es, et nec frigidus, nec calidus, incipiam te evomere ex ore meo. But because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit you out of My mouth. (Apocalypse 3:16)

Could we hear, my brethren, without shuddering, such a sentence come forth from the mouth of God Himself against a bishop who seemed perfectly to fulfill all the duties of a worthy minister of the Church? His life was regular; his goods were not spent amiss. Far from authorizing vice, he opposed it strongly; he gave no bad examples, and his life seemed truly worthy of being imitated. Yet in spite of all that, we see that the Lord has Saint John say to him that if he continued to live in that manner, He was going to reject him—that is to say, punish him and reprobate him. Yes, my brethren, this example is all the more frightening in that many follow the same road, live in the same manner, and hold their salvation for assured. Alas! my brethren, how small is the number of those who are neither on the side of the sinners already reprobate in the eyes of the world, nor of the number of the elect! In what path do we walk? Is it the right path that we follow? What ought to make us tremble is that we know nothing of it. Frightening uncertainty!… Let us try, however, to know whether you are unhappy enough to be of the number of the lukewarm. I am going, first, to show you the marks by which you will know it; and second, if you are of that number, I will indicate to you the means of coming out of it.

In speaking to you today, my brethren, about the terrible state of a lukewarm soul, my intention is not to paint for you the frightening and despairing picture of a soul that lives in (mortal) sin, without even having the desire to escape from it; this poor unfortunate woman is only a victim of God's wrath for the next life. Alas! these sinners listen to me, they know well who I'm talking about (at this moment) Let us not go any further, everything I say would only serve to harden them more. In speaking to you, my brethren, from a lukewarm soul, I do not want to speak to you more about those who do neither Easter nor confessions; they know very well that despite all their prayers and their other good works, they will be lost. Let us leave them in their blindness, since they want to stay there. But, you will ask me, will not all those who confess, who celebrate their Easter and who receive communion often, be saved? Certainly, my friend, they will not all be; for if the greatest number of those who frequent the sacraments were saved, it must be admitted, the number of the elect would not be as small as it will be. But, however, let us recognize it; all those who will have the great happiness of going to heaven will be chosen from among those who attend the sacraments, and never from those who neither make Easter nor make confessions. Ah! you will say, if all those who do neither Easter nor confession are damned, the number (of the reprobate) will be greatly increased. Yes, without doubt, it will be great. Whatever you may say, if you live as sinners, you will share their fate. Does this thought not touch you?... If you are not hardened to the last degree, it must make you

shudder and even despair. Alas! my God! how unhappy a person who has lost faith is 1 Far from benefiting (from these truths), these poor blind people, on the contrary, will make fun of them; and yet, despite everything they may say about it, it will be as I say: no Easter, no confessions, no heaven, no eternal happiness. O my God! that the blindness of the sinner is frightful! I do not yet understand, my brethren, by a lukewarm soul, one who would like to be in the world without ceasing to be God's: you will see him, for a moment, prostrating himself before God, his Savior and his master; and, another moment, you will see him prostrate himself before the world, his idol. Poor blind man, who extends one hand to the good God and the other to the world, both of whom he calls to his aid, promising his heart to each one. He loves the good God; at least he would like to love her, but he would also like to please the world. Tired of wanting to give himself to both, he ends up giving himself only to the world. An extraordinary life which presents such a singular spectacle that we cannot be convinced that it is the life of the same person. I will show it to you in such a clear manner that perhaps many of you will be offended; but, it doesn't matter to me, I will always tell you what I have to tell you, and you can do with it what you want.

I say, my brethren, that he who wants to be in the world without ceasing to be God, leads a life so extraordinary that it is not possible to reconcile the different circumstances. Tell me, would you dare to think that this girl, whom you see in these parties of pleasure, in these worldly assemblies where one does only evil and never good, giving herself over to everything that a spoiled and perverted heart can desire, is the same one whom you saw, (barely) a fortnight or a month ago, at the foot of the tribunal of penitence confessing her faults, protesting to God that she is ready to die rather than fall back into sin? Is this really the person you saw going up to the holy table with downcast eyes and prayer on his lips? O my God! what a horror! Can we think about it without dying of compassion? Would you believe, my brethren, that this mother who, three weeks ago, sent her daughter to confession, rightly recommending her to think seriously about what she was going to do, and giving her a rosary or a book; today, tells her to go to a dance, a wedding or an engagement. These same hands, which gave him a book, are employed to arrange his vanities, in order to better please the world. Tell me, my brethren, is it really this person who, this morning, was in church, singing the praises of God, and who now uses this same language to sing bad songs and to make the most infamous speeches? Is this really the master or father of the family who, earlier, was at Holy Mass with great respect, who seemed to want to spend Sunday so holy, and who you now see working and making his people work? O my God! what horror! how is the good God going to put all this away on the day of judgment? Alas! how many damned Christians 1

I say more, my brethren: he who wants to please the world and the good God, leads a most unhappy life. You will see it. Here is a person who frequents pleasures, or who has contracted some bad habit; What is not her fear when she fulfills her religious duties, that is to say, when she prays to the good God, when she confesses, or wants to receive communion? She would not want to be seen by those with whom she danced, and spent nights in taverns, where she got into all kinds of disorder. Did she succeed in deceiving her confessor, by hiding all the worst things she had done, and did she thus obtain permission to take communion, or rather to commit sacrilege? she would like to receive communion before or after Holy Mass, that is to say when there is no one there. But she is happy to be seen by people who are wise, who are unaware of her bad life, and in whom she hopes to inspire a good opinion of herself. With people of piety, she speaks of religion; with people without religion, she will only talk about the pleasures of the world. She would blush to perform her religious

practices in front of the companions of her debaucheries. This is so true that one day someone asked me to have him receive communion in the sacristy, so that no one would see him. What a horror! My brethren, can we think about it and not shudder at such behavior? But let us go further, you will see the embarrassment of these poor people who want to follow the world without leaving the good God, at least in appearance. Easter is approaching. You have to go to confession; it's not that they want it, nor that they feel the need: they would much rather like Easter to only come every thirty years. But their parents still insist on the external practice of religion; they are happy that their children present themselves at the Holy Table, they even urge them to go to confession: in this they do very badly That they pray for them, and do not torment them to make them commit sacrileges; alas! they will do enough! To free themselves from the importunity of their parents, to keep up appearances, these people will gather to know which confessor they must go to to be absolved the first or second time. "Several times already," said one, "my parents have tormented me because I am not going to confess. Where will we go? » — "You must not go to our priest, he is too scrupulous; he wouldn't make us have Easter. We need to go find so-and-so. There have been such and such who have committed as many crimes as we have. We have done no more harm than them. » Another will say; "I assure you, if it weren't for my parents, I wouldn't have Easter; since our catechism tells us that to make a good confession, we must leave sin and the occasion of sin, and we do neither. I tell you sincerely, I am very embarrassed every time Easter arrives. I don't see the hours being established so I don't run anymore. So I will make a confession with all my life to repair those I am making now, otherwise I would not die happy. » — "Well, someone else will tell him, you will have to return to the one who confessed to you until now, he will know you much better. » "Ah certainly no, I will go to the one who did not want me to pass, because he did not want to damn me. » — "Ah, how good you are! It doesn't matter, they all have the same power.

To pass, to absolve. I'm missing it. see. » — "That is good to say as long as you are in good health; but when we are sick we think very differently. One day, I went to see someone who was very ill; she told me that she would never go back to confess to these priests who are so easy, and who, by pretending to want to save you, throw you into hell. » This is how many of these poor blind people behave. "Father," they said to the priest, "I have come to confess to you, because our priest is too scrupulous. He wants us to promise things that we cannot keep; he would like us to be saints, and that is not very possible in the world. He would like us to never go dancing, to never go to taverns or games. If one has some bad habit, he no longer grants absolution until one has completely left it. If we had to do all that, we would never have Easter. My parents, who are very religious, are always after me because I don't do my Easter. I will do everything I can; but we cannot say that we will not return to these amusements again, since we do not know the opportunities that we may encounter. » — "Ah! the confessor, deceived by this beautiful language, will say to him, I see that your priest is a little scrupulous. Make your act of contrition, I will give you absolution, and try to be very good. » That is to say, lower your head; you are going to tread on the adorable blood of Jesus Christ, you are going to sell your God as Judas sold him to his executioners, and tomorrow you will take communion, or rather, you will go and crucify him. 0 horror, oh abomination! V a, infamous Judas, goes to the Holy Table; go and kill your God and your Savior! Let your conscience cry out; just try to stifle your remorse as much as you can....

But, my brethren, I go too far; let us leave these poor people blind to their darkness. I think, my brethren, that you want to know what the state of a lukewarm soul is. Well! here it is: A lukewarm

soul is not yet completely dead in the eyes of God, because faith, hope and charity, which are its spiritual life, are not completely extinguished. But it is a faith without zeal, a hope without firmness, a charity without ardor. I am going to give you the portrait of a fervent Christian, that is to say a Christian who truly desires to save his soul, (at the same time as) that of a person who leads a lukewarm life in the service of God. Let us put them next to each other, and you will see which of the two you resemble. A good Christian is not content to believe all the truths of our holy religion, he loves them, he meditates on them, he seeks all means to learn them; he loves to hear the word of God; the more he hears it, the more he desires to hear it, because he desires to benefit from it, that is to say, to avoid everything that God forbids him and to do everything that he commands. The instructions never seem too long to him; on the contrary, these moments are the happiest for him, since he learns the way in which he must behave in order to go to heaven and save his soul. Not only does he believe that God sees him in all his actions and that he will judge them all at the hour of death; but he still trembles every time he thinks that one day he will have to go and give an account of his whole life before a God who will be without mercy (for sin). He doesn't just think about it, tremble; but he works to correct himself every day; he never stops inventing new ways to do penance every day; he counts for nothing everything he has done so far, and laments that he has wasted a lot of time, during which he could have gathered great treasures for heaven. How different is the Christian who lives in lukewarmness! He still believes all the truths that the church believes and teaches, but it is in such a weak way that his heart has almost nothing to do with it. He does not doubt, it is true, that the good God sees him, that he is always in his holy presence; but with this thought he is neither wiser nor less sinful; he falls into sin with as much ease as if he believed nothing; he is very convinced that, as long as he lives in this state, he is an enemy of God" but he does not leave it for that. He knows that Jesus Christ gave the sacrament of penance the power to forgive our sins and to make us grow in virtue. He knows that this sacrament grants us graces proportionate to the dispositions we bring to it; no matter: the same negligence, the same lukewarmness in practice. He knows that Jesus Christ is truly in the sacrament of the Eucharist, that it is absolutely necessary food for his poor soul; However, you see few desires in him. His confessions and his communions are very far from each other; he will only decide on the occasion of a great celebration, a jubilee, or a mission; or else, because others go there, and not because of the need of his poor soul. Not only does he not work to deserve this happiness; but it does not even envy those who taste it more often. If you speak to him about the things of the good God, he responds with an indifference which shows you how little his heart is sensitive to the goods that we can find in our holy religion. Nothing touches him: he listens to the word of God, it is true; but often he gets bored; he listens with difficulty, out of habit, like a person who thinks he knows enough, or does enough. Prayers that are a little long disgust him. His mind is so full of the action he has just finished, or the one he is going to do; (his boredom is so great) that his poor soul is like in agonio: he still lives, but he is capable of nothing for heaven. The hope of a good Christian is firm; his trust in God is unshakeable. He never loses sight of the goods and evils of the other life.

The memory of the sufferings of Jesus Christ is continually present in his mind; his heart is always occupied with it. Sometimes he carries his thoughts into hell, to understand how great is the punishment of sin and how great is the misfortune of the one who commits it, which disposes him to prefer death even to sin; sometimes to excite himself to the love of God, and to feel how happy he is who prefers the good God to everything, he carries his thoughts into heaven. He imagines how great

the reward is for those who leave everything for the good God. Then, he desires only God and only wants God: the goods of this world are nothing to him; he likes to see them despised and to despise them himself; the pleasures of the world horrify him. He thinks that being the disciple of a crucified God, his life should only be a life of tears and suffering. Death does not frighten him in the least, because he knows very well that it alone can deliver him from the evils of life, and reunite him with his God forever. But a lukewarm soul is far removed from these feelings. The goods and evils of the other life are almost nothing to her: she thinks of heaven, it is true, but without truly desiring to go there. She knows that sin closes the doors to her; despite this, she does not seek to correct herself, at least in an effective way; so it is always the same. The demon deceives her by making her make many resolutions to convert, to do better, to be more mortified, more restrained in her words, more patient in her sorrows, more charitable towards her neighbor. But all this does not change her life in any way: she has been filled with good desires for twenty years, without having changed her habits in any way. She resembles a person who envies the one who is on a triumphal chariot, but does not even deign to lift her foot to get on it. However, she would not want to renounce eternal goods for those of earth; but she desires neither to leave this world nor to go to heaven, and if she could spend her time without a cross and without sorrows, she would never ask to leave this world. If you hear him say that life is very long and very miserable, it is only when everything does not go according to his desires. If the good God, to force her, in some way, to detach herself from life, sends her crosses or miseries, there she is who torments herself, who becomes sad, who abandons herself to complaints, to murmurs, and often to a kind of despair. She no longer seems to want to recognize that it is the good God who sends her these trials for her good, to detach her from life and attract her to himself. What could he have done to deserve them? she thinks to herself, many others more guilty than her do not suffer as much. In prosperity, the lukewarm soul does not go so far as to forget the good God, but it does not forget itself either. She knows very well how to tell of all the means she used to succeed; she believes that many others would not have had the same success; she likes to repeat it, to hear it repeated; every time she hears it, it is with new joy. Towards those who flatter her, she takes on a graceful air; but for those who have not given her all the respect that she believes she deserves, or who have not been grateful for her benefits, she maintains a cold, indifferent air, and seems to tell them that they are ungrateful people who did not deserve to receive the good that she has done for them. But a good Christian, my brethren, far from believing himself worthy of anything, and capable of doing the least good, only has his misery before his eyes. He is wary of those who flatter him, like so many traps that the devil sets for him; his best friends are those who make his faults known to him, because he knows that it is absolutely necessary to know them in order to correct them. He flees the occasion of sin as much as he can; remembering how little things bring him down, he no longer counts on all his resolutions, nor on his strength, nor even on his virtue.

He knows, through his own experience, that he is only capable of sinning; he places all his trust and hope in God alone. He knows that the demon fears nothing so much as a soul who loves prayer, which leads him to make his life a continual prayer through an intimate conversation with the good God. The thought of God is as familiar to him as breathing; the elevations of her heart towards him are frequent; he likes to think of him as his father, his friend and his God who loves him, and who so ardently desires to make him happy in this world, and even more so in the next. A good Christian, my brethren, is rarely occupied with earthly things; if you talk to him about it, he shows as much indifference as people of the world show when we talk to them about the goods of the other life.

Finally, he makes his happiness consist of crosses, afflictions, prayer, fasting and the thought of the presence of God. For a lukewarm soul, it does not completely lose, if you like, confidence in God; but she doesn't trust herself enough. Although she often exposes herself to sin, she still believes that she will not fall. If she falls, she attributes her fall (to the next one) and she affirms that another time, she will be firmer. He who truly loves the good God, my brethren, and who has the salvation of his soul at heart, takes all possible precautions to avoid the occasion of sin. He doesn't just avoid big mistakes; but he is careful to destroy the slightest faults that he sees in himself. He always considers as a great evil everything that can displease God even a little; or to put it better, everything that displeases God displeases him. He looks at himself as at the foot of a ladder to the top of which he must climb; he sees that to achieve it he has no time to lose; so he goes from virtue to virtue every day, until the day of eternity. It is an eagle that cuts through the air; or rather it is a lightning bolt which loses none of its rapidity, from the moment it appears to the moment it disappears. Yes, my brethren, this is what a soul does who works for God and who desires to see him. Like lightning, it finds neither limits nor delay, before being buried in the bosom of its Creator. Why does our mind travel so quickly from one end of the world to the other? It is to show us how quickly we must bring ourselves to God through our thoughts and desires. But such is not the love of God in a lukewarm soul. We do not see in her these ardent desires and these burning flames, which will overcome all the obstacles which oppose salvation. If I wanted, my brethren, to paint for you exactly the state of a soul which lives in lukewarmness, I would tell you that it is similar to a turtle or a snail. She only walks by dragging herself on the ground, and we barely see her change her place. The love of God, which she feels in her heart, is like a small spark of fire hidden under a pile of ashes; this love is enveloped by so many earthly thoughts and desires, that if they do not stifle it, they prevent its progress and extinguish it little by little. The lukewarm soul comes to the point of being quite indifferent to its loss. She has only a love without tenderness, without activity and without strength, which barely supports her in everything that is essentially necessary to be saved; but for everything else, she regards it as nothing or as little. Alas! My brethren, this poor soul is in its lukewarmness, like a person between two sleeps. She would like to act; but her will is so weak that she has neither the strength nor the courage to accomplish her desires. It is true that a Christian who lives lukewarmly still fulfills his duties fairly regularly, at least in appearance.

He will say his prayers every morning, on his knees; he will attend the sacraments well, every year, at Easter, and even several times a year; but in all this, there is so much disgust, so much cowardice and so much indifference, so little preparation, so little change; in his way of life, which we clearly see that he only fulfills his duties out of habit and routine; because it is a festival, and he is in the habit of filling them at that time. His confessions and communions are not sacrilegious, if you like; but these are fruitless confessions and communions, which, far from making him more perfect and more pleasing to God, only make him more guilty. As for his prayers, God alone knows how they are made: alas I without preparation. In the morning, it is not the good God that he concerns himself with, nor the salvation of his poor soul; but he only thinks about working well. His mind is so enveloped in the things of the earth that the thought of God has no place there. He thinks about what he will do during the day, where he will send his children and his servants; how he will go about activating his work. To say his prayers, he kneels, it is true; but he knows neither what he wants to ask of the good God, nor what is necessary for him, nor even before whom he finds himself; his manners, so disrespectful, announce it well. He is a poor man who, although very miserable, wants nothing and

loves his poverty. He is an almost desperate patient, who despises doctors and remedies, and loves his infirmities. You see this lukewarm soul making no difficulty in speaking, under the slightest pretext, during his prayers; a little thing makes her abandon them, in part, at least, thinking that she will do them at another time. Does she want to offer her day to God, say her blessings and her graces? She does all this, it is true; but often without thinking about who she is talking to. She won't even quit her job. Is it a man? he will turn his cap or hat in his hands, as if to examine whether it is good or bad, as if he intended to sell it. Is it a woman? she will recite them while cutting bread from her soup, or pushing her wood into the fire, or while shouting at her children or her servants. Distractions in prayer are not very intentional, if you want them to be; we would prefer not to have them; but, because it is necessary to use some violence to chase them away, we let them come and go as they please. A lukewarm soul perhaps does not work, on the holy day of Sunday, on works which seem forbidden to people who have a little religion; but make a few stitches, arrange something in the household, send your shepherds to the field, during services, under the pretext that they don't have much to give their animals; They have no scruples about it, and thus prefer to let their souls and those of their workers perish than (let their animals perish). A man will arrange his tools, his carts for the next day; he will go and visit his land, he will plug a hole, he will cut some ropes, he will bring saddles and arrange them. What do you think, my brethren? isn't it, alas! the pure truth?... A lukewarm soul will still confess every month, and even much more often. But, alas! what faiths? No preparation, no desire to correct oneself; at least they are so weak and so small that the first gust of wind overturns them. All his confessions are only a repetition of the old ones, blessed again if they have nothing to add. Twenty years ago they accused what they accuse today; in twenty years if they confess again, it will be the same repetition. A lukewarm soul will not, if you like, commit great sins; but a little backbiting, a lie, a feeling of hatred, aversion, jealousy, a little dissimulation hardly costs him. If you don't give her all the respect she believes she deserves, she will make it clear to you, under the pretext that you offend God; she should rather say, because she herself is offended.

It is true that she will not stop frequenting the sacraments, but her dispositions are worthy of compassion. The day she wants to receive her God, she will spend part of the morning thinking about her temporal affairs. If he is a man, he will think of his markets or his sales; if it's a woman, she will think of her household and its children; if it's a girl, how she will dress; if it's a boy, he will dream of some frivolous pleasures, and the rest. It contains its God as in a dark and dirty prison. She does not give him death, but he is in this heart without joy and without consolation; all his dispositions announce that his poor soul has only one breath of life left. After receiving Holy Communion, this person hardly thinks more about the good God than on other days. Her way of living tells us that she has not known the greatness of her happiness. A lukewarm person thinks little about the state of his poor soul, and almost never returns to the past; if, however, she thinks of doing better, she believes that having confessed her sins, she must be perfectly at peace. She attends holy mass, almost as she attends an ordinary event; she thinks about it seriously, and has no difficulty in talking about different things while going there; click will not think even perhaps once that she is going to participate in the greatest of all the gifts that the good God can give us, all God that he is. For the needs of her soul, she thinks about it, it is true, but very weakly; often she even presents herself before the good God without knowing what she is going to ask him. She has few scruples about removing, under the slightest pretext, the Passion, the procession and holy water. During holy services, she does not want to sleep, it is true, and she is even afraid of being seen; but she does not

commit the slightest violence. As for distractions during prayer or holy mass, she would not want to have them; but as it would be necessary to fight a little, she suffers them with patience, however, without loving them. The days of fasting are reduced to almost nothing, either because the meal time is brought forward, or because we snack abundantly, which amounts to a supper, under the pretext that heaven is not taken by famine. When she does some good deeds, her intention is often not well purified: sometimes it is to please someone, sometimes it is out of compassion, and sometimes to please the world. With them, everything that is not a great sin is good enough.... They love to do good, but they would like it to cost them nothing, or at least very little. They would still like to see the sick, but the sick would have to come and see them themselves. They have the means to give alms, they know well that such a person is needed; but they wait for her to come and ask them, instead of warning her; which would make their good work much more meritorious. Let us say better, my brethren, a person who leads a lukewarm life, does not fail to do many good works, to frequent the sacraments, to regularly attend all the holy offices; but in all this, you see only a weak, languid faith, a hope that the slightest trial overthrows, a love for God and for neighbor which is without ardor, without pleasure; everything she does is not entirely lost, but close to it. See before the good God, my brethren, on which side you are: on the side of sinners, who have abandoned everything, who think nothing of the salvation of their poor soul, who immerse themselves in sin, without remorse? On the side of just souls who see and seek only God alone, who are always inclined to think badly of themselves, and are convinced as soon as they are made aware of their faults; who always think that they are a thousand times more miserable than we believe, and who count for nothing everything they have done up to now? Or are you one of those cowardly, lukewarm and indifferent souls such as we have just described? In what path do we walk? Who can assure himself that he is neither a great sinner nor lukewarm; but he is elected! Alas! My brethren, how many seem to be good Christians in the eyes of the world, who are lukewarm souls in the eyes of God, who knows our interior.

IL But, you will ask me, what means should we use to get out of this unfortunate state? My brethren, if you want to know this, listen to it carefully. However, let me tell you again that he who lives in lukewarmness is in a sense more in danger than he who lives in mortal sin, and that the consequences of this state are perhaps even more fatal. Here is the proof. A sinner who does not celebrate Easter, or who has bad and criminal habits, moans from time to time about his state in which he is resolved not to die; he even wants to get out of it, and he will do so one day. But a soul that lives in lukewarmness does not think of leaving it, because it believes that it is good with the good God. What to conclude from all this? here it is, my brethren This lukewarm soul becomes a tasteless, insipid and disgusting object in the eyes of God, who ends up vomiting it out of his mouth; that is to say, he curses and reproaches her. O my God, that this state loses souls! If we want to bring a lukewarm soul out of its state, she replies that she does not want to be a saint; that as long as she goes to heaven, that is enough. You don't want to be a saint, (you say); but it is only the saints who go to heaven. Either be a saint, or be a reprobate: there is no middle ground. If you want to emerge from lukewarmness, my brethren, transport yourself from time to time to the gate of the abyss, where you hear the cries and howls of the reprobate, and you will form an idea of the torments they endure for having lived with lukewarmness and negligence in the matter of their salvation. Carry your thoughts into heaven, and see what is the glory of the saints for having fought and having done violence while they were on earth. Transport yourselves, my brethren, to the depths of the forests and

you will find there these multitudes of saints who have spent fifty, seventy years mourning their sins in all the rigors of penance. See, my brethren, what they have done to deserve heaven. See what respect they had for the presence of God; what devotion in their prayers, which lasted all their lives. They had abandoned their possessions, their parents and their friends to think only of God alone. See their courage in fighting the temptations of the devil. See the zeal and eagerness of those who were confined in the monasteries to make themselves worthy of often approaching the sacraments. See their pleasure in forgiving and doing good to all those who persecuted them, who wanted them and spoke evil to them. See their humility, their contempt for themselves and their happiness at seeing themselves despised, and how much they feared being praised and esteemed by the world. See how carefully they avoided the smallest sins, and how many tears they shed over their past sins. See their purity of intention in all their good works: they had only God in view, they desired to please only God alone. What else will I tell you? See these crowds of martyrs who cannot be satisfied with suffering, who mount the scaffolds with more joy than the kings on their thrones. Let us conclude, my brethren. There is no state more to fear than that of a person who lives in lukewarmness, because a great sinner will convert rather than a lukewarm person. Let us ask the good God with all our hearts, if we are in this state, to give us the grace to leave it, to take the road that all the saints have taken, in order to arrive at the happiness which they enjoy. This is what I wish you...

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost — On Envy

Ut quid cogitatis mala in cordibus vestris? Why do you think evil in your hearts? (Matthew 9:4)

"It is perfect that the wicked do not blame or condemn; they corrupt, through the malignity of their envy, the finest virtues of men, and spread the poison of their slander and their rash judgments on the best actions of their neighbors. They are like snakes who only feed on flowers to make them the material for their venom. Go that they hate in their brothers, Saint Gregory tells us Great, these are the most beautiful qualities; and by this, they seem to reproach the good God that he does them. Why did the Jews declaim so loudly against Jesus Christ, this tender and amiable Savior, who only came among them to save them? Why did they so often gather together, sometimes to throw him from the top of the mountain, sometimes to stone him, and other times to put him to death? holy and exemplary condemned their proud and criminal life, and that she was like a secret executioner who tortured them? Was it not also because her miracles attracted the people to follow her, and because they seemed to leave these impious people aside, being devoured by an interior rage, no longer able to hold on to them: What have we to deliberate, they cried, what are we waiting for? Do you not see that he astonishes the world with the greatness of his prodigies? Do you not notice that everyone runs after him and abandons us? Let us put him to death: Alas! My brethren, what passion is comparable to that of envy? the envy which devours them is the cause of their being afflicted; what should convert them becomes the matter of their envy and their jealousy. A paralytic lying in his bed is presented to him. This tender Savior looks at him and heals him, saying to him with kindness: "My son, have faith, your sins are forgiven you." Anyone other than the Pharisees would have been filled with gratitude, and would have hastened to go. publish everywhere the greatness of this miracle; but no, they were so hardened that they took the opportunity to decry it, to treat it as a blasphemer. This is how, my brethren, envy poisons the best actions Ah! if at least this cursed sin had died with the PhariseesI but, on the contrary, it has grown roots so deep that it is found in all states and in all ages.

indulges in this sin, I will show you, first,, that nothing is more odious, and yet nothing is more common than this sin; second,, that there is nothing dangerous for salvation like envy, and that, however, there is no sin from which we correct ourselves less.

Before showing you, my brethren, how much this sin degrades and degrades those who commit it, and how much the good God abhors it, I want to make you understand, as much as I can, what the sin of envy is. This accursed sin, Saint Thomas calls it a mortal sorrow and sadness, which we feel in our heart, regarding the benefits that God deigns to bestow on our neighbor. It is still, he tells us, a malicious pleasure that we experience when our neighbor suffers some loss or some disgrace. I am sure, my brethren, that this simple presentation already begins to make you feel how odious this sin is, not only to God, but also to anyone who is not devoured by it. Can we find a blinder passion than that which consists of grieving over the happiness of one's brothers, and rejoicing over their misfortune? This is precisely what we call the sin of envy, a sin so odious that it contains cowardice, cruelty and secret perfidy at the same time. Could you, my brethren, form an idea of this? can you represent it as it is? No, you never can. This is especially impossible for those who commit it, as it blinds them. Tell me, why are you angry that your neighbor is more successful than you in his business? He doesn't stop you from doing what you can to succeed as well or even better than him. You are distressed by the fact that he has more talent and more intelligence than you; but it does not take away what you have. You see with difficulty that he increases his goods; but this increase does not decrease yours. You are saddened by the fact that he is loved and esteemed; but it does not take away the love or esteem that people have for you. You are tired of seeing a wiser person; Hey, who's stopping you from being even more so than her, if you want? Will the good God not give you his grace as much as you need? Other times, on the contrary, you rejoice when your neighbor experiences some loss of property, or when his reputation is tarnished a little; but his disgraces and his miseries give you nothing. Do you see, my brethren, how much this passion blinds the one who abandons himself to it. This sin is not like the others: a thief, for example, when taking, experiences a certain pleasure in possessing what he has taken; an immodest person who indulges in his turpitudes enjoys a moment's pleasure, although remorse follows very closely; a drunkard feels satisfaction in the moment when the wine passes from the glass into his stomach; a vindictive person believes he experiences joy in the moment he vindicates himself; but an envious or jealous person has nothing to compensate him. His sin is like a viper, which produces in its womb the young which will destroy it. Ahi cursed sin, what cruel and internecine war do you not wage against him who has the misfortune of having fathered you! But, you may ask me, where was this sin committed for the first time? — IlelasI it began in the sky. The angels, who were God's most beautiful creatures, became jealous and envious of the glory of their Creator, and wanted to attribute to themselves what was due to God alone; and this sin of envy was the cause that the Lord dug a hell, to precipitate there this infinite multitude of angels who are now demons. From there, the sin of envy descended to the earth, and took root in the earthly paradise; It is therefore truly through envy that sin entered the world. The demon who, through his envy, had already lost heaven, not being able to bear that man, who was very inferior to him by his creation, was so happy in the earthly paradise, wanted to try to drag him into his misfortune. Alas! he succeeds only too well. Addressing the woman as the weakest, he made her eyes shine with the great knowledge that she would have more if she ate the fruit that the Lord had forbidden her to eat. She allowed herself to be tempted and deceived, and led her husband to do the same.

This mistake cost them dearly; from that moment, they were condemned to death: which is the most humiliating punishment; man being created never to die. Since then, this sin has wreaked the most terrible havoc on the world. The first murder that was committed was caused by envy. Why, Saint John tells us, did Cain kill his brother Abel? This is because Cain's actions were evil, and he attracted the hatred of God and men; while his brother, being good, was loved by God and men, and his good deeds became a continual reproach for Cain. But the desire with which he was devoured was not confined only to his soul. It showed on his face by the great sadness he showed. So the Lord, Holy Scripture tells us, looked neither at Cain nor at his offering. Then he said to himself: My brother is loved by everyone; it is the cause that I am despised. I must take revenge for this contempt, I must kill him with my own hands, and I must remove from my eyes an object that is intolerable to me. "Come, my brother," said this unfortunate envious man, "let's go for a walk in the fields." The poor innocent follows him, without knowing that he is going to be his executioner. As soon as they are in the fields, Cain hits him, wounds him and kills him. Abel falls at her feet bathed in her blood. Far from being horrified by such a crime, Gain, on the contrary, rejoices in it, at least for the moment; for his sin will soon become his executioner. See again Esau, whom envy devours. Like Cain, he also wants to kill his brother Jacob, because of the blessing he received from his father. He said to himself: "The time of my father's death will indeed come; then I will take revenge, I will kill him." Poor Jacob is obliged, to avoid death, to flee to his uncle Laban, where he remained for a long time without returning, for fear of being exposed again to the envy of his own brother. It was also the envy that moved Joseph's brothers against him, to the point of wanting to take his life. My God! how blind this passion is! Joseph told his brothers about a dream he had had, which seemed to elevate him above them. They therefore resolved to kill him; because his innocent and God-pleasing life condemned their criminal life. Likewise, Saiil, devoured with envy against David, to whom more praise was given than to himself, set all kinds of traps for him to destroy him, and could not rest until death. Ah! My brethren, that we must take care not to allow this passion to arise in our hearts; because once it takes root, it is difficult to destroy it! Here is a very striking example, reported in the story of Abbot Paphnutius. His virtues were so dazzling that he was an object of admiration for all those who had the good fortune to know him. In the same monastery lived another monk, so jealous of such a great reputation, that he resolved to do everything he could to decry him. One Sunday, this envious man secretly entered the cell of Saint Paphnace, who was at that moment attending holy mass, and having hidden his book under a small pile of wood, went with the others to the church. He came to take his complaints to the superior, and assure everyone that his book had been stolen. The superior ordered that none of the religious leave the church; after which he sent three elders, who searched all the cells, and found this book in the cell of Saint Paphnutius. On their return, they showed it to everyone, saying that they had found it in Paphnutius' cell. The latter, although his conscience was safe, made no attempt to justify himself; for fear that, if he denied it, they would believe him guilty of lying. No one, in fact, could believe anything other than what he had seen with his own eyes. This poor young man was content to offer his tears to the good God, and humiliated himself deeply in front of everyone, as if he had been truly guilty. He spent almost two weeks fasting, to ask the good God for the grace to endure this ordeal for his love.

Witnessing the joy of his servant, God wasted no time in making the truth known. In order to reveal the innocence of his disciple, who so calmly supported the black slander that envy had brought upon him, he allowed, by a terrible judgment, that the author of such a great crime was possessed by the

demon, and forced (to confess) this crime of envy in the presence of all the religious. This impure spirit attacked him so violently, and tormented him with so much obstinacy, that no saint of the desert was able to drive it out. This unfortunate envious man was finally forced to confess his imposture, and to proclaim that Paphnutius was a saint and alone could deliver him; (he added) that the demon had only possessed him as punishment for wanting to make this saint appear to be a hypocrite. He asked him for forgiveness, begging him to have pity on him. Like all the saints, Paphnutius, without gall and without resentment, approached the culprit, and commanded the demon to leave him; which he did immediately. Alas! said Saint Ambroise, how many envious people there are in the world who are angry that the good God blesses their brothers! According to the holy man Job, anger kills a fool, and envy kills small minds. Indeed, my brethren, is it not a very small mind to be angry that a neighbor, and perhaps even a brother or sister, is happy, that he does his business well, that he is loved and that he is blessed by the good God? Yes, my children, Saint Gregory the Great tells us, you must have a very weak mind to allow yourself to be tyrannized by a passion so dishonorable and so far from charity. Shouldn't a Christian rejoice to see his neighbor happy? Tell me, my brethren, can one imagine anything more odious than being angry at the happiness of one's neighbor, and rejoicing in his sorrows? Also we see that he who is affected by a passion so base and so unworthy of a reasonable creature, takes great care to hide it as much as he can. He refuses to wrap it up with a thousand pretexts, in order to make people believe that he only acts for the good. What criminal cowardice! To be devoured with sorrow because the good God fills with good things those who deserve it much better than us!... An envious person does not have a moment of rest. On whom does the envious person spread his venomous foam? It is either on his enemy, or on his friend, or finally on a person who is indifferent to him. first, If it is against an enemy, the envious person knows well that not only must he not wish him harm; but that Jesus Christ commands him to love him as himself, to do him good and to pray for him; so that the good God blesses him in his spiritual or temporal goods. But, you say, it is because someone did me harm, it is because someone said something to me that didn't suit me. Fine, but in doing so you show terrible cowardice: you do not have the courage to do what so many saints have done with divine grace. second, If it is a friend, you pretend to him when you see him, you speak to him as if you wished him all kinds of good things, and in your heart you would like him to be unhappy, that the good God would abandon him, reduce him to misery, or that he would become an object of contempt in the eyes of the world: what perfidy, what cruelty! He opens his heart to you, while you vomit the venom of your envy on him. What would you think of a person who behaved this way towards you? If you saw the depths of his heart, you would be indignant, you would say to yourself: here is a coward, a perfidious, a wicked person, who, by speaking to me, is good to me, and seems to wish me all kinds of good things; while, in his heart, he would like to see me the most unhappy of men. Is there a passion more wicked than that? third, But he is an indifferent person. What did she do to you to attract the venom of your gall? Why grieve that she is happy, or rejoice that some disgrace befalls her?

How cruel this passion of envy is, my brethren, and how blind it is. 1 As men, you know, my brethren, we must have humanity for one another; but an envious person, on the contrary, would, if he could, destroy what he sees good in his neighbor. As Christians, you also know, we must have boundless charity for our brothers. We have seen saints who, not content with giving all they had to redeem their brothers, also gave themselves. Moses agreed to allow himself to be erased from the

book of life to save his people, that is to say, to obtain their forgiveness from the Lord. Saint Paul tells us that he would give his life a thousand times over to save the soul of his brothers. But an envious person is far removed from all these (virtues), which are the most beautiful ornament of a Christian. He would like to see his brother ruined. Every trait of God's goodness towards his neighbor is a spear thrust that pierces his heart and causes him to die secretly. Since we are all one body of which Jesus Christ is the head, we must show union, charity, love and zeal in everything. To make each other happy, we must rejoice, as Saint Paul tells us, in the happiness of our brothers, and grieve with them when they have some sorrows. Far from having these feelings, Penvieux continues to launch slander and slander against his neighbor. In this way he seems to be relieved and to soften his sorrow a little. Alas! we have not said enough yet. It is this formidable vice which overthrows kings and emperors from their thrones. Why, my brethren, among these kings, these emperors, these men who occupy the first places, are some driven out, others poisoned, others stabbed? It is only to reign in their place. It is not bread, nor wine, nor accommodation that the perpetrators of these crimes lack. No, undoubtedly; but it is envy that devours them. On the other hand, look at a merchant, he would like to have all the practices, and the other points. If someone leaves him to go elsewhere, he will try to say as much bad as he can either about the person of the merchant or about the merchandise. He will take any means possible to make him lose his reputation, by saying that his merchandise is not as good as his, or that he is not a good weight. See again (the diabolical ruse) of this envious man: we must not tell it to others, he adds, for fear of causing him loss; I would be very sorry, I only tell you so that you do not allow yourself to be deceived. Look at a worker, if another goes to work in the house where he is accustomed to going, it annoys him; he will do everything he can to decry this person so that they will not be accepted. Look at a father of a family, how angry he is if his neighbor does his business better than him, if his land produces more than his. Look at a mother, she would only like people to speak favorably of her children; if we praise other children in front of her and do not praise her own, she will respond: They are not perfect; and she becomes sad. How good you are, poor mother! the praise we give to others takes nothing away from yours. See the jealousy of a husband towards his wife and of a wife towards her husband; see how they examine themselves in everything they do, in everything they say; as they notice every person they talk to, every house they go to. If one notices that the other is talking to someone, there is no sort of insult that he does not heap on him, although often he is quite innocent. Isn't it this cursed sin that divides brothers and sisters? If a father or mother gives something more to one than to the other, you immediately see the birth of this jealous hatred against the one who has been favored; (hatred that lasts) for whole years and sometimes for a lifetime. Aren't these children always watching their mother or father, to see if he doesn't give something, or is kind to one of them? So, there's no harm they say.

We even see that this sin seems to be born with children. See, in fact, among them, this little jealousy which they conceive against each other, if they perceive any preference on the part of the parents. Look at a young man, he would like to be the only one to have intelligence, knowledge, good behavior; he is distressed if others do better, or are more esteemed than him. Look at a young girl, she would like to be the only one loved, the only one well adorned, the only one sought after. If others are preferred to her, you see her grieve and torment herself, perhaps even cry, instead of thanking the good God for being despised by creatures for clinging only to Him alone. What blind passion, my brethren! who could possibly understand it? Alas! My brethren, this vice is found even

among those in whom it should not be found; I mean among people who profess religion. They will examine how long such a person remains to confess, the way in which she stands to pray to the good God; they talk about it and they blame them. They think that all these prayers, these good works are only to show off, or, if you want, are only grievous. No matter how much we tell them that the actions of their neighbor concern them alone; they become irritated and take umbrage when others act better than themselves. See even among the poor, if more good is done to one of them, they speak ill of the one who gave the alms, in order to divert it for another time. My God! what a detestable passion! It attacks everything, spiritual as well as temporal goods. We said that this passion shows a little spirit. This is so true that no one believes they have it, or at least doesn't want to believe they have it. We will try to cover it with a thousand pretexts to hide it from others. If, in our presence, someone speaks well of our neighbor, we remain silent; it grieves our hearts. If we are forced to speak, we do so in a cold manner. No, my brethren, there is no charity in an envious person. Saint Paul tells us that we must rejoice in the good that happens to our neighbor. This, my brethren, is what Christian charity should inspire us for one another. But the feelings of an envious person are very different. No, I do not believe that there is a sin worse and more to be feared than that of envy, because it is a hidden sin, and often covered with a beautiful robe of virtue or friendship. Let us put it better: it is a lion that we pretend to muzzle, or a snake covered with a handful of leaves, which will bite you without you realizing it; it is a public plague which spares no one... It is usually only this accursed sin which brings divisions and turmoil into families. I say, my brethren, that this sin is a sin of malice: here is an example which will clearly prove it to you. Saint Vincent Ferrier reports that a prince, having learned that there were two men in his capital city, one of whom was very miserly and the other very envious, brought them to him. He promised to grant them whatever they asked, with this condition however, that the one who asked first would receive half as much as his companion. This condition troubled them greatly. The miser burned with the desire to have money, but said to himself: If I ask the first, I will only have half of what the other will have. The envious man was eager to ask, but he was jealous that the other would have had half as much as he did. Time thus passed in disputes, without either of them wanting to start: one was held back by avarice, the other by envy. To finally end this dispute, the prince ordered that the envious person should ask first. In his despair, see what this one did. Seized by an attack of incomprehensible fury, he cried out: “Since you have promised us to grant everything we ask, I want one of my eyes taken out.” Do you know, my brethren, why he made this request?

This is because, you remember, the prince had promised double to the one who asked for the last. The envious person said to himself; I will still have one eye to enjoy the pleasure of seeing my comrade's two eyes gouged out, and he will have no more than me. I do not believe, Saint Vincent Ferrier tells us, deploring the misfortune of those who are affected by this vice, I do not believe that another passion has ever led a man to such wickedness. Was it not envy that caused poor Daniel to be thrown into the lions' den? How common is this sin! It extends everywhere, to all conditions, to all ages. How detestable he is! But what is most deplorable, my brethren, is that it is little known, and there are very few who want to believe themselves guilty of it, and there are even fewer who work to correct it.

To accuse oneself of a sin, to humble oneself by it and to stop committing it, one must necessarily know it.

But an envious person, a jealous person is so blind that he does not recognize his passion. He is a hardened person who neither wants to leave her nor blame himself for it. From this, I conclude that it is very rare for an envious person to convert. You will perhaps tell me that every sin blinds those who commit it. This is true; but there is none which envelops the soul in clouds as thick as the sin of envy, and which takes away more from the knowledge of oneself. This is why the Holy Spirit tells us, through the mouth of the Wise, not to associate with the envious, because they have no share in wisdom. A poor envious person convinces himself that his sin is nothing, or at least very little, because this sin does not dishonor him in the eyes of the world like theft, blasphemy, adultery would do. He regards the passion which dries him up as a very forgivable thing; he does not think that it is the poison of Cain, of which he becomes the imitator. This wretch, Holy Scripture tells us, could not tolerate that God preferred the offering of his brother Abel to his own. His passion blinded him to such an extent that he had no rest before taking his life. The Lord made his voice heard to him from heaven: “Cain, Cain, what have you done? where is your brother? his blood cries for vengeance.” Cain trembled and shivered all over. He himself became his executioner, and carried his torture with him everywhere. But, Saint Basil tells us, does he recognize himself? does he convert? No, my brethren, no, envy has so blinded him that he perishes miserably in his sin. Look again at the Pharisees.

Envy made them cry out for the death of Jesus Christ, who had worked so many miracles before their eyes. Did they convert? No, my brethren, no, they are dead in their sin. I say further: this sin not only blinds, but also hardens. Saint Basil adds that an envious person is nothing other than a monster of... who returns evil for good; his sin leads him into a series of other sins which always distance him from God, and always harden him more. Its conversion becomes ever more difficult. See what happened to Moses' sister. She could not bear the honor that the Lord gave to her brother. Did the Lord only speak to Moses? she said. Did he not speak to us as well as to himself? But the Lord rebuked her for daring to envy her brother, and said to her: You will soon suffer the punishment that your sin of jealousy deserves; and he struck her with leprosy which covered her whole body. Why did the good God send him this disease rather than another? It is because this disease shows the nature of his sin: as leprosy spoils all the parts of the body, so envy corrupts all the powers of the soul. Leprosy is a corruption of the mass of the sung and a sign of death; in the same way envy is a spiritual rottenness which insinuates itself into the marrow of the bones. This shows us, my brethren, how much it It is difficult to cure a person who is afflicted with the sin of envy. See again what happened to Korah, Dathan and Abiron, jealous of the honors which were given to Moses, these wretches said to him: "Are we not as good as you? Can we not offer incense naked as well as you?" They wanted to offer incense. But God said to Moses and Aaron: “Make them separate, and all that belongs to them. I will punish them rigorously.” Indeed, at the moment when they thought they had satisfied their desire, the earth opened up under their feet, and swallowed them alive into hell! get rid of it; they keep it for months, for whole years and often for their entire life; they will still be of service to those who are the object of it; but they would rather not see them, they cut short their conversation, if they can; the cause and they say: I would prefer not to see them, because it tires me, their ways displease me. You are wrong, my friend, it is your passion of envy which gnaws at you and dries you up; remove this sin from your heart and you will love them like everyone else. Do you want, my brethren, an example which will make you know how much this sin blinds man? See Pharaoh. overwhelmed him with works. The Lord, through the ministry of Moses and Aaron,

performed extraordinary miracles to force him to let his people go. But the miracles, which should have converted this prince, only served to harden him more and more. However, a final punishment touched his heart. Then, the king consented to let (the Israelites) go. repented and pursued them with all his army But the Lord still protected his people... Moses, seeing himself caught between the sea and Pharaoh's army, struck the sea. The sea opened a passage for him, and as soon as the Israelites had passed, it returned to its ordinary bed, swallowed up Pharaoh and all his army without a single one remaining.

It was again envy that motivated Saùi against poor David, to the point of seeking every means to take his life. And do you know why? David had killed ten thousand enemies. When the people returned from the war they sang: "Saul has killed a thousand and David ten thousand." Holy Scripture tells us that this irritated Saiil so much that from that day on he had no rest. But the good God, to make known (how odious) this sin is to Him, gave permission to the demon to enter Saiil's body. His pride engendered envy, because these two passions cannot exist without each other. We can say that a proud person is an envious person, and an envious person is a proud person. We see that almost all those who are affected by this vice even lose their lives by this executioner. Saiil, unable to hold it any longer, cut his own throat. You therefore see, my brethren, from these examples, how much this sin is to be feared, since, almost never, an envious person has converted. The good God, it is true, does not always strike the envious with these punishments

Remember the sin of Joseph's brothers. (Note of the Venerable.) terrible; but they are no less unhappy, and still remain damned. We lead ourselves to hell without realizing it. But how, my brethren, can we correct ourselves from this vice, since we do not believe ourselves guilty? I am sure that, out of a thousand envious people, if you examine them carefully, there will not be one who wants to believe that he is among this number. There is no sin that we know less than this. In some, ignorance is so great that they do not know even a quarter of their ordinary sins; and as the sin of envy is much more difficult to know, it is not surprising that so few confess and correct themselves from it. Because they do not commit these big sins that crude and stupid people commit, they think that the sins of envy are only small defects of charity, while for the most part they are very bad mortal sins, which they nourish and maintain in their hearts, often without knowing them well. But, think to yourself, if I knew them, I would try to correct myself. — To know them, my brethren, you must ask for the light of the Holy Spirit: he alone will give you this grace. No matter how hard you put them to your finger, you wouldn't want to agree, you would always find something that would make you believe that you are not wrong to think and act the way you act. Do you still know what can contribute to making you aware of the state of your soul and to discovering this cursed sin hidden in the secret folds of your heart? It is humility: as pride hides it from you, humility will reveal it to you. Saint Augustine feared this sin (of ignorance) so much that he often repeated this prayer: "Lord, my God, make me know what I am."

Alas! My brethren, how many people who, even profess piety, are affected by it and do not believe it. If now I asked a child what the virtue opposed to envy is, he would answer me: It is love of neighbor and liberality towards the poor. How happy the world would be, my brethren, if we had this love that religion commands us to have for one another; if we knew how to rejoice with those who are happy and in joy, and to grieve with those who are in pain and suffering; thank the good God for the good he grants to our neighbors, as we would like them to do towards us! However, this, my brethren, is

what all the saints have done. See Jesus Christ himself, how touched he was by our miseries and how he wanted to make us happy. He left his father to come and give us happiness. He sacrificed not only his reputation, but his very life, by dying, like an infamous person, on a cross. See how he was touched with compassion for the sick, the infirm; see with what eagerness he will himself heal and comfort them. See how his bowels are moved by the same compassion for this crowd of people who followed him in the desert; he even performs a miracle to give them something to eat. “I fear,” he said to the apostles, “that these poor people will fall from weakness along the way.” See how the apostles all sacrificed their lives to make their brothers happy! See how charitable the first Christians were to one another, and how far sin was from them! The Holy Spirit tells us "that they had only one heart and one soul," and thus shows us that they saw with as much pleasure the good that the good God did to their brothers as if he had done it to themselves. Look at all the saints: some gave their lives to save that of their brothers; others have stripped themselves, not only of their possessions for the poor or the suffering; but, after giving all they could give, they gave themselves again! They sold themselves to ransom the captives! How happy we would be, my brethren, if we saw among us this charity, this love for one another, this pleasure and this joy when our neighbor is happy and esteemed by men, this compassion, this pain and this sorrow when we see him afflicted and miserable! Would not the world be the beginning of heaven? Let us end, my brethren, by saying that we must fear, above all, that this cursed sin of envy takes root in our hearts, since it makes a person so unhappy. If the devil tempts us with thoughts of envy against our neighbor, far from making it known to him with an indifferent air; we must show him friendship and be of service to him as much as we can. As for his actions, if they seem bad to us, let us quickly think that we could well be wrong being as blind as we are; and that, moreover, we will not be judged by what others do; but only on the good and the bad that we will have done during our life. If we have thoughts of envy because others are more successful than us in their temporal affairs, let us quickly remember that a good Christian must thank God for the good he has done to his brother. If it is for spiritual good, let us think how happy we are that the good God has people who compensate him for the outrages we do to him. I conclude, my brethren, by telling you that if we want to hope to go to heaven, we must absolutely be happy with the good that the good God does to our neighbor, and be saddened by the evils he experiences, since Saint John says to us: How can you make us believe that you love the good God whom you do not see, while you do not love your brother whom you do see. Let us cast our eyes on our great model, who, to cure us of this accursed sin of envy and jealousy, died for his enemies and to make us happy; It’s the same happiness that I wish you.

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost — On Impurity

Ligatis manibus et pedibus ejus, mittite eum in tenebras exteriores: ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium. Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 22:13)

O my God! can we dare to pronounce the name of a vice so horrible, not only in the eyes of Christians, but also in those of reasonable creatures? Could I say it, my brethren, and you, will you be able to hear it without shuddering? Ah! if I had the happiness, by showing you all the darkness and all the horror of this sin, to make you flee it forever! O my God! Can a Christian abandon himself to a passion which degrades him to the point of placing him below the vilest, most brutal, most filthy

beast! Can a Christian indulge in a crime that wreaks so much havoc on a poor soul! Can a Christian, I say, who is the temple of the Holy Spirit, a member of Jesus Christ, plunge and roll, drown himself, so to speak, in the slime of such an infamous vice, which, by shortening his days, making him lose his reputation, prepares for him so many evils and misfortunes for eternity! Yes, my brethren, to give you an idea of the greatness of this sin, I (will) first, show you, as much as I am possible, the full horror of this crime; second, in how many ways we can be guilty of it; third, what are the causes which can lead us there; fourth, finally, what we must do to protect ourselves from it.

To make you understand the magnitude of this accursed sin which loses so many souls, it would be necessary here to display to your eyes all that is most frightful, most despairing, and, at the same time, all that the power of God exerts on a guilty victim of such a crime. But, you understand as I do, that it will never be possible to grasp the greatness of this sin and the rigor of God's justice towards the immoral. I will only tell you that he who commits the sin of impurity is guilty of a kind of sacrilege, since our heart being the temple of the Holy Spirit, our body being a member of Jesus Christ, we truly desecrate this temple by the impurities to which we abandon ourselves; and from our body, which is a member of Jesus Christ, we truly make the member of a prostitute. Examine now whether you can ever form an idea which approaches the greatness of the outrage which this sin does to God and the punishment which it deserves. Ah! My brethren, it would be necessary to be able to drag here, in my place, this infamous Queen Jezebel who lost so many souls through her impudence; She herself would have to give you a despairing picture of the torments she is enduring, and that she will endure for all eternity, in this place of horror into which she has been thrown by her turpitudes. Ah! you would hear her cry out from the middle of these flames which devour her: Alas! how I suffer! Farewell, beautiful sky, I will never see you, everything is over for me. Ah! cursed sin of impurity, the flames of God's justice make me pay dearly for the pleasures I have tasted! If I still had the happiness of being on earth, how much more precious this virtue of purity would be to me than it has been to me! Let us go even further, my brethren, perhaps you will feel a little better the horror of this accursed sin. I am not talking about a pagan, who does not have the happiness of knowing the good God; but of a Christian who knows how this vice is opposed to the holiness of his condition as a child of God, of a Christian who has been all watered with the adorable blood, which so many times has served as his dwelling and tabernacle. How can this Christian abandon himself to such sin! O my God can we think about it and not die of horror! Listen to what the Holy Spirit says: He who is unfortunate enough to abandon himself to this accursed sin deserves to be trodden under the feet of the devil like dung under the feet of men. Jesus Christ said one day to Saint Bridget that he saw himself forced to prepare terrible torments to punish the immoral, and that almost all men were affected by this infamous vice. If we take the trouble to go through Holy Scripture, we see that, since the beginning of the world, the good God has pursued the immoral in the most severe manner. See all the men before the flood who abandoned themselves to this infamous vice; the Lord can no longer suffer them; he repents of having created them; he sees himself forced to punish them in the most frightful way, since he opens the cataracts of heaven on them and makes them all perish by a universal flood. This land, soiled by so many crimes, and so horrible in the eyes of God, had to be purified by the flood; that is, by the waters of the wrath of the Lord. If you go further: See the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as the other neighboring cities; their inhabitants indulged in crimes of such appalling impurity that the Lord, in his just anger, caused a rain of fire and sulfur to fall on these accursed places which burned them and their inhabitants; men, beasts, trees,

lands and stones were as if destroyed; this place has been so cursed by God that it is now nothing more than a cursed sea. It is called Dead Sea because it does not support any fish and because on its shores we find certain fruits which have a beautiful appearance, but contain only a handful of ashes. In another place we see that the Lord commanded Moses to put to death twenty-four thousand men, because they had given themselves over to impurity.

Yes, my brethren, we can say that this accursed sin of impurity has been, from the beginning of the world, until the coming of the Messiah, the cause of almost all the misfortunes of the Jews. See David, see Solomon and so many others. Who brought so many punishments upon their persons and upon their subjects, if not this accursed sin? O my God! May this sin deprive you (of souls), oh let it drag some to hell!

If we move from the Old Testament to the New, the punishments are not less. Saint John tells us that Jesus Christ showed him, in a revelation, the sin of impurity in the figure of a woman sitting on a beast which had seven heads and ten horns, to show us that this sin attacks the ten commandments of God and contains the seven deadly sins. If you want to be convinced of this, you only have to examine the conduct of an immodest person; you will see that there is not a commandment that he does not transgress, and one of the deadly sins of which he is not guilty, by satisfying the desires of his body. I do not want to go into all these details, see it for yourselves, and you will say that it is true. But I will add that there is no sin in the world that causes so many sacrileges to be committed: some do not know half of the sins they commit in this way, consequently they do not say them; the others do not want to say them, although they know them; so that we will see on the day of judgment that there is no sin that has thrown so many souls into hell. Yes, my brethren, this sin is so dreadful that not only do we hide ourselves to commit it; but we would still like to hide it from ourselves, it is so infamous, even in the eyes of those who are guilty of it!

But, to make you better understand how common this sin, although so dreadful, is among Christians, and how easy it is to commit it, I will tell you in how many ways we sin against the sixth commandment of God. We sin in six ways: by thoughts, by desires, by looks, by words, by actions and by occasions.

Jo say first,, by thoughts; there are many who do not know how to distinguish a thought from a desire; which can lead to sacrilegious confessions. Listen to me carefully and you will see: a bad thought is when our mind voluntarily stops thinking about an impure thing, either in relation to us or in relation to others, without wanting to accomplish what we think; we only let our minds languish on these dirty and dissolute things. You accuse yourself of this; it is necessary to say how long you let your thoughts rest there, without turning away from it, or whether you thought of things which could lead you there by the memory of some conversation you had, or of some familiarity you allowed, or of some object you saw. The devil only puts cola before your eyes in the hope that he will lead you to sin, at least in thought. second, We sin by desires. This, my brethren, is the difference between thought and desire; desire is wanting to accomplish what we think about; but to speak to you more clearly, it is wanting to commit the sin of impurity, after having thought about it for some time, when we find the opportunity or when we seek it. It is necessary to say whether this desire has remained in our heart, whether we have taken any steps to accomplish what we desired, whether we have asked some people to do harm with us; then say clearly who are the people we wanted to bring to harm, if it is a brother, a sister, a child, a mother, a sister-in-law, a brother-in-law, a cousin. You

must say all this, otherwise your confession would be worth nothing. However, one should only name people as much as is necessary to make one's sin known. It is quite certain that if you had done wrong with one. brother or sister, and if you are content to say that you have committed a sin against the holy virtue of purity, that would not be enough. third, We sin by looking, when we focus our eyes on impure objects, or something that can lead us there. There is no door through which sin enters so easily and so often as through the eyes; also the holy man Job said: “That he had made a pact with his eyes never to look a person in the face.” fourth, We sin by words. We speak, my brethren, to manifest externally what we think within ourselves, that is to say, what is happening in our hearts. You must blame yourself for all the impure words you said, how long your conversation lasted; what motive prompted you to say them, to which people and to how many people you were able to say them. Alas! My brethren, there are poor children for whom it would be much better to find a tiger or a lion on their path than some shameless ones. If, as they say, the mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart, judge what must be the corruption of the hearts of these infamous people who roll around, drag themselves and drown, so to speak, in the mire of their impurity. O my God! if you tell us that you know the tree by its fruit, what an abyss of corruption can be like! fifth, We sin by actions. Such are the guilty liberties on oneself or on others, the impure kisses, without daring to tell you the rest; you understand what I am saying. My God, where are those who, in their confessions, accuse themselves of all this? But also what sacrileges this cursed sin of impurity causes! We will only know this on the great day of vengeance. How many young girls will stay sweet or three hours with libertines, and there will be no kind of impurity that their infernal mouth does not vomit continually. Alas! my God, how can I not burn in the middle of such a blazing inferno? 6° We sin by occasion, either by giving it or by taking it.

I say, in giving it, like a person of the sex who is dressed in an indecent manner, leaving her handkerchief too far apart, having her neck and shoulders uncovered, wearing clothes which outline the shape of the body too much, or not wearing a handkerchief in summer, or else dressing in a too affected manner. No, these unfortunate people will only know at the tribunal of God the number of crimes they have caused to be committed. How many married people have fewer reserves than pagans! A girl is still guilty of many impure sins, almost all of which are mortal sins, whenever she is too easy and too familiar with young people. We are still guilty when we go with people who we know only have bad words in their mouths. You may not have enjoyed it, but you were wrong to expose yourself to it. Often, we delude ourselves, we believe we are not doing any harm, while we sin horribly. So people who see each other under the pretext of marriage believe that there is no harm in spending a considerable amount of time alone, day and night. Do not forget, my brethren, that all these embraces which are made in these moments are almost all mortal sins, because ordinarily it is only a carnal friendship which causes them to be done. How many young engaged couples have no reservations; they take upon themselves the most terrible crimes, and seem to force the justice of God to curse them the moment they enter the state of marriage. You must be as reserved during this time as you are with your sisters; anything more than that is a sin. Alas! my God, where are those who accuse themselves of this? almost no one. But also, where are those who enter the state of marriage holyly? Alas! almost not. This results in so many evils in marriage for both the soul and the body. Hey! my God! parents who know this can sleep! Alas! how many souls drag themselves through hell! We still sin against the holy virtue of purity when we get up at night without being dressed to go out, to serve the sick, or to open the door. A mother must be careful never to have any

dishonest glances or unnecessary touching of her children. Fathers and mothers and masters are guilty of all the familiarities they allow between their children and their servants, which may prevent them. We are still guilty of reading and lending bad books or licentious songs; by writing letters to each other between people of different sexes. We participate in sin by encouraging young people to meet, even under the pretext of marriage. You are obliged, my brethren, to declare all the aggravating circumstances, if you want your confessions to be good. Listen to me, you will understand it even better. If you sin with a person already abandoned to vice, who professes it, you voluntarily make yourself the slave of Satan, and incur eternal damnation. But, to teach evil to a young person, to lead her to evil for the first time, to take away her innocence, to take away the flower of her virginity, to open the door of her heart to the demon, to close heaven to this soul which was the object of the love of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, to make her worthy of the execration of heaven and earth: this sin is still infinitely greater than the first, and you are obliged to accuse yourselves of it. To sin with a free person, neither married nor related, is, according to Saint Paul, a crime which closes heaven to us and opens the depths to us; but to sin with a person committed to the bonds of marriage is a crime which contains a large number of others; it is a horrible infidelity, which destroys and profanes all the graces of the sacrament of marriage; it is still an execrable perjurer who tramples underfoot a sworn faith at the foot of the altars, in the presence not only of angels, but of Jesus Christ himself; a crime which is capable of bringing all kinds of curses, not only on a house, but also on a parish.

To sin with a person who is neither relative nor ally is a great sin, since it loses us forever; but, to sin with a relative or an ally, that is to say, a father with his daughter, a mother with her son, a brother with his sister, a brother-in-law with his sister-in-law, a cousin with his cousin, is the greatest of all crimes that one can imagine; it is to play with the most inviolable rules of modesty; it is to trample underfoot the most sacred rights of religion and nature. Finally, sinning with a person consecrated to God is the height of all misfortunes, since it is a terrible sacrilege. O my God! can there be Christians who indulge in all this turpitude! Alas! if at least, after such horrors, we had recourse to the good God to ask him to pull us out of this abyss!

But, no, you live peacefully, and most only open their eyes when they fall into hell. Have you, my brethren, formed any idea of the greatness of this sin? No, probably, because you would be much more horrified by it, and you would have taken more precautions to avoid falling into it.

If you ask me now what can lead us to such a crime. My friend, I only have to open my catechism and ask a child, saying: What usually leads us to this shameful vice? He will simply answer me: Monsieur le Curé, these are the dances, the balls, the all-too-familiar associations with people of different sexes; the songs, the free words, the immodesty in clothes, the excesses in drinking and eating. I say: excesses in drinking and eating. If you ask me why this is, here it is, my brethren: It is because our body only tends to the loss of our soul; we must necessarily make him suffer in some way, otherwise, sooner or later, he will throw our soul into hell. A person who has the salvation of his soul at heart will never pass a day without mortifying himself in something like drinking, eating, or sleeping. Concerning the excess of wine, Saint Augustine clearly tells us that a drunkard is immodest, which is very easy to prove. Enter a cabaret, or be in the company of a drunkard, he will have nothing in his mouth other than the dirtiest words; you will see him doing the most shameful actions; and certainly he would not make them if he were not into wine. So you see from this, my brethren, that if we want

to maintain purity in our soul, we must necessarily deny something to our body, otherwise it will ruin us.

I say that balls and dances lead us to this infamous vice. This is the means the demon uses to take away the innocence of at least three-quarters of young people. I do not need to prove it to you, you know it only too unfortunately from your own experience. Alas! how many bad thoughts, bad desires and shameful actions caused by dances! It would be enough for me to tell you that eight councils held in France defended dancing, even at weddings, under penalty of excommunication. But, you will ask me, why are there priests who give absolution to these people without testing them? For this reason, I will not tell you anything, everyone will give an account of what they have done. Alas! My brethren, where did the loss of young people come from? Why did they no longer attend the sacraments? Why did they even leave their prayers? Do not look for any other cause than dancing. Where can this great misfortune come from that many people no longer have Easter, or do it poorly? Alas! dance. How many young girls, as a result of dancing, have lost their reputation, their poor soul, heaven, their God! Saint Augustine tells us that there would not be as much harm in working all day on Sunday as in dancing. Yes, my brethren, we will see in the great day of judgment, that these worldly girls have caused more sins to be committed than they have hairs on their heads. Alas! what bad looks, what bad desires, what dishonest touches, what impure words, what bad embraces, what jealousies, what disputes, what quarrels do we not see committed during the dance or following dances! To better convince you, my brethren, listen to what the Lord tells us through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah: "The worldly" dance to the sound of flutes and drums, and a moe" lies after they descend into hell." The Holy Spirit tells us through the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel: "Go" and tell the children of love, that because they have indulged in dancing, I am going to punish them rigorously; so that all Israel may be seized with fear." Saint John Chrysostom tells us that the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob never wanted to allow dancing at their wedding, for fear of bringing curses from heaven upon them. But I do not need to look for any other evidence than you. Talk to me sincerely, do not you want to die coming from a dance? No, probably, because you would hardly be ready to appear before the tribunal of God. Tell me why you would not want to die in this state, and why you do not fail to confess it? It is therefore well proven, you yourself feel that you are doing wrong; otherwise you would not need to accuse yourself of it and would not fear to appear before Jesus Christ. Listen to what Saint Charles Borromeo tells us about dancing: in his time, a person who went dancing was sentenced to three years of public penance, and if he continued, he was threatened with excommunication. Let us go no further, my brethren, death will prove to you what we are saying today, but too late for many. You really have to be blind to believe that there is no great harm in the dance, when we see that all the people who wanted to secure heaven for themselves left it and mourned the misfortune of having gone there, in the time of their follies. But let us draw back the curtain until the great day of vengeance when we will see all this more clearly, when the corruption of the heart will no longer be able to find an excuse.

I say that immodesty in clothing leads us to this shameful vice. Yes, my brethren, a person who does not dress decently is the cause of many sins: bad looks, bad thoughts, dishonest words. Do you want to know, at least in part, the evil of which you are the cause? Place yourself for a moment at the feet of your crucifix, as if you were going to be judged. It can be said that people dressed in a worldly manner are a source of impurity, and a poison which brings death to all those who do not have the strength to flee from them. See in them this effeminate or playful air, these piercing glances, these

shameful gestures, which, like so many features soaked in the poison of their impudence, hurt almost all the eyes unfortunate enough to look at them. Alas! How many sins does a heart commit once it is soaked in this impure slime! Alas! there are some of these poor hearts who are as burned with this impure vice as a handful of straw in a madman. I do not know if you have begun to form an idea of the greatness of this sin and in how many ways you can be guilty of it. Pray to the good God, my brethren, that he will make it known to you well and that you will understand such horror about it that you will never commit it again.

IV. But let us now see what we must do to protect ourselves from this sin, which is so horrible in the eyes of God, and which drags so many poor souls to hell. To show it to you in a clear and simple way, I only have to open my catechism once again. If I asked a child what are the means that we must employ to avoid falling into this accursed sin, he would answer me with his ordinary simplicity: There are several, but the main ones are: retirement, prayer, frequentation of the sacraments, great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, avoidance of opportunities, and finally promptly rejecting all the bad thoughts that the devil presents to us. I say that you have to love retirement, I do not mean that you have to hide in a wood, or even in a monastery, which would however be a great happiness for you; but I want to say that you should only flee the companies of people who only talk about things capable of sullying your imagination, or who only care about earthly affairs and not at all about the good God. This, my brethren, is what I mean. On Sunday especially, instead of going to see your neighbors, pick up a book, like the Imitation of Our Lord Jesus Christ, or the lives of the saints; you will see how they fought the temptations that the devil tried to create in their minds; you will see how many sacrifices they made to please God and save their souls: this will encourage you. You will do like Saint Ignatius, who, being wounded, began to read the lives of the saints; seeing the struggles they had experienced and the courage with which they fought for the good God, he said to himself: And why should I not do what these saints did? do I not have the same God who will help me to fight, the same heaven to hope for and the same hell to fear?... You will do the same. Yes, • my brethren It is necessary to flee the company of people who do not love the good God. Let us be with the world only out of necessity, when our duty calls us to do so. We say that we must love prayer if we want to maintain the purity of our soul. If you ask me why we must pray, I will give you the reason: it is that this beautiful virtue of purity comes from heaven, it is therefore through prayer that we must ask for it and preserve it. It is certain that a person who does not resort to prayer will never keep his soul pure in the eyes of God. Through prayer we converse with the good God, the angels and the saints, and through this celestial conversation we necessarily become spiritual; our mind and our heart gradually detach themselves from created things to consider and love only the goods of heaven. However, we must not believe that every time we are tempted, we offend God; sin is only found in consent and in the pleasure one takes in it. When we are tempted for eight or fifteen days, if it horrifies us, we do like the children in the furnace of Babylon, who only came out more beautiful. We must quickly have recourse to the good God by saying to him; My God, come to my aid; you know that without you, I can only get lost; but, helped by your grace, I am sure to emerge victorious from the fight. Ah! Holy Virgin, we must say, do not allow the demon to ravish my soul which has cost your divine Son so much suffering. To maintain purity, one must have recourse to the sacraments, and receive them with good dispositions. Yes, my brethren, a person who has the happiness of frequenting the sacraments often and holyly, can very easily maintain this beautiful virtue. We have proof that the sacraments are of great help to us, in the efforts of the devil to distance us from them

or make us profane them. See, when we want to approach him, how much fear, trouble, and disgust the demon arouses in us. Sometimes he tells us that we almost always act badly, sometimes that the priest doesn't know us, or that we do not make ourselves known enough, whatever?

But, to mock him, we must redouble our care, approach him even more often, and then bury ourselves in the bosom of God's mercy, saying to him: You know, my God, that I seek only you and the salvation of my poor soul. No, my brethren, there is nothing that makes us so formidable to the devil as frequenting the sacraments; here is the proof. See Saint Thérèse. The demon confessed, through the mouth of a possessed man, that this saint had become so formidable to him through the holiness drawn from holy communion, that he could not even breathe the air where she had passed. If you look for the reason, it is very easy to understand: is not the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist this wine which produces virginity? How can you not be a virgin while receiving the king of purity? Do you want to preserve or acquire this beautiful virtue which makes you like the angels? frequent the sacraments often and holyly, you are sure that, despite all the efforts of the devil, you will have the great happiness of preserving the purity of your soul. If we want to keep this temple of the Holy Spirit pure, we must have great devotion to the Most Holy Virgin, since she is the Queen of virgins. It was she who first raised the standard of this incomparable virtue. See how much the good God esteems him: he did not disdain to be born of a poor mother; unknown in the world, to have a poor father as a foster father; but he needed a pure and spotless mother, a father of such purity that only the Blessed Virgin could surpass him in purity. Saint John Damascene greatly encourages us to have a tender devotion to the purity of the Blessed Virgin; he tells us that everything we ask of the good God in honor of the purity of the Blessed Virgin we always obtain. He tells us that this virtue is so pleasing to the angels that they continually sing in heaven: “0 Virgin of virgins, we praise you; we bless you, O Mother of beautiful love.” Saint Bernard, this great servant of Mary, tells us that he converted more souls through Ave Maria than through all his sermons. Are you tempted? he tells us, call Mary to your aid, and you are sure not to succumb to temptation. When we recite Hail Mary, he tells us, all heaven rejoices and trembles with joy, and all hell shudders remembering that Mary was the instrument that God used to chain him. This is why this great saint so recommends devotion to the Mother of God, so that Mary regards us as her children. If you are well loved by Mary, you are sure to be well loved by her Son. Several holy Fathers recommend us to have great devotion to Mary, and to make from time to time some communions in her honor, and especially to have the honor of her holy Purity; which is so pleasing to her that she will not fail to make us feel her intercession with her divine Son. To preserve this angelic virtue we must fight temptations and flee opportunities, as the saints did, who preferred to die than lose this beautiful virtue. See what the patriarch Joseph did, when Potiphar's wife wanted to solicit him to sin, he left half of his cloak in her hands. See the chaste Suzanne; who preferred to lose his reputation, that of his family and his very life, than to lose this virtue which is so pleasing to God. See also what happened to Saint Martinian, who withdrew into a wood to think only of pleasing God. A wicked woman came to him, pretending to have lost her way in the forests and begging him to have pity on her. The saint received her in her solitude and left her alone. The next day, having returned to see what had become of her, he found her well dressed. Then she told him that the good God had sent her to make an alliance with him; that she had great property in the city, that he could give a lot of alms.

The saint wanted to know if it came from God or the devil; he told him to wait, because every day people came to recommend themselves to his prayers and he must not let them make a useless

journey; he was going to the mountain to see if any arrived. When he was on the mountain, he heard a voice which said to him: Martinian, Martinian, what are you doing? you listen to the voice of Satan. He was so frightened that he returned to his solitude, made a big fire and jumped into it; the pain of the sin he was exposed to committing and the pain of the fire made him cry out loudly. This unfortunate woman, having come to this noise, asked him what had put him in such a state. Ah! replied the saint, I cannot bear the fire of this world, how could I endure that of hell, if I have the misfortune to sin as you desire? What struck this woman so much that she remained in the saint's cell, did penance all her life, and Martinien went further to continue his austerities. It is reported in the life of Saint Thomas Aquinas that a wicked woman was sent to him to lead him to sin. She was brought into his room while he was away. When he saw this creature, he took a burning brand and chased it away shamefully. See again Saint Benedict, who, to free himself from his bad thoughts, rolled among the brambles where he got all bloody. Other times, he immersed himself up to his neck in icy water to extinguish this impure fire. But I find nothing in the lives of the saints that is comparable to the story of Saint Jerome. From the depths of his desert, he writes to one of his friends, and gives him a picture of the struggles he experiences and the penances he exercises on his body; one cannot read it without crying with compassion. “In this vast solitude which the heat of the sun makes unbearable,” he said, “feeding myself only on a little black bread and raw herbs,” lying on the bare earth, drinking only water, “even in my illnesses, I never cease to cry at the feet of my crucifix. When my tears fail, I take a stone, I beat my chest with it until the blood comes out of my mouth, and despite this, the demon leaves me no rest;” you must always have weapons in hand.” What can we conclude, my brethren, from all that we have just said? There is no (virtue) that makes us so pleasing to the good God as the virtue of purity, and no vice that pleases the devil so much as the sin of impurity. This enemy cannot allow a person who is God's to possess this virtue; and this is what should compel you to neglect nothing to preserve it. To do this, watch carefully over your looks, your thoughts and all the movements of your heart; resort to prayer frequently; flee bad company, dances, games; practice mortification; have recourse to the most holy Virgin; frequent the sacraments often. What good luck! if we are happy enough not to let our hearts be defiled by this accursed sin, since Jesus Christ tells us that only those who have a pure heart will see God. Let us ask, my brethren, every morning the good God to purify our eyes, our hands and generally all our senses; so that we can appear with confidence before Jesus Christ, who is the portion of pure souls; That’s all the happiness I wish you.

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost — Duties of Parents toward Their Children

Credidit ipse et domus ejus tota. He believed, and his whole house. (John 4:53)

Where could we find, my brethren, an example more capable of showing all heads of families that they cannot work effectively for their own salvation without at the same time working for that of their children? In vain would fathers and mothers spend their life doing penance, weeping over their sins, distributing their goods to the poor; if they have the misfortune to neglect the salvation of their children, all is lost for them. Do you doubt it, my brethren? Open the Scriptures, and you will see that if the parents were saints, the children and even their servants were also saints. When the Lord praises those fathers and mothers who distinguished themselves by their faith and their piety, He never forgets to tell us that their children and their servants followed in their footsteps. Great

examples for fathers and mothers! O my God! if the fathers and mothers of our days had the happiness of being saints themselves, how many more children for heaven! How many fewer children for hell! But, you will perhaps ask me, what must we do to fulfill our duties, since they are so great and so formidable? Alas! I scarcely dare tell you—they are so frightening for a Christian who wishes to fulfill them as the good God asks. But since I am forced to show them to you, here they are: instruct your children—that is, teach them to know the good God and their duties; correct them Christianly; give them a good example; lead them on the path to heaven by walking there yourselves. Alas! my brethren, I fear that this instruction will be for you, like so many others, a new subject of condemnation. Oh how many married people will not go to heaven! And why, you ask me? My friend, here it is.

Because there are many who enter the state of marriage without the necessary dispositions, and who thus first of all profane this sacrament. Yes, where are those who receive this sacrament with the appropriate preparation? some are led by the thought of satisfying their impure desires; others are attracted by sights of interest or the seductions of beauty; but almost no one has God alone as their object. Alas! How many marriages are desecrated, and how few unions exist where peace and virtue reign! My God! How many married people will be damned! But, no, my brethren, let us not go into these details, we will come back to them another time; let us just talk about the duties of parents towards their children: they are vast enough, extensive enough to serve as a subject for discussion. For today, my brethren, we will say nothing about these fathers and mothers, whose darkness and horror of crime I could not depict in sufficiently vivid and energetic terms. They fix, even before God, the number of their children, they set limits to the designs of Providence, and oppose its adorable wills. Let us cover, my brethren, all these turpitudes, with a veil that He who has seen everything, counted everything, and weighed everything, will be able to tear away in the broad daylight of vengeance. Your crimes are hidden, my friend, but wait a few more days, and God will know how to reveal them to the face of the entire universe. Yes, my brethren, we will see on the day of judgment horrors that have been committed in marriage, and which would have made even the pagans shudder. Nor will we say anything about these criminal mothers, who would see without pain, alas! perhaps even with pleasure, to perish their poor children, before having given birth to them, and having obtained for them the grace of holy baptism; some, by fear of the trouble they would experience in raising them; the others, by fear of the contempt and rejection that they would suffer from a brutal and unreasonable husband: I do not say, without religion, because the pagans would not do more. O my God! can such crimes be found among Christians? However, my brethren, how great the number! Once again, how many married people are damned! Hey! why, my friend, must the good God have given you knowledge so above beasts only to better outrage him? Should small birds and even the most ferocious animals serve as an example to you? See them, these poor little creatures, how much they rejoice to see their generation multiply; during the day, they are busy looking for food for them, and at night, they cover them with their wings, to protect them from the insults of the air. If a greedy hand takes away their young, you hear them cry in their own way; they no longer seem to be able to leave their nests, always in the hope that they will find them again. What a shame, I do not say for pagans, but for Christians, that animals are more faithful to accomplish the designs of Providence for them, than God's own children; that is to say the fathers and mothers whom the good God chose only to populate heaven. No, no, my brethren, let us go no further, let us leave such a revolting subject; let us go into details that will concern a larger number of people. I will speak to you as simply as

possible, so that you can fully understand your duties and carry them out. I say first, that, as soon as a mother is pregnant, she must offer some prayer or some alms; better still, if she can, have a mass said to pray to the Most Holy Virgin to receive her under her protection, so that she can obtain from the good God that this poor child does not die without having received holy baptism. If a mother really had religious feelings, she would say to herself: ah! if I had the happiness of seeing this poor child become a saint, of contemplating him all eternity beside me, singing the praises of the good God, what joy for me!

But no, no, my brethren, it is not the thought that occupies a pregnant mother; rather, she will experience a devouring sorrow at seeing herself in this state, and perhaps she will have the thought of destroying the fruit of her womb. O my God! can the heart of a Christian mother well conceive of such a crime? However, how many we will see in broad daylight who will have harbored these thoughts of homicide within themselves! second, I say that a pregnant mother who wants to keep her child for heaven must avoid two things: the first of carrying too heavy burdens and raising her arms to take something, which could harm her poor child and cause it to perish. The second thing to avoid is taking remedies that could tire your child, and getting into fits of anger, which could often suffocate them. Husbands have to overlook many things that they would not overlook in another time; if they do not do it in relation to the mother, let them do it in relation to this poor child; because perhaps he would lose the grace of holy baptism: which would be the greatest of all misfortunes! third, As soon as a mother sees her childbirth approaching, she must go to confession, and for several reasons. The first is that many die in childbirth, and that, consequently, if she had the misfortune of being in a state of sin, she would damn herself. The second is that being in a state of grace, all the suffering and pain she endures will be rewarded for heaven; the third is that all the blessings she wishes for her child, the good God will not fail to grant them to her. A mother, in childbirth, must maintain modesty and modesty, as much as possible in her state, and never lose sight of the fact that she is in the presence of the good God, in the company of her good guardian angel. She must never go fat on forbidden days without permission, which would bring a curse on her and her child. i° Never let more than twenty-four hours pass without baptizing your children; if you do not do it, you are guilty, unless you have serious reasons. In your choice of godparents, choose wise people as much as you can; here is the reason: it is that all the prayers, the good works that their godparents will do, by virtue of the spiritual kinship with your children, will obtain for them a quantity of graces from heaven. Yes, my brethren, we are sure to see at the last judgment many children who will recognize themselves indebted for their salvation to the prayers, good advice and good examples of their godparents. Another reason obliges you to do so: if they miss you, they are the ones who must take your place. So, if you had the misfortune of taking godparents without religion, they could only lead your children to hell. Fathers and mothers, you must never let your children lose the fruit of baptism; how blind and cruel would you not be? The Church has just saved them through holy baptism, and you, through your negligence, would you give them back to the devil? Ah! poor children, into whose hands have you had the misfortune to fall! But if it is a question of godparents, we must not forget that to respond for a child we must be sufficiently educated, in order to be able to instruct this child if the father and mother were to fail him. Furthermore, they must be good Christians, and even perfect Christians; since they must serve as examples to their spiritual children. Thus, a person who does not celebrate Easter must not answer for a child, nor a person who maintains a bad habit without wanting to give it up, nor a person who goes to dances,

who habitually frequents taverns; because, at each question from the priest, he makes a false oath: a serious thing, as you think, in the presence of Jesus Christ himself, at the foot of the sacred font of baptism.

When you are not in the conditions required to be Christian godparents, you must refuse; and, if this has happened to you, you must confess it and not fall into this sin again. fifth, You should not make your children sleep with you before they are two years old; if you do, you are committing a sin. If the Church has made this law; it is not without reason: you are obliged to observe it. But, you will tell me, sometimes it is very cold, or we are very tired. All this, my brethren, is not a reason that can excuse you in the eyes of God. Besides, when you got married, you knew well that you would be obliged to fulfill the responsibilities and obligations which are attached to this state. Yes, my brethren, there are fathers and mothers so little instructed in their religion, or so little concerned with their duties, that they will make children from fifteen to eighteen years old sleep with them, and often even brothers and sisters together. O my God! in what state of ignorance are these poor fathers and mothers! — But, you will tell me, we do not have a bed. — You do not have a bed: but it is much better to have them sleep on a chair, or at your neighbor's. O my God! what damned parents and children! But I come back (to my subject) by telling you that every time you make your children sleep with you, before they are two years old, you offend the good God. Alas! how many poor children the mother finds suffocated in the morning, and how many mothers are present to whom this misfortune has happened! And even if the good God had preserved you from it, you are no less guilty than if, each time your children slept with you, you had found them suffocated in the morning. You do not want to admit it, that is to say, you do not correct yourself; let us wait for the judgment, and you will be forced to recognize what you do not want to recognize today. But, you will tell me, when they are baptized they are not lost; on the contrary, they go to heaven. Without doubt, my brethren, they are not lost; but it is you who will be lost; and besides, do you know what God intended these children for? Maybe this child would have been a good priest. He would have led many souls to the good God; every day, by celebrating Holy Mass, he would have given more glory to God than the angels and saints all gathered together in heaven. He would have drawn more souls from purgatory than the tears and penances of all the solitary people gathered before the tribunal of God. Will you understand, now, the misfortune of letting a child perish, even if baptized? If the mother of Saint Francis Xavier, who was such a great saint, who converted so many idolaters, had allowed him to perish: alas! how many souls in hell, who, on the day of judgment, would reproach him for having been the cause of their misfortune, because this child was raised up by God to convert them! You let this girl perish who perhaps would have given herself to the good God; through her prayers and her good examples she would have led many to heaven. Perhaps, as a mother, she would have raised her children well, who, in turn, would have raised others, and thus the religion would have been maintained and preserved over many generations. You take little account, my brethren, of the loss of a child, under the pretext that he is baptized; but wait for the judgment, and you will see and recognize what you will never understand in this world. Alas! if fathers and mothers made this reflection from time to time, how many more souls would be in heaven. 6° I say that parents are very guilty in caressing their children in an improper manner. But, you will tell me, we do no harm, it is to caress them; and I will say that you offend the good God, and that you bring a curse on these poor children. Do you know what results from this? here it is. There are children who picked up this habit

from their parents, and who kept it until their first communion. But, my God! can we believe this from Christian parents?

7° There are mothers who have so little religion, or, if you like, are so ignorant that to show a neighbor the health of their children they strip them naked; others, to change them, leave them uncovered for a long time in front of everyone. Well! even in the absence of anyone, you should not do it. Shouldn't you respect the presence of their guardian angels? The same is true when you breastfeed them. Should a Christian mother leave her breasts uncovered? and although well covered, should she not turn towards the side where there is no one? Others, under the pretext that they are nurses, are always only half covered: what an abomination! Is there not even enough to make the pagans blush? We are obliged, in order not to expose ourselves to evil looks, to flee their company. Oh what a horror! But, you will tell me, although there are people, we must breastfeed our children, and change them when they cry? And I will tell you that when they cry, you must do everything you can to soothe them; but it is much better to let them cry a little than to offend the good God. Alas! how many mothers are the cause of bad looks, bad thoughts, dishonest touches! Tell me, are these Christian mothers who should be so reserved? O my God what judgment must they expect? Others are so cruel that they let their children run around all morning half-covered in summer. Tell me, wretches, would you not be better off among the wild beasts? Where is your religion and your concern for your duties? Alas! As for religion, you have none, and have you ever known your duties? You provide proof of this every day. Ah! poor children, how unfortunate you are to belong to such parents! 8° I say, that you must still supervise your children, when you send them to the fields; then, distant from you, they indulge in everything that the devil wants to inspire them. If I dared, I would tell you that they do all kinds of dishonesty; let them spend half the day doing abominations. I know well that most do not know the harm they do; but wait until they have knowledge. The devil will not fail to make them remember what they did at that moment, to make them commit sin, or similar things. Do you know, my brethren, what your negligence or your ignorance produces? here it is: remember it well. A good number of the children you send into the fields commit sacrileges for their first communion; they have contracted these shameful habits; or they do not dare to say it, or they are not corrected. Then, if a priest, who does not want to damn them, refuses them; we will reproach him, saying: It is because he's mine... Come on, you wretches, watch over your children a little better, and they will not be refused. Yes, I would say that the majority of your children began their disapproval when they went to the fields. But, you will tell me, we cannot always follow them, there would be plenty to do. For this, my brethren, I tell you nothing; but all I know is that you will answer for their souls as well as your own. — But we do what we can. — I do not know if you are doing what you can; but what I know is that, if your children are damned at home, you will be too; This is what I know and nothing else. You may say no, that I am going too far; you will agree, if you have not entirely lost your faith; this alone would be enough to throw you into a despair from which you could not escape. But I know very well that you will not take another step to better fulfill your duties towards your children; you do not worry about all this, and you are almost right, because you will have plenty of time to torment yourself throughout eternity. Let us move on. 9° You must not make your servants or your daughters sleep in the apartments where.

In the morning your servants will fetch your turnips and your potatoes. This must be said to the shame of fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses, poor children, servants who will have the confusion of getting up and dressing in front of people who have no more religion than if they had

never heard of the true God. Often the beds of these poor children will not have any curtains. But, you will tell me, if I had to do everything you say, there would be a lot of work. — My friend, this is the work that you must do, and if you do not do it, you will be judged and punished: that is it. You should also not make your children sleep in the same room as you, once they are seven or eight years old. Look, my brethren, you will only know the evil you are doing at the judgment of God. I know very well that you will do nothing or almost nothing of what I have just taught you; but, no matter, I will always tell you what I have to tell you; then all the harm will be for you and not for me; because I am letting you know what you must do to fulfill your obligations towards your children. When the good God judges you, you will not be able to say that you did not know what to do; I will remind you of what I tell you today. You have just seen, my brethren, that your children, although small, have made you commit many faults; but you will see that when they are big they make you commit much bigger ones and much more fatal ones for you and for them. You will all agree with me, my brethren, that the older your children get, the more you must redouble your prayers and your care, given the greater dangers and the more frequent temptations. Now tell me, is this what you do? No, undoubtedly, when your children were little, you took care to talk to them about the good God, to make them say their prayers; you watched over their conduct a little, you asked them if they had gone to confession, if they had attended Holy Mass; you had the precaution of telling them to go to catechism. Since they were eighteen to twenty years old, far from inspiring them with the fear and love of God, the happiness of those who serve him during their life, the regret that we have when dying for having lost ourselves; alas! these poor children are full of vices, and have transgressed the commandments of God a thousand times without knowing them; their spirit is full of the things of earth and empty of those of God. You tell them about the world. A mother will begin to tell her daughter that so-and-so married so-and-so, that she has indeed found a good match; that she should have the same happiness. This mother will only have her daughter in mind, that is to say, she will do everything she can to make her shine in the eyes of the world. She will burden her with vanity, perhaps even to the point of incurring debts; she will teach her to walk straight, telling her that she walks all hunched over, that we do not know what she looks like. It surprises you that there are such blind mothers! Alas! How great are the number of these poor blind people who seek the ruin of their daughters! Another time, seeing them go out in the morning, they are more eager to quickly look to see if they have their hats straight, their faces and hands clean, than to ask them if they have given their hearts to the good God, if they have said their prayers and offered their day: of all this, they do not talk about it. Another time, they will say that we must not appear wild, that we must be kind to everyone; that you have to think about making acquaintances to establish yourself. How many blinded mothers or poor fathers say to their child: If you are very kind or if you do this well, I will let you go to the Montmerle fair, or to the fashion show; that is to say, if you always do what I want, I will drag you to hell. O my God, is this indeed the language of Christian parents, who should pray night and day for their poor children; so that the good God would inspire in them a great horror for pleasures, a great love for him with the salvation of their souls!

What's even sadder; there are children who are not at all inclined to go out; the parents are praying to them, asking them, saying to them: You always stay there, you will not be able to establish it, you will not be known to the world. Do you want, mother, for your daughter to make acquaintances? Do not worry so much, she will do well without you worrying so much; wait a little longer, and you will see that she has made them. The daughter, whose heart will perhaps not be as spoiled as that of the

mother, will say to him: “I will do well” as you wish; but no, the priest does not want to; he tells us that all this only brings the curse of God on marriages; I do not want to go to the dances, what do you think, mother? — Well, good God, how good you are, my daughter, to scare Mr. I priest, he must tell us something; it is his livelihood, we take what we want from it, and we leave the rest to others. — But we will not have an Easter? — Ah, poor child, if he does not want to receive us, we will go to another; what one does not want, the other always takes. My daughter, be good, come back early, go, only, you will not have fun when you are no longer young.” Another time, it will be a neighbor who will say to her: “You give your daughter too much freedom; it will end up giving you grief.” — “My daughter! will answer him, “I am not afraid of that. Besides, I recommended her to be very good, she promised me that; I am sure" that she only sees good people.” — My mother, wait a while and you will see the fruit of her wisdom. When the crime breaks out, it will be a subject of scandal for the entire parish, it will cover the family with opprobrium and dishonor; and if nothing comes to light, that is to say, if no one finds out, she will carry under the veil of the sacrament of marriage, a heart and a soul spoiled by the impurities to which she indulged before her marriage, a source of curses for all her life. But, a mother will say, when I see that she is doing too much, I will know how to stop her; I will not give him permission to go out anymore, or else I'll take a stick. — You will no longer give him permission, mother; do not worry, she will know how to take it without you having the trouble of giving it to her, and if you only pretend to refuse it to her, she will know how to brave you, make fun of you and leave. You pushed her first; but it is not you who will remove it. You may cry, but what good will your tears do? nothing, except to remind you that you were wrong, that you should have been wiser and led your children better. If you doubt it, listen to me for a moment, and you will see, despite the hardness of your heart for the souls of your poor children, that it is only the first step that costs; once you have let them go astray you are no longer in control of them, and often they come to very miserable ends. It is recorded in history, that a father had a son, who gave him all kinds of consolations; he was wise, obedient, reserved in his words, he was at the same time the edification of the entire parish. One day, when there was a little entertainment in the neighborhood, the father said to him: “My son, you never go out, go and have fun with your friends for a while, they are all decent young people, you will not be in bad company there.” The son said to him: “Father, I have no greater pleasure or better recreation than being in your company.” This is a beautiful response for a child who values the company of his father more than all other pleasures and all other companies. “Ah! my son,” said this poor blind father, “if that is so, I will go with you.” The father leaves with his son. The second time, the young man no longer needed to be asked so much to leave; the third time he leaves alone; he doesn't need his father; on the contrary, his father begins to hinder him, he finds the way perfectly.

His mind is only occupied with the sound of the instruments he has heard, the people he has seen. He ended up abandoning these little practices of piety that he had prescribed for himself at the time when he was entirely God's; he then gets involved with a young girl, much worse than him. The neighbors are already starting to talk about him as a new libertine. As soon as the father notices it, he wants to oppose it, he forbids him from going anywhere without his permission; but he no longer finds this former submission in his son. Nothing can take it away; he makes fun of his father, telling him that, now that he can no longer entertain himself, he wants to prevent others from doing so. The father, in despair, sees no more remedy, he pulls his hair out, he wants to correct him. The mother, who felt better than her husband the dangers of these companies, had often told him that he was

doing very badly, that he would be angry about it; but no, it was too late. One day, when his father sees these pleasures coming, he punishes him. The son, seeing that he was being hampered by his parents, committed himself, and after some time, the father received a letter informing him that his son had been crushed under the feet of horses. Alas! where did this poor child go? God grant he is not in hell. However, if he is damned, by appearances his father is the real cause of his gate. When the father does penance, his penance and his tears will never have the power to rescue this poor child from hell. Ah! unhappy parents, who throw your children into the eternal flames. You find this a little extraordinary; However, if we look closely at the behavior of parents: this is what they do every day. If you doubt this at all, let us touch on this a little closer. Do not you complain about your children every day? that you cannot anymore. be masters? this is very true. You may have forgotten the day when you said to your boy or your girl: If you want to go to the fair in Montmerle, or to the fashion house at the inn, you can go; you will come back early. Your daughter told you that it would be just as you wanted. - Just go, you never go out, you have to have a moment of pleasure. — You will not say no. But later, you will not need to ask her or even give her permission. Then you will be tormented by the fact that she is leaving without telling you. Look back, mother, and you will remember that you gave her permission once and for all. Plus, consider what will happen when you give her the freedom to go wherever her poor brainless head takes her. You want her to make acquaintances to establish herself. Indeed, by dint of running, she will make acquaintances, she will increase her crimes. It will be like a mountain of sins which will prevent the blessing of the good God from being poured out on these children at the time of their marriage. Alas! these poor people are already cursed by God! While the priest raises his hand to bless them, the good God, from heaven, launches his curses. Hence, for them a terrible source of misfortune. This new sacrilege, added to so many others, makes them lose their faith forever. So, in marriage, where we think we have everything, life is nothing more than an abyss of corruption, which would make even hell shudder if it were to witness it. But, alas, all this only lasts for a while. Soon after, sorrows, hatreds, arguments and mistreatment on the part of both spouses are not uncommon. — After five or six months of marriage, the father will see his son coming all furious like a desperate person, cursing the father, the mother, the wife, and perhaps even those who requested the marriage. His father, astonished, will ask him what happened to him: “Oh how unhappy I am; Ah at least if after my birth you had crushed me, if before I married someone had poisoned me! “But, my son,” the father will tell him in great sorrow, “you must be patient.” What do you want! maybe it will not last. - Born " tell me nothing, if I believed my courage, I would shoot myself or I would throw myself into the water: one must always be arguing or fighting. "Isn't that right, Father, let the priest say, you have to make acquaintances, otherwise you wouldn't find a place to settle down. Always leave, my son, be good, come back early and be calm. Yes, without doubt, my friend, if you had been wise, if you had consulted the good God, you would not have established yourself as you did; God would not have allowed it; but he would have done to you as he did to young Tobio; he himself would have chosen for you a wife who, by coming to you, would have brought peace, virtue, all kinds of blessings. This, my friend, is what you have lost by not listening to your pastor, and by following the advice of your blind parents. Another time it will be a poor girl who will come, perhaps all bruised from blows, to place her tears and her sorrow in her mother's bosom. They will mix their tears together: “Ah! poor mother, how unfortunate I am to have taken a husband like that! He's "so mean and so brutal! I fear that one day it will be said that he killed me.” — But, the mother will tell him: “you must do whatever he commands you.” — “I” do it well; nothing satisfies

him, he is always in co-" 1ère." — "Poor child," the mother will say, "if you had had the good fortune to take so-and-so, who asked you, you would have been much happier." You are wrong, mother, that is not what you should tell him. "Ah! poor child, if I had had the good fortune to inspire in you the fear and love of the good God, if I had never let you pursue pleasures: God would not have allowed you to be so unhappy. Would you not, mother? Let the priest say, always leave; be good, come back early and be calm. This is very good, mother, but listen... One day, I happened to pass by a big fire, I took a handful of very dry straw, I threw it in, telling it not to burn. Those who witnessed this said to me, mocking me: "Even if you tell her not to burn, that will not stop her from burning. "And how," I replied, "since I tell him not to burn?" — What do you think, mother? do you recognize yourself there? Is this not your behavior or that of your neighbor? Didn't you tell your daughter to be very good when you gave her permission to leave? — Yes, without a doubt...— Come on, mother, you were blind and the executioner of your children. If they are unhappy in their marriage, you alone are the cause.

Tell me, my mother, if you had some feelings of religion and friendship for your children, should you not work with all your power to make them avoid the harm that you yourself did, when you were in the same situation as your daughter? Let us speak more clearly. You are not happy enough to be unhappy yourself, you still want your children to be unhappy too. And you, my daughter, are you unhappy in your household? I am very angry about it, I am very sad about it; but I am less surprised than if you told me that you are happy, after the arrangements made for your marriage. Yes, my brethren, corruption has risen today to such a high degree among young people, that it would be almost as impossible to find any who holyly receive this sacrament, as it is impossible to see a damned person ascend into heaven. But, you will tell me: there are still a few. Alas! my friend, where are they?... Ah! well yes, a mother or father has no difficulty leaving a daughter with a young man for three or four hours in the evening, or during vespers. — But, you will tell me, they are wise. — Yes, without doubt, they are wise; charity must make us believe it. But tell me, mother, were you very good when you were in the same situation as your daughter? Let us end, my brethren, by saying that if children are unhappy in this world and in the next, it is the fault of the parents who did not use all the means of which they were capable to holyly lead their children on the path of salvation, where most certainly, the good God would have blessed them, llalas! today, a young man or a young girl wants to settle down, they absolutely must abandon the good God... No, let us not go into that detail, we will come back to it another time. Poor fathers and mothers, what torments await you in the next life. As long as your generation lasts, you will participate in all the sins that are committed there, you will be punished for them as if you had committed them, and even more, you will account for all the souls of your generation who have damned themselves. All these poor souls will accuse you of having lost them. This is very easy to understand. If you had raised your children well, they would have raised theirs well: they would have saved each other. That is not all yet, you will be responsible before God for all the good works that your generation has accomplished until the end of the world and which were not done through your fault. What do you think of this, fathers and mothers? If you have not yet lost your faith, do you not have reason to cry about the harm you have done and the impossibility of repairing it? Was I right to tell you at the outset that it is almost impossible to show you in all its magnitude the magnitude of your duties?... Still, what I told you today is only a small overview... Come back on Sunday, fathers and mothers, have your children look after the house, and we will go further without being able to make you aware of everything. Alas! how many parents drag

their poor children into hell, falling there themselves. My God! can we think about so many misfortunes without shuddering! Happy are those whom the good God does not call to marriage! What less account to give! — But will you say to me: "We do what we can." — You do what you can, yes undoubtedly; but it is to lose them and not to save them. In closing, I want to show you that you are not doing what you can. Where are the tears you shed, the penances and the alms you gave to ask God for their conversion?

Poor children, how unhappy you are to belong to parents who only work to make you unhappy in this world and even more so in the other! Being your spiritual father, here is the advice I have to give you: When you see your parents who miss services, who work on Sundays, who go to school on forbidden days, who no longer attend the sacraments, who do not learn: do just the opposite; so that your good examples may save them themselves, and if you had this happiness, you would have gained everything. This is what I wish you.

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost — On Drunkenness

Nolite inebriari vino, in quo est luxuria. Do not be drunk with wine, wherein is luxury. (Ephesians 5:18)

Do not give yourselves over to drunkenness, which leads to impurity. (Eph. 5:18)

To show you, my brethren, the greatness of the sin of drunkenness, it would be necessary to be able to make you aware of the greatness of the evils that it brings with it for time and for eternity; which will never be given to mortal man, because only God can know it. Everything I tell you about it will therefore be nothing compared to what it is. First, you will agree with me that a person, who still has a little common sense and religion, cannot be indifferent and insensitive to the loss of his reputation, his health and his salvation. Should I explain it better, I will tell you that the drunkard, through his sin, brings upon himself the ruin of his health, the aversion of men and the curse of God himself. I believe, my brethren, that this alone should be enough to make you conceive of it an execrable horror. What a shame for a person, but especially for a Christian, to plunge into this infamous quagmire! The Holy Spirit tells us in Holy Scripture that we must send the lazy person to the ant to learn from it to work; but that for the drunkard, he must be sent to the brute beast to learn from him temperance in drinking and eating. When we want to encourage a sinner to escape from sin, we hasten to offer him the examples of Jesus Christ and the saints; but for a drunkard, you have to change your language, you have to offer him the example of animals, and without fear of going down to the most filthy. Great God, what a horror! Saint Basil tells us that drunkards among men should not be tolerated; but that they should be chased away, and relegated among the wild beasts which are deep in the forests. This sin seems odious even to pagans. It is recorded in history that the magistrates of the city of Sparta, whose inhabitants were very sober, to make the young people understand how unworthy this vice is of a reasonable creature, brought, on a certain day of the year, into the middle of the public square, a slave who had been drunk. The young people, seeing this man dragging himself through the water or the mud, were astonished and exclaimed: 0 heaven! where can such a monster come from? He has a human face, but he has less reason than a brute beast. You see, my brethren, pagan as they were, they could not conceive that a reasonable creature was capable of giving itself over to a passion which reduced it to such a dishonorable state. We also read that a

young lord, a good man, had a servant unfortunate enough to dabble in wine from time to time. One day, as he was going to church, he found him in this state, and asked him where he was going. I am going to church, to pray to God, the servant replied. You are going to church, his master replied, ah! infamous! how could you pray to the good God when you would not be able to feed your horse. This sin is not like those which, with time and grace, are corrected; for this one requires a miracle of grace, and not ordinary grace. Do you ask me why drunkards convert so rarely? Here is the reason: they have neither faith, nor religion, nor piety, nor respect for holy things; nothing is capable of making them squint and make them open their eyes to their unhappy state. If you threaten them with death, with judgment, with hell waiting to burn them; if you tell them about the happiness that God reserves for those who love him; In response, they will give you a clever little smile which means: "Perhaps you think you are scaring me like you do to children; but I am not yet one of those who give up. to believe all this." That is all you get out of it. He believes that when we are dead, everything is over. His God is his wine and he leaves it at that. "Go, unhappy man," said the Holy Spirit to him, "this wine that you drink in excess is like a snake that kills you." You don't believe it now; but in hell you will learn that there is another God besides your womb.

Besides the harm that the drunkard does to himself by this sin, what excesses is he not capable of going to when he is in his vice! Saint Augustine gives us a frightening example. In the city where he was bishop, a young man named Cyril had, like so many others, alas! the unfortunate habit of frequenting taverns. One day when he was returning from the place of his debaucheries, he carried the fury of passion so far that he attacked his mother herself who was pregnant. Seeing herself in the hands of this accursed son, she struggled with so much effort that she caused the poor child she was carrying to perish. O my God, what a misfortune! a child who will never see heaven because of the fury of this unfortunate libertine!... This infamous person, seeing that he could not win over his mother, went after one of his sisters, who preferred to let herself be stabbed than to consent to his infamous desire. The father, hearing a loud noise, runs to free his daughter. The unfortunate man throws himself at his father, stabs him with a knife and makes him fall at his feet. Another of her sisters runs to the aid of her father whom she saw murdered; the unfortunate man also stabs her. 0 sky what horror! what is the passion like this? Saint Augustine, having gathered the faithful at the church to inform them of this event, himself reports that everyone burst into tears at the story of such a crime. See, my brethren, what horror of this sin the Holy Spirit wants to inspire in you, since he tells you not even to look at the wine when it shines in the glass. If you drink it in excess, he says again, it will bite you like a snake, it will poison you like a basilisk. Do you want, Saint Basil tells us, to know what the stomach of a drunkard is, here it is: it is a reservoir filled with all the filth of the cabaret. You usually see, he said, a drunkard leading a languid life; he is capable of nothing except ruining his health, eating away his property, putting his family in poverty: that is all he is capable of. This passion must be very dishonorable, since the world, however corrupt it may be, still has sovereign contempt for drunkards and regards them as public pests. This is not very difficult to understand: does it not contain everything that is capable of making a man infamous and odious even in the eyes of pagans? Is he not odious when, through neglect of his affairs, he ruins his family and puts them in misery? Is he not odious by the scandals he gives, by the turpitude of his life, and the insults he utters against his superiors as well as against his inferiors; because a drunkard has no more respect for some than for others.

You will agree with me, my brethren, that it would not take so much to make a person contemptible. Listen to me for a moment longer, and you will understand it better. Where will you find a father who wants to give his daughter to a drunkard, if he knows him to be such? As soon as you make the proposition to him, he replies: “If I wanted to make my daughter die of grief, I would do it; but as I love my children, I prefer to keep her with me all my life.” Besides, my brethren, where would the girl be who would want to agree to take a young man who rolls the taverns? - “I would rather,” she would tell you, “go spend my life in a wood than take an idiot, who, perhaps, in his wine will kill me, as we have seen very often.” Tell me, my brethren, what bourgeois is there who would want to entrust the government of his domain to a drunkard, charge him with paying his expenses, receiving his money? Out of all five thousand you will not find one who agrees to it, and they are quite right. Where is the judge who would like to receive the testimony of a drunkard in court? He would have him expelled from his audience, and would order him to be taken to his stable, with his horses, or even better with his pigs, if he had any. Where will you find an honest man who would appear in an inn in the company of a drunkard? If no one knows Me, he will perhaps be patient; but, if he thinks he is recognized by a proper person, he immediately takes flight; or, if he cannot, he seeks a thousand detours to make it understood that he found himself in this company without knowing it. If you want to hurt him in an argument, reproach him for having seen him in such company; it is telling him that he's not worth

Who haunts. - Owner. no better than this drunkard; and we assume all kinds of bad qualities in a drunkard! Saint Basil tells us that if animals were capable of knowing what a drunkard is, they would not want to suffer him in their company, they would believe they were dishonoring themselves. Doesn't a drunkard put himself below the crudest beast? See, in fact, an animal has feet to go where it wants, where it is called; but a drunkard has none. How often do you find him lying in a path, like an animal whose four feet have been cut off? If you have the charity to pick it up, it immediately falls back, to the point that you are obliged either to leave it in the mud, or to take it on your shoulders. Isn't that the truth? — Yes, undoubtedly, you think to yourself. —An animal has eyes to see, to behave, to go to its master's house, and to place itself in the stable that he has designated for it. A drunkard has no eyes to guide himself home, he does not know whether to take the right or the left; if he is one of your neighbors, he does not only know you. Ask him if it is day or night, he doesn't know. A beast has ears to hear what its master says to it; she cannot answer him; but she looks at him to show that she understands and is ready to do what he commands her. If a dog sees its master sign to it that it has lost its handkerchief or its stick, it immediately sets out to look for it, it brings it back and shows its master the joy, the pleasure it has in doing him a service. If you find a drunk lying on your way, try talking to him for hours on end, he will not only answer you, his ears are so blocked, his eyes are so obscured by the smoke of the wine. If drunkenness still leaves him with the strength to open his mouth, he will answer you one thing for another; and you will end up leaving, deploring his unfortunate inclination. If, in this state, he still has some knowledge, there is no kind of filth and infamy that he does not vomit up; you will see him commit actions that would make pagans blush if they witnessed them, and this without remorse. Should we give a final brushstroke to make you better appreciate what is the value and what are the fine qualities of a drunkard? I only add one word: it is a demon of impurity clothed in a body, which hell has vomited onto the earth, it is the dirtiest, the most foul of all animals. Take away his soul, and it is only the last of the beasts that the earth bears. I believe that now, my brethren, you can get an idea of the greatness of the sin of drunkenness.

We find it very horrible, and yet we have only a very limited knowledge of the malice of sin; I leave you to think in what way the good God, who knows it in all its extent, must consider it! If it were not immortal, could he, without dying of horror, bear the sight of this vice which dishonors him in his creatures, since they are, Saint Paul tells us, the members of Jesus Christ. Let us go no further, my brethren, it is enough. I will only tell you that an impudent person, although very criminal, can still at least, in his sin, produce an act of contrition which reconciles him with the good God. the slightest sign of repentance, far from knowing the state of his soul, he does not even know if he is in the world; so that, my brethren, dying in intoxication or dying as a reprobate is the same thing.

We say, my brethren, that a drunkard is quite incapable of working out his salvation, as you will see. For him to emerge from his state, he would have to be able to feel its full horror. But, alas! he has no faith; he only very weakly believes the truths that the Church teaches us. He would have to resort to prayer; but he does almost none, or if he does, it is by dressing or undressing, or else he will be content to make the sign of the cross, as best he can, by throwing himself on his bed like a horse on its dunghill. He would have to use the sacraments, which are, despite the contempt shown by the impious, the only remedies that the mercy of God presents to us to attract us to him. But, alas! he does not know the provisions that must be made to receive them worthily, nor even the most necessary of what one must know to be saved. If you want to ask him about his (state), he doesn't understand anything, he tells you one thing for another. If? in a time of jubilee, or mission, he wants to keep up appearances, he will be content to say only half of his sins; and, with the others, he goes to the holy table, that is to say, he is going to commit sacrilege; that is enough for him. My God, what a state a drunkard is in! how difficult it is to be able to get out of it! My brethren, if you would take the trouble to consider the retention of a drunkard in church, you would think that he is similar to an atheist who believes nothing; you see him come last, or go out to relax a little, look for some of his peers to accompany him to the cabaret, while the others are listening to Holy Mass. The prophet Isaiah tells us that drunkards are useless creatures on earth for good; but that they are very dangerous for evil. For us to believe, my brethren, enter a cabaret, which Saint John Climaquc calls the demon's shop, the school where hell weakens and teaches its doctrine, the place where souls are sold, where households are ruined, where health deteriorates, where disputes begin and where murders are committed. Alas! so many things that horrify those who have not yet lost their faith. What do we hear there? You know it much better than me: blasphemy, swearing, imprecations, dirty words. And how many shameful deeds that one would not do anywhere else!… See, my brethren, this poor drunkard! He is full of wine and his purse is empty. He throws himself onto a bench or table; the next day he is surprised to find himself in a cabaret, whereas he thought he was at home. He leaves after having spent all his money, and often he is obliged to leave (as pawn) his hat or his clothes with a note, in order to be able to take away his body with the wine he has drunk. When he returns, his poor wife and children, whom he has left without bread, with only their eyes to cry, are obliged to quickly flee, otherwise they will be mistreated, as if they were the cause of the spending of his money and the bad deals he made. My God, how deplorable the state of a drunkard is! The Council of Mayonce is right to tell us that a drunkard transgresses the ten commandments of God. If you want to be convinced of this, examine them one after the other, and you will see that a drunkard is capable of doing everything that God's commandments forbid us to do. I do not want to go into this detail which would take too long. Saint John Chrysoslom said, addressing the people of the city of Anlioche: “Take care, my children, not to indulge in drunkenness; because this sin degrades (man)

in such a terrible way that it places him below the brute beast deprived of reason. Yes, he continues, drunkards are truly the friends of the devil; where drunkards are, there are demons in great numbers." Alas! my brethren, must this sin not be horrible in the eyes of God, for him to punish it in such a frightening way, even in this world. Here is a striking example.

We read in Holy Scripture that King Balthasar had prepared a splendid feast for the nobles of his court, which surpassed all those he had offered them during his reign. He had searched throughout his kingdom for the most delicious wines. When his guests were assembled, and, boasting of drinking in long drafts, the blood began to heat up and impudence to kindle; we can well say that one does not go without the other: when they were already plunging into voluptuousness, suddenly there appeared before the king's face, a bodyless hand, writing on the wall certain words which were the condemnation of this king, without his knowing it. Alas! My brethren, how little the proudest, most proud and most ferocious man is in such an accident, or rather in the slightest accident! Balthasar was so frightened and trembled so greatly that the joints of his back were broken and his knees knocked against each other. All the guests were prey to the same terror and seemed to be half-dead. The king hastened to seek out someone who could make him understand the meaning of these words; but no one understood anything about it. Then he ordered all his diviners, that is to say, his false prophets, to come. Everyone wanted to know, but without success. Finally the king was told that Daniel, the prophet of

Lord, only he could give him its meaning. As he greatly desired to know the meaning of these words, he ordered him to be brought forth immediately. The prophet went without resistance to the king, who received him with great respect, and asked him for an explanation of these words, offering him several gifts. The prophet refuses them. "Prince," he said, "listen. Here is what these three words MANÉ, THÉCEL, PHARES mean. The first, that your days are numbered and that you are at the end of your life and your reign; the second, that you were weighed and found too light; the third, that your kingdom will be divided between the Medes and the Persians." Thus the king heard from the prophet's own mouth the sentence of condemnation which announced to him the end of all his debaucheries. Note carefully, this happened at the time when this unfortunate man was drinking with his guests, from the sacred vessels removed by his father during the pillage of the temple of Jerusalem; while they filled their bodies with wine, and immersed themselves in the dirtiest pleasures. O my God what a thunderbolt of your anger! But he was not free from fear, as is commonly said: everything happened as the prophet had predicted. The king was massacred, and his kingdom was divided between the Modes and the Persians. Despite this warning capable of converting any other sinner, this unfortunate man was only hardened; for it does not appear that he gave the slightest sign of repentance. To all appearances, from his villainy and his fear he descended into hell. Which shows us how difficult it is for a drunkard to convert. See again Holofernc, this famous proud man, who prided himself on filling himself with wine until he was overflowing, in the presence of the beautiful Judith. It was precisely in her drunkenness that she cut off his head. Oh! My brethren, what a fatal passion! who could understand its tyranny and give in to it? No, my brethren, a person who abandons himself to drunkenness no longer has any reserve, not even for his parents, as we have said. But to impress it on your heart, here is an example which is no less frightening. The story goes that a father had a son, who, while still very young, had the habit of going to taverns quite often. One day, seeing him return from this place of misfortune, and noticing that he had drunk a little too much, the father wanted to show him how shameful it was for him, who was still only a

child, to go to taverns where evil is done and where good is never done; that he would do much better to flee these places where his reputation and his money were wasted, and that, if he wanted to continue, he would find himself chased out by his father. This young man, hearing these words, became so angry that he ran at his father, and, stabbing him with a knife, stabbed him and knocked him down at his feet all covered in blood. Tell me, my brethren, could you ever have thought that drunkenness could lead man to such excesses? So the drunkard not only commits the sin of gluttony; but he becomes capable, through this sin, of committing all crimes. If I were not afraid of being too long, I would show it to you so clearly that you would not be able to doubt it. After this, my brethren, it is not necessary to tell you how much you should fear drunkenness, and flee from those who indulge in it. However, my brethren, as the mercy of the good God is infinite, and as he wants to save drunkards like other men, although their conversion is very difficult; if they wanted to lend themselves to the grace given to them to correct themselves, they would be able to pull themselves out of this abyss. The first thing they must do is to flee drunkards and taverns: this condition is absolutely necessary for them to return to the good God. The second way is to resort to prayer, in order to touch the heart of God and regain his friendship. The third is to have great respect for holy things, to never despise anything that relates to religion.

The fourth, to have recourse to the sacraments where so many graces are granted to us: this is the means which all sinners have used to return to the good God, both drunkards and others. Saint Augustine says, according to his mother's own account, that she had almost damned herself by playing the little gourmand with wine. She watched for the moment when no one saw her, and then she tried to be content. But a servant who had seen her sometimes, and who one day happened to displease her, told her that she was a little drunkard. This word was so close to her heart, she was so confused by it, that, in her repentance, she cried for a long time. She immediately went to confess this fault, which she had never dared to tell her confessor, as she considered this sin so infamous and shameful, although she was barely twelve years old. She corrected herself so well with the grace of the good God that she never fell back into it again in her entire life, and she lived in such an exemplary way that she became a great saint. We see that the good God, to make her atone for her sin, allowed her to marry a drunken and brutal man who made her suffer a thousand ill-treatments. His son

Satisfy yourself.

Augustine, until the age of thirty-two, was no less a drunk than his father. Saint Monica, recognizing that the good God allowed this so that she could satisfy his justice, bore this ordeal so well that she was never heard to make the slightest complaint to anyone. She finally had the happiness of seeing her husband and her son Augustine converted. You see, my brethren, that the good God reaches out and gives grace to those who ask him, with a true desire to escape from sin, to live only for him. But another example will please you, because it will show you that drunkards, although very miserable, can still save themselves; and that those who do not convert from their bad habits, and believe that they will not be able to correct themselves, are very much mistaken. It is rare to find a trait that suits our subject better. In a village near Nîmes, there was a peasant named Jean. From his youth, he had been so addicted to drunkenness that he was almost continually involved in wine, and was generally considered the biggest drunkard in the country. The parish priest having brought missionaries to instruct his parishioners, thought it necessary to make them aware of this sinner, lest he deceive

them. This wise precaution of the pastor seemed at first useless; because not only did the peasant not introduce himself to any missionary, but he also did not attend any of the mission exercises. Two days before it was finished, he decided to go and hear a sermon on the prodigal son or on the mercy of God, which was preached by M. Castel, priest of Nîmes, one of the missionaries who had the most talent and zeal. This speech written with noble simplicity, but delivered with great force and anointing, made the most lively

So give me the grace to understand myself, and that I may, at least, have the consolation of confessing. The missionary complied with this desire, and the peasant made his confession as well as he could. He accompanied the accusation of his sins with so many tears and such lively repentance; he resisted with so much courage the prudent advice given to him, not to give up wine entirely, because of his health, and only to use it more rarely and more soberly; he protested so strongly that nothing could ever reconcile him with this cruel enemy, who had brought death to his soul, and that he would hate it all his life, that the missionary, seeing him so well disposed, gave him absolution, strongly recommending him to persevere in the good feelings that the good God had inspired in him. This great sinner promised him, and what followed would prove that his repentance had been sincere. Five or six months after the mission, one of Jean's sisters made a trip to Nîmes. She met the missionary who was very curious to know if her famous drunkard Jean had persevered. You come, no doubt, from your village, he said to him, can you give me news of brave Jean? Ah! sir, replied this woman, we have great obligations to you; you made him a saint. Since you left our country, not only have his old friends not been able to take him to taverns; but it was not possible for us to make him drink a single drop of wine. No, no, he tells us, when we talk to him about it, he has been my greatest enemy, I will never be reconciled with him; do not talk to me about it anymore. The missionary could not hear these words without shedding tears, so joyful was he to know that this converted sinner had had the happiness of persevering. Every time he recounted this trait, he was accustomed to adding that after such a conversion, one should never despair of the greatest sinners, if the sinner wants to correspond to the grace that the good God grants to all to save them.

We will see, my brethren, that sinners, that is to say drunkards, have no pretexts which justify their excesses. Saint Augustine tells us that, although drunkenness is condemned by everyone, everyone believes they can excuse themselves from it. If you ask a man why he got into wine, he will answer you, without worrying, that a friend came to see him; that they went to the cabaret, and that if they drank too much, it was only out of complacency. — It is out of complacency! but, either this friend is a good Christian or he is an impious one. If he is a good Christian, you have greatly scandalized him by urging him to drink, and by spending your time in a cabaret. Perhaps it was even during Holy Mass or during Vespers 1 Eh! what, my brother, you two reasonable people entered the tavern, and you left less reasonable than two brute animals. Believe me, my friend, if you had kept your friend at home for a moment, and, having no wine, you would have offered him water; you would have given him much more pleasure than by making him sell his soul to the demon. If this friend is a bad Christian or an impious person without religion, you must not go with him, you must run away from him. — But, you will tell me, if I do not make him drink, and if I do not take him to the cabaret, he will resent me, he will call me a miser. — My friend, it is a great happiness to be despised by the wicked,

Get confused. because it proves that we are not like them. You must serve as an example to them. Saint Augustine tells us: Eh! what, wretch, you have taken to wine to be the friend of a drunkard, of an impious person, of a libertine; while you become the enemy of God himself! Oh unfortunate! what an unworthy preference! So you see, my brethren, you have nothing that can excuse you: you dabble in wine, because your gluttony leads you to it. Some tell you that they are in the habit of going to the cabaret to drink with the others; but that, however copiously they drink, wine never disturbs their reason. My friend, you are wrong. Although wine does not trouble you, as soon as you drink more than you need, you are as guilty in yourself as if you had lost your reason; there is only one little scandal less. And yet you are no less, in the eyes of the public, a cabaret pillar. Listen to what the prophet Isaiah tells us: Woe to you who are strong-headed enough to drink to excess, who pride yourself on making others drunk: you make yourself drunk. Here are some who still tell you: It is to make a deal, to give or to receive money. — Alas! my friend, I do not want to prove to you how many of those who are in the wine business make deals all wrong. We make them sign receipts without them having the money, or if they have received it, we quickly try to take it back from them. Besides, how do you want to know what you are doing? you do not know yourself. What conclusion should we draw from all cola, my brethren? here it is. It is to seriously return to ourselves, as the Lord tells us through the mouth of the prophet Joel: Wake up, he says, you drunkards, because all kinds of misfortunes await you. Weep and shout at the sight of the punishments that the just wrath of God is preparing for you in hell, because of your drunkenness. Wake up, unhappy, to the clamors of this poor woman whom you mistreated after eating her bread; wake up, drunkards, to the cries of these poor children whom you reduce to begging or who you put in the situation of dying of hunger. Listen, infamous drunkard, to this neighbor who asks you for the money he lent you, and which you ate in debaucheries and in taverns. He needs it to feed his wife and children, who are mourning the misery your drunkenness has caused them. Ah! unhappy sinners, what did you promise the good God when he received you for his child? You promised to serve him, not to fall into these disorders again. What did you do in your drunkenness? Alas! you revealed secrets that were entrusted to you and that you were never supposed to tell. You have committed an infinite number of deeds that horrify everyone. What have you done by indulging in drunkenness? You have ruined your reputation, your fortune, your health and you have made your family so miserable that, perhaps in order to live, they will abandon themselves to all kinds of disorder. You yourself have become a worthless man, the fable and the opprobrium of your neighbors, who now only look at you with contempt and horror. What have you done with your soul, with this soul so beautiful that only God surpasses it in beauty? You have made it completely carnal, completely disfigured by your excesses. What have you lost through your drunkenness? Alas! my friend, you have lost the greatest of all goods, you have lost heaven, eternal happiness, infinite goods; you have lost your poor soul which had been redeemed by the adorable blood of Jesus Christ. Ah! let us say further: You have lost your God, this tender Savior, who only lived to make you happy throughout eternity. Oh! what a loss! Who can understand it and be insensitive to it! What misfortune is comparable to this? But what have you deserved? Alas! nothing but hell, to be burned there for all eternity. You have deserved, my friend, to be placed on the table of demons where you will feed and maintain the fury they have against Jesus Christ himself.

You are going to be this victim on whom the just wrath of God will fall for endless centuries... Agree with me that perhaps you would never have been able to form an idea of the greatness of the sin of drunkenness, of the state to which it reduces those who commit it, of the evils that it brings upon

them during their life and of the punishments that it prepares for them for eternity. Who would not be affected by so many evils, my brethren? Cry, unhappy drunkards, for your disturbances and all the bad examples you have given, instead of laughing at them as you do. Cry out to heaven, to ask for mercy, to try, if the Lord will still have mercy on you. Let us pray to God to protect us from this unfortunate sin, which seems to make it almost impossible for us to save ourselves. For this, let us only love God alone, this is the happiness that I wish you.

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost — On Anger

Tenens suffocabat eum, dicens: Redde quod debes. Seizing him, he throttled him, saying: Pay what you owe. (Matthew 18:28)

Tenens suffocabat eum, dicens: Hedde quod debes. Having taken him by the throat, he said to him: Give me back what you owe. (S. Matthew, xvm, 28.)

How the feelings of man are different from those of God! This wretch, who had just received the remission of everything he owed to his master, far from being touched with gratitude, and being ready to show the same indulgence towards his brother, barely saw him when he flew into a rage, no longer possessed himself, jumped at his throat and seemed to want to strangle him. The other throws himself at his feet to beg for mercy, but nothing touches him and nothing stops him. He must exhaust his fury against this poor wretch, and have him dragged to prison until he has paid his debt. This, my brethren, is the conduct of the people of the world. God is represented to us by the master. If he voluntarily gives us everything we owe to his justice, if he treats us with such kindness and gentleness, it is so that, following his example, we behave in the same way towards our brothers. But an ungrateful and fiery man soon forgot everything his God had done for him. For nothing, we will see him indulge in all the fury of a passion so unworthy of a Christian, so outrageous to a God of gentleness and goodness. Let us fear, my brethren, a passion so evil, so capable of distancing us from God, and of making us and those around us pass an unhappy life. I will therefore show you: 1° how much anger outrages God; 2° how unworthy of a Christian it is.

I do not want to talk to you about these little impatience, these murmurs which are so frequent. You know that whenever you do not reject them, you offend God. Although this is not the usual mortal sin, you must not fail to accuse yourself of it. If you ask me what anger is, I will tell you that it is a violent, impetuous movement of the soul, which persistently rejects what displeases it. If we open the holy books, where are contained the actions of men who have been the admiration of heaven and earth, everywhere we see that they have always had a horror of this accursed sin, and that they have regarded it as a mark of reprobation. However, I will tell you with Saint Thomas, that there is a holy anger, which comes from the zeal that we have to support the interests of God. We can sometimes, he tells us, get angry without offending God, according to these words of the King-Prophet: "Get angry; but do not sin." There is therefore a just and reasonable anger, which we can rather call zeal than anger. Holy Scripture shows us a large number of examples of this. There we read that Phinees, who was a man fearing the Lord and supporting his interests, entered into holy anger at the sight of the scandalous sin of a Jew with a Midianite woman, and pierced them with a blow of the sword. Not only did he not offend the Lord by the death of these two abominables, but on the contrary, he was praised for his zeal in avenging the outrages done to him. Such was also the conduct of Moses.

Indignant because the Israelites had worshiped a golden calf, in contempt of the true God, he had twenty-three thousand of them killed to avenge the Lord, and this, by the orders of God himself. Such was also that of David who, from the morning, declared war on all these great sinners who spent their lives insulting his God (1). Such was finally that of Jesus Christ himself, when he went into the temple to drive out those who sold and bought there, saying to them: "My house is a house of prayer and you are making it a den of thieves." Such must be the anger of a pasteitr who has the salvation of his parishioners and the glory of his God at heart. If a pastor remains silent when he sees God outraged and souls going astray, woe to him! If he does not want to damn himself, if there is some disorder in his parish, he must trample on human respect and the fear of being despised or hated by his parishioners; and although he would be sure of being put to death after coming down from the pulpit, that should not stop him. A pastor who wants to fulfill his duty must always have the sword in his hand to defend the innocent, and pursue sinners until they have returned to God; this pursuit must only cease upon his death.

If he does not behave in this way, he is a bad priest, who loses souls instead of leading them to God. If you saw some scandal happening in your parish, and your pastors said nothing: bad- (1) Psalm c, v. 8. Happy to you, because God has punished you by sending you such pastors. I therefore say that all these angers are only holy angers, praised and approved by God himself. If all your anger were of this nature, you could only praise it. But when we reflect a little on everything that is happening in the world, when we hear all these noises, see these dissensions which reign between neighbors, brothers and sisters: we recognize only a fiery, unjust, vicious and unreasonable passion, the pernicious effects of which it is necessary to show you; in order to make you realize all the horror it deserves. Listen to what the Holy Spirit tells us: By becoming angry, a man not only loses his soul and his God, but also shortens his days. I will prove it to you with a striking example. We read in the history of the Church that the Emperor Valentinian, upon receiving the deputies of the Quadi, entered into such a terrible anger that he lost his breath and died immediately. O my God! what horror! what detestable and monstrous passion! she brings death to the one who gives birth to her! I know very well that we do not often indulge in such excesses; but how many pregnant women, through the anger in which they indulge, cause their poor children to perish, before having given birth and baptism! These unfortunate people will therefore never have the happiness of seeing the good God! On the day of judgment we will see them lost: they will never go to heaven! And only a mother's anger will be the cause! Alas! these poor children will often cry out in hell: Ah! cursed sin of anger, that you have deprived us of goods!... it is you who have stolen heaven from us; it is you who condemned us to be devoured by flames! O my God! how this accursed sin has robbed us of great goods! Goodbye beautiful sky, we will never see you; ah! what a misfortune!... O my God! Could a woman who was guilty of such a crime live without shedding torrents of tears day and night, and not say to herself at every moment: Unhappy woman, what have you done? where is your poor child? you threw him into hell. Alas! what reproaches for the day of judgment, when you will see him come and ask you for heaven! This poor child will throw himself at his mother with terrible fury. Ah! mother he will say to him, cursed mother give me back the sky; It's you who stole it from me! This beautiful sky that I will never see, all eternity I will ask you; this beautiful sky that a mother's anger made me lose!... O my God! what a misfortune! And yet how great the number of these poor children is!

— A pregnant woman must, when confessing a sin of anger, never fail, if she (wants) to save herself, to declare her condition; because, instead of a mortal sin, there can be a mild one. If you do not do

this, that is to say, if you do not say this circumstance, you must very much doubt your confessions. Likewise, a husband who makes his wife angry must blame himself for this circumstance; as well as all those who are guilty of the same fault. Alas! how few there are who accuse themselves of this! My God, what bad confessions! The prophet Isaiah tells us that an angry man is like water tossed by a storm. Nice comparison, my brethren.. Indeed, nothing represents the sky better than the sea when it is calm; it is a large mirror in which the stars seem to reproduce themselves; but also, as soon as the storm has disturbed the waters, all these celestial images disappear. Thus, the man who has the happiness of maintaining patience and gentleness is, in this calm, a sensitive image of God. But anger and impatience no sooner destroy this calm than the image of the divinity disappears. This man therefore ceases to be the image of God and becomes that of the devil. He repeats the blasphemies, represents the fury. What are the demon's thoughts? These are only thoughts of hatred, revenge, division: such are those of an angry man. What are the expressions of the demon? It is all curses and oaths. If I listen to an angry man, I hear nothing from his mouth except swearing and curses. O my God! What sad company is that of a person who is prone to anger! Look at a poor woman who has a husband like this: if she has the fear of God, and wants to spare him offenses and mistreatment of herself, she cannot lift her tongue (1), even if she had the greatest desire in the world. She must be content to moan and cry in secret; so as not to create a bad relationship or cause scandal. But, a passionate man will say to me, why does she stand up to me? we know that I am lively. — You are lively, my friend, but do you think that others are not as lively as you? Instead, say that you have no religion, and you will say what you are. Shouldn't a person who fears God know how to govern his passions, instead of letting himself be governed by them? Alas! if I said that there are unhappy women because they have carried away husbands; there are husbands (1) Say a single word. who are no less unhappy, with women who will never be able to say a good word to them, who are taken away and maddened by the slightest thing. But what misfortune in a household, when neither one nor the other wants to give in; it is nothing more than arguments, anger and curses. 0 great God! Is this not truly an anticipated hell? llélasl what school are these poor children at? what lessons of wisdom and gentleness do they receive? Saint Basil tells us that anger makes man like the devil, because it is only the devil who is capable of giving in to these kinds of excesses. A person in this state is like a furious lion, whose roar scares other animals to death. See Herod: because the Magi had deceived him, he became so angry, or rather in such fury, that he had all the little children of Bethlehem and the surrounding area slain. He was not content with these horrors; he had his wife and children stabbed again. Alas! how many poor children are crippled for their lives, by the bad blows they received from their parents, in these transports of anger. But I add that anger almost never works alone: it is always accompanied by many other sins, as we will see.

IT Anger brings with it swearing, blasphemy, denials of God, curses, imprecations. Saint Thomas tells us that swearing is a sin so great, so dreadful in the eyes of God, that we will never be able to understand the outrage it causes him. This sin is not like the others, whose lightness of substance often only makes it a venial sin. In swearing, the lighter the matter, the greater the sin; since it is a greater contempt, and a greater profanation of the holy name of God. The Holy Spirit assures us that the house of man who is accustomed to swearing will be filled with iniquity, and that the chastisements of God will not come out of it until it is destroyed. Can we hear without shuddering these unfortunate people, who dare to carry their fury to the point of swearing the holy name of God, that adorable name that the angels have so much joy in constantly repeating: Holy, holy, holy, the

great God of hosts! (may he) be blessed for ever and ever! If we thought carefully when using our tongue, that it is an instrument given by God to pray to him, to sing his praises; that this tongue has been watered by the precious blood of Jesus Christ; that, so many times, it served as a resting place for the Savior himself, could it be used to outrage such a good God, and to profane a name so holy and so respectable! See what horror the saints had of swearing. Saint Louis, king of France, had made a law stating that anyone who swore would have his tongue pierced with a hot iron. A bourgeois of the city, in an argument, swore the holy name of God. He was taken before the king, who immediately condemned him to have his tongue pierced. All the powerful people of the city having come to ask for his pardon, the king replied to them that, if he had had the misfortune to commit this sin, he would pierce it himself. And he ordered that his sentence be carried out. When he went to fight for the Holy Land, he was taken prisoner. He was asked to take an oath, which, however, did not seem to offend his conscience; However, he preferred to expose himself to death rather than doing so, so afraid was he of swearing. Also, we see that a person who swears is ordinarily a person abandoned by God, overwhelmed with all kinds of misfortunes, and who often comes to an unhappy end. We read in history an example capable of giving us the greatest horror of swearing. During the time that Saint Narcissus governed the Church of Jerusalem, three libertines horribly slandered the saint, supporting their assertion with three execrable oaths.

The first said that if what he affirmed was not true, he wanted to be burned alive; the other, that he wanted to die of the obsolete disease; the third, that he wanted his eyes gouged out. Because of these slanders, Saint Narcissus was chased out of the city as an infamous person, that is to say, as a bishop who abandoned himself to all kinds of impurities. But God's vengeance did not take long to punish these unfortunate people. A fire having been set during the night in the house of the first, he was burned alive there. The second died of the disease; the third, terrified by such horrible punishments, lost his sight while weeping for his sins. I know that very few allow themselves to swear these kinds of things. The most ordinary oaths are these: My foil My conscience! - My God! Yes; - My God! No; — parbleu! — morbleu! - Morning! When you confess, you must be accused of the reason why you swore; whether it is to assure false things or the truth. If you made other people swear by not wanting to believe them. You need to say if you are used to it, and how long you have had it. To the oaths, we must be careful not to add the oath. There are some who say: If this is not true, I will never move from my place; see the sky; God damn me! let the plague suffocate me! may the devil take me away!.... Alas! my friend, perhaps the devil is only waiting for your death to win!... You must say, in your confessions, whether what you said was or was not against the truth. There are some who believe that there is no harm (in making an oath) to assure something that is true. The evil, it is true, is not so great as for a false thing; but it is still a sin, and even a big one. You are therefore always obliged to accuse yourself of it, otherwise you are damned. Here is an example that makes one tremble. It is reported in the life of Saint Edward, King of England, that (Count Gondevin, father-in-law of the king), was so proud that he could not tolerate anyone near him. The king one day accused him of having cooperated in the death of his brother. The count replied that, if that were true, he wanted a piece of bread to strangle him. The king made the sign of the cross on this piece of bread, his father-in-law took it, and as he swallowed it, the bread stuck in his throat, strangled him, and he died. Terrible punishment, my brethren! Alas! where did his poor soul go, since he died committing this sin? Not only must we not swear, under any pretext whatsoever, even if it means losing our

property, our reputation and our life, because, by swearing, we lose heaven, our God and our soul; but we must not even make others swear.

Saint Augustine tells us that, if we anticipate that those whom we bring to justice will swear falsely, (we must not do this;) we are as guilty and even more guilty than if we took their lives. In fact, by slitting their throats we are only giving death to their bodies, if they have the good fortune to be in a state of grace; the only harm is for us: instead of making them swear, we lose their poor soul, and we lose them for eternity. It is reported that a bourgeois of the city of Hippo, a good man, but very attached to the land, forced a man to whom he had lent money to swear in court; he swore falsely. The same night he was presented before the tribunal of God. — Why did you make this man swear...? Shouldn't you rather lose what he owed you than lose his soul? Jesus Christ told him that he forgave him this time, but that he condemned him to be whipped; which was carried out immediately by the angels; because the next day he found himself covered with sores. You will tell me: Should I lose what you owe me? — We would have to lose what we owe you; but do you value your brother's soul less than your money? Besides, be sure that if you do this for the good God, he will not fail to reward you. Fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses must examine whether they have not been, for their children or their servants, the cause of some swearing, through the fear they sometimes have of being mistreated or scolded. We swear for lies as well as for the truth. Take care, when you are called to court, never to swear falsely. Although you have not sworn, you must even examine whether you have not had the thought of it in yourself, and how many times you have had this thought; if you have advised others to swear falsely, under the pretext that if they tell the truth they will be condemned. You have to say that. Blame yourself again if you have taken a few detours to say otherwise than you thought; for you are obliged to say as you think it or as you have seen and heard it; otherwise, you are committing a great sin. You must likewise distinguish whether you have given something to induce others to lie: thus, a master who threatens his servant to mistreat him or make him lose his wages, must explain all this in confession, otherwise his confession would only be sacrilege. The Holy Spirit tells us that the false witness will be punished rigorously. We have just said what swearing and oath are, let us now see what blasphemy is. There are many who do not know how to distinguish blasphemy from swearing.

If you do not know how to distinguish one from the other, you cannot expect your confessions to be good, because you do not make known your sins as you have committed them. Listen carefully; so that you leave this ignorance, which would most certainly damn you. Blasphemy is a Greek word which means to hate, to curse infinite beauty. Saint Augustine tells us that Your blasphemy is when we attribute to God something that he does not have, or that does not suit him; when we take away from him what suits him, or, finally, when we attribute to ourselves what is due only to God. Let us explain this. first, We blaspheme when we say that God is not just, if what we do or undertake does not succeed. second, To say that God is not good, as some unfortunate people do in the excess of their misery, is blasphemy. third, We blaspheme when we say that God does not know everything; that he does not pay attention to what is happening on earth; that he not only knows us in the world; that all things go as they will; that God does not interfere in such little things; that by coming into the world we bring our fate of being unhappy or being happy, and that God changes nothing. fourth, When we say: If God had mercy on this one, truly it would not be just; because he did too much and deserved nothing but hell. fifth, When we get angry with God at the occasion of some loss, and we say: No, God cannot do more to me than he does to me. It is also blasphemy to mock and mock the

Blessed Virgin, or the saints, by saying: He is a saint who does not have much power, I have been (praying) for several days and I have obtained nothing; I do not want to use him anymore. It is blasphemy to say that God is not powerful, and to treat him unworthily, as in saying: Despite Dicul S... D..! S... N..! The Jews had such a horror of this sin that when they heard blasphemy, they tore their clothes as a sign of grief. The holy man Job feared this sin so much that, fearing that his children had committed it, he offered sacrifices to God to atone for it. The prophet Nathan said to David: Since you have been the cause of blaspheming God, your child will die, and punishment will not leave your house while you live. The Lord says in Holy Scripture: Whoever blasphemes my holy name, I want him to be put to death (1). While the Hebrews were in the desert, a man was caught blaspheming, and the Lord ordered him to be stoned to death.

Sonnacherib, king of the Assyrians, who besieged Jerusalem, having blasphemed the name of God, saying that, despite God, he would take this city, and put it all to fire and blood; the Lord sent an angel, who in one night killed one hundred and eighty-five thousand men, and he himself was slain by his own children. These blasphemies have always been held in horror since the beginning of the world; they are truly the language of hell, since the devil and the damned never stop uttering them. When Emperor Justin learned that some of his subjects had blasphemed, he had their tongues cut out. During the reign of King Robert, France was afflicted by a great war. The good God revealed to a holy soul that all these evils would last until blasphemy was banished from the kingdom. Is it not then an extraordinary miracle that a house where a blasphemer is found is not crushed by lightning and overwhelmed with all kinds of misfortunes? Saint Augustine also says that blasphemy is a greater sin than perjury; for in the latter, God is taken as witness to a false thing; in the latter, on the contrary, it is a false thing that is attributed to God. You will agree with me, my brethren, of the greatness of this sin and of the misfortune that results from it for the man who indulges in it. After having indulged in it, should he not fear that God's justice would punish him immediately, like so many others? Let us now see what difference there is between blasphemy and the denial of God. I do not want to talk to you about those who deny God by leaving the Catholic religion to embrace a false one: such are the Protestants, the Jansenists and so many others. We call these people renegades and apostates. This concerns those who, following some loss or some disgrace, have the accursed habit of bursting out in angry words against God. This sin is horrible, because at the slightest thing that happens to us, we take it out on God himself, we lose our temper against him; it is as if we were saying to God: You are a

! a 1 an unhappy I a vindictive! You are punishing me for such an action, you are unfair. God must wipe away our color, as if he were the cause of the loss we suffered and the accident that happened to us. Is it not he, this tender Savior, who took us from nothing, who created us in his image, who redeemed us with his precious blood and who has preserved us for so long; while we deserved to be buried in hell for many years... He loves us with an inconceivable love, and we despise him; we profane his holy name, we swear it, we deny it! What horror! Is there a more monstrous crime than this? Isn't this imitating the language of demons? demons who only do that in the underworld? Alas! My brethren, if you imitate them in this life, you are sure to go and keep them company in the underworld. O my God! Can a Christian indulge in such horrors? A person who indulges in this sin must expect an unhappy life, even in this world. It is said that a man, after having been a blasphemer all his life, said to the priest who confessed him: Alas! my father, how unhappy my life has been! I used to swear, to blaspheme the name of God; I lost all my property, which was considerable; my

children, on whom I have only brought curses, are worthless; my tongue, which has sworn, blasphemed the holy name of God, is ulcerated and rotting. Alas, after having been very unhappy in this world, I still fear being damned because of my oaths. Remember, my brethren, that your tongue was only given to you to bless the good God; it was consecrated to him by holy baptism and by holy communion. If unfortunately you are subject to this sin, you must confess it with great pain and make it a harsh penance; otherwise you will suffer the punishment in hell. Purify your mouth, pronouncing the name of Jesus with respect. Ask God often for the grace to die rather than fall back into this sin. Would you have ever thought how blasphemy is a horrible sin in the eyes of God and man? Tell me, did you confess properly, did you not just say that you swore, or even said rude words? search your conscience, and do not. do not fall asleep, because it is quite possible that your confessions are worthless. Let us now see what is meant by curse and imprecation. Here it is. Cursing is when, driven by hatred or anger, we want to destroy or make unhappy anyone who opposes our will. These curses fall on us, on our fellow human beings or on animate or even inanimate creatures.

When we do this, we do not behave according to the spirit of God, which is a spirit of gentleness, goodness and charity; but according to the spirit of the demon, whose whole occupation is to curse. The worst curses are those that fathers and mothers call upon their children, because of the great evils that follow. A child cursed by his parents is, ordinarily, a child cursed by God himself; because the good God said that if parents bless their children, he will bless them; on the contrary, if they curse them, their curse will remain on them. Saint Augustine cites an example worthy of being forever engraved in the hearts of fathers and mothers. A mother, he tells us, cursed in anger her three children; At that very moment, they were possessed by the demon. A father said to one of his family: You will not die. His child fell dead at his feet. What makes this sin even worse is that, if a father and mother are in the habit of committing it, their children will contract this habit, this vice becomes hereditary in families. If there are so many houses which are unhappy, and which are truly the retreat of demons and the image of hell, you will find the explanation in the blasphemies and curses of their ancestors, which passed from their grandfather to their father and from their father pass to their children, and so on. You have heard an angry father uttering swear words, imprecations and curses; well, listen to her children when they are angry: the same swearing, the same imprecations she remains. Thus the vices of parents pass to their children like their possessions, and even better. Cannibals only kill strangers to eat them; but, among Christians, there are fathers and mothers, who, to satisfy their passions, wish the death of those to whom they have given life, and deliver to the devil those whom Jesus Christ has redeemed with his precious blood. How often do we hear these fathers and mothers without religion say: Ah! cursed child, you do not, once! you bore me; the good God will not punish you once!...,; (I wish) you were as far from me as you are near! that little child! this demon of a child, these ch... children! these stupid children and the rest. O my God! Can all these curses come from the mouth of a father and a mother, who should only wish and desire the blessings of heaven for their poor children! If we see so many children in his, surly, without religion, crippled, let us not look for the cause elsewhere than in the curses of the parents; at least for the majority.

What then is the sin of those who curse themselves in times of trouble? It is a terrible crime which combats nature and grace; because nature and grace inspire us with love for ourselves. He who curses himself is like a madman who kills himself with his own hands; it is even worse; often he attacks his

soul, saying: God damn me! let the devil take me away! I would as much like to be in hell as to be as I am! Ah! unhappy, says Saint Augustine, that God does not take you at your word; because you would vomit the venom of your rage into hell. O my God! if a Christian thought carefully about what he said, would he have the strength to utter these blasphemies, capable, in some way, of forcing God to curse him from the top of his throne! Oh! How unhappy a man prone to anger is! He forces this God who would only want his good and his happiness to be punished! Will we ever be able to understand it! What is the sin of a husband and a wife, a brother and a sister, who vomit all kinds of blasphemies against each other? It is a sin the magnitude of which no term can ever express; it is a sin all the greater because they are more strictly obliged to love and support one another. Alas! how many married people never stop spewing all sorts of curses at each other! A husband and wife who should wish each other only happy wishes, and seek God's mercy; in order to obtain for each other the happiness of spending their eternity together, take on curses; they would tear their eyes out if they could, and even life. Cursed wife or cursed husband, they cry, at least if I had never seen you and never known you! Ah! cursed father, who advised me to take you!... O my God, what a horror for Christians, who should only work to become saints! They are doing what demons and reprobate do! How many brothers and sisters do we see wishing each other death, cursing each other, for being richer or for some insults they have received; often retain hatred throughout their lives, and have difficulty forgiving themselves even before dying. It is still a big sin to curse the weather, the animals, your work. How many people, when time is not according to their will, curse it saying: Cursed time, you will not change! You do not know what you are saying, it is as if you were saying: Ah! cursed God, who does not give me a time as I would like. Others curse their animals: Ah, 1 cursed beast, I will not be able to make you go as I want!... May the devil take you away! may the thunder crush you! may the fire of heaven roast you! Ah! unfortunate, your curses have their effect more often than you think. Often beasts perish or become maimed, as a result of the curses you have given them. How many times have your curses, your outbursts and your blasphemies brought hail and frost to your crops? But what is the sin of those who wish harm on their neighbor? This sin is great in proportion to the harm you wish for, the damage that would be caused if it happened. You must blame yourself every time you have had such wishes. When you confess, you must say what harm you wished for your neighbor, what loss he would have suffered if this evil had happened to him. You must explain whether they are your parents, your brothers and sisters, your cousins, your uncles or aunts. Alas! how few there are who make all these distinctions in their confessions! We will have cursed our brothers, our sisters, our cousins; and we will be content to say that we wished harm on our neighbor, without saying to whom, or what the intentions were in doing so. How many others will have made terrible swearing, blasphemy, imprecations, hair-raising denials of God, and who are content to accuse themselves of having said foul words, and nothing else. A rude word, you know, is a kind of little swear, like b and f say without anger. Alas, so many sacrilegious confessions and communions! But, you will ask me, what must we do to avoid committing these sins, which are dreadful and capable of bringing on us all kinds of misfortune?

All the sorrows that befall us must make us remember that, having rebelled against God, it is right that creatures should revolt against us. We must never give others the opportunity to curse us. Children and servants especially, must do all they can; so as not to cause their parents or their masters to curse them; for it is certain that sooner or later some punishment will befall them. Fathers and mothers must consider that they have nothing so dear in the world as their children, and, far

from cursing them, they must never cease to bless them; so that God may pour out on them whatever good they desire. If something bad happens to you, instead of heaping curses on what doesn't go your way, it would be just as easy and much more advantageous for you to say: God bless you. Imitate the holy man Job, who blessed the name of the Lord in all the troubles that befell him, and you will receive the same graces as him. Seeing his great submission to the will (of God), the demon flees, blessings are poured out abundantly on his goods, everything is returned to him double. If, unfortunately, you happen to utter one of these bad words, quickly make an act of contrition to ask for forgiveness, and promise that you will not return there. Saint Teresa tells us that when we pronounce the name of God with respect, all heaven rejoices; while if we say these bad words, it is hell. A Christian must never lose sight of the fact that his tongue is only given to him to bless God in this world, and to thank him for the goods with which he has showered him during his life; in order to bless him for eternity with the angels and the saints: this will be the portion of those who have imitated, not the devil, but the angels. I wish you...

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost — On Restitution

Reddite quae sunt Caesaris Caesari, et quae sunt Dei Deo. Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. (Matthew 22:21)

To render to God what is God's and to the neighbor what is due to him: nothing is more fair, nothing more reasonable. If all Christians followed this path, hell would have none among its inhabitants, and heaven would be populated. Ah! would to God, the great Saint Hilary tells us, that men never lost sight of this precept! But alas! how many delude themselves? They spend their lives deceiving one, stealing from the other. Yes, my brethren, nothing is more common than injustices, nothing rarer than restitutions. The prophet Hosea was right to say that injustices and thefts covered the face of the earth, and that they were like the flood which ravaged the universe. Ah! unfortunately, as many as there are guilty, there are just as many who do not want to recognize it. O my God, how many thieves death will reveal! To convince you of this, my brethren, I will show you, first, that ill-gotten goods never benefit; second, in how many ways you harm your neighbor; third, how and to whom you must return what does not belong to you.

We are so blind that we spend our lives seeking and gathering goods that we will lose for ourselves, while we leave behind those that we can keep for all eternity. The riches of this world are only worthy of contempt for a Christian, and it is precisely after which we run so eagerly [après lesquelles nous courons]. Man is therefore a fool, since he acts in a manner quite contrary to the end for which God created him. I do not want to speak to you, my brethren, about those who lend at usury, at seven, eight, nine and ten percent; let us leave them aside. To make them feel all the grandeur and darkness of their injustice and their cruelty, it would be necessary for one of these old usurers, who for three or four thousand years have been burning in hell, to come and tell them the story of the torments he endures, and of which his thousand injustices are the cause. No, that is not my intention. They know well that they do wrong, and that God will never forgive them, if they do not repay those who they have wronged. Anything I said to them would only make them more guilty. Let us go into a detail that concerns a larger number of people. "'I say that property acquired unjustly will never enrich the person who possesses it. On the contrary, it will be a source of curses for all his family. O my God,

how blind man is! He is perfectly convinced that he only comes into this world for a little while; every moment, he sees those leaving younger and more robust than him; no matter, that does not make him open his eyes. The Holy Spirit told him in vain, through the mouth of the saint man Job, that he came into the world devoid of everything, and that he will come out of it in the same way; that all these goods, after which he runs, will all leave him at the moment when he least thinks of them: all this does not stop him yet that he who wants to become rich by unjust ways, will not delay falling into great error; even more, that he will never see the face of God. a miser or, if you like, a person who has acquired some property by fraud or by skill, will almost never convert, as this sin blinds the one who commits it. Listen to how Saint Augustine speaks to those who have the property of others. No matter how much you confess, no matter how much you do penance and cry for your sins, if you do not repay, when you can, God will never forgive you. All your confessions and all your communions will only be forgiven. sacrileges, which you will heap on one another, either give back what is not yours, or you will have to resolve to go and burn in hell. The Holy Spirit is not content only to forbid us from taking and desiring the good of our neighbor, he does not even want us to look at it, in fear that this sight will make us lay our hands on it. that it be destroyed. And I say that not only will the property acquired by fraud or by skill not benefit you, but that it will cause your property acquired legitimately to perish, and that your days will be shortened. If you doubt it, listen to me for a moment, you will be convinced.

We read in Holy Scripture that King Ahab, wanting to enlarge his garden, went to find a man named Naboth, to ask him to buy his vineyard. “No,” Naboth told him, “it’s the inheritance of my fathers, I want to keep it.” The king was so outraged by this refusal that he fell ill. He could neither drink nor eat, and went to bed. The queen came and asked him the cause of his illness. The king replied that he wanted to enlarge his garden, and that Naboth had refused to sell his vineyard. “linked what!” replied the queen, “where is your authority?” Do not worry; I'll make sure you have it.” She hastens to go find some people who, won by money, will testify that Naboth had blasphemed against God and against Moses. This poor man tried in vain to defend himself by asserting that he was innocent of the crime of which he was accused; we didn't believe him; he was dragged away and knocked out with stones. The queen, seeing him bathed in his blood, ran to the king to tell him to take possession of the vineyard, because the one who had been bold enough to refuse it to him was dead. At this news, the king was cured and ran, like someone in despair, to take possession of the vineyard. This unfortunate man did not think that this was where God was waiting to punish him. The Lord calls his prophet Elijah, commands him to go to the king, and tell him on his behalf that, in the dreary place where the dogs had licked the blood of Naboth, they would lick his own blood, and that none of his children would reign after him. He also sends her to Queen Jesabol to tell her that the dogs will eat her as punishment for her crime. Everything happened as the prophet predicted. The king, massacred in a fight, the dogs licked his blood. A new king called Jôhu, entering the city, saw a woman sitting at a window. She had adorned herself like a goddess, hoping to charm the heart of the new king. He asks what this creature is. He is told that it is Queen Jezebel. He immediately ordered her to be thrown down. Men and horses trampled it underfoot. When evening came, when they wanted to give him a burial, only a few pieces of his body were found: the dogs had eaten the rest. “Ah! cried Jehu, “the word of the prophet has been fulfilled.” King Ahab left seventy children, all princes; this new king ordered that the heads of all of them be cut off, and that they be placed in baskets at the gate of the city to show, by such a frightful spectacle, what misfortunes the injustices

of parents bring upon their children. Saint Victor tells us an example which is no less astonishing. A man, he told us, had entered his neighbor's attic to steal some wheat. As he took his bag, the demon seized him, and, in front of everyone, dragged him as if he had taken him to the underworld. O my God, how blind man is to damn himself for so little... The second reason which should make us fear taking the property of others is that it leads us to hell. The prophet Zechariah said that, in a vision, God showed him a book where it was written that those who steal the property of others would never see God, and that they would be thrown into the flames. And yet, my brethren, there are some who are so blinded, that they would rather die and be damned than give up the ill-gotten good, while death is about to snatch it from their hands. A man had spent his life stealing and pillaging... Being only thirty years old, he fell ill with the illness from which he died. One of his friends, seeing that he was not asking for a priest, went to find one himself. "My friend," said the priest, "you seem very ill to me. So you didn't think to ask me? you would like to confess. — Ah, sir, replies the patient, with a completely bewildered air, so you think I am already dead? — But, my friend, the more knowledge you have, the better you will receive the sacraments. — Do not talk to me about that, I am tired at the moment; When I am better, I'll go find you at church.

— No, my friend, if you were to die without being administered, I would be too sorry. Since I am here, I will not leave until I have confessed to you." Seeing himself as forced, he consents; but how does he do it? like a person who has property from others, and who does not want to give it back. He says nothing about it.... — "If you get worse, I will come back and bring you the good God." In fact, the sick person goes to the side of death; Your short informs the priest that his penitent is expiring. He hurries to run. When the sick man heard the bell, he asked what it was, and, learning that the priest was bringing him the good God; "Hey! What, he cried, did I not tell you that I did not want to receive him? Tell him not to go any further." The priest nevertheless entered, and, approaching his bed: "You do not then want to receive the good God who would console you, and who would help you to suffer your sorrows." — "No, no, I have already done enough harm. — But you will scandalize the whole parish. — Hey! What does it matter to me that everyone knows that I am damned. — If you do not want to receive the sacraments, you cannot be buried Christianly. — Does a damned person deserve to be buried among the saints? When the demon has taken my cursed soul, throw my body to the wolf, like that of an animal..." Seeing his wife in tears: "Are you crying? console yourself; If you accompanied me to go, at night, to rob the neighbors, you will not take long to come and join me in the underworld." He cried out in his despair: "Ah! horror of hell, open your abysses! come and tear me away from this world, I cannot hold on any longer." And he dies with visible signs of disapproval. But, you will tell me, he had certainly committed great crimes. — Alas! my friend, if I dared, I would tell you that he was only doing what almost all of you do; sometimes it was a bundle, sometimes an armful of hay or a sheaf of wheat.

If I wanted, my brethren, to examine the conduct of those present here, I would perhaps find only thieves. Does this surprise you? Listen to me for a moment and you will recognize that this is true. If I begin by examining the conduct of the servants, I find them guilty on the side of their master and on the side of the poor. On the side of their masters, the servants are guilty, and, consequently, obliged to make restitution, every time they have taken more time than was necessary to relax, that they have lost time in taverns; if they allowed their masters' property to be lost or taken, and being able to prevent it they did not do it. Likewise, if, by praising himself, a servant has assured that he is capable of doing certain works, knowing very well that he was ignorant of it or could not..., he is

obliged to compensate his master for the pearl which is the consequence of his ignorance or his weakness. Moreover, he steals from the poor every time he spends his money gambling, going to a cabaret or on other useless things. But, you will tell me, this money is indeed mine since it is my pledge. I will answer you: You worked to earn it, it is true, and yet you are guilty; you will understand it. Perhaps your parents are poor enough to be obliged to resort to public charity; if you had kept your wages, you could relieve them: you are unable to do so; is this not stealing from the poor? One girl or boy has spent all their money, one on buying vanities, the other in taverns or games; if the good God sends them some illness or infirmity, they are obliged to go to the hospital, eat the bread of the poor; or else they will wait for a charitable person to reach out to them and give them what will be lacking to others even more unfortunate. If they enter a household, there they are with their children, reduced to poverty. Why is this? otherwise because being young, they didn't know how to reserve anything. Isn't it, my sister, if we thought a little, vanity wouldn't rise so high? What is most unfortunate is that not only are you lavishing a good that you will lack; but you lose your poor soul. But here is a sin all the more deplorable because it is more common, that of children and servants who steal from their parents or their masters. Children should never take anything from their parents just because they are not given enough. When your parents fed you, clothed you and taught you; they do not owe you anything more. Moreover, as soon as a child steals from his parents, he is seen as capable of anything. Everyone runs away from him and despises him. A servant will tell me:

Vm servant. A servant.

I am not paid for my troubles, I must reward myself - You are not paid for your troubles, my friend, why do you stay with these masters? When you hired yourself, you knew well what your pledge was and what you could deserve; you had to go elsewhere, where you would have earned more. And let those who receive into their homes what servants steal from their masters or children from their parents be careful. Even if these objects have only remained with them for five minutes, and even if they do not know their value, these receivers are obliged to return them, under penalty of damnation, if the culprits do not return them themselves. There are some who will buy some object, from a child or from a servant: but if they pay more for it than it is worth, they are obliged to return to the master either the object or its value; otherwise they will be thrown into hell. If you have advised another person to steal; even if you have not made any profit, if the thief does not return it, it is up to you to do so; otherwise, you can no longer hope for heaven. The most common thefts are in sales and purchases. Let us go into detail, so that you know the wrong you are doing, and, at the same time, you can correct yourself. When you go to sell your goods, you will be asked if your eggs or your butter are very fresh, you will hasten to answer yes; while you know very well the opposite. Why do you say it, if not to steal two or three pennies from a poor person, who, perhaps, borrowed them to maintain their household? Another time is by selling hemp. You will have to take the precaution of hiding the smallest or the worst inside. You may say: If I do not do it this way, I will not sell it as much. — That is to say, if you behaved like a good Christian, you would not steal as you do. Another time, you realized that you had been given more than you needed in your account, but you said nothing. — Too bad for this person, it is not my fault. —Ah! my friend, a day will come when people will perhaps say to you with more reason: Too bad for you!... Such and such a person wants to buy you wheat, wine or animals. She will ask you if this wheat is a good year. Without hesitation you assure him that this is. You mix your wine with other bad wines, and you sell it like any good wine. If people do not want to believe you, you swear it, and it is not once, but twenty times that you give

your soul to the demon. Oh! my friend, you do not need to torment yourself so much to give yourself to him; You've been his for a long time! Does this beast, they will still ask you, have any fault? Make no mistake, I just borrowed this money, if you do, I am in misery. —Ah! certainly not, correct yourself; this beast is very good. If I sell it, it is not without being angry about it; If I could do otherwise, I wouldn't sell it. And in reality, you are only selling it because it is worthless and can no longer be of use to you. — I do like the others; too bad for whoever gets caught. I have been deceived, I give up deceiving, otherwise I would lose too much. — You see, my friend, the others damn themselves, you must damn yourself too; They are going to hell, do you have to go there with them? You would rather have a few extra pennies, and go burn in hell for all eternity! Well! I tell you that if you have sold a car with hidden defects, you are obliged to compensate the buyer for the loss that these hidden defects may have caused him, otherwise, you will be damned, — Ah! If you were in our place, you would do just like us. — Yes, without doubt, I would do like you, if, like you, I wanted to damn myself; but wanting to save myself, I would do the complete opposite of what you are doing. Other people passing through a meadow, a ravine or an orchard will have no difficulty filling their apron with herbs or turnips, and taking their baskets and pockets full of fruit.

Parents will see their children coming with their hands full of stolen things, and will take them back with a laugh. — Well, that is a big thing. — my brethren, if you take sometimes for a penny, sometimes for two, you will soon have made the material for a mortal sin. Besides, you can commit a mortal sin by taking only a cent if you want to take three francs. So what should parents do when they see their children coming with something stolen? here it is. They must force them to return it themselves to those they stole. Once or twice will be enough to correct them. An example will show you how faithful you must be to this. It is reported that a child of nine to ten years old began to commit petty thefts, such as taking fruit or other small things of little value. It continued to increase, to the point that he was later taken to the scaffold. Before dying, he asked the judges to bring his parents; when they were present: “0 unfortunate father and unhappy mother,” he cried, “I want everyone to know that you are the cause of my shameful death. You are dishonored in the eyes of the world; but you

Field of raves. If you had corrected me at the beginning of my little thefts, I would not have committed those which led me to this scaffold.” I say, my brethren, that parents must be wise towards their children, even if they forget that they have a soul to save. We see in fact, usually, that as the parents are, such are the children. Every day you hear: So-and-so has children who will follow in the footsteps they followed when they were young. — That doesn't concern you, you will say to me, leave us alone, do not come and disturb us; we no longer thought about that, and you put it back in front of us. Is the fire of hell not rigorous enough, nor eternity long enough, for you to make us suffer like this from this world? —It is very true, my brethren, but it is precisely because I would not like to see you damned. — Well, too bad for us; if we do evil, it is not you who will suffer the penalty. — If you are happy, at the right time!... Sometimes it will be a shoemaker who will use bad leather and bad thread, and who will charge them as good ones. Or again, it will be a tailor who, under the pretext that he is not receiving a good enough price for his work, will keep a piece of fabric without saying anything about it. O my God! How many thieves will be discovered by death!... It is another weaver who spoils part of his thread, rather than taking the trouble to unravel it; or else, he will put on the least, and will keep, without saying anything about it, the one entrusted to him. Here is a woman who will be given hemp to spin, she will throw away part of it, under the pretext that it is not

well combed, will keep some, and, putting her thread in a damp place, the weight will still be there. She perhaps does not think that it belongs to a poor servant, who will have no use for this thread, because it is already half rotten: she will therefore be the cause of the numerous oaths that he will make against his master (I). A shepherd knows very well that it is not permitted to graze in this meadow or this wood; no matter, if we do not see it, that is enough for him. Another knows that it was forbidden to go and pick up the tares in this wheat because it is in flower; he looks to see if anyone sees him and he enters. Tell me, my brethren, would you be very happy if your neighbor did this to you? No, undoubtedly; well! believe that if we now examine the conduct of the workers, there are a good number of them who are thieves. In a moment you will be convinced of it. If we make them work at fixed prices, either to draw, or to mine, or for any other work; They will massacre half of them, and will not fail to get paid well. If they are hired by the day, they are content to work well when the master is watching them, and then they start chatting or doing nothing. A servant will have no difficulty in receiving and treating his friends well in the absence of his masters, knowing well that they would not tolerate him. Others will give large alms, in order to be considered as charitable people... Should they not, on the contrary, give of their pledge which they so often dissipate in vanity? If this has happened to you, do not forget that you are obliged to return to the rightful person everything that you have given to the poor, without the knowledge and against the will of your masters. It is still a

Who will have given him this hemp for his pledge. Fixed price. Will hurt... (Xote from the editors.) first servant, to whom his boss will have entrusted the supervision of others or his workers, and who, at their request, will give them wine or anything else; pay close attention to this: if you know how to give, you will have to know how to give back, under penalty of damnation. A businessman will have been charged with buying wheat, hay or straw, he will say to the merchant: “Make me a note, on which you will also count to my master a few bichetals of wheat, ten, twelve quintals of straw or hay than you deliver to me. It cannot be wrong.” Now, if this poor blind person delivers such a note, he is obliged to return himself the money that this man will have given in addition to his master, otherwise, he must resolve to go and burn in hell. If we now turn to the side of the masters; I believe we will not fail to find thieves there. Indeed, how many masters do not give everything they agreed with their servants; who, seeing the end of the year approaching, do everything possible to make them leave, so as not to have to pay them. If an animal perishes despite the care of the person in charge of it, they will pay him the price from his pledge; so that a poor child will have worked all year, and at the end of this time will find himself with nothing. How many more, having promised cloth, will have it made either narrower, or worse (he, or even make it wait several years; to the point that they have to be called to court to force them to pay. How many finally by plowing, mowing, harvesting, exceed the limits; or even cut off a scion from their neighbor to get away with it?

Measurements. Young flexible tree. make a pickaxe handle, a viol or a rope for their cart. Was I not right to say, my brethren, that if we examined the conduct of people of the world very closely, we would only find thieves and cunning people? Do not fail to examine yourself on what we have just said: if your conscience cries out, hurry to repair the harm you have done, and while there is still time, pay back immediately, if you can, or, at least, work with all your strength to put yourself in a position to restore what you have ill-gotten. Remember also to say in your confessions how many times you neglected to repay, when you were able to do so; because, God gives you the thought, these are just as many despised graces. I will also tell you about a fairly common theft in families, where

certain heirs, when dividing, hide as much of their property as they can. This is real theft, and we are obliged to make restitution, otherwise we are lost. I told you at the beginning, nothing is more common than injustice, and nothing more rare than restitution: there are few, as you see, who do not have something on their conscience. linked well! where are those who restore? I do not know anything about it. However, my brethren, although we are obliged to return ill-gotten goods under penalty of damnation; when we return it, God does not fail to reward us. An example will clearly prove this to you. A baker, who had, for several years, used false weights and false measures, wanting to put his conscience at rest, con-

A wreath tie. Tricksters. advised his confessor, who advised him to do the weight a little heavier for a while. The rumor having spread, the crowd of clients became very great, and, although he earned little, God allowed that by returning, he considerably increased his fortune.

Now, you will say, we can hope to know, at least roughly, how we can do wrong. But how and to whom should we give back? — Do you want to give it back? Well! Listen to me for a moment, and you will find out. We must not be satisfied with returning half, nor three-quarters; but everything, if you can; otherwise you will be damned. There are some who, without considering the number of people they have wronged, will give some alms, or have a few masses said; c l, after that, they will think they are safe. It's true, alms and masses are very good things; but they must be given from your money, and not from that of your neighbor. This money is not yours; give it to its master, and then give some of your own, if you wish: you will do very well. Do you know what Saint Chrysostomo calls these alms? the alms of Judas and the devil. When Judas had sold Our Lord, seeing himself condemned, he ran to return the money to the doctors; these, although very miserly, did not want to accept it; They bought a field to bury the strangers. But, you will say to me, when those who have been wronged are dead, to whom should we give back? Can we not keep it or give it to the poor? — My friend, this is what you must do. If they have children, you should give to them; if they have no children, it is up to the parents, to the heirs; if they have no heirs, you must go and find your pastor, who will tell you what you have to do. There are others who say: I have wronged so-and-so, but he is rich enough: I know a poor person who has a much greater need. — My friend, give this person some of your property; but return to your neighbor the good that you have taken from him. — It will be misused. — Cola is none of your business; give him his property, pray for him and sleep peacefully. Alas! Today the people of the world are so greedy, so attached to the goods of the earth, that, believing they have never had enough, it is a question of who will be the most clever and will best deceive others. But you, my brethren, do not forget that if you know the people to whom you have wronged, even if you would have given double to the poor; if you do not return to the master what you took from him, you will be damned. I do not know if your conscience is clear, I doubt it!... I said that the world is full of thieves and cunning people. Merchants steal by deceiving with weights and measures; they take advantage of a person's simplicity to sell more dearly, or to buy cheaper; masters steal from their servants, making them lose part of their labor; others, by making them wait a considerable time, by counting down to one day of illness, as if they had taken their trouble from a neighbor and not from their service!... For their part, the servants steal from their master, sometimes by not doing their work, sometimes by allowing the property to be lost through their fault; a worker gets paid, while

Remain at rest. Pledges. his work is half done. Those who run the taverns, these reservoirs of iniquity, these gates of hell, these Calvaries where Jesus Christ is constantly crucified, these infernal schools where Satan teaches his doctrine, where religion and morals are destroyed. The innkeepers, I say, see the bread of a poor woman and her children by giving wine to these drunkards, who spend on Sunday everything they will have earned during the week. A tenant farmer will divert a thousand things for his benefit, before the master shares, and will not take them into account. O my God! where are we? So many things to examine at the hour of death!... If their conscience cries out too loudly, these people will go find a minister of the Lord. They would like to have their debt forgiven; if, on the contrary, they are urged to make restitution, they will find a thousand pretexts to prove that others have also wronged them, and that they cannot do so at this moment. Hey my friend, I do not know if the good God will be satisfied with your reasons? If you wanted to take away a little from these vanities, from these delicacies, from these games; go a little less to cabaret and dancing, and redouble your work; you would soon have paid off part of your debts. Be very careful, if you do not do your best to give back to everyone what you owe them, whatever penance you do, you will only end up falling into hell: you are sure of it... You will find some blind enough to say that their children will do so after their death. Your children, my friend, will do it as you do. Besides, do you want your children to take more care of your soul than you yourself? You'll be damned, that is what will happen to you.

(I) Brother.

Tell me, have you then made full satisfaction for all the little injustices your parents had committed? You took good care not to; and your poor parents are in hell for not having made restitution in their lifetime, trusting too much to your good will. In short, to cut it shorter, how many are there among those who hear me whose parents charged them, perhaps more than twenty years ago, to give alms or to have Masses said, and not one of them has done it? They took good care not to! They prefer to enlarge their lands, to frequent games and taverns, to buy vanities for their children. Saint Antoninus relates that a usurer chose to die without the sacraments rather than give back what did not belong to him. He had only two sons; one feared God and the other did not. The one who was concerned for the salvation of his soul was so touched by the unhappy state in which his father died, that after having used part of his fortune to repair paternal injustices, he became a monk, so that he would only have to think of God alone. The other, on the contrary, squandered all his money in debauchery and died suddenly. The news was brought to the monk, who at once set himself to prayer. He then saw in spirit the earth opened, and in its midst a deep abyss vomiting flames. In the midst of these flames, his father and his brother burned and cursed each other. The father cursed his son; because, wanting to leave him more property, he had not feared being damned for him, and the son reproached his father for the bad examples he had received from him. Shall I tell you about those who wait until they die before giving back? I will prove to you by two examples that, when the time comes, either you will not want it, or, even if you want it, you will no longer be able to do it. first, You will not want it. It is said that the father of a large family was about to die, and his children said to him: “Father, you know, this property that you are leaving us is not ours: we should return it. — My children,” the father said to them, “if I gave back all that is not mine, you would have almost nothing left. — Father, we would rather work to earn our living than if you were damned. — No, my children, I do not want to restore; you do not know what it is to be poor. —If you do not give back, you will go to hell. — No, I will not give anything back.” He dies as a reprobate... O my God! how the sin of

avarice blinds man! second, I said that, even if you wanted to at that moment, you would not be able to do so. It is reported by a missionary that a father, seeing his end approaching, called his children near his bed and said to them: "My children, you know that I have wronged many people; if I do not give back, I am lost. Go find a notary to receive my arrangements. - Well, my father, his children reply, would you like to dishonor yourself and us too, by making yourself appear to be a dishonest man? Would you like to reduce us to misery, and send us to beg for our bread? — But, my children, if I do not restore, I will be damned!" One of his impious sons did not fear to say to him: "My father, do you fear hell? Come on, you get used to everything: in eight days, you will be used to it...." Well, my brethren, what do we conclude from all this? How famously blind you are! You lose your souls to leave a few inches of land, or a few makeshift possessions for your children, who, far from being grateful to you, will make fun of you, while you burn in the flames. Let us end by saying that we are fools, to think only of amassing goods, which make us unhappy when we collect them, while we possess them, when we leave them, and again throughout eternity. Let us be wiser, my brethren, let us attach ourselves to these goods which will follow us into the other life, and will make us happy for endless days: which is what I wish for you...