THE FIFTY
SPIRITUAL HOMILIES
Homily 1

An allegorical interpretation of the vision written down by the Prophet
(Ez 1:4–2:1)

1. When Ezekiel the prophet beheld the divinely, glorious vision, he described it in human terms but in a way full of mysteries that completely surpass the powers of the human mind. He saw in a plain a chariot of Cherubim, four spiritual animals. Each one had four faces. On one side each had the face of a lion, on another side that of an eagle, while on the third side each had the face of a bull. On the fourth side each had the face of a human being. To each of the faces were attached wings so that one could not discern any front or posterior parts. Their backs were full of eyes and likewise their breasts were covered with eyes so that there was no place that was not completely covered with eyes.

And there were three wheels for each face, a wheel within a wheel. And in the wheels there was inserted a spirit. And Ezekiel saw what appeared to be the likeness of a man and under his feet there was an artistic setting in sapphire. And the Cherubim and the animals pulled the chariot on which sat the Lord. In whichever direction he wished to go, he merely pointed his face in that direction. He was under the cherubim as it were the hand of a man carrying and balancing it.

2. And all of this which the prophet saw in ecstasy or in a trance was indeed true and certain, but it was only signifying and foreshadowing something no less hidden, something divine and mysterious, “a mystery hidden for generations” (Col 1:26) but that “has been revealed only in our time, the end of the ages,” (1 Pt 1:20) when Christ appeared. For the prophet was viewing the mystery of the human soul that would receive its Lord and would become his throne of glory. For the soul that is deemed to be judged worthy to participate in the light of the Holy Spirit by becoming his throne and habitation, and is covered with the beauty of ineffable glory of the Spirit, becomes all light, all face, all eye. There is no part of the soul that is not full of the spiritual eyes of light. That is to say, there is no part of the soul that is covered with darkness but is totally covered with spiritual eyes of light. For the soul has no imperfect part but is in every part on all sides facing forward and covered with the beauty of the ineffable glory of the light of Christ, who mounts and rides upon the soul. It is similar to the sun that is the same all
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

over, without any imperfect part, but is completely all light, brilliantly shining. It is totally light in all of its parts. Or it is similar to fire, which like light is the same all over, having in itself no part that is before or behind, either greater or less.

Thus the soul is completely illumined with the unspeakable beauty of the glory of the light of the face of Christ and is perfectly made a participant of the Holy Spirit. It is privileged to be the dwelling-place and the throne of God, all eye, all light, all face, all glory and all spirit, made so by Christ who drives, guides, carries, and supports the soul about and adorns and decorates the soul with his spiritual beauty. For Scripture says, “There was the hand of a man under the Cherubim” and this is why Christ is the one who is carried by the soul and still directs it in the way.

3. The four animals that bore the chariot were a type of the leading characteristics of the soul. For as the eagle rules over all the other birds and the lion is king of the wild beasts and the bull over the tame animals and man rules over all creatures, so the soul has certain dominant powers that are superior to others. I am speaking of the faculties of the will: conscience, the mind and the power of loving. For it is through such that the chariot of the soul is directed and it is in these that God resides. In some other fashion also such a symbolism can be applied to the Heavenly Church of the saints.

In this text of Ezekiel’s vision it is said that the animals were exceedingly tall, full of eyes (Ez 10:4). It was impossible for anyone to comprehend the number of eyes or grasp their height since the knowledge of such was not given. And in a like manner the stars in the sky are given for man to gaze upon and be filled with awe, but to know their number is given to no man. So in regard to the saints in the Heavenly Church it is permitted to all who only enter into it and enjoy it as they strive to live in it. But to know and comprehend the number of the saints is given only to God.

The Rider, then, is carried by the chariot and the animals with all eyes, or, in a way, he is carried by every soul that has become his throne and exists now as eye and light. He is mounted on the soul and guides it with the reins of the Spirit, directing it according to his knowledge of the way.

Just as the spiritual animals went, not wherever they themselves wished, but only in the direction that he knew and wished to direct them, so also he holds the reins and guides the human souls by his Spirit and they follow, not by their own habit as they wish, but as he leads them to Heaven. At times he leaves the body and leads and directs the soul toward Heaven by wisdom. And again when he wishes, he comes in the body and through thoughts directs the soul. At other times, he is so minded that he leads the soul to the ends of the earth and shows it the revelations of hidden mysteries.

Oh, what a good and useful and the only authentic Charioteer! In a similar way our bodies will be judged worthy of this honor in the resurrection which even now the human soul is given an anticipated grasp of such a glory by being mingled with the Spirit.

4. That the souls of the just become heavenly light, the Lord himself has told his Apostles: “You are the light of the world” (Mt 5:14). For he himself, who first transformed them into light, has ordered and commanded them to be light to the world. He said: “No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lampstand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men” (Mt 5:15–16). That is to say, do not hide the gift that you have received from me, but give it to all who desire it. And again he said: “The lamp of the body is the eye. It follows that if your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light. But if your eye is diseased, your whole body will be all darkness. If then, the light inside you is darkness, what darkness that will be!” (Mt 6:22–23).

Just as the eyes are the light of the body and when the eyes are healthy and sound, then the whole body is enlightened, so also on the contrary, if anything should happen to render the eyes darkened, then the whole body is in darkness. Thus the Apostles were called and ordained to be the eyes and the light of the whole world. For this reason the Lord told them: “If you, who are the light of the world, will persevere and not turn away, behold, then the whole body of the world will be enlightened. But if you, who are light, should be led into darkness, how great is that darkness, which is nothing less than the world.” Thus the Apostles, who were made light, brought light to those who believed and enlightened their hearts by the heavenly light of the Spirit by whom they themselves had been enlightened.

5. And since they themselves were salt, they seasoned and salted every believing soul by the salt of the Holy Spirit. For the Lord told them: “You are the salt of the earth” (Mt 5:13). He meant by earth the souls of upright men. For they ministered to the souls of men the heavenly salt of the Spirit, seasoning them and keeping them free from decay and from anything harmful, away from the fetid condition they were in. Indeed, it is just as flesh—if it is not salted, it will decay and give off a
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

stench, so that all bypassers will turn aside from the fetid odor. Worms crawl all over the putrid meat; there they feed, eat, and burrow. But when salt is poured over it, the worms feeding on that meat perish and the fetid odor ceases. It is indeed the nature of salt to kill worms and dispel fetid odors.

In like manner every soul not seasoned with the Holy Spirit and made a participator of the heavenly salt which is the power of God grows corrupt and is filled with the stench and fetidness of bad thoughts so that the countenance of God turns away from the awful stench of vain and dark thoughts and from the disorderly affections that dwell in such a soul. The harmful and wicked worms which are the spirits of wickedness and the powers of darkness crawl up and down in such a soul. There they feed, burrowing deeply inside. They crawl all over and devour it and thoroughly corrupt it. “My wounds stink and are festering” (Ps 38:5).

If indeed the soul takes refuge in God, believes and seeks the salt of life, which is the good and human-loving Spirit, then the heavenly salt comes and kills those ugly worms. The Spirit takes away the awful stench and cleanses the soul by the strength of his salt. Thus the soul is brought back to health and freed from its wounds by the true salt in order again to be useful and ordered to serve the Heavenly Lord. That is why even in the Law, God uses this example when he ordered that all sacrifices be salted with salt (Lv 2:2, 13).

6. It was, therefore, necessary that the sacrifice first be killed by a priest. After it died, it was cut in pieces and seasoned with salt, then placed on the fire. Unless the priest first kills the lamb, it is not salted nor is it brought to the Lord as a burnt offering. Similarly also our soul must approach the High Priest Christ to be slain by him and die to its own thoughts and the wicked life which it was living, that is, to die to sin. Thus the life of wicked passions must go out of it.

Just as the body, after the soul has left it, is dead and has no longer life in it as it had before (neither does it hear nor walk), so after Christ, the Heavenly High Priest, by the grace of his power, puts to death our life to the world, it dies to the life of corruption that it formerly lived. It no longer hears nor speaks nor moves about in the darkness of sin because the evil passions which possessed the soul have by grace left it. Thus the Apostle exclaims, saying: “The world is crucified to me and I to the world” (Gal 6:14). For the soul, which still lives in the world and in the darkness of sin, has not yet been put to death by him, but still has the soul of wickedness in it, that is, it still harbors the power of the dark passions of sin. It is nurtured by such a sinful soul and is not of the Body of Christ nor is it of the body of light, but it is a body of darkness and is still a part of that darkness. But those, on the contrary, who possess a soul of light, that is, they possess the power of the Holy Spirit, they are a part of the light.

7. But someone may say: How is it that you say the soul is a body of darkness since it is born of darkness? Listen well to this example. Just as the coat or garment that you wear was made by someone else, still you wear it. Likewise, another builds a house and nevertheless you live in it. In the same way Adam violated the command of God and obeyed the deceitful serpent. He sold himself to the devil and that evil one put on Adam’s soul as his garment—that most beautiful creature that God had fashioned according to his own image, as also the Apostle says: “He has done away with it by nailing it to the cross; and so he got rid of the Sovereignties and the Powers” (Col 2:15).

This was the very reason why the Lord came in order to cast them out and reclaim man as his very own house and temple. For this reason the soul is said to be the body of the darkness of wickedness as long as the darkness of sin lives in it because there it lives in the perverse world of darkness and there it is held captive. Thus Paul calls it the body of sin, the body of death, saying “… with him to destroy this sinful body” (Rom 6:6). And again he says: “Who will deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:24).

Contrariwise the soul that believes in God and has been freed of the sordidness of sin is lifted through death out of the life of darkness once the soul has accepted the light of the Holy Spirit as its life. By that means it has come to life and spends its life in the Spirit forever after, because it is now held captive by the divine light. The soul is neither by nature divine nor by nature part of the darkness of wickedness, but is a creature, intellectual, beautiful, unique, and admirable. It is a beautiful likeness and image of God. Into that likeness the wickedness of the passions of the dark world entered through the fall.

8. A conclusion, therefore, is that the soul is united in will with whatever it is joined and bound to as its master. Either it has, therefore, the light of God in it and lives in that light with all of his powers, abounding with a restful light, or it is permeated by the darkness of sin, becoming a sharer in condemnation.

The soul, therefore, that wishes to live with God in rest and eternal light must approach, as we said above, to the true High Priest, Christ, and be slain and die to the world and to its former life of darkness and
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

wickedness and be transported into another life to enter into a divine communication. When someone dies in a city, he is unable to hear the voices of others around him. He does not hear their conversation nor the sounds they make, but he is completely dead and is transported to another place where there are no voices, none of the noises of the city. In a like manner the soul, after it has been slain and dead to that city of evil passions where it once earlier lived, hears no longer in itself the voice of the darkened thoughts. It no longer hears the conversation and the noise of frivolous arguments or of the noisy crowd of the spirits of darkness. For it is transported to the city full of goodness and peace, to the city of divine light. There it lives and listens, there it converses, speaks, and reasons. There it performs spiritual works very worthy of God.

9. Let us, therefore, pray that we may be put to death by his power and die to the world of the wickedness of darkness and that the spirit of sin may be extinguished in us. Let us put on and receive the soul of the heavenly Spirit and be transported from the wickedness of darkness into the light of Christ. Let us rest in life forever. For just as on the racetrack the chariot that takes the lead becomes an obstacle, pressing and checking and preventing the others from stretching out and reaching the goal first, so do the thoughts of the soul and of sin run the race in man. If the thought of sin gets the upper hand from the start, it becomes an obstacle, checking and hindering the soul from approaching God to carry off the victory against sin.

But where God himself truly mounts and guides the soul, he always obtains the victory, skillfully directing and leading with expertise the chariot of the soul to a heavenly mind forever. God does not wage war against wickedness, but since he possesses all power and authority of himself, he brings about the victory by himself. Therefore the Cherubim go, not where they wish, but where the Rider in control directs them. Wherever he inclines them, there they go and he supports them. For Scripture says, “The hand of a man was under them” (Ez 10:21).

Holy souls are led and guided by the Spirit of Christ, who directs them wherever he wishes them to go. Sometimes he leads them by his will through heavenly thoughts, sometimes through the body. Wherever he wishes, there they minister to him. Just as the feet of the birds are the wings, so the heavenly light of the Spirit takes up the wings of thoughts worthy of the soul and leads and directs the soul as he knows best.

10. Therefore, when you hear such things, look to yourself and see whether you really possess these things in your own soul. These are not mere and empty words, but we are dealing with a work that truly goes on in the soul. And if you do not possess these very important spiritual goods but you are lacking in them, be moved to sorrow, grieve and be continually in mourning as one who is still dead in regard to the Kingdom. And as one lies wounded, continually cry out to the Lord and ask with confidence that he may deign to give you this true life.

And so God, who made your body, did not give it life from its very own nature nor from the body itself, nor from the food, drink, clothing, and footwear that he gave the body, but he arranged it that your body, created naked, should be able to live by means of such extrinsic things as food, drink, and clothing. (If the body were to attempt to exist only by its own constituted nature without accepting these exterior helps, it would deteriorate and perish.) In a similar way, it is so with the human soul. It does not have by nature the divine light, even though it has been created according to the image of God. For, indeed, God ordered the soul in his economy of salvation according to his good pleasure that it would enjoy eternal life. It would not be because of the soul’s very own nature but because of his Divinity, of his very Spirit, of his light, that the soul would receive its spiritual meat and drink and heavenly clothing which are truly the life of the soul.

11. As, therefore, the body, as was said above, does not have life in itself, but receives it from outside, that is, from the earth, and without such material things of the earth it cannot live, so also the soul, unless it be regenerated into that “land of the living” (Ps 27:13) and there be fed spiritually and progress by growing spiritually unto the Lord and be adorned by the ineffable garments of heavenly beauty flowing out of the Godhead, without that food in joy and tranquility, the soul cannot clearly live.

For the divine nature has the bread of life who said: “I am the bread of life” (Jn 6:35), and “the living water” (Jn 4:10), and the “wine that gladdens the heart of man” (Ps 104:15), and the “oil of gladness” (Ps 45:8), and the whole array of food of the heavenly Spirit and the heavenly raiment of light coming from God. In these does the eternal life of the soul consist. Woe to the body if it were to rely solely on its own nature, because it would by nature disintegrate and die. Woe also to the soul if it finds its whole being in its own nature and trusts solely in its own operations, refusing the participation of the Divine Spirit because it does not have the eternal and divine life as a vital part of itself.

For just as it happens to sick men that, when the body can no longer take food, all the genuine friends, relatives, and loved ones lose all their hope for life and grieve, so God and all the holy angels are saddened by
those who do not eat the heavenly food of the Spirit and do not live in a state of incorruption. These things, I repeat, are not simply words spoken, but are the work of the spiritual life, the work of truth, which is brought forth in the worthy and faithful soul.

12. If, therefore, you have become a throne of God and the Heavenly Charioteer has mounted you and your whole soul is a spiritual eye and has become totally light, and if you have been nourished with that heavenly food of the Spirit and you have drunk from the water of life and you have put on the raiment of ineffable light, if finally your interior man has experienced all these and has been rooted in the abundance of faith, then, behold, you already live the eternal life, indeed, with your soul resting with the Lord.

Look, you have received these things truly from the Lord so that you may live the true life. If, however, you are not conscious of having experienced any of these things, weep, mourn and groan because you have not yet been made a participator of the eternal and spiritual riches and you have not yet received true life. Therefore, be worried by your poverty, beseeching the Lord night and day because you have settled for the serious poverty of sin.

Would that one be anxious about his penury! And would that we do not live as though we are complacent in our smugness, because whoever is so burdened in this way should seek and cry out incessantly to the Lord and he will soon obtain redemption and heavenly riches, just as the Lord said in his story of the unjust judge and the widow. “How much more shall God avenge them who cry out to him night and day? Yes, I say unto you, he shall quickly vindicate them” (Lk 23:7). To whom be glory and power for ever. Amen.

HOMILY 2

On the reign of darkness, that is, of sin and that God alone is capable of taking sin away from us and freeing us from the slavery to the evil prince.

1. The reign of darkness, the evil prince, after humanity at the beginning was taken captive, surrounded and clothed the soul as if it were a human form with the vestiture of the power of darkness. “And they made him king and they clothed him with regal garments and from head to foot he would walk in royal robes.” So likewise he clothed the soul and all its substance with sin. That evil prince corrupted it completely, not sparing any of its members from its slavery, not its thoughts, neither the mind nor the body, but he clothed it with the purple of darkness. Just as the whole body suffers and not merely one part alone, so also the entire soul was subjected to the passions of evil and sin. The prince of evil thus clothed the whole soul, which is the chief member and part of humanity, with his own wickedness, that is, with sin. And so the entire body fell a victim to passion and corruption.

2. When, indeed, the Apostle says “Put off the old man” (Eph 4:22), he refers to the entire man, having new eyes in place of the old, ears replacing ears, hands for hands, feet for feet. For the wicked one has defiled the entire person, soul and body, and dragged him down and subjected him to the old man, polluted, impure, and an enemy of God, “not subject to God’s law” (Rom 8:7). That is, man is under sin so that he no longer can see freely but sees evilly, hears evilly, and has swift feet to perpetrate evil acts (Ps 58:3). His hands work evil and his heart meditates evil deeds.

Let us, therefore, beg God to put off from us the old man because he alone is able to take away from us sin and because they are stronger who have taken us captive and hold us in their kingdom. He, indeed, has promised that he would free us from this slavery. For just as the sun shines and the wind blows together, each having its own body and nature, yet no one can separate the wind from the sun unless God alone who can calm the wind so it blows no more, similarly sin is also mixed with the soul even though each has its own nature.

3. It is, therefore, impossible to separate the soul from sin unless God should calm and turn back this evil wind, inhabiting both the soul and body. As anyone who watches a bird flying may wish that he himself could fly, yet still he cannot fly, being without wings, so also a man may have the will to be pure, to be without blame and spotless, to be always without evil and in communion with God, yet he does not truly have the power.

To fly into the divine air and enjoy the liberty of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18) may be one’s desire, but, if he does not have wings given him, he cannot. Let us pray to God that he give us “the wings of a dove” (Ps 55:7) of the Holy Spirit so we may fly to him and find rest and that he may separate and take away from our soul and body such an evil wind, namely, sin itself, inhabiting the members of our soul and body. For this he alone is able to do. For it says: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (Jn 1:29). He alone has shown this mercy to those who believe in him by redeeming them from sin, and he always
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

"How much more shall your heavenly Father avenge those who cry unto him day and night?" (Lk 18:7). And he adds, saying: "Yes, I say unto you, he will avenge them speedily" (Lk 18:8). And in another place he exhorts: "Ask and you will receive. For all who ask receive, and whoever seeks, finds, and whoever knocks, it will be opened unto him" (Mt 7:78). And a little farther he adds: "How much more your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" (Lk 11:9).

"Truly, I say to you, even though he will not give it to him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as much as he needs" (Lk 11:8).

27. In all that has been said in these pages he has exhorted us to seek from him without shame, incessantly and unflaggingly, his gift of grace. It was indeed for sinners that he came in order to convert them to himself and to bring healing to all who would believe in him. We need only to get rid in our lives of all evil pursuits, as best we can, and despise evil works. Let us have nothing to do with wicked and vain talk and in all things let us with all our might cling to him.

He certainly is ready to give us his help. We have proof of this in the fact that he is merciful and comes to bring life. He heals incurable passions and gives redemption to those who call upon him, to those who turn away from all worldly attachment as best they can, freely wishing to do so by forcing their mind away from earthly cares and holding fast to him with eager desire.

To such a soul he gives his strength provided such a person values all other things as unnecessary. He clings to nothing of this world but hopefully seeks to find rest and happiness in the tranquility of his kindness. And thus through such faith he obtains the heavenly gift. All his desires are satisfied in perfect assurance through grace. Consequently, he serves the Holy Spirit with pleasing constancy. He daily makes progress in goodness and persevering to the end in the way of righteousness; he never yields to any shape or form of evil. He never offends grace in any matter. He is deemed worthy to enter into eternal salvation with all the saints with whom he has lived in the world as a friend and companion in imitation of their lives. Amen.

HOMILY 5

The great difference between Christians and men of this world. For the latter, imbued with the spirit of the world, are in heart and mind held captive by earthly shackles. Christians, however, are possessed by a love for their heavenly Father. They keep him alone before their eyes in all their desires.

1. The world of Christians is of a special kind, their style of living, their thinking, their speech, and all their actions. That of men of this world is completely different. There is a great difference between them. The inhabitants of this world, the children of this age, are like wheat in a sieve. They are being sifted by restless thoughts of this world. They are constantly tossed to and fro by earthly cares, desire, and absorption in a variety of material concerns. Satan tosses such souls as a sifter sifts wheat. He sifts the whole sinful human race by means of such earthly pursuits, ever since Adam fell by disobeying God's command and came under the power of the prince of evil. From that time when he gained such power, Satan is constantly sifting all the sons of this world with thoughts of deceit and agitation. He dashes them relentlessly on the sieve of this earth.

2. As the wheat in the sieve is shaken by the sifter and is continually tossed up and down, so the prince of evil holds all people engrossed in earthly concerns. By these concerns he disturbs people, keeps them anxious and in a state of nervous motion. The result is that they are disturbed by vain thoughts and base passions and are in bondage to earthly attachments to this world. Satan constantly holds them as captives. He agitates and entices the whole human race, infected by the sin of Adam.

In such a manner the Lord forewarned his Apostles about the future attack of the prince of evil against them. "Satan has sought to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed to my Father so that your faith would not fail" (Lk 22:31–32). That work spoken by the Creator to Cain, which has been a sentence openly pronounced upon him, namely, "Groaning and trembling you shall be tossed upon the earth" (Gn 4:12), is a type and image of what all sinners secretly undergo. After the race of Adam had violated God's command and entered into the sinful state, it began to live in that acquired likeness interiorly. It is tossed to and fro relentlessly with continuous thoughts of fear and terror and every sort of disturbance. The prince of this world keeps each soul that is not reborn of God tossed on the waves of various passions and lusts. As wheat is shaken up constantly in the sieve, so he keeps men's thoughts jangling in all directions. He shakes and entices them all by the seductions of this world, by the carnal pleasures, fears, and agitations.
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

3. So the Lord, showing that those who follow the wiles and wishes of the evil prince and bear the likeness of Cain's evil, reproved them when he said, "The lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and did not abide in the truth" (Jn 8:44). In such a way the whole sinful race of Adam has received that condemnation interiorly, namely, "Groaning and trembling shall you be" (Gn 4:12) and shaken in the sieve of the earth by Satan sifting you. For just as from one Adam the race of men was multiplied over the earth, so one depravity of passion infiltrated into the entire human race. The prince of evil is thus able to sift all of them by continued cress, vain, and passionate thoughts. For as one wind is capable of shaking all the plants and seeds or as one darkness of the night spreads over all the entire earth, so the prince of evil, who is similar to a spiritual darkness of sin and death, is like a hidden yet wild wind. He shakes the entire human race on the face of the earth. He tosses them about and fro with restless thoughts. He entices the hearts of people with the pleasures of the world. He fills every soul with a dark ignorance, blindness, and forgetfulness. Only those escape him who have been reborn from above and have been transported in mind and heart to another world, as it was said: "Our citizenship is in Heaven" (Phil 3:20).

4. In this we see the difference between true Christians and the rest of human beings, and great is the difference between them, as I said above. This difference is seen in the fact that the mind and intellect of Christians are always centered on heavenly thoughts. They gazed on heavenly things because they participate in the Holy Spirit. Because they have been born above from God and are children of God in truth and power, they have arrived, through many labors and sweat endured over a long time, at a state of equilibrium, tranquility and peace, freed from further sifting. They no longer vacillate back and forth, tossed about by crippling and vain thoughts.

In this they are greater and better than those of the world, because their intellect and thinking of the soul is permeated by the peace of Christ and the love of the Spirit, as the Lord had in mind when he said: "They had passed from death to life" (Jn 5:24). It is, therefore, not in outward shape or form that the distinguishing characteristic of Christians consists. Many Christians believe that the difference does lie in some external sign. They are in mind and thought similar to those of the world. They undergo the same disturbing restlessness and instability of thoughts, lack of faith, confusion, agitation, and fear as all other persons do. They really do differ somewhat in some external form and way of acting in a limited area, but in heart and mind they are shackled by earthly bonds. They do not have the divine rest and heavenly peace of the Spirit in their heart because they never begged it of God nor did they ever believe that he would deign to grant these to them.

5. It is through the renewing of the mind and the tranquility experienced in our thoughts and the love of the Lord and the love for heavenly things that every new creation of Christians distinguishes them from the men of this world. For this reason the Lord comes in order that he might deign to give these spiritual gifts to those who truly believe in him. Christians possess a glory and beauty and an indescribable heavenly richness that come to them with hard work and sweat, acquired in times of temptations and in many trials. All of this must be ascribed to divine grace.

If the sight of an earthly king is something all wish to see, and everyone who passes through the city of the king desires at least to catch a glimpse of his beauty or the elegance of his garments or the splendor of his purple, the beauty of his many pearls, the comeliness of his crown, the impressive retinue that accompanies him, spiritual persons, however, spurn all of these things because they have experienced another heavenly, incorporeal glory. They have tasted another ineffable beauty and have participated in other riches. They have received in the inner person another Spirit.

The people of this world who possess the spirit of the world have a great yearning to see an earthly king, at least to feast upon his comeliness and glory. In proportion as his share of visible accessories is greater than that of others, so even to have only seen him, the king, is something desired by all. Each man inwardly says to himself: "I would really like someone to give me something of that glory, comeliness, and splendor." He believes that king is happy, a man like him, of the earth, having the same weakness of passions, subject to death. He makes him an object of envy because of his fleeting comeliness and desired glory.

6. If, I say, carnal persons so desire the glory of an earthly king, how much more those whom the touch of the Divine Spirit of life has touched and whose heart divine love has pierced with a desire for Christ, the heavenly King, who have been captivated by his beauty and ineffable glory and by the incorruptible comeliness and incomprehensible riches of the true and eternal King, Christ! They are held captive by desire and longing for him. Their whole being is directed completely toward him. And they desire to obtain those ineffable goods which through the Spirit they contemplate.
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

For the sake of Christ, such Christians regard such earthly beauty, adornment, glory, honor, and the riches of kings and princes as nothing because they have tasted divine beauty and the life of heavenly immortality has dropped like dew onto their souls. Therefore, they ardently long for that love of the heavenly King and they have him alone before their eyes in every desire. For his sake they detach themselves from every worldly love and tear loose from every earthly attachment so that they may possess that one desire always in their hearts and never mix anything else with it.

However, few indeed are those who begin well the race and successfully complete it, reaching the goal without falling, who have love for God alone and who are detached from all others. Many have a conversion experience and many become participators of heavenly grace and are wounded by heavenly love, but, because of the daily battles and struggles and the work involved and the various temptations from the evil one that they have not conquered, they do not persevere. They are overwhelmed by various worldly passions, because everyone has something of this world that he loves and he does not detach himself completely from that attachment. And so such as these have stopped in the race and have immersed themselves in the abyss of the world because of their weakness, laziness, and cowardice of will or through an earthly attachment.

Those who really wish to reach the goal by good living must not willingly allow and mix any other love or affection with that heavenly love lest they be hindered in their spiritual pursuits and fall back and finally lose their very own life. Just as God has made great, ineffable, and indescribable promises, so, too, they demand on our part great faith, hope, and effort and great struggles. The goods that a person seeks in striving for the Kingdom of Heaven are not of little importance. To reign with Christ forever, if this is what you desire, will you not be ready to bear manfully struggles and labors and temptations for the brief space of this life up until death? The Lord says: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily with joy and let him follow me" (Mt 16:24). And again he says: "If anyone does not hate father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sister, yes, even his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14:26). Most wish to obtain the kingdom and desire to have eternal life, but, following their own wills, they refuse to control them. They are rather more like the sower who sows vain desires. They refuse to deny themselves and still wish to receive eternal life, which is a thing impossible.

The saying of the Lord is found to be true. For those reach the goal successfully without falling who, according to the Lord's injunction, deny themselves totally. They have spurned all things of the world: concupiscences, attachments, pride, pleasures, and impediments. They keep him alone before their eyes and seek to observe his commandments so that each person of this type goes against his own will. He would reject any kingdom of this world by denying his own interests. He would mingle no other love with the love he has for his Lord. He takes no pleasure in any of the pleasures or passions of this world. He only wishes to place his total love in the Lord as far as he can willingly wish to do so.

Let me give an example that comes to me. Take someone who is led to judge another. He knows that the thing he wishes to do, to make such a judgment, is not becoming. But when he is drawn to such a judgment by a certain pleasure in the thought and does not repulse it, he falls a victim to it. For at first in his heart there is interiorly a war. There is a struggle, a conflict, a discernment between what is of the love of God and what is of the love of the world. Then he yields and makes a judgment against his brother, which may even lead to quarreling and angry blows. He weighs the matter, dialoguing with himself: "Should I say it? or, should I not say it?" He is mindful of God, but still he wants his own glory, and he will tend not to deny himself. If the love and esteem for the world in his heart dips the scale, immediately the evil word leaps to his lips. Then the mind interiorly, like an archer, aims its arrow, using the tongue to hit the neighbor. It discharges arrows of unseemly words in a spontaneous willing bent on seeking self-glory. Then this shooting of arrows against the neighbor continues with unbecoming words, augmenting the sin until it reaches the point of blows and wounds as other members of the body enter into the war, even sometimes to the point of inflicting physical death. So you see what is the origin and end result of the love of worldly glory when it once has turned the scale in the balance of the heart toward self-will. Because such a person refused to deny himself, but rather loved something of this world, all those worldly desires and evil passions of the flesh resulted.

In this way every kind of sin and every immoral practice, all theft, also avarice, sloth, desire for money, and vainglory, so likewise envy and ambition and whatever is of evil arise. Sometimes actions that may appear to be good for the glory and praise of men are done, but God reckons these on the same level as deeds of injustice, theft, and all other sins. For God says: "He has scattered the bones of those who please
men” (Ps 53:5). Thus an evil person loves to give the appearance of doing things that seem to be good, yet he is still a shifting liar in his attachments to the world. For by means of a certain love for the things of the world and the flesh by which he is held in bondage to his own will, evil entices him until it becomes an enslaving bond, a heavy chain and weight that sucks him down and stifles him in a world of evil that does not allow him to rise up and return to God. The reason is that whatever anyone loves of the world oppresses his mind, holds him and does not allow him to rise up. For from this scale and discernment which tilts man toward evil, the whole of mankind hangs and is tested, including Christians living in cities or in mountains or in monasteries or in wild places or in the desert. The reason is that a person is seduced by his own desires and loves something that binds him that is not wholly centered on God.

One person, let us say, sets his heart on possessions, another on gold and silver, another on the persuasive wisdom of the world to gain the glory of men; another has ardently sought power, another, the praise and honors of men; still another lives by anger and violence. For when one yields quickly to such a passion, he shows his love and preference for that desired object. One shows this attachment to unbecoming actions, another to jealousy, another all day long shows pride and amuses himself, another deceives himself with meaningless thoughts, another loves to parade as a teacher of law to impress people, while another takes satisfaction in laziness and carelessness. Another is absorbed by dress and clothing and still someone else gives himself to earthly pursuits. Another overindulges in sleep or trivial gossip or lewd conversation. But regardless of how anyone is bound, whether by a small or a great chain to the world, he is possessed by that attachment and is unable to extricate himself from it.23 For whatever passion a person does not manfully fight against, that is an object of his love. Such an attachment dominates and holds him down. It becomes for him an impediment and a chain that prevents him from directing his mind to God and from pleasing him. In no way can he serve God alone and obtain the kingdom and reach eternal life.

The soul that truly tends toward the Lord completely forces itself to a total love of him. It is held fast in a willed dedication, as far as is possible, to God alone. From him it obtains the help of grace. Such a person denies himself and does not obey the will of his mind, because he knows that the mind tends to deal with us in a deceitful way, seducing us to evil. He yields himself perfectly to the Word of the Lord and frees himself from every visible bond as far as he can will it. He surrenders himself completely to the Lord and thus will be able to undergo successfully struggles, labors, and setbacks. Wherever there is a question of affection, there is either a help or an obstacle. If a person loves something of the world, this becomes for him a burden and a bondage dragging him downward and not allowing him to rise upward to God.

If, however, he loves the Lord and loves his commandments, this becomes his help. He is strengthened by this. His observance of all the Lord’s precepts becomes easy for him and this tilts him toward the good, or rather, it makes lighter and easier every battle and affliction. Through divine power he cuts through the world and through the powers of evil which lay snares for the human soul in the world and which use all sorts of desires as nets to ensnare the soul in the depths of the world. In such a way he is freed from such snares by means of his own faith and great courage and through heavenly aid. He is accounted worthy of the eternal kingdom which was the goal of his desiring. He receives from the Lord help and he will not lose eternal life.

To be able to illustrate all of this with concrete examples, think how many, by their own wills, perish and are drowned in the sea or are taken into captivity. Or suppose a house is on fire. One person wishes to save himself. As soon as he is aware of the fire, he flees naked. He completely leaves all else behind. He wishes only to take care for his own life and he is saved. Another person wishes to save something of the house furniture or other objects. He enters to get those things and when he gets them, the fire sweeps through the whole house. He is caught within and burned. Do you not see that by attaching himself by his own will to some temporal object, he really perishes in the fire? Similarly, at sea people encounter raging waves and are shipwrecked. One strips himself naked of all clothes and throws himself into the waters, hoping to save himself. He is tossed about by the whitecap waves and swims through the treacherous sea and saves his life. Another person wants to save some of his clothes. He thinks he can swim and pass through the sea with them on but those things he carried along with himself pull him down and sink him in the depth of the sea. For a paltry gain he loses everything, even his own life. Do you not see how by following his own will he perishes?

Again, take the example that comes to mind of a rumor of an invading enemy. One person, as soon as he hears of it, flees at once, escaping without any clothing but his naked self. Another person, however, does not believe that the enemy will come or wishing to save something of his possessions, he delays his flight in seeking to take things with him. The
enemy comes and captures him. They carry him off as a captive into a land of foreigners and there they force him to serve as a slave. Do you not see how, by following his own will, he was captured because of his lack of attention, energy, and attachment to possessions? In a similar manner, those who do not obey the commandments of the Lord and do not deny themselves, refusing to love God above all else, freely decide to be held by earthly bonds. When the eternal fire comes, they, having been caught as captives in a foreign land and drowned in a love for the world, tossed mercilessly in a bitter sea of wickedness, are held captive by a spirit of wickedness and so come to their ruin.

If you want to learn from the lives of the saints what complete dedication to the love of the Lord means and from Holy Scripture inspired by God, look at Job. How he gave up all he possessed, so to speak: children, wealth, livestock, servants, and everything else that he had, stripping himself completely to escape and save himself. He even gave up his very clothing, throwing it at Satan; yet all the time he never blasphemed in word, neither in his heart nor with his lips before the Lord. But on the contrary he blessed the Lord saying: "The Lord gave; the Lord has taken away. As it has pleased the Lord, so be it. Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Jb 1:21). Although it was true that he had many possessions, but, tested by the Lord, he showed that God alone was his possession.

Similarly, Abraham, ordered by the Lord to leave his country and family and the home of his father, at once, so to speak, stripped himself of everything—fatherland, property, relatives, parents—and obeyed the Word of the Lord. Then he underwent many trials and temptations as when his wife was taken from him or when he, living in an alien land, was subjected to injustices. Yet through all he proved that God alone was his sole love over all things. Then when, through a promise and after many years, he had his only son whom he so very much wanted, he was ordered to sacrifice him with his own hands. Abraham stripped himself and truly went against himself. He showed how by the sacrifice of his only son he loved nothing more than God. If indeed he so generously gave up his own son, how much more, if he had been ordered to surrender all other possessions, or to give them all up in one moment, he would have willingly done it.

Do you not see the complete centering upon the Lord of a perfect love freely given? And so also those who wish to follow in their footsteps must love nothing besides God so that, when they are tried, they may be found authentically prompt in preserving their love, their perfect love for the Lord. Such as these are able to endure conflict to the end who have completely and with their whole heart loved God alone and who have freed themselves from all other loves for the world. Few, however, are found who enjoy such a love, turning away from all pleasures and desires of the world and who manfully endure the assaults and temptations of the evil one.

Are there not among the many who, in crossing the rivers, are sucked under by the waters, some who pass over the turbulent streams of worldly passions, so diverse, and successfully overcome the various temptations of evil spirits? Also, just because many ships on the sea are shipwrecked by waves, are there not some ships that succeed and pass over the waves and reach safely the haven of peace? For this there is great need always of much faith and courage, struggle, patience, labors, hunger and thirst for the good, alacrity, perseverance, discretion, and reflection. Most want to possess the kingdom without labors and struggles and sweat, but this is impossible.

As in the world certain people offer themselves to a rich man to work in his fields or to do some other work so as to obtain the necessities for their livelihood, out of these some are lazy and sluggisb, not working or laboring as they should. These very ones, not having toiled or labored diligently, still want equal pay as those who manfully, with full force, have labored, as though they too had fulfilled their job.

Likewise when we read in Scripture how such and such a just man pleased God, how he was made a friend and companion of God and how all the fathers were considered friends and participators of God, we forget one thing: What great afflictions they had to suffer, how much they had to endure on behalf of God, with what great courage they struggled and fought battles! We congratulate them and we wish to enjoy rewards and honors equal to theirs. We desire ardentl to receive their outstanding gifts, but we fail to notice their labors, struggles, afflictions, and crucifixions. We eagerly want honors and dignities such as they received from God, but we are not ready to accept their labors and struggles.

Truly, I tell you this. Every person, even prostitutes, publicans, and the wicked, desires and wants all this, namely, to possess the kingdom easily without labors and struggles. But because of this there lie along the path temptations and many trials and afflictions and struggles and sweat in order to sift out those who have truly loved the Lord alone with might and main right up to death itself and have desired nothing else along with their love for him.
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

They justly, therefore, enter into the Kingdom of Heaven who have denied themselves according to the Lord's Word and have loved the Lord alone with their whole heart. Because of their great love they will be recompensed with the greatest of heavenly gifts. For in the afflictions, crucifixions, patience, and faith are hidden the promises, the glory, the possession of heavenly good things just as in the seed that is thrown into the earth the fruit lies already hidden or in the tree that is covered with thorns and grows amidst vile and dirty dung. Then they will reveal that in them were the dignity and glory and manifold fruit as the Apostle says: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Acts 14:22). And the Lord says: "In your patience you will possess your souls" (Lk 21:19), and again: "In the world you will have tribulation" (Jn 16:33).

For there is need of effort and patience, restraint and every kind of watchfulness, of alacrity and perseverance in prayer to the Lord so that one can rise above earthly desires and the snares and traps of sense pleasures, above the enticements of the world, and avoid the attacks of evil spirits. One needs to know well by what vigilance and attentive faith and love the saints possess the heavenly treasure, that is, the power of the Spirit in their souls and in Heaven, which is the balm of the kingdom. Blessed Apostle Paul, in describing this heavenly treasure, that is, the grace of the Spirit, explains also the multitude of tribulations and at the same time shows what each one ought to strive for while in this life: "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made by hands, eternal in Heaven" (2 Cor 5:1).

7. Therefore, let all strive and labor with all the virtues and let them believe that they, even here, may possess that house. For even if the house of our body is dissolved, we have no other house to which the soul can turn. It is said: "If, being clothed, we shall not be found naked" (2 Cor 5:3), naked, that is, of the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit in which the faithful soul can alone find rest.

For this reason, Christians who are genuine Christians are optimistic and are glad to leave the body because they have that house not made by hands, which house is the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. Therefore, even if the house of the body is destroyed, they do not fear, for they have the heavenly house of the Spirit and the incorruptible glory, which glory in the day of the resurrection will build up and glorify the house of the body, as the Apostle says: "He that raised Christ from the dead shall raise up also your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwells in you" (Rom 8:11). And again he says: "That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor 4:11). And he says: "That mortality which is in us may be swallowed up by life" (2 Cor 5:4).

8. Let us, therefore, strive by faith and excel in every virtue to gain after this life that clothing so that when we lay aside our body we will not be naked and that there will be nothing in that day to glorify our flesh. For insofar as anyone, through faith and zeal, has been deemed worthy to receive the Holy Spirit, to that degree his body also will be glorified in that day. What the soul now stores up within shall then be revealed as a treasure and displayed externally in the body. It is something like the trees once winter has passed. They are warmed by the invisible power of the sun and winds. The trees shoot outwardly and send out leaves and flowers and fruit like external clothing. Similarly also in spring flowers of the plants blossom forth from within the bosom of the earth and the earth is thus covered and decorated. The plants are like those lilies described by the Lord that "not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these" (Mt 6:29). For all examples of this nature are types and images of Christians at the resurrection.

9. So to all God-loving souls, I mean, true Christians, there is the first month, Xanthicus, which is called April. This is, indeed, the day of resurrection in which, by the power of the Sun of Righteousness, the glory of the Holy Spirit rises up from within, covering and warming the bodies of the saints. This is the glory they interiorly had before, hidden in their souls. For what they now have, that same then pours out externally into the body. This, I say, is the first month of the year (Ex 12:2). This brings joy to every creature. It clothes the naked trees; it opens the earth. This produces joy in all animals. It brings mirth to all. This is for Christians. Xanthicus, the first month, the time of the resurrection in which their bodies will be glorified by means of the light which even now is in them hiddenly, this is the power of the Spirit who will then be their clothing, food, drink, exultation, gladness, peace, adornment, and eternal life. For the Divine Spirit, whom they were considered worthy even now to possess, will then bring about in them every beauty of radiance and heavenly splendor.

10. How, therefore, ought each of us to believe and to strive and to be dedicated to live a full virtuous life? With much hope and endurance we should now desire the privilege of receiving that heavenly power and the glory of the Holy Spirit interiorly in the soul so that then, when our bodies will have been dissolved, we may receive what shall clothe and
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

Lord that the inner man receive even now this glory and that we may participate in the holiness of the Spirit so that, purged from all sordid traces of evil, we may receive also in the resurrection what will clothe our bodies as they rise naked, what will cover over any deformity, will vivify and transform them in the heavenly kingdom forever.

Christ will descend from Heaven and raise up all generations of Adam that have fallen asleep from the beginning of time, as Holy Scripture proves. And he will divide all into two parts. Those who bear his particular sign, that is, the sign of the Spirit, he will call to himself as his very own and place them at his right hand. He says: “My sheep hear my voice and I know mine own and I am known by mine” (Jn 10:27, 14).

Then shall their bodies be surrounded with the divine glory because of their good works. They themselves will be filled with the glory of the Spirit which in this life they enjoyed in their souls. And thus, illumined by the divine light and caught up into Heaven “to meet the Lord in the air (as is written), we shall be always with the Lord” (1 Thes 4:17), reigning with him forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY 6

Those wishing to please God ought to pray in peace, tranquillity, meekness, and wisdom, so as not to give scandal to all others by their loud outcries. The homily touches also on two questions: whether the thrones and crowns of Israel.

1. Those who approach the Lord ought to pray in quietness, peace, and great tranquility. They ought to attend to the Lord, not using un-called for or disturbing outcries, but rather with an attentive heart and controlled thoughts. Take the example of someone seriously sick who needs to undergo cautery or a surgical operation. One will bear the pain with courage and patience, self-possessed without any great tumult and disturbance. Then there are others who may be afflicted with the same sickness. While cautery is being applied or they are being cut open by the surgeons, they let out horridous cries. All the while, both types suffer the same pain, yet one screams and the other is silent, one makes a disturbance and the other none.

There are some who, when they undergo some suffering and affliction, accept it in a tranquil spirit. There are then others who have the same affliction. They accept it with much impatience. They pour out
performed, brought her also to that gift of grace. She also received the divine power in her soul.

17. And what indeed can be so surprising if those who came to the Lord and were intimately associated with him received his power as we see when the Apostles preached the Word of God and the Spirit fell upon those believers? Cornelius received power from the Word of God when he heard it. How much more in the case of the Lord speaking with Mary or Zaccheus or to the sinful woman who let her hair down and wiped the feet of the Lord, or with the Samaritan woman or the good thief—did not power go out and the Holy Spirit mingle with the souls?

Now those who pursue God in love, having abandoned everything else, and who persevere in prayer, are taught secretly things they had not known before. For truth itself comes to them according to their desire and it teaches them. “I am the truth” (Jn 14:6). Even the Apostles themselves, before the crucifixion, staying close to the Lord, saw great miracles, namely, how lepers were cleansed and the dead raised to life. But they did not yet know how the divine power operates or ministers in the heart. They did not yet know that they had to be reborn spiritually and be joined with the heavenly soul and become a new creature. Because of the signs that he performed, they loved the Lord. But the Lord told them: “Why do you marvel at such signs? I give you a great inheritance which the whole world does not possess.”

18. However, these words were strange to them until he arose from the dead and ascended with his body into heaven for us. And then the Spirit, the Comforter, entered and mingled with him. The Truth in person shows himself to the faithful. And the heavenly Man walks with you and forms one fellowship. Whoever, therefore, dedicate themselves to different forms of service and eagerly perform all such activities, motivated by zeal, faith, and love of God, that very service, after a while, leads them to a knowledge of truth itself. For the Lord appears to their souls and teaches them how the Holy Spirit operates. Glory and adoration to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.

Homily 13

What is the fruit God expects of Christians?

All visible things God created, and gave them to men for recreation and enjoyment, and he gave them also a law of justice. But ever since

Homily 14

Christ’s coming, God demands other fruit and another righteousness, namely, a purity of heart, a good conscience, profitable speech, holy and good thoughts, and all the works of the saints. For the Lord says: “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. It is written in the Law: Do not commit adultery. But I tell you, Do not lust or be angry” (Mt 5:20 ff). For it is necessary that he who truly desires to be a friend of God keep himself from the mire of sin, but for the eternal fire which is in us.” This makes us worthy of the kingdom. Glory to his mercy and to his propitious will toward us, Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.
and the veil of darkness has been lifted and the light of Christ shines with splendor and brings about in him an unspeakable joy, then he will be completely satisfied in having with him the Lord in much love, as in the example of the merchant rejoicing when he makes a profit. Nonetheless, he undergoes many afflictions and he fears the thieving spirits of iniquity lest, becoming remiss, he may lose the fruit of his work before he obtain the heavenly kingdom, the Heavenly Jerusalem.

3. Let us, therefore, beg also of God that he would put on us, who have shed the old man, the heavenly Christ, even now, so that established in great joy and thus led by him, we may be granted the greatest tranquillity. For the Lord, who wishes to fill us with a taste of the kingdom, says: “Without me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). And still, by using the Apostles, he knew how to enlighten many others. Even though they were creatures, they fed their fellow-servants. They taught them how to become a brother and a son of Christ to live in a more outstanding way than the rest of men, namely, they sanctified the very heart and mind, likewise the thoughts, so that men directed those to God. And thus God secretly bestows life and all their heartfelt needs and dedicates himself to them. For when a person surrenders to God his secret possessions, that is, his mind and thoughts, not occupying himself with any other matter or thought or distraction, but subjecting himself to a certain constraint, then the Lord makes him a sharer in his mysteries, in holiness and great purity. He also gives himself as heavenly food and spiritual drink.

4. Take the example of a man who has many possessions, servants, and children. He offers one kind of food to his servants, another kind to his children, born of his own seed, because the children are the heir of the father and they eat with him, namely, they are like to their father. So also Christ is that true Lord who has created all things and nourishes the evil and ungrateful. But he has begotten children, born of his own seed whom he has made participators of his grace. In them the Lord is formed and he nourishes them with a special refreshment, nourishment, food and drink that he does not give to other men. He also gives himself to them who relate to him as to their very own father, as the Lord says: “Whoever eats of my flesh and drinks of my blood, he remains in me and I in him and he will not see death” (Jn 6:56). Those who possess the true inheritance have been begotten as sons from the heavenly Father and they dwell in their Father’s house, as the Lord says: “The servant does not abide in the house, but the son abides forever” (Jn 8:35).

5. If, therefore, we wish also to be born of the heavenly Father, we ought to act in a more outstanding way than other people, namely, to show zeal, effort, and diligence, to love and speak well in conversation, to live in faith and in fear, as seeking to obtain only good things and to possess God by right of inheritance. “For the Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup” (Ps 16:5). And thus, when the Lord sees that good intention and our steadfastness, he shows forth his mercy and cleanses us by the heavenly Word. He calls to new life dead and lost minds through the good example and teaching of his own apostles. Take the example of seeds of wheat or barley that are creatures protected by clouds. The rains also and the sun call them into life when they are so commanded. Like light which enters through the window and the sun which extends throughout the whole world its rays, so the prophets were lights to their own proper house of Israel. The Apostles also were suns, sending off rays in every part of the whole world.

6. There is, therefore, one earth on which four-legged animals dwell and there is also an “earth” in the air where the birds walk and live. If the birds wish to stand or walk on the earth, there are hunters who catch them. There is also an “earth” for fish, namely, the water of the sea. Wherever one is born, whether on land or in the air, there each creature sojourns and finds its nourishment and rest.

There is also a land that is the homeland of Satan where the powers of darkness and the spirits of evil dwell and walk about and find their rest. There likewise is a land, luminous with the Godhead, where the camps and armies of angels and holy spirits walk about and find their rest. But the darksome world is invisible to human eyes nor can it be touched by the senses. Neither can the luminous world of the Godhead be touched or seen with physical eyes. But to those who are spiritual, namely, who see with the eyes of the heart, both the world of Satan and darkness and also the world of divine light lie revealed.

7. There is a secular fable that describes certain mountains which are fiery because there is a permanent fire within them. There are found animals that look like sheep. Hunters who try to capture them make iron wheels and fashion hooks that they heat in fire because those animals eat fire as their food, their pleasure, their growth, their life. Fire is everything to them. If you put them in another environment, they die. Their coats, if they become dirtied, are not washed by water but by fire and they become even purer and whiter. So also Christians have that heavenly fire as their food. It is their pleasure. It purges, washes, and sanctifies their heart. It gives them growth. It is their air and their life. If they leave that, they are killed by the evil spirits, as the animals in the fable die.
if they leave the fire, or as fish that leave water or the four-legged animals suffocate if thrown into the sea. As the birds walking on the earth are captured by the hunters, so also the human being that will not stay on that earth suffocates and dies. If such a one does not have that divine fire for his food, drink, clothing, and purification of his heart and the sanctification of his soul, he is taken captive by evil spirits and dies. We, however, should zealously ask ourselves whether we have been sown in that invisible earth and planted in the heavenly vineyard. Glory be to his mercies for all eternity. Amen.

HOMILY 15

This homily teaches through many ways how a soul ought to conduct herself in holiness, chastity, and purity toward her Spouse, Christ Jesus, the Savior of the world. It touches also on certain questions, namely, whether in the resurrection all the members are raised up and other questions on evil, grace, free will, and the dignity of human nature.

1. Take the example of a certain, very wealthy man, a noble king. He sets his eyes on a poor woman who possesses nothing other than her own being. He falls in love with her and wishes to take her as his spouse and wife. If she bestows on him all kindness and continues to show love for him, behold, that poor and indigent woman, who possessed nothing, now becomes the lady of the house of all the possessions of her husband. If, however, she should act contrary to decorum and her state of life and should act in an unbecoming manner in the house of her husband, she then is cast out with shame and insults heaped upon her as she covers her head with her two hands, just as it is said figuratively of the disobedient woman who is no longer of service to her husband. Then she suffers sorrow and the greatest grief as she considers what riches befell her and what glory she has lost as she is held in contempt because of her stupidity.

2. So also a person whom Christ, the heavenly Spouse, has asked to be his bride in a mystical and divine fellowship. Such a one has tasted the heavenly riches and ought with great diligence to strive sincerely to please the Bridgroom, Christ. This person ought faithfully to fulfill the service entrusted by the Spirit so as to please God in all things and never to grieve the Spirit in any matter. Such a person should display properly an outstanding modesty and love toward him and behave becomingly in the house of the heavenly King and become pleasing and acceptable to him in all things according to grace received. Behold, such a person is made like the woman of the household over all the goods of the Lord. And even the splendor of his Godhead touches her body. But if she fails and acts unbecomingly in his service and does not do the things that please the Lord nor obey his will nor cooperate with the grace of the Spirit indwelling her, then she is stripped of honor with shame and indignity and is deprived of life as being useless and hardly suited for the fellowship of the heavenly King. Then that person experiences sadness and sorrow. There is weeping among all the holy, invisible spirits. The angels, powers, Apostles, prophets, martyrs, weep over such a person.

3. Just as “there is joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents,” as the Lord said (Lk 15:7), so is there great sadness in Heaven over one person that falls away from eternal life. As on earth, when a rich man dies, he is led out of life with mournful music, lamentation, and wailing from his brothers, relatives, friends, and servants, so also all the saints mourn over such a person with lamentation and plaintive music. The Scriptures allude in various places to this in oblique language saying: “The pine has fallen, mourn, you cedars” (Zec 11:2). It is like the people Israel, who seemed to please the Lord, even though it was not fully as they ought. They had a pillar of cloud to overshadow them and a pillar of fire to enlighten them. They saw the sea divide before their eyes and witnessed clear water erupt from the rock (Ex 14:19). But after their mind willfully turned away from God, then they were handed over to serpents or to their enemies and were taken captive and sent into most miserable exile and suffered bitter servitude. The same applies also to our souls. This very same thing the Spirit mystically declares through the prophet Ezekiel, as he spoke of Jerusalem: “I found you stripped in the desert and I washed you of your impurity with water and I clothed you with a garment and I put bracelets on your hands and necklaces around your neck and earrings in your ears. And you became famous among all the Gentiles. Pure flour and oil and honey you ate. And after all this ultimately you forgot my kindness. You went after your lovers and committed fornication with shame” (Ex 16:6 f.).

4. So also the person who knows God through grace is warned by the Spirit. Such a one had been cleansed of former sins and adorned with the ornaments of the Holy Spirit and had been made a participator of divine and heavenly food, but yet does not behave in a fitting way with great thoughtfulness. She does not properly persevere in a becoming
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

good will and love toward the heavenly Bridegroom, Christ, and so is cast out and deprived of life of which she once was made a participator.

For Satan has power against those who have arrived at these levels to rise up and attack them. And also evil attacks those who have known God in grace and power and tries to unarm them. We must, therefore, strive and be prudently attentive “to work out our own salvation with fear,” as it is written (Phil 2:12). All you who have been made participators of the Spirit of Christ, may you not behave in any matter either small or great in a contemptible way, nor hold these things in contempt nor treat the grace of the Spirit with abuse so as not to be deprived of life of which you have already been made participators.

5. Let me say this same thing using a different example. Suppose a servant enters a certain palace to take charge of the serving dishes. He uses what belongs to the king’s goods, since he has come owning nothing, and he serves the king with the very dishes that belong to the king. In this matter he needs great prudence and judgment lest he serve something improperly by bringing one dish to the royal table instead of a different, proper one. He should observe the proper order, serving the courses, from the first to the last in order. If through ignorance or lack of judgment he should serve the king not according to proper order, he places himself in danger of death. So also a person who serves God in grace and the Spirit requires exact discernment and knowledge so as not to err in using the divine vessels, that is, in the spiritual service, by not keeping his own will in harmony with grace. For it is possible that even in spiritual service, performed secretly by the interior man, a person can serve the Lord with his own vessels, that is, by his own spirit. But it is impossible that anyone can serve God not using God’s vessels, which means without grace, and still seek to please him in all God’s will.

6. But when one receives grace, there is then need for the greatest prudence and discernment. God gives these to the person that asks him for them so that he may serve God in the Spirit whom he receives, and also that he may not be conquered by evil and be deceived, led astray through ignorance, presumption, and carelessness by acting against all that the Lord wills. Punishment, death, and grief will be such a person’s portion. The holy Apostle said this: “Lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected” (1 Cor 9:27). Do you see what fear he had, even though he was an Apostle of God? Let us, therefore, implore God so that we may prove to be servants of the Spirit according to his will in an exceptional way, we who have been made participators of divine grace. May we not live with a disposition of contempt so that we may live a life most pleasing to God and may serve him with spiritual dedication according to his will and thus we may obtain the inheritance of eternal life.

7. If anyone is burdened with a sickness, it is, nevertheless, possible that he may have certain of his members sound and healthy, for example, his vision or some other faculty, while the rest of his members are weak. So also in the spiritual life. It is possible that someone may be healthy in three areas of his spirit, but he is not perfect just because of this. You see how many stages and ways of the Spirit’s acting there are. Evil is cut out little by little and diminished, not all at once. All things that exist come about by divine providence and economy, both the rising of the sun as well as all creatures, all exist for the kingdom, which the elect die to possess by right of inheritance, so that they may make up the kingdom of peace and harmony.

8. Christians, therefore, should strive in all things and ought not to pass judgment of any kind on anyone, neither on the prostitute nor on sinners nor on disorderly persons. But they should look upon all persons with a single mind and a pure eye, so that it may be for such a person almost a natural and fixed attitude never to despise or judge or abhor anyone or to divide people according to categories. If you see a man with one eye, do not make any judgment in your heart, but regard him as though he were whole. If someone has a maimed hand, see him not as maimed. See the crippled as straight, the paralytic as healthy. For this is purity of heart, that, when you see the sinners and the weak, you have compassion and show mercy toward them. For it can happen that the holy ones of the Lord sit as though they were in the theater, watching the follies of the world, but in the interior they are conversing with God. According to their exterior they seem to be looking with their eyes at the things of the world.

9. Worldly-minded persons move by another power, one of error, as they eagerly thirst for the things of the earth. But Christians are motivated by another attitude, another mind. They are of another world, another city. For the Spirit of God has fellowship with them and they crush the head of the adversary. It is written: “The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Cor 15:26). For those who venerate God are masters of all things. But, on the contrary, those who are slack in faith and live in sin are completely enslaved. The fire burns them and the stone and sword kill them and finally the demons will conquer over them.

10. Question: In the resurrection will all members rise?
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

Answer: To God all things are easy and thus he has promised it, even though to human weakness and thought this seems impossible. For just as God took from dust and the earth and created the human body as a completely unique nature, not at all like the earth, and he created many other kinds of parts such as hair, skin, bones, and nerves, and just as a needle that is put into a fire is changed in color, becoming like the fire, yet retaining its own nature as iron, so also in the resurrection all members will rise. “Not a hair will perish” (Lk 21:18; Mk 9:49), as it is written. All things will become light. All are immersed in light and fire and are indeed changed, but are not, as certain people say, dissolved and transformed into fire so that nothing of their nature remains. For Peter is Peter, and Paul, Paul, and Philip is Philip. Each person in his own unique nature and personality remains, yet filled by the Spirit. But if you say that the nature is dissolved, then there is no more Peter or Paul but God is alone and everywhere. Then those in hell feel no punishment and those in the kingdom receive no reward.46

11. It is like a garden with various fruit-bearing trees. There is a pear tree, an apple tree, and grapevines with fruit and leaves. It can happen that the garden and all the trees and leaves can be changed and transformed into another nature. The former things now are made into light. So also humans are changed in the resurrection and their members are made holy and full of light.

12. Men of God, therefore, ought to prepare themselves for the struggle and battle. As the young athlete in the wrestling bout learns to accept the blows that come upon him and he strikes back, so Christians ought to learn to bear afflictions, both exterior and those interior wars so that, when struck, they may rise to higher victories through endurance. That is, indeed, the way of the Christian religion. Where the Holy Spirit is, there follows, as a shadow, persecution and struggle. You see how the prophets suffered persecution from all of their own compatriots, yet in all these the Spirit was working. You see how the Lord, who is the way and the truth (Jn 14:6), was not persecuted by a foreign people but by his own. He suffered persecution and was crucified by his own tribe of Israel. It was the same with the Apostles. From that time when Jesus was crucified, the Spirit, the Paraclete, passed the cross down through the ages to the Christians. Moreover, no Jew suffered persecution; the Christians alone suffered martyrdom. Because of this, Christians ought not to be surprised, for it is necessary that the truth undergo persecution.

13. Question: Certain people say that evil enters in from the outside and that if a person wishes, he need not accept it, but can reject it. Answer: As the serpent spoke with Eve (Gn 3:5–6), and she obeyed, the serpent entered within, so too now, on account of man’s obedience, sin (which is from outside) enters in. For sin has full power and liberty to enter into the human heart. The Apostle says: “I will that men pray without anger and evil thoughts” (1 Tm 2:8). “For thoughts proceed from out of the heart” (Mt 15:19), according to the Gospel. Go, therefore, to prayer and examine your heart and mind and desire to pour out to God your prayer as pure. And see to it that there be nothing of hindrance preventing your prayer from being pure, from your mind being totally occupied with the Lord, just as the concentration of the farmer is centered on his farming, the married man’s concern with his wife, the merchant with his business. Let nothing prevent you from bending your knees in prayer and not allowing others to distract your thoughts.

14. But you say, after he came by means of the cross: “The Lord has condemned sin” (Rom 8:3), and that it no longer remains within. It is similar in this example to a soldier who puts up his chariot at the home of another. When he pleases, he has access of entering and leaving that home. So also sin has the power of conversing within the human heart. For it is written: “Satan entered into the heart of Judas” (Lk 22:3). But if you insist that through the coming of Christ sin was condemned and that after Baptism evil has no more power of suggestion within the human heart, then you ignore the fact that from the coming of the Lord up to this day the many who have been baptized, have they not, thought evil things at some time? Have not some of them turned to vain desire for glory, to fornication, or to gluttony? Moreover, are all those who live in the Church, men of the world, are they endowed with a pure and blameless heart? Or do we not find after Baptism that many commit many sins and many live in error? So, even after Baptism the thief freely enters and does what he pleases.

15. It is written: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Dt 6:5, 15:19). But do you remember him constantly and have a passionate love and burning desire directed always toward the Lord? Are you night and day bound fast to him? If you have such a love, then you are pure. But if you have less a love, then ask yourself whether earthly pursuits or vile and evil thoughts absorb your attention, or whether your soul is drawn always toward love and longing for God. For the thoughts of the
world drag the mind away toward worldly and corruptible things and do not permit it to love God or to be mindful of the Lord. But very often the unlearned person goes to prayer and gets down on his knees and his mind enters into tranquility. And as long as he digs and as deeply as he gets below the surface, the wall of evil, as an impeding obstacle, breaks down. He passes into vision and wisdom where the powerful ones or the wise or the orators cannot enter to comprehend or know the subtlety of his mind, since he is absorbed in divine mysteries. One hardly knows how to judge the value of pearls nor give a price to them simply because he lacks any experience in such a matter. Wherefore Christians have nothing to do with the things of the world considered as of great value and regard them as dung (Phil 3:8) compared to the magnificence of those spiritual gifts, a magnificence that works powerfully in them.

16. Question: Can a man fall who has the gift of grace? Answer: If he is careless, he certainly falls. For the enemies never take a rest nor do they withdraw from the war. How much more you ought not to cease seeking God! For a very great loss comes to you if you are careless, even though you may seem to be confirmed in the very mystery of grace.

17. Question: Does grace remain after man's fall? Answer: God desires to lead man back again to life and to encourage him to weep again and be converted. But if grace truly remains, it is to encourage man again to tears and repentance in order that he may repent because of those things by which he formerly sinned.

18. Question: Are those perfect ones threatened by affliction or battle or do they totally live in security? Answer: The enemy never stops waging war against humanity. Satan is without mercy and hates humans. For this reason he never is hesitant to war against everyone. But he does not attack all in the same ways. Governors and noblemen pay their taxes to the king. Such men rely on their riches, their gold and silver. They take their taxes out of their abundance and suffer no loss. Just as a man who gives alms never considers it a setback, so also Satan considers these things superfluous. He lets some persons alone; they are no loss to him, who is so wealthy in possessing so many other persons as his own. But it is different with a poor man deprived even of daily bread. He is beaten and tortured since he is unable to pay the tax. He also is worn down by trials and is tortured and yet does not die. Another person, on account of only one word said, is ordered to be put to death and perishes.

So also among Christians, there are some who are vehemently attacked and beaten by sin and yet for all that they grow stronger and wiser even in the battle, as they scorn the power of the adversaries. They have no danger from this source because they are certain and firm in their salvation since they have trained well in the battle against vice and have learned by experience. Therefore, having God with them, they are under his direction and enjoy peace.

19. But others, who have never received training, if they should encounter any trial and a battle ensues, fall at once into disarray and perdition. It is like travelers to a city desirous to visit their friends and relatives. Although they encounter many people in the marketplaces, they are not detained by them, for their aim is to meet their friends. When they knock on the door outside and call, their friends open the door with joy. But if they loiter in the marketplaces and squares, they are distracted or detained by those they meet. The door is shut and no one opens to them. So those who are impelled to go forward toward the Lord, our Christ, the true Friend, ought to regard all other things as irrelevant and of little value.

Take the example of noblemen and governors who enter the palace to see the king. They greatly fear how they are to give an accounting lest they should make some mistake and incur being sentenced to trial and punishment. But simple country people, who have never seen a prince, have no worry. So it is with this world under the heavens, from kings to paupers. Since they are ignorant of Christ's glory, they are occupied with worldly matters. No one is quick to recall the divine judgment. But those who entertain thoughts that raise them to the judgment seat of Christ where his throne is and live continually in his sight are always in fear and trembling so as not in any way to fall away from his holy commandments.

20. Like the rich of this earth, they have brought much fruit to their barn. Still, every day they expend even greater labor to make their stored-up treasure even more abundant and to prevent any shortage. If they sit back and rely on the supplies stored up in the barn and neglect to bring forth more and they use up what they had stored up, they soon fall into poverty and dire want. For this reason they must strive and bring forth fruit by adding and increasing their harvest, so that they may not come under the yoke of poverty.

It is like this in Christianity for anyone who tastes the grace of God. For it says: "Taste and see how sweet the Lord is" (Ps 34:8). Such a taste is this power of the Spirit working to effect full certainty in faith which operates in the heart. For as many as are sons of light and in the
service of the New Covenant through the Holy Spirit have nothing to learn from men. For they are taught by God. His very grace writes in their hearts the laws of the Spirit. They should not put all their trusting hope solely in the Scriptures written in ink. For divine grace writes on the "tables of the heart" (2 Cor 3:3) the laws of the Spirit and the heavenly mysteries. For the heart directs and governs all the other organs of the body. And when grace pastures the heart, it rules over all the members and the thoughts. For there, in the heart, the mind abides as well as all the thoughts of the soul and all its hopes. This is how grace penetrates throughout all parts of the body.

21. So, on the contrary, as many as are sons of darkness, sin has control over their heart and infiltrates into all the members. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts" (Mt 15:19). And thus diffused throughout, sin covers humanity with darkness. Those who hold that evil is in no way born into man and does not grow are not worried about tomorrow nor are they led by any passionate desire. For a certain length of time evil stops molesting them, by suggesting a certain desire, so that such a one does not blush to affirm on oath that such a passion no longer bothers him. But after a short time he burns with lust so that he is guilty of perjury. Just as water runs through a pipe, so too sin runs through the heart and the thoughts. Those who deny these statements are refuted and ridiculed by sin itself, intent always on victory. For evil tries to hide itself and remain undetected in man's mind.

22. If, then, anyone loves God, God also shares his love with him. Once a person believes in him, God bestows on such a one a heavenly faith and so he becomes twofold. As you offer God any part of yourself, he himself shares with your soul similar aspects of his own being, so that all you do, you may do sincerely and purely, loving and praying in this same way. For great is the dignity of humanity. See how great are the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon. But the Lord was not pleased to find his rest in them but in humanity alone. Man, therefore, is of greater value than all other creatures, and perhaps, I will not hesitate to say, not only visible creatures, but also those invisible, namely, "the ministering spirits" (Heb 1:14). For it was not of Michael or Gabriel, the archangels, that God said: "Let us make according to our image and likeness" (Gn 1:26), but he said it concerning the spiritual makeup of the human, I mean, the immortal soul. For it is written: "The ranks of angels of the Lord encamp round about those that fear him" (Ps 34:7). The visible creatures, therefore, are endowed with a certain unchangeable nature.

23. The heavens were once established, the sun, moon, and the earth, but in these creatures the Lord could not find lasting pleasure. They could not be other than what he created them to be. They had no will. You, however, for this reason are made according to the image and likeness of God. Insofar as God is his own Master and does what he wishes, if it seems right to him, with power and out of justice, he can send the just into hell and sinners into the kingdom, although he hardly wishes this, nor does it please him to do so. For God is just. So are you also your own master, and if you wish to perish, you are of a changeable nature.

If you prefer to blaspheme, to concoct poisons and kill someone, no one opposes you or prevents you. If a person wishes, he may live for God and walk in the way of justice and conquer his passions. For the human mind which resists and struggles can conquer, with firm purpose, the impulses of vices and the evil passions.

24. Suppose that in a mansion in which there are many objects made of gold and silver, clothing of various kinds of gold and silver, the young men and women servants restrain their desires, even though human nature, because of indwelling sin, desires inordinately everything. Because they humbly fear their masters, they repress their driving concupiscences. How much more, where the fear of God is strong, ought a person to struggle and resist any inherent evil. For God has commanded what is possible for you to do. The nature of irrational animals is fixed and unchangeable. The nature of the serpent is to bite and to spew out poison. Therefore, all serpents are of one kind. The wolf is accustomed to be rapacious. Therefore, all wolves are of this same nature. The lamb is a gentle animal and a prey to marauders. Therefore, all lambs are of the same nature. The dove is guileless and harmless. All doves also are of the same nature. But a human being is not so. One person is a rapacious wolf and another, like a lamb, is a victim of marauders. Both come from the same human race.

25. One man is fed up with his wife and commits adultery. And another does not allow the slightest concupiscence to stir in his heart. One man steals his neighbor's goods, while another, moved by piety toward God, distributes all his goods. You can see how changeable is the nature of man, equally tending toward vice and, on the contrary, also toward good. In both cases man is capable of assenting to whatever actions he wishes. Human nature, therefore, is capable of both good and evil, either of divine grace or of the evil adversary. Man is in no way submitted to necessity.
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

Adam at the beginning lived in purity. He controlled his thoughts. But from the time that he transgressed the command of God, heavy mountains weighed upon his mind, and evil thoughts mingled with it and became completely a part of the mind, and yet this was not really man’s mind by nature since such thoughts are tainted by evil.51

26. Therefore, you ought to seek a lamp to be lighted so as to find pure thoughts. Those are the natural thoughts which God has made.52 They are like persons who are accustomed to the sea and have learned to swim. If storms and waves rise up, they do not panic. So it is with Christians. As the mind of a three-year-old child cannot follow or comprehend the mind of a perfect dialectician because of the difference in age, so also Christians look on this world with the eyes of children, despising its worldliness and seeing the presence of grace. They are strangers to this world. Their city and their rest are elsewhere. For Christians have the consolation of the spirit, tears, grief, and groaning. And the very tears are for them a source of delight. They have a fear along with joy and exultation. And so they are like men who carry in their hands their own blood, not trusting in themselves or thinking themselves to be anything special. But they are neglected, condemned, and rejected among all men.

27. Take the example of a king who entrusted his treasure to a certain poor person. He who receives the job of taking care of the treasure does not regard it as his own, but constantly recognizes his poverty, not daring to waste any of the other’s treasure. He always keeps this in mind—not only that the treasure is another’s, but above all it belongs to a king, a man of greatest power who entrusted it to him. Whenever it should please him, he can take it away from him.

So, in a similar way, ought those who have received divine grace consider themselves to be humble in thoughts and confess their own poverty. As in the case of the poor man who has received a treasure entrusted to him by the king, if he relies on someone else’s treasure as though it were his own and becomes puffed up, the king will take it from him. And he who received the charge remains as he was before, a pauper. So also from those who have received grace. If they are puffed up and are filled with pride, the Lord will take his grace back and they will remain what they were before they had received grace from the Lord.

28. Truly, there are many who possess grace but do not perceive that they secretly are deprived of it by sin. Take the example of a certain young maid and young man working in a household. She is captured by his unseemly words and consents to him. She commits fornication and loses her purity and is expelled. So that terrible serpent of sin is always present to the soul, enticing and provoking it. And if it consents, the spiritual soul communicates with the incorporeal evil of that spirit, that is, spirit enters into a fellowship with spirit, and he who commits adultery in his heart receives the suggestion of the most wicked one. This is the measure of your struggle, not to commit adultery in your thoughts, but to resist and to take up the interior war, and to battle and not to yield nor to delight in evil thoughts. And if the Lord finds in you such promptitude of mind, in the last day he will receive you into the Kingdom of Heaven.

29. For there are certain things which the Lord so directs that he cannot do without violating his own divine grace and election. And there are others that God governs by permitting in order that man may be tested and exercised and his free will may be manifested. Those oppressed by afflictions and temptations, if they bear them, will not fail to come into the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, Christians in hardships are not overcome by sadness or sorrow. If they are burdened by poverty or insults, they ought not to be surprised, but rather they should delight in poverty and consider it a richness. They should consider fasting a pleasure and ignominy which they accept as glory. On the other hand if they should receive in this life the better things which draw them to worldly ease, to riches, to glory, or to pleasures, they ought not to take pleasure in these but flee from them as though fleeing from fire.

30. Let us take this example. Suppose a small, insignificant nation wages war against a king. The latter is not greatly perturbed, but he sends his soldiers and officers and they carry on the war. But if it is a case of a great nation capable of overthrowing his kingdom, the king himself is forced with his servants and his army to enter into the war and with all possible forces to fight it. Look, therefore, at your dignity, namely, that God has put himself in motion with his army, the angels, I say, and his holy spirits, and has come in person to save you from death.

Stand firm, therefore, and think what providence has been working on your behalf. We take an example from human life since we still live in such a manner. Suppose a king came upon a certain poor person, very sick. He is not embarrassed to treat his wounds with healing medicines. And when he brings him to his palace, he clothes him with the royal purple and the diadem and shares his table with him. In a similar way the heavenly King, Christ, came to suffering man and healed him. He made
him a companion at his royal table. And this he does, not by forcefully constraining man’s will, but by attraction he establishes him in so great a dignity.

31. It is written in the Gospel: “The Master sent out his servants to call them who wish to come, inviting them: ‘My banquet is ready.’ But those who were called began to excuse themselves, one saying: ‘I bought some span of oxen.’ Another: ‘I have married’” (Lk 14:16 ff.). You see, he was ready who called, but the invited refused. They themselves were alone responsible in the way they answered. Thus, so great is the dignity of Christians. Consider, the Lord has prepared for them the kingdom and has called them to enter, but they have refused. Concerning the gift which Christians will receive by way of their inheritance, one could rightly say that if anyone, from the time of Adam’s creation to the end of the world, should battle against Satan and put up with afflictions, it would be nothing in comparison to the glory which he is to obtain. For he will reign forever together with Christ. Glory to him who so loved such a person that he gave himself and his grace and entrusted himself to him. Glory to his greatness!

32. According to all visible signs, all of us brethren seated here are endowed universally with the one image and face of Adam. Is there also in secret and in the most interior matters one will among all of us? One heart? Will we, indeed, not all together be good and religious? Or truly, are there not certain among us who have fellowship with Christ and his angels while others have it with Satan and the demons while all the time all of us appear seated here as one? All of us bear the same countenance of Adam. Do you see how different is the intellectual life, namely, the interior man, from the exterior? For all of us appear to be as one, both those who are with Christ and his angels and those who are with Satan and his unclean spirits. There are, therefore, infinite depths to the human heart. There are found reception rooms, bedrooms, doors and antechambers, many offices and exits. There is found the office of justice and of injustice. There is death and there is life. There takes place upright business as well as the contrary.

33. Take the example of a great palace that is deserted and all kinds of stench and odors from many cadavers come out of it. So also the heart is the palace of Christ and it abounds with every kind of impurity and with great crowds of evil spirits. It is, therefore, necessary to repair and rebuild it; its storerooms and bedrooms must be cleaned up. For Christ the King with his angels and spirits is coming there so that he may find his rest, he may live and move about freely and set up his kingdom. I say it is like a ship that is equipped with much equipment over which the captain rules and directs all the sailors, urging some on with correction, directing others. In the same way, the heart has a captain in the mind, the conscience, that tests the thoughts that accuse and defend. For it says: “Thoughts accusing or else excusing one another” (Rom 2:15).

34. You see that our conscience does not approve of thoughts of the kind that lead to sin, but immediately it sets judgment upon them. It does not lie because it witnessed to what it will say before God in the day of judgment like a constant judge. It is like a chariot. The reins, horses, and the whole apparatus are under one driver. When he wishes, he drives the chariot at a fast speed. When he wants, he stops it. Wherever he wishes to steer the chariot, there it goes. For the whole chariot is under the power of the driver. So also the heart has many natural faculties within itself, but the mind and the conscience admonish and direct the heart. And they wake up the natural faculties that spring up in the heart. For the soul, even though it is one, has many members.

35. From the time that Adam transgressed the command, the serpent entered and became master of the house and became like a second soul with the real soul.33 For the Lord says: “Whosoever does not deny himself and hate his own soul is not my disciple” (Lk 14:26) and “He that loves his soul shall lose it” (Mt 10:39). Indeed, sin, after it entered into man’s soul, became its members, adhering to the corporeal person and from this source there pour out from the heart many unclean thoughts. Wherefore, he who does the wish of his soul, does the wishes of evil, because it is so intimately connected and mixed with the soul. He who subjugates his soul and is irate with the innate passions is like one who has captured a city from his enemies. Such a person is deemed worthy to possess the good measure of the Spirit and is endowed by divine power with the pure man and transcends his very self. For such a one as this is made a participator of the divine nature (2 Pt 1:4) and made a son of God, receiving the heavenly stamp on his soul. For his chosen ones are anointed with the sanctifying oil and are raised up in great dignity to be kings.

36. For such is humanity’s nature, that may be immersed in the depths of evil and be a slave to sin, yet it can still turn to good. One who is totally surrendered to the Holy Spirit and intoxicated with heavenly things is also capable of turning to evil. It is similar to a woman, clothed in tattered rags, starved and dirty. Not without much work does she reach a royal rank and put on the purple and the crown and become the spouse of the king. She may recall in memory her past filth and it may
come to her to turn back to that former state. But she, nevertheless, does not wish to return to her past, for that would be sheer stupidity. And it is similar to those who “have tasted the divine grace, have been made partakers of the Spirit” (Heb 6:4). Unless they are attentive, they can defect and even become worse than they were before when they were worldly-minded.

It is not that God is changeable or of a foolish mind or that the Holy Spirit is quenched, but the fact is that human beings themselves do not consent to grace and on account of this they go astray and fall into infinite sins. For those who have tasted that gift have both things in happy tension, namely, joy and consolation, fear and trembling, exultation and weeping. They mourn for themselves and the whole race of Adam because mankind is one. And tears are to them like bread and their compunction is like sweetness and repose.

37. If you should see a person puffed up by arrogance and pride because he is a partaker of grace, and even if he should perform signs and should raise up the dead, if he, nevertheless, does not hold his soul as abject and humble and he does not consider himself poor in spirit and an object of abhorrence, he is being duped by evil and is ignorant. Granted he should perform signs, he is not to be trusted. For the sign of Christianity is this, that one be pleasing to God so as to seek to hide oneself from the eyes of men. And even if a person should possess the complete treasures of the King, he should hide them and say continually: “The treasure is not mine, but another has given it to me as a charge. For I am a beggar and when it pleases him, he can claim it from me.” If anyone should say: “I am rich. I have enough. I possess goods. There is nothing more I need,” such a person is not a Christian, but a vessel of deceit and of the devil. For the enjoyment of God is insatiable and the more anyone tastes and eats, the more he hungers. Persons of this kind have an ardor and love toward God that nothing can restrain. And the more they apply themselves to the art of growing in perfection, the more they reckon themselves as poor, as those in great need and possessing nothing. This is why they say: “I am not worthy that the sun shines its rays upon me.” This is the sign of Christianity, namely, this very humility.

38. But if anyone should say: “I am content and full,” that one is a deceiver and a liar. For as the body of the Lord was glorified when he climbed the mount and was transfigured into the divine glory and into infinite light, so also the bodies of the saints are glorified and shine like lightning. Just as the interior glory of Christ covered his body and shone completely, in the same way also in the saints the interior power of

Christ in them in that day will be poured out exteriorly upon their bodies. For even now at this time they are in their minds partakers of his substance and nature. For it is written: “He that sanctifies and the one who is sanctified are of one” (Heb 2:11); and: “The glory that you have given me, I have given them” (Jn 17:22). Similarly, as many lamps are lighted from the one, same fire, so also it is necessary that the bodies of the saints, which are members of Christ, become the same which Christ himself is.

39. Question: In what way are Christians superior to the first Adam? Indeed, he was immortal and not only was he incorruptible in soul, but also in body. But Christians die and decompose.

Answer: The real death takes place interiorly in the heart. It lies hidden. The interior man perishes. If anyone, therefore, has passed from death into the hidden life, that one truly lives forever and does not die. For, granted that their bodies for a time are dissolved, at last, however, they are raised in glory. For they are sanctified. We say that the death of Christians is thus a sleep and a falling off into repose. But if the [Christian] man were immortal and incorruptible in his body, the whole world, seeing the strange happening, namely, that the bodies of Christians do not corrupt, would be won over to what is good by a certain necessity and not by a spontaneous desiring.

40. In order that man’s free will which God gave to man from the beginning might more clearly be manifested and confirmed, a great providence is at work in this matter, and the dissolution of the bodies takes place so that it is a question of man’s will choosing to embrace what is good or evil. For even the man confirmed in evil, or the one completely immersed in sin and making himself a vessel of the devil by whom he is totally bound, caught up in a certain necessity, still enjoys free will to become a chosen vessel (Acts 9:15), a vessel of life. Similarly, on the other hand, those who are intoxicated with God, even if they are full and dominated by the Holy Spirit, still are not bound by any necessity, but they possess free will to choose and do what pleases them in this life.

41. Question: Is evil gradually diminished and eradicated, and thus man makes progress in grace, or is evil uprooted immediately when he has had a spiritual experience?

Answer: Take the example of the undeveloped infant in the womb. It does not immediately grow into a matured person but only gradually it receives the shape and is born, and even then is not perfect, but it grows gradually over many years and finally becomes a human. It is similar to
barley and wheat seeds. They do not push forth roots immediately upon falling into the earth, but winters and rains pass over them and then at the convenient time the ears form. The same for the man who plants a pear tree. He does not immediately harvest fruit. So likewise in spiritual things, where there is a question of so much wisdom and subtlety, man makes progress gradually "and reaches to a perfect man, to the full measure" (Eph 4:13), and not as some say: "To put off one garment and put on another."

42. Whoever wishes to distinguish himself in letters first starts with learning the alphabet. When he reaches the first place of that level, he moves on to Latin school and there he is the lowest of all. Again when he becomes top of that level, he enters debating school and again he is the last of all and a beginner. Then he becomes a "scholastic" and again he is the novice and the last of all the other lawyers. After he rises to be first in that area, he then becomes an official. After reaching the position of chief magistrate, he takes on an assistant assessors.

If, therefore, in worldly affairs a person makes progress in so many steps, how much more do the heavenly mysteries admit of progressions and allow increase through many stages, and then, through many testings and through many trials, one reaches perfection. For Christians, who truly have tasted of grace and have the sign of the cross in their mind and heart, such, from kings to beggars, hold all things as dung and squalor. And they are able to understand that the whole earthly world—the treasures of a king and his riches and glory, the discourses of wisdom—are only an external form and have no solid foundation, but all will pass and disappear. And whatsoever lies under the heavens is easily held in contempt by them.

43. Why is this so? Because the things which are beyond the heavens are foreign and wonderful and are not found in the treasures of kings, nor in the wisdom of words, nor in worldly glory. And also because the dignities and riches that they possess who have the Lord and Creator of all things in their inner man are a possession that never will pass away, but will remain. Christians have known that the soul is by far more precious than all other creatures. Indeed, only man has been made according to the image and likeness of God. Behold the heavens, how vast and also the earth! How precious are the creatures that inhabit them! And how great are some of their bodies! But man is, nonetheless, much more valuable than all of these bodies, since in him alone the Lord is pleased. The whales of the sea, the mountains and the beasts, in outward appearance far excel man in size. See, then, your dignity. How precious you are that God has made you superior to the angels since he came on earth himself visibly present to help and redeem you."

44. For when did the angels come to save you? Indeed, the King's Son held council with his Father and the Word was sent and took on flesh. He concealed his own divinity so that like may be saved by like. He laid down his life on the cross. So great was the love of God toward man! Immortal though he was, he chose for your sake to be nailed to the cross. Ponder, therefore, how ardently "God loved the world so as to give his only begotten Son for it" (Jn 3:16). "How shall he not with him freely give us all things?" (Rom 8:32). And again in another place it says: "Amen, I say to you that he shall set him as ruler over all his goods" (Mt 24:47).

Also in another place it shows that the angels are the ministers of the saints. For when Elijah was on the mountain and foreigners were rising up against him, his servant said: "Many are coming against us and we are all alone." Then Elijah answered: "Do you not see the armies and multitudes of angels with us surrounding us to aid us?" (2 Kgs 6:15 ff.). You see how the Master and the multitude of angels are standing by the side of their servants. How great, therefore, is the soul and with what great honors it has been gifted by God! Indeed, both God and the angels seek the human soul to share their fellowship and kingdom! But Satan and his power seek it for their own purpose.

45. Just as in the visible world we see that kings are not served by peasants who watch sheep, but by well-groomed and well-instructed persons, so also in the heavenly palace, those who serve the heavenly King are those who are free of all fault and reproach and are pure of heart. As in the palace, the attractive maidens without blemish and reproach, namely, the most beautiful, are called to participate in the company of the king, so also in the spiritual palace, it is those who possess all manner of good virtues that enter into fellowship with the heavenly King.

In the visible order if a prince goes to stay at a certain house, if there should be anything in that household not clean, it is set aight with much housecleaning and the whole house is perfumed. How much more the house of the soul, in which the Lord finds his rest, needs ordering so that he may be able to enter and there rest, he, who is without any reproach, spot or blemish! In such a heart both God and the whole heavenly Church find rest.

46. In the visible order open to our eyes, if a certain father possesses any goods, including diamonds and precious stones, these he
hides in storerooms and sets them aside for his son as his inheritance. So God also has entrusted his possession with all his precious things to us humans.

Finally, in the temporal order in the case of a war, if a king comes with his army to do battle and his side is weaker in number and in strength, immediately he sends legates to sue for peace (Lk 14:32). But if it be a very great nation attacking an equally great nation, and king goes out against king (for example, the king of the Persians against the king of the Romans), it is absolutely necessary that these kings go out to war with their entire army and all their soldiers. Think, therefore, how great is your dignity since God has moved with his own army of angels and spirits to enter into battle with the adversary in order to redeem you from death. God, therefore, came for your sake.

47. What, for instance, if there were a king who came upon a certain pauper whose whole body was covered with leprosy. He would not be ashamed of him, but would apply medicine to his wounds and so heal his sores. And after that, he received him at his royal table, clothed him with purple and made him a king. In this way God also has shown himself to the human race. He wished their wounds and healed mankind and led them into the heavenly bedchamber. Therefore, very great is the dignity of Christians, so great, indeed, that there is nothing to compare with it. But if the Christian is aroused to defection and is done in by evil, he becomes like a city without walls which robbers invade from any part they wish, for there is absolutely no resisting force and they plunder it and set it on fire. Thus, while you are neglecting yourself and hardly taking stock of yourself, the evil spirits enter into you and destroy and lay barren your mind, dissipating your thoughts on things of this world.

48. Many people, who are experts in some field or other of knowledge and pursue science and are conscientious about proper living, think that this makes for perfection. They do not examine the heart, failing to see how evil binds up the soul. Even if the mind is interior, evil flows throughout, sending roots into all the other members. The robber, that is, the opposing power, has entered the household. It is an opposing, even hidden power. And unless one enters into war against sin, gradually the hidden, inner evil spreads by multiplying itself and leads man to commit deliberate sins. For evil is continually bubbling up like the center of a fountain. Therefore, take diligent care so as to block up the rivers of evil, lest you should fall into an infinite amount of evil and become as one in a stupor.

It is like some nobleman who throws aside all caution and lives in affluence. The officers of the prince and those who serve warrants arrest him and bring him to the prince, saying: “You are accused of a serious crime and your head is in danger.” From fear at such news, he loses all his thoughts and shudders as one struck with stupor.

49. Think that it is the same way with the evil spirits. For the world evident to your gaze, from kings to the weakest, is all in tumult, confusion, and battle, and no one knows the cause of it, nor do they understand that it is an unveiling of the evil which entered in through Adam’s disobedience, “the sting of death” (1 Cor 15:56). For the sin which gained entrance, being a sort of power and an intellectual creation of Satan, sowed the seeds for all evils. It works in a hidden manner in the inner man and in the mind and contends with the thoughts. However, men are unaware that they are being moved by a certain foreign power when they do these things, but they think these are done naturally and that they do them with a certain self-determination. But those who have the peace of Christ in their mind and are enlightened by him know from whence these actions come.

50. The world thrives on evil passions and is ignorant of this fact. These passions, indeed, are an unclean fire which burns up the heart and pervades all the members and incites men to lustful actions and innumerable other evils. Those who are titillated and yield to such passion commit fornication within their heart. And so gradually evil gains control and they commit the external act of impurity. The same holds also for avarice, vainglory, pride, envy, and anger. It is like a man who is invited to a banquet before whom are placed great varieties of foods. Then sin begins to suggest that he taste all of them. And so his soul is held captive by the pleasure and he overeats. For those passions are most difficult mountains to cross in whose middle there flow rivers of dragons, poisonous beasts, and reptiles. Like a whale swallowing up a man into its belly, so also sin engulfs human souls. Those passions are the burning flames of fire and the fiery darts of evil. For the Apostle says: “That you may be able to extinguish the fiery darts of evil” (Eph 6:16). For evil spreads and lays its foundation in the soul.

51. The prudent ones, however, when passions begin to rise up, do not obey them, but they turn in anger against the evil desires and become their own enemies. For Satan greatly desires to enjoy rest inside the soul and there to set up his sleeping quarters. He is disturbed and highly annoyed when the soul does not obey him. There are not lacking those who are under the control of the divine power, who, when they see a young man with a woman, granted they may entertain certain thoughts,
their mind is not defiled nor do they commit an interior sin. Still they must not be confident in such matters. There are others in whom concupiscence is completely extinguished and dried up. Truly, these are the ranks of the very great ones. Take the example of divers who swim in the bottom of the sea and risk death in the water in order to find there pearls for a royal crown and purple dye. In a similar fashion there are also those who live the eremitical life. They leave the world, stripped of everything, and descend into the depths of darkness. And from there they gather up and take back precious stones fit for the crown of Christ, for the heavenly Church, for a new world, for a lighted city and an angelic people.

52. As many kinds of fish fall into a net and the least useful ones immediately are tossed back into the sea, so also the net of grace is spread over all men and seeks tranquillity. But men do not surrender and for this reason they are thrown back again into the same depths of darkness.

Just as gold is found, washed out of a great amount of sand and it amounts to very small grains like millet, so also out of many human beings few will be approved. For those who seek the kingdom are clearly manifested, while those who merely wear its word as a beautiful ornament are the ones most conspicuous. For the same reason those are manifested who are seasoned with the heavenly salt and who speak out of the Spirit’s treasures. The vessels appear in whom God is pleased and to whom he gives his grace. There are also others, who, with much patience, receive the sanctifying power in many different ways, as God wishes.

He who speaks, unless he be directed by a heavenly light and wisdom, cannot meet the needs of each person, since there are so many different levels that people are at. For some are undergoing an interior war; others, however, enjoy a much more peaceful existence.

53. Let us take the example of someone who wishes to rebuild a city that has been totally destroyed. He must first get rid of the ruins and knock down whatever is a menace, and thus he begins to build and to lay his foundations in the excavation he has made and upon this he constructs his building, even though as yet there is no house built. Likewise, for one who wishes to develop a garden in barren or swampy, dirty places, he must first begin to clean up the place and put a fence around it and prepare irrigation and so finally he can begin to plant. And the plants grow, so that after much time the garden bears fruit. In a similar manner the intentions of men, after the fall, are barren, devastated, and thorny.

For God said to man: "Thorns and thistles shall the earth bring forth for you" (Gn 3:18). Therefore, there is need of much labor and sweat so as to seek and lay down a foundation until fire comes into men’s hearts which will burn up and get rid of the thorns. And in this way men begin to grow in sanctity, glorifying the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.

HOMILY 16

Spiritual persons are subject to temptations and afflictions that flow out from the first sin.

1. All intellectual creatures, namely, angels, humans, and demons, have been created by the Creator, innocent and completely simple. That some fell away from these traits and turned to evil was a result of their free will. By their own will they turned away from right reason. If we assert that such fallen ones were created as such by the Creator, we are saying that God is an unjust judge who would cast Satan into fire. There are certain heretics who say that matter was eternal and that matter is the root and the root is where the power is, equal to God’s power. To such you can rightly reply: "Which power finally is the victorious one?" Without doubt it has to be the power of God. Therefore, in time or in power the one who is conquered can in no way be an equal to God. Those who affirm that evil exists in itself are really most ignorant. For in God no evil can exist by itself since he himself is not subject to passions and he possesses his divinity. In us, however, it works with full power, especially in our senses, suggesting all sorts of obscene desires. In us it is not like, say, wine mixed with water. It is more like wheat in the same field by itself and the tares by themselves. It is like a robber in one part of the house and the owner in another.

2. Take a spring which pours forth pure water and yet has mud lying under it. When someone stirs up the mud, the whole spring is dirtied. So also the human soul, when it is stirred up, is dirtied and is mixed with evil. And Satan becomes one in consent with the soul, for both are spirits, in committing fornication or murder. For this reason, "who clings to the harlot is one body" (1 Cor 6:16). But at another time the soul exists all by itself, and, stricken by repentance for what it has committed, it weeps and prays and remembers God. For if the soul always were completely immersed in evil, how could it do such things?
earth, to suffer on behalf of all and to buy them back with his blood and to put the heavenly leaven of goodness into faithful souls once they were humbled by sin. And then he was pleased through growth and development to perfect in them every justification commanded them and all virtues until they [are] leavened in one in the good and they can become with the Lord, “one Spirit,” according to Paul’s phrase (1 Cor 6:17), so that evil and fornication may not even in thought enter into the soul, so completely leavened by the divine Spirit, as it is said, “Love thinks no evil,” and so forth (1 Cor 13:5). But without the heavenly leaven which is the power of the divine Spirit it is impossible that a person be leavened with the goodness of the Lord and reach life. In this way the race of Adam would have been unable to be seduced to such evil and wickedness unless the leaven of evil, which is sin, had crept into Adam. That evil leaven was a power of Satan of a spiritual and intellectual nature.

4. Take the example of a person kneading flour without putting into it a leaven. However much be the efforts he makes, turning it over and over and thoroughly working it up, still the lump remains unleavened and unfit to eat. But if leaven is put into the dough, it draws itself to itself the whole mass of dough and works it all into leaven, as the Lord said in his parable about the kingdom: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour until the whole was leavened” (Mt 13:33).

If there were some meat and someone were to take great pains with it, but did not salt it with the salt that kills the worms and destroys the foul odor, the meat would smell and decay and become unfit for men. In the same way picture to yourself the whole of mankind as meat and unleavened dough. Realize that the salt and the leaven belong to another world, the divine nature of the Holy Spirit.

If, therefore, the heavenly leaven of the Spirit, this good and holy salt of the Godhead from that other land, be not mixed and inserted into the lowly nature of men, a person will not be able to get rid of the foul odor of evil. Nor will such a person be leavened so as to put away the heaviness and be freed from the unleavened state of evil.

5. For whatever a person seems to do by himself and whatever diligence he exerts and successful completion he brings about relying solely on his own powers, if he thinks he can effect a perfect work by himself without the help of the Spirit, he is totally in error. Such an attitude is unbecoming one who strives for heavenly places, for the kingdom. Such a person believes that by himself and himself alone, without the Spirit, he can bring about perfect purity.

Until a person who is swayed by passions approach God by denying the world, and believe with hope and patience that he will receive something good, yet different from his own nature (namely, what is the power of the Holy Spirit), and unless the Lord drop down from above upon him divine life, such a one will never experience true life. He will never recover from the intoxication of materialism. The illumination of the Spirit will never shine brightly upon his soul nor will it illumine him with a “holy day.” He will never be aroused from the deepest sleep of ignorance in order in this way truly to know God through God’s power and the efficacy of grace.

6. For unless a person is deemed worthy through faith to obtain grace, he is ineffective and unsuited for the Kingdom of God. But on the other hand, whoever has received the grace of the Spirit and does not in any way change his mind, or through negligence or wrongdoing resists grace, if he for some time strives not to grieve the Spirit, he will be able to become a participator of eternal life. Just as one is aware of the operations of evil from the very passions, I mean, by anger and concupiscence, envy and heaviness, by evil thoughts and other absurdities, so also ought one to perceive grace and the power of God by the virtues, I mean, by love, kindness, goodness, joy, simplicity, and divine gladness so as to become like to and mingled with the good and divine nature, with the kind and holy efficacy of grace.

Indeed, a person’s free choice is tested by progress and growth in time and according to opportunity to see whether a person is always united with grace and found pleasing. He gradually comes to be totally one with the Spirit and thus is rendered holy and pure by the Spirit, made fit for the Kingdom. Glory and adoration to the undefiled Father and to the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.

Homily 25

This homily teaches that no one, unless he is empowered by Christ, is capable of overpowering the stumbling blocks of the evil one. It deals with what those who eagerly seek the divine glory need to do. It also teaches that through the disobedience of Adam we have descended into a slavery to fleshly passions: from which we are delivered by the mystery contained in the cross. It teaches us, moreover, that great is the power of tears and of the divine fire.

1. Those upon whom the divine law is stamped not with ink and
letters, but implanted in hearts of flesh, illumined with the eyes of the mind and intent with a constant yearning for a hope that is not sensible or visible but interior and immaterial, have the power to conquer the staggering blocks of the wicked one, this by the power that can never be surpassed. But those who have not been honored by the Word of God nor instructed in the divine Law are “vainly puffed up” (Col 2:18). They believe that by their own free will they can abolish the sources of sin, something which is condemned only by the mystery found in the cross. For that free deliberation lies in the power of man to resist the devil, but this power is not absolute control over the passions. “Unless the Lord builds the house” (Ps 127:1).

2. It is in vain to go against the asp and the basilisk (Ps 91:13) and tread under foot the lion and the dragon, unless one also first purges himself as far as one has strength and is strengthened by him who said to his Apostles: “Behold, I have given you power to trample upon serpents and scorpions and upon all the power of the enemy” (Lk 10:19).

If man’s nature had the ability outside of the complete armor of the Holy Spirit “to stand against the deceits of the devil” (Eph 6:11), the Apostle would surely have not said: “The God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom 16:20); and again: “Whom the Lord will destroy with the Spirit of his mouth” (2 Thes 2:8). This is why we have also been commanded to beg the Lord: “Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Mt 6:13). If we are not delivered by the more powerful assistance from the fiery darts of the evil one and not deemed worthy to be the adopted sons, then we live on this earth with no purpose. We are found far from the power of God.

3. Therefore, whoever wishes to become a partaker of the divine glory and to see, as in a mirror, the form of Christ in the ruling power of his mind, must, with unquenchable love and inexhaustible desire, with all his heart and strength, by night and day, seek the help of God which powerfully comes from him, in which help it is impossible to share unless, as I said before, a person abstains from the pleasure of the world, from the desires of the opposing power, which is foreign to the light and is an activity of evil, having no likeness to good activity and is completely alien to it. Therefore, if we want to know why we, since we were created for honor and placed in Paradise, became finally “compared to the beasts that possess no understanding and were made like to them” (Ps 99:12, 20), having fallen from the pristine glory, know that we, by transgression, became slaves of carnal passions. We excluded ourselves from the blessed region of the living (Ps 116:9) and were led into captiv-ity. We still sit along the shore of Babylon (Ps 137:1). The fact that we are still held in Egypt means that we do not yet possess the land of our inheritance, “flowing with milk and honey” (Ex 3:8). We have not yet been immersed in the leaven of sinfulness (1 Cor 5:8), but we are still in the leaven of evil. Our heart has not yet been sprinkled by the blood of God, for “the snare of hell” (Prv 9:18) and the hook of evil is still lodged in it.

4. We have not yet accepted the happiness in Christ’s salvation, for “the sting of death” (1 Cor 15:55) has its roots in us. “We have not yet put on the new man who has been created after God in holiness” (Eph 4:24), because we have not yet put off “the old man that is corrupt according to the sinful lusts” (Eph 4:22). We have not yet “given birth to the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor 15:49) nor have we been made “conformed to his glory” (Phil 3:21). We have not yet adored “God in spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:24), since “sin reigns in our mortal body” (Rom 6:12). We have not yet seen “the glory of the incorruptible” (Rom 1:23), because we work under “the moonless night” (Ps 11:2). We have not yet put on the armor of light (Rom 13:12) because we have not yet thrown off the armor and the spears and the works of darkness. We have not yet been “transformed by a renewal of the mind,” since we are still “conformed to this world” (Rom 12:2) “in the vanity of the mind” (Eph 4:17).

We are not yet glorified with Christ” because we have not yet “suffered with him” (Rom 8:17). We do not yet “carry the marks of him in our body” (Gal 6:17), since we do not live in the mystery of Christ’s cross. For we are still “in the passions and lusts” of the flesh (Gal 5:24). We have not yet become “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17) because the “spirit of bondage” is still in us and not that “of adoption” (Rom 8:15). We have not yet been made “the temple of God” (1 Cor 3:16) and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, for we are still the temple of idols and the receptacle of evil spirits because of our attachment to the passions.

5. Indeed, we have not yet attained to the simplicity of a life-style and to the enlightenment of our mind. We have not yet been deemed worthy to receive “the guileless and spiritual milk” (1 Pt 2:2) and intellectual growth. The day has not yet dawned upon us, nor “the day star risen in our hearts” (2 Pt 1:19). We have not been mingled with “the sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2), nor do we yet shine by his rays. We have not yet received the likeness (Gn 1:26) of the Lord nor have we become “participants of the divine nature” (2 Pt 1:4). We have not yet become
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

the true royal purple nor the authentic image of God. We have not yet been captivated by divine love nor wounded by the spiritual love of the Bridegroom. We have not yet known that ineffable fellowship and have not known the power and peace that are found in sanctification. In a word, we are not yet “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set aside” (1 Pt 2:9), because we are still “serpents, a brood of vipers” (Mt 23:33).

6. How can we be found to be anything but serpents, we who do not obey God but are in the disobedience that has come by the serpent? I cannot discover how to weep befittingly over this situation. I do not know how to cry aloud and weep to him who can expel from me the error planted within me. “How shall I sing the song of the Lord in a foreign land?” (Ps 137:4). How shall I weep over Jerusalem? How am I to flee from the severe slavery of Pharaoh? How am I to abandon the soul dwelling place? How shall I deny the bitter tyranny? How shall I go forth out of Egypt? How shall I pass over the Red Sea? How shall I journey through the vast wilderness? How shall I not perish, if bitten by the snakes? How shall I conquer the foreigners? How shall I destroy the pagans within me? How shall I receive the messages of the divine Law upon my tablets? How shall I see the true pillar of light and the cloud from out of the Holy Spirit? How shall I take delight in the manna of eternal delight? How shall I drink the water from the life giving rock? How shall I pass over Jordan and come into the good land of promise? How shall I see the Leader of the Lord’s army whom, when Josuah, son of Nun, saw, he fell down at once and worshiped him?

7. For unless I pass through all these and kill the pagan tribes living within me, in no way will I enter and find rest “in the sanctuary of God” (Ps 73:17) nor will I become a participator in the King’s glory. For this reason work diligently so as to become a child of God, having no fault and “to enter into that rest” (Heb 4:11) whither the precursor, Christ, has entered on our behalf (Heb 6:20).

Strive to be numbered in the heavenly church with “the firstborn” (Heb 12:23) so that you may be found “on the right hand of the majesty” (Heb 1:3) of the Most High. Strive to enter to the holy city, the Jerusalem, full of peace, that is above where Paradise is. You have no other way to become worthy of these amazing and blessed types, except that day and night you pour out tears according to him who says: “Each night I wash my bed and water my mattress with my tears” (Ps 6:6). For you are not ignorant that “those who sow in tears will reap in joy” (Ps 126:6). For this reason the Prophet boldly declares: “Do not silence my tears” (Ps 39:13). And again: “Keep my tears before your sight as you have promised” (Ps 56:8). And, “My tears have been my bread day and night” (Ps 42:3). And in another psalm: “I have mingled my drink with weeping” (Ps 102:9).

8. For such a tear, that truly is shed out of much sorrow and anguish of heart in the knowledge of the truth and with the burning in the bowels, is food for the soul, supplied by the heavenly Bread of which Mary preeminently partook as she sat at the feet of the Lord and wept, as the Savior himself testified. For he says: “Mary has chosen the better part which will not be taken from her” (Lk 10:42, 7:38). Oh, what precious pearls, those contained in the flowing of blessed tears! Oh, that immediate and prompt hearing! Oh, what a strong and wise mind! Oh, the intensity of the love of the Lord’s Spirit that moves powerfully toward the spotless Bridegroom! Oh, what a concentration of desire in the soul toward God the Word! Oh, what intimate communion of the bride with the heavenly Bridegroom!

9. Imitate her, O child, imitate her, I say, who saw nothing but him alone who said: “I have come to cast fire on the earth and how I desire but that it be already enkindled” (Lk 12:49). For there is a burning of the Spirit which puts hearts on fire. For that reason the immaterial and divine fire enlightens souls and tests them as pure gold is tested in the furnace. But it burns out any evil, as if it were thorns and stubble. For “our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29), “taking revenge on those who do not know him in flaming fire and who do not obey his Gospel” (2 Thes 1:8). This fire exerted its power over the Apostles when they spoke with tongues of fire (Acts 2:35). This fire surrounded Paul in the voice that enlightened his mind while blinding his sense of sight (Acts 9:3). For it was not in the flesh that he saw the power of that light. This fire appeared to Moses in the bush (Ex 3:2). This fire, in the form of a chariot, caught up Elijah from the earth (2 Kgs 4:11). The blessed David, while seeking out the power of this fire, said: “Search me, Lord, and try me. Burn out my reins and my heart” (Ps 26:2).

10. This fire inflamed the heart of Cleophas and his companion when the Savior spoke to them after the resurrection. From the same source also angels and the ministering spirits partake of the shining fire according to what has been said: “Who makes his angels spirits and his ministers a flaming fire” (Heb 1:7). This fire burns up the beam in the interior eye; it renders the mind pure so that recovering its natural power of seeing, it may constantly gaze on the wonderful works of God according to him who says: “Open my eyes and I will ponder the
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

wonders of thy law" (Ps 119:18). This fire also drives out demons, takes away sins, and has the power of resurrection. It develops immortality, the illumination of holy souls, and the strengthening of the rational powers. Let us beg that this fire come also to us so that, constantly walking in the light, we may never for even a moment “dust our feet against the stone” (Ps 91:12), “but shining as lights in the world,” we may “hold forth the word of eternal life” (Phil 2:15), so that, enjoying ourselves among the saints of God with the Lord, we may find rest in life, glorifying the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

HOMILY 26

On the dignity and value and the power and works of the immortal soul. How it is tempted by Satan and how it obtains freedom from temptations. It touches on certain questions full of important teaching.

1. Do not, Beloved, consider lightly the intellectual quality of the human soul. The immortal soul is like a precious vessel. See how great are the heavens and the earth and yet God did not take pleasure in them but only in you. Consider your dignity and nobility since not on behalf of angels but for you the Lord came to your protection in order to call you back when you were lost, when you were wounded, and he restored to you the first created condition of the pure Adam. For man was lord over the heavens and the things below. He was the discernor of his passions and was totally alien to the demons. He was pure of any sin or evil, made in the likeness of God. But by the transgression he was lost and was wounded. Satan darkened his mind. In one thing this is so, yet in another way he still lives and can discern and possesses a will.

2. **Question:** Is it not true that, when the Holy Spirit comes, the natural concupiscence is uprooted along with sin?

   **Answer:** I have said above that both sin is uprooted and man receives again the first creation of the pure Adam. By the power of the Spirit and the spiritual regeneration, man not only comes to the measure of the first Adam, but he also reaches a greater state than he possessed. For man is divinized.

3. **Question:** Is Satan let loose on us in a certain measure, or does he war against us as he wishes?

   **Answer:** He attacks not only Christians but also idolators and the whole world. Therefore, if he were allowed to wage war as he wishes, he would have destroyed all human beings. Why is this? Simply because this is his need and desire. Just as the potter puts his vessels into the oven and heats it in a controlled way, not too much because they crack if overheated, and not too little so as not to be useless by being underbaked, and like the silversmith and goldsmith who measure out the fire exactly (for if the fire is too great, the gold and silver melt and turn to water and are sheer waste), likewise, if the human mind knows exactly how to measure the burden of the pack animal and the camel or other such animals according to what weight they can carry, how much more God, who knows what sort of vessels humans are, permits also the enemy power in various ways!

4. Take the example of the earth. Even though it is one, nevertheless, some earth is rocky, some quite fertile. And some is good for vines while other ground is suited for raising wheat and barley. So also there are different types of human hearts and wills. Likewise also gifts from above are distributed differently. To one is given a ministry of preaching, to another that of discernment, to another the gifts of healings (1 Cor 12:9). For God knows how a person is able to fulfill his stewardship and so he gives his various gifts accordingly. In a similar way in regard to the interior battles, the enemy power is permitted to attack humans in the certain measure that each person is able to receive and withstand.

5. **Question:** Does a person who has received divine power and is to some degree changed by it remain in the state of nature?

   **Answer:** In order that the will, once it has received grace, may be tested, in what direction it tends and where it gives consent, nature remains the same: strong in the strong person, and light-minded in the light-headed person. It sometimes occurs that an illiterate person may be reborn spiritually and change to a state of wisdom. Hidden mysteries are revealed to him. Still he remains by nature an uneducated person. Another person is rough by nature. He applies his will to divine services which God accepts. However, the roughness of his nature persists and yet God is pleased with him. Another is kind in his habits, gentle and good. He offers himself to God and the Lord accepts him. But if he not persevere in good works, God is not pleased with him, since the whole nature of mankind is changeable for good or for evil. It is capable of evil, yet if it desires, it has the power not to carry it out.

6. Take the example of writing on a parchment. You write something not intended and so you erase it. The parchment receives any kind of writing. So also a self-willed man gave his will over to God. He was
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

own. Let every one be attentive to himself, let him examine his own conscience always, checking the movement of his heart as to his diligence and with what striving his mind tends toward God. And keeping in mind the perfect goal of liberty and freedom from passions and of the Spirit's peace, let him run without stopping and without sloth, never being complacent with any charismatic gift or even justification. Glory and adoration to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.

HOMILY 30

It is necessary that one who wishes to enter into the Kingdom of God must be born of the Holy Spirit and the manner in which this is to be done.

1. Those who hear the word should give witness to the working of the Word in their own souls. The word of God is not an idle word, but it has its own work upon the soul. For this reason it is called a “work” so that the word may be found in those who hear it. May the Lord, therefore, grant the work of truth in the hearers so that the Word may be found fruitful in us. For just as the shadow precedes the body, but reveals it, so also, while the truth is the body itself, the Word is like a shadow of the truth of Christ. Thus the Word precedes the truth. Fathers on earth beget children of their own nature from their body and soul, and when they are born fathers educate them carefully with every attention since they are their own children until they become full grown men and successors and heirs. For the aim and every striving of fathers from the beginning is to beget children and have heirs. And if they had not had any children, they would have suffered the greatest sorrow and grief, while having had children, they had joy. Also their relatives and neighbors rejoice.

2. In the same way also our Lord, Jesus Christ, was concerned with humanity's salvation. He exercised from the beginning every providential planning and diligence through the fathers, the patriarchs, through the Law and the prophets. Finally he himself came and suffered the ignominy of the cross and endured death. And all this labor and diligence of his was done so that he might beget from himself and his very own nature children from his Spirit. He was pleased that they were to be born from above, of his own Godhead. And just as those fathers, if they have no offspring, are saddened, so also the Lord who loved man-

kind as his own image wished them to be born from his seed of the Godhead. If any of them, therefore, do not wish to come to such a birth and to be born of the womb of the Spirit of the Godhead, Christ receives great sorrow, suffering on their behalf and enduring so much in order to save them.

3. For the Lord wishes all to be considered worthy of this birth. For he died on behalf of all and he has called all to life. Indeed this life is the birth from above of God. Without this one cannot live as the Lord says: “Unless one will be born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God” (Jn 3:3). And so, on the contrary, as many as believe the Lord and come to be deemed worthy of receiving this birth, they bring joy and great happiness in Heaven to the parents that gave them birth. And all the angels and holy powers rejoice over a person who is born of the Spirit and has become spirit. For this body is a likeness to the soul and the soul is an image of the Spirit. And as the body without the soul is dead, and cannot do anything whatsoever, so without the heavenly soul, that is, without the divine Spirit, the soul is reckoned dead as far as the kingdom goes, being unable to do any of the things of God without the Spirit.

4. Just as the portrait painter is attentive to the face of the king as he paints, and, when the face of the king is directly opposite, face to face, then he paints the portrait easily and well. But when he turns his face away, then the painter cannot paint because the face of the subject is not looking at the painter. In a similar way the good portrait painter, Christ, for those who believe in him and gaze continually toward him, at once paints according to his own image a heavenly man. Out of his Spirit, out of the substance of the light itself, ineffable light, he paints a heavenly image and presents it to its noble and good Spouse.

If anyone, therefore, does not continually gaze at him, overlooking all else, the Lord will not paint his image with his own light. It is necessary that we gaze on him, believing and loving him, casting aside all else and attending to him so that he may paint his own heavenly image and send it into our souls. And thus carrying Christ, we may receive eternal life and even here, filled with confidence, we may be at rest.

5. Just as in the case of the golden coin, if it does not receive the imprint of the king's image, it does not reach the marketplace nor is it stored up in the royal treasuries, but it is discarded, so also the soul, if it does not have the image of the heavenly Spirit in the ineffable light, namely, Christ, stamped on it, is not useful for the treasures above and is cast out by the merchants of the kingdom, the Apostles. For also he
who was invited and yet did not wear the wedding garment was cast out as a stranger into the alien darkness for not wearing the heavenly image. This is the mark and sign of the Lord stamped upon souls, being the Spirit of the ineffable light. And as a cadaver is useless and completely of no good to those of a given place, and so they carry it outside the city and bury it, so also the soul which does not bear the heavenly image of the divine light, the life of the soul, is rejected and completely cast off. For a dead soul is of no profit to that city of the saints, since it does not bear the radiant and divine Spirit. For just as in the world the life of the body, so also in the eternal and heavenly world the life of the soul is the Spirit of the Godhead.

6. Therefore, he who seeks to believe and to approach to the Lord must beg while here on earth to receive the divine Spirit. For the Spirit is the life of the soul, and on this account the Lord came, in order to give his Spirit to the soul on this earth. For he says: "As long as you have the light, believe in the light. The night comes when you can no longer work" (Jn 12:36, 9:4). If anyone, therefore, while on this earth does not seek and has not received life for his soul, namely, the divine light of the Spirit, when he departs from his body, he is already separated into the places of darkness on the left side. He does not come into the Kingdom of Heaven, but has his end in hell with "the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41).

Or take the example of gold or silver that is thrown into the fire. It becomes purer and more tested and nothing can make it to be otherwise, such as wood or hay, for it devours all things that approach it, for they become also fire. For the soul that is plunged into the fire of the Spirit and in the divine light will suffer no harm from any of the evil spirits. Even if anything should come near to it, it is consumed by the heavenly fire of the Spirit. Or as a bird, when it flies up high, has no worry and does not fear the bird-catchers or the evil beasts, for being up so high, it laughs at all below. So also the soul that has received the wings of the Spirit. It flies up into the heights of heaven and being higher than all else, it derides them all.

7. Israel, the people of God according to the flesh, passed through after Moses had divided the sea. But these, since they are the children of God, walk from above over the sea of bitterness of the evil powers. Their body and their soul have become the house of the Godhead.

In that day when Adam fell, God came walking in the garden. He wept, so to speak, seeing Adam and he said: "After such good things, what evils you have chosen! After such glory, what shame you now bear! What darkness are you now! What ugly form you are! What corruption! From such light, what darkness has covered you!" When Adam fell and was dead in the eyes of God, the Creator wept over him. The angels, all the powers, the heavens, the earth and all creatures bewailed his death and fell. For they saw him, who had been given to them as their king, now become a servant of an opposing and evil power. Therefore, darkness became the garment of his soul, a bitter and evil darkness, for he was made a subject of the prince of darkness. This was the person who was wounded by robbers and left half dead as he "was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho" (Lk 10:30).

8. For Lazarus also, whom the Lord raised up, exuded so fetid an odor that no one could approach his tomb, as a symbol of Adam whose soul exuded such a great stench and was filled with blackness and darkness. But you, when you hear about Adam and the wounded traveler and Lazarus, do not let your mind wander as it were into the mountains, but remain inside within your soul, because you also carry the same wounds, the same smell, the same darkness.

We are all his sons of that dark race and we all inherit the same stench. Therefore, the passion that he suffered, all of us, who are of Adam's seed, suffer also. For such a suffering has hit us, as Isaiah says: "It is not a wound, nor a bruise, nor an inflamed sore. It is impossible to apply a soothing salve or oil or to make bandages" (Is 1:6). Thus we were wounded with an incurable wound. Only the Lord could heal it. For this he came in his own person because no one of the ancients nor the Law itself nor the prophets were able to heal it. He alone, when he came, healed that sore, the incurable sore of the soul.

9. Let us, therefore, receive God the Lord, the true healer, who alone can come to heal our souls, after he has borne so much on our behalf. For he is always knocking at the doors of our hearts in order that we may open up to him and that he may enter in and take his rest in our souls, and that we may wash his feet and he may take up his abode with us. The Lord in that passage admonishes him who did not wash his feet (Lk 7:44). And again he says elsewhere: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I shall come in unto him" (Rv 3:20). For this purpose he endured many sufferings, giving his body over to death and buying our ransom from slavery so that he, coming to our soul, might make his abode there.

For this reason the Lord says to those on the left side in the judgment, sent by him into hell with the devil: "I was a stranger and you did not take me in. I was hungry and you gave me not to eat. I was thirsty and
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

you gave me not to drink” (Mt 25:42–43). For his food and drink and clothing and shelter and rest are in our souls. Always, therefore, is he knocking, seeking to enter into us. Let us receive him and lead him within ourselves, because he himself is our food and life and drink and our eternal life. And everyone person who has not now received him within and found rest, or rather found his rest in him, does not have an inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven nor can he enter into the heavenly city. But you, yourself, Lord Jesus Christ, lead us into it, as we glorify your name with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.

HOMILY 31

It is necessary that the believer be transformed in his mind and focus all his thoughts upon God. For in these truly all service of God consists.

1. The believer should beg God to be transformed in his deliberation by a change of heart, to be transformed from bitterness into sweetness. He should remember how the blind man was healed and how the woman with a hemorrhage likewise was healed by the touching of his garment—the nature of lions was tamed, the nature of fire was deadened. The reason is because God is the height of goodness. Unto him you should gather up the mind and the thoughts and to think of nothing else than to look expectantly for him.

2. Let the soul be as one who gathers together straying children and castigates the thoughts scattered abroad by sin. Let the soul lead them into the home of its body, always awaiting expectantly for the Lord in fasting and love when he will come and gather it in truth. Since the future is uncertain, let the believer set his hope more on the Pilot, being full of hope. And let him remember how also Rahab, while she was living among foreigners, believed the Israelites (Jos 2:9) and was deemed worthy to share their society. But even the Israelites out of affection turned back to Egypt. As, therefore, Rahab was not harmed at all while she lived among foreigners, but her belief gave her a home, sharing the inheritance of the Israelites, so sin shall not harm those who in hope and faith wait expectantly for the Redeemer, who, when he comes, transforms the thoughts of the soul and makes them divine, heavenly, good. And he teaches the soul how to pray, truly undistractedly without wandering.

THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

He says: “Fear not. I go before you and will level the mountains. I will break in pieces the gates of brass and cut asunder the bars of iron” (Is 45:2). And again he says: “Attend that there be no secret thought of wickedness in your heart. Say not in your heart: This nation is strong and mighty” (Dt 15:9, 7:17).

3. If we do not dissolve ourselves in sloth and turn over the pastures of our minds to the disorderly thoughts of evil, but we force our mind to obey our will, compelling our thoughts toward the Lord, without doubt the Lord will come to us with his will and take us unto himself in truth. Everything that is pleasing and is of service is found in the thoughts. Therefore, strive to please the Lord, always waiting expectantly for him from within, seeking him in your thoughts and forcing and compelling your own will and deliberation to stretch out always toward him. And see how he comes to you and makes his abode in you (Jn 14:23). For as much as you concentrate your mind to seek him, so much more does he, by his own tender compassion and goodness, come to you and give you rest. He stands, gazing on your mind, your thoughts, your desires. He observes how you seek him—whether with your whole soul, with no sloth, with no negligence.

4. And when he sees your earnestness in seeking him, then he appears and manifests himself to you. He gives you his own help and makes the victory yours, as he delivers you from your enemies. For when he first sees you seeking after him, and how you are totally waiting expectantly without ceasing for him, he then teaches and gives you true prayer, genuine love, which is himself made all things in you: paradise, tree of life, pearl, crown, builder, cultivator, sufferer, one incapable of suffering, man, God, wine, living water, lamb, bridgroom, warrior, armor, Christ, all in all. ⑨2

Indeed, just as an infant does not know how to take care of itself or do for itself, but only looks to its mother, as it cries, until she, moved by pity, picks it up, so faithful persons constantly hope only in the Lord, attributing all justice to him. As without the vine, the branch is dried up, so is he who desires justification without Christ (Jn 15:5–6). Just as the robber and the thief “who does not enter through the door but climbs in by some other way” (Jn 10:1), so too is he who justifies himself without the Justifier.

5. Let us, therefore, take this body and make an altar of sacrifice, and let us place on it all our desires and let us beg the Lord that he would send down from Heaven the invisible and mighty fire and consume the altar and everything on it. And may all the priests of Baal fall, which are
ing the soul healthy and pure. And thus we may be deemed worthy of the fellowship of the Spirit, as we glorify the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.

HOMILY 50

God is the one who works wonders through his saints.

1. Who was it who closed the doors of Heaven? Was it Elijah or God in him who commanded also the rain to fall? I believe that he who holds power over the heavens was himself seated within his mind and through his tongue the Word of God forbade the rain to fall upon the earth. And he spoke again and the gates of the heavens opened and rain poured down. Likewise also Moses laid a rod down and it became a serpent (Ex 8:10). And he spoke again and it became a rod. And he took ashes from the furnace and scattered them and there were boils. And again he struck the rod and there came forth lice and frogs (Ex 8:17). Could the nature of man do these things? He spoke to the sea and it was divided (Ex 14:16, 21), to the river and it was changed into blood. It is evident that a heavenly power was dwelling in his mind and through Moses that power did these signs.

2. How was David, without any weapon, able to go against such a giant in battle? And when he hurled the stone at the foreign enemy, through the hand of David the hand of God guided the stone. And it was the divine nature itself that killed him and brought about the victory. For David could not have done it, being weak in body. Joshua, the son of Nun, when he came to Jericho, besieged it for seven days, not able to do anything by his own nature, but when God commanded the walls came tumbling down by themselves. And when he entered the land of promise, the Lord says to him, “Go out into battle.” Joshua answered, “As the Lord lives, I will not go out without you!” (cf. Num 13:14). And who is it who commanded the sun to stand still for another two hours in the conflict of war (Jos 10:13)? Was it his own nature or the power that stood by him? And Moses, when he fought Amalek, if he extended his hands up to Heaven toward God, repulsed Amalek. But if he lowered his hands, Amalek was superior.

3. When you hear of such things taking place, do not let your mind wander far from you. But since those were a figure and shadow of true realities, apply them to you yourself. For when you shall raise the hands of your mind and your thoughts toward Heaven and you shall be bent on clinging to the Lord, Satan will be worsened by your thoughts. And, as the walls of Jericho fell by God's power, so also now the walls of evil that obstruct your mind and the cities of Satan and your enemies will be totally destroyed by God's power. Thus, in the shadow the power of God was constantly at the side of the just ones, performing amazing, visible acts. And the divine grace dwelled within them. Similarly also in the prophets divine grace worked and furnished to their souls the Spirit of prophesying and to speak when there was a great need to tell about great happenings. For they were not always speaking, but when the Spirit in them desired to do so.

4. If, therefore, the Holy Spirit was poured out with such force on what was only a shadow, how much more on the New Covenant, on the cross, on the coming of Christ, where the outpouring and the intoxication of the Spirit took place? For it says, “I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17). This is what the Lord himself said, “I will be with you until the end of the world” (Mt 28:20). “For everyone who seeks, finds” (Mt 7:8). He says: “If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him” (Lk 11:13), “with power and great assurance,” as the Apostle says (1 Thes 1:5).

Therefore, such things are found by degree and pain and much work and patience and love toward him as the “senses” of the soul are exercised, as it is said (Heb 5:14), through good and evil, namely, through the machinations and deceits and manifold circumstances and ambushings of evil. They are likewise exercised by the various gifts and different helps of the working and power of the Spirit. He who knows the plotting of evil that defiles the interior man through the passions and does not realize in himself the help of the Holy Spirit of truth that strengthens his weakness and renews the soul in gladness of heart, such a one travels without yet knowing of the manifold providential care of God's grace and peace. On the other hand, he who is helped by the Lord and is found in spiritual happiness and heavenly gifts, if he should think that he no longer can be impeded by sin, he is deceived in a hidden way, since he does not discern the subtlety of evil and does not realize the growth by degrees from infancy to perfection in Christ. For through the ministering of the holy and divine Spirit, faith increases and makes progress and every citadel of evil thoughts gradually is destroyed completely in a “casting down” (2 Cor 10:4).

Therefore, each one of us must examine whether he has found the
THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

"treasure in this earthen vessel" (2 Cor 4:7), whether he has put on the purple of the Spirit, or whether he has seen the King and has found rest by coming near to him or whether he still serves in the most exterior parts of the house. For the soul has many parts and great depth, and besides, sin has entered in and has taken charge of all of its parts and of all the pasturelands of the heart. Then when a man seeks, grace comes to him and takes charge of, let us say, two parts of the soul equally. The inexperienced person, being comforted by grace, thinks that grace has come to all the parts of the soul and has taken possession and that sin has been uprooted. But the greatest part of the soul is held under the power of sin and only one part is touched by grace. And he is deceived and does not know it.

We have much more still to clarify and call to your attention according to your disposition of sincerity, but we have briefly pointed out to you a beginning, so that, as men of understanding, you might work and examine the power of the words given and become more understanding in the Lord, and increase in the simplicity of your heart in his grace and in the power of the truth, so that you may be found with all security, safe in your salvation, and, being freed from all impediments of evil and deceit of the adversary, you may receive the privilege of being found upright and uncondemned in the day of judgment of our Lord Jesus, to whom be glory forever. Amen.