

## ON THE ASSUMPTION OF THE B. V. MARY

## SERMON 1

*The waters increased and bore up the ark and it rose high above the earth* [Gen 7:17]. Such is the excellence of the Virgin, attained by her today in her assumption, that no tongue can express it, neither a human nor an angelic tongue. Most fortunately the Holy Spirit in Sacred Scripture prefigured the assumption in many likenesses, indicated it beforehand in many metaphors, and foretold it in many prophecies. The assumption is prefigured in the lifting up of the ark as in the text above. It is prefigured in the lifting up of the cloud over the tabernacle of the covenant: *the cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of the covenant, and settled down in the wilderness of Paran. Then the Israelites set out company by company* [Num 10:11-12. 18]. It is prefigured in the rising of the small cloud out of the sea: *Look, a little cloud no bigger than a person's hand is rising out of the sea* [1 Kings 18:44]. It is prefigured in the soaring of an eagle: *Is it not at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes its nest on high* [Job 39:27]? In the Song of Solomon 8:5 the angels admire her going up as one who is delicate: *Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?* They admire her going up like a column of smoke: *What is that coming up from the wilderness, like a column of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense* [Song 3:6]. They admire her rising like the dawn: *Who is this that looks forth like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun* [Song 6:10].

Among all the figures and metaphors, the text quoted above from Genesis can be quite satisfactorily applied to her. The assumption is described in this text from three points of view: firstly, in the principle acting above; secondly, in the person lifted above or the action above; thirdly, in its completion or the result of this action above.

The principle acting above is the influence of divine grace. The assumption does not come from nature but from divine grace. The text says: *The waters increased*. The increase of waters is an increase of grace, because in Scripture the waters represent grace as the

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

Saviour said: *'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water'*. Now he said this about the Spirit which believers in him were to receive [Jn 7:38-39]. The angel greeted Mary as one filled with these waters: *Greetings, favoured one* etc [Lk 1:28].

The subject acted upon from above or lifted above is the Virgin Mary as prefigured in the ark: they *bore up the ark*. A Psalm comments on this: *Rise up, O Lord, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might* [Ps 132:8]. The Psalm says, Lord Jesus Christ, rise from the dead, go up to the place of quiet at the right hand of God the Father and may *the ark of your might*, that is the Virgin, your Mother, accompany and follow you; you made her holy for yourself so that the Holy One among the saints might be born.

The completion of this action above is the excellence of the glory to which the glorious Virgin is raised today: *it rose high above the earth*. There is a double reference, one to the starting point, the lowness of earth, and the goal, the height of heaven. She was raised above the earth and so Jerome<sup>1</sup> says:

Today the glorious and ever Virgin is taken from the earth, from this present unworthy world. Secure in her stainless glory she reaches the heavenly palace where raised up with Christ she reigns forever as queen of the world.

Therefore the text says: *The waters increased and bore up the ark and it rose high above the earth*.

I. I will speak first of all about the significance of this ark that prefigures, as has been said, the Virgin Mary. I will speak but briefly on this since it refers more to her birth than to her assumption. It is fitting to understand the ark as referring to the Virgin Mary when one reflects on its fourfold cause. The fourfold cause is the efficient, material, formal and final causes. Who built this ark? From what material was it built? How was it made? For what purpose was it arranged or destined?

1. Who built the ark? Certainly, it was the eternal Worker or Architect. Although God in wisdom made the ark, as well as every human being and every creature, eternal Wisdom made the Virgin in

a singular and special way as a dwelling made for God: *Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars* [Prov 9:1]. *'This one and that one were born in it', for the Most High himself will establish it* [Ps 87:5]. It is said of the builder of this ark: *Noah built an ark to save his household* [Heb 11:7]. According to the saints,<sup>2</sup> Noah represents Christ. Noah means 'consoler' or 'consolation',<sup>3</sup> and Christ was sent to bring consolation: *The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me, to comfort all who mourn* [Isa 61:1-2]. Simeon waited for this comfort: *Looking forward to the consolation of Israel* [Lk 2:25]. Noah built the ark, that is, Christ built Mary for himself and formed her *to save his household*, that is, for the salvation of the Church, the house of God: *The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel* [Isa 5:7]; *Christ was faithful over God's house as a son, and we are his house* [Heb 3:6].

2. Secondly, Mary is understood and prefigured by the ark from the point of view of its material cause. If you ask from what material did eternal Wisdom make the Virgin Mary, the remote material was the royal stock, namely, the family of David: *A shoot shall come from the stump of Jesse* [Isa 11:1]. A shoot, that is, the Virgin Mary, came from the stump of Jesus, the father of David. From this shoot came a flower, Christ who was conceived in this virgin and who was the true Nazarene, a name meaning 'flowering',<sup>4</sup> in the flower-bearing town of Nazareth: *The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth and the virgin's name was Mary* [Lk 2:26-27]; and so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, *'He will be called a Nazarean'* [Mt 2:23].

But if you ask from what actual material was she made, this question is answered in Genesis 6:14. Noah was commanded: *Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch*. Noah was ordered to make the ark from cypress wood, that is, smooth, hewn, polished and bituminized wood. This wood, held together with the strongest glue, represents the Virgin Mary, who was made from polished wood, that is, from a soul and body in which after her sanctification there was nothing in her that could offend the eyes of anyone, nor could she displease God in her body, her soul, nor in thinking and feeling. She was made

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

from bituminized wood, that is, from a body and soul living together in utmost peace and joined in perfect harmony since in her there was no repugnance, no rebellion of the flesh against the spirit, no rebellious movement against reason. This is indicated in Exodus 25:10 where there is the command: You *shall make an ark of acacia wood*. Acacia wood is incorruptible wood like hawthorn as stated in a *Gloss*.<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly this represents nothing other than the incorruption of Mary's flesh and spirit. It is said to be like hawthorn because even though she was sanctified, there remained in her, as in her Son, the likeness of sin.<sup>6</sup> The likeness of sin is a *palanquin*, that is a carriage, that the true *Solomon made himself from the wood of Lebanon* [Song 3:6]. Lebanon means 'whiteness'<sup>7</sup> and clearly signifies purity.

3. Thirdly, Mary is prefigured in the formal cause of the ark. If you ask how this ark was made, listen to Scripture: *The length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits, and finish it to a cubit above* [Gen 6:15-16]. The ark was proportioned exactly to the measurements of a human body. Augustine, in *The City of God*<sup>8</sup> and in *Contra Faustum*,<sup>9</sup> says that the length is six times the width and ten times the height. The length is measured from the top to the feet, the width is measured from one side of the chest to the other, the height from the spine of the back to the stomach. Whoever wishes to measure a human person must do so in this way while the person is lying down. Similarly, the length of the ark was six times its width and ten times its height.

In a spiritual sense the Virgin Mary was of such measurements; she was formed and arranged in this way. She had the length of hope and perseverance in good works all of which were done for the praise and glory of the most blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The perfection of her works or merits and the correctness of her intention are represented by a hundred tripled.

She had the width of charity in everything that should be loved out of charity and in this is the fulness of the Law: *Love is the fulfilling of the law* [Rom 13:10]. This love is represented by the number fifty arrived at by taking ten five times. Five things are to be loved from charity, namely, God, one's own soul, the soul of a

neighbour, one's own body, the body of a neighbour,<sup>10</sup> and in that order.

She had the height of desire based on faith in the Trinity and represented by the number three hundred.

That the height of the ark was finished to a cubit represents a mind recollected and united to what is heavenly. The base of the ark was perfect humility because Mary herself says: *He has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant* [Lk 1:48]. The four sides, the four cardinal virtues, according to Augustine,<sup>11</sup> are the art of acting correctly, namely, prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance because she did everything prudently, justly, strongly and with temperance.

4. Fourthly, Mary is understood and represented by the ark from the point of view of its final cause. As stated in Genesis 7:3, the reason for building the material ark was to save all species of life. What else does the ark represent other than Mary who conceived and carried in her womb the Saviour of all? Hence the angel said to Joseph the spouse of Mary:

*Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins* [Mt 1:20-21].

For this and because of this, God made an ark, the Virgin Mary, that God might rest in her and live in her both in the ark of her womb and of her mind. We read: *My Creator chose the place for my tent* [Sir 24:8]. Augustine says<sup>12</sup>:

The Creator and Lord of every nature created a virgin so as to be able to create from the Virgin. God the maker made a Mother from whom God could take flesh when wanting to be conceived from her flesh. When the conception took place, God took the reality of flesh from the Virgin in such a way that when the child was born God preserved the integrity of a virgin in the Mother. God was made the Son of Mary, and the Virgin Mary was made the Mother of God's only begotten whom the Father bore in eternity and the Virgin conceived in time. This Virgin whom God, who was to be

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

born from her, so prepared and filled with grace that God might have as the fruit of her womb the person whom from the beginning the universe recognized as Lord. The universe was to see born as a subject him whom, in the unity of the Father's substance, both human and angelic creation knew and adored as the Most High.

In this humble, narrow ark the great God who holds all things together was contained, as the Church sings: 'The one who holds the world in a hand, was held in the ark of a womb'.<sup>13</sup> O glorious Virgin, 'I do not know how to praise you because heaven itself cannot contain the One whom you bore in your womb'.<sup>14</sup> *Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb* [Lk 1:42].

II. This ark, the Virgin Mary, in whom the waters increased, that is, the abundance of divine grace, is today raised up to heaven. Four things hinder movement especially movement upwards. When these things are present, the waters have a contrary effect, namely, a confusion of contraries, a weakening of a subject, a lack of desire and a defect in the vehicle. But divine grace like material water purifies or cleans as it pushes out a contrary, strengthens as it comforts a subject, stimulates as it changes affection or desire, carries along as it drives one upwards.

1. Firstly, a confusion of contraries hinders movement. This is clear because fire added and joined to earthly material, no matter how much it tries, cannot be carried upwards. The weight of the mind is love, as Augustine says<sup>15</sup>: 'My weight is my love, by it I am taken to wherever I am taken'. Love has a power to assimilate and transform and 'it transforms a lover into the person loved'.<sup>16</sup> If then our love is mixed with earthly weight, necessarily it tends downwards, and cannot be lifted upwards; for this reason the Saviour said: *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God* [Mt 19:24]. The Apostle says: *But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction* [1 Tim 6:9]. Similarly, if our love is mixed with carnal foulness, of necessity it fouls and stains the mind and so cannot enter the court of heaven into which *nothing defiled*

*gains entrance* [Wis 7:25]. The Apostle says: *Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable* [1 Cor 15:50].

But divine grace poured into the mind cleanses the affections from everything earthly, makes one despise the things of earth and without a doubt raises to heaven the lover of things heavenly. Ezekiel 36:25-26 says of this water:

*I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you.*

This purifying grace cleanses the soul from every carnal stain, even renewing the soul by changing one who loves what is earthly into one who despises the earthly and loves what is heavenly. With this water Christ washes the feet, that is, the affections of the disciples.<sup>17</sup>

The most blessed Virgin Mary was most pure desiring nothing in her flesh, most pure in not loving anything temporal. So, once the tent of her flesh was loosened, she immediately passed to the heavenly region and afterwards with this flesh she was glorified.

If we wish to follow Mary into heaven, *let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of body and soul* [2 Cor 7:1]. Let us detach ourselves from all temporal and earthly desire so that unimpeded and unburdened we may be ready to be taken to God.

2. Secondly, a weakening of a subject hinders movement. This can be seen clearly in a sick and infirm person who is unable to climb a difficult mountain; rather, on seeing the mountain the person may turn to despair. There is a threefold sickness of the heart: natural, penal and culpable, or from original or actual sin. Sin not only weakens and enervates, indeed it corrupts nature, according to Augustine<sup>18</sup>: ‘sin is a corruption of a way of life, of a species and of the natural order’. Natural sickness hinders, because weakened nature by its own power is unable to be taken into heaven without divine help; penal sickness hinders even more; culpable sickness hinders the most in that as long as the sickness lasts, no one can be taken into heaven. But when perfect divine grace is infused into the soul, it strengthens and helps natural weakness, heals penal and

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

culpable weakness, so that the soul is perfectly healed, comforted and strengthened to pass immediately to heaven.

Of this effect of spiritual water, Judges 15:19 says:

*Then the Lord opened a great tooth in the jaw of an ass,<sup>19</sup> and water came from it. When Samson drank, his spirit returned, and he revived.*

The ass represents Christ as man. Genesis 49:11 says in the blessing of Judah from whose tribe Christ was born according to the flesh: *Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine.* It is fitting for Christ to be represented by an ass because he carried the burden of our sins; just as water flowed from the mouth of a dead ass, so from Christ, dead on the cross for us, there flowed the graces by which drooping souls are revived and healed.

Since the most blessed Virgin Mary was full of grace, indeed most full, in that she was so close to her Son, the source of graces, she was healed and sanctified from original sin before her birth,<sup>20</sup> preserved free from any actual sin, and so fortified and invigorated she ascended into heaven by the swiftest route.

And we, if it is our strongest wish to follow her upwards, must ask with bitter tears for these healing and comforting waters so that when our last day and end of life come, we will be taken up to heaven without delay.

3. Thirdly, a lack of desire hinders movement. Human beings are moved by want and desire so that they are moved only to what is loved and wanted; unless they be stimulated in some way, they do not move. So it is that people without devotion, bitter people, people who enjoy no divine sweetness and experience no spiritual consolations, are not moved towards God, indeed they rather disdain what is divine and become dull in themselves. Grace and glory differ only as perfect differs from imperfect.<sup>21</sup> When divine grace, a foretaste of eternal happiness, is poured into the heart the grace so affects the soul as to make it melt completely from love and a desire for heaven. Whoever drinks from these waters does not thirst again; the more it thirsts, the more strongly is it borne above. The waters to drink are the waters from the fountain of the Saviour: *With joy you*

*will draw water from the wells of salvation* [Isa 12:3]. *He leads me beside still waters, he restores my soul* [Ps 23:2-3]. No one is converted to God other than people taught and nourished by these waters. These are the waters of wisdom from which devout souls drink and are delighted: *She will give him the water of wisdom to drink* [Sir 15:3]. Those who during life have drunk and been affected by these waters, will later, on their last day, be led immediately to the fountain of life from which anyone who drinks will not be thirsty forever:

They shall not hunger or thirst,  
neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them down,  
for he who has pity on them will lead them,  
and by springs of water will guide them [Isa 49:10].

Since the most blessed Virgin Mary was not only refreshed in these waters, not only drank from but was full of these waters, so while she lived here in the body, in her heart she was in heaven; later, on the day of her assumption she was totally immersed in the fountain of life.

If we wish to follow her we must thirst most ardently for this water because no one thirsting is denied; later at the Lord's invitation we will be inebriated *on the abundance of your house* and we will *drink from the river of your delights* [Ps 36:8].

4. Fourthly, a defect in a vehicle hinders movement. This is clear from observing that when people search out an easier, faster and more convenient way of movement, they make use of beasts of burden or chariots. The water of grace flowing from the first principle carries, leads and brings back to the final goal, namely, God: *'I am the Alpha and the Omega' who is and who was and who is to come* [Rev 1:8]. We see that water supports heavy weights as is clear with ships. But water only goes up as much as it comes down.<sup>22</sup> And since the water of grace, as already said, comes out of and down from the first principle, so it brings back to the first principle as its final goal. Of this water we read: *Those who drink of the water that I will give them, it will become in them a spring of water*

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

*gushing up to eternal life* [Jn 4:14]. The sense is causal, that is, it means the water will take them up to eternal life.

And since these waters in their utmost force and fulness flowed in the heart of Mary, indeed the eternal fountain of living waters was born and gushed forth in Mary and from Mary, so it is not surprising if they carried her and made her rise even fly towards heaven.

If we wish to follow her, not as equals, but at least in some way like her, we have to go to this fountain to which all are invited and which is offered for free: *Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters* [Isa 55:1]; and: *let anyone who is thirsty, come to me and drink* [Jn 7:37-38]. I say, let us hasten to this fountain and if we are afraid, let Mary our Mediatrix intercede for us as she is the mother of grace. Through her intercession and help may we be carried into heaven by these waters.

III. These waters carried the ark, that is, the Virgin Mary, *high above the earth*. Today the Virgin Mary is carried, raised up and exalted by a fourfold grandeur, namely, to the grandeur of a lofty dignity, of evident truth, of a honey flavoured and sweet pleasantness and of an eternal tranquility and stability.

1. Firstly, Mary was raised to the height of power and to a lofty dignity. And rightly so for according to the Evangelist: *All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted* [Lk 14:11]. This agrees with Job 5:11: *He sets on high those who are lowly*. Therefore, the more one humbles himself or herself, the more will he or she be exalted, and the one who does this the most will be most exalted. The blessed Virgin humbled herself more than any other creature and so rightly is exalted above every creature. The Church sings: 'The Virgin Mary is exalted high above the choirs of angels'.<sup>23</sup> The text of Micah 4:1 can fittingly be applied to this exaltation: *In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills*. This mountain is the Virgin Mary from which mountain, according to the prophecy of Daniel, *a stone was cut out, not by human hands* [Dan 2:34]. The stone is Christ, the corner stone [Eph 2:20], conceived not by human effort but only by the power

of the Holy Spirit.<sup>24</sup> This mountain has been prepared as *the highest of the mountains and above the hills*, because Mary exceeds in glory every angelic dignity represented by the mountains and every human dignity represented by the hills. Although she was in fact the queen of the world after becoming the Mother of God, she became truly its queen after she conceived and gave birth to the King of kings. However today, hurrying and going to meet Christ the King accompanied by all the choirs of saints and all the hierarchies of angels, she was assumed to the royal throne. Her throne was placed alongside the throne of her Son, as prefigured in 1 Kings 2:19 where it is said that Solomon rose to meet his mother, that he bowed down to her and had her sit on her throne: *he had a throne brought for the king's mother, and she sat at his right*.

Today, these signs are fulfilled as the undefiled Mother and Virgin goes to the height of the throne and sits in glory on a throne of the kingdom next to Christ. Jerome<sup>25</sup> says:

We are to believe that today every heavenly army arrayed in columns comes in festive style to meet the Mother of God, surrounds her with powerful light and leads her to the throne prepared for her before the creation of the world with praises and spiritual canticles.

He also says: 'Nor is it wrong to believe that the very Saviour of all, as far as we can understand, met her in full festive style and placed her with joy beside him on a throne'. This is what David long before had forecast: *At your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir* [Ps 45:9] certainly with the adornment of the saints surrounding her. For this reason the angels were in wonder: *Who is this that looks forth like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army with banners* [Song 6:10].

In her ascent she shone like the dawn of a new light, protected and surrounded by many columns of saints, so it is said: *terrible as an army with banners*. If indeed it was terrible that she be protected by virtues like an army with banners, in this angels supported her; *fair as the moon*, indeed more beautiful than the moon because

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

already without defect in herself she glittered illuminated by heavenly splendour; *bright as the sun* from the splenour of virtues because *the sun of righteousness* [Mal 4:2] chose to be born from her.<sup>26</sup>

Let every age, every sex, every state be glad and rejoice on this solemn day, let every knee be bent *and every tongue confess* that the glorious Virgin Mary is to the glory of her Son, just as the Son is *to the glory of God the Father* [Phil 2:11]. Whoever is in need, seek out this helper who is powerful in helping; whoever is in trouble, seek out this consoler who is powerful in consoling; whoever is in sin and without grace, seek out this intercessor and mediatrix whose Son can refuse nothing to his Mother; whoever is righteous, seek out this guide and leader to glory for she is the gate of heaven and the door of paradise.

2. Secondly, Mary was raised up to a grandeur of evident truth. She contemplates and sees eternal truth more directly and clearly than any other creature. The reason for this is because vision corresponds to and follows faith as a reward follows merit, for as Augustine<sup>27</sup> says: 'vision is the reward of faith'. Hence, when faith is deeper, more sincere and purer, there necessarily follows a clearer and more direct vision. The blessed Virgin Mary had the most pure, sincere and firm faith which is why holy Elizabeth called her blessed: *Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the angel* [Lk 1:45]. In fact, only in her at the time of the passion did faith remain stable and unshaken; others either lost faith or at least hesitated.<sup>28</sup> She was like the ark in which the seed of salvation remained. Now she is filled and illuminated more by the light of truth and gazes more directly on truth itself.

Again, according to Augustine,<sup>29</sup> 'we see much in proportion to our similarity, we see less in proportion to our dissimilarity'. No one doubts, no one is ignorant that Mary was most like and conformed to Truth, for she conceived and gave birth to Wisdom itself, and so there is no doubt that she contemplated more clearly and directly. For this reason Bernard<sup>30</sup> says of her wisdom while she was on earth: Mary

penetrated the deepest abyss of divine wisdom, beyond what one could believe, and as much as she endured the condition of a personal union of a creature, seems to be immersed in inaccessible light.

‘What could she not have discerned of God, when divine Wisdom was hiding in her?’<sup>31</sup> Gregory<sup>32</sup> says of other blessed: ‘What do they not see when they see the One who sees everything?’ So I believe it can more truly be said of her that there is nothing she does not see.

Therefore, *if any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask her and it will be given to you* [Jas 1:5], for Wisdom comes to us through her. Of this dignity we read: *See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up and shall be very high* [Isa 52:13]. If this is said of the servant it must be understood to be truer of the Mother and queen. We are not to beg for wisdom on soft skins,<sup>33</sup> nor from mortal humans; let us aspire and long for that truth and skill by which all things were made; let us go back to the very fountain of wisdom, from where the saints drew truth to the full.

3. Thirdly, Mary was raised to the height of honey flavoured and sweet pleasantness. She fed and drank from eternal delights more than any other creature. The reason for this is that those who *mourn* here, will be *comforted* there [Mt 5:4]. Those who here mourn more and are more afflicted, will be more comforted there. What person was more afflicted, tasted more bitterness than the Virgin Mary whose soul was pierced by a sword of sorrow in the hour of the passion of her Son, as Simeon had prophesied [Lk 2:35]. She could say: *All you who pass by, look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow* [Lam 1:12]? Who was more compassionate towards the sorrows and sins of her neighbours? How much, do you think, she was affected by sorrow when she saw God dishonoured? She afflicted herself also with a discipline of penances and so is now filled with consolations and abounds in delights more than any other creature.

Again, love is the source and principle of pleasure; hence, where something is loved more, there is the pleasure greater. There is no doubt that the Virgin Mary loves the Father, Son and Holy Spirit more than any other creature and so is more delighted in God than

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

any other creature. How great, do you think, is her happiness, with what joy is she filled on seeing the Father whose Son she conceived, on seeing the Son whom she conceived, carried, gave birth to and nourished, on seeing the Holy Spirit by whose power she conceived? Undoubtedly, she is totally immersed in an abyss of pleasure. We read of this height of sweetness: *For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure* [2 Cor 4:17]. This means that troubles and afflictions are short because momentary, easy and not lasting because they are light; but consolation and joy that replace troubles in the height of glory, are eternal, lasting and fixed. Consolation and joy are experienced *for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure* and replace troubles and afflictions.

Each person should reflect on what Gregory<sup>34</sup> says, namely, that ‘here what delights is momentary, but there what torments is eternal’. Conversely, what torments here is momentary, while there what delights is eternal. Therefore, it is better and more useful to be tormented here for a time and then to be consoled eternally with the holy angels rather than experience delight for a time here and afterwards be tormented in eternal fires with the devil and his angels.

4. Fourthly, Mary was raised to the height of tranquility and eternal stability, and this is the perfection of glory and happiness. Anyone who is not secure in his or her possessions is not blessed because fear is a great misfortune. Anyone who can or has to die is not blessed because for a rational creature death is a great, even the greatest misfortune.

Further, anyone who can be disturbed or upset is not blessed because disturbance and being upset are a type of punishment. And so happiness, beatitude, and glory are perfected in security, in immortality, in quiet and tranquility, as Augustine proves in many places.<sup>35</sup> For this reason it is said of the heavenly Jerusalem: *He strengthens the bars of your gates, he blesses your children within you, he grants peace within your borders* [Ps 147:13-14]. This is possible only in eternal and unchanging good and so another text says: *Jerusalem, built as a city that is bound firmly together* [Ps 122:3].<sup>36</sup> ‘Together’ is something not changed or altered. Augustine<sup>37</sup>

says: ‘You are always present to them as they cling to you with all their affections, having nothing in the future to look to, nor casting back into the past for anything to remember’. Therefore, where there is a greater share in that highest and unchanging good there will be more tranquility, security and peace. Since the blessed Virgin Mary has a higher share in the highest good, she remains stable, unshaken, untroubled and completely at peace for all eternity.

Of this peace we read: *He makes peace in his high heaven* [Job 25:2], that is, in the blessed in whom is perfect love, utmost peace and undivided unity. And we read in Isaiah 33:15-16,

*Those who walk righteously and speak uprightly,  
who despise the gain of oppression,  
who wave away a bribe instead of accepting it,  
who stop their ears from hearing of bloodshed  
and shut their eyes from looking on evil,  
they will live on the heights,  
their refuge will be the fortresses of rocks.*

For such people the merit of justice and the reward of glory meet. Justice consists in acting correctly and in innocence, in doing good and turning away from evil.<sup>38</sup> It is justice to act correctly in what is done: *Those who walk righteously* make progress in good works, and in speech: *and speak uprightly*.

Innocence consists in two things, namely, to harm no one,<sup>39</sup> and not to inflict injury on property or people. On property, by not wanting something in a disordered way: *who despise the gain of oppression*, for avarice is a disordered desire for some temporal object<sup>40</sup> and ‘this is the mother of false accusation because from harm done to one person goods are added to another’.<sup>41</sup> Justice does not act in a disordered way: *who wave away a bribe instead of accepting it* whether the bribe is offered by word, by gesture or by some service. On persons, justice is debased and harm inflicted in two ways: in a person giving consent: *who stop their ears from hearing of bloodshed*, that is, ‘lest they consent to sin’; and in approving something in others: *and shut their eyes from looking on evil*, and this is to approve evil. There follows the reward of glory in

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

two things: in relation to the heavenly place: *they will live on the heights*; and in relation to a stable condition: *their refuge will be the fortresses of rocks*; in the fortresses of rocks, that is, between the saints who are fixed in a stable and immovable way, 'because they are founded on a firm rock'.

IV. The Virgin Mary, represented by the ark, has been raised, not only in her soul but also in her body, to this height by the fulness of grace as indicated by the increase of the water. Mary was not assumed with her body without passing through death, but even though by the condition of flesh she left the body and in death her soul was truly separated from her body, 'however she was not held by the bonds of death'.<sup>42</sup> Raised up and rejoined to her body she was glorified equally in body and soul and, clothed in the robe of immortality, she reigns in heaven.

Even though<sup>43</sup> at one time there was doubt about this, and the venerable doctor Jerome<sup>44</sup> spoke about it rather ambiguously, however, it is now piously believed by all. The outstanding doctor Augustine<sup>45</sup> of happy memory seems to assert it in a sermon or small book that he edited on the Assumption. While no direct authority for it can be found in Scripture, it is not contrary but rather in accord with the authority of Scripture; many arguments confirm it and since God could have done this, it was fitting for God to do it. There are seven arguments for it about which something can be said from the aforementioned work of Augustine.

1. The first argument is based on the unity of the substance of flesh in mother and child. Since the flesh of a child is taken from the flesh of the mother, there is but one substance of flesh in both. Christ the Son of God did not exempt his Mother from the general sentence of death because he did not wish her to be different, and since the Son died so too the Mother died. However, as the flesh of the Child was not corrupt, for David says: *You do not let your faithful one see the Pit* [Ps 16:10], and Peter says: *His flesh did not experience corruption* [Acts 2:31], nor should the flesh of the Mother, from whom the Son took his flesh, be allowed to corrupt, to be reduced to ashes

nor return to dust. Therefore, Mary's flesh was reunited to her soul and she was glorified in both soul and body.

2. The second argument is because of her total incorruption. There was a multiple sentence cast against woman. The first sentence was against all women for we read in Genesis 3:16, *I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, and your husband will rule over you.* God increased the pangs of Mary when a sword of sorrow pierced her soul in the suffering of her Son [Lk 2:35], but she conceived only once and was not ruled over by a husband. The Virgin was not to be ruled over by a husband, because she conceived of the Holy Spirit and her body remained wholesome with her virginity intact. She gave birth without pain because she was pregnant without any trace of sin or loss from sexual intercourse, her integrity was intact, and she remained wholesome with the modesty of virginity. Therefore, God wanted the Mother, beyond the sentence cast against all women, to be kept immune from a corruption of integrity and a violation of modesty in conceiving and childbirth. God was able to and ought to have preserved her from the corruption of death and burning, even beyond the general human condition. So we say that the Mother of the Lord underwent death as a human condition, but was not held by the bonds of death,<sup>46</sup> for the Lord wanted to be conceived and born from her without any corruption in her.

3. The third argument is to save the honour of the Mother. It was written in the Law: *Honour your father and your mother* [Ex 20:12; Deut 5:16]. If Christ came not *to abolish the law or the prophets but to fulfill* them [Mt 5:17], then just as he honoured the Father as he ought to: *I honour my Father* [Jn 8:49], so too should he have honoured his Mother. If then it is a reproach on the human condition to suffer corruption and the worm, just as Christ remained free of this reproach, so he should have kept his Mother free because the same flesh is in a mother and her child. Just as she was honoured in her life in the conception and birth of Christ, so undoubtedly one must feel that she has been honoured in her death with a special grace.

4. The fourth reason is on account of her manifold title of dignity and holiness. Such was Mary's dignity that she merited to be the

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

Mother of the Saint of saints. Just as the Son was the Saint of saints so it is that the Mother who carried him is the woman Saint of saints; in her was that precious treasure, the tabernacle of God, the dwelling of God, the throne of God. No decay of corruption, no turning to ashes ought to follow such holiness and such dignity. Therefore, in no way does it seem right or in accord with reason that the most holy body from which Christ took flesh and in which the divine nature was united to a human nature, so that *the Word became flesh and lived among us* [Jn 1:14], should be given as food to worms and then become most lowly dust.

5. The fifth argument is on account of the perfect imitation and conformity of the Mother and Son. The Mother was perfectly conformed to her Son and was the main imitator of Christ. Christ said: *Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also* [Jn 12:26]. Mary, the main imitator of Christ not only by her footsteps but out of reverence, followed the Lord in a sense of piety, religious faith and a most strong feeling of love, so that never could she be turned aside from this faith and love, she who knew that she had conceived by the Holy Spirit at the message of the angel. Mary was a servant of Christ in a role of special duties for she conceived, carried, gave birth to, fed at her breast, cared for and hid him from the face of Herod. Therefore, she should be where Christ is and not only in the way other saints are with Christ but by some special title, since he *repays to all according to their work* [Ps 62:12; Mt 16:27; Rom 2:6]. And if: *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones* [Ps 116:15], then the death of Mary was most precious, she who was so surrounded with grace. In her life Mary was endowed with grace more than any others, and this should not be lessened in her death, but where Christ is, she is to be placed in body and soul.

Further, if Mary was most conformed to Christ as a mother in purity and royal dignity, the Mother should not be separated from the Son, the queen from the king, not only in her soul but also in her body. Therefore, Mary, the Mother of Christ, the queen of heaven, was glorified with Christ in her body and soul and received into heaven.

6. The sixth argument is on account of the sure record of resurrection. Augustine<sup>47</sup> says: ‘Christ our Lord came to heal both sexes’, and so he became man born from a woman. Perfect healing, perfect deliverance was made clear in the resurrection. Therefore, resurrection should be made clear in both sexes as a sign of perfect healing. The perfect healing for the male sex was made clear and shown in Christ. In no other woman could it or should it have been more fittingly shown than in the Mother of Christ who in life was free from every corruption. This is stated in a Psalm: *His throne shall endure before me like the sun, it shall be established forever like the moon, an enduring witness in the skies* [Ps 89:36-37]. The Mother is the throne of the Son, and in the eyes of the Son she is bright as the sun in the adornment of her soul, and like a perfect moon in the adornment of her undefiled body; and so she is an enduring witness to the resurrection.

7. The seventh argument is because of Mary’s complete happiness, for as Augustine says towards the end of *Super Genesim ad litteram*,<sup>48</sup> ‘the body because of its desire to be in charge holds back the soul lest the soul be totally taken up with the highest good’. This does not apply to the soul of Christ that was united to the Word in a unity of person and because of this personal union was not held back in any way nor did it suffer loss of glory. The fulness of glory is in taking up the second robe. It was not fitting or proper for the Mother of God, the queen of heaven, to suffer any loss of glory; therefore, it was necessary, even though from the condition of flesh her soul was separated from the body, that later she be glorified with her body.

In the same book Augustine<sup>49</sup> points out examples from Scripture. He says:

The divine will kept safe in the crackling fires not only the bodies of the three young men but also kept their clothing from being burnt [Dan 3:19-27]; why then could he not do for his own Mother what he did for this clothing? The divine will kept Jonah, beyond the normal course of nature, undamaged in the belly of a whale [Jon 2:10]; will God not go beyond nature to keep the Mother undamaged? Daniel was saved from the demanding hunger of lions

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

[Dan 6:16-27]; why then would not Mary, endowed with such merits of dignities be kept intact?

An actual test can be applied here for, as Jerome<sup>50</sup> says, although her body was buried in the valley of Jehoshaphat, it has never been found there, nor has anyone found to where it was moved. The bodies of other saints and their relics that had lain hidden were revealed by the Lord, as is clear for blessed Stephen,<sup>51</sup> Gervase and Protasius<sup>52</sup> and many similar cases as recorded in the histories. The Lord revealed these sacred relics and holy bodies that they be given due reverence and fitting honour. These cases are a sign and argument that Mary's body was once buried in the earth but now risen and glorified it has been reunited to her most pure soul in heaven. No one should wonder nor think it less than fitting that she, who in life went beyond every law of nature, should now be above angelic and human creatures, and in death also should not be held by the laws of mortal human nature.

Unless God has revealed this to someone, I do not think anyone knows what length of time passed between the separation of her soul and body and their reunion and glorification. There is a tradition, even though it is not fully authentic, that it was revealed to a holy and devout lady<sup>53</sup> that the glorious Virgin and Mother gave birth to the Saviour at the age of fifteen; then in the second year after the ascension of the Lord and as much more as is needed to reach the month of August, when her assumption is celebrated, she died; finally after forty days, that is 24 September, her flesh and unstained body prepared with angelic care were taken up and reunited to her glorious soul.

And so the glorious Virgin and Mother, glorified both in soul and body, was assumed and seated at the right hand of her Son, according to the text: *The waters increased and bore up the ark and it rose high above the earth.* This is the holy ark that contained Christ as the hidden Word not only in her heart but also in her body. This is what John saw: *Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple* [Rev 11:19]. Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit reigns

## Sermon 1

forever and ever, brings us into this heaven and temple by the merits and prayers of his Mother who has been assumed into heaven.

SERMON 2

*A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars* [Rev 12:1]. Today's feast is ranked before the feasts of all the saints, with the exception to some extent of the feast of All Saints in which both Mary and all the saints are honoured. The reason is that Mary is above every other creature in dignity and today she 'has been exalted high above the heavens'.<sup>1</sup> This exaltation and glorification are the subject of today's feast. Blessed John in the text quoted above expresses excellently this exaltation, glorification and beatification.

John describes and praises these in a fourfold way: firstly, as something to wonder at and he puts it as a topic for our contemplation, saying: *A great portent appeared in heaven*. According to Augustine,<sup>2</sup> 'A portent is something that impresses on the senses and conveys a knowledge of something beyond itself'; hence a sign holds within itself the thing to which it points. In this case John says *a great portent* because signs can be miracles or wonders and, according to Augustine,<sup>3</sup> a miracle is something difficult and out of the ordinary beyond the understanding and expectation of the person observing'. This *great portent* is something great pointing to something wonderful.

By *heaven* is understood in Scripture the Church either militant, triumphant or both. And indeed everything concerning this most holy Virgin is completely wonderful, something to be admired in the Church. She was wonderful in her sanctification, her life and life style, her conception of the Son of God, her birth, her assumption as a creature and woman to be exalted above all the orders of angels, as has already been said. When the Lord told Ahaz to ask God for a sign either in heaven or on earth, he refused to ask for such a sign, and so the Lord promised to give a sign to the house of Israel, saying: *Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel* [Isa 7:14].

Secondly, he describes and praises her as delightful, and puts her forward to us as a delight of spiritual consolation, saying: *a woman*

*clothed with the sun.* The use of the word woman here does not refer to corruption or weakness but rather to keenness of understanding and fertility. She was at the one time a mother and a virgin, so John 19:26 says: *Woman, here is your son* as the Lord commended her to John. *But when the fulness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman* etc. [Gal 4:4]. This woman is the glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of the Son of God, said to be clothed with the sun, that is, clothed with the sun of righteousness [Mal 4:2], the eternal God, the most blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This clothing represents complete conformity to and assimilation into God. This is a common way of speaking. When we want to say that one person is like or acts like another, we say this one imitates the other or acts like the other. Sacred Scripture uses the same way of speaking: *Not in quarreling or jealousy but put on the Lord Jesus Christ* [Rom 13:13-14], that is, let us be perfectly conformed to and imitate Christ. Because this conformity and imitation are elegant and a most proper adornment like beautiful clothing, they are fittingly called clothing, so that John is saying the Virgin Mary is adorned or clothed with the sun of righteousness, namely, God, that is, fully conformed to the most blessed Trinity. Perfect beatitude, perfect happiness is nothing other than perfect conformity.<sup>4</sup> There is nothing more beautiful, more delightful than this just as the sun is more beautiful and delightful than any other object we can perceive; and so 1 John 3:2 says:

*Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.*

Thirdly, John describes her as venerable and presents her to us as an example of humility, saying: *with the moon under her feet.* The moon represents the Church. In the Song of Solomon 6:9 we read: *Who is this that looks forth like the dawn, fair as the moon?* It is well said that the moon is beneath the feet of the Virgin Mary, because every gathering of the just in the Church militant and of the blessed in the Church triumphant is spread at her feet and venerates her humbly. Every rational creature, whether on earth or in heaven, is subject to her and she is placed before all. This is well illustrated in

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

Job 25:5-6: *If even the moon is not bright and the stars are not pure in his sight, how much less a mortal, who is a maggot, and a human being, who is a worm!* She it is who is pre-eminent over the condition of blessed souls, the blessed angels and the saints on earth, so that no creature can be compared to her. The moon can also represent that every creature changes, as Gregory<sup>5</sup> says in *Moralia* in his comment on this text: ‘the moon wanes in its monthly cycles’. The moon is said to be under her feet because, rising above the changes in creatures, she is immovably fixed in God.

Fourthly, John describes her as desirable, and presents her to us as an incentive for true devotion when he says: *and on her head a crown of twelve stars*. By *head* is understood the higher part of the soul on which the image of God is impressed. By its very nature and name, a *crown* points to glory, since a crown is put on the head as a sign of glory: *You have crowned them with glory and honour* [Ps 8:5]. Because the numbers are in the form of a circle they represent eternity. The number twelve, a number expressing abundance and overflowing, represents the fulness of glory, a fulness that consists in the twelve fruits or joys enjoyed by the saints in heaven and these are represented by the twelve stars. Therefore, the words *and on her head a crown of twelve stars* indicate nothing other than the heart and soul of the glorious Virgin Mary in so far as she has been glorified with eternal and perfect glory in these higher parts of her person. If we pay close attention, we see that the blessed Virgin Mary is being presented as one adorned as the bride of the eternal king, with the sun for clothing, the moon for her footstool or carpet, and the twelve stars for her crown.

I. John says: *A great portent appeared in heaven* etc. The most blessed Virgin Mary appeared and appears to those gazing at her as a sign of forgiveness and reconciliation for penitents, as a sign of direction for the more advanced, and as a sign of triumph for all who struggle. She is a sign of pardon, life and victory. If you are a sinner and are penitent, rejoice because a sign of reconciliation has appeared; if you are righteous and proficient in the way of righteousness, rejoice because there is a sign indicating the way for

you; if you are struggling and in difficulty, rejoice because you have a sign of triumph and support.

1. The Virgin Mary appeared to penitents as a sign of forgiveness and reconciliation. Eve was the beginning of deviation, Mary the beginning of reconciliation; Eve was the beginning of condemnation, Mary the beginning of salvation; Eve was the beginning of sin, Mary the beginning of grace and so the angel greeted her, saying: *Greetings, favoured one*,<sup>6</sup> and so that ‘the curse on Eve might be changed into the blessing on Mary’,<sup>7</sup> the name ‘Eva’ is changed to ‘Ave’. In Esther 4:11 this is well illustrated: *All nations know that if any man or woman goes to the king Ahasuerus inside the inner court without being called, there is no escape for that person*, unless the king stretches out the golden sceptre to that person as a sign of clemency. Esther entered to beg for her people and the king *held out to her the golden sceptre* [Esth 5:2]. King Ahasuerus represents God, the king of the whole universe, who made a decree that no one may enter the heavenly palace unless called by grace. Anyone who would intrude rashly and proudly will die. The first angel arrogantly and imprudently intruded wanting the dignity of prelate when he said: *I will ascend to heaven, I will raise my throne above the stars of God* [Isa 14:13]. The first parents imprudently intruded wanting to have knowledge of good and evil [Gen 3:6]. The first angel was cast out of heaven with his followers, while the first parents were cast out of paradise with all their successors.

The Church has to be entered with humility as represented by Esther. The eternal God extends the golden sceptre as a sign of clemency, of reconciliation by grace and forgiveness, and of a wonderful condescension. God did this in coming down through Mary to the Church and to the whole human race. Isaiah 11:1 speaks of this: *A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse*.<sup>8</sup> The shoot is golden because of the brightness of wisdom and the glitter or glow of love. It is also implied in Genesis 9:13 where the Lord says: *I have set my bow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth*, that is, in one of the clouds of which the most excellent is Mary: *The Lord is riding on a swift cloud and*

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

*comes to Egypt* [Isa 19:1]. The Lord placed the bow on this cloud and by the bow we understand the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, true God and made true man. The heavenly bow is of three colours signifying the triple substance in Christ. Just as the heavenly bow is generated from a ray of the sun falling on a moist and concave cloud<sup>9</sup> in the very belly of the cloud, so the Lord became incarnate and was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. Just as after the rainbow most sweet rain falls from a cloud, so after the conception of the Son of God a plentiful and health giving grace came from the Virgin Mary, because *from his fulness we have all received, grace upon grace* [Jn 1:16]. A sinner who is penitent needs grace, so this person is to go *with boldness to the throne of grace*, because *grace and mercy* will be found and forgiveness *in time of need* [Heb 4:16].

2. The Virgin Mary appeared also as a sign of guidance for the proficient and for all making progress. Mary was and is a teacher of virtues, a way of life, a rule of conduct, a form of discipline, a mirror of goodness and an example of all perfections, so that whoever imitates her cannot fall into error. Should you find yourself in some ambiguity or worry, look at the sign, gaze and reflect on Mary. She is the model for the building of the tabernacle of the Church militant: *And see that you make them according to the pattern for them which is being shown you on the mountain* [Ex 25:40]. She is the true light and morning star [Job 11:17], that those who sail the waves of this world cannot be in danger when they watch her but under her direction they come to the harbour of eternal happiness.<sup>10</sup> And so the Lord says to preachers: *Prepare the way for the people, build up, build up the highway, clear it of stones, lift up an ensign for the peoples* [Isa 62:10]. A highway is prepared for people by the healing of preaching, the way becomes smooth by an unraveling and explanation of Scripture, the stones are cleared by the removal of hindrances and obstacles, an ensign is raised for the people when the life of Mary is praised, exalted and held up so that all people may look at and imitate her as a sign.

The whole life of Mary is a sign, a record and a teaching of most immaculate purity, for, even though she was conceived in original

sin, she was sanctified before her birth,<sup>11</sup> so that afterwards she committed no sin, and after conceiving the Son of God she was so strengthened that she could not commit sin nor did any stain of sin remain in her. Anselm<sup>12</sup> says: ‘It was fitting that the Virgin who was to be the Mother of God should shine with a purity than which nothing greater could be thought of under God’. And Augustine, *On nature and grace*,<sup>13</sup> after naming almost all the Fathers of the Old Testament, none of whom could be said to be without sin, stated when he came to the Virgin Mary: ‘Of her alone, when there is question of sin, I want no question raised for to her was given to conquer all sin, she who merited to conceive and bear the Son of God’.

Mary’s whole life was a sign of deepest humility; it was of this that she gloried most in her canticle: *He has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant* [Lk 1:48]. She says the same thing in the Gospel: *Here am I, the servant of the Lord* [Lk 1:38]. Since the sickness of pride was completely eliminated by her humility she was filled with every beauty of grace.<sup>14</sup>

Her whole life was a sign of goodness and maturity in dress, gesture, walking, appearance and speech. As befitted a virgin she was in all things modest, mature, serious and obliging. Ambrose,<sup>15</sup> commenting on the text of Luke 1:39 and 56, says: *Mary went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country and remained there for about three months*: The Virgin went in haste so as not to be seen in public; she was there for three months not because she was pleased to be in another house but because she was not happy moving around.

Her whole life was a sign of strictest poverty, for while staying in the temple she lived a difficult enough life supported by her manual work.<sup>16</sup> After marrying the carpenter she waited in Bethlehem until the time *for her to deliver her child and she wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger* [Lk 2:6-7]. When the time of her purification had been completed, according to the Law [Lev 12:6-8], she had to offer a lamb for her first-born. But she was so poor that she could not offer a lamb and so offered *a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons* [Lk 2:24]. Her whole life was a sign of most prudent

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

discretion. When the angel announced to her the conception of the Son of God saying: *And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son* etc. [Lk 1:31], she did not argue nor give a hasty consent but asked how: *How can this be since I am a virgin* [Lk 1:34]? On hearing how, she immediately gave her consent and as she consented she conceived the Son of God by the Holy Spirit. The shepherds came to adore the Saviour born according to the sign given them by the angels and there came also angels singing: *Glory to God in the highest* [Lk 2:14]. When the shepherds returned home, the text notes: *But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart* [Lk 2:19].

Her whole life was a sign of most lively faith. Elizabeth commended her faith: *Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord* [Lk 1:45]. After the death of her Son, as all the Apostles doubted, only in the Virgin did faith remain intact,<sup>17</sup> just as in the ark of the covenant a golden urn with manna was preserved [2 Chron 5:10; Heb 9:4].<sup>18</sup>

Her whole life was a sign of most intelligent hope. It was also a sign of devotion and attention to God. She was always concerned with God in her deepest sighs, meditation and vehement desires, as when the disciples were *devoting themselves to prayer together with certain women including Mary the mother of Jesus* [Acts 1:14].

Her whole life was a sign of careful work. She diligently served Elizabeth when she was giving birth; earlier in the temple, as it is believed, she served the ministers of the temple and the poor most courteously. Finally, she served her Son nourishing him with all care and eagerness as when she carried him to Egypt and back.

Finally, her whole life was a sign of the strongest love for God and neighbour. To neighbours she most generously gave her Son so that it can be said of her what is said of the Father, namely, he *so loved the world that he gave his only Son* [Jn 3:16]. Christian, whoever you are, if you want to make progress in the way of God, you have an infallible sign in Mary, provided you want to follow her lead and walk in her footsteps.

3. The Virgin Mary appeared as a sign of victory and triumph. She is such a sign in her complete overpowering of the devil as could

be expected because she gave birth to the power of God. It was not Eve, the first parent who gave in to the temptation of the devil, who crushed the head of the serpent [Gen 3:15], that is, of the ancient enemy, for this was done by the Virgin Mary. She is Judith who cut off the head of Holofernes with his own sword [Jdt 13:10]; she is weak Jael who struck the head of Sisera with a piece of rock [Judg 4:21]. Because she conquered all, for us she is a sign of victory so that whoever while being tempted carries in his or her heart the memory of Mary and asks for her help, cannot be overpowered.

This is prefigured in Isaiah 11:12: *He will raise a signal for the nations, and will assemble all the outcasts of Israel.* Soldiers customarily gather around some standard towards which they look, because as long as they stand together at the standard, they cannot be conquered. But should it happen that they turn their backs to the enemy and are scattered, unless they have been completely conquered, there is still some hope of victory if they come back to the standard and regroup. The blessed Virgin Mary is such a sure sign of power that an enemy is deterred and thrown down at the sight of her, while her followers are strengthened, comforted and regrouped for she is *terrible as an army with banners* [Song 6:4]. Under the sign of this unconquerable leader we should be strong and triumph over the enemy, so that we act strongly and strenuously, not in a weak way like people terrified at the sound of a driven leaf [Lev 26:36].

It is said also of this sign: *I will soon lift up my hand to the nations, and raise my signal to the peoples* [Isa 49:22]. Although in Scripture the word *nations* refers to Gentiles, *peoples* is taken as a name for Judah. We can take the word *peoples* to refer to the faithful who are united by law and rite. *Hand* is understood in Scripture as a reference to the Son of God; the Psalmist asked for the help of this hand: *Stretch out your hand from on high* [Ps 144:7]. *Signal* refers to the most holy Virgin Mary. God the Father stretches out his hand, that is, his power, his Son, to the nations so as to destroy or change their wildness. God holds out a sign to the peoples because God has raised the Virgin to heaven to be a help and assistance for believers and faithful. Christian, whoever you are, when beset by temptations,

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

provided you are not fainthearted but attack strongly and persevere with firmness, you have in Mary a sign of help. If you look on her with an attentive heart, hold her memory impressed on your heart and devoutly invoke her in every temptation, in every trial, you will find in her a helper; in her you will overcome every hostile power and repel every attack of the enemy.

II. The text goes on: *clothed with the sun*. These words describe as delightful the assumption and glorification of the Virgin Mary and puts them before us as a comfort for our spiritual consolation. As has been said, *clothed with the sun*, that is, clothed in a robe of glory, namely, a triple quality by which the soul is made perfectly conformed to the most blessed Trinity, in which perfect glory and happiness are found. Among all other bodies the sun has powerful effectiveness, shining brightness and pleasing influence; Mary is fully empowered by the power of the Father, perfectly enlightened by the wisdom of the Son, and perfectly remade with the close sweetness of the Holy Spirit. Because of this, Mary possesses or holds truth in her memory, she sees truth keenly in her mind, she enjoys truths delightfully and sweetly in her will; or 'she lives in eternity, shines in truth, and rejoices in goodness'.<sup>19</sup>

1. Therefore, in so far as the sun has a powerful effectiveness, Mary is said to be clothed with the sun by which she is strengthened. Of all the things in this world, the sun has greater power and more powerful effectiveness. It is the principle of growth, vegetation and preservation in all lesser things: by the power of the sun all things are generated, so the Philosopher says that it is the father of all things growing in the earth,<sup>20</sup> and in *Physica*<sup>21</sup> he says that 'one person and the sun generate another person'; by the power of the sun all things vegetate, live, are preserved, and so by its setting in the zodiac vegetable matter corrupts.<sup>22</sup>

Today the glorious Virgin is clothed with this power of the eternal Sun whose power is found in three things. Firstly, in not suffering: the holy souls and the blessed spirits as so fortified and made strong that they can suffer no disturbance, are immune from

every passion, are far removed from every trouble; they experience no sadness, impatience, sorrow, hatred nor anger.

Secondly, it consists in not failing: the holy souls and the blessed spirits have been so confirmed and made strong that no weakness at all can befall them; hence they do not sin, lie, wish evil, suffer any misfortune, evil of guilt, evil of punishment.

Thirdly, it consists in doing and acting: the holy souls and the blessed spirits are made all-powerful over their wills just as God is in command of the divine will, as Anselm says: whatever they want will be, whatever they do not want will not be; so Anselm, *De similitudinibus*<sup>23</sup>: ‘Whatever a blessed person wants to do will be done, since the Omnipotent will agree with all the decisions of their will’. Therefore, what they do will be what they want to do, and what they do not want to do will not be done. Of this power of the blessed, Augustine<sup>24</sup> says:

Mortals hold on to justice; power is given to those who are immortal, such power in fact that compared to it the power of any people said to be or called powerful on earth, is seen to be a ridiculous weakness.

If the power of the blessed is so great, how great must be the power of the Mother of God, the queen of heaven? In fact *whatever she pleases she does in heaven and on earth* [Ps 135:6]. The text of Sirach 43:2 can be applied to this power and effectiveness of the sun: *The sun, when it appears, proclaims as it rises*. As has been said, the sun is what brings out living forms, so when it appears, when it returns to us in the zodiac, it proclaims the emergence of forms from possibility to actuality. And so the text of Revelation 1:16 can be applied to the blessed Virgin: *Her face was like the sun shining with full force*.

2. Secondly, in so far as she has a shining brightness, she is said to be clothed with the sun on account of the brightness of wisdom by which she is enlightened. The sun has more light than any other body in the universe, in fact it is the source of light, so that not only do bodies on earth but also heavenly stars share in this light. Scholars prove this by the fact that when the earth comes between the Moon,

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

Mercury and the sun, the shadow of the earth causes an eclipse. But the eternal, unchanging Sun, that is, Truth and uncreated Wisdom, just like the sun, brightens and enlightens so that it understands and makes other things understandable,<sup>25</sup> to the extent that without its rays nothing could be understood. It not only knows or can be known as truth, but it is the principle and cause of all knowledge, as the wonderful doctor Augustine teaches in many places.<sup>26</sup>

The glorious Virgin today is clothed in this brightness and in the rays of the eternal Sun, so that she contemplates immediately and directly eternal light by which all things are made understandable, eternal wisdom in which all things are held together, eternal skill by which all things were made, and the eternal mirror in which all things are reflected. She knows God perfectly with a most blessed knowledge, and in God she knows what is above, within and below. Gregory says: ‘What do they not see when they see the One who sees everything?’<sup>27</sup> Perhaps she knows everything without change or interruption, for as Augustine says in *The Trinity*<sup>28</sup>: ‘Perhaps our thoughts will not be changeable going hither and thither, but in one glance we will see all our knowledge’. Therefore, as Augustine says in *The City of God*<sup>29</sup>: ‘Knowledge will be sure and wonderful in the place where wisdom is drunk from its very source without difficulty and with ease’. I conclude with Anselm, *De similitudinibus*<sup>30</sup>:

In the future life the wisdom of the blessed will be such that what they want to know of some matter, they will know fully. The blessed person will be filled with the perfect wisdom which is God and will gaze on it face to face. While it gazes on Wisdom, the blessed will see the nature of the entire matter which is seen more clearly in Wisdom than in itself. Then the just will know everything that God makes knowable, both things past and things yet to be in the future. There, all things will be known by individuals and individuals will be known by all others. Nothing will be hidden concerning one’s country, race, family, what one did in life,

whether good or bad, not for one’s confusion but rather for the praise of God and the extolling of divine mercy.<sup>31</sup> If all the blessed are to be filled with such knowledge, such wisdom, how much more the most

blessed Virgin who gave birth to and conceived Wisdom itself. Of this shining of the sun we read: *What is brighter than the sun* [Sir 17:31]? *The sun looks down on everything with its light* [Sir 42:16]. This sun will never set on these blessed: *your sun shall no more go down* [Isa 60:20].

3. Thirdly, in so far as the sun has a pleasing effect, Mary is said to be clothed with the sun because of the sweetness of the inner pleasantness by which she is refreshed. Nothing is pleasant without the shining of the sun, nothing pleasing, but when the sun shines it adorns everything, and makes everything pleasant; so holy Tobit 5:12 said: *What joy is left for me any more? I lie in darkness like the dead who no longer see the light*. The eternal Sun is the highest good and for this Sun rational creatures were made. Because of this, there is nothing apart from or less than this Sun that is able to satisfy, for this Sun alone suffices to satisfy desire and it delights perfectly; it is good in itself, good simply, good by essence, perfect good. Everything else is not good by its essence, but by sharing, and so it is good only partially, imperfectly, only as a shadow and image of the highest good. Those who cling to such goods, who love them, who take delight in them, are always unhappy; but all who enjoy the highest good, cling to it perfectly, take delight in it, are blessed.

For perfect delight, three things of necessity must come together. These are not found in any created good but come together perfectly in uncreated good. The first is perfect conformity or likeness: a rational creature is not like anything else in the same way as it is like that good in whose image and likeness it is made.

The second is perfect union: no created good is perfectly united to a mind because it is not united by essence and truth but by its form. Things themselves do not enter or slip into the mind but only their forms or likenesses, according to Augustine<sup>32</sup> and also the Philosopher.<sup>33</sup> Uncreated good is united to the mind by its essence and by truth, more closely than the mind itself, according to Augustine,<sup>34</sup> so no created good delights perfectly because only uncreated good is perfectly similar and closely united. According to Algazeles,<sup>35</sup> delight is a joining of like to like and the understanding of this.

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

The third is a perfect cause for delight so that something delights in itself. But nothing delights in itself unless it is good in itself. The highest good delights because it is good in itself and is the cause of delight.

Further, if more can be desired or thought of, it is not perfect delight. With any created good more and better can always be desired and considered; hence it does not perfectly delight. Uncreated good delights and nothing better, nothing other, nothing further can be thought of, considered or desired, in fact it exceeds all and so completes and absorbs every wish and desire: *Satisfies you with good* [Ps 103:5]. *They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights* [Ps 36:8].

However, if other saints and blessed enjoy this good perfectly, are perfectly delighted, it will be enjoyed by and delight incomparably more the one who incomparably loves more, clings more closely and is more perfectly conformed. Of the sweetness of this sun and its pleasant influence we read: *Light is sweet, and it is pleasant to see the sun* [Eccl 11:7] and the sun of justice is indeed sweet and pleasant. Whatever sweetness, whatever pleasure, whatever joy is found in other good and true objects, is joyful in that good and truth, and so there one will *enter into the joy of your master* [Mt 25:21].

III. The text goes on: *with the moon under her feet*. These words describe Mary's Assumption and glorification as venerable and so put them before us as an example for becoming humble. The moon is under her feet because she has gone beyond change, every creature is subject to her, venerates her and lies prostrate at her feet.<sup>36</sup> Creatures are subject to change in three ways: the change in a rational nature, in temporal conditions, and in culpable or penal defect. This triple kind of change is fittingly represented by the moon and so the moon is said to be under her feet. Change in a rational nature is under her feet on account of her most excellent dignity; change in temporal conditions because of her highest poverty; change in culpable or penal defect because of confirming grace and perfect immortality.

1. Firstly, change in a rational nature is under her feet on account of her most excellent dignity. In dignity she is above every creature, above every rational, angelic, human nature, above any mere creature, as she has been put before all, placed above all as lady and queen. All blessed spirits, be they angelic or human, rightly venerate and obey her. This is prefigured in the text: *Sun and moon and stars are bright, and when sent to do a service, they are obedient* [Let Jer 6:60]. By the sun we can understand the Church militant, by the stars the angelic and human spirits assembled in the Church, all of whom shine in the firmament of the Church like stars, obey blessed Mary, venerate and adore her as lady and queen. Joseph's dream is fulfilled and verified in her: *Look, I have had another dream: the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me* [Gen 37:9]. *The descendants of those who oppressed you shall come bending low to you* [Isa 60:14]. Every sinner, in so far as being a sinner, takes away from the Virgin who was without sin, and this is especially true of infidels who do not believe that she is the Mother of God. But when by the grace of God they are converted and come to her, have recourse to her, adore her with reverence and salute her as mother, they repeat the greeting of the angel: *Greetings, favoured one. The Lord is with you* [Lk 1:28]. I think it is fitting that if the Church triumphant is arranged in orders, in fact most ordered in accord with the law of God, as held by Dionysius,<sup>37</sup> then influences and enlightenments come down through her into the angelic hierarchy, through the angelic to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and through this and through her into the whole triumphant and militant Church. At her feet *every knee should bend and every tongue should confess* [Phil 2:10-11], every human soul and angelic mind should venerate, salute and adore her.

2. Secondly, the changeableness of temporal conditions, represented by the moon, is under her feet, because by highest poverty she trod under foot and despised all changeable and temporal good. It is quite wonderful and to be thought about carefully that to despise, lack, hold in contempt and disdain temporal possessions, gives the soul power over all temporal goods as the soul is carried above temporal concerns. On the other hand, to love, desire and have

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

an abundance of such temporal things makes the soul subject to them; then, what is temporary has power over the soul, so that one becomes not a person owning possessions but a servant of whatever one has and loves. Of the first of these the Apostle says: *As having nothing, and yet possessing everything* [2 Cor 6:10]; of the second he says: *Greed which is idolatry* [Col 3:5].

Woe to all who submit themselves to such love, who always long to increase them, who go in search of them, things that when loved stain, when owned are burdensome, when lost cause pain. Since the blessed Virgin was most poor, a person who despised and disdained such things, a person who had nothing, loved nothing, wanted to own nothing of such things, she is rightly said to have all such things under her feet.

Sirach 27:11 says of the instability of possessions: *The fool changes like the moon*. A stupid person is one who exchanges the precious for what is worthless, heavenly for earthly, eternal for things of earth, gold for mud, silver for lead, God for the world. Such a person loves and pursues temporal goods; and because temporal goods are always subject to change like the moon, so it is fitting to say a stupid person changes like the moon. *The conversation of the godly is like the sun* [Sir 27:11]. Holy means ‘without earth’; in Latin holy is sanctus, in Greek ‘agios’; this Greek word comes from ‘a’ meaning ‘without’ and ‘gios meaning ‘earth’, and so ‘without earth’.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, a truly holy person is one who by love has cut himself or herself off from what is earthly and temporal. Of such a person is said: *Every place on which you set foot shall be yours* [Deut 11:24]. To set the foot on is to despise; whoever sets the foot on, despises; one who despises is truly and properly a lord and owner, so to this person can be truly said and promised what is said to all who despise the world: *Every place on which you set foot shall be yours*.

3. Thirdly, change coming from culpable and penal misfortune, represented by the moon, is beneath her feet because of her confirming grace and perfect immortality. In the first sanctification, Mary was cleansed from original sin in which she was indeed conceived like anyone else born in the normal manner, so that each person can truly say: *Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my*

*mother conceived me* [Ps 51:5]. Mary as a person was cleansed from this sin in the womb; as has been said,<sup>39</sup> she was sanctified before her birth and any passion for sin was so remitted and weakened that she never experienced a feeling of concupiscence.

In her second sanctification, that is, in the conception of the Son of God, such a fulness of grace came upon her that from then on not only did she not sin but she could not sin; she was purified not only in her person but also in her nature so as to be the beginning of another nature in her conception of a pure and immaculate child. Later, in her Assumption she was freed by a perfecting grace from every corruption and penalty remaining in her, as we piously believe and as has been proven by valid arguments in another sermon.<sup>40</sup> In her Assumption she was freed not only in her person but also in her body so that the blessed Virgin could be clothed in immortality.

On this changeableness we read in a Psalm: *In her days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more* [Ps 72:7]. *Gloss*<sup>41</sup>: ‘This peace will be, that is, may it be extended until there is no longer death in the body when death has been destroyed and death is represented by the moon’. It is also prefigured in Prov 7:19-20: *My husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey, he will not come home until full moon*. This man is the bridegroom of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven. He will return on the day of the full moon, he will come to judge the living and the dead when every defect or corruption has been taken away and our corruptible and mortal bodies will put on incorruption and immortality<sup>42</sup> represented by the full moon.<sup>43</sup>

Fourthly, the text continues: *and on her head a crown of twelve stars*. Mary’s assumption and glorification are described in these words as something desirable and she is put before us to incite our longing. The crown of twelve stars, as has been said,<sup>44</sup> represents eternal, full or perfect glory. Therefore, the crown of twelve stars is the eternity of the twelve joys. Two of the joys come from God, namely, joy in the vision of Christ’s divinity and joy in the vision of his humanity. Another two come from or are caused by the place, one from its beauty, another from its spaciousness. Another two come from the citizens, one being the company of angels, the other

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

the company of human beings. Another two come from the world, one from its abundance, the other from its stability and incorruption. Another two come from hell, one from having avoided it, the other from its closure. Finally, two come from herself, one from the clothing of her body, the other from the robe on her soul.

Because these joys are common to all the blessed, we are to understand the twelve stars or the crown of twelve stars as twelve privileges decorating, adorning and setting the Virgin Mary apart from all other women. Four of these privileges came to her from heaven: the first was her sanctification in the womb for which reason she was said to be chosen and chosen beforehand, the second was the angel's greeting, the third the overshadowing by the Holy Spirit, and the fourth was the conception of the Son of God. Because of these four reasons she was addressed as: *Greetings, favoured one* [Lk 1:28].

Another four joys were in herself, namely, in her soul: firstly her humility by which she said: *Here am I, the servant of the Lord* [Lk 1:38], the second was her prudence by which she asked *How can this be* [Lk 1:34], the third was the blushing that *perplexed* her at *his* words [Lk1:29], the fourth was the love she showed in serving her cousin [Lk 1:39-40], and in saying when the wine was running out at the wedding feast: *They have no wine* [Jn 2:3]. Because of these four joys it was said: *The Lord is with you* [Lk 1:28].

The remaining four were in her body: the first was her being a mother without corruption, the second her fertility with virginity or virginity with fertility, the third pregnancy without difficulty, and the fourth was birth without pain. Because of these four joys there was said: *Blessed are you among women*.

The Virgin Mary rejoiced and still rejoices in these twelve privileges by which she is wonderfully adorned as with a crown of twelve stars and so the text of Proverbs 4:9 can be understood as applying to her: *She will place on your head a fair garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown*.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, crowned for us with a crown of thorns and afterwards crowned with *glory and honour* [Heb 2:7] because of the passion of his death, today crowned his most glorious Mother. May this Lord deign to bring us by his merits and the merits of all

## Sermon 2

the saints to the crown of eternal life, he who lives and reigns God forever and ever. Amen.

SERMON 3

*Rise up, O Lord, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might* [Ps 132:8]. The raising up and exaltation of the glorious Virgin, today realized in her assumption, was foretold and prefigured by many types and signs in Scripture. It was foretold in many oracles of the prophets, among which the above declaration or prophecy of David is clear and direct, for like a prophet he foretells and announces beforehand in this text the exaltation of the Son and Mother, King and Queen. David describes this exaltation adequately and elegantly: firstly in its proper order, secondly in the person taken or exalted above, thirdly in its perfect conclusion or the completion of exaltation.

Firstly, in its proper order since, firstly, the Son is exalted and David points this out by saying: *Rise up, O Lord, and go to your resting place*, and when you are exalted your Mother will be exalted.

Secondly, in the person taken or exalted above, namely, the unstained Virgin Mary who is represented by the ark: *you and the ark of your might*, that is, your Mother whom you sanctified.

Thirdly, in its perfect conclusion or the completion of exaltation: *to your resting place* since the end of all movement is quiet. So the meaning is: Lord Jesus Christ, you came down to earth out of mercy, you were conceived in and from the Virgin, you took on genuine human nature, then, born from the immaculate Virgin, you taught while living in the world, you worked miracles to encourage faith.<sup>1</sup> Finally to save human beings you suffered and died on a cross in the same nature, your body was buried, you went down into hell to release the holy Fathers, and in the same flesh you rose on the third day and ascended into heaven. And you who were troubled in death, as David says: *I slept troubled* [Ps 56:5 DRB]<sup>2</sup>, and John 12:27 says: *Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say?* Go to the resting place you had before the world existed. When you are exalted, the ark of your might, that is, the Virgin, your Mother, will be exalted to the same resting place. It is not fitting for a king to be without the queen, a son without the mother, a treasure without the ark.

Today the glorious Virgin setting aside the condition of flesh went away from her body.<sup>3</sup> From the sentence passed on the human race because of the sin of the first parent [Gen 3:19], no one, even the Son of God, true God and true man, was exempt from death. Others suffered and died from a necessary death, but Christ died voluntarily and from a task taken on because of sin. Today that glorious soul was assumed into heaven while the angels rejoiced and ‘she was exalted above all the choirs and orders of angels to the heavenly kingdom’.<sup>4</sup> Her body was buried in the valley of Jehoshaphat, and miraculously all the apostles and disciples who had been dispersed came together and assisted at her glorious burial.<sup>5</sup> This happened by a wonderful order and arrangement of providence, one year after the ascension or only for as long as from the ascension of the Lord to the present day.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, Mary, a teacher of truth and perfection, spoke with the disciples who were ‘witnesses to the resurrection as she was herself’.<sup>7</sup> It is written in Acts 1:14 that they were *constantly devoting themselves to prayer with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers*, as they waited for the promised Spirit. All the disciples venerably and humbly obeyed her; John did this in a special way for to him the Virgin had been given in a special way as to an adopted son. The Lord said on the cross [Jn 19:26-27]: *Woman, here is your son*; to the disciple he said: *Here is your mother* and together ‘they were pleasant, pleasing in appearance’.<sup>8</sup> I do believe that the heavenly assistant, Gabriel the Archangel, who on greeting Mary announced the conception and birth, would have accompanied her all the time and humbly served her in his own way. I do not think I am wrong in holding and believing that her Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, frequently visited her bodily while she always enjoyed his spiritual presence.<sup>9</sup> The Son knows why he left his Mother on earth for so long after his ascension. Still, we can say that it was for the comfort and consolation of the disciples who were renewed and strengthened by her; it was for the strengthening of their faith, when they saw her who conceived and gave birth to Christ, fed, cared for and carried him, who afterwards saw him die on a cross and be buried, saw him risen and ascending, things to

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

which the Mother most definitely and truthfully testified; it was for the building up and instruction of the faithful, for she was a mirror of goodness, a norm of discipline, a form of virtues and a model of every perfection and a teacher and doctor of truth.

When Mary's soul was separated from the body in death it was glorified in heaven and the body, as already said, was buried. Although the worthy doctor Jerome<sup>10</sup> seems to have doubted this, it is now piously believed by all, and the wonderful doctor Augustine<sup>11</sup> affirms that later the incorrupt body and the blessed soul were reunited and, in a body truly raised up, she was assumed into heaven and placed at the right of her Son above every creature. But how long afterwards is known only by the Son. It is thought and said to have been revealed to someone<sup>12</sup> that on the fortieth day after her death, that is, after the separation of body and soul, the opposite took place; she was raised up, so that in her there might be a perfect and total resurrection and then with soul and body glorified she might reign forever as queen of the world.

This seems to be completely reasonable and fitting because of the common flesh of Mother and Child. It is certain that there is the same flesh in the Child and Mother, because from the flesh of the Mother the flesh of the Son was formed by the power and strength of the Holy Spirit. It does not seem right to think of them as separated but it is fitting that where the Son is, there the Mother should be.

Further, it seems to be wrong that the flesh from which the body of Christ was taken or cut out, in fact the same flesh as the flesh of Christ, should suffer corruption, turn to dust or become food for worms, since the flesh of the Son did not see corruption [Ps 16:10; Acts 2:31].

It is reasonable also to preserve the honour of the Mother. The Son commanded that a mother is to be honoured: *Honour your mother* [Ex 20:12; Deut 5:16]. Therefore, if Christ showed to his own Mother what he commanded and laid down for others, and since he could, should and wanted to, he honoured his Mother in her body and soul and in both together. As Christ glorified Mary in her soul so he glorified her in her body, preserving it from corruption. As the Son is at the right hand of the Father, so the glorified Mother in body

and soul sits at the right hand of her Son as a queen at the right hand of the king, in fulfillment of the prophecy of David: *At your right hand stands the queen* [Ps 45:9].

The authority quoted above, namely, Augustine, seems to affirm that as Christ, of whom the prophet is speaking, truly rose in his body from the dead and ascended into heaven to his rest, so he raised up the Virgin not only in soul but also in her body that she might be exalted in the same rest.

A clear sign of this, as Jerome<sup>13</sup> says, is that while she was buried in a tomb, no empty tomb has been found. The faithful venerate and the whole Church reverences the relics of other saints kept in designated places. Also where the bodies of the holy apostles and martyrs are buried has been revealed to saints that they may be honourably laid to rest and held in due reverence. Much more would that virginal body have been kept reverently in some place and the whole world would have come there to venerate the body. It does not seem that her body was moved to another place as this would have been known. But as said above, her body was raised up and reunited to her blessed soul and with the soul was equally glorified. There are many other arguments for this belief and we have listed them in another sermon on the assumption;<sup>14</sup> in the interests of brevity we omit them here.

The prophecy of David is fulfilled and the ark of God's might has been raised up: the Virgin Mother, sanctified and exalted, is at rest with her Son who was already risen and exalted. We do not know how the holy angels conduct and bring the souls of saints into heaven, as we read of the poor beggar Lazarus who was *carried away by the angels to be with Abraham* [Lk 16:22], and as we sing in the burial service: 'May the angels lead you into paradise and choirs of angels take you'. But in no way could I believe that in this Assumption there was any shortage of angels to help. Rather all the columns of holy angels and the spirits of other saints went to meet her in ranks and as it were in procession with hymns and praises saluted her venerably and reverently, took her joyfully, so that surrounded and accompanied by columns of angels she would move *terrible as an army with banners* [Song 6:10].<sup>15</sup> The Son in festive

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

style joyfully met his Mother and received her with honour, while she, adorned and full of delight, leant on him as the angels had wondered at in the Song of Solomon 8:5: *Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?* With how much splendour, do you think, she shone when the true Sun of justice brought and accompanied her?

When she was brought in beside him, she was placed at his right hand on a throne; this was prefigured in 1 Kings 2:19 where it is said that *King Solomon rose to meet his mother and bowed down to her; then he sat her on a throne brought for the king's mother and she sat on his right.* The Son was subject to the Mother on earth, as recorded in Luke 2:51 that *he came to Nazareth and was obedient to them.* He was subject to his true Mother and his putative father who was the provider, guide and protector of the Mother. In view of this I do not think it is far from the truth that in some way he would be subject to her in his humanity and, I would say, suitably honouring her. If the Son venerates her according to the nature which he took from her, what doubt is there that the whole court of heaven, the Church triumphant, and the whole gathering of saints humbly venerate and honour her together with her Son, when all see and rejoice at her sublime and glorious exaltation over every creature.

We are commanded to praise God in the saints [Ps 150:1], so how much more should we devoutly sing *psalms and hymns and spiritual songs* [Eph 5:19] in honour of Mary, the Virgin Mother of God? We are to venerate the Mother with her Son, greet her with more affection, and fervently invoke her so that we may merit to have a helper near to her Son.

But now let us go back to our theme and say something more on this ark representing the glorious Virgin and Mother and more on the rest to which she has been assumed today.

I. Mary is the ark built or constructed, adorned, guarded and looked after by the supreme Architect, for in her he dwelt and rested.

1. The true Noah, the consoler, built the ark by the hand of divine wisdom. In Genesis 6:14 it is written that Noah, a name meaning 'consoler',<sup>16</sup> made *an ark of timber planks and covered it*

*inside and out with pitch.* Who is this consoler, Noah, who *consoles us in any affliction* [2 Cor 1:4] and trouble, other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of the Father through whom all things were made [Jn 1:3]? He built an ark in the Virgin Mary for himself; it was made of timber planks, joined together and made smooth<sup>17</sup> by meekness and tenderness, because there was nothing rough or anything in her that might offend anyone's eyes, but she was in everything sweet, agreeable and kind.

It was lined with pitch, 'that is, a most strong glue'<sup>18</sup> long lasting because of the marvelous unity and peace of body and spirit. With such harmony did that soul and flesh cling together that the flesh obeyed the spirit and the senses obeyed reason in everything, nor was there any unruly movement against reason.

Moses made the ark of cypress [Ex 25:10<sup>19</sup>] wood safe from decay. The length of the ark is the endurance of hope, the height is the sublimity of desire, the width is the generosity of love, the depth is the deepness of humility, the cover is virginal modesty, the bar or door is the vow of virginity, the finish to a cubit's height is the perfect union with and recollection of the mind on God. See how well smoothed, fitted together, measured and fastened is this ark that was to hold a mystery!

And you, whoever you are, who wish to be a temple of God, a dwelling of the Holy Spirit, observe and try to be so built.

2. Not only did the true Noah build and construct the ark but he also adorned it. The Apostle says that the ark was *overlaid on all sides with gold* [Heb 9:4], and Exodus 25:24 says: *You shall overlay it with pure gold, and make a molding of gold around it.* This overlay or covering of gold was a kind of clothing of a golden veneer. In Scripture gold represents wisdom<sup>20</sup> because of its strength and brightness. The ark that was the Virgin Mary was covered inside and out with gold: inside for her wisdom in the knowledge of things divine for she was filled both with the Spirit of wisdom and with the source of wisdom, the Word of God *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* [Col 2:3] and who took flesh from her. It is clear that the nearer she was to the light of wisdom the more she was filled with it. Bernard<sup>21</sup>: Mary

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

penetrated the deepest depths of divine wisdom, more than can be thought, so that even while being in the condition of a creature without personal union, she saw far into that inaccessible light.

And ‘what did she not know of God, she in whom the wisdom of God resided?’<sup>22</sup>

She was covered with gold outside in her disposition for work. The wise Virgin did nothing rashly, hurriedly or thoughtlessly, but acted with deliberation and mature judgment in accord with the eternal laws and reasons. She was attentive in all things to the desire of the divine will, referring everything to its final end, not seeking human praise like the foolish virgins,<sup>23</sup> but the praise and glory of the Creator as a most prudent virgin.

And you who want to imitate Mary, reflect on wisdom so that you may know God, strive to know and act prudently in everything, in accord with the demands of the divine law and the desire of the Creator.

3. Nevertheless, the true Noah built, adorned, preserved and kept this ark intact and unstained. His presence was always there to assist her, as was the ministry of angels with her inseparably, so that no hostile power might presume to approach or come near to her, nor any human rashness touch her in any way, nor think of her with unclean desire or sordid love. Hence, it is said<sup>24</sup> that such brightness shone from her face that not only was she not carnally desired but movements of passion in her were stilled. Rightly was she carefully and diligently watched over for in her the heavenly treasure was to be placed, she was to be the Mother of God and the beginning of our redemption.<sup>25</sup> Anselm<sup>26</sup> says: ‘It was fitting that she who was to be the Mother of God should shine with such purity that no greater purity could be thought of under God’; and so she was kept free from sin. In Joshua the people were ordered: *Do not come any nearer to the ark.* Not only the people but also the demons observed this command: none of the people nor any demon dared to approach her.

You, whoever you are, when you feel a movement of the flesh or are troubled by a stirring of conscience, call on Mary,<sup>27</sup> recall her

purity and every such movement and stirring of conscience will be stilled. Her virtue was not limited nor her purity lessened.

4. Finally, the supreme Architect who built, adorned, guarded and kept this ark free from sin, lived and rested in her. The Lord and Creator of all things, the Son of God, the Word who *was in the beginning with God*, and through whom *all things came into being* [Jn 1:2-3], at the message of the angel and the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, came into the heart and body of Mary and from her took true flesh and true human nature and lived among us [Jn 1:14]. This true God and true man in one and the same person lay closed in her womb, as in an ark, for nine months and so we sing<sup>28</sup>:

O Mother, blessed in her great office! He, the sovereign Creator, who holds the world in the palm of his hand, is enclosed in the tabernacle of her womb.

Finally, after the space of nine months, the womb of the intact and uncorrupted Virgin opened for that birth and she gave birth to the Son of God made true man, so that she might most definitely and rightly be called ‘Theotocos’, that is, Mother of God, and ‘Christotocos’,<sup>29</sup> that is, Mother of Christ. ‘I know not how to praise you, holy and immaculate Virgin. Heaven cannot contain the One whom you bore in your womb’.<sup>30</sup>

This is well represented by the golden urn in which the manna was placed in the ark, as written in Exodus 25:10 and as stated by the Apostle in Hebrews 9:4. What is the golden urn other than human nature, and what is the manna other than the divine nature<sup>31</sup> that truly is united to a human nature in the unity of a person? In the ark, that is, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, was the true manna, the heavenly bread, *providing every pleasure and suited to every taste* [Wis 16:20]. In John 6:32-33, the Saviour himself said: *It was not Moses who gave you the true bread or the true manna, but my Father in heaven gives you the true bread from heaven*, and the Saviour is that true bread for he *comes down from heaven and gives life to the world*. This living bread and heavenly treasure, by which the human race was redeemed, came out of the ark. And, as has been said,<sup>32</sup>

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

after the resurrection of her Son, the Virgin ought to rise and be exalted in the same rest.

II. But I ask, what is that quiet? Certainly it is a genuine quiet, a happy and joyful quiet, and a firm and lasting quiet.

1. It is firstly a genuine quiet. Genuine rest is only possible in something still and quiet, since one who relies on a moving object moves with the movement. Created objects are not still and quiet rather they change and are agitated by many movements. Therefore, in no created object that continuously gives way, moves and changes, can there be genuine quiet. In such circumstances the quiet is imaginary as when one is on a ship or in a river and thinks he or she is at rest but in fact is continuously changing and moving. Therefore, genuine quiet is in a still and unchanging good, namely, in God,<sup>33</sup> who ‘while remaining still gives movement to all things’,<sup>34</sup> *with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change* [Jas 1:17]; so a Psalm states: *I will both lie down and sleep in peace* [Ps 4:8]. The words before this in Ps 4:4 read: *You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound*, but because peace is not possible in an abundance of good things, he adds the words: *I will both lie down* etc. The Psalmist lies down in the good that does not change,<sup>35</sup> but is always the same. *But you are the same, and your years have no end* [Ps 102:27]. In this good a soul rests in utmost peace, forgetful of all the misfortunes of this world; this peace brings sleep. Here it is not possible to sleep in this way but it will be possible in the future, so the Psalm does not say ‘I sleep’ or ‘I have slept’, but ‘I will sleep and I will rest’, namely, when all change is left behind.

But this rest comes only to those who work, as Revelation 14:13 says: ‘Yes,’ *says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them’*. Therefore, the more work is useful and beneficial, the greater will be the rest. Since the most blessed Virgin worked so hard, never being idle but always busy, and because she relied to the utmost on that unchanging good, now she rests in that good above every creature.

2. Secondly, it was full rest. Full rest is not a dulling of all passion and all desires so that a mind cannot want anything more. The desires of a rational creature are meant to find satisfaction in total good, perfect good. Such desires cannot be satisfied or restored by a deficient good, by a half complete good, by an imperfect and defective good or by something that is partly good, because what is half full is imperfect. Every created good is imperfect and so no created good can quieten, restore or satisfy passion or desire. This can be done only by divine, uncreated good, the highest good that is full, perfect and unending good, in no way deficient but exceeding every desire of the soul. This good is not partially good in this or in that, but is good simply and absolutely, 'the good in every good'.<sup>36</sup> Only in that good is there full rest. Augustine, in his *Confessions*,<sup>37</sup> says: 'Lord, you have made us for you and our heart is restless until it rests in you', in whom alone is our every desire satisfied [Ps 103:5].

This rest comes only to those needy persons who have despised every other good, have loved only this good for its own sake and above everything else. A person choosing another good for himself or herself is not worthy of this good. Because the glorious Virgin Mother of God loved this good more than all others, desired it more than any other creature, and despised every other good, so she rests in that good most fully above every creature. Isaiah 32:18 says of this rest: *My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.* True and abundant rest in which desire will be completely satisfied, restored and fulfilled is to rest at the Lord's *table* because it is *full of fatness* [Job 36:16].

3. Thirdly, it is a pleasant rest, desirable and joyful where the spirits of the blessed shall and are pastured in the pastures of eternal freshness. This splendid river *flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb* [Rev 22:1] is in the river of the Holy Spirit, the river that rejoices *the city of God* [Ps 46:5], *a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon* [Song 4:15]. There, *the tree of life in the midst of the garden, with its twelve kinds of fruit, produces its fruit each month* [Rev 22:2; Gen 2:9], that is, wisdom,<sup>38</sup> by which the blessed spirits are refreshed and which they enjoy perfectly; and so there are twelve fruits. There is the gracious and

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

pleasant company of angels and blessed spirits. There is the open contemplation and complete enjoyment of truth: nothing delights other than beauty,<sup>39</sup> and nothing is more beautiful than truth; and 'whatever is pleasant in all that is true, is pleasant because of the truth'.<sup>40</sup> There is true God and true man, whom they see in his beauty and they find pasture inside and out: inside in the divinity, outside in the humanity.<sup>41</sup> There, after the resurrection, the immortal bodies of the blessed *will shine like the sun* [Mt 13:43]. There is a bright and pleasant place, namely, the heavenly sky completely at rest and remote from any change. To conclude briefly, whatever is pleasant and delightful will be there, because everything beautiful will be there. Whatever could cause sadness or pain will be far removed because *sorrow and sadness shall flee away* [Isa 35:10; 51:11]. But if delight depends on the coming together of things that are similar in meaning,<sup>42</sup> everything there will be delightful, pleasant, and similar with nothing dissimilar. This is especially so in the supreme God towards whom the soul is directed, because it has been made in God's image, it moves towards God, is united to God not in some likeness but in fact and in truth and this more closely than the soul is united to itself.<sup>43</sup> And since the most perfect and correct love exists among them, because 'one will love the other as oneself, will be gladdened as much over the good of another as over one's own'. In this way joy will be infinitely multiplied and then will be heard: *Enter into the joy of your master* [Mt 25:21, 23].

But this joyful rest is only for the afflicted, for those who mourn and are sorrowful: *Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted* [Mt 5:4], and all who despised every false joy. The most glorious Virgin was deeply afflicted and a sword pierced her soul especially in the passion of her Son [Lk 2:35] and so she can rightly be called 'a bitter sea'.<sup>44</sup> She spent her whole life in austerity, not wanting to delight in anything else and so she delights more than any other creature in that quiet; the more she is in that delightful good the more she is united and joined to God. In Ezekiel 34:13-14, the Lord refers to this quiet:

*I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing ground.*

In this way, as is possible, the Lord uses sensible signs to refer to the pleasure of eternal happiness.

Finally, that rest is sure, perpetual and everlasting. When one longs in this life for quiet, one finds it but for a moment because eternal quiet exists only in eternity. But in the next life quiet will be continuous without interruption, eternal without an end, sure without fear, trouble or restlessness; so the city of Jerusalem is called peaceful and quiet.<sup>45</sup> The Lord *strengthens the bars* of this city and *grants peace within its borders* [Ps 147:13-14], that is, gives it final peace.

This rest is given only to those who persevere to the end; one who does not persevere to the end does not come to final quiet and peace [Mt 10:22; 24:13]. The glorious Virgin exceeded all creatures in the length of her perseverance for she never turned aside nor was interrupted in living virtuously and in doing works of virtue. Consequently, she gained more peace and quiet than any other creature. So a text of a Psalm can be applied to her: *This is my resting place forever; here I will reside, for I have desired it* [Ps 132:14]. This is the perfect Sabbath on which God rested,<sup>46</sup> that is, after the efforts of the present life God makes us rest in God in whom there will be no evening nor finish.

The Son of God leads us to this eternal peace and rest, into which he introduced his Mother today. May honour and glory be to the Son with God the Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

### SERMON 4

*The cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of the covenant. Then the Israelites set out by stages from the wilderness of Sinai, and the cloud settled down in the wilderness of Paran [Num 10:11-12].*

In this text the solemnity of the Assumption of the blessed Virgin Mary is described under three headings: firstly, the exaltation of the person ascending, secondly, the joining in of the whole heavenly curia, thirdly, the blessedness of restful glory.

The exaltation makes this feast admirable as indicated by the words: *The cloud lifted* etc. The joining of the heavenly curia makes this feast honourable: *the Israelites set out by stages*. No one should doubt that the Son with the ranks of all the holy spirits met the one ascending.<sup>1</sup> The text of 1 Kings 2:19 implies this: *The king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; then he sat on his throne, and had a throne brought for the king's mother*. The happiness of heaven makes this solemnity desirable and delightful: *the cloud settled down in the wilderness of Paran*, by which is signified the heavenly sky, the place of the blessed.

The text says: *The cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of the covenant*. One must ponder who is this person who was assumed, namely, the blessed Virgin Mary represented by the cloud; how was she assumed as she was raised up to heaven: *lifted up*; from where she was assumed because it was *from over the tabernacle of the covenant*, indicating the Church.

I. We find in Scripture a sevenfold cloud to which the glorious Virgin is compared because of the seven qualities singularly bright in her.

1. Firstly, she is a small cloud because of her humility: *Look, a little cloud no bigger than a person's hand is rising out of the sea [1 Kings 18:44].*

2. Secondly, she is a concave cloud because of her genuine love: *From the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased [Mt 17:5]; He allowed Moses to hear his voice, and*

*led him into the dark cloud* [Sir 45:5]. This cloud was so concave and spacious that all creatures could be held in her heart.

3. Thirdly, she is a bright cloud because of her immaculate purity: *Then I looked, and there was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like the Son of Man, with a golden crown on his head* [Rev 14:14].

4. Fourthly, she is a shining cloud because of the brightness of her wisdom: *While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them* [Mt 17:5]; *the clouds scatter his lightning, they turn round and round by his guidance* [Job 37:11-12].

5. Fifthly, she is a cloud full of dew because of her fertility: *Like a clear heat in summer, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest* [Isa 18:4]. *Shower, O heavens from above, and let the skies rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation may spring up* [Isa 45:8].

6. Sixthly, she is a light cloud because of her poverty or her agility in contemplation: *See, the Lord is riding on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt; the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence* [Isa 19:1]. For this reason it is said of preachers: *Who are these who fly like a cloud* [Isa 60:8]?

7. Seventhly, she is a pillar of cloud because of her firm and stable mind: *I dwelt in the highest heavens, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud* [Sir 24:4]; *The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day* [Ex 13:21].<sup>2</sup>

SERMON 5

*Look, a little cloud no bigger than a person's hand is rising out of the sea* [1 Kings 18:44]. In this text the assumption of the glorious Virgin is presented in the metaphor of a cloud rising up. It is described from two points of view, namely, her disposition that prepared the way and her perfection leading to its end or completion.

I. There is a triple disposition of soul preparing or a preparation disposing the Virgin for this elevation:

1. The first is her purifying holiness or sanctifying purity: *a little cloud*. A cloud begins in the earth since it comes from the vapours of earth and water, but purified, made light and raised up by the power of heat. The Virgin Mary was conceived with original sin since she was conceived according to the law of human propagation; however, by the grace of the Holy Spirit she was sanctified in the womb before her birth,<sup>1</sup> so that her birth was not a fall as in others, but rather a rising up.

2. The second is her humility drawing her back into herself: *little*. To be little is to be humble. Mary was chosen by God that she might be the Mother of God, she was made holy by the Holy Spirit, not puffing herself up above herself, but rather retreating into herself and worshipping the divine majesty. For this reason she merited to be raised up because as it is written: *For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted* [Lk 14:11 and 18:14]. For the Lord *has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant* [Lk 1:48]. Humility is the principle and foundation of every movement upwards.

3. The third is her love moving her to God: *a person's hand*. Such an ascent does not come from local movement but from becoming Godlike. This is a work of fervent love because love is a transforming power, as Dionysius,<sup>2</sup> Augustine<sup>3</sup> and Hugo<sup>4</sup> affirm. The Virgin Mary was more conformed to her Son than any other creature and for this reason she is said to be *a person's hand* and she was raised up higher.

II. Secondly, the Assumption of the Virgin is described from the point of view of her perfection that led to the completion of the Assumption. This is considered in two ways, namely, from the goal of her elevation, from the point of departure, namely, *out of the sea*, that is, from this turbulent world marked by bitterness and disasters; and from the actual Assumption: *rising*. She rose up into heaven ‘exalted to the heavenly kingdom above all the choirs of angels’.<sup>5</sup>

SERMON 6

*Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her* [Lk 10:41]. It seems quite strange and doubtful why the Church has applied this text to Mary, the Mother of God, when in its literal sense it refers to Mary Magdalene, a sinner; there is not any similarity nor comparison between a sinner and the Mother of God. The reason becomes clear when the sense of the Gospel is pondered more closely. In the Gospel the perfection of two ways of life is described: one consists in work, the other in rest; one in fighting, the other in victory; one in activity, the other in stillness; one in action, the other in contemplation, so one is called active and the other contemplative. There are many examples in Scripture of this double way of life: Leah represents one, Rachel the other [Gen 29:16ff.];<sup>1</sup> Peter one, John the other. In the text quoted one is described perfectly in Martha, the other in Mary, while both were most perfect in the glorious Virgin. What was given in part to these two sisters and to some other saints was given most fully to Mary. Jerome<sup>2</sup>: ‘To others grace was given in part, but Mary was filled with the fulness of grace’, so that one may say of her what was said of her Son: He was given *the Spirit without measure* [Jn 3:34].

The perfection of the active life is depicted in Martha who is described as working *worried and distracted by many things* [Lk 10:41]. The perfection of contemplative life is depicted in Mary who is described as being occupied within the Church (!), listening to the divine word. Martha worked but Mary was free. The glorious Virgin was Martha, in fact she was busier than Martha for Martha received Christ in her material home, while Mary received him into her own womb;<sup>3</sup> Martha gave him bread to eat, the Virgin her own milk. So Augustine says in his book *De assumptione beatae Virginis*<sup>4</sup>:

Mary was a servant of Christ in her work and in the most sincere truth of her faith as all know who think properly; without a doubt she was a servant who carried him in her womb, fed and cared for him after his birth, *laid him in a manger* as the Gospel says [Lk 2:7], fled with him from the face of Herod into Egypt [Mt 2:13], and through his infancy cared for him with a mother’s affection.

Mary was also occupied in being with and contemplating Christ. Just as the other Mary remained beside Christ, the Virgin Mary was incomparably closer to him and so she took in much more from his words. Blessed Mary

penetrated the deepest abyss of divine wisdom to a degree one could not believe possible so that while being a creature not united to God in one person she seemed to be immersed in that inaccessible light.<sup>5</sup>

And ‘what did she in whom the wisdom of God had been hidden not know of God’.<sup>6</sup> More is said of her wisdom. Because the contemplative life is far more excellent, more noble and more to be chosen than the active life, the Gospel ends with a commendation of it. Its most perfect example is the Virgin Mary, and the Gospel text quoted from Luke 10:41 gives the best commendation of it.

The contemplative life is described in the text from three points of view, namely, its existence, its pre-eminence and its permanence. Firstly, the text states in what contemplation consists by saying: *Mary*, as will be seen. Secondly, the text states that contemplation far excels the other by saying: *has chosen the better part*; Augustine<sup>7</sup>: ‘Martha did not choose a wrong way, but the other is better’. Thirdly, the text states that contemplation will never end by saying: *which will not be taken away from her*; Augustine<sup>8</sup>:

Any burden of necessity has been taken from you, but there remains the sweetness of truth; what you chose will not be taken from you; it will not be taken but increased. In that life, life is increased and perfected in the other life, it will never be taken away.

I. The text says: *Mary*, a name expressing the completeness or existence of contemplation. Contemplation consists in three things that of necessity are to be acquired step by step, namely, in purifying sacrifices, in images that teach, and in desires that stir a person. I state that sacrifices purify by penitential sighing, images teach the

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

mind, and desires stir from experiences of the affections or from beyond the mind. These three are expressed in the name Mary: Mary means 'a bitter sea'<sup>9</sup> because of her penitential outpourings; it means 'star of the sea' or 'one who enlightens' because of her intellectual insights; it means 'lady' or 'one who rules' because of the desires of her affections. In accord with these three, the Virgin Mary is shown in Scripture to have gone up to heaven by a triple way, namely, the purgative and illuminative ways and by the way of perfection.

1. Firstly, contemplation or the contemplative life consists in sighs of penitence. Mary is a model of this since her name means 'a bitter sea'. The mind has to be purified to be capable of thinking and tasting what is above and heavenly.<sup>10</sup> It is purified by sorrowful and bitter sighs because almost all medicines for healing the body are bitter. Job 3:24 says: *For my sighing comes like my bread.* Gregory,<sup>11</sup> *Moralia*: 'Unless the mind be first affected by sighs from troubles, it will not be satisfied with the refreshment of contemplation'. Wherever the mind turns it finds grounds for bitterness and sorrow. If it turns to what is below itself, it meets the fear of the punishment of hell; if above itself, it meets the delay of the joys of heaven; if beside and in itself, it meets remorse for sin and the isolation of the present exile. Hence Jeremiah 15:17 states: *Under the weight of your hand I sat alone, for you had filled me with indignation;* sitting alone signifies stability of mind, tranquility signifies solitude of the mind, harshness of sorrow signifies fulness of bitterness. A sorrowing person usually sits and looks for solitude, because 'solitary places' are 'favourable to grieving'.<sup>12</sup> Holy persons taste bitterness over the delay of the heavenly reward, over the isolation of the present exile, despise prosperity in the world, do not fear setbacks, want to die, refuse to live and put away from themselves every earthly thought.

This is well expressed in Job 3:20-22 who called out speaking for all the elect:

*Why is light given to one in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, who long for death, but it does not come, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures; who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they find the grave?*

This is equivalent to Job saying that while I see myself in the distress of this misfortune, I despise all the prosperity of this world. 'Light usually indicates prosperity just as darkness indicates adversity: *for darkness is as light to you* [Ps 139:12]'.<sup>13</sup> Not only do they despise prosperity but should it come to them they groan since, 'although they see themselves in no way utterly oppressed by it, they think with worry that they might depart from the love of the Lord and his law; so Job says: *Why is light given to one in misery?*'<sup>14</sup> 'Light is given to those in misery when those contemplating what is above recognize that they are in misery in this pilgrimage, and look to the light of a passing prosperity'.<sup>15</sup> Not only do they despise the prosperity of the world but they refuse to live on as they make little of the glory of this present life. So Job adds: *and life to the bitter in soul*. This is equivalent to saying that while they regret the harshness of this present exile and long with all their heart for the glory of a heavenly reward, they do not love the glory of earthly life, but bear it with much sadness. 'Life is given to the embittered when the glory of this world is given to those who are sad and lamenting'.<sup>16</sup>

Since to many of the chosen *the world has been crucified* [Gal 6:14], as they live on in the world the world regards them as living whereas they look at the world and strongly desire to die to the world. So Job adds: *who long for death, but it does not come*; 'they desire to mortify themselves utterly in the world and to put out any form of earthly glory. But death does not come because while they do not want earthly glory their way of life lives on'.<sup>17</sup> They do not reach the sweetness of inner contemplation.

Sometimes they do not reach what they desire so that during this delay they may reach what they desire with a broadened surface of the mind. So the bride, longing with desire for her beloved, calls out: *Upon my bed at night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not* [Song 3:1]. The beloved hides himself when he is sought so that when he is found he may be sought more ardently. The bride is distracted as she searches, so that the delay might make her more ready and loving when she finds the one she seeks. Job explains the desire for this increase when he adds: *and dig for it more than for hidden treasures*.<sup>18</sup>

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

Holy people want to die to this world so as to find in hidden places the treasure of wisdom.

For the deeper treasure hunters dig for treasure, the more intense becomes their digging; the closer they think they are getting to the hidden treasure, the more strenuously they work.<sup>19</sup> Wisdom is not found on the surface, but lies rather in invisible places. We discover the treasure of wisdom when we abandon what is visible and hide ourselves in the invisible.<sup>20</sup>

The more progress one makes in the discovery of wisdom, the more one comes to that mortification.

Whoever looks for death is happy when the grave is found. So Job adds: *who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they find the grave.*

Just as the grave is the place in which a body is hidden, so divine contemplation is a kind of grave in which the soul hides. We hide the dead in a grave, and when we have mortified ourselves externally, we then hide in the hidden places of inner contemplation. Whoever, therefore, looks for death, rejoices on finding a grave. Whoever desires to mortify himself or herself, rejoices greatly on finding the rest of contemplation, so that a person within the embrace of close love hides as one dead to the world, hides from all the disturbances of external concerns. The Apostle says: *You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God* [Col 3:3].<sup>21</sup>

Mary was an example of such bitterness. Her name means ‘a bitter sea’ and so the text of Ruth 1:20 can be applied to her: *Call me no longer Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me.* This is equivalent to saying: while I am beautiful from virginal purity, I am bitter from inner compassion, as Simeon said of her: *a sword will pierce your own soul too* [Lk 1:35]. Hence a certain saint called her ‘a crucified person’. A soul so embittered from penitential sighs, like a person purified by sacrifices, goes up to heaven as did Mary to whom the text of Song 3:6 can be applied:

*What is that coming up from the wilderness, like a column of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of the merchant?* This question is asked by angels not out of ignorance but in admiration of the exaltation of the Virgin. They ask: *What is that coming up* by a lightening of the mind, *from the wilderness* by her perfect disdain of this world, *like a column of smoke* upright from a correct intention and weakened from the rigour of discipline, *perfumed* from the perfume of her good name spread throughout the whole Church, *with myrrh* from her sweet devotion, *with all the fragrant powders* from the sum of her virtues joined to most lowly humility. Therefore, Mary, so weakened from heavenly disciplines, went up to heaven like a column of smoke rising from the perfumes.

2. Secondly, the contemplative life consists in wise or intellectual images. Mary is an example of this in so far as her name means ‘star of the sea’ or ‘one who enlightens’. A mind purified by penitential sighs can be raised to intellectual pursuits since it has been opened to rays of wisdom and is able to look at images of eternal wisdom. This is contemplation as Richard<sup>22</sup> says: ‘Contemplation is a free insight of a mind intent with admiration on the images of wisdom’. The soul contemplates God in three books, as if in three images, namely, in the book of creatures, in the book of Scripture, and in the book of conscience. In the book of creatures the soul sees God as present, in the book of Scripture it hears God speaking, but in the book of conscience it experiences and feels God giving pleasure and approving. Hence eternal Wisdom meets the soul everywhere as stated in Wisdom 6:16: *She graciously appears to them in their paths.*

In the book of creatures there is a need to reflect and admire as one looks at the number, order, beauty, variety, ability, power and usefulness of creatures and from such reflection comes admiration. From the variety of creatures and their species their Creator can be recognized. ‘If many things have been made and come from one source, there is one Person who made them.’<sup>23</sup> If what has been made is ordered and beautiful, more beautiful is the One who made them; if they are greater, the One is greater; if they are good, the One is

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

better. Be careful, however, as you reflect on the beauty of a creature, not to stop there, because the creature is only an indication, a kind of shadow or trace of the creating Wisdom. Do not cling to it like a harlot, but you should go to the Creator to whom you attribute all with praise.

One must read and meditate on the book of Scripture. You are to read Scripture frequently and as you read meditate on the divine commands, the divine promises, the divine judgments and from these come to know the wisdom, justice and generosity of the Creator. Be careful, therefore, lest as you read Scripture you contradict the Scripture, rather submit to it piously.

The soul rests and is refreshed from devotion in the book of conscience. A mind examines the divine images and illumined with the light of wisdom is correctly called 'a star' and 'a star of the sea'. It is called a star because of the brightness of wisdom, and a star of the sea because of the bitterness scattered throughout present misfortunes. Sirach 50:6-7 says of the contemplative person Simon son of Onias: He shone *like the morning star among the clouds, like the full moon at the festal season, like the sun shining on the temple of the Most High*. Contemplation has a starting point, a finishing point and fruit. Its starting point is compared to the light of a star shining in the midst of cloud because of the mixture of darkness coming from the blindness of ignorance. Its finishing point is compared to a full moon because of the fulness of knowledge. Its fruit is compared to the light of the sun because of the spreading of teaching.

The text of Revelation 22:16 can well be applied to the Virgin Mary: *I am the root and the descendant of David, the morning star. The root and descendant of David* in her origin, *the bright morning star* in her time,<sup>24</sup> *bright* from the fulness of wisdom. If *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden* in Christ [Col 2:3], the light of wisdom flowing from the Father's mind as from a sun, then he filled not only the body but also the soul of Mary. There is no doubt that Mary was filled with the light of wisdom and so she is called *a bright star*. Mary is shown in Scripture to have gone up by the illuminative way: *Who is this that looks forth like the dawn, fair*

*as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?* [Song 6:10]. The ascent of the Virgin is compared to the dawn rising at a birth. Dawn is the border between night and day, and the Virgin was the border between sin and grace. She began with original sin but ended with a superabundant grace of holiness. In the conception of her Son she is compared to the beauty of the moon for she was filled with divine light and in her glorification she is compared to the sun.

Or to put it another way, we may say she is compared to a breaking of dawn because of the light of her faith. Dawn is the first light from the sun while our first illumination is by faith. She is compared to the moon because of the light of her wisdom or knowledge in life; although this was full in Mary for her calling, it was not simply full. She is compared to the sun because of the light of glory that had no shadow or change in her.

3. Contemplation or the contemplative life consists in experiences of the affections. Mary is an example of this since her name means 'lady'. A mind purified by penitential sighs and illumined by wise or intellectual insights, rises up by desires that are above the mind, and the soul is enkindled so that it is completely transformed into the person loved. As the Apostle says: *Anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him* [1 Cor 6:17]. She can rightly be called 'lady' like the bride, held in the chaste embrace of the heavenly King and Ruler of all. Mary is not only the bride but also the mother and so is rightly named 'queen of heaven and lady of the angels'.<sup>25</sup> Since she is exalted above every creature and is more conformed to Christ, her Son, she is filled with more abundant delights. Holy men and women can say: *Taste and see that the Lord is good* [Ps 34:8]. Mary can say as one who abounds:

*Come to me, you who desire me, and eat your fill of my fruits. For the memory of me is sweeter than honey, and the possession of me sweeter than the honeycomb* [Sir 24:19-20].

So Mary is shown in Scripture to have gone up by the way of perfection: *Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on*

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

*her beloved?* [Song 8:5]. In this text the ascent of Mary is described from the point where it began, as she went up from this earth to the Father, from this world to heaven. The Virgin Mary ‘was taken from earth and from this present wicked world and she reached the palace of heaven confirmed in her spotless glory’.<sup>26</sup>

The text describes how she ascended, namely, *flowing with delights*,<sup>27</sup> not bodily but spiritual delights that do not stain but beautify a soul. Song 7:6: *How fair and how pleasant you are, O loved one, in delights*.<sup>28</sup> Delights are nothing other than the satisfying of desires; desires are satisfied by love when the one loving is transformed into the one loved. If one delights in anything stained or foul, one is transformed into foulness; if in beauty, one is transformed into beauty. Hugo<sup>29</sup>:

The force of love is such that you must be such a person as is the one you love and with whom you are joined in affection; may you be transformed into his or her likeness by your very coming together in love.

The text describes the union: *leaning on her beloved* from the tenderness of love she leaned on her beloved, supporting herself on the beloved. There is no doubt that the Son met his Mother ascending; nor was it fitting for the King to come alone without the columns of holy spirits. Hence, the whole heavenly curia met Mary.<sup>30</sup> On this honour we read:

*The king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; then he sat on his throne, and had a throne brought for the king's mother* [1 Kings 2:19]. *At your right stands the queen in gold of Ophir* [Ps 45:9].

II. The contemplative life is recommended not only because it exists but because of its pre-eminence. Hence, the text adds: *Mary has chosen the better part*. A good part is to observe the precepts: *The Lord is my portion, I promise to keep your words* [Ps 119:57]. A better part is to observe the counsels beyond the precepts:

*Then the Lord said to Aaron: You shall have no allotment in their land, nor shall you have any share among them; I am your share and your possession among the Israelites [Num 18:20].*

This expresses clearly the counsel of poverty. The *best* part is to contemplate the divine and taste the eternal: *The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot* [Ps 16:5]. The Gospel says of this: *Mary has chosen the better part*. This part is best because of its unity, tranquility, security and sweetness. It is reasonable to prefer unity to diversity, tranquility to worry, security to discrimination and sweetness to bitterness.

1. Firstly, the part of Mary is best, that is, a contemplative life, because of its unity rightly preferred to diversity. An active life is concerned with many things, as the Lord said to Martha: *you are worried and distracted by many things*. But the contemplative life is concerned with the one thing that is necessary. ‘One is preferred to many since many things were made but only One made them.’<sup>31</sup> Mary was intent on this One, namely God, a Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit whose unity exceeds any other unity. Bernard, *Ad Eugenium*<sup>32</sup>: ‘Among all unities the Trinity holds the vault together’. ‘*The Lord is my portion,*’ says my soul, ‘*therefore I will hope in him*’ [Lam 3:24]. These words can be spoken confidently by a soul that has left behind all earthly possessions and is completely emptied of them and hopes for and waits for nothing other than God. *My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever* [Ps 73:26].

2. Secondly, Mary’s part is the best because of the tranquility of mind that is rightly preferred to worry and trouble. Since an active person is busy with many concerns, he or she must of necessity be troubled and worried about these concerns. But a contemplative person is concerned for and is quiet in one thing, because quiet can only be in one thing. Augustine, *De verbis Domini*, sermon 26<sup>33</sup>:

Behold, how many you are: Who could hold you together if you did not hold one thing in common? Is this quiet found in a multiplicity? With one you have a people; take away the one thing

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

and there is a crowd. What is a crowd other than a disturbed multitude?

The Lord said to Martha: *you are worried and distracted by many things*. On this we read: *Go to the side of the holy age, with them that live and give praise to God* [Sir 17:25 DRB]. *To the side of the holy age*, that is, 'of eternal quiet',<sup>34</sup> where there is no care or worry but everlasting peace.

3. Thirdly, Mary's part is best because of the security that is rightly preferred to division. Augustine, in *Super Genesim*<sup>35</sup> says: An active life is a diligent care to succeed, but the contemplative life is in the secure peace of victory. How many divisions, how many dangers are there in the cares of this world, not only bodily but also spiritual cares! There is security in the contemplation of the divine as a Psalm says: *I say to you, O Lord, I say, 'You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living'* [Ps 142:5]. For if at times there be some wavering in a contemplative life, this does not come from the contemplative life but from some action necessarily joined to it; but the contemplative finds relief in the One who is *my portion in the land of the living*. An active life is busy with what is mortal and sometimes abandoned: the bodies, even of holy people, are fed but they are mortal; hunger, thirst and divisions weaken life.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, the contemplative life is concerned with what endures and so it is secure.

4. Fourthly, Mary's part is best because of sweetness rightly preferred to bitterness. Who could list the bitterness sprinkled throughout an active life? 'A person wants to be present when he or she serves but sometimes this is not possible: one searches for what is not present, one sees what is present';<sup>37</sup> and this is not done without effort and bitterness. But contemplatives taste how sweet is the Lord [Ps 34:8; 100:5] and rejoice on their couches [Ps 149:5], 'that is in their conscience';<sup>38</sup> and this will be even more so in glory when the person will be refreshed by the Lord, when the Lord *will come and serve them* [Lk 12:37]. Ecclesiastes 5:18 says:

*This is what I have seen to be good: it is fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils*

*under the sun for the few days of the life God gives us; for this is our lot.*

Activity should lead to contemplation just as work should lead to quiet and sorrow to sweetness; and so the great gift of God is when one experiences divine consolations in work. Unfortunate is the person who serves others but never serves him or herself, who is intent on others but neglects self. Therefore, a person should care for others but not omit self; one has to refresh oneself and after work and active duties one must stop for a while in the consolations of the contemplative life. The contemplative life is called better because it *will not be taken away*.

By the merits of the Virgin Mary and of all the saints we are led to this part by the Son of the living God, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

SERMON 7

*Who is this coming up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?* [Song 8:5 DRB]. In these words the angels ask a question, they are not doubting or hesitating; rather they are rejoicing together and admiring the excellence of the glorious Virgin today assumed into heaven. In their admiration they describe three aspects of her Assumption, namely, the status, the how, and the company. In admiration they ask: Who is this so raised up by the ascent, so filled with comfort, so honoured by her companions?

They describe her heavenly status when they say: *Who is this coming up from the desert*, without a doubt because she is in heaven; her complete joy: *flowing with delights*; the honour of her companions: *leaning upon her beloved*. The Son comes to meet the Mother on whom he depended for tenderness; and it is not surprising that the King of heaven does not come alone, but surrounded by columns of holy spirits both angelic and human.

I. The text says: *Who is this coming up?* The Holy Spirit wants us to understand two things about the ascent, namely the terminus ‘towards where’ and the terminus ‘from where’, as is true for all movement. The terminus ‘towards where’ is heaven, the terminus ‘from where’ is the earth represented by the desert, when it says: *from the desert*. Jerome says this in his letter *De assumptione*<sup>1</sup>: ‘Today the glorious Virgin was taken from earth and from this present wicked world and she reached the palace of heaven confirmed in her spotless glory’. We are to examine how she ascended.

Ascent is a movement. Four things are necessary for local movement either to cause it or to make it possible. Firstly, there must be a distance from the thing being moved to the terminus of the movement. ‘Movement is not the movement’;<sup>2</sup> every movement is based on a need and lack of that to which it moves.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, there is a need for a slope so that something can move by its own weight; and this is in natural movement: fire by its own weight goes upwards while earth by its weight goes downwards. Thirdly, there must be a

contact with some external nature; for although fire by its own weight is taken upwards, it can be held down in another material. Fourthly, something must start the movement or remove what hinders movement. No matter how heavy is the natural weight of an object, and provided it is not in contact with another object and stands at a distance from the terminus of the movement, it will not be moved unless it is pushed. If a stone were on top of a sun-dial or a column, it would not fall down unless it be pushed off the column.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, four things are necessary for movement, namely, distance, slope, contact and a push. It is the same for spiritual movement. In this ascent humility is the distance, love the slope, chastity the purifying power, and poverty the moving force.

The Virgin Mary went up distanced by humility: *When it says, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who ascended is the same one who descended* [Eph 4:9-10]. Not like Lucifer who said: *I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne, I will ascend to the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High* [Isa 14:13-14]. For this he was cast down to earth:

*How you are fallen etc.* [Isa 14:12]. *But when you are invited to a wedding banquet, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'* [Lk 14:10]. *It is better to be told, 'Come up here,' than to be put lower in the presence of a noble* [Prov 25:7].

2. Mary ascended on the slope of love. Love is the weight of the soul. Augustine in his *Confessions*<sup>5</sup>: 'My weight is my love; by it I am taken wherever I am taken'. Also in *The City of God*<sup>6</sup>:

Like love, the movement of bodies depends on weight, whether by heaviness to below, or above by lightness. Bodies by weight, souls by love are taken to wherever they are taken.

The more weight a bodily substance has the more quickly is it taken upwards by fire, and in spiritual matters the more a soul has of divine love the more quickly is it taken upwards. Divine love filled the

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

whole of Mary for the Holy Spirit, the love of the Father and Son, overshadowed her [Lk 1:35]. This is indicated in Judges 13:20 when speaking of the sacrifice of Manoah: *When the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar.* Song: *King Solomon made himself a palanquin, from the wood of Lebanon,* and later in the same passage: *its interior was inlaid with love* [Song 3:9-10].

3. Mary ascended purified by chastity and weakened by the rigour of discipline. Mary was more pure than any creature and so, as Anselm says in *The Virgin Conception and Original Sin*<sup>7</sup>: ‘It was fitting that the Virgin who was to be the Mother of God should shine with a purity than which nothing greater could be thought of under God’. Augustine, *On nature and grace*,<sup>8</sup> while speaking of the Fathers of the Old Testament, says that none of them could say he was without sin; but when he comes to Mary he says, of her alone, ‘when there is question of sin I want no mention to be made’, for not only did she not sin, but after her sanctification she could not sin. This is wonderfully represented in Song 3:6: *What is that coming up from the wilderness, like a column of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?*

4. Mary was moved by poverty. She knew that the entrance to heaven is narrow, and one cannot enter unless stripped, with the camel’s hump taken away, namely, the affections and earthly greed, for as the Master says: *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God* [Mt 19:24; Mk 10:25; Lk 18:25]. She knew also that the ascent into heaven is arduous and one cannot get there without putting aside the burden of corporal possessions. 2 Kings 2:11-13, speaking of the ascent of Elijah, represents this well when as *Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven* Elisha called out: *The chariots of Israel and its horsemen.* Then Elisha tore his own clothes. The whirlwind is the virtues or powers of the soul; the four wheels of the chariot are the four cardinal virtues, namely, wheels by which the soul is carried into heaven; they must be fiery, that is, afire with love; and finally it is necessary that love be spurred on by poverty, represented by the

tearing up of the clothes. Gregory<sup>9</sup> says: ‘What are earthly possessions other than clothing for the body?’

II. The text continues: *from the desert*, a reference to the terminus ‘from where’, because she crossed from this world to the Father, from this life to a palace, from earth to heaven. The desert in its conditions and properties stands for the world, because the desert is a place of error, horror, disorder, and barrenness: a devious, horrible, disordered and barren place.

1. Firstly, the desert is a devious place or a place of error because it lacks roads and signposts. *In a dry and weary land where there is no water; so I have looked for you in the sanctuary* [Ps 63:1-2]. The children of Israel were lost for *three days in the wilderness* [Ex 15:22]. *Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town* [Ps 107:4]. Clearly, we do not long for that kind of truth.

2. The desert is also a place of horror because of attacks by the enemies. *He sustained him in a desert land, in a howling wilderness waste* [Deut 32:10]. And so it is a place of temptation: *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil* [Mt 4:1]. Clearly, we do not long for that kind of security.

3. The desert is a place of disorder. There is a disorder in the management of temporal concerns and there is a disorder in the desert on account of the thorn-bushes: *When the Lord has given Zebah and Zalumna into my hand, I will trample your flesh on the thorns of the wilderness and on briers* [Judg 8:7].

*My love-song concerning his vineyard, he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and it shall be overgrown with briers and thorns* [Isa 5:1-2, 6].

Clearly, we do not long for that kind of sweetness.

4. Fourthly, the desert is a barren place bereft of spiritual goods: *Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals, ... they shall be like a shrub in the desert, ... in an uninhabited salt land* [Jer 17:1-6]. The Lord said: *How can we feed these people with bread here in the desert?* [Mk 8:4]. And in another text: *This is a deserted place, and the*

## Assumption of B. V. Mary

*hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves* [Mt 14:15]. Clearly, we do not long for that kind of food.

III. The text continues: *flowing with delights*, not earthly and carnal delights, that is, false, superficial, inadequate and temporal delights, but spiritual delights, that is, true, interior, full and eternal delights.

1. Earthly delights are false delights: *They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, revelling in their dissipation* [2 Pet 2:13]. But spiritual delights are true delights: *If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored ... and you will delight yourself in the Almighty* [Job 22:23, 26].

2. Secondly, earthly delights are superficial: *O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you with crimson, in luxury* [2 Sam 1:24]. But spiritual delights are interior delights: *All to whom God gives wealth and possessions, ... will scarcely brood over the days of their lives, because God keeps them occupied with the joy of their hearts* [Ecc 5:19-20].

3. Thirdly, earthly delights are inadequate, in fact they are harmful: *The widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives* [1 Tim 5:6]. But spiritual delights are full: *That you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom* [Isa 66:11].

4. Fourthly, worldly delights are temporal and end in trouble: *As she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, so give her a like measure of torment and grief* [Rev 18:7]. But spiritual delights are eternal delights: *My delights are to be with the human race* [Prov 8:31].

The text concludes: *leaning upon her beloved*, that is, totally reclining on him.<sup>10</sup>

## SERMON 8

*He rode on a cherub, and flew; he came swiftly upon the wings of the wind* [Ps 18:10]. This text describes the ascension or Assumption of the blessed Virgin Mary from three points of view: its movement, terminus and method. By movement I understand an ordered progression by which it becomes understandable to us when it says: *he rode on*; by the terminus I understand an exalted and perfect state by which it is made venerable for us when the text says: *on a cherub*; by method I understand that most swift movement or ascent which make it admirable for us when it says: *he came swiftly upon the wings of the wind*, with an ease and speed she went up more swiftly than the movement of the wind so that it seemed more like flight than an ascent.

I. The text says: *He rode on a cherub*, that is, exalted above the choirs of angels. By what steps did she go up? In what ways are angels arranged? According to blessed Dionysius<sup>1</sup>: ‘Our perfecter Paul [see Eph 1:21; Col 1:16; Rom 8:38] divides the heavenly groups into three threes’. Since there are three hierarchies or three groups, so there are three ascensions, namely, exterior or low, interior or middle, and higher or supreme.

1. The first ascent in accord with the first group has three steps in accord with the three orders. In the first group or hierarchy are Angels, Archangels, Principalities: Angels assist and make announcements, Archangels reveal, but Principalities rule or direct. So there are three gifts, namely, announcing, dictating and leading; and, as Bernard says *Ad Eugenium*,<sup>2</sup> among Angels there is ‘assistance as piety’, among Archangels there is ‘revelation as light’, among Principalities there is leadership ‘as a beginning’. So our hierarchy, namely, the Virgin Mary, model of every ascent to God, in accord with the angelic order went up by piety, in accord with the order of Archangels she went up by a study of truth, and in accord with the order of Principalities she went up by an example of goodness.

Firstly, the Virgin Mary, as if placed in the first hierarchy, ascended by an affection of piety, because she acted kindly to all.

## Appendix

This is prefigured in 2 Sam 15:30: *David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, with his head covered and walking barefoot.* By the olive, a fruit light and rich, I understand piety and kindness, by weeping I understand compassion, by the covered head I understand shame, by bare feet I understand purity of the affections.

Secondly, Mary ascended in accord with the order of Archangels by a study of truth:

*'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.'* For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem [Isa 2:3].

The mountain of the Lord is the mountain on which was given the law of the Gospel:

*When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak and taught them etc.* [Mt 5:1-2].

The house of the God of Jacob is the Church<sup>3</sup> in which truth is taught. Because Mary was assiduous in learning, so later she was a leader in teaching.

Thirdly, Mary ascended in accord with the order of Principalities by her example of goodness so that she could truly be our duchess and princess, an example of goodness, seriousness, modesty and maturity, a mirror of purity, a norm of discipline. *Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts* [Ps 24:3]. Who is such a person? She is. Who is she? The Virgin Mary with *clean hands* and clean in her work; *pure of heart*: pure in her thoughts;<sup>4</sup> *who do not lift up their souls to what is false*: pure in affections; *and do not swear deceitfully* [Ps 24:4]: pure in speech.

2. The second ascent is interior or middle, in accord with the second group or hierarchy, and it has three steps according to the arrangement of the three orders. In this order there are Powers,

Virtues and Dominations. Powers control hostile forces lest they do harm as much as they are able; Virtues work miracles in elements and with the elements of the world in confirmation of the faith; Dominations command others.<sup>5</sup> Hence, there are three gifts by which the middle hierarchy is arranged, namely, to strengthen, work and command. Bernard, V *Ad Eugenium*<sup>6</sup>: In Powers ‘salvation is guarded’, in Dominations etc.<sup>7</sup>

## ENDNOTES

## SERMON 1

## Pages 77-97

- 1 *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, n. 4 (in the works of Jerome, PL 30, 126).
- 2 Among whom Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, l. 12, c. 23 (PL 42, 266); *Christian Instruction*, book 4, ch. 21, n. 45, FOTC, vol. 2, 1947, 215; *Glossa ordinaria* on Gen 6:9, in Lyranus (I, 50v): *Noah was a righteous man*: ‘Noah by his actions represents Christ’.
- 3 Gen 5:29, *He named him Noah, saying, this one shall bring us relief* etc.; while Jerome, *De nominibus hebraicis* (PL 23, 782, 837 etc.) has: ‘Noah, rest’.
- 4 Jerome, *De nominibus hebraicis* (PL 23, 842).
- 5 *Glossa ordinaria* on this text, in Lyranus (I, 76r): ‘The ark was made from acacia wood, which is light and incorruptible, little different from hawthorn ...’; from Bede, *De tabernaculo*, l. 1, c. 4 (PL 91, 401).
- 6 Rom 8:3.
- 7 Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, l. 1, n. 30 (PL 23, 253); *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, n. 9 (in the works of Jerome, PL 30, 131).
- 8 Book 15, ch. 26, FOTC, vol. 14, 1952, 478, from where some of the material in the text is taken; see also *Glossa ordinaria* on Gen 6:15, in Lyranus (I, 51r).
- 9 L. 12, ch. 14 (PL 42, 262).
- 10 Augustine, *Christian Instruction*, book 1, ch. 23, n. 22, FOTC, vol. 2, 1947, 43; in P. Lombard, *Liber III Sententiarum*, d. 28, c. 1 (p. 678ss.). See Matthew himself, *Quaestiones de anima beata*, q. 2 (ed. A. Emmen in BFS XVIII, 203).
- 11 *The City of God*, book 22, ch. 24, FOTC, vol. 24, 1954, 484; *Enarratio in Ps 83*, n. 11 (PL 37, 1065); *The Trinity*, book 15, ch. 6, n. 10, FOTC, vol. 45, 1953, 463.

## Appendix

- 12 Rather Fulgentius, *To Peter on Faith*, ch. 2, n. 14 and 17, FOTC, vol. 95, 1997, 68 and 70.
- 13 Hymn for the Feast of the Annunciation, A. Guéranger, *The Liturgical Year*, Lent, London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1930, 476: 'Quem terra, pondus, sidera'.
- 14 Response, Common of the B. V. Mary, *The Divine Office*, vol. 1, E. J. Dwyer: Sydney, 1974, 241\*.
- 15 *Confessions*, book 13, ch. 9, n. 10, FOTC, vol. 21, 1953, 416.
- 16 Hugo, *De arrha animae* (PL 176, 954).
- 17 Jn 13:4-11, and *Glossa interlinearis* on Jn 13:9, in Lyranus (V, 225r): *not my feet only*: 'of the affection'.
- 18 *De natura boni*, c. 4 (PL 42, 553).
- 19 In the NRSV the words: *The Lord opened a great tooth in the jaw of an ass*, read: *So God split open the hollow place that is at Lebi*.
- 20 Bernard, *Epistola 174*, Ad canonicos Lugdunenses, n. 5 (PL 182, 334). See above, page 2, note 2.
- 21 On this see Matthew himself, *Quaestiones de gratia*, qq. 3 and 6 (ed. V. Doucet in BFS XI, 78, 158); *Quaestiones de anima beata*, q. 3 (ed. A Emmen in BFS XVIII, 235).
- 22 A statement found also in Bonaventure, *Sermo IV de assumptione B. V. Mariae* (IX, 696a).
- 23 Second antiphon for Morning Prayer, Feast of the Assumption, *The Divine Office*, vol. 3, E. J. Dwyer: Sydney, 1974, 195\*.
- 24 *Glossa interlinearis* on Dan 2:34, in Lyranus (IV, 298v): *stone*: Christ from whom: the stone which the builders rejected etc. *Not by human hands*: without the seed of a man born from a virgin'.
- 25 *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, n. 8 and n. 9 (in the works of Jerome, PL 30, 130).
- 26 From Ps.-Jerome, *Epistola 9*, n. 8 (PL 30, 130).
- 27 *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, Tractate 111, n. 3, FOTC, vol. 90, 1994, 300; *Enarratio in Ps. 109*, n. 8 (PL 37, 1451) etc.
- 28 See above, page 32, note 27.
- 29 *Letter 92*, FOTC, vol. 18, 1953, 52.
- 30 *Sermon for the Sunday within the Octave of the Assumption*, n. 3, in, *St Bernard's Sermons for the Seasons and principal Festivals of the Year*, vol. 3, Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1925, 261.
- 31 Anselm, *Homiliae*, homilia 9 (PL 158, 648; PL 95, 1508). Bonaventure attributes this opinion to Bede, *Commentarium in Lucam*, c. 10, n. 79 (VII, 277a).

- 32 *Moralia*, l. 2, c. 3, n. 3 (PL 75, 556); also *Dialogorum libri.*, l. 4 c. 33 (PL 77, 376), in P. Lombard, *Liber II Sententiarum*, d. 11, c. 2 (p. 357).
- 33 In books written on the skins of animals.
- 34 According to the sense of *In 1 Regum*, l. 5, c. 3, n. 15 (PL 79, 347); *Moralia*, l. 14, c. 8, n. 10; l. 15, c. 13, n. 15 (PL 75, 1045, 1088); literally in Bonaventure, *Commtarius. in Sapientiam*, c. 8 (VI, 165b) and see the note of the editor there.
- 35 *The City of God*, book 22, ch. 30, FOTC, vol. 24, 1954, 505ff.
- 36 *Glossa ordinaria* on Ps 121:3, in Lyranus (III, 278r): ‘Together: what remains always the same’; from Augustine on this text (PL 37, 1622).
- 37 *Confessions*, book 12, c. 11, n. 12, FOTC, vol. 21, 1953, 376.
- 38 Prosper Aquitanus, *Sententiae ex August. delibatae*, n. 98 (PL 45, 1867): ‘The whole nature of justice is to turn from evil and do good’.
- 39 Prosper Aquitanus, *Sententiae ex August. delibatae*, n. 1 (PL 45, 1859): ‘True innocence harms neither self nor another’.
- 40 Hugo de S. Victore, *De sacramentis christianae fidei*, l. 2, p. 13, c. 1 (PL 176, 526): ‘Avarice is an immoderate desire to possess’.
- 41 *Glossa interlinearis* on Isa 33, 15 in Lyranus (IV, 61r), where is found also the next quote.
- 42 *Sacramentum Gregorianum*, in assumptione S. M. Virginis: ‘Nor could she be held down by the bonds of death’ (PL 78, 133).
- 43 From here till the end of the sermon was copied by Bernardine of Siena, *Sermones de B. Virgine*, sermo 9, a. 3, c. 1 (*Opera omnia*, VI, Quaracchi 1959, 173-177).
- 44 *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, n. 2 (in the works of Jerome, PL 30, 123ss.).
- 45 *De assumptione B. M. Virginis* (in the works of Augustine, PL 40, 1141-1148).
- 46 As stated in *Sacramentum Gregorianum*; see above, page 92, note 42.
- 47 *Eighty-three different Questions*, q. 11, FOTC, vol. 70, 1982, 42: ‘The freeing of human beings should be clear in both sexes’; but more probably the quote is from Ambrose, *In Lucam*, l. 4, n. 57 (PL 15, 1629): ‘The Lord came to heal both sexes’. P. Abelard proposed the same argument, *Sermo 26*, *De assumptione B. Mariae* (PL 178, 543).
- 48 L. 12, c. 35, n. 68 (PL 34, 483). This argument is found in Bonaventure, *Sermo I de assumptione B. V. Mariae* (IX, 690a).
- 49 *De assumptione B. M. Virginis*, c. 8 (in the works of Augustine (PL 40, 1147)).

## Appendix

- 50 *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, c. 2 (in the works of Jerome, PL 30, 123).
- 51 Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 2, ch. 112, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, 41-44.
- 52 Augustine, *Confessions*, book 9, ch. 7, n. 16, FOTC, vol. 21, 1953, 242; *The City of God*, book 22, ch. 8, FOTC, vol. 24, 1954, 431ff.; Paulinus, *Vita S. Ambrosii ad b. Augustinum*, n. 14 (PL 14, 31).
- 53 Namely, Elisabeth Schönaugiensis whose so called revelations were edited by F. W. E. Roth, *Die Visionen der hl. Elisabeth und die Schriften der Aebte Ekebert und Emecho von Schönaun*, Brünn 1884, 53-54. See also L. Oligier, *Revelationes B. Elisabeth*, in *Antonianum*, I, 1926, 24-83.

### SERMON 2

### Pages 98-115

- 1 Antiphon 3 for Evening Prayer I, Feast of the Assumption, *The Divine Office*, vol. 3, Sydney: E. J. Dwyer, 1974, 188\*.
- 2 *Christian Instruction*, book 2, ch. 1, n. 1, FOTC, vol. 2, 1947, 61; in P. Lombard, *Liber IV Sententiarum*, d. 1, c. 3 (p. 746).
- 3 *The Advantage of Believing*, ch. 16, n. 34, FOTC, vol. 4, 1947, 437.
- 4 See Matthew himself, *Quaestiones de anima beata*, qq. 3 and 5 (ed. A. Emmen in BFS XVIII, 231, 276).
- 5 L. 34, n. 25 (PL 76, 731).
- 6 The Latin for this text is *Hail, full of grace*. In Latin the word *Hail* is *Ave* and hence the play on the name Eve (Eva) and Ave.
- 7 Ps.-Augustine, *Sermo 194*, n. 1 (PL 39, 2105).
- 8 *Glossa interlinearis*, in Lyranus (IV, 39v): ‘*swift cloud*: the body of the holy Virgin’.
- 9 *Glossa ordinaria* on Gen 9:13, in Lyranus (I, 56r): ‘The bow is nothing other than rays of the sun and a moist cloud’.
- 10 See Bernard, *Super Missus est*, homilia 2, n. 17 (PL 183, 70).
- 11 See above page 2, note 2.
- 12 *The Virgin Conception and Original Sin*, ch. 18, New York: Magi Books Inc., 1969, 194.
- 13 Ch. 36, n. 42, FOTC, vol. 86, 1992, 52-53.
- 14 See Augustine, *The Trinity*, book 8, n. 12, FOTC, vol. 45, 1963, 263, a text quoted above on page 27, note 12.
- 15 *In Lucam*, l. 2, n. 21: ‘She remained for three months, not that the different house pleased her, but because she was not happy to be seen more frequently in public’ (PL 15, 1560).

- 16 See above page 7, note 17, page 28, note 15.
- 17 See above page 32, note 27.
- 18 See above page 33, note 28.
- 19 Augustine, *The City of God*, book 11, ch. 24, FOTC, vol. 14, 1952, 225: The holy city ‘lives in the eternity of God, shines in the truth of God, rejoices in the goodness of God’.
- 20 *De animalium generatione*, book 1, 2, *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. 5, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912, 716<sup>a</sup>: ‘the heavens and the sun ... are called by the name of parent and father’; Ps.-Aristotle, *De plantis*, book 1, n. 2, c. 6, *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. 6, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913, 817<sup>a</sup>: ‘The earth is mother of plants and the sun is the father’.
- 21 Book 2, n. 2, *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930, 194<sup>b</sup>.
- 22 *De generatione et corruptione*, book 2, n. 10, *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930, 194<sup>b</sup>: ‘As the sun rises growth occurs; as it sets we see decay’.
- 23 Rather Eadmerus, *De S. Anselmi similitudinibus*, c. 68 (PL 159, 641).
- 24 *The Trinity*, book 13, ch. 13, n. 17, FOTC, vol. 45, 1963, 393.
- 25 See Augustine, *Soliloquies*, book 1, ch. 8, n. 15, FOTC, vol. 5, 1948, 362: ‘Three things can be pointed out in the sun: it exists, it shines, it enlightens, just as in the most secret God there are three things: God is, God understands and God makes other things understandable’.
- 26 *The City of God*, book 8, ch. 4, FOTC, vol. 14, 1952, 28: (in God) is ‘the cause for understanding’; *ibid.*, ch. 9, 37: ‘the light for knowledge’; *ibid.*, ch. 10, 39: ‘The light for grasping truth’; Matthew treats of this in more detail in *Quaestiones de cognitione*, q. 2 (p. 235ss.).
- 27 *Moralia*, l. 2, c. 3, n. 3 (PL 75, 556). See above page 89, note 32.
- 28 Book 15, ch. 16, n. 26, FOTC, vol. 45, 1963, 491.
- 29 Book 22, ch. 24, FOTC, vol. 24, 1954, 489.
- 30 Rather Eadmerus, c. 59 (PL 159, 635).
- 31 Rather Eadmerus, c. 60 (PL 159, 635).
- 32 *The Trinity*, book 9, ch. 11, n. 16, FOTC, vol. 45, 1963, 248: ‘Objects are not in the mind when we think about them but their likenesses’.
- 33 *De anima*, book 3, n. 8, *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. 3, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931, 431<sup>b</sup>: ‘... not the objects themselves: a stone is not in the mind, but the form of a stone’; see Matthew, *Quaestiones de cognitione*, q. 4 (p. 275).
- 34 *Confessions*, book 3, ch. 6, n. 11, FOTC, vol. 21, 1953, 60; see Matthew, *Quaestiones de anima beata*, q. 1 (p. 188); *Quaestiones de gratia*, q. 8 (p. 204).

## Appendix

- 35 *Metaphysica*, l. 2, tr. 5, c. 3 (ed. J. T. Muckle, Toronto 1933, 185): ‘Delight is nothing other than when a power grasps without hindrance what it considers to be like itself; Avicenna, *Metaphysica*, VIII, c. 7 (Venice 1508, f. 101b): ‘Delight is nothing other than taking hold of what is similar’.
- 36 See Bernard, *Sermon for the Sunday within the octave of the Assumption*, in, *St Bernard’s Sermons for the Seasons and Principal Festivals of the Year*, vol. 3, Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1925, 261.
- 37 *De coelesti hierarchia*, c. 4, n. 3 (PG 3, 182): ‘From a primordial, transcendent order of all things there is a law that through the single hierarchies the first would be ... the more divine orders would be mixed with the lower, and those who guide to the divine presence, enlightenment and communion’, and in many other places.
- 38 *Summa Halensis*, III, n. 73: ‘Holy ... in Greek is  $\alpha\eta\iota\omicron\varsigma$ , from  $\alpha$  which means without, and  $\eta\iota\omicron\varsigma$  which is earth, hence holy means without earth’ (IV-2, 110b). See *Glossa ordinaria* on Lev 19:2, in Lyranus (I, 246v) from Origen on this text (PG 12, 530).
- 39 See above page 2, note 2.
- 40 See above pages 92-95.
- 41 P. Lombard on Ps 71:7 (PL 191, 662), and *Glossa interlinearis*, in Lyranus (III, 186v); from Augustine on this text (PL 36, 908).
- 42 See 1 Cor 15:53: *For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality.*
- 43 *Glossa interlinearis* on Prov 7:19-20, in Lyranus (III, 316v): ‘*Man*: Christ ... *home*: the Church ... *gone away*: rose from the dead and ascended into heaven ... *full moon*: when he will return to judge’.
- 44 See above page 100.

### SERMON 3

### Pages 116-127

- 1 See Augustine, *De vera religione*, c. 16, n. 31 (PL 34, 135): ‘By miracles the Lord prepared faith’; *The Advantage of Believing*, ch. 14, n. 32, FOTC, vol. 84, 1992, 52-53..
- 2 The Latin text is far different from Ps 57:45 in NRSV in which these words read: *that greedily devour human prey.*
- 3 See *Sacramentum Gregorianum, in Assumptione S. M. Virginis* (PL 78, 133): ‘... who we know in spite of the condition of flesh went away’.
- 4 *Feast of the Assumption, Antiphon for Morning Prayer, The Divine Office*, Sydney: E. J. Dwyer, 1974, 195\*.

## Endnotes

- 5 According to the *Transitus Mariae*, ed. By C. Tischendorf, *Apocalypses apocryphae*, Leipzig 1866, 115ss., 127.
- 6 From the revelations to Elisabeth Schönaugiensis, see above page 96, note 53.
- 7 Ps.-Jerome, *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, n. 4 (PL 30, 125).
- 8 Ps.-Jerome, *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, n. 3 (PL 30, 125), who also suggests the following about Gabriel a 'heavenly assistant' (124).
- 9 See above page 8, note 24.
- 10 Ps.-Jerome, *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, n. 2 (PL 30, 123ss.).
- 11 *De assumptione B. M. Virginis* (in the works of Augustine, PL 40, 1141-1148), from where the following arguments are drawn.
- 12 Namely, Elisabeth Schönaugiensis, see above page 96, note 53.
- 13 Ps.-Jerome, *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, n. 2 (PL 30, 124).
- 14 See above pages 92-95.
- 15 Some of the preceding material is suggested by Ps.-Jerome, *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, n. 8 (PL 30, 129ss.).
- 16 See above page 79, note 3.
  
- 17 *Glossa interlinearis* on Gen 6:14, in Lyranus (I, 50v).
- 18 *Glossa interlinearis* on Gen 6:14, in Lyranus (I, 50r).
- 19 For what follows see *Glossa ordinaria* on this text, in Lyranus (I, 176r).
- 20 P. Lombard, *Glossa* on Heb 9:1-2 (PL 192, 465): 'Gold represents wisdom'.
- 21 See Bernard, *Sermon for the Sunday within the Octave of the Assumption*, in, *St Bernard's Sermons for the Seasons and Principal Festivals of the Year*, vol. 3, Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1925, 261.
- 22 Anselm, *Homiliae*, Homilia. 9 (PL 158, 648).
- 23 See Gregory, *In Evangelia*, Homilia 12 in Mt 25:1-13, n. 1 (PL 76, 1118ss.).
- 24 See above page 2, note 4.
- 25 The word translated as redemption is purification in the Latin.
- 26 *The Virgin Conception and Original Sin*, ch. 18, New York: Magi Books Inc., 1969, 194.
- 27 See Bernard, *Super Missus est*, homilia 2, n. 17 (PL 183, 70).
- 28 Hymn for the Feast of the Annunciation, A. Guéranger, *The Liturgical Year*, Lent, London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1930, 476: 'Quem terra, pondus, sidera'.
- 29 From Ps.-Jerome, *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, n. 9 (PL 30, 131).

## Appendix

- 30 *The Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Response to a reading, *The Divine Office*, vol. 1, Sydney: E. J. Dwyer, 1974, 241\*.
- 31 P. Lombard, *Gloss* on Heb 9:4: 'By the ark is understood the flesh of Christ and by the manna the divinity?'
- 32 See above pages 117-119.
- 33 See Augustine, *The City of God*, book 12, ch. 1, FOTC, vol. 14, 1952, 246; and Matthew himself, *Quaestiones de gratia*, q. 5 (ed. V. Doucet in BFS XI, 124).
- 34 Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, book 3, n. 9, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969, 97.
- 35 P. Lombard, *Gloss* on Ps 4:9 (PL 191, 89): 'that is, in what is unchanging'; *Glossa interlinearis*, in Lyranus (III, 92r).
- 36 So Augustine, *The Trinity*, book 8, ch. 3, n. 4, FOTC, vol. 45, 1963, 248: 'This good and that good ... but the good in every good'.
- 37 Book 1, ch. 1, n. 1, FOTC, vol. 21, 1953, 4.
- 38 *Glossa interlinearis* on Gen 2:9, in Lyranus (I, 36v): 'Tree ... This is wisdom, the mother of all that is good'.
- 39 Augustine, *De vera religione*, c. 32, n. 59 (PL 34, 148): '... One will undoubtedly say to me, things delight because they are beautiful'; see *Confessions*, book 4, ch. 13, n. 20, FOTC, vol. 21, 1953, 90.
- 40 Augustine, *The Free Choice of the Will*, book 2, ch. 13, n. 59, FOTC, vol. 59, 1967, 146; see Matthew, *Quaestiones de anima beata*, q. 1 (p. 187ss.).
- 41 So Ps.-Augustine, *De spiritu et anima*, c. 9 (PL 40, 785). See above page 46, note 14.
- 42 As Avicenna and Algazel state and whose words are found above on page 110, note 35.
- 43 According to the teaching of Augustine; see above pages 108-110.
- 44 Jerome, *De nominibus hebraicis* (PL 23, 842).
- 45 Jerome, *De nominibus hebraicis* (PL 23, 842): 'Jerusalem, a vision of peace'.
- 46 Gen 2:2. Augustine, *Sermo 4*, c. 7, n. 8 (PL 38, 37): 'The seventh day that has no evening represents for us eternal rest in which there is no sunset'.

### SERMON 4

### Pages 128-129

- 1 See Ps.-Jerome, *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, nn. 8-9 (PL 30, 130).
- 2 Parts II-III of the sermon are missing.

### SERMON 5

### Pages 130-131

- 1 See above page 2, note 2.
- 2 *De divinis nominibus*, c. 4, n. 15 (PG 3, 714).
- 3 *The Trinity*, book 8, ch. 10, n. 14, FOTC, vol. 45, 1963, 266.
- 4 *De arrha animae* (PL 176, 954). This quotation is found above on page 8.
- 5 *Feast of the Assumption*, Antiphon for Morning Prayer, *The Divine Office*, Sydney: E. J. Dwyer, 1974, 195\*.

**SERMON 6**

**Pages 132-143**

- 1 Augustine expounds these figures in *Contra Faustum*, l. 22, cc. 52, 54-55 (PL 42, 432ss.); *De consensu evang.*, l. 1, c. 5, n. 8 (PL 34, 1045ss.); Gregory, *In Ezechielem*, l. 2, Homilia 2, nn. 10-11 (PL 76, 954ss.).
- 2 *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, n. 5 (in the works of Jerome, PL 30, 127).
- 3 Anselm, *Homiliae*, Homilia 9 (PL 158, 657): ‘she received him not in a house, but in her womb’.
- 4 Cap. 7 (in the works of Augustine, PL 40, 1146).
- 5 Bernard, See Bernard, *Sermon for the Sunday within the octave of the Assumption*, in, *St Bernard’s Sermons for the Seasons and Principal Festivals of the Year*, vol. 3, Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1925, 261.
- 6 Anselm, *Homiliae*, Homilia 9 (PL 158, 648). Some of the preceding statements seem to have come from Bonaventure, *Commentarium in Lucam*, c. 10, nn. 78-79 (VII, 276b-277a).
- 7 *Sermo 103*, c. 4, n. 5; *Sermo 104*, c. 2, n. 3 (PL 38, 615, 617).
- 8 *Sermo 103*, c. 4, n. 5 (PL 38, 615).
- 9 Jerome, *De nominibus hebraicis* (PL 23, 842) where the following interpretations are found.
- 10 Matthew, *Quaestiones de cognitione*, q. 8: ‘The mind must necessarily be cleared and purified . . .’ (BFS 1, ed. 2, 363, lin. 25-26).
- 11 L. 5, c. 8, n. 14 (PL 75, 686).
- 12 Bonaventure, *The Major Legend of Saint Francis*, ch. 1, n. 5, in, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 2, New York: New City Press, 534 ‘He then began to seek out solitary places, favourable to grieving’. See Augustine, *Confessions*, l. 8, ch. 12, n. 28: ‘I thought of solitude as a more apt place for weeping’ (PL 75, 680). NB: get FOTC reference
- 13 Gregory, *Moralia*, l. 5, c. 2, n. 2 (PL 75, 680).

## Appendix

- 14 Gregory, *Moralia*, l. 5, c. 2, n. 2 (PL 75, 681).
- 15 Gregory, *Moralia*, l. 5, c. 2, n. 2 (PL 75, 680).
- 16 Gregory, *Moralia*, l. 5, c. 3, n. 4 (PL 75, 682).
- 17 Gregory, *Moralia*, l. 5, c. 3, n. 5 (PL 75, 682).
- 18 Gregory, *Moralia*, l. 5, c. 3, n. 6 (PL 75, 682–683).
- 19 Gregory, *Moralia*, l. 5, c. 5, n. 7 (PL 75, 683).
- 20 Gregory, *Moralia*, l. 5, c. 5, n. 8 (PL 75, 684).
- 21 Gregory, *Moralia*, l. 5, c. 6, n. 9 (PL 75, 684).
- 22 Richard of St Victor, *Beniamin minor*, l. 1, c. 4 (PL 196, 67).
- 23 Augustine, *Sermo 104*, c. 2, n. 3 (PL 38, 617).
- 24 Augustine, *The Trinity*, book 4, ch. 4, n. 7, FOTC, vol. 45, 1963, 139: ‘The sixth (age) began with the birth of the Lord and it continues now until the unknown end of time’; see *Two Books on Genesis against the Manichees*, book 1, ch. 23, n. 40, FOTC, vol. 84, 1991, 86.
- 25 Hymn, ‘Ave, regina coelorum’, *The Divine Office*, vol. 3, Sydney: E. J Dwyer, 1974, 812\*.
- 26 Ps.-Jerome, *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, n. 4 (PL 30, 126).
- 27 These words are in the Latin Bible but not in the NRSV.
- 28 See footnote in NRSV on this verse.
- 29 Hugo de S. Victore, *De arrba animae* (PL 176, 954).
- 30 Ps.-Jerome, *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, n. 8 (PL 30, 130).
- 31 Augustine, *Sermo 104*, c. 2, n. 3 (PL 38, 617).
- 32 *De consideratione*, l. 5, c. 8, n. 19 (PL 182, 799): ‘Among all things that are rightly said to be one, the unity of the Trinity holds the vault together’.
- 33 *Sermo 103*, c. 3, n. 4 (PL 38, 614).
- 34 *Glossa interlinearis* on this text, in Lyranus (III, 404r).
- 35 This is found in *De Genesi ad litteram*, l. 12, c. 26, n. 54 (PL 34, 476): ‘For the sake of reaching this, where there will be secure quiet and a wonderful vision of truth, a person works, holds back from pleasure and endures setbacks ...’.
- 36 See Augustine, *Sermo 103*, c. 5, n. 6 (PL 38, 615).
- 37 Augustine, *Sermo 103*, c. 4, n. 5 (PL 38, 615).
- 38 P. Lombard, *Gloss* on Ps 149:5 (PL 191, 1289), and *Glossa Interlinearis* in Lyranus (III, 306r); from Augustine on this text (PL 37, 1955).

- 1 *Epistola 9*, Ad Paulam et Eustochium, n. 4 (in the works of Jerome, PL 30, 126).
- 2 Aristotle, *Physica* book 5, n. 1, *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930, 225<sup>b</sup>: ‘Movement is not the movement itself’; *Metaphysica*, book 10, n. 12, *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. 8, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928, 1068<sup>a</sup>.
- 3 See Aristotle, *De motu animalium*, n. 6, *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. 5, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912, 700<sup>b</sup>.
- 4 See Aristotle, *Physica*, book 8, n. 5, *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930, 256<sup>a</sup>; see Matthew, *Quaestiones de gratia*, q. 1 (ed. V. Doucet in BFS XI, 9).
- 5 Book 13, ch. 9, n. 10, FOTC, vol. 21, 1953, 416.
- 6 Book 11, ch. 28, FOTC, vol. 14, 1952, 232.
- 7 Ch. 18, New York: Magi Books Inc., 1969, 194.
- 8 Ch. 36, n. 42, FOTC, vol. 84, 1992, 52-53.
- 9 *In Evangelia*, Homilia 32, n. 2 (PL 76, 1233).
- 10 The sermon finishes here and is clearly incomplete.

**SERMON 8**

**Pages 149-151**

- 1 *De coelesti hierarchia*, c. 6, n. 2 (PG 3, 199); versio Ioannis Erigenae (PL 122, 1049): ‘Our divine holy perfecter divides the heavenly essences into three groups’; in *Dionysiaca*, l. 2, 831.
- 2 *De consideratione*, l. 5, c. 5, n. 12 (PL 182, 795).
- 3 *Glossa interlinearis* on Isa 2:3, in Lyranus (IV, 9r): ‘*The house of the God of Jacob: the Church*’.
- 4 *Glossa interlinearis* on Ps 23:3, in Lyranus (III, 118r): ‘*Clean hands: in work; pure hearts: pure in thoughts*’; from Augustine on this text (PL 36, 183).
- 5 From Bernard, *De consideratione*, l. 5, c. 4, n. 12 (PL 182, 795).
- 6 Bernard, *De consideratione*, l. 5, c. 5, n. 12 (PL 182, 795).
- 7 The unfinished sermon stops here.

## Appendix