

SERMON 9**On the visitation of blessed Mary****On the seven words of the glorious virgin in which seven levels or steps in love are implied**

How sweet are your words to my palate [Ps 118:103 (119:103)]! ‘Make me worthy to praise you, sacred Virgin’,¹ and do not look down on the poor service of your servant as you consider his not insignificant devotion to your praises. Deign, heavenly queen, to come to my help, in this topic of your sublime meanings, as to one navigating across vast seas without an oarsman or the blessing of a heavenly breeze. Help me so that I who desire, trusting in your grace, to declare, at least by stammering, the meaning of your words may be able to explain it with the help of your grace. May the divine guest of your dwelling be favourable so that, having kindled in me zeal for piety to praise his Mother, he does not refuse to be present as a pious listener from heaven.

What mortal, unless protected by a divine oracle, would presume with uncircumcised, even polluted lips to utter anything small or great of the true Mother of the God man; the Father predestined her from eternity to be the eternal Virgin, the Son chose her as a most worthy Mother, the Holy Spirit prepared her as a dwelling of all graces? With what words may I, a little person, state the highest meanings spoken by the most holy mouth of the virginal heart, for which the tongue of all the angels would not suffice? For in Matthew 12:35 the Lord says: *A good person out of a good treasure brings forth good things*. What word can be used as a theme? Who among pure people can be thought of as a better person than she who merited to be made the Mother of God, who for nine months in her heart and womb was hostess to God? What is a better treasure than the divine love with which the heart of the Virgin was afire as if in a furnace? From this heart, as from a furnace of divine heat, the blessed Virgin spoke good words, that is, words of most ardent charity. Just as from a vessel full of the finest and best wine only the best wine can come, or just as from a furnace of the highest heat only glowing heat can come out, so indeed from the Mother of Christ there could come out nothing other than a word of the highest and extreme divine love and ardour. It pertains to a wise lady and mother to speak but few words, but words that are true and full of meaning. Therefore:

On seven occasions, as if only seven words of wonderful meaning and virtue were spoken by the most blessed Mother of Christ to show mystically that she was filled with a sevenfold grace. With the Angel she spoke only twice, Luke 1:34-38: *How shall this be done* etc., and: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*. With Elizabeth also twice, Luke 1:44-55, namely, when greeting her and, secondly, when praising her, she said: *My soul glorifies the Lord* etc. She spoke twice to her Son, once in the Temple in Luke 2:48: *Son, why have you done this to us?* Secondly, at the wedding in John 2:3: *They have no wine*. Once to the servants in John 2:5: *Whatever he shall say to you, do*. And in all these she said very little except that she said more in praising and thanking God, namely, when she said: *My soul glorifies the Lord*²

when she spoke with God, not with other people.

These seven words were spoken according to the seven steps or acts of love following a wonderful progression and order as if they were seven flames from the furnace of her heart. As a devout person thinks and reflects on these words, he or she says with the Prophet: *How sweet are your words to my palate*, that is, to all my affections. Hence, this sweetness, felt by a devout soul in the words of the blessed Virgin, is an ardour of pious devotion that a soul tests experientially in the words. So the devout soul may say: *How sweet are your words to my palate!*

Accordingly, we may distinguish in order these seven flames of love in the words of the blessed Virgin: the first flame is of a separating love; the second, of a transforming love; the third, of a communicating love; the fourth, of a rejoicing love; the fifth, of a tasting love; the sixth, of a compassionate love; the seventh, of a perfecting love. We may divide these seven flames into three articles, so that in the first article three flames are included, in the second, only the fourth flame, and in the third, the last three flames.

ARTICLE 1**On the triple level of love shown in the triple word of the blessed Virgin**

Firstly, we may consider the three first flames according to the order used by the Evangelist St Luke in 1:34-35 to describe her statements.

CHAPTER 1

How much the blessed Virgin shrank from all corruption out of love for God and that she had a shadow of corruption

The first flame is a love that separates; the nature of true love is to distance oneself away from the person loved.

The greater and stronger love is, the more it draws back and vice versa. I ask you to reflect carefully on how evident it was that the Virgin drew far back in her first word to the Angel who, in Luke 1:30.34, promised her the conception and birth of the Son of God. As one stupefied she replied: *How shall this be done, because I know not man?* That is, since I am in the state and vow of never knowing a man, as if she were to say: I know indeed that God has many ways by which this could be done in harmony with God's will, but one way, as far as I am concerned and from the vow of my soul, is totally distant and foreign to my soul, namely, that I would conceive by knowing a man carnally, even if he were God.³

So XXVII, quaest.2, #2,⁴ has: 'Mary vowed that she would persevere as a virgin; so she said to the Angel: *How shall this be done, because I know not man*, that is, I have decided never to know this? There follows⁵: 'But', as Augustine says, 'the blessed Virgin had decided to keep for herself in her heart a vow of virginity, but this vow of virginity was not expressed verbally; she had submitted herself to the divine pleasure when she decided to remain a virgin unless God revealed to her to do otherwise'. And he adds: 'However, after her Son was born, what she had decided in her heart she expressed at the same time to her husband and both remained in virginity'.

Reflect carefully how much she drew back from anything contrary to her beloved, namely, to God; she hated not only any offence but even every corrupt and faulty action, as far as it could be done without offending him; as could happen in the marriage act, especially if done for a divine child. However, the blessed Virgin spoke this word because she had such hatred for this, both absolutely and for herself. Therefore, as I think, this was the main reason why the way of conceiving the Son of God, already decided on by God, was not revealed to her so that, by the Virgin's spirit, speech and effective action, it might be shown in word, speech and work that, in fact, this act of such fervent love would be made evident at its highest level.⁶

CHAPTER 2

The transformation by which the blessed Virgin was joined to God in the conception of the Son of God

The second is a flame of transforming love uniting the one loving with the one loved and vice versa.

Even though this flame is the first of all, in its completion and actual practice it is second because it is never fully experienced, nor is it fully reached in any actual exercise, unless a person be first fully practised in flight from and hatred of anything contrary to and everything that is a hindrance to a full possession of the beloved, of his favour and pleasure. Note how much this flame shone in the second word of the Virgin by which, as she consented to the conception of the Son of God, she said to the angel: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word*. A loving union of a soul with God has to be, on the part of the soul, humble, submissive, prompt and serving, or compliant in everything. For this reason, the Virgin, first of all as such a person, showed herself to God and to the conception of the Son of God saying: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*. Because the Virgin should also be both reverent and confident, sweetly and entreatingly desirous, but not beyond the measure fixed for her by God, she added: *be it done to me according to your word*; as if she were to say: I would not dare to ask for this of myself, but neither am I unwilling nor do I dare to distrust a promise of God, nor ask and desire anything above or below God's word spoken to me through you. Therefore, *according to your word* let the conception of the Son of God *be done to me* by God, in the way it has been announced to me through you.

It is as if in this word there is more clearly expressed long obedience, when she says: *Behold*; deep humility, when she adds: *the handmaid of the Lord*; broad charity when she adds: *be it done to me*; high faith when she concludes: *according to your word*; so that it may shine forth clearly that only the blessed Virgin is such a person worthy to understand more than all others, be they angels or saints, *the breadth, and length, and height and depth* [Eph 3:18] of the incarnation of the Son of God. Hence, devout soul, contemplate:

the action and ascent of divine love and wonderful transformation of that soul, in that she so dared that, constantly and with full consent, she would dare to desire and seek to be the Mother of the Most High God and

for God to be her Son. Furthermore, the goal and consent of this desire, teaches its height; for the goal was the highest fulfilment of this desire. Just as in a young woman, given the prior consent of the king and the young woman, when a solemn and trustworthy messenger to the one chosen and the one officially appointed conveys his message and the young woman subsequently expresses her consent and when this is conveyed fully to the king or to his messenger, there is established immediately between them an unbreakable marriage bond. So, but much higher and unchangeably, with the previous consent of God announced through the Angel to the Virgin, immediately following the full consent of the Virgin, there exists an ineffable and completely inseparable union of Christ to Mother and of Mother to Christ, the Son of God.

Earlier in this treatise, Sermon 8, Article 1, Chapter 3,⁷ the great merit deriving from this virginal consent is explained.

CHAPTER 3

With what fervent speed the blessed Virgin hastened to share the love and grace of her Son

The third is a flame of one communicating.

Therefore, it is the nature of true love to impress others, as far as possible, with the one loved and the love, just as it is the nature of fire to ignite and set fire to everything around it according to its inflammability. For this reason, in the third word of the Virgin with which she greeted Elizabeth, the impression made immediately was so strong, that John in the womb of the mother was sanctified and gladdened with joy in Christ, and the mother was filled so much with the Holy Spirit that she felt within her the one conceived and the incarnation of the Son of God that occurred a short time before, so that rejoicing she could say to the Mother of Christ: *Blessed is the fruit of your womb.*

But Luke, in 1:39-45, wanting to show this in fuller detail arranges three things in order: firstly, the greeting of Mary; secondly, the rejoicing of John; thirdly, the delight of Elizabeth.

Firstly, I say, he places the greeting of Mary but he says before this: *Mary rising up in those days went into the hill country*, namely, so as to communicate immediately the grace and love of her Son for John and his parents, *'into a city of Judea*, that is, into Jerusalem that was situated in the mountains',⁸ *and she entered into the house of Zachary*; Gloss⁹: 'Namely, so that the young woman might be of service to the old pregnant woman'; *and saluted Elizabeth*, for together with a sign of humility, she displayed kindness by her word.

Secondly, he lists the rejoicing of John when he says: *And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leapt in her womb.* For 'whoever first receives the influence of the Word of God, recognizes first the power of the greeting and visitation; and because he could not reply in words from the womb of his mother, he longed to break forth at meeting him'.¹⁰ Hence, 'a Gloss¹¹ says: "Because he could not speak, he greets with a rejoicing spirit and begins his role of precursor". He senses the coming of the Lord; the Holy Spirit moves John's free will to recognize the coming of the Saviour, and so he rejoiced in happiness'.¹²

Thirdly, he states the joy of Elizabeth and so adds the words:

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she cried out with a loud voice, and said: Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold as soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed are you that has believed because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to you by the Lord.

But note how great was the fulness of grace communicated to John before the presence of the word of God and by the words from the virginal mouth. His mother was filled by the Holy Spirit with merits, was allowed to recognize the mystery of the incarnation, to call out from excitement, to proclaim the Virgin to be blessed, to understand the dignity of the Virgin and herself to be unworthy of this visitation. For the Holy Spirit who filled her with humility did not leave her empty.¹³

Behold, how great a communication of the Holy Spirit and divine love occurred at the greeting of the blessed Virgin.

ARTICLE 2

On the abundant rejoicing of the glorious Virgin when she sang her 'Magnificat'

Secondly, we may consider the fourth flame which is rejoicing love, 'that by its nature always praises and sings of the beloved'.¹⁴ 'For while the blessed Virgin was praised for her faith by blessed Elizabeth and the blessed fruit of her womb was glorified, with her soul taken up in the highest contemplation, she gave it all back to God as she said: *My soul magnifies the Lord*.¹⁵ In this canticle she glorifies, magnifies and thanks God for the multitude of her great gifts: firstly, for particular gifts; secondly, for general gifts; thirdly, for singular gifts. And the canticle contains ten verses according to the prophetic word in Psalm 32:2 [33:2]: *Sing to him with the lyre, the harp of ten strings*. This can be used as a theme when preaching only on the canticle.

CHAPTER 1

How by rejoicing the blessed Virgin thanked God for the gifts given to her

Firstly, the blessed Virgin thanked and praised God for particular gifts, namely, gifts given specifically to her. She did this in three ways: firstly, by praising; secondly, by rejoicing; thirdly, by giving examples.

Firstly, she thanks God by praise and so she says: *My soul magnifies the Lord*. 'She does not say: my tongue because every tongue is deficient in praising God; but *soul* that can understand more than the tongue can express'.¹⁶

As if she would say: *The Lord has done great things* for me [Ps 125:3 (126:2)] when he made himself within my womb, and so made me great even above the height of all the angels. But this is all from him and not from me; and I do not make myself great, by vainly attributing this to myself, but *my soul magnifies the Lord*, referring his gift back entirely to him. As Bede says in *Super Magnificat*¹⁷ the blessed Virgin fully acknowledges her greatness, but refers it all back to God. Hence, speaking in the person of the Virgin, he says: *My soul magnifies the Lord*, namely, in voice, work and affection. Every creature indeed *magnifies the Lord*, but *my soul* more than others. Nothing so wonderful was done in any creature as was done in my soul. So *my soul magnifies the Lord*.¹⁸

Secondly, the Lord is thanked by rejoicing and so she says: *And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour*. From the praise of God there rightly follows a lifting up of the spirit and soul; 'as if she were to say, according to a Gloss¹⁹: *My spirit has rejoiced* beyond every creature and beyond itself, and now in the immensity of gladness I have danced *in God my Saviour*, that is, in Jesus who, while being for all, is mine in a singular way'. In Luke 1:31, the Angel said to her: You shall call his name Jesus which means 'salvation'.²⁰ She exalted in the Son whom she bore in her womb; as if she were to say: 'In everything I feel, in all that I discern, I spend my whole life in contemplating his greatness and keeping his precepts; no prosperity puffs me up, no adversity breaks me, but *my spirit* delights only in remembering him, in his unending deity, for whom my flesh was fertile in a conception in time'. As if she were to say as did Hugo:

Over the salvation I see prepared for the human race, I rejoice with my whole being. I see also that what is to be taken from me is what I believe has to be offered for me. Truly, beloved Virgin Mary, brought into the wine cellar to the King, your bridegroom, inebriated with the abundance of his house, you have breathed out the memory of his sweetness and rejoiced in his justice. You have seen the majesty, you have tasted the sweetness; and what you have drawn in, you have set before others. There are two things the good angels and the human spirit draw from that spring of goodness by eternal contemplation, namely, the majesty of the incomprehensible God and ineffable goodness; one brings forth chaste fear, the other gives love. They venerate the majesty of God and love God's goodness, lest love be lost without reverence or penal reverence without love. The soul of the blessed Virgin was raised up to this contemplation and in her words she expressed wonderfully the sweetness of the heavenly homeland that she understood in a wonderful way. When she set herself to glorify God, she declared openly the majesty to be venerated and which she had seen in the eternal vision. But when she stated that she rejoiced in her salvation, she showed she had savoured the taste of an inner sweetness.

So Hugo.²¹

God is thanked by giving examples. But 'she who ascended so high in the contemplation of the majesty of God, gave back to him all the good that was in her, and finally, retreating into deep humility, she used herself as an example and said: *Because he has regarded the humility of his handmaid*':

namely, by choosing me before others to be made the Mother of my Saviour; Proverbs 31:29 says: *Many daughters have gathered together riches but you have surpassed them all. I say, he has regarded the humility of his handmaid.* In fact, *he has regarded* it in three ways. Firstly, by inspiring so that I might choose humility before other gifts, Luke 1:38: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord.* Secondly, by accepting so that through him I might conceive God; Bernard²²: ‘Although she pleased by virginity, she conceived by humility’. Thirdly, by lifting up so that I might ascend by humility above the heavens; Psalm 8:2: *Your magnificence is elevated above the heavens.* Also, *he regarded humility*, not nobility and height because *the Lord looks on the lowly and the high he knows afar off* [Ps 137:6 (138:6)]. Not beauty because *charm is deceitful and beauty is vain* [Prov 31:30]. Not power because the Lord *has put down the mighty from their seat* [Lk 1:52]. Not wisdom because *God has made foolish the wisdom of this world* [1 Cor 1:20]. Not virginity because there are foolish virgins; Matthew 25:2 says: *Five of them were foolish.*²³

Finally, she does not list racial closeness, development of skill, eloquence, human prudence, riches or any such things for the sake of drawing God’s attention. She is silent about greater things: she does not draw attention to her sanctification in the womb, her prayer, contemplation, guarding of the senses; and, what is more wonderful, does not parade her faith, is silent about her hope and does not mention her exceeding charity. All her virtues were acted out in silence, she glories only in the humility regarded by the Lord: *Because he has regarded the humility of his handmaid.* Moreover clearly, from an opposite point of view, she was the first woman to give birth to all her children from a stronghold of goodness. And then Lucifer with his followers was cast strongly from the highest thrones to the seats in the underworld.²⁴

So a Gloss²⁵ says: ‘See how poorly she thinks of herself, attributing all to the grace of God. Before her God she shows that she is humble but so sublime was she in the height of heavenly grace that what nature lost in the first parents by pride, it would receive in Mary by humility’. ‘Consequently, the Word of God assumed in her, through the merit of her humility, the substance of flesh that he would unite to himself; and then in this flesh, previously cast down, *he regarded* the nature to be raised up by mercy.’ But because from this humility she understood how much she was to be exalted, she went on to say:

Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, namely, of heaven, of earth and of hell. Of heaven, for the angels whom she restored; of earth, for the people she reconciled; of hell, for the captives she freed. This is the mystery spoken of in Judith 15:10: *You are the glory of Jerusalem*, namely, of the heavenly Jerusalem whose ruins you repaired for the angels; *you are the joy of Israel*, for the captives you freed; *you are the honour of our people*, namely, for the people for whom you gave birth to a brother and to one who reconciles. Or *all generations*, that is Jews and Gentiles, male and female, angels and humans, poor and rich, great and small, servants and free, just and wicked, and briefly all kinds of generations because they all bless her.²⁶

Similarly, Bernard²⁷ says when commenting on this text: O extended heart of Mary, Mother of God, you have seen with shining eyes at one time all creatures who are to be gathered into true happiness! *Behold*, she says: her word is of one looking and explaining; *behold*, I now see that the future is from me, the fruit comes forth from me, how many and what great good come through me not only for me but for all generations. The number of angelic ruins will be restored by the one born through me, and the generation of humans, cursed in Adam, will be reborn to eternal happiness through the blessed fruit of my womb.

So Bernard.²⁸

And adding the reason for this gratitude, she says: *For he that is mighty has done great things to me and holy is his name*; as if she were to say:

That *all generations shall bless me*, I do not attribute to myself, I do not ascribe it to my merits, but rather to the one who *has done great things to me*. It is a great thing that I am a virgin and also a great thing that I am a mother; better than both these together is that I am a mother and a virgin; but the greatest thing, if you take note of it, is whose mother I am, namely, of the only begotten Son of God and the Saviour of all. Although these *great things* may be done to all in a general way, for me they were done in a singular way, and to my inestimable glory they were powerfully done in me and from me by the Holy Spirit. So *my soul magnifies the Lord because he has done great things to me*, things I know from experiencing them. Of what kind they are I do not state because not even an angelic ear can understand them fully. These *great things* are the greatest not only to creatures, but they are the greatest and unsurpassable even to the One who is powerful, in fact all powerful, *and holy is his name*. Indeed neither more powerful, nor wiser things could have been done than what were done in me, namely, when human nature was joined to the Word, so that the one making is the same as the one to be made; he is my Son Jesus, the God who is blessed over all, and he was made for the salvation of all; but by an eternal arrangement and my immense love they were done for my singular glory.

Note, however, that by speaking so subtly the blessed Virgin held on to the utmost humility. That she was able to give birth to the Son of God and receive other great things, she did not attribute to her power, but to the One who *is mighty*, the One who wanted to honour power in the humility of the Virgin. And while she was most holy so as to bring forth the Holy of holies, she did not attribute this to her own power but to the holiness of the One who wanted to show the *holy name*. God wanted to cleanse most fully a woman who was the beginning of sin, so that a woman might be the Mother of all the holiness to be poured out into every vase of grace. All this is implied when she says: *He is mighty and holy is his name*. As if she wished to say: since woman is the lowest of all rational creatures and totally infected with uncleanness, such would I have been unless God had preserved me by grace, and so *he that is mighty has done great things in me²⁹ and holy is his name*. God was never able to show this more fittingly than when a woman was raised up above every creature and made the very Mother of all grace and purity by her holiness.

CHAPTER 2

How the blessed Virgin thanks God for the gifts given in mercy to angels and humans

Secondly, the blessed Virgin thanks God for general gifts: firstly, for gifts of mercy; secondly, for gifts of justice; thirdly, for gifts of mercy and justice.

Firstly, I say, for gifts of mercy. So she says: ‘And *his mercy*, begun in me, will be extended *from the generation* of the first person *unto generations* of people, that is, unto all *the generations* of the world who in spirit were seen as believers’.³⁰

There was one first generation of persons that then expanded into many generations; but distinct from all others was the generation of the Jewish people for as long as they held to the worship of the one God. The words of God were first entrusted to them, and so the Son of God was sent first to the sheep of Israel, so that mercy be shown first to them and then to all. What the Lord says in Hosea 1:10, the Apostle quotes in Romans 9:25 when he says: *I will call that which was not my people, my people; and was not my beloved, my beloved; and her that had not obtained mercy, one that has obtained mercy*. And in Romans 11:32: *For God has included all in unbelief, that he may have mercy on all*. And in Wisdom 11:24-25 there is written: *You have mercy on all, because you can do all things; and the text continues: and you hate none of the things you have made*.³¹

Therefore, as the Prophet says in Psalm 102:17 [103:17]: *And his mercy is from eternity and unto eternity*, not in any random way but *upon them that fear him*; because the Holy Spirit flees from the proud and rests upon the humble, the meek and *the one who trembles at his words*.³² So the blessed Virgin adds: *to them that fear him*. ‘In fact no one is excluded from the mercy of God except those who cut themselves off from the mercy of God by impenitence’. However, in a higher sense we can say that the blessed Virgin in the highest light of contemplation saw that by her merits after the Son she greatly benefited the blessed angels in giving them grace and glory. This happened when they saw in faith, and by the merit of the counsellor of God and angels, that the Virgin would be born and that they, the angels, would be graced and glorified by God, as explained in more detail in the Lenten sermon, n. 60, *De christiana religione*, Articles. 2 and 3.³³ The blessed Virgin speaks in this sense when she says: *And his mercy is from the generation of angels to the generations of humans; but of both she says: to them that fear him* as will be evident below.

Secondly, the blessed Virgin thanks God for gifts of justice. As was foretold, the blessed Virgin understood in the highest light:

that the gifts of God enlighten, vivify and transform the elect towards God, while the reprobate heap up for themselves greater judgments of divine severity from their hardness, obstinacy and ingratitude. Hence, the great gifts of the elect are often blindness to the reprobate, especially to those who, presuming on their own justice, glory in their actions. Hence, the Lord, in John 9:39, says: *For judgment I came into this world, that they that see not, may see, and those who see, may become blind*. And, in Luke 2:34, Simeon says: *Behold, he is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many*. Therefore, the sacred enlightened Virgin contemplating this process, names first the most sublime gifts of the mercy of God that have been distributed and are to be distributed on the elect among both angels and humans who fear God. She then turns her attention to the general judgments against the reprobate, describes the process of the providence of God in respect to a rational creature, and expounds what proud demons or humans merit. And because Christ by the vigour of his virtues, more than can be described, brought honour to God the Father, not only in sanctifying by mercy the elect among both angels and humans, but also by overcoming the reprobate by conquering; so to express this she says: *He showed might in his arm*.³⁴

It is a common saying that when someone does something significant against an enemy, the power is attributed to the arm. But these words of the Holy Spirit spoken through the mouth of the Virgin are not to be lightly reduced to a narrow sense; they can and should be spread high and wide. For the arm mentioned by the blessed Virgin, with which God showed power, is the eternal Son of the eternal Father, made the Son of the Virgin in time.³⁵

For three reasons he is called the arm of God: firstly, because of creation; secondly, because of conservation; thirdly, because of struggling.

Firstly, because of creation:

Human beings use their arms for work; the Father created everything through the Son; John 1:3: *All things were made by him*. Secondly, because of conservation or maintenance, because humans give support with their arms; so also the Father by his Son; Hebrews 1:3: *Upholding all things by the word of his power*. Thirdly, because of struggling, because a person fights and overcomes with the arm; as the Father fights and overcomes by his Son.³⁶

So in Psalm 76:16 [77:15] the Prophet says:

With your arm you have redeemed the children of Jacob and of Joseph, that is, the elect of Jews and Gentiles, namely all nations that are saved. He says *the children of Jacob*, that is, the circumcised, *and the children of Joseph*, that is, the uncircumcised. Joseph means 'increase'³⁷ and he went to the Gentiles in Egypt; for this reason the Gentiles are represented through him.³⁸

'By this arm the Father fought the devil, took hold of hell and overcame the world'.³⁹ Rightly then does the blessed Virgin say: *He has shown might*. For greater certainty he mentions the past, or speaks of the fall of the angels, as is shown at greater length in sermon 60 *De Christiana religione*.⁴⁰ *With his arm*, that is, with his Son:

the Father not only worked powerfully and strongly, but also emphatically *has shown might*, because *he has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart*. In this text she shows the presumptuous pride of the reprobate by speaking of their conceit in which they think themselves as being better than others and do not turn to God in a reverence of humility. Also, she shows the most passionate and malicious wickedness because from a heartfelt affection for their own honour they lift themselves up against a precept of God. So she says: *of their heart*. Hence, by this they are shown to be strong lovers of their own honour.⁴¹

Or it can be put another way: *He has scattered the proud*. 'I say, *he has scattered in the conceit of their heart*, that is, according to the inclination *of their heart*, something that no one can resist',⁴² so that in this the disposition of divine vengeance against pride might be implied, according to the prophetic text in Psalm 88:11 [89:10]: *You have humbled the proud one as one that is slain*, 'that is, Lucifer, whom you cast out of paradise, not slain because he did not have a body, but *as one that is slain* because he has a spirit'.⁴³ And the Psalm continues: *with the arm of your strength you have scattered your enemies*. 'Who are the enemies of God other than proud devils and people who despise God's commandments and make little of God's rule? Indeed, God scattered the devils when they were condemned with Lucifer; and God either humiliates or damns proud people';⁴⁴ and so God scatters them.

Thirdly, the blessed Virgin thanks God for gifts of justice and mercy together. So she continues and says: *He*, namely, Christ *has put down the mighty*, that is, the demons, *from their seat*: note the effect of justice; *and has exalted the humble*, namely, the angels who made themselves humble before Christ and the blessed Virgin, as stated in sermon 60 *De christiana religione*⁴⁵: note the effect of mercy.

Indeed, it is for God's justice to put down to the depths those who wickedly seek the heights; and also it is seen to be for God's mercy to lift up the humble who persevere in virtue. Hence, in Job 5:11, there is written: *Who sets up the humble on high, and comforts with health those who mourn*. These things were spoken for the humble. For the putting down of the powerful proud and the lifting up of the humble, Sirach 10:17-18 says more clearly: *The Lord*⁴⁶ *has overturned the thrones of proud princes and has set up the meek in their stead*; this can be applied to the angels. The text goes on: *God has made the roots of proud nations to wither, and has planted the humble of these nations*; this can be applied to human beings. In Luke 14:11 the Lord repeated this, saying: *All who exalt themselves, will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted*.

What the blessed Virgin then adds applies only to human beings. So she says: *He has filled the hungry with good things*: note the mercy. This hunger is not of the body but of a rational animal hungry to arrive at what is true and best. When grace was given to a rational animal, its hunger is increased, so that it might strive with

impatience to be freed from sins, to cling to virtues, to hardships that threaten, not cease from striving for death and always undertake work for as long as necessary. *He who is mighty has filled with good things* those who are *hungry* in this way. Nature abhors a vacuum, but when emptied of what is earthly they will be filled with what is heavenly. Before Jesus was born, his Mother, already carrying him in her womb preached what he was to preach. Later, in Matthew 5:6, he says: *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill.* And, in Psalm 106:9 [107:9], the Prophet says: *He has filled the empty soul with good things.* Rightly, a soul unceasingly desiring good things will be filled with good things. *He who is mighty* always does this since he knows the strong desire by which a soul is lifted up to virtue. In Psalm 145:7 [146:7], the Prophet says this: *Who gives food to the hungry.* *Food*, namely, of virtues that feed the soul, and *food* of his Body and Blood that he has prepared for all the faithful. In fact, this is proper to virtue as well as to the goodness and wisdom of God, namely, that after eating, further hunger follows and what is tasted rekindles desire. So, in Sirach 24:19, there is said of wisdom: *They that eat me, shall yet hunger; and they that drink me, shall yet thirst.* This showed that the soul that has virtue is further enkindled to desire it all the more.

Of what kind is the fulness of the proud and reprobate the blessed Virgin shows when she adds: *and the rich he has sent empty away*: note justice. They are left *empty* since the soul cannot be filled with what is transitory. Such a rich person is the one addressed by Christ in the seventh church as in Revelation 3:17: *Because you say, I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing.*

Note the triple presumption of spiritual graces. For those who trust in themselves on the basis of personal justice, attribute the riches of wisdom to themselves by saying: *because I am rich.* They presume on the riches and treasures of justice and so add: *and made wealthy.* Nor do people blinded by vain glory think that adequate virtue is absent for they do not recognize personal weakness, and so they say: *and have need of nothing.* Note how these rich people see themselves. But note how God sends such rich people away empty. For there is added: *and you know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* For, in a triple way, God sends away a triple presumption.

Firstly, the presumptuous think they have an abundance of the riches of wisdom, but note how Christ sends them away empty because he says: *and you know not that you are wretched.* They are miserable who are empty of all, even natural riches; so the presumptuous are genuinely *miserable* because they do not have a sense of natural wisdom by which they are able to assess personal deficiencies. Of such, in Romans 1:22 is said: *Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools.*

Secondly, the presumptuous claim to be rich, that is, by having riches of many merits before God; but Christ sends them away empty, in fact calls them wretched. Therefore, they are wretched whose misery is so great that others rightly grieve over them, and especially when the things they think are profitable to them are turned into an increase of misfortune. Such are the presumptuous for the good things they do are changed into faults against them. The good things they do are not done for the right reason because they refer the good to their own and not to God's glory; Hence, in Matthew 6:23, the Lord says to such: *If then the light that is in you is darkness, the darkness itself, how great shall it be!* For if in the presumptuous the light of good works, by which they and others through them should be enlightened, *is the darkness* of sins, that is, if the good they do becomes sin, *the darkness itself*, that is, works that of their nature are sins, how great, that is, how serious they will be! How serious indeed are the sins of the presumptuous when actions meritorious in themselves become sins!

Thirdly, the presumptuous claim to need nothing, that is, they are sufficient in themselves. See how Christ sends them away empty when he says to them that they are not sufficient in themselves, since they are *poor, blind and naked.* They are poor in necessities, blind in light and direction, naked from a need for clothes. Hence, they quickly perish in their necessities; the poor from hunger, the blind from dangers of the way, the naked from cold, unless they are protected by mercy. Therefore, the proud are unfortunate because those who rely on themselves rather than on God do not merit mercy from God. The vainglorious really fight against God for they want to be self sufficient in what God alone guarantees and provides. Hence, they make themselves God and try to grow rich of themselves. Rightly then does God take away from them the bread *of life and understanding* [Sir 15:3] so that from a lack of virtue they might grieve in spiritual hunger. God takes from them their direction so that they might incur innumerable dangers of sins and punishments. Nor does God give to those who say they have need of nothing the clothing of a good life so that in everything they might find themselves to be inadequate, namely, in an understanding of what is true, in choosing good, and in acting justly.⁴⁷

Note how God *sends the rich away empty.*

CHAPTER 3

How the blessed Virgin thanks God for the gift of the incarnation of the Son of God

Thirdly, the blessed Virgin thanks God for singular gifts, all of which are included in the Son of God assuming human nature. As if she were to say: The Lord has done great things in me, so that his mercy might be spread out to all people and the rightness of his justice be spread among the reprobate, and to complete this:

He received Israel his servant, that is, a faithful people received its son, Jesus incarnate and a child, as Isaiah 9:6 says: *A child is born to us and a son is given to us.*

Or *Israel*, that is, the Jewish people to whom he was first sent because he was first promised to them; so there follows: *being mindful of his mercy*, namely, as already promised to the Jewish people.

Or it can be better expressed by saying that Israel is in the accusative case in this way: *he received*, that is, the Lord received by the incarnation, *Israel his servant*, the Jewish or faithful people and this is human nature;⁴⁸

or: *He received Israel his servant*:

that is, calling the man Jesus the *servant* of the divinity because she served him in the highest reverence of humility. She says that she had received this God because she was united personally to him; and he truly became Israel because he truly saw and enjoyed the divinity. The whole multitude of the elect can also be called a servant of God, on account of the reverence of humility and the union of love received in Jesus himself by a grace of adoption; and it becomes *Israel* through the beatific vision. The holy Virgin, understanding that this was done unchangeably in the merit of Christ, rejoiced that it was realized completely even though it remains in the future for the people of the elect. So she says: *He received Israel his servant*, because by the One conceived in me in grace, already the number of the elect was adopted. And God did this *mindful of his mercy*, not because of our justice; God redeemed people not because of human merit but from a gift of the most divine kindness. Pious Jesus then *received* our nature, he received also our lawsuit, wiped out the sentence in mercy, and by his most loving death made full amendment to the justice of God. But because God waited until the fulness of time, in a certain sense it was thought that the Father had forgotten to send his Son; finally however, God was *mindful of his mercy*, that is, actually did what was awaited. And because this most high and wonderful gift was promised to the holy Fathers, especially to Abraham, and preached by the prophets, she adds: *As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever*, to whom it was promised that such things would be done.⁴⁹

With these words, the blessed Virgin concluded her canticle full of praise, full of thanks to God, and stressing mercy and justice to the fullest.

ARTICLE 2

On the three last flames of words of the blessed Virgin

Thirdly, we are to examine the three last flames of love of the Virgin shown in her three last words.

CHAPTER 1

On the double general taste of divine love that the blessed Virgin experienced

Firstly, we reflect on the fifth flame of love in the Virgin and this is a savouring love. The nature 'of this love is inwardly to taste, savour and discern separately the various delights of the person loved or the particular characteristics and differences of the divine taste'.⁵⁰ Christ contains in himself two kinds of tastes which include in them all the other differences of divine tastes: the first is a taste of sweetness, the second a taste of sorrow or bitterness; and these are included in the fifth word of the Virgin.

Firstly, there is a taste:

of the gentlest sweetness, and the beginning of her fifth word shows how the blessed Virgin tasted it; in an admirable drinking and in a wonderful singularity of the most delicate sweetness she called Jesus her Son, as he was sitting among the doctors in the temple, and she said in Luke 2:48: *Son, why have you done so to us?* In no other text of Scripture is it written that she called him Son except in this fifth word. The word son comes from 'filos', the word for love, and in the mouth of the mother it bore a taste of the most delicate and heartfelt sweetness, especially when it is so great and of such a kind as is the sonship of God.

Further:

the sign of all love is surpassed in this word: *Son*; nothing more effective can be uttered than to say: *Son*. All the feelings of mothers are moved when they address their child with a filial name. The Virgin Mother was not able

Bernardine of Siena

to restrain her affection any longer, when she exclaimed in words of vivid love, with no other form of address other than that he is the Son and she the Mother.⁵¹

No number of words could serve other than the name of Son. And she adds: *Son, why have you done so to us?* These are not words of blame but of wonder, so that, in a mystical sense, there is an indication that when the bridegroom goes away from a soul the mind, in such an experience, wonders at the ways of God's wisdom, nor can it understand the highest ways of the bridegroom in his absence and return, even though he remains loving in many ways. For some reason, Christ, the wisdom of God, as one caring for his Mother and leading her on the way of love, wanted his Mother to experience this and for the Virgin to express it in her own words.

'Secondly, there is a taste of sorrow or utmost bitterness as stated by the pious Mother with the bitterest sorrow, when she says: *Behold, your father and I have sought you sorrowing.*⁵² 'The humble Virgin gives way to her husband whom she names first and herself afterwards; since it is the norm of all good customs and virtues that women learn to defer to their husbands, not only in other things but also in speech.'⁵³ In a mystical sense:

this distressing taste, arising from the loss of the beloved, is bitter, instructive and formative for the mind in its radical separation from the one loved; by this a soul totally dependent on him cannot rest, is always jealous, lest he is away because of some fault. From this it follows that she goes about seeking the beloved, asks help from everyone so as to find the one her affection loves. The Mother herself shows that this sorrow was in her in a most virulent form when she said: *We have sought you sorrowing.*⁵⁴

'And because most holy Joseph shared these tastes, the blessed Virgin calls him in the singular the father of Christ.'⁵⁵

The blessed Virgin, filled with the Holy Spirit from the moment of the Conception of the Son of God, did not need to be exercised in such things. Nevertheless, as an example for us, Jesus reasonably put himself in this position with her to show in a mystical sense how much a soul benefits from such an experience of sorrow arising from an absence of the beloved and from a solicitous search. For the beloved returns to a soul in a more abundant sweetness, unless a fault of negligence has made her unworthy. Similarly, when Jesus was found again the blessed Virgin expresses in a singular way the most delicate taste of having a son and of this love when she said: *Son.*⁵⁶

The Apostle Paul experienced these two tastes of love as he showed when, in Philippians 4:12, he says: *I know how to abound*, namely, in spiritual consolations, *and to suffer need*, namely, in their absence and in the enduring of adversities. And in 2 Corinthians 1:8 he says: *We would not have you ignorant, brethren, of our tribulation, which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure above our strength*, namely, of nature not of grace, *so that we were weary even of life*, namely, from a certain natural weariness. Ambrose⁵⁷: So that we despair by a certain natural diffidence even of living. It is sure, however, that it is more difficult to bear a like trouble with strength coming only from a virtuous habit and efforts of a will conditioned by it, than to do this assisted by other helps of the habit and will.⁵⁸ It does not seem that the Apostle in his suffering had any help from spiritual tastes and sweetness. For, so that the strength of his virtue might be further tested, it would seem that God stopped such spiritual infusions. So also, at the time of the passion, Christ felt no infusion of joy from the habit and act of his glory in the nature that was suffering so that the bitterness of his passion might be somewhat lessened. In Matthew 27:46, the Lord expresses this more clearly in the words: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* As if he were to say: Out of love for the human race, I have been handed over by you to suffering and the reproaches of an ignominious death; so that you, Father, from a zeal for justice, seem to have forgotten the blessed union and unshakable communion in which in the Person of God this sorrowing nature is inserted. From this it is clear that the highest peak of patience is to suffer patiently without an infusion of spiritual consolation, rather than to endure it with such infusions; it is more perfect *to suffer need* for consolations when suffering, than to *abound* in consolations.

Brother Jacapone da Todi wanted to express this in a letter he wrote to John of Alverna who was seriously ill and deprived of the usual consolations of his spirit. On the back he wrote in the vernacular:

'To Brother John of Alverna, - who is in the grip of a fever,
I send this letter to him, - it should be read to him.'⁵⁹

Letter of Brother Jacopone da Todi on the double meaning of divine love

I have regarded and think it to be something great *to abound* in knowing about God. Why? Because in this humility is practised with reverence. But I have regarded and think it to be the greatest thing to fast and *suffer need* for God. Why? Because in this, faith is practised without evidence, hope without expectation of a reward, love without signs of pleasure. These *foundations are in the holy mountains* [Ps 86:1 (87:1)]. By these foundations a soul ascends to that solid mountain on which one may taste *honey out of the rock, and oil out of the hardest stone* [Deut 32:13].

At the end he writes in the vernacular:

Farewell, Brother John, farewell. – Do not regret the pain you suffer.
Between the anvil (?) and the hammer – you make a beautiful vase.
But the vase has to be heated – so that the blow falls on a solid base.
If you strike while it is cold – it will break.
If it is broken, it has no use – but is put with the rubbish (?).
Convince yourself to ask – for the Lord to give you
Every misfortune and ill health – and to find the world displeasing.
Misfortune indeed is glorious – if it not a result of sin.
If a person suffers from sin - (?).⁶⁰

CHAPTER 2

With how much love the blessed Virgin has compassion on our needs and misfortunes

Secondly, we consider the sixth flame of love which is loving sympathy.

By this love one experiences in pious compassion the lack of the double taste spoken of in the preceding chapter, and one carries with anxiety the lack of the spiritual joy and song of Christ, and one feels much more sorrow over the multitude of sins and defects that exist in the unfortunate states of this life. After the first two flames of love, by which one rightly moves towards the beloved, there follows the third that impresses itself on the beloved. In the same way after the last two, namely, the fourth and fifth by which again one goes directly to the beloved, there follows the sixth by which the lack of spiritual wine, widespread in the world, is experienced with compassion and pointed out to the beloved. This is the word of wonderful compassion and kindness with which the sweetest Mother of Christ, our advocate on earth and in heaven and as a kind mother on behalf of us, her unfortunate and weak children who are to be pitied from all sides, says to her beloved Firstborn: *They have no wine* [Jn 2:3]. She does not say this to accuse or reproach us but rather to influence Christ to show kind mercy to us, so that he might give us the best *wine*, rich in divine tastes and full of all the virtues,⁶¹

that are necessary for our salvation.

There are in wine an excellence, a sweetness and warmth: an excellence of colour, sweetness of taste and warmth of strength, all of which are drawn from water. The most prudent Mother wanted to show to her kind Son, Jesus, in a mystical sense, that the world was unaware of a clear knowledge of his person, the sweetness of a refreshment of the eternal Godhead, and the strength of his mighty power. Hence, she asked him to enlighten the darkened mind, change the wavering affection and strengthen the failing effort; that is, that he would do whatever would enlighten faith, encourage hope and enkindle charity.⁶²

The Virgin Mother knew that every creature was subject to weakness, overcome by need, lacked proper joy, was subject to most ugly wretchedness and confused from a lack of genuine good, while delighting in the passing things of the world, for example, in marriage. For this reason she made a request to her son, saying: *They have no wine*. She did not do this to inform him who knew everything, but the Virgin Mother made her request as if the care of all things was her responsibility and, conscious of being the advocate of all people, and that she was made the Virgin Mother of the Creator for the sake of all, she took on the role of advocate and kind helper, when she saw a need as if there was no need to make her aware by requests, for the whole attention of her kindness was directed towards us, and conscious of our need and recognizing herself as a mother of kindness for all people, worried over her children, she intercedes with her divine Son even for things not requested of her,⁶³

saying: *They have no wine*. ‘If she does this even when not asked, what will she do when asked? If she did this while a pilgrim what will she do when she reigns in heaven? If she asks this of her Son while subject to a temporal death, what will she ask when he has conquered death, recalled his immortal flesh from the tomb, is established in heaven, sitting at the right hand of the Father, and possessing the empire’ of all things?

Afterwards, this short word had such wonderful efficacy and power with her beloved son, Jesus, and affected so much her beloved the Evangelist John, that he was brought to the nuptials of virginal chastity and to the peak of the highest contemplation, so that just as by the third flame and word John the Baptist was wonderfully sanctified in the womb of his mother, so by the sixth and seventh words the Evangelist John was brought to spiritual nuptials with Christ.

CHAPTER 3

How much the blessed Virgin encourages us to obey in all things that are pleasing to and commanded by God

Thirdly and finally, we consider the seventh flame of love of the glorious Virgin and it is called perfecting love.

The order of divine grace demands that we, in order to make up what we lack, should join ourselves to the prayers of the blessed Virgin Mother. In this we need to be informed and encouraged by our superiors and so the seventh flame of love is added. It is not only ourselves but also all others who must try with all possible effort not only to observe and perfectly fulfil all the precepts of Christ, but also all his counsels, words and wishes; because the wishes, gestures and actions of Christ are in some way also words. This is what the blessed Virgin taught the servants so that they might get wine, when she said: *Whatsoever he*, namely, Jesus my Son, *shall say to you, do you* [Jn 2:5].

Literally this means that 'it is certain that Christ would do what she requested. It seems that she sensed in her spirit how the miracle would be worked, namely, that Christ would direct the servant as to what they had to do; so she said to them: *Whatsoever he shall say to you, do you*'.⁶⁴

But it has to be noted in the mystical sense:

That, in Romans 13:10, the Apostle says: *Love is the culmination of the law*, that is, the full observance of the law; and how, in Matthew 2:40, is said: *On these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets*, because the whole of Scripture is fulfilled in love of God and neighbour; so in this last word of the Virgin and the last flame of love is included and understood everything that is contained in the whole divine law and all the words of God.

So she says to all: *Whatsoever he shall say to you, do you*, that is, obey the divine will. Nor without the wonderful light of the wisdom of God is the blessed Virgin reduced to the obedience that the Lord and the Apostle related to a full love for the law. For:

that I might show obedience and love, even more that I might speak of obedience and charity as first laid down by God and are not in any way different. Love for the beloved is always subject to obedience; and it is subject more truly, the stronger the love; and it clings more closely when it obeys attentively. For this reason, love that is ignorant of negligence comes from obedience, obeys without fail, takes on all that is possible, practises all the virtues, carries this yoke with pleasure, clings tenaciously, accepts an unchanging affection, is not affected by many things, loves one, even though, for the sake of the one, it does many things. It restricts desires to one, for the sake of the one it subjects itself to one or several, reduces the ten or the two commandments to one, one in one other, one from one other, so that forever it might enjoy the one and be with all the blessed in the one.⁶⁵

Rightly, therefore, does the blessed Virgin say to all: *Whatsoever he shall say to you, do you*; because everything pleasing to God is to be done in obedience. Nor did the most blessed Virgin teach this without first doing it herself. For this reason, it is right that in this word her most divine words receive the perfection of perfect love. The Son of the blessed Virgin, the Lord Jesus Christ, in mercy gives us all these things; he lives and reigns glorious and victorious with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever.

NOTES

¹ *Brev. Rom.*, Versus ad antiph. final. B.M.V. in Easter time.

² From Anonymous, *In Lucam*, c. 1 (f. 11a), with a few additions and changes.

³ From Olivi, *In Ioan.*, c. 2 (f. 21c).

- ⁴ *Decretum*, c. 2 (I, 1063).
- ⁵ *Decretum*, cc. 2 and 3 (I, 1063); from various places in Augustine, especially in *De sancta virginitate* (PL 40, 397ff.); it is found literally, under the name of Augustine, in Peter Lombard, *IV Sent.*, d. 30, c. 2 (II, 932). See also the notes of Friedberg, on this text of the *Decretum*.
- ⁶ From Olivi, *In Ioan.* (f. 21c), and f. 21d for the three quotations that follow, with some changes and additions; see above pages 99-101.
- ⁷ See *De Christ. relig.*, serm. 61, a. 1, c. 3 (II, 374).
- ⁸ From Anonymous, *In Lucam*, c. 1 (f. 12ab).
- ⁹ *Interlin.*, on this text, in Lyranus (V, 125v).
- ¹⁰ From Ubertinus, *Arbor vitae*, I, c. 10 (f. 23a).
- ¹¹ *Ordin.*, on this text, in Lyranus (V, f. 125c).
- ¹² From Anonymous, *In Lucam*, c. 1 (f. 12b); see Ubertinus, loc. cit. (f. 23a).
- ¹³ From Ubertinus, loc. cit. (f. 23a) with a few changes.
- ¹⁴ From Olivi, *In Ioan.*, c. 2 (f. 21d).
- ¹⁵ From Ubertinus, loc. cit. (f. 24a).
- ¹⁶ From Anonymous, *In Lucam*, c. 1 (f. 12d).
- ¹⁷ See *Expos. in Evang. Luc.*, c. 1 (PL 92, 321) and Hugh of St Victor, *Explanatio in cantic. B.V.M.* (PL 175, 422, 427).
- ¹⁸ From Ubertinus, loc. cit. (f. 24ab), and also the four following quotations with some changes and additions.
- ¹⁹ Not found among the *Glossae*; see, however, Hugo de S. Charo, *Postilla*, on this text (VI, f. 136a). In fact, *Glossa ordin.*, on this text (in Lyranus, IV, f. 126a) refers to the text immediately following.
- ²⁰ See Jerome, *De nominibus hebraicis* (PL 23, 789, 795, 851, 855 and 857).
- ²¹ De S. Victore, *Explanatio in cantic. B. M.* (PL 175, 420, 416, 417-418).
- ²² *Super missus est*, hom. 1, n. 5 (PL 183, 59).
- ²³ From Anonymous, *In Lucam*, c. 1 (f. 13a).
- ²⁴ From Simon de Cassia, *Gesta Salvatoris, D.N. Iesu C., seu commentaria super IV Evangelia in XV libros in duobus tomis distributa* (Ratisbonae 1733-1734), II, c. 14 (I, 71a), with some changes towards the end.
- ²⁵ *Ordin.*, on this text, in Lyranus (V, f. 126a), with some changes near the end.
- ²⁶ From Ubertinus, loc. cit. (f. 24b).
- ²⁷ Exact reference not found; see *In festo Pentecostes*, serm. 2, n. 4 (PL 183, 328); and Hugo de S. Charo, *Postilla*, on this text (VI, f. 136b).
- ²⁸ From Ubertinus, loc. cit. (f. 24b), and the following quotation is from herewith some changes and additions.
- ²⁹ See *Biblia maxima versionum*, on this text (XIV, 21a).
- ³⁰ From Anonymous, *In Lucam*, c. 1 (f. 13b).
- ³¹ From Simon de Cassia, *Gesta Salvatoris*, II, c. 14 (I, 72a), and the following quotation is from here with some changes and additions.
- ³² See Isaiah 11:2-3; 66:2.
- ³³ *Opera*, II, 357-370.
- ³⁴ From Ubertinus, loc. cit. (f. 24d).
- ³⁵ From Simon de Cassia, loc. cit. (I, 72a), with some changes.
- ³⁶ From Anonymous, *In Lucam*, c. 1 (f. 13c).
- ³⁷ Jerome, *De nominibus hebraicis* (PL 23, 781).
- ³⁸ From Simon de Cassia, loc. cit. (I, 72b), with some changes.
- ³⁹ From Anonymous, *In Lucam*, c. 1 (f. 13c).
- ⁴⁰ Art. 2, cc. 1-3 (II, 357ff.), but there Bernardine neither refers to the canticle of the blessed Virgin nor does he mention it.
- ⁴¹ From Ubertinus, loc. cit. (f. 34d).
- ⁴² From Anonymous, *In Lucam*, c. 1 (f. 13c).
- ⁴³ From Hugo de S. Charo, *Postilla, in Ps. 88* (II, 231c), with a few changes and additions.
- ⁴⁴ From Simon de Cassia, loc. cit. (I, 72b-73b), from where the following quotation with several changes and additions comes.
- ⁴⁵ Art. 2, throughout (II, 357ff.), but better sermon 59, a. 2, cc. 1, 3 (II, 345, 347 and 349), where, however, Bernardine says little about the blessed Virgin but touches on her especially when he treats of the incarnation of the Word and of angels.
- ⁴⁶ Instead of God. See *Sacra Biblia variarum translat.*, on this text (III, 168b).
- ⁴⁷ From Matthia de Svetia, *Expos. in Apoc.*, c. 3 (f. 31b-d), with some changes and additions.
- ⁴⁸ From Anonymous, *In Lucam*, c. 1 (f. 13d), with a few changes.
- ⁴⁹ From Ubertinus, *Arbor vitae*, I, c. 10 (f. 25a), with some changes.
- ⁵⁰ From Olivi, *In Ioan.*, c. 2 (f. 22b) and the following quotation comes from here.
- ⁵¹ From Simon de Cassia, loc. cit., c. 24 (I, 88ab).
- ⁵² From Olivi, loc. cit. (f. 22b).
- ⁵³ From Simon de Cassia, loc. cit., c. 24 (I, 88b-89a).
- ⁵⁴ From Ubertinus, II, c. 7 (f. 62c), with some changes and additions.
- ⁵⁵ From Olivi, loc. cit. (f. 22b).

⁵⁶ From Ubertinus, loc. cit. (f. 62cd).

⁵⁷ See Ambrosiaster, *Comment. in II Cor.*, on this text (PL 17, 277).

⁵⁸ See *De Christ. Relig.*, serm. 55, a. 1 secundae partis princ., c. 4 (II, 251).

⁵⁹ Lauda 63 (Iacopone da Todi, *Le laude secondo la stampa fiorentina del 1490*, a cura di G. Ferri, p. 142).

⁶⁰ Iacopone, *Le Laude*, loc. cit.

⁶¹ From Olivi, *In Ioan.*, c. 2 (f. 22b).

⁶² From Ubertinus, *Arbor vitae*, III, c. 6 (f. 83d).

⁶³ From Simon de Cassia, loc. cit., c. 25 (I, 91ab), and the following quotation with a few changes comes from here.

⁶⁴ From Olivi, *In Ioan.*, c. 2 (f.22c), and f. 20a, 22c for the two following quotations in which are many changes.

⁶⁵ From Simon de Cassia, *Gesta Salvatoris*, IV, c. 1 (I, 155b), with many changes and additions.

SERMON 10

On the day of the Purification of the blessed Virgin Mary

We have received your mercy, O Lord, in the midst of your temple [Ps 47:10 (48:9)]. Dearest brothers, from the Lord's generosity we will be able to experience easily the joy of this feast day provided we recall devoutly the mystery of the great gift divinely presented to us. Furthermore, 'he, for whom in the whole company of the just the entire universe was waiting in expectation, and for whom the bride had been languishing from desire for more than five thousand years'¹, by whose protection the human race hoped to be freed from hell, became flesh in the womb of the Virgin on the sacred day of the Annunciation. On seeing this:

Zion was glad and the daughters of Jerusalem rejoiced [Ps 96:8 (97:8)]. However, this joy in the human race was not complete; a space of nine months passed when *at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom is coming* [Mt 25:6]. The human race heard this and rejoiced, there was exultation among the pastors, on seeing that *the Word was made flesh* [Jn 1:14] and had come to live with us. But the bride did not hold him in a peaceful possession.

On the eighth day the child was circumcised: already the mysteries of the passion begin, already he suffers for the redemption of people, already his most precious blood is poured out. The infant Jesus is carried in the arms of his most beloved Mother. The bride says: *The voice of the turtledove is heard in our land, the time of pruning has come* [Song 2:12] nor is the bridegroom given to the bride. The Magi come from the East, led by the brightness of a new and wonderful star; they adored the bridegroom with an adoration of supreme worship, and *opening their treasures they offered him* mystical kinds of gifts; but finally, leaving the bridegroom, *they went back another way into their country* [Mt 2:11-12]. But today, dearest brothers, I say, that on this most sacred day through the hands of the most lovable Virgin, as from the Mother common to the Saviour and to those needing salvation, in a common place, that is, in the holy temple of God, to a common person, the most holy Simeon, as to the authentic and legitimate representative of the world, the gift of Jesus Christ, God and man, is given to the human race, and the Church is introduced as the bride of God in possession of the gift.

Hence, speaking for the human race, the Prophet uttered the text quoted above and rejoicing in God, said: *We have received your mercy, O Lord, in the midst of your temple*. In Luke 2:22-35 and in today's Gospel, Luke speaks of a triple mystery in this solemn gift: the first is of most loving subjection; the second, of most loving giving; the third, of most loving rejoicing.

ARTICLE 1

How Christ for our sake wanted to submit himself most lovingly to a triple law, like other newly born

The first mystery is of most loving subjection. Of this Luke 2:22-24 says: *After the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they carried Jesus to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord: 'Every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord'; and to offer a sacrifice, as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons*. In these most sacred words, Luke shows that Jesus submitted himself most lovingly to a triple law: firstly, to the law of purification; secondly, to the law of redemption; thirdly, to the law of sacrifice.

CHAPTER 1

That Jesus submitted himself most lovingly and humbly to the law of purification

Firstly, he submitted himself to the law of purification, of which a directive is written in Leviticus 12:2-5, namely, that *if a woman having received seed shall bear a male child, she shall be unclean for seven days* and separated from the company of others. On the eighth day the child is to be circumcised; and then until the fortieth day the woman is to remain *in the blood of her purification*, abstaining not from human company but from entering the temple; and so on the fortieth day she offered her child in the temple of God, and offered gifts for him. Christ submitted himself to this law as an example of purity. Luke says about this: *After the days of her purification, that is, forty days, according to the law of Moses were accomplished* as had been foretold. However, it should be noted that this law of purification only applied to one giving birth

after receiving male seed; and the blessed Virgin did not conceive from the seed of a man but from an overshadowing of the Holy Spirit; hence she was not subject to the law of purification from any need for cleansing, but this was done from a divine arrangement to give an example of virtue. Therefore, Bernard² says on this: 'Do you think, Moses would have said a woman who gave birth to a male child is unclean, without being fearful of uttering a crime of blasphemy against the Mother of the Lord? For this reason, he says first: *if a woman having received seed*'.

Although the blessed Virgin was not obliged by this law of purification, she wanted to observe the custom of the law as an example of the cleanest purity, so as to teach in a mystical sense that after we have done some good things, we are to say: *We are unprofitable servants*, as Christ, the master of humility, teaches in Luke 17:10. For a faithful soul first conceives, then gives birth, and thirdly regards him or herself as unclean.

Firstly, I say, one conceives holy desires, namely, from the Spirit of divine love. So Isaiah 26:17-18 says: *In your presence, O Lord,*, that is from a knowledge of your love; or *from fear of you, O Lord*, according to another translation,³ *we have conceived*.

Secondly, one gives birth to good works, but not without difficulty; so in John 16:21 the Lord says: *A woman when she is in labour has sorrow because her hour has come*. But finally joy follows in her awareness of a good work done. So he adds: *but when she has brought forth the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world*. And there is added in Isaiah: *We have brought forth and given birth to the wind of salvation*.

Thirdly, after all the above a soul should regard itself as unclean, following the example of most holy Job who, in Job 9:28.30-31, says of himself: *I feared all my works knowing that you do not spare the offender*. And the text goes on: *If I be washed as it were with snow water, and my hands shall shine ever so clean, you shall plunge me in the filth of dust*, that is, you who, in the keenness of your vision, know all, show me to be infected.

CHAPTER 2

With what love and humility Jesus submitted himself to the law of redemption

Secondly, Jesus submitted himself to the law of redemption, of which in Exodus 13:2 there is written: *Sanctify to me every firstborn that opens the womb among the children of Israel, as well of men and beasts, for they are all mine*. And it lays down which firstborn are to be immolated, which changed and which redeemed. And so Exodus 13:13: *Every firstborn child you shall redeem with a price*. It is understood that this does not apply to the firstborn among the Levites. Because of what has been said, Luke adds: *Joseph and Mary carried Jesus to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord*, that is, to offer and consecrate him to God and redeem him according to the law, as is written in the law of the Lord, namely, in Leviticus, chapter 12, Exodus, chapter 1, Numbers, chapter 18 and Deuteronomy, chapter 15. It was said above: in the law of Moses, but here he called it the law of the Lord: because it came from Moses as from a messenger, but from the Lord as from one giving as its author. The Lord gave an example of the deepest humility in this redemption. Who does not fittingly admire the humility of the Lord as he is redeemed with the price of birds, the price of all souls, and that our Redeemer is redeemed before we are redeemed by him? So Luke says of this redemption: *Every male opening the womb*, that is, a firstborn. Luke is speaking of a normal birth, but of the Virgin, Ezekiel 44:2 says: *This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it; it shall be called holy to the Lord*; because the firstborn are to be regarded as belonging to the Lord, as is written in Exodus 13:2 where it says: *Sanctify unto me every firstborn*; and they shall be called holy because they shall be offered to the Lord.

CHAPTER 3

With what love and humility Jesus submitted himself to the law of offering

Thirdly, loving Jesus submitted himself to the law of offering, of which Leviticus 12:6 says: *And when the days of her purification are expired for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of the testimony, a lamb of a year old for a holocaust, and a young pigeon or a turtledove for sin*. To this the Evangelist adds: *and to offer a sacrifice*, they carried him to Jerusalem. This sacrifice was given to redeem a male child, according to the prescription of the law of the Lord, as has been said; because, as stated in Matthew 5:17, he did *not come to destroy, but to fulfil; a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons*. In this offering he gave us an example of the highest poverty; this was the offering of the poor who were

unable to offer a lamb. So Bede⁴ says: ‘The Lord, while being rich, became poor for us, and wanted to give the sacrifice of the poor, so that by his poverty he might make us rich now in faith and in the future as heirs of the kingdom’.

But why did the blessed Virgin not offer a lamb since shortly before she had received from the Magi, as is piously believed, an offering of a not insignificant quantity of gold?

It has to be said that:

the blessed Virgin, the mother of kindness and friend of poverty, without delay gave away with most generous charity to the poor of the region the treasures offered out of devotion by the kings. Nor could any temporal good cling to her hands; she already understood, in a mind enlightened by all the signs, to show her Son the height of poverty.⁵

The wording can also be queried: Since one offering would suffice, namely, either the turtledoves or the pigeons, especially for poor people, why does the Evangelist list both according to the distinction in the law when he says two turtledoves, *or two young pigeons*?

It has to be said that a mystical meaning can be given in this case; for:

in a mystical sense both parts of the distinction are fitting for Christ and the Virgin. Firstly, they offered the most sincere chastity, as well as a solitary, sighing and sorrowing contemplation represented by the turtledove’s call which is chaste, solitary and a sigh. Secondly, they offered a love that was common, domestic, fruitful, simple, meek, but also sharp sighted, gracious and sorrowing, things represented by the pigeon. In both of these there is equality because of body and soul; the law orders that *young pigeons* be offered, because with pigeons, the young are better for eating, while large turtledoves are better for the same purpose; in a mystical sense this implies that among things that are similar the more perfect are to be offered to God.⁶

Or, according to Bede⁷, ‘it was right to offer a pigeon, a wanton bird, of such an age when it was not inclined to excess’. Bernard⁸ also says on this:

Although in other places the Holy Spirit is commonly represented by a pigeon, however, because it was a wanton bird, it was not fitting to offer it as a sacrifice for the Lord unless it was of an age that was ignorant of excess. But the age of the turtle dove is not stated because a turtle dove is chaste irrespective of age,

just as chastity was preserved in every age by Christ and his Mother.

ARTICLE 2

That a triple grace was active when Christ was given in the temple and offered to God

The second mystery is of most loving devotion. Luke 2:25-28 says of this:

And behold there was in Jerusalem a man named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was in him. He had received an answer from the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when his parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him into his arms and blessed God.

In the Gospel of Luke 2:34-35 there is added:

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother: Behold this child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted; and your own soul a sword shall pierce that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed.

That a triple grace was active in these sacred words is shown by the order in the giving: the first is a choosing grace, the second a disposing grace, the third a uniting grace.

CHAPTER 1

On the grace of the triple affection with which holy Simeon was filled when in the temple he came to take Jesus on our behalf

The first is a choosing grace. There is a sure rule in sacred theology ‘that whenever God through grace chooses someone for some state, God dispenses and gives to the person all the gifts necessary for that state and copiously embellishes the person’.⁹ Accordingly, a choosing grace selected this holy old man to be the representative of the world who would take the Son of God on behalf of the human race from the hands of God and the Virgin. This grace prepared his soul and filled it with the graces necessary and fitting to carry out this office. The Evangelist shows that he was then filled with a triple affection: firstly, with a fearful affection; secondly, with a desiring affection; thirdly, with a loving affection. The first concerned himself, the second, others, and the third, God.

Firstly, he was filled with a fearful affection, something that concerned himself; so Luke says: *And behold there was in Jerusalem a man named Simeon, and this man was just and devout.* Therefore, he feared from a belief in divine justice and so kept busy in works of the just, as is written in Sirach 15:1-2: *Whoever fears God will do good, and whoever possesses justice shall lay hold on her and she shall meet the person as an honourable mother.* And in Sirach 1:16 we read: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*

Secondly, he was filled with a desiring affection, something that concerned others. On this Luke adds: *waiting for the consolation of Israel*, namely, to receive it from the Lord in mercy, believing that he could say with the Prophet: *With expectation I have waited for the Lord, and he was attentive to me* [Ps 39:2 (40:1)]; as if he had heard in an inspiration: *Expect the Lord, do manfully, and let your heart take courage, and wait for the Lord* [Ps 26:14 (27:14)].

Thirdly, he was filled with a loving affection that was directed to God for he was wholly on fire with love and desire for the Saviour. So Luke adds: *and the Holy Spirit was in him*; just as in John 14:23 the Lord promised to those who love him: *Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.*

CHAPTER 2

On the triple revelation with which Simeon was enlightened when on our behalf he came to take Jesus in the temple

The second is a disposing grace. For God not only chose this old man by grace to receive God’s Son as the representative of the world but, by a disposing grace, God embellished him in whatever he needed to carry out this office. Therefore, God enlightened him with a triple light or revelation; for, firstly, he knew the glorious time, secondly, the glorious place; thirdly, the glorious gift. He received the first because of his faith, the second because of his hope, and the third because of his love.

Firstly, by faith he knew the glorious time, namely, the coming of Christ. According to James 1:6, he had asked for this *in faith, nothing wavering*, so, according to Augustine, in the sermon *De purificatione*,¹⁰ ‘this was granted to the decrepit man, as if to one desiring, longing for, and saying in his prayers: When will he come? When will he be born? Do you think I will be still living? Do you think he will find me here, he through whom the eyes of the heart will be revealed?’ So, in a revelation he was enlightened about the time of the coming of the Saviour. Hence, the Evangelist adds: *He had received an answer from the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord*, namely, made man in our nature. So Simeon could utter the prophetic text: *I shall not die, but live and shall declare the works of the Lord* [Ps 117:17 (118:17)]. Also the text of Job 19:26: *In my flesh I shall see God, my Saviour*.¹¹ And Balaam, in Numbers 24:17,23, said when lifted up in spirit: *I shall see him but not now, I shall behold him, but not near. A star shall spring up from Israel, and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel* etc. And there is added what he said as he called out: *Alas, who shall live when the Lord shall do these things?* He can be answered in a strong voice: Simeon the just and fearful person, to whom by a singular privilege the time of the incarnation of the Son of God was revealed in spirit.

Secondly, he knew the glorious place by reason of his hope. When these come together, totally inflamed with love, he was led by the Holy Spirit into the temple. So Bruno¹² says: ‘While agitated by this desire, the Holy Spirit said to him: Behold, he whom you seek is present, now you shall see him; get up, be ready, hurry, go into the temple!’ So Luke adds: *he came by the Spirit into the temple*, so as to find Jesus there, according to the prophecy of Malachi 3:1 who says: *The Lord whom you seek shall come to his holy temple and the Angel of the testament whom you desire.* Afire with such fervour *he came into the temple*, hoping and desiring to embrace and kiss Jesus! Can you picture with what strength that old man was clothed from on high when *he came by the Spirit into the temple?* Sirach, chapter 2,¹³ says: *They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*

O holy old Simeon, you have indeed come *by the Spirit into the temple*; but were these wonders revealed to you by the Spirit? Did you know which temple of the Lord, rather which temples of the Lord? For both the Mother of the Lord and the Son were temples of the Lord. Did you know, I say, which temples were entering your temple? Clearly you knew, because you came *by the Spirit*; you clearly knew because you had *received an answer from the Holy Spirit that you should not see death before you had seen the Christ of the Lord*¹⁴.

Thirdly, however, by his love he knew the glorious gift, Jesus; so Luke adds: *When his parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law*; then, as Bruno¹⁵ says: ‘the old man ran, stretched out his arms and said to the parents: Give him to me, it is right for me, it belongs to my office, for this have I been sent, I have been kept alive for this office!’ But how did Simeon know him? Bernard¹⁶ replies that ‘by the same grace by which he knew beforehand that he was to come, he knew that he was coming’. Although many were being offered, he discerned this one from the others, so that with the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 2:10-12, he could say: *We have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that are given us from God. For the Spirit searches all things*.

CHAPTER 3

On the wonderful solemnity with which Jesus, the Son of God and the blessed Virgin, is given to us by them

The third is a uniting grace, because by the authority of the whole Trinity the nature of our gift is ratified. And this is done firstly by the authority of law given by the Father; secondly, by the will of the Son who was present in an assumed nature; thirdly, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who led our representative to this; fourthly, through the hands of the most holy Virgin who as a true Mother truly possessed God and man; fifthly, in the most famous place of the temple; sixthly, in a time fixed in law by the whole Trinity; seventhly, the gift itself is given to us solemnly in Simeon our representative.

I ask you to take note in this solemn giving of the care and wisdom of our representative. Before taking hold of the Son of God from the Virgin Mother for the sake of our redemption, he sealed for us saving pacts. So he said to the Virgin: Most sweet Mother of God, I know that the darkened world is in need of an exemplary life, enlightening teaching and the passion and bitter death of your Son. If therefore you, as the treasurer of God and on behalf of the whole Trinity and yourself, wish to give this Son of God and your Son to me as to the representative of the world, I accept him most keenly, I embrace him most sweetly and thank God and yourself most humbly. I do this provided you intend to promise and keep these three pacts for me as the representative of the world, namely, that he is given to me for the salvation of the world: firstly, for a difficult life, secondly, for difficult teaching, thirdly, for his and your difficult and bitter death.

The most blessed Virgin agreed in her heart, word and action with these, and sealed it with a pact by passing her Son with her own hands into the arms of Simeon, and so gave him to the human race. Then, as Luke says: Simeon with inexpressible joy of heart and cheerful face *took him into his arms*. O deep humility of the Saviour! Divine wisdom seems to be overshadowed, divine goodness to be insufficient, divine majesty reduced. Wisdom seems to be overshadowed by the weakness of childhood as indicated by his being presented, for Luke says: *When the parents brought in the child Jesus*. Goodness seems to need a remedy in law, namely, when they acted *according to the custom of the law*, by offering and redeeming him. Majesty seems to be overshadowed when Simeon *took him into his arms*. Hence Bernard¹⁷: ‘The great humility of the Saviour! He is not found in a lofty place but in the arms of a man’. An arm is called the part of the forearm from the elbow to the hand, from which perhaps a measure of cloth for sale is named an arm. This can be understood in a mystical sense that the price of our redemption was measured by the measure of an arm. So the grey haired old man would receive, as stated in Luke 6:38, *good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over*; because the Lord, as stated in Isaiah 28:17, set judgment in weight and justice in measure.

He took Jesus into his arms, that is, between his arms, as undoubtedly he experienced and knew through the Holy Spirit that he was Christ and the high God, the only begotten of the high God. So, in the joy of his heart he expressed his faith by his arms. And as Bruno¹⁸ says: ‘Soon old age vanishes, while youthful vigour and strength are present; and he who was hardly able to support himself, now rejoices to carry the child with ease’.

While he held him firmly in his arms, he confirms the pacts with authentic writing, saying: Firstly, I commit this Son of God and your Son to a difficult life, for he says: *He is set for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel.*

He says: *He is set for the fall:*

Namely, as occasions arise, and this from four generations opposing him: firstly, of the natural Philosophers or pagans; secondly, of perverse heretics; thirdly, of foolish Jews; fourthly, of false Christians. In Zechariah 14:15 it is written: He, namely Christ, *shall be the destruction of the horse, and of the mule, and of the camel, and of the ass.* Firstly, proud Philosophers and pagans who glory in the wisdom of the world and of the natural forces are represented by the horse; Romans 1:22 says: *Professing themselves to be wise they become fools.* Secondly, heretics are represented by the mule, an animal that is a degeneration of the horse, and heretics depart by many errors from the generosity of orthodox faith; 1 John 2:19 says of them: *They went out from us, but they were not of us. If they had been of us, they would no doubt have remained with us.* Thirdly, the camel represents Jews who still chew the cud and mutter over the law and carry a hump of hardness on the back of their hearts; in Psalm 68:24 [69:23], the Prophet says: *Let their eyes be darkened that they see not, and their back bend you down always.* Fourthly, by the ass, which has a cross on its shoulder, is understood wicked Christians who hold up the sign of Christ in name but display the sign of Antichrist in their actions; Titus 1:16 says of these: *They profess that they know Christ, but in their works they deny him.*

The text goes on: *the resurrection of many in Israel*, namely, as a cause. This happens in four ways according to the four kinds of people to be saved and raised up, now by grace and in the future by glory: firstly, good lay people; secondly, good clerics; thirdly, good religious; fourthly, good prelates. Of these Luke 6:38 says in a mystical sense: *Good measure, for the laity, and pressed down, for clerics, and shaken together, for religious, and running over, for prelates, shall they give into your lap, that is, into your mind and affection*¹⁹.

Secondly, I accept this Son of God and your Son for difficult teaching. So he adds: *for a sign that shall be contradicted*; as if he had said: The good news and preaching of your Son will be *for a sign* of salvation for those who believe in him, as the Prophet says in Psalm 59:6 [60:4]: *You have given a warning to those who fear you, that they may flee from before the bow, namely, of final judgment, that your beloved may be delivered.* For Jews, cruel Christians and all the wicked will contradict his teaching but woe to them, for in Isaiah 41:11 there is written: *All that fight against you shall be confounded.*

Thirdly, I also accept this Son of God and your Son for his and your difficult and bitter death. So he adds: *And your own soul a sword shall pierce.* This text can be read in three ways: in the first and third ways it refers to the Virgin, in the second way it refers to Christ.

In the first way the text is modified according to a Gloss²⁰: *And his sword shall pierce your soul*, ‘that is, the sorrow you will have from his suffering’. Or ‘possession is revealed in the first born’ in this way: *A sword*, that is, sorrow over the Lord’s suffering, *shall pierce your soul*, that is, yourself. Bernard²¹: Christ was immolating his flesh on the cross, Mary her spirit. And Damascene²² says: ‘The suffering she escaped while giving birth, she experienced at the time of the passion’.

According to Chrysostom²³ the text can be interpreted in the second way as follows: ‘*And a sword*, that is suffering, *shall pierce your soul*, namely, which you regard as yours’.

Or in the third way: *your soul*, that is, the soul of Christ himself by a transforming love, *a sword shall pierce*, namely, of dire compassion expressed by the word *soul* which a material sword could not pierce.

So see, blessed Virgin, with what pact and under what conditions I will receive this Son of God and your Son: I look for the salvation of the world, I act as the representative of the world, I fulfil my office. Mother of God, you too are to take note of what is necessary for your office: I do what I have to do; you do what concerns you: you accepted him from the Lord for the salvation of the world, you gave birth to him for the world; see to what you have come!

The blessed Virgin replied to him²⁴: I am aware, most faithful representative of the world, what the world needs and why God gave him to me. God gave him to me for the salvation of the world, because *God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son* [Jn 3:16]. So I too give him and this out of a tortured love, because I accepted him for this; out of urgent love, because previously I was not able; out of a complete love, because I have held back nothing for myself; with a mother’s love, because I have envied no one; with a perfect love, because I am unable to offer more. So I give him as a gift of enlightenment, as an example of a way of life, as a reward of glorification. I am aware of what I am giving, I am aware of what I am doing, I am aware for whom I give.

I offer him for my beloved children and I put him forward for their redemption, for their expiation, for their information, instruction, renewal, gratification and glorification. He is truly the *Lamb who takes away the sin of the world* [Jn 1:29]. As the one rich person I offer this, because I alone have the Lamb whom I

conceived without shame, carried without heaviness, gave birth to without pain and I brought forth in complete virginity God and man. I know, therefore, what I am giving to the children of grace who wish to share in this gift; nor am I giving only my Son but with this gift I give myself to be their advocate, Mother, guardian, one who makes excuses and defends from all enemies; also I bind myself with an inviolable love to dispense the treasures of my Son.

ARTICLE 3

On the joyful praise and thanksgiving of most holy Simeon

The third mystery is of most loving rejoicing. When that holy old man took Jesus into his arms and heard such words from the Virgin, he was so filled with joy that he could speak the words of the Prophet in Psalm 83:3 [84:2]: *My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God*. So Luke adds: *He blessed God and said: Now you dismiss* etc. This text can be taken as the theme of the present article that deals only with the canticle. The blessing is given as an expression of an affection of devotion; hence, *he blessed God*, that is, thanked God, in accord with 2 Maccabees 10:38: *They blessed God with hymns and thanksgiving who had done great things in Israel*. And he said: *Now you dismiss* etc.

The old man giving thanks and rejoicing in his canticle, glorifies and magnifies three things: firstly, the most holy Trinity; secondly, the humanity of Christ; thirdly, our advantage.

CHAPTER 1

On the joyful thanksgiving to the most holy Trinity when he had seen the Lord and could now die in peace

Firstly, while giving thanks and rejoicing he glorifies and magnifies the most holy Trinity. He commends: firstly, divine goodness; secondly, divine power; thirdly, divine truth.

Firstly, I say, he commends divine goodness in his departure from this life, when he says: *Now you dismiss*, and for tranquillity in the other life, when he adds: *in peace*,

By this he indicates that he has another life for his future and final rest; and that before he had seen Christ, something he strongly desired and firmly expected, it would not have been peaceful or agreeable for him to die and go away. By saying *dismiss* he indicates that he had been held back by God from a death that in itself was simply desirable, except that because of his hope of seeing Christ he most willingly accepted its delay. By this he also indicates that the bond of this life was for him simply burdensome and tedious; for he says: *Now you dismiss*, that is, dismiss me from this time forward; and this is understood as a request. It is also understood positively in a present, indicative sense, that is: you are dismissing me from this time forward, or dismiss, meaning you may dismiss; as if he were to say: Set me free from this time forward.²⁵

He says further: *Now you dismiss* me from the confinement of a double prison, namely, the world and the body; *dismiss* him who is bound, free him from a triple carnal bond, namely, of necessity, pleasure and custom.

Secondly, he commends divine power when he says: *your servant, O Lord*. Psalm 15:16 [116:16]: *O Lord, for I am your servant, I am your servant and the son of your handmaid*. By naming himself as *servant*, he indicates the subjection of obedience; by saying: *O Lord*, he praises the ownership of power. So, in Wisdom 16:13, there is written: *It is you, O Lord, who has power of life and death, and leads down to the gates of death, and brings back again*.

Thirdly, he commends divine truth when he adds: *according to your word*, that is, according to the truth of your promise because you have truly fulfilled the promise, as the Prophet says in Psalm 118:65 [119:65]: *You have done well with your servant, O Lord, according to your promise*; and in Psalm 118:81.114 [119:81.114]: *In your word I have very much hoped*; and: *In your word I have greatly hoped*; and Psalm 118:25 [119:25]: *Revive me according to your word*.

CHAPTER 2

On how in rejoicing he magnifies and glorifies the child Christ in three ways

Secondly, in his rejoicing he glorifies and magnifies the humanity of Christ or the human Christ. He does this especially in three ways, namely, that he was made firstly, visible, secondly, ready, thirdly, that he was put forward and displayed for the salvation of all.

Firstly, because he was made visible to all, namely, to those who wanted to see, and he rejoiced that this was realized in him so that he could say as he sang: *Because my eyes have seen your salvation*; Baruch 3:38 has: *He was seen upon earth and conversed with people*; and Isaiah 52:10 says: *All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God*; while Job 33:26 says in prophecy of the holy Simeon: *He shall see his face with joy*.

Secondly, Simeon rejoices that he was made ready to help, as he notes when he says: *Which you have prepared*. So Isaiah 52:10 says: *The Lord has prepared his holy arm in the sight of all the Gentiles*. And shortly before this in 52:8 he says: *They shall see him eye to eye*.

Thirdly, he was put forward and displayed for the salvation of all, that is, that he might be seen by all. Simeon adds this when he says: *before the face of all peoples*, 'that it might be shown in a mystical sense, that just as *the sun when it rises in the world* is given and presented face to face for all eyes, so God showed the human Christ to all. The only reason why not all know him, his saving light and his glorious rays is because of our original and actual sins'.²⁶ In Psalm 97:2 [98:2] the Prophet says of this: *The Lord has made known his salvation, he has revealed his justice in the sight of the Gentiles*. In Isaiah 49:22, the Lord says: *I will set up my standard to the people*. From these three, the measure of the joys of faith, hope and charity in pious minds is increased.

Firstly, the joy of faith is increased because the Saviour has been made visible and the One who could not be seen in the divinity, may be seen and represented in his humanity. So Simeon says: *Because my eyes have seen your salvation*.

Secondly, the joy of hope is increased because he has been prepared to help us; so in Psalm 26:1[27:1] the Prophet says: *The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?*

Thirdly, the joy of charity is increased because the salvation of all people is made visible. For he says: *Which you have prepared before the face of all peoples*; Isaiah 49:6 says: *I have given you to be the light of the Gentiles that you may be my salvation even to the farthest part of the earth*.

Chapter 3

On the three names expressing how Christ was advantageous to the human race

Thirdly, Simeon in his rejoicing praises our advantage that can be seen clearly in the triple praiseworthy name he uses to refer to Christ.

He calls him saving, light and glory. By this he shows in a mystical sense that from him and in him and through him is our salvation, enlightenment and rejoicing or happiness; these can be reduced to three hierarchical acts, namely, purgation, enlightenment and perfection; or to three attributes of God, namely, power, wisdom and goodness. He compares Christ, by the three names mentioned above, to the whole human race. But so that he can show that there is unity with distinction, he first mentions all human beings as united. From the point of view of Christ, there is offered to them a general salvation or saving grace and virtue. Then he distinguishes between Gentiles and Jews; and he does this with a certain clear connection to the second and third names of Christ, namely, light and glory, by calling him *a light to the Gentiles and the glory of Israel*. But, so that this distinction might not lessen the unity of Christ, he attributes two effects or two results and ways of sharing in the light, namely, enlightenment and glory or glorification. So he calls Christ *a light to the revelation*, that is, to the enlightenment *of the Gentiles*, and *the glory*, that is, the glorification, *of Israel*. He puts the Gentiles before Israel because all the Gentiles had to be enlightened before all Israel could be saved. He attributes enlightenment to the Gentiles and *glory* to Israel because, just as a final form is superior to a previous state, so the first conversion of the Gentiles, according to all the properties of the states, relates to the final conversion of the Jews as a previous state to the final form, and this is the same as faith to a clear understanding, as active to contemplative, or like mental effort or mediocre contemplation to its highest form that stands with Moses on the peak of the mountain and with Paul taken up to the third heaven.

The light in fact is Christ who is necessary to the Gentiles who were walking in the darkness of unbelief, as Isaiah 9:2 had predicted: *The people of the Gentiles that walked in darkness have seen a great light*. He is called *light* to indicate the incarnate Godhead. There is a difference between one light and another light. In a strict sense light is in the source of a shining body, however, light is clarity in a clear transparent medium of light, like the atmosphere. Therefore, the divinity is light in its substance, Daniel 2:22: *He reveals deep and hidden things, and knows what is in darkness, and light is with him*. But there is light in human nature of which the Prophet in Psalm 35:10 [36:9] says: *In your light we shall see light*; and in Psalm 118:105 [119:105]: *Your word, namely, made flesh, is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths*. Therefore, he says: *to the revelation of the Gentiles*, that is, that he be revealed to the blind eyes of the Gentiles who lack the

support arising from a hope in a coming of the Lord made known through revelation; by this he indicates the removal of the veil of error necessary before receiving an enlightenment of necessary truth. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, the Apostle, referring to the Gentiles who already believe, says: *But we all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord*; as if he were to say: The Jews still have a veil over their eyes, but we all believe *with open face*, that is, *beholding the glory of the Lord* with an unencumbered mind, with the veil removed; not crossing over, that is, *beholding the glorious God*; because *we see now through a glass in a dark manner*, as stated in 1 Corinthians 13:2; *we are transformed into the same image*, that is the divine image, the likeness of God which we behold by passing from an appearance of ignorance to a clear appearance of truth. I say that we pass from *the glory of creation to the glory of justification, from the glory of Moses to the glory of Christ* as people led *by the Spirit of the Lord*. Isaiah 9:2 says: *To them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen*; in accord with what was foretold in Isaiah 40:5: *The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh together shall see that the mouth of the Lord has spoken*.

It must also be noted that:

He refers to the enlightenment of the Gentiles as their revelation; he does this for a triple reason.

Firstly, to point out that it does not come from nature, it is not owing to them, nor does it come from natural causes but from the supernatural and from supernatural causes; such enlightenment is rightly called revelation.

Secondly, to show that this enlightenment would break and take away from them the veil of original blindness and adopted idolatry.

Thirdly, because the Gentiles not only did not see this light, but also had not seen or known of a loving knowledge of God, they were regarded as nothing; they could be known neither by God nor by God's people as a people of God, nor counted among the number of God's faithful. And so they were to receive a revelation, that is, be brought from a dark and carnal existence to the light and so enlightened they would not only see but also be seen.

He adds: *the glory of your people Israel*. He says this because the Jews to some degree had light from the faith of the prophets and the law; however, they lived with the shame of breaking the law and, for this reason, they needed the glory and honour of virtue. In Ezekiel 26:20-21, the Lord says to Tyre: *When I shall give glory to the land of the living, I will bring you to nothing*.

He says *glory* rather than glorification to indicate both the source and cause of glorification and glorification itself. One of the reasons why *glory* is attributed to Israel is because they, more than others, were able to glory in Christ as being from their race, from being born among them and from them, and as more especially and explicitly promised and given to them,

but born for the salvation of all. May he, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be salvation, light and everlasting glory for all of us forever and ever.

NOTES

¹ From Ubertinus, *Arbor vitae*, II, c. 5 (f. 51b), and f. 51d for the following quotation, with some changes and additions.

² *De purificat. B.M.*, sermo 3, n. 1 (PL 183, 369ff.).

³ In the LXX version. See *S. Biblia var. trans.*, on this text (III, 237).

⁴ *In Lucae Evang. Expos.*, I, c. 2 (PL 92, 342).

⁵ From Ubertinus, *Arbor vitae*, II, c. 5 (f. 51a), with some changes; see Pseudo-Bonav., *Meditationes vitae Christi*, c. 9 (VI, 341b); Ludolphus de Saxonia, *Vita Iesu Christi*, pars 1, c. 11, n. 19 (I, 96).

⁶ From Olivi, *In Luc.*, c. 2 (f. 124a), with some changes and additions; see also Olivi, *In Matth.*, c. 3 (f. 17c).

⁷ The reference has not been found in Bede, but the opinion is found in Hugo de S. Charo, *Postilla*, in *Luc. 2:24* (VI, f. 144c) under the name of Bernard; it would seem to be conflated from the words of this Doctor that follow immediately.

⁸ *In Cantica*, sermo 59, n. 7 (PL 183, 1064).

⁹ From Ubertinus, *Arbor vitae*, II, c. 6 (f. 61d); see lib. IV, c. 15 (f. 161cd); Olivi, *De Domina*, q. 1 (VIII, 2ff.) and also Thomas, *Summa*, III, q. 27, a. 4, sub *Respondeo* (XI, 296a).

¹⁰ Sermon 370, namely, *De Nativ. Domini serm.* 2, c. 3 (PL 39, 1658).

¹¹ See *Biblia Sacra iuxta latinam Vulgatam versionem*, on this text (IX, Rome, 1951, 143b).

¹² Signiensis, *Commentaria in Lucam*, pars 1, c. 2, n. 10 (PL 165, 359).

¹³ Rather Isaiah 40:31. See Sirach 2:8-21.

- ¹⁴ From Ubertinus, *Arbor vitae*, II, c. 5 (f. 51a).
- ¹⁵ Loc. cit. (PL 165, 369). See also Ludolphus de Saxonia, *Vita Iesu Christi*, pars 1, c. 12, nn. 9-10 (I, 101bff).
- ¹⁶ Rather Bede, *In Lucae Evang. Expos.*, I, c. 2 (PL 92, 344), but more exactly, and indeed under the name of Bede in *Glossa interlin.*, on this text in Lyranus (V, f. 131v); see Ludolphus de Saxonia, loc. cit.
- ¹⁷ Rather Bede, *In Luc. Evang. expos.*, I, c. 2 (PL 92, 344).
- ¹⁸ Signiensis, *Comment. in Luc.*, pars 1, c. 2, n. 10 (PL 165, 359).
- ¹⁹ From Anonymous, *In Luc.*, c. 2 (f. 22ab), with some changes and additions.
- ²⁰ Lyranus, on this text (V, f. 131d); in the following interpretation a marginal Gloss has the same, loc. cit., (f. 131c). But the words 'possession is revealed in the first born' come from Hugo de S. Charo, *Postilla*, on this text (VI, f. 146a).
- ²¹ See *Sermo in Dom. infra oct. Assumpt. B.M.V.*, n. 14 (PL 183, 437).
- ²² *De fide orthodoxa*, IV, c. 14 (PG 94, 1162).
- ²³ Not found in Chrysostom but it is found almost literally in Hugo de S. Charo, *Postilla*, on this text (VI, f. 146a) under the name of Chrysostom.
- ²⁴ This reply by Bernardine was suggested by Ubertinus, *Arbor vitae*, II, c. 5 (f. 51cd), or perhaps Bernardine took it directly from some common source, as yet unknown, on which Ubertinus also depended.
- ²⁵ From Olivi, *In Luc.*, c. 2 (f. 124b), with some changes.
- ²⁶ From Olivi, *In Luc.*, c. 2 (f. 125c), and f. 124cd for the three quotations in the following chapter.

SERMON 11**ON THE ASSUMPTION OF THE GLORIOUS VIRGIN MARY**

Arise, O Lord, into your resting place, you and the ark which you have sanctified. Psalm 131:10 [132:8].

Bernard says in a certain sermon¹: ‘This day, on which the royal Virgin is taken to the throne of God the Father, is sublime and shines more brightly than the sun for she attracts even the angelic nature to gaze on her as she sits by the throne of the Trinity. All the angels press together to see the queen sitting *on the right hand* of the Lord *in gilded clothing* of virtues, in her immaculate body, *surrounded with variety* [Ps 44:10 (45:9)], distinguished in the multiplicity of her virtues’.

So Bernard.²

But with what praises would the service of humans proclaim the Queen of angels? What praises would human poverty utter, or what functions would they serve, for her whom heavenly beings attend and all the celestial citizens serve? What festivals can one offer, what praises can human weakness bring to her whose glory is admired and proclaimed by the angelic powers? What honours worthy of her will the applause of humans proclaim on earth, when she is continually venerated in heaven by the multitude of the blessed? Assuredly, human ability is not able to proclaim in a worthy way the glorious Virgin. It is enough for us who desire to give honour, to believe in such a person, to confess a person who is great beyond what anyone could explain. Perhaps it is enough for her who has come to the highest glory that today she is exalted soul and body above the angels and surpasses the voices of all people and is beyond their understanding. Contemplating in his spirit this most excellent assumption and exaltation the Prophet says to the Lord: *Arise, O Lord, into your resting place, you and the ark which you have sanctified.*

The triple state of the glorious Virgin is shown in these most holy words. Firstly, a loving invitation or elevation when it says: *Arise*; secondly, a loving meeting when it adds: *O Lord, into your resting place*; thirdly, a loving glorification or exaltation when it says: *you and the ark which you have sanctified.*

ARTICLE 1**How the blessed Virgin was invited thrice to the glory of heaven or thrice elevated**

The first state of the blessed Virgin, as stated by the Prophet, is a loving invitation when he says: *Arise*, namely, and come to everlasting glory. She was thrice invited by God to the glory of heaven as has been explained above in the last chapter of sermon 8.³ Or, the first state the Prophet mentions for the blessed Virgin is a loving elevation, because the Lord says to the Virgin: *Arise*.

She is encouraged by her Son to this elevation so that it seems he is applying to her the words of Isaiah 51:17: *Arise, arise, stand up, O Jerusalem*. She, in fact, was *Jerusalem*, a word that means ‘a vision of peace’.⁴ She was totally at peace and wonderfully enlightened by the vision of God. He says twice: *Arise*, and once, *stand up*, to show the raising up of both her mind and body in glory and to show that like him she rose glorious from death. The most blessed Virgin received sublime elevations from her Son: firstly, while living here on earth; secondly, when crossing from here to glory; thirdly, while she sits beside him on a throne of glory. Even though no tongue can explain this, the language of Sacred Scripture tries to indicate to us this triple elevation in the Virgin. It shows her raised up: firstly, while living here on earth, by an elevation of grace; secondly, while crossing from the world here, by an elevation of glory; thirdly, while sublimely residing in heaven, by a fruitful elevation.⁵

CHAPTER 1**That by a triple elevation of virtues the blessed Virgin was raised up in this present life**

Firstly:

She was raised up while living in the world by an elevation of grace; and this in three ways: firstly, in holiness; secondly in her way of life; thirdly, in contemplation. Firstly, by the eminence of her holiness exceeding the purity of virgins and angels; secondly, by the excellence of her way of life surpassing the obedience of the martyrs and confessors; thirdly, by the eminence of contemplation surpassing the wisdom of the Prophets and Apostles. Scripture shows us this triple elevation in a mystical sense in the elevation of the ark of Noah; in the elevation of a wheel and in the elevation of an eagle.

Firstly, she was raised up by the eminence of her holiness; so:

in Genesis 7:17, there is written: *The waters increased*, namely, from an abundance of uplifting grace and holiness. For the increase of waters around the ark refers to the fulness of graces in Mary. She is *the fountain of gardens and the well of living waters whose waters shall not fail* [Isa 58:11].

The *waters lifted up the ark*, in which the all the seed of the chosen generation was saved, *on high from the earth*, that is, from all that is earthly and from infected love. It says *on high*, because no other pure creature, neither angels nor virgins, reached this purity and cleanness. Angels are clean only in mind, virgins in mind and flesh, but the glorious Virgin with a certain perfection of both was raised *on high* above every creature.

Secondly, she was raised up by the excellence of her way of life, represented in the raising up of a wheel, of which is written in Ezekiel 1:15.19-20: *There appeared upon the earth by the living creatures one wheel with four faces. And the appearance of the wheels and the work of them was like the appearance of the sea*; and there follows: *And when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels also were lifted up with them*.

And there is added: *The spirit of life was in the wheels*. Gospel teaching is represented by the four animals. But by the wheel that has *four faces*, the blessed Virgin is rightly indicated, for she has *four virtues* according to which the active life is managed and conformed in all perfection to Gospel teaching. While these virtues are joined together in grace, they are distinguished in their way of working; so the text speaks in the plural of *the wheels lifted up* because her virtues were of the highest perfection, both for acting and for enduring. This is so incomprehensible to a human mind that it is rightly said that *the appearance of the wheels and the work of them was like the appearance of the sea*. Hence, she inestimably surpasses all the obedience and deeds of the martyrs and confessors for in all of them there was a burden of difficulty in doing good and an inclination to evil. But the blessed Virgin was not held back in any way; so *the wheel* turned in harmony with every wish of the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, she was raised up by the excellence of contemplation; this is represented by the rising up of an eagle of which in Job 39:7 is written: *Will the eagle mount up at your command, and make her nest in high places?* As to how this *eagle* was raised above all other birds and surpassed all of them in wisdom, see above, sermon 4, article I, chapter 2.⁶ In Song 6:9, the Holy Spirit describes this triple elevation where the Spirit says of the Virgin: *Who is she who comes forth like the morning rising, in holiness; fair as the moon, in her way of life; bright as the sun, in contemplation; terrible as an army set in array?* This has to be understood together with all the preceding.

CHAPTER 2

That the blessed Virgin going up into heaven was raised up to a triple dignity

Secondly, 'she was raised up when crossing from the world in a glorious elevation to the peak of a triple dignity: of height, breadth and security so that the kingdom of the Virgin is high, broad and everlasting. These three are represented in the raising up of divine magnificence, of a divine throne and of an irremovable mountain'.

Firstly, she was raised to the peak of the highest dignity so that the kingdom of the Virgin might be high. In Psalm 8:2 [8:1], the Prophet says of this: *Your magnificence is elevated above the heavens*. In fact:

the singular magnificence of God was the blessed Virgin because God is magnified more in her elevation; in her humility, devotion, thanksgiving and enjoyment of all the gifts of God she magnifies God more than all other creatures taken together. So she is rightly said to be *elevated above the heavens* that is, above all the angels. Because, just as Jesus, the Son of God, *sits on the right hand of the majesty on high*, Hebrews 1:3-4, *being made so much better than the angels as he has inherited a more excellent name than they*, the name that he is truly God by the grace of union; so also the Mother of Jesus is so much better than all the angels in that she abounds more than all others in maternal dignity.

Secondly, she was raised to the peak of the broadest dignity so that the kingdom of the Virgin might be broad. So, in 2 Samuel 3:9-10, there is written: *As the Lord has sworn to David, so I do to him, that his kingdom be set up over Israel and over Judah from Dan to Beer-sheba*. This *kingdom*, in which David, namely, Jesus, the Son of God, sits and rests, means 'strong in hand'⁷ and desirable in appearance'. This *kingdom* was the glorious Virgin Mary who was raised to the breadth of the kingdom, so it can be said of her that she rules not only *from Dan to Beer-sheba* but rules *from a sea of grace to a sea of glory, and from the river of divine influences unto the ends of the earth*, reigning over the whole creation.

The magnitude of this kingdom is dealt with more fully above in sermon 3, articles 2 and 3, and in fact throughout the whole sermon.⁸

Thirdly, she was raised to the peak of the most secure dignity; so, in Isaiah 2:2, is written: *In the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountain, and it shall be exalted above the hills*. This *mountain*, in which God is well pleased to dwell [Ps 67:17 (68:16)] and from which *a stone was cut*

without hands is the glorious Virgin of whom, without human intervention, Jesus Christ was born, a corner stone that filled *the whole earth* [Dan 2:34-35]. This mountain was *exalted above the hills* because the height of the Virgin, as has been said, is the highest of the high and the broadest of all and is most secure and unshaken. The stability of this mountain could not be moved as long as the stone remains firm, nor could the kingdom of the Mother as long as the empire of her Child endures; there is written in Daniel 7:14 of this empire: *His power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away and his kingdom that shall not be destroyed*. This triple elevation of the Virgin was foreseen at the one time in the reward in Isaiah 6:1-3 where it says: *I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne*; the Lord rested without moving on the glorious Virgin by reason of her most secure dignity. I say, *a throne high and elevated* by reason of her highest dignity; and *all the earth is full of his majesty* by reason of her broadest dignity. Bernard⁹ also says: ‘No place in the world was more worthy than the temple of the virginal womb in which Mary received the Son of God; nor is there a more sublime throne in heaven than the throne to which the Son of Mary raised Mary’. And he said when exclaiming in a sermon¹⁰: O womb holding more than the heavens, more spread out than the earth, broader than the elements, you were able to contain him whom the whole world could not comprehend and who *with three fingers holds up the bulk of the world* [Isa 40:12].

CHAPTER 3

That the blessed Virgin now reigning in heaven offers us a triple protection

Thirdly:

The blessed Virgin was raised up and dwells sublimely in heaven, namely, by a fruitful elevation because while she sits besides her Son she gives three protections to the Church militant: firstly, she directs; secondly, she protects, thirdly, she petitions. She directs by smoothing the way, she protects by repulsing opposition, she petitions by asking for grace; so the text of Sirach 24:25 can rightly be applied to her: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue*. This elevation was prefigured in a triple figure: firstly, in the image of the rod; secondly, in the image of the Mosaic ark; thirdly, in the image of a cloud. Firstly, because she directs she is represented in the image of the rod, as in Exodus 14:16 where it is written that the Lord said to Moses: *Lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it that the children of Israel may go through the midst of the sea on dry ground*. In truth, the rod that prepared the way for the people of God when it was lifted up is the glorious Virgin Mary by whose protection almost all bitterness is sweetened for the people of God. So Bernard¹¹ says: ‘You who prefer to be carried on the torrent of this world rather than walk, do not take your eyes off the brightness of this star, unless you want to be submerged in the storms’. And further: ‘If you are disturbed by an abundance of crimes, if you are confused by stains of conscience, if you are terrified at the horror of the judgment, if you are in the grip of an abyss of despair, think on Mary, call on Mary; do not let her be absent from your heart, nor absent from your mouth. For thinking of her you do not make mistakes; praying to her you do not despair; following her you do not go astray; holding on to her you do not stumble; under her protection you do not fear; under her leadership you do not get tired; when she is kind you endure; and so in yourself you will be able to experience what is correctly said: *the Virgin’s name was Mary* [Lk 1:27]’, that is, ‘a star of the sea’.¹²

Secondly, because she protects, she is represented by the image of the Mosaic ark:

Of this ark, there is written in Numbers 10:35 towards the end: *When the ark was lifted up, Moses said: Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered, and let them that hate you, flee from our face*.¹³

This indicates in a mystical sense that ‘When the glorious Virgin was raised up, the power of the demon was lessened and blown away. So the text of Sirach 24:11 can be applied to her: *The necks of all the proud and high I have trodden by my own power*’.

Thirdly, because she petitions she is represented in the image of a cloud:

of which is written in Job 38:34: *Can you lift up your voice to the cloud that an abundance of waters may cover you?* The voice raised to the cloud is grace requested by the prayer of the Virgin; this prayer is followed by an abundance of waters because through the prayer she requests an influence of graces and remission of sins. So Sirach 43:24 says: *A remedy for all is the speedy coming of a cloud*, that is, in the speedy assumption of the blessed Virgin; because all who so wish share in her grace. So Bernard¹⁴ says: ‘Mary is made all things to all, she made herself a debtor to the wise and the foolish, she opens the treasure of her mercy to all, and of her fulness all receive’.

The abovementioned triple effectiveness of the virginal protection is indicated in the rising up of a cloud, of which Numbers 10:11-12 writes: *The cloud was taken up from the tabernacle of the covenant, and the children of Israel marched by their troops*. Exodus, chapter 14, says of this cloud that the people were led by the first,

defended by the second, and overshadowed by the third; for sometimes the cloud went ahead, sometimes it followed, and sometimes it was above them,

so that they indicate the multiple protection of the blessed Virgin towards the people of the elect and all Christians.

ARTICLE 2

How the whole blessed Trinity with all the heavenly choir comes to meet the blessed Virgin ascending into heaven

The second state of the glorious Virgin as stated by the Prophet is a loving meeting, so that the one voice of all the blessed may use the word of the Prophet as the rejoice, exult, applaud and exhort the Lord to go to meet his blessed Mother, and they say: *Lord, into your resting place*, namely, you go with the whole army of the blessed to meet her. They call the blessed Virgin *the resting place* of Christ, not only because he rested in her for nine months but also because he rested more in her through quiet love than in any other rational creature, as Sirach 24:12 testifies of the blessed Virgin when it says: *He that made me rested in my tabernacle*.

Who could express the joy and solemnity of the heavenly curia when the glorious King, Jesus, got up in haste, joyful and crowned with royal beauty, and aroused the whole body of the blessed, so that all the citizens of heaven would meet the Virgin Mother as she was lifted up. Then indeed was fulfilled what, in 2 Samuel 6:12-15, is said of David, that he *brought away the ark of God with joy, and there were with David seven choirs*, namely, of the spirits of the blessed, prophets, apostles who had already crossed over, of martyrs, confessors and virgins; so there was fulfilled in the glorious Virgin what is written in Sirach 24:16: *My abode is in the full assembly of the saints*. O glorious solemnity, O inexpressible joy that can be neither expressed nor passed over, when *David and all Israel* joyfully brought in the ark of the covenant, that is, the glorious Virgin. This was prefigured in a mystical sense in 1 Kings 2:19 where it is written that *King Solomon arose to meet his Mother and bowed to her*, or according to Josephus¹⁵ 'he embraced her', *and sat down upon his throne, and a throne was set for the king's mother, and she sat down on his right hand*. In this, one has to contemplate the wonderful meeting because *Solomon arose to meet his Mother*; the wonderful greeting because he *bowed down to her*; the highest elevation because *she sat down on his right hand*. Glorious Jesus *arose to meet his sweet Mother*. On this, as Bernard¹⁶ says: 'This assumption of the Virgin in some way is more excellent than the ascension of the Son of God, namely, in the triumphal meeting, only angels were able to meet the Son of God; but as the Mother was lifted up she was met by Jesus himself with the whole heavenly curia, both of angels and the just, and she was solemnly carried to the gathering of the blessed meeting'. Not only the Lord Jesus crowned as a man in a glorified body, but the God King, three and one, can be said to have met triumphantly the most holy Virgin, not by local movement but by favourable goodwill and from having the principal role in her glorification.¹⁷

CHAPTER 1

How the heavenly Father comes to meet the blessed Virgin as she rises into heaven

Firstly:

The father by a certain appropriation comes to meet the blessed Virgin and embraces the bride of most chaste love, of most singular fertility, of most careful upbringing. By the singular purity of her virginity and more by the deepest abyss of her humility, she pleased the almighty Father who gave her his only Son, whom she conceived in her most chaste womb, gave birth to and most carefully nourished. Before the whole heavenly court, the eternal Father most kindly embraces and acknowledges this bride as the Mother of his only Son. So, speaking in the name of the Father, Isaiah 60:7 says: *I will glorify the house of my majesty*. From the Father she received the source of fertility for all the elect to be born; and also to give the angels some taste and degree and experience of the divine, since even from the beginning of their creation and glorification they foresaw the future Mother of the Son of God, and consequently of every rational creature

to be raised up in heavenly glory, as has been treated above to some extent in Sermon 9, article 2, chapter 2.¹⁸ But this is treated more fully in Quadregasimali *De christiana religione*, Sermon 60, articles 2 and 3.¹⁹ Hence, the Virgin 'for this reason receives from the Father a position of primacy and royal and imperial dignity over every created nature'.

CHAPTER 2

How her glorious Son goes to meet the blessed Virgin being lifted up into heaven

Secondly:

The Son himself goes to meet her in the glory of his majesty, showing to all that this is the very Mother who conceived, gave birth to and nourished him and that she was linked with him faithfully in his assumed nature. So with filial reverence, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, he is said to have bowed to his most worthy Mother. O good Jesus, omnipotent and eternal God, how is it that you bow down to a woman? He replies that I want to reverence her in a correct way because there are two reasons why she should be revered: the first is her motherhood, the second is her humility. In her there were a singular motherhood and an incomparable humility. Firstly, the Lord Jesus reverences his Mother for her motherhood, for she was not an ordinary mother but one of singular sufficiency, singular magnificence and singular caring. Firstly, I say, of singular sufficiency because without male seed she conceived on her own from the Holy Spirit. Secondly, of singular magnificence because she alone gave birth to God, she alone remained a virgin after giving birth. Thirdly, of singular caring because no other mother ever loved and cared for her son so much, in fact not even all other mothers taken together. Therefore, just as she had no associate in conceiving, so she will have no associate in this honour. And just as she had no equal in such a son, so she will have no one similar to her in this honour. And just as no one was comparable to her in her sincere caring, so in glory she will have no creature equal to her. Secondly, Jesus reverences his Mother because of her deep humility, for, as stated in Luke 14:11: *All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.* And because no creature was like her in humility, so in her glory she will have no associate. There is a triple way of rewarding virtues²⁰:

the first is by emptying; the second by completion; the third by opposition.

The first is by emptying, as in faith and hope; when these are emptied there follows a vision of faith and a holding on of hope. The second is by completion as in charity and many cardinal virtues to which is added a completion without any defect. The third is by opposition as in poverty, hunger, struggle and humility to which God promises their three opposites.

For, as Matthew 5:3-6 testifies: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.* And in Luke 14:11 the Lord says of humility: *Those that humble themselves will be exalted.*

So, see how in the blessed Virgin her humility and divine goodness are at odds in a pious opposition. Mary humbles herself and God exalts her. Mary not only humbles herself but in humility makes herself lower than every rational creature; but God not only exalts her but magnifies her above every creature, even the angels, and the sublime God reverences her as his Mother to be most revered and he bows bodily to her in inestimable honour. O wonderful sign and peak of unheard height that from a woman the Son of God in some way is seen to recognize that he is human! What should he not give to the Virgin whom he so greatly wanted to honour? Indeed, as far as honour is concerned, the Son of God would not be mindful of a thousand times a thousand thousands of seraphim, and an infinite number of infinities; nor would all these together be able to love God truly, and truly enjoy God, in the way that the Virgin and Mother enjoys the Son of her womb. Indeed on the highest level among the levels of mere creatures, all the highest seraphim are raised up in the Virgin; in so far as they are the same as the Virgin, they taste, love and enjoy the Son of God in her and through her, as, by the inestimable love of God, he was made for them a natural Son and the Son of a creature. Just as the text, *he bowed down to her*, described the honour due to a mother from her son, so the text of Josephus,²¹ 'he embraced her', shows the love due to her by a bridegroom. The most blessed Virgin, like another Esther 2:13.16 *from the chamber of the women*, that is, from the Church militant, is brought by the whole company of the heavenly army *to the chamber of the blessed Artaxerses*, namely, of the most high God; so that the prophetic words may be applied to her: *You have held me by my right hand and by your will you have conducted me, and with your glory you have received me* [Ps 72:24 (73:24)]. This is truly completed today, when all the heavenly citizens have seen her being raised up and abounding in the *delights* of the divine embraces as she *leans upon her beloved* [Song 8:5]. The fullness of the delights of the mutual embraces is known only to her and to her Son, for she has the one who is Son and bridegroom; although we may be able, if you so wish, to attribute betrothal to the Father.

CHAPTER 3

How the Holy Spirit goes gloriously to meet the blessed Virgin

Thirdly:

The Holy Spirit goes to meet the glorious Virgin, conscious of the furnace of love and the place of the fantastic work in which and by which a most pure body for the Son of God was made, and how, with a new soul infused, both together were united in one complete and perfect human nature in the person of the Son of God. The Holy Spirit showed exactly to all the elect that, in this place and through it, was done whatever is wonderful in the working of grace, and that in this place was enclosed the whole fire of the virtuous work the Spirit had decided to give to a rational creature. So, the whole Trinity, acting together with common agreement, showed that this ineffable Virgin is their bride of incommunicable charity, the Queen of heaven with unattainable dignity, the Lady of the world with power that could not be shared, the pious Mother of all the elect with inexhaustible piety, the most triumphant crusher of all the enemies of God with insuperable energy, the generous dispenser of all heavenly treasures on account of her goodwill.²²

The heavenly spirits are left in such admiration at the honour and glory given to the Virgin as she is raised up that they say in the words of Song 8:5:

Who is this that comes up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning on her beloved? Firstly, they admire her personal excellence by which she was in everything an example of religion: *Who is this?* Secondly, they admire the singular grace by which her whole life was an advance in devotion: *that comes up*; as long as she lived she always went higher. Thirdly, they admired the universal magnificence by which she was an honour to the human condition: *from the desert*. It was indeed wonderful that such a Virgin could arise from a human race bereft of grace. Fourthly, they admired the virginal wealth in the fruit she provided for the benefit of herself and her children: *flowing with delights*. Fifthly, they admired the glory that could not be shared on account of the bond of union, because, according to Bernard,²³ ‘she was *leaning on her beloved*. That happier Mother leans on him, and lying on the golden couch of the divine majesty she rests between the arms of her bridegroom, in fact of her Son’. O what dignity, what special glory rests upon her whom the angelic powers reverence! This is what the angels admired most especially.

Let the angels be glad and rejoice when the blessed Virgin enters body and soul into heaven, because they are seeing the Queen of heaven today enter for the first time the curia of paradise. Now they are joined by a stronger covenant to humans because, while they had seen the God-man raised up in the ascension, they had never seen a mere human put forward ahead of every other creature. The whole heavenly curia rejoices, because after the entry of the divine body of Jesus, with whom perhaps the souls and glorified bodies of the saints came, they had seen no one raised up in a royal body other than the Virgin. Each heavenly order rejoices because it finds in the Virgin some special aspect of her glory.

ARTICLE 3

On the triple glorious adornment with which the blessed Virgin shines in the glory of paradise

The third state of the glorious Virgin, touched on by the Prophet, is loving glorification or exaltation, because he adds: *You and the ark which you have sanctified* In Psalm 44:10 [45:9] he states this more clearly when he says: *The queen stood on your right hand*. ‘For, just as blessed Jesus sits on the right hand of the Father, that is, in control of the Father’s possessions, so the glorious Virgin, raised up on the throne, sits beside him in control of the possessions of her Son Jesus’. He calls the Virgin an ark. The word ark comes from ‘shutting in’, in that it shuts in and blocks vision. In this way the blessed Virgin for nine months shut the Son of God in her womb. And he adds: *which you have sanctified*; because he sanctified her most especially when he remained for nine months in her womb. For he says in Psalm 45:5 [46:4]: *The most High has sanctified his own tabernacle*. Therefore he says: *You and the ark which you have sanctified*, namely, you have been raised in glory above all creatures.

On this triple state of loving glorification or exaltation of the blessed Virgin we can speak in three ways. In the first way, there is noted the glorification and exaltation of the glorious Virgin in three things: the first is capability, the second, unity, and the third is liberality, topics treated more fully above in Sermon 8, article 2, chapters 8, 9, and 10.²⁴

Regarding the second way, more can be seen in Sermon 8, articles 2 and 3,²⁵ in which is shown more fully the great glory with which the blessed Virgin Mary shines in paradise.

In the third way, it can also be said that this outstanding wonder, namely, that a woman is joined in this way to divine glory, as John, in Revelation 12:1, describes it by saying: *A great sign appeared in heaven: a*

woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. This mystery can be explained in another way as explained above in Sermon 8.²⁶

In this mystery, the blessed Virgin is shown: firstly, adorned with the sun; secondly, honoured by the moon; thirdly, crowned with stars; 'so that the sun is her clothing, the moon her covering, the stars the ornament on her head',²⁷ and so, in royal beauty, she shines gloriously in the kingdom of heaven.

CHAPTER 1

It is shown that there are seven reasons why the blessed Virgin reigns in soul and body in the glory of paradise

Firstly, it is shown that she was adorned with the sun, 'not only by the brightness of the divinity in her soul; not only because, as his most worthy Mother, she was adorned more than other creatures with the glory of Christ the man, who is the true sun; but also because the splendour of the glory of the glorified soul and body of the most excellent Virgin shone forth'.

'And while sometimes doubt has been cast on this, and blessed Jerome²⁸ speaks of it rather ambiguously, however, in modern times it is piously believed by all'²⁹ and assured.

Augustine seems to assert it in a small book or sermon that he edited on the Assumption.³⁰ While no direct authority for it can be found in Scripture, it is not contrary to but rather agrees and is in accord with it; many arguments confirm it. For, according to Augustine,³¹ there is no doubt that God could have done this; certainly, one should doubt less that he should do what he wished, because this was fitting for filial reverence.

That the blessed Virgin both in her glorious body and soul reigns in heaven is shown by seven arguments:

firstly, because of union; secondly, because of incorruptibility; thirdly, because of honour; fourthly, because of dignity; fifthly, because of conformity; sixthly, because of equity; seventhly, because of integrity.

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 in a natural way 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 or himself to be different, and since the Son died so too the Mother died. However, as the flesh of the Child was not corrupt, for Psalm 15:10 [16:10] says: *Nor will you give your holy one to see corruption*, 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, the blessed Virgin was glorified in both soul and body.

The second argument is because of her incorruptibility.

There was a multiple sentence cast on the first woman against other women. In Genesis 3:16 the Lord says: *I will multiply your sorrows and your conceptions; in sorrow you shall bring forth children, and you shall be under your husband's power*. Mary increased her sorrows when, as stated in Luke 2:35, a sword of sorrow pierced her soul in the suffering of her Son, but she conceived only once and was not under the power of a husband; she was not put under the power of a man, since her body remained completely intact and her virginity unchanged. The Virgin conceived of the Holy Spirit. Because she was pregnant without any trace of sin or loss from sexual intercourse, she gave birth without pain, and without any violation of her integrity she remained with the complete modesty of virginity. God was able and 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. Therefore, God was able to and ought to have preserved her from the corruption of death and ashes, 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, for the Lord wanted to be conceived and born from her without any corruption in her.

The third argument is on account of the honour due to her.

That means to save the honour of the Mother. It was written in the Law in Exodus 20:12: *Honour your father and your mother*. If Christ came not to abolish the law or the prophets but to fulfill them, as stated in Matthew 5:17, then just as he honoured the Father as he ought to: *I honour my Father*, as stated in John 8:49, so too should he have honoured his Mother as he ought to. 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 more than others in her life in the

Bernardine of Siena

grace of the conception and birth of Christ, so undoubtedly one must feel that she has been honoured in her death with a special grace.

The fourth argument is on account of her dignity and holiness.

Such was Mary's dignity and holiness that she merited to be the Mother of the Saint of saints. Just as the Son is the male 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 throne of God, the dwelling 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 was made flesh and dwelt among us* [Jn 1:14], should be given as food to worms and then become most lowly dust.

The fifth argument is on account of the conformity between mother and child.

The Mother was perfectly conformed to her Son and was the main imitator of Christ. Christ said: *Whoever ministers to me must follow me, and where I am, there also shall my minister be* [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. 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, in Matthew 16:27 is written, *he will render to all according to their work*. And if: *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints* [Ps 115:15 (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.

The sixth argument is on account of equity.

Augustine³² 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. Moreover, healing and perfect freedom are made clear in the resurrection; therefore, resurrection should be made clear in both sexes as a sign of perfect healing. Just as perfect healing for the male sex was made clear and shown in Christ, so it should be made evident in the female sex. In no other woman could it or should it have been more fittingly shown than in the most sweet Mother of Christ who in life was free from every corruption. The Prophet, in Psalm 88:38 [89:36-37], says while speaking in the person of Christ: *His throne shall endure as the sun before me, and as the moon perfect forever, and a faithful witness in heaven*. The Mother is the *throne* of the Son, and *before* the Son she is bright as *the sun* in the adornment of her soul, and like him *forever* in the adornment of her undefiled body; and so she is a *faithful witness* to the resurrection.

The seventh argument is on account of her integrity, that is, 'on account of the perfection of beatitude. For, as Augustine says in *Super Genesim ad litteram*³³, and Bernard, *De diligendo Deum*³⁴.

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 fullness 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 Augustine³⁵ points out examples from Sacred 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? He kept Jonah, beyond the normal course of nature, undamaged in the belly of a whale [Jon 2:10]; did he not go beyond nature to keep the Mother undamaged? Daniel was saved from the demanding hunger of lions [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 Jerome³⁶ 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,³⁷ Gervase and Protasius³⁸ and many similar cases as recorded in the

histories. Did not the Lord reveal 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 never remained 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 not fully authentic, that it was revealed to a holy and devout lady³⁹ that the blessed Virgin died in the second year after the ascension of the Lord and as much more as is needed to reach the middle of the month of August, when her assumption is celebrated; 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 was assumed into heaven with her soul and glorified body together and was seated on the right hand of her Son.

It is fitting to be able to understand the text of Proverbs 11:16 of this: *A gracious woman finds glory*, namely, both in soul and glorified body. Rightly, in Revelation 12:1, is she said to be *clothed with the sun*, because she is glorious in a fourfold quality represented in the sun. The sun has: firstly, brightness or clarity; secondly, subtlety; thirdly, incapability of suffering; fourthly, agility. The blessed Virgin, like the sun, has these four qualities in her glorious body.

It must be noted that, according to Alexander of Hales, in III,⁴⁰ the first quality, clarity, is the main quality and the others depend on it.

Firstly, subtlety depends on it; light of its nature has subtlety to penetrate bodies and especially bodies that are transparent, as is clear in glass and in rock-crystal which are penetrated by light.

Secondly, subtlety depends on it for its movement and changes are sudden.

Thirdly, the incapability of suffering depends on it for it suffers no harm from others. Accordingly, clarity underlies all the other properties of the bodies of the blessed, and since no other quality underlies all the others, it is fitting to use clarity to show the glorification of a glorious body. So, in Matthew 13:43, the Lord wanting to show the glory of a glorified body, did not use many words, but indicated it fully, totally, and perfectly by clarity, when he said: *Then shall the just shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father*.

So Alexander.

But, according to Richard de Mediavilla, in IV, dist. 49⁴¹:

The light of the elements and the light of a glorified body are not the same, but the light of the elements is like an imitation of it, just as the spiritual light of a soul is not of the same kind as the spiritual light of heavenly glory, but rather a certain imitation of it. Similarly, sunlight is not the same kind as the light of a glorious body, but like it and an imitation of it.

This is in every glorious body. But the light of the glorious body of the Virgin is greater than that of all the bodies of the blessed taken together will be, excepting the glorious body of Jesus Christ.

It has to be noted that, according to Dionysius, *Ad Dioscorum*,⁴² beatitude does not belong to bodies but it flows from souls into bodies. It happens in this way.

Firstly, a vision of God, that is, of infallible truth, is given to a mind on account of a merit of faith as the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 13:12: *We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face*. Because the spirit will be enlightened and glorified in the vision of eternal light, and so will provide clarity to the body, *the just shall shine as the sun*, as quoted above.

Secondly, in the home of secure dignity, on account of hope there will be given a holding or possession in the memory; the Apostle says of this in 1 Corinthians 9:24: *So run that you may obtain*. But because by a holding and possession of the God who cannot suffer, the human spirit will be made totally unable to suffer, and it will give to the body, both internally and externally, total impassibility. Hence, in 1 Corinthians 15:42, the Apostle says: *The body is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption*.

Thirdly, love or enjoyment in spirit, namely, appealing goodness, will be given to the will on account of a merit of charity while on the way; so Job 22:36 says: *Then shall you abound in delights in the Almighty*. But because the will is to become most spiritual in the delight and love of the divine spirit, so there is imparted to its body a corresponding subtlety and spirituality; in 1 Corinthians 15:43, the Apostle says: *It is sown in weakness, it shall appear again in power*: this is subtlety.

Fourthly, the spirit, from the enjoyment and possession of the divine vision, will be most ready to move towards God, and the spirit in a glorious body will be outstanding in its complete agility; in 1 Corinthians

15:44, the Apostle says: *It is sown a natural body, it shall appear again a spiritual body*: this is agility. This is the glory of each and of all the blessed. To the extent that in the present life there was greater faith, firmer hope and more fervent charity, so much clearer will be the vision of God, and the most holy Trinity will give as a reward a firmer or surer clinging to God, a sweeter enjoyment of God, and love in the soul; consequently, as is clear from what has been said, in the bodies of the blessed, clarity will be brighter, the incapability of suffering will be stronger, subtlety stronger and agility lighter.

With this stated, one has to reflect carefully that the faith of the blessed Virgin, remembering that she was the Mother of God, was of such brightness, her hope of such stability, her love of such immensity, that they surpass all the faith, hope and love of all rational natures taken together. All rational creatures taken together, on the basis of their faith, hope and charity, even if all these were to be given to only one creature, would not be able to reach this motherhood. But no matter how great was the perfection of these virtues in the glorious Virgin, no matter how great their reward in heaven, to the same degree does the glory of her soul flow over into the glorious body of the Virgin and her body is glorious in the abovementioned qualities.⁴³ Hence, Bernard, in a sermon,⁴⁴ says quite rightly: 'The whole world was brightened by the presence of Mary'. He says this of her life on earth and then adds: 'indeed, she now makes heaven glow more brightly as it is lit up by the brightness of this virginal lamp'. In Revelation 12:1, John rightly says: *A great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun*. In a different and fuller way, the sun is spoken of above in Sermon 8, Article 2, Chapter 3 and the following Chapters.⁴⁵

CHAPTER 2

On the triple nature of light to which the blessed Virgin was compared in this present life

Secondly, the blessed Virgin is shown by John to be honoured by the moon, because she has *the moon under her feet*. This can be applied to the Virgin in two ways: firstly, to when she lived in this present life; secondly, to when she now reigns in heaven.

Firstly, as applied to her while she lived in this present life. The moon is changeable, cold and bright, and these represent temporal possessions, earthly knowledge and clear understanding. Firstly, the moon is changeable and it represents temporal possessions that, like the moon, are changeable and imperfect. The blessed Virgin while she lived kept all temporal possessions *under her feet*, because in contempt she trod on all temporal goods lest in any way they might hinder her love for Christ; so Sirach 24:24, rightly says of her: *I am the mother of fair love*. To some extent, the love of any changeable object always takes away from the love of an unchangeable good. Augustine, in book 10 of the *Confessions*⁴⁶ says: 'One loves you less, who loves something with you that is not loved because of you'.

Secondly, the moon is cold and this represents earthly knowledge and prudence which are cold and dark. The Virgin kept these *under her feet*, partly by rejecting and treading on them, and partly by making them her servants.

Thirdly, the moon is bright and this represents a clear understanding in creatures. The blessed Virgin kept this also *under her feet*, for she put little value on the knowledge of all creatures, namely, active and passive, in comparison to the most excellent knowledge of Christ. The Apostle also shared in this knowledge for, in Philippians 3:7-8, he says: *The things that were gain to me, the same I have counted loss for Christ. Furthermore, I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord*. How much more was this true of the Virgin who was the Mother of the Saviour?

In the second way, it can be applied to her status as she now reigns in heaven. Sufficient has been said on this above in Sermon 8, Article 3, Chapter 2.⁴⁷

CHAPTER 3

On the triple meaning of the twelve stars with which the blessed Virgin is crowned

Thirdly, the blessed Virgin is shown by John as crowned with stars because he adds: *and on her head a crown of twelve stars*. This can be understood in three ways: in the first way that the twelve stars of her crown are the twelve Apostles of Christ:

They were chosen by the merits of the blessed Virgin, and after their collapse at the death of Christ they were brought back to faith and taught by her instruction. The glorious Virgin Mary in a singular way is the city, written about in Revelation 21:10-17, in which all the elect are contained mystically. In this city the twelve

Sermon 11

Apostles are placed as the twelve foundations of precious stones; and likewise the twelve pearls from which the twelve gates are made,⁴⁸

represent the twelve Patriarchs who are adorned with every precious stone; through them faith in the coming of the Son of God was passed on to posterity by the merits of the Virgin.

In the second way, the twelve stars of her crown are twelve clear understandings or illuminations of the mind of the Virgin. The first star is knowledge of natural bodies; the second, of spiritual substances; the third, of intellectual knowledge; the fourth, of the affective faculties; the fifth, an inspiration about the bodies of laws; the sixth, an inspiration of infused graces; the seventh, of faultless judgments; the eighth, of incomprehensible mercies; the ninth, of merits to be rewarded, the tenth, of rewards given; the eleventh, of the passage of time; the twelfth, of eternal reasons.

In the third way, the twelve stars in the crown of the Virgin are the twelve gifts that in her prayers, as one reigning and glorious in heaven, she asks for us who struggle and work in the world. The first star is giving light to the blind; the second, lifting up the fallen; the third, cleansing of sinners; the fourth, encouraging the downcast; the fifth, help to all who struggle; the sixth, strength in adversity; the seventh, resurrection of the dead; the eighth, softening the hardhearted; the ninth, leading to Jesus Christ; the tenth, help in the hour of death; the eleventh, refreshment from the fire of purgatory; the twelfth, rejoicing in the glory of all others

Her most beloved Son, Jesus Christ, gives these to us from the merits and prayers of his sweet Mother; may he, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, exalt this Virgin in glory above all creatures forever and ever. Amen.

NOTES

- ¹ Rather Nicolaus Claravallensis, *Sermo 40, In Assumpt. B.M.V.* (in the works of Peter Damian, PL 144, 717).
- ² From Ubertinus, *Arbor vitae*, IV, c. 38 (f. 198ab).
- ³ See above pages 158-162.
- ⁴ Jerome, *De nominibus hebraicis* (PL 23, 830).
- ⁵ From Ubertinus, loc. cit., (f. 200a), and from f. 200a-c for the five quotations that follow, with many changes and additions.
- ⁶ See above, pages 50-52.
- ⁷ Jerome, *De nominibus hebraicis* (PL 23, 813).
- ⁸ See above, pages 35-44.
- ⁹ *In Assumptione B.M.V.*, sermo 1, n. 3 (PL 183, 416).
- ¹⁰ Rather Nicolaus Claravallensis, *Sermo 11, De Annunt. B.M.V.* (in the works of Peter Damian, PL 144, 558); see above page 148 with note 37.
- ¹¹ *Super Missus est*, hom. 2, n. 17 (PL 183, 70ff.).
- ¹² Jerome, *De nominibus hebraicis* (PL 23, 842); Bernard, *Super Missus est*, hom. 2, n. 10 (PL 183, 70); *In Nativitate B.M.V.*, n. 6 (PL 183, 441).
- ¹³ From Ubertinus, *Arbor vitae*, IV, c. 38 (f. 200c), and also the two quotations that follow.
- ¹⁴ *In Domin. infra Oct. Assumpt. B.M.V.*, n. 2 (PL 183, 430).
- ¹⁵ Namely, Iosephus Flavius, *Antiquitates iudaicae*, III, c. 1, n. 2 (p. 282b); see also the LXX translation of this text, *Sacra biblia variarum transl.* (II, 92c).
- ¹⁶ Rather Nicolaus Claravallensis, *Sermo 40, In Annunt. B.M.V.* (in the works of Peter Damian, PL 144, 717ff.).
- ¹⁷ From Ubertinus, *Arbor vitae*, IV, c. 39 (f. 200d), and also for the two quotations in the following chapter.
- ¹⁸ See above pages 177-183.
- ¹⁹ *Opera*, II, 357-370; see also above, pages 140-162.
- ²⁰ From Ubertinus, *Arbor vitae*, IV, c. 39 (ff. 200d-201ab), and for the two quotations that follow, with some changes.
- ²¹ See above page 225.
- ²² From Ubertinus, *Arbor vitae*, IV, c. 39 (ff. 201b), and c. 40 (f. 201c) for the two quotations that follow, with many changes and additions.
- ²³ Rather Nicolaus Claravallensis, *Sermo 40, In Annunt. B.M.V.* (in the works of Peter Damian, PL 144, 722).
- ²⁴ See above pages 149-152.
- ²⁵ See above pages 140-162.
- ²⁶ See above pages 125-162.
- ²⁷ From Ubertinus, *Arbor vitae*, c. 4039 (f. 201d), and also the first quotation in the following chapter.
- ²⁸ *Epist. 9 ad Paulam et Eustochium, de Assumpt. B.M.V.*, n. 2 (in the works of Jerome, PL 30, 123).

- ²⁹ From Matthew of Aquasparta, *Sermones. Sermo Multiplicatae sunt aquae* (Assisi, Bibl. Commun., cod. 460, ff. 230v-231r), and the nine quotations in the present chapter down to the words: 'It is fitting to be able' on page 236, with some changes and additions, are taken from here.
- ³⁰ Cap. 2 (in the works of Augustine, PL 40, 1144).
- ³¹ Loc. cit. c. 8 (PL 40, 1148).
- ³² Rather Ambrose, *Expos. Evang. secundam Lucam*, IV, n. 57 (PL 15, 1629):
- ³³ L. 12, c. 35, n. 68 (PL 34, 483).
- ³⁴ See lib. II, c. 2, n. 4 and c. 7, n. 18 (PL 182, 976, 985).
- ³⁵ Namely Pseudo-Augustine, in the work already quoted, *De assumptione B. M. V.*, c. 8 (in the works of Augustine (PL 40, 1147)).
- ³⁶ *Epistola 9, ad Paulam et Eustochium, De Assumpt. B.M.V.* n. 2 (in the works of Jerome, PL 30, 123).
- ³⁷ See *Brev. Rom.*, die 3 augusti, Inventio corporis S. Stephani, ad Matutinum, lect. 2 noct.; Surius, *Vitae Sanctorum*, die 3 augusti (VIII, 99sq.); B. Mombritius, *Sanctarum*, II, 493sq.
- ³⁸ That the place where the bodies of Saints Gervase and Protasius was revealed to Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, is testified to by his contemporaries: Augustine, *Confessiones*, IX, c. 7, n. 16 (PL 32, 770); *De Civitate Dei*, XXII, c. 8, n. 2 (PL 41, 761); Paulinus, *Vita S. Ambrosii ad beatum Augustinum*, n. 14 (PL 14, 31). Ambrose himself speaks of the finding of the bodies of the Saints in *Epist. 22* (PL 16, 1019ff.), but he makes no mention of a heavenly revelation made to him, for in *Epist. 2* (in the works of Ambrose, PL 17, 743ff.), where there is much on revelations, the text does not apply to Ambrose himself.
- ³⁹ See Jocabus a Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, c. 119 (p.150).
- ⁴⁰ *Summa*, III, n. 186 (IV, 260).
- ⁴¹ Art. 4, q. 6, sub *Respondeo* (IV, f. 228d).
- ⁴² Rather Augustine, *Epist. 118*, c. 3, n. 14 (PL 33, 439).
- ⁴³ On the argument and authorities in this last part of the chapter see *De evang. aet.*, serm. 65, a. 3, cc. 1-2 (V, 333-339).
- ⁴⁴ *In Assumpt. B.M.V.*, sermo 1, n. 1 (PL 183, 415).
- ⁴⁵ See above pages 144-152.
- ⁴⁶ Chapter 29, n. 40 (PL 32, 796).
- ⁴⁷ See above pages 154-158.
- ⁴⁸ From Ubertinus, *Arbor vitae*, IV, c. 40, (f. 202b).