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Homily on Pentecost, attributed to Athanasius of Alexandria

Title

0 A homily of Apa Athanasius, the archbishop of Alexandria, which he delivered about the feast of the holy Pentecost while a crowd of bishops were sitting in his presence in the church, (and) about the ordinance of wealth and poverty, so that everyone may glorify God according to the dispensation that God has ordained for him. In the peace of God, Amen.

Prologue: belief and unbelief

1 "Listen, heaven, hear, earth, to the words of my mouth! Let the whole earth pay attention to my voice and may you receive my words as dew upon herbs and a breeze upon grass, for it is the name of the Lord which I will proclaim and I will boast upon our God, for all his works are true and judgements are his ways, a faithful God who does not show partiality. Just is the Lord and holy."¹

2 These things Moses said on account of his people, they who did not want to obey the prophet of God and be saved. Therefore they did not recite the Ode of the Law. He realized that it was a stiff-necked people² and that they did not seek God.

3 We, too, my brothers, let us beware that not our Lord Jesus leaves us behind, as when Moses brought them out of the land of Egypt to take them to the Land of Promise: when they had become disobedient to God, they perished in the desert.³ Us, Christ brought out of impiety into piety. He took us out of the terrestrial world and brought us to the heavenly

¹ Dt. 32: 1-4.

² Ex. 32: 9; Dt. 9: 6.

³ Cf. 1 Cor. 10: 1-11.

world. Beware that we cause him anger, just as they caused Moses anger, so that he throws us in the fiery Gehenna!

4 For to others He said: "The publicans and the prostitutes will enter the kingdom of heavens before you,"⁴ because they did not believe in him. Therefore he told them: "Truly, I tell you, they will come from east and west and recline with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heavens. But the children of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness, the place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."⁵

5 Now then, my beloved, perhaps there are some among you who pronounce the name of Christ while they do not believe in him. May people of this kind listen to the word of David: "I have set my trust upon you, Lord, with the whole of my heart."⁶ Beware not to confess his name with your mouth alone, while you do not believe in him with your heart, in order that you will be saved. Do you not fear then on account of what was said about you: "This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me, said the Lord."⁷

6 And surely there will be said to you, as to those who have become unbelievers of God, these words: "They forsook God, their Saviour, who fed them,"⁸ and also: "They forsook the fountain of living water. They hewed out for themselves cisterns that cannot contain their water."⁹ Rather may the Lord be witness with me, according to Jeremiah's prophecy, that: "They have known me, from their smallest up to their greatest,"¹⁰ for in the Lord Jesus the whole fullness of divinity dwells bodily.¹¹

⁴ Mt. 21: 3.

⁵ Mt. 8: 11-12.

⁶ Ps. 118: 10.

⁷ Isa. 29: 13; quoted in Mt. 15: 8; Mk. 7: 6.

⁸ Cf. Jer. 5: 7.

⁹ Jer. 2: 13.

¹⁰ Jer. 31: 34.

¹¹ Col. 2:9.

Obedience and disobedience

7 Then you may find others who perfectly believe in him, but do not obey his teaching, and to whom He will say on that day: "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I tell you?"¹² When there are some who are called Christians by men, while they are walking in arrogance, they will not be granted the hope of the kingdom of heavens nor its benefits nor the delight of Paradise, the things that God promised to those who will love him and keep his commandments,¹³ since they have loved this age, which is temporary.

8 O man, how many are the days of your life that you can turn your back on these things that last forever? The prophet cries out that you may listen and understand the brevity of the delight of this age. Therefore he tells you, crying out: "The days of our years are seventy years."¹⁴ Then are you not afraid since, after having lived seventy years, it is inevitable for you to be taken out of the age that you are presently seeing?

9 Why have you not followed the example of him who says: "Our citizenship is in heavens"?¹⁵ For the Lord is heard saying: "Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, there where moth and rust destroy them and thieves steal them. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, there where the moth does not destroy and where thieves do not steal."¹⁶ Do you not see how the Apostle upbraids the Colossians, saying: "When you died with Christ to the principles of the world, why do you return to them?"¹⁷ What then are those things about which he says and proclaims: "Do not touch nor taste nor approach them!",¹⁸ but those about which he preaches to them: "Put to death your members that are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, impurity, passion, desire and greed"?¹⁹

¹² Lk. 6: 46

¹³ Cf. Dt. 7: 9.

¹⁴ Ps. 90: 10.

¹⁵ Php. 3: 20.

¹⁶ Mt. 6: 19-20.

¹⁷ Col. 2: 20.

¹⁸ Col. 2: 21.

¹⁹ Col. 3: 5.

These are the works of every man who thinks in the categories of the world.

10 Why then do you fornicate, although you have a wife? Tell me, what is the benefit that you will find when you destroy a woman who is not yours? Are you then not afraid that you will be arrested by men? Are you not aware of him of whom it was said: "He who watches over Israel will neither sleep nor slumber"?²⁰ For he watches you in every place. Do you not know that he will judge you like the Jews, to whom he told: "They all forsook me, said the Lord, they settled in the houses of prostitutes, they became like randy horses, each neighing after the wife of his neighbour"?²¹

The Christian household

11 Even if you are not an adulterer, O man, but you have slept with an alien woman who has no husband, when she becomes pregnant, what will you do? Will you then agree to let it (the child) inherit with your (legitimate) children? If you do not kill it because of the scandal of men, then - if it will live - it will spend all its life-time cursing you because of the poverty that it lives in. What then will you say on that day and what is your defence before the judge, when you shall account for the abomination that you committed? Will you answer for the infidelity that you have shown to your spouse? Will you account for the complaint of your children, whom you treated unjustly by ruthlessly spending your possessions with the prostitutes?

12 For what is proper for you (to do) is to administer what God has given to you according to his will: one portion for your household and your children and another portion for the needs of the poor, so that you may find it to your credit in the coming age, in the place where you will join your fathers,²² and that you feed the poor, the widows and the orphans from the abundance of your possessions.

²⁰ Ps. 120: 4.

²¹ Jer. 5: 7-8.

²² Cf. 1 Chr. 17: 11.

13 For how long will you frequent the cafes and the useless crowds? Why do you care only about yourself? Did you then acquire exemption from death, thinking that He will leave you here forever? Why do they take from us daily and are we not afraid that we ourselves will be taken? Look how the prophet admonished others when he had found them putting their trust in the world alone. He told them: "Where are your fathers and where are your prophets? Did they perhaps live forever? Rather, accept my words and my laws, said the Lord."²³

14 If you, however, would have understood that you are a sojourner upon earth, just as David said: "I am a sojourner upon earth, sojourning just like all my fathers"²⁴ - if you would have considered these words, O man, not only you would not gather yourself treasures upon earth nor would you commit adultery, but you would even abstain from intercourse with your wife. You would become like those who have said: "This city is not permanent; it is the one for which we are searching, the one we are looking forward to,"²⁵ those who are walking in hunger and thirst and need while suffering, those whom the world was not worthy.²⁶

15 Why then, O man, have you been entrusted with a wife and children and possessions? Are they granted to you forever? Do you perhaps not know that you live today and have died tomorrow? Are you unaware that you have been entrusted with a wife and children in order to bring them up in piety? You are the one who will account for them. For the man is the head of the woman, as the wise Paul said.²⁷ If you did not cause offence, then your children will be blameless in the day of the judgment. If you are a womanizer or rapacious or violent or a thief and they too will walk in your ways, you will account for them before God.

16 But when you are free of all these things, and they have not heard a word of blasphemy or falsehood from your mouth, nor slander or hatred or arrogance, you will be innocent as regards your children. And they, for

²³ Zec. 1: 5-6.

²⁴ Ps. 38: 13.

²⁵ Cf. Heb. 13: 14.

²⁶ Heb. 11: 37-38.

²⁷ 1 Cor. 11: 3; Eph. 5: 23.

their part, will live in piety and they will bless you. They will govern with you as a good father and be your heirs. For since the beginning, God has established the authority of the man over his wife and his children.²⁸ Indeed, thus all the saints behaved, fearing the Lord, entreating him for their salvation together with their children.

17 For not only concerning visible acts, but also the thoughts of their heart you will account for them, according to what Job says: "Perhaps my sons have nourished wicked thoughts against God in their heart." Therefore that he offered sacrifices to God for them.²⁹ Become then, O man, a teacher for your own children, teaching them to keep all the commandments of God in their heart and in every work that they will undertake, according to what the lawgiver says: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with your entire heart, with all your thoughts and with your entire soul. And these words that I command you today are to be in your heart and your soul and you are to teach them to your children so that they follow them."³⁰

18 David, indeed, did this when he entreated, saying: "Do not snatch the word of truth from my mouth."³¹ For we see some who teach their children great terrible oaths, blasphemy and shameful talk from their early age. Did not you hear then, O man, that: "for every idle word they will speak, men will have to account on the day of judgment"?³² Perhaps you do not know what the judgment is, about which the Apostle James said: "Judgment is merciless to the one who has not shown mercy"?³³ Examine yourself when an illness has befallen you and you will know the exact nature of the judgment. How, when there is a fever inside you, your tongue becomes dry from thirst, and how you go on drinking water all the time because of the heat, if at least you will be given the chance to drink, because of the phlegm and the filth that come up from your heart.

²⁸ Cf. Gen. 3: 16.

²⁹ Job. 1: 5.

³⁰ Dt. 6: 5-7.

³¹ Ps. 118: 43.

³² Mt. 12: 36.

³³ Jam. 2: 13.

19 Look, furthermore, also at people when they are going to die, at the moment the true judgment comes and they do not have the chance to return, at the moment man will see his life being taken bit by bit. Indeed, if it were possible, he would give all his possessions in order to be saved from death. For at the time when He ordered you to give your possessions to the poor, you forgot about them, even though some were being hungry, others naked, some working for you while you robbed them of their wages.

20 What shall I tell you, O man, about these great distractions with which you waste your time, while you employ a mass of people for your works, not allowing them to serve the God who created them? For you employ many for your pleasures, some for your field, others for your ships as well, some for your service and even your children you nourish in the deception of this age, instead of following the example of Abraham the patriarch. For he was very rich and he used his wealth according to the will of God and also taught those who belonged to his household like a good teacher.

21 Let us consider also the faith of his chief servant, who was in his house, how he prayed faithfully for his lord.³⁴ Not only his servant alone, but he taught also Isaac, his son, to serve God from his early age, not allowing him to behave arrogant towards his servants, whom God had granted him.³⁵ But you, you did not spare your servants, who - on top of it - share with you in the single grace of Christ Jesus, with whom there is no difference between slave and freeman.³⁶ Do you not feel ashamed before your Lord, Him who took the form of a slave for our sake?³⁷ But you harass your servants without mercy, them for whom Christ gave his body and his blood.

³⁴ Gen. 24.

³⁵ Cf. Gen. 25: 5-6.

³⁶ Cf. Ga. 3: 28.

³⁷ Cf. Php. 2: 7.

22 Are you not able to wash yourself with water, only to be washed by others? Why do you scorn your Lord by letting someone else wash your feet, whereas you see the Lord of heaven and earth who, wrapped in a towel, poured water into the basin and washed his disciples' feet?³⁸ But you, O man, to whom other men are entrusted, either hundred or fifty or who has ten men under him or, briefly, up to a single one, be prepared to answer for him to the Lord. O man to whom God has entrusted someone who depends on you in order that you become for him like a father in every good thing, you - instead - love some and hate some, you frequent some and despise some.

23 And you too, O miserable one, you will find yourself, after having passed out of this place of sojourn, being requited in return for all what you have done upon earth. Do you not hear, O fool, Paul saying: "Masters, give unto your servants what is just, knowing that your master and theirs is in heavens,"³⁹ and that there is no partiality before him."⁴⁰ Instead, you find people neglecting their servants in their food and their clothing, while they themselves are enjoying every good thing with their children.

24 May they listen to the Saviour who says to them: "Woe to you, rich ones, for you have received your comfort! Woe to you who bless, now you will curse! Woe to you who are well fed, for now you will be hungry."⁴¹ Isaiah says: "Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, and champions at mixing drinks."⁴² Rather, follow the example of the blessed Job, who says: "Many times, my maids told me: 'Who will give us to be satisfied of your flesh?'"⁴³ Remember how our Lord cried out, saying: "All souls are mine."⁴⁴ He also says: "You shall not ill-treat a foreigner nor a servant of your own without mercy and you shall not

³⁸ Jn. 13: 4-5.

³⁹ Col. 4: 1.

⁴⁰ Eph. 6: 9.

⁴¹ Cf. Lk. 6: 24-25.

⁴² Isa. 5: 22.

⁴³ Job. 31: 31.

⁴⁴ Cf. Jh. 17: 10.

oppress them, for if they cry out to me, I will listen to them, since I am a merciful God."⁴⁵

25 O man, who multiplies the duties of his servants so as not to let them be free for Him who tells them: "Free yourselves and perceive that I am God,"⁴⁶ how can they occupy themselves with God since they are all the time occupied with you? - some with the clothes that you are going to wear, others standing ready for the clothes that you are going to lay off, some light the fire for you, others prepare your bed, some are sweeping and sprinkling, others running to the field to gather what you will eat, some watch your works so that no carelessness will occur in them, and you strike them so that they are careless in praying to God.

26 Why do you not let one single person suffice for your service, so that all these in turn devote themselves to God and his works? If you do this, you will continue being a leader of your people in the kingdom of heavens. Now then, if you listen to me, I will teach you the ways of life. Let some of your servants go to those who are imprisoned, with some money. Let others visit those who are ill, and send with them some good things, so that they will be consoled in their illness, and you yourself should visit the saints. Let the others supervise the behaviour of your children, so that they will not become arrogant.

27 God gave to you in order that you do what is right and He did not make you a leader for nothing, but in order that you would acknowledge Him who alone is above all leaders and follow the example of Him who said: "The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."⁴⁷ For to some who had fulfilled their service well He said: "Since you have been faithful over few, I will put you in charge of many."⁴⁸ So he who wants the word to apply to him, that the leaders of the peoples gathered to the God of Abraham,⁴⁹ let him teach those who are under him according to God's will and let him

⁴⁵ Cf. Ex. 22: 27.

⁴⁶ Ps. 45: 11.

⁴⁷ Mt. 20: 28.

⁴⁸ Mt. 25: 21.

⁴⁹ Ps. 46: 9.

nourish his children in the fear of the Lord, glorifying God who gave them to him, lest He becomes angry with you and takes your children, so the word that is written is fulfilled in you which says: "I will take away the desire of your souls, that is your sons and your daughters."⁵⁰ To those people He said: "I struck your sons and your daughters and you did not accept my teaching, said the Lord."⁵¹

28. Nay, my beloved, do not let these harsh words apply to us, but let each of us teach his neighbour what is good and what is right. As for our children, let them be wary of the vanity, the impudence and the frivolity of the daughters of Judah, about whom the prophet cries out: "The Lord will humiliate the leaders and the daughters of Zion, for they walked with outstretched necks and flirting eyes, dragging their fringes while stepping along, and with vain laughter."⁵²

29 For us, Christians, it is not fitting us to let things of this kind happen to us, for fear we walk in vanity and he will tell us too: "The Lord will snatch away the glory of their garments, their finery, their plaits, their finger-rings, their bracelets, their purple tunics, their curly hairs, their hair-nets, their crescents, their necklaces, the adornment of their face, their tassels, their anklets, their ear-rings, what they wear as girdles and dresses in their houses, their shiny garments, their fine linen, their byssos, their jacinth, the fine linen interwoven with gold and precious jacinth, their cloaks and their shawls. Instead of fragrance, you will get dust and instead of a sash, you will gird yourself with a rope and instead of your purple tunic, you will dress yourself in sack-cloth and instead of the adornment of your head, you will be dressed in sack-cloth, because of your works. Your chosen son, whom you loved, will fall by the sword."⁵³

30 You see then, O adornment-loving women, the reward that you will obtain for your adornment, for instead of fragrance, God has given you dust, instead of your purple tunics, he has dressed you in sack-cloth, instead of your curls, your plaits, your golden hair-net and these great

⁵⁰ Cf. Ez. 24: 21.

⁵¹ Cf. Ez. 23: 25.

⁵² Isa. 3: 16-17.

⁵³ Isa. 3: 18-25.

strands of curls which are upon your heads, fatal baldness is what you will obtain.

31 Why then, O women, do you not walk in the manner of the holy women, in order to escape all these things? Do you not see that virtuous women, who became servants of Christ in righteousness, have done away with these evil appearances, these misleading appearances? Which married lady will allow curled hair upon her head, uncovering it in order that the men will see it? Or who will put fringes upon her head and around her face or a golden hair-net in order that men look at her so that their soul leaps up because of her rakish appearance and the sound of the golden ornaments that are at her feet?

32 But undoubtedly someone will say that perhaps they dress up for their husbands. I, for my part, do not call such a woman a married lady, since the prophet Ezekiel calls her 'whore'.⁵⁴ For he said thus: "You have dressed yourself up for the Chaldeans, you have put kohl upon your eyes, bracelets on your arms, ear-rings in your ears and a superb crown upon your head. You adorned yourself with gold and silver."⁵⁵ Are you not an adulterer in this way? And your works, are they not those of a whore? Indeed, the prophet did not shrink from speaking about the shame of women who love sin, saying: "O woman, look: What is the need of these golden finger-rings, these bracelets and these precious stones which are hanging from your neck? Will they give you warmth in the winter or, if not, will they give you cooling in summer? What are these soft clothes for? For the weakness of the body? What is, moreover, the need of these great these great strands of curls which are upon your head?"⁵⁶

33 Then, look again at the prudent women. Not only do they not wear curls, but not even is their face visible and their cloak comes down upon their eyebrows. You will hardly see the tips of their hands in case it is necessary. When we see that they have not become a snare for us, we praise God. For we are men, too, and we live among men. The holy

⁵⁴ Cf. Ez. 16: 35.

⁵⁵ Cf. Ez. 16: 11-13, 23: 40.

⁵⁶ Cf. Jer. 4: 30.

prophet Isaiah said: "I am a man whose lips are impure."⁵⁷ When the prophet of the Lord says this, who had seen the Lord Sabaoth with his eyes,⁵⁸ then what shall I, the wretched man that I am, say?

34 Now then, O woman, do not bedeck yourself with gold and silver, which God has rejected. The Lord told Moses: "Take off these glorious dresses and these adornments, and I will show you what I will do for you."⁵⁹ He says this, because the one who is covered with this external adornment will not see anything profitable, unless the punishments. For which woman, who is concerned with gold and plaits, will ever deliver a pure prayer to God? Will perhaps the hair of her head purify her heart, so that she will become a dwelling of God? No, instead she will become a dwelling of the devil. For the wise said about the woman who loves adornment: "Her heart is like a drag net and a snare is what in her hands. Who is upright before God will escape from her. The sinner, however, will be caught in her,"⁶⁰ showing that her heart is a dwelling of the devil. For he is the drag net that swallows those whom he will catch with his hook and has caught with his casting net and gathered in his drag net.⁶¹ For his hook is heavy food. His hook is violence. His teaching is the desire of womanizing.

35 Therefore, O woman, do not become yourself a snare for him, but become like the blessed Susanna and Sara, about whom it is said that they are children of God.⁶² For the poor yet virtuous woman is precious in the eyes of God. For he said: "As for him who has found a good wife, such a (woman) is more valuable than precious stone."⁶³ For she works with wool and linen and she strengthens her women on the spindle. She opens her hand and gives to the poor and the needy, and the paths of her

⁵⁷ Isa. 6: 5.

⁵⁸ Cf. Isa. 6: 1-3.

⁵⁹ Ex. 33: 5.

⁶⁰ Ecc. 7: 26.

⁶¹ Cf. Hab. 1: 15.

⁶² Cf. Sus. 1: 2-3; 1 Pe. 5-6.

⁶³ Pro. 31: 10.

house are full of blessings.⁶⁴ Like an ear-ring in a sow's snout, thus is the beauty of a wicked woman.⁶⁵

36 Indeed, the patriarch Jacob, as he knew that sin is caused by abundant adornment, took for that reason the golden rings that were in the ears of his women and his daughters, destroyed them and hid them in the earth.⁶⁶ For the principle of idolatry arose from women's earrings, those that Aaron took and fashioned into a calf.⁶⁷

Wealth and poverty

37 Now then, my children, this is what has occurred to me in the presence of the Lord and I did not shrink from telling it to you, begging each of you to take care of his soul before we will be fetched. We will not be left here forever! On the contrary, daily people are snatched away from us. Where are our parents who begot us? And our friends who left us? Did any of them return to us? We know that it is us who are going to them, but they will not return again to us. There are many, indeed, who died without seeing the contentment of their children. There are also many whose children died and left their parents in a miserable state. Others became insane due to the death of their children and their beloved, because of the great amount of their possessions, which strangers inherited since they did not have a heir. Many other people, again, squandered their possessions without purpose because of their beloved who had died.

38 The differentiation of death does not depend on itself alone, but on the disposition of God, in order that nobody will forget death, for fear his heart will love the realities of this age and believes them to be marvellous things, while they are in fact shadows that decline. Where are these great and famous names, those who became famous through gold and silver and their numerous possessions? And the kings of the nations and those who subdued the wild beasts? Where are they who built these great cities,

⁶⁴ Cf. Pro. 31: 13, 19-20.

⁶⁵ Pro. 11: 22.

⁶⁶ Cf. Gen. 35: 4.

⁶⁷ Ex. 32: 2-4

those who mocked the nations thanks to the crowd of their followers? Have they not all turned into dust and become as if they even did not exist? Did they not all pass like a shadow?

39 Look at how the righteous one has perished while nobody paid attention. Indeed, the righteous and those who toil will not be left here forever. Likewise, also the sinners will not be left according to their own desire. Why then are we diligent for the place where we sojourn for a short time and are we careless, by contrast, about the house where we will go forever? For if we attach ourselves to this place, we will not find the other one. Do you not see the wretched Nineve, how he used to dress in purple and fine linen while being in the world and how wonderfully he rejoiced daily?⁶⁸ When he had gone to the other place, he not only did not rejoice, but not even a finger (wet) with water was allowed upon his tongue, although he begged Abraham saying: "My father Abraham, send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering in this fire."

40 Also consider how he answered ⁶⁹ him. He (Abraham) said: "Remember that you have already received your good things in your lifetime, Lazarus, however, evil things. And now he is comforted here and you are being tormented." You have seen, O my beloved, that a life is held for a life and that this world is a test.⁷⁰ Exactly therefore he (the rich man) called upon Abraham and did not call upon Lazarus. Likely he would find an excuse and say: "I am rich, that is why I went down into the tortures. You, however, are poor and you were saved." Exactly therefore he was not able to say this, as he knew that the difference in this situation did not depend on wealth, but on him himself.

41 Abraham did not dispose of his fortune with a merciless heart nor with a faithless heart. No! Indeed, in the kingdom there are many rich ones and there are many poor ones and this same situation applies to the punishments (of Hell) as well. For Abraham was rich in silver and gold

⁶⁸ For what follows, cf. Lk. 16: 19-31.

⁶⁹ Lit. asked.

⁷⁰ Cf. Dt. 19: 21.

and cattle in great numbers and male and female slaves,⁷¹ so that the number of all the males who were born in his house, apart from the women, were three hundred and eighteen,⁷² not counting their fathers and mothers, and such a wealthy person entered life, to become the father of the whole world because of his piety, his faith and the gentleness of his heart. But the poor who will not be moved by mercy will be cast into the punishments.

42 Indeed, what was the work that Lazarus did, but that he merely kept thanking God for what He had done to him? If you are poor, then keep thanking, but if you start to steal and murmur, you will be punished. In the same way, if you are rich and you keep walking in arrogance, pride and pitilessness, you will be punished, because you did not follow the example of the patriarch Abraham. Such a very wealthy man, he never became arrogant, but walked in humility. For when he rode a donkey, as a shepherd of a flock, only two servants accompanied him, in the manner of peasants, being of perfect humility in everything.⁷³

43 Therefore, indeed, he became worthy of such great glory, according to what David said: "I humbled myself, the Lord saved me and my soul returned to rest."⁷⁴ You now, O rich man, you ride your horses and go out of the city, saying to yourself: "I am a disciple of Jesus," while you let a crowd of people follow you and prepare your way. Now, tell me, what kind of behaviour is this? Are you then intending to go to war, with this crowd following you with these sticks? But when you are truly a Christian disciple, you would not only not prepare yourself for fighting in the way you do, but it would fit you, on the contrary, to turn your cheek to (receive) blows to whom will strike you upon it, just like your Lord.⁷⁵

44 And if you had wished to escape the evil punishments of Nineve, the merciless rich man, they would have hit your right cheek and you would

⁷¹ Gen. 12: 16; 13: 2.

⁷² Gen. 14: 14.

⁷³ Cf. Gen. 22: 3.

⁷⁴ Ps. 114: 6-7.

⁷⁵ Cf. Mt. 26: 67; Jn. 18: 22.

have turned your other one to them.⁷⁶ Is this then not like what your Lord wrote for you in his epistles?⁷⁷ If you wished to live, would you not fear God's judgment?⁷⁸ Tell me, O rich man, in what do you put your trust while you live in this arrogance? What is the benefit of those golden rings on your fingers? Rather, this is your full worth that you adorn yourself with every propriety and that virtue precedes you where ever you will go.

45 First of all, let you be found righteous, not mixing up with women, but having a virtuous and decent wife whose ways are pure, teaching her to love God and the poor, taking her to the church daily, together with her children, in order to pray together with them and your servants that you have. When you enter your house, you should ask them about the lessons that were read in the church. Even if you are going to be perfect, sell all your possessions and give them to the poor, according to the commandment of our Saviour.⁷⁹ Do not turn down anyone who asks you in faith, for He says: "He who gives to the poor, will not be wanting,"⁸⁰ in order that you become a disciple of Jesus Christ and He fulfil all your needs. Do not turn your face away from a needy one who implores you, for it is written: "He who shuts his ears in order not to hear the poor, he will cry out to God and He will not listen to him,"⁸¹ but He will say: "My eye shall not spare you."⁸²

46 Now then, give, so that there will be given unto you.⁸³ Do not let the reproach of the prophet apply to you, as when he said: "Her leaders are like wolves in her midst; the poor and the needy they violated, and the foreigner they oppressed, so as not to do him justice."⁸⁴ He also says: "Her rulers are disobedient, they are the companions of thieves, they love to receive bribes, they run after repaying one thing for another; they who

⁷⁶ Mt. 5: 39; Lk. 6: 29.

⁷⁷ Probably Gospels?

⁷⁸ Cf. Rom. 2: 2.

⁷⁹ Mt. 19: 21.

⁸⁰ Cf. Pro. 28: 27.

⁸¹ Pro. 21: 13.

⁸² See for instance, Ez. 8: 18.

⁸³ Lk. 6: 38.

⁸⁴ Ez. 22: 29.

judge an orphan do not pay heed to the judgment of a widow."⁸⁵ He also says: "The Lord will enter into judgment with the elders of the people and their leaders."⁸⁶ He also says: "Why do you oppress my people and is the plunder of the poor in your houses?"⁸⁷ Who will be able to stand up to him in that day or to say: "I heard your voice, I was afraid and I hid for I am naked"?⁸⁸ For in the last day, when he will judge us, who will be able to bear his anger?⁸⁹

47 Indeed, they will melt like wax!⁹⁰ For the prophet Daniel already told us in the beginning, wishing to inspire us with fear, he said: "His throne is a flame of fire, its wheels are ablaze with fire, while a river of fire is flowing before him. Thousands upon thousands are serving him and ten thousands upon ten thousands are waiting upon him."⁹¹ After all these, the Saviour says: "All flesh will be seasoned in fire."⁹² Test yourself, O man, through your acts,⁹³ to see whether you are able to cross the river of fire so that you will not burn. For in that fire you will be tested. It is also said in Ezekiel, the prophet: "I will take you, I will gather you and I will blow upon you with the fire of my wrath; I will take you with my rod."⁹⁴

48 May it happen to us that He gathers us to him and does not leave us to be dispersed. We, for our part, let us say to him: See, we have followed you with our entire heart.⁹⁵ So that He, for his part, will have mercy upon us and gather us with the rod of his love. For it is good for us to come under the rod of God's discipline. As he says: "He will strike us and heal us."⁹⁶ We, for our part, let us say: "When I have sinned, it is good for me to humiliate myself, so that I may understand your ordinances."⁹⁷ And

⁸⁵ Cf. Isa. 1: 23.

⁸⁶ Isa. 3: 14.

⁸⁷ Isa. 3: 14.

⁸⁸ Gen. 3: 10.

⁸⁹ Cf. Rev. 6: 17.

⁹⁰ Cf. Ps. 21: 14.

⁹¹ Dan. 7: 9-10.

⁹² Mk. 9: 49.

⁹³ Cf. Sir. 37: 30.

⁹⁴ Cf. Ez. 20: 34, 22: 21.

⁹⁵ 1 Kgs. 14: 8.

⁹⁶ Job. 5: 18.

⁹⁷ Ps. 118: 71.

Jeremiah, too, said: "You disciplined me and I have been disciplined. You turned yourself to me and I will turn myself, for you are the Lord, my salvation. Before my captivity, I repented."⁹⁸ David also says: "Prove me, O God, and know my heart."⁹⁹

49 So that, my brothers, it is better to accept every pain than that you hear this great and fearful voice forever: "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire that is prepared for the devil and all his angels."¹⁰⁰ For about those it is said: "They will receive everlasting punishment."¹⁰¹ For I was hungry and you did not feed me, I was thirsty and you did not let me drink, I was naked and you did not cover me, I was in prison and you did not come to me, I was a foreigner and you did not receive me."¹⁰² O man, do you not know that after your death, there will be done to you like what you have done? For the prophet Obadiah says: "Like you have done, there will be done to you,"¹⁰³ just as to this unmerciful man, Nineve.

50 This blessed man, Lazarus, had been lying in his porch, covered with sores, and desired to be satisfied with what fell from the table of the rich man.¹⁰⁴ The latter in turn cried out asking for a finger of water to cool his tongue, because of the torture of the fire where he was, but it was not granted to him. Instead, it was further blame which he heard from the one to whom he had appealed, saying: "My father, have mercy upon me!" "No mercy will be shown to you, O miserable man, for you did not have mercy upon your fellow man."¹⁰⁵ Did he not sleep in your porch, that is the place where you went out and in? Why did you not even once bow down to him and ask him: "What do you need?" On the contrary, you went about with ostentation, seeing the great number of servants that followed you. Indeed, because of this empty joy, you did not remember your fellow, even though he was lying in your porch and you were

⁹⁸ Jer. 31: 18-19.

⁹⁹ Ps. 138: 23.

¹⁰⁰ Mt. 25: 41.

¹⁰¹ Mt. 25: 46.

¹⁰² Mt. 25: 42-43.

¹⁰³ Ob. 1: 15.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Lk. 16: 19-31.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Jam. 2: 13.

passing him while entering and leaving. For it is not said: "He was in a corner of your house," but: "He was in your porch," in order that your mercilessness would be obvious to everyone.

51 Is this not the reproach that the prophet pronounced over you when he said: "Woe to those who drink pure wine from bowls, while they anoint themselves with lotions and idle away upon soft blankets and do not grieve at all over the ruin of the house of Joseph,"¹⁰⁶ that is their poor brothers and those who are in need. Not only will we be taken to account for those whom we see suffering and forget, but also about the others, who hide their poverty because of the disgrace of the people, you will be asked.

52 You then, O bishops, do not forget such people. For you will account for the entire flock over whom the Holy Spirit ordained you as bishops in order to pasture the church of the Lord, which he acquired with his own blood.¹⁰⁷ Remember His compassion for the poor and the entire race of men, as he said to his disciples: "I do not want to send this crowd away hungry, lest they faint on the road."¹⁰⁸ And through his compassion, five loaves fed five thousand men, so that they ate and left over from them.¹⁰⁹ When you acquire this compassion, even if it is only a little bit that you possess, it is yet sufficient for you to feed a crowd with it.

53 Indeed, Paul bears witness for us about these things, when he says: "While we live like poor, we yet make many rich."¹¹⁰ Because compassion feeds man better than great wealth. For Nineve owned much, yet he did not take care of a single poor man, even though he belonged to his own household. The blessed Paul, by contrast, had renounced everything, but the work of his hands served him and those with him,¹¹¹ so that nobody would be able to say: "I have nothing to provide for the need of the poor." For God has entrusted you with his sheep.

¹⁰⁶ Am. 6: 4, 6.

¹⁰⁷ Ac. 20: 28.

¹⁰⁸ Mt. 15: 32.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Mt. 14: 20; Mk. 6: 43; Lk. 9: 17; Jn. 6: 13.

¹¹⁰ 2 Cor. 6: 10.

¹¹¹ Ac. 20: 34.

54 See how he enjoined the apostle Peter three times, saying: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said: "Yes, my Lord, you know that I love you." He told him: "Herd my lambs."¹¹² See how He repeated it three times, impressing this word upon him in order that he would watch the lambs and the sheep. For man is the work of his hands, and because of this did He become man, though being God, and did he die and live, so that we would live with him.¹¹³ Do not be negligent with the deposit that you have received, but be responsible for the entire flock. To the rich bear witness daily with what the apostle Paul wrote down for his beloved son Timothy, as he told him: "Enjoin the rich not to be arrogant and not to put their trust in wealth, which will perish, but let them put their trust in God, who richly provides us with everything. Let the rich of this age collect for themselves a good foundation for eternal life."¹¹⁴ Indeed, God also gives them the richness of his virtue. If not, they will be deprived of true life.

55 Therefore, let them become stewards of God who take care of the poor, so that God may grant them the wealth that lasts forever. For he said: "If you have not been trustworthy in what is yours, then who will be able to entrust you with what is not yours?"¹¹⁵ For the kingdom of heavens is not theirs: it will be taken from them on account of their wealth, which is devoid of mercy. Who shows mercy is worthy of that eternal kingdom.¹¹⁶

56 Now then, my beloved, do not let such insignificant pride in this world make us strangers to those eternal gifts. Do not let darkness separate us from the light. Do not let death separate us from life. As for the poor, now, this is the way in which you console them so that they remember their burden that is light and realize the grace that God has shown them by granting them a responsibility that is lighter than that of the rich, as He saved them the necessity to account for many heavy responsibilities. Since you will be questioned about your own soul alone, O poor, do not

¹¹² Jn. 21: 15-17.

¹¹³ Cf. Rom. 6: 8; 2 Cor. 13: 4; 2 Tim. 2: 11.

¹¹⁴ Cf. 1 Tim. 6: 17-19.

¹¹⁵ Cf Lk. 16: 10-12.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Jm. 2: 13.

be grieved that you do not have gold, silver, gardens, pasture, slaves and cattle; on the contrary, what fits you is to rejoice, because you will not be questioned about all these things in the tribunal of God.

57 You will not be asked whether you evilly squandered the produce of the land, not doing God's will with it, as you did not give it to the poor and the widows, or whether you sold it for gold and buried it in the earth, or whether you sold it at a time of scarcity for a high price, oppressing the poor from all sides, having made bad use of what does not belong to you. When you had received its price, you did not think of turning back to God so that he might forgive you. Instead, you buried the gold it had yielded in the earth, from which you will be taken away; the gold, however, will remain hidden in the earth as it was, but your sins will remain walking together with you to the tribunal where you will be taken. Will you then spend it in profligacy, like the young man who squandered his wealth in a dissolute way?¹¹⁷ Afterwards, when he had become needy, he came to his mind, sat down and cried. If his possessions had been used by him for the sake of charity and he would have spent them according to the will of God, he would have escaped many sins. For it is written: "The wealth of the impious is stored up for the righteous."¹¹⁸

58 Have you not been saved all these reproaches, O poor? Will you be asked whether you melted down gold and silver for your concubines, just like those whom God rebuked by mouth of the prophet, saying: "I gave them my gold and my silver, but they made them into Baal, which is lust"?¹¹⁹ Will you be condemned because of horses, because you took better care of them than of human beings, whom God created according to his own image?¹²⁰ Will ever a servant bring a charge against you at the tribunal of God because you ill-treated him and neglected to give him his food and his clothes, and because you ordered him to a job that was heavy beyond his power, in particular as he witnessed you eating and drinking from whatever his soul desired. And you, O rich man, you are

¹¹⁷ Cf. Lk. 15: 11-32.

¹¹⁸ Pro. 13: 22.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Ez. 16: 17.

¹²⁰ Cf. Gen. 1: 27.

eating with a jealous eye, without extending your hand towards him in order to let him, too, taste of what you eat. Have you not been saved all these things, O poor man, and have you not become free to stand up against the rich man when he is judged because of all these things?

59 Now, let the heretics be ashamed! Let them close their mouth full of poison that blasphemes against the dispensation of the creator of the universe, Him who takes care of all souls, which he created, and desires that they live all together, when they say that he created some poor and others rich.

60 See, I have come upon the very grace that God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, bestowed upon the poor and others who are ill, for nothing has happened without God's ordainment. Since to the poor he gave a straight and easy way to go, in order that they enter eternal life in the kingdom of heavens. Do you have lots of wine to drink daily so that you get drunk and start to cause difficulties and leer at a woman who is not yours or go and steal, so that you get caught and be killed? On the contrary, your poverty, in which you live, has become for you like a master of philosophy, who teaches you to turn away from all evil and do what is good and become inspired with the fear of God, while you keep his commandments, and give glory to him by day and by night.¹²¹

61 Do you not know, O poor man, that the origin of nakedness is wine?¹²² Let your mind become wakeful in everything and may you remain remembering the God who created you in his likeness and his image,¹²³ he who allowed you to be rich in the coming age and with the eternal wealth of heavens.¹²⁴ If you persevere in remaining like this, O poor man, thanking God in everything for your poverty,¹²⁵ and if He sees that your heart is sincere towards Him, he will bestow his mercy upon you.¹²⁶ Have you not heard the prophet Isaiah saying: "The Lord is a

¹²¹ Cf. Ps. 1: 2.

¹²² Cf. Gen. 9: 21.

¹²³ Gen. 1: 26.

¹²⁴ Cf. Jam. 2: 5.

¹²⁵ Cf. Col. 3: 17.

¹²⁶ Cf. 1 Kgs. 3: 6.

good judge in the house of Israel: He will bestow upon you according to his mercy"¹²⁷ - for indeed, He did not leave them in need of their basic needs, to bread and water. For I trust in God to the effect that there is indeed nobody who owns these things but through the goodness of the God of heaven. Even if some people may forget someone who is in need - the compassion of God will not forget him.¹²⁸

62 Therefore, what is unfitting for you, O poor man, is to forget the wealth of virtue which belongs to you. Do not envy those who are easy-going in their life, those for whom it is difficult to enter the kingdom of heavens.¹²⁹ Why? Because they did not wish to give themselves pain, according to the word of the apostle, but on the contrary gave themselves over to self-defilement and all kinds of impurity and greed.¹³⁰ Therefore, they do not believe in the Lord, who gives wealth and poverty.

63 He, however, who wants to live in wealth and yet enter the kingdom of heavens, should love the Lord with the whole of his heart.¹³¹ Was not Zacchaeus a rich man? And yet the excess of his possessions did not prevent him from entering the kingdom of heavens,¹³² because he loved the Lord with the whole of his heart, even though he was a publican, because of his love for the Lord not in words alone, but he also put it into practice.¹³³ Therefore he became worthy of the eternal life. For the Lord says: "If someone loves me, he shall observe my word."¹³⁴ Those who now study this verse: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heavens,"¹³⁵ have loved this verse, (but) they have defiled themselves so as not to allow them to enter the kingdom of heavens, because they have loved death more than life and they have loved this world, which will be pass by,

¹²⁷ Isa. 63: 7.

¹²⁸ Cf. Ps. 9: 19.

¹²⁹ Cf. Ps. 36: 1, 7.

¹³⁰ Cf. Eph. 4: 19.

¹³¹ Dt. 6: 5; Mt. 22: 37; Mk. 12:3.

¹³² Cf. Lk. 19: 9.

¹³³ Cf. 1 Jn. 3: 18.

¹³⁴ Jn. 14: 23.

¹³⁵ Mt. 19: 24; Mk. 10: 25; Lk. 18: 25.

more than that world to which no term is set.¹³⁶ Indeed, we see that many rich men of ancient times have entered the kingdom of heavens on account of their compassion upon the poor, because they did not hoard up what they possessed.

64 You, O bishops, do not be negligent in explaining to them the word of God, making yourself models of justice and purity and love, being lovers of the poor, consoling them with the word, enjoining upon everyone to remember the word of the apostle and evangelist John as he wrote in his letter: "Let us not love with words alone, O my beloved, but in practice and truth."¹³⁷

65 When there is someone, who lives the life of this world and - if he sees his brother in need - excludes him from his compassion, in what way does God's love dwell within him? Do you not remember, O men, that you are the administrators of the riches of this world? And that the owner of the riches will ask you to render account up to a single obol?¹³⁸ Do you not know his meticulousness? For He ordered his apostles: "Gather the fragments that were left over, so that none of them be lost."¹³⁹ Do not envy the rich people who had to justify themselves in this way on the day of judgment. For all will stand trial on the day of judgment. From him to whom much was entrusted, much will be demanded and from him to whom more was given, more will be asked.¹⁴⁰

66 Return to the Lord, our God, before the darkness comes, my beloved.¹⁴¹ Do not allow your feet to stumble. Watch for the light of God. Further, your souls will weep in the end and your eyes will shed tears because you have scattered the sheep of the pasture of God. Tell the emperor and those who are in power: "The crown upon your head has been taken."¹⁴² Who are they about whom the prophet says: "Humiliate

¹³⁶ Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 10.

¹³⁷ 1 Jn. 3: 18.

¹³⁸ Cf. Mt. 25: 24-28.

¹³⁹ Jn. 6: 12.

¹⁴⁰ Lk. 12: 48.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Jn. 12: 35.

¹⁴² Jer. 13: 18.

yourselves,"¹⁴³ but the rich of this moment, who are guilty of every blame? And why then are so many people desirous for this thing (i.e. wealth)? When a rich tyrant assumes power, he will start by jumping upon the robbers.

67 Indeed, the death of the poor is more honourable and more peaceful than that of the rich one. If the rich man dies, many are at risk. Some he ill-treated and they will mock him. Others, who had good relations with him, will be sad because they have been deprived of their hope for work. If he left money and went away, then his sons will squander it; afterwards, the man will become an object of derision in the end. On the other hand, if he did not leave (anything), they will despise him in the end and mock him in his death. The poor man, however, has been saved all these things. One single thing is what he owns in order to be found a wise poor man. Do not put your confidence in the wealth of this age, for it is full of all kinds of impurity.

Behaviour in church

68 Indeed, rich people are not used to stay unoccupied. Pay heed to yourself in church. Do you not find many poor people cleave to the word of God? But when a rich man enters, he has no patience at all to come closer in order to hear the word of God, which tells him: "Watch your steps when you are going to enter the house of God and draw near to him so that you will hear his words."¹⁴⁴ But the rich do not want to get closer lest they would hear the reproaches that apply to them, for they do not want to listen and be saved. If it happens that one enters the church, he will take a seat at a distance; he will not come close to the poor, as if the poor were despicable, since he is afraid that they will defile his garments. Oh what a great lack of respect and what a misanthropy! O man, will you not go and turn to God with the whole of your heart? Are not the seats of the dignitaries beside the singers, in accordance with what the blessed David said: "First the rulers came, close to those who sing"?¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Jer. 13: 18.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Ecc. 5: 1.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Ps. 67: 26.

69 Why are they allowed to be closer to the place of instruction? Perhaps because the word applies to them? Therefore they shall seek it more diligently. I am speaking of you, O rich man, who is excessively rich and yet is careless about going to the house of God and who is slow to enter, but remains outside, at the gates, and whoever has entered, yet did not sit on the place that was appointed to him. Such people can be reproved by the word that is written and says: "This is what the Lord says; 'I called you and you did not listen to me. I stretched out my hands and you did not pay heed to them. Therefore, you all will fall by sword', said the Lord."¹⁴⁶ He also said: "I will kill them by the word of my mouth."¹⁴⁷

70 Why do you not want to make yourself free for God, who says: "Be free and acknowledge that I am God"?¹⁴⁸ Instead, each is hurrying according to the wish of his own soul. Some are hurrying to the theatres and to parties; others run after vanities of the vain and short-lived world, rather than listening to the word of the Lord, He who cries out, saying: "I am the Lord, who does not change ever."¹⁴⁹ For the Lord has appointed one over many, so that all would be part of one single order.

71 If one of the dignitaries enters the church, it is inevitable that those who follow him and over whom he has authority enter together with him and pray. Instead of gaining benefit for himself alone, he will rather gain benefit for others as well, who follow him. Moreover, they will praise God because of him and, inversely, if he sins and perseveres in a despicable and dissolute way of life in front of them, they will in turn envy his evil acts and follow them. He who has authority over them will be held accountable for their sins. Those who are negligent about the Holy Mass, are negligent for fear of hearing the reproaches that apply to them. Shall we not reproof those who are negligent about going to church in spite of the fact that the Lord made them free of care about anything and allowed them to devote themselves to their own salvation? They despised it; they did not go to the house of God, telling it in the streets

¹⁴⁶ Isa. 65: 12.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Hos. 6: 5.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Ps. 45: 11

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Mal. 3: 6.

and the markets, even though the word of God, who wishes to let everyone enter the knowledge of truth,¹⁵⁰ is overtly available.

72 But their heart is full of foolishness and they take pleasure in useless words and when the pious have already finished celebrating the holy service, they enter with a shameless eye and approach and take from the body and the blood of the Lord, He who came down from the heavens surrounded by a crowd of countless angels and the Cherubim and the Seraphim and the Father with him and the Holy Spirit, crying out to everyone: "Come, eat of my bread and drink of my wine, for I mixed it for you in order that you will drink and live."¹⁵¹ For my flesh is real spice and my blood is real drink.¹⁵² For this is my blood and my body, which will be given for you for the forgiveness of your sins."¹⁵³

73 Therefore, you who are negligent in entering the house of God, how have you dared to approach the altar, wishing to receive from the flesh and the blood of the Lord? If you do not go to church early, then tell me, how have you heard the Gospel? Or what is the teaching that you have heard from Paul? Tell me, what is the psalm that David sung, so that our thoughts are lifted from this age? But you enter with great shamelessness and you approach what is holy with great insolence, before you have purified yourself by prayer and the word of God, walking in stubbornness as the beasts do. Verily, if only you had remained until the sacrifice had been brought to an end! But you snatched it and ran off like a kite. For this reason, the law-giver said: "You shall not eat the kite nor what resembles it."¹⁵⁴

74 Did you not hear, O man, him who derides the sluggard and the negligent, as it is written: "How long will you sleep, O sluggard, and when will you rise from sleep? You sleep a little, you slumber a little, with your hand upon your chest."¹⁵⁵ After that he says: "Poverty will

¹⁵⁰ 1 Tim. 2: 4.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Pro. 9: 5.

¹⁵² Jn. 6: 55.

¹⁵³ Cf. Mt. 26: 26-28.

¹⁵⁴ Lev. 11: 13.

¹⁵⁵ Pro. 6: 9-10.

reach you quickly and need like a good runner."¹⁵⁶ What is poverty but poverty of virtue? Are there not twelve hours in the day? When you spend ten hours in performing the works of your body, are you not even free for two hours for the works of your soul?

75 We know many people in the world who are working by day and by night, gathering for themselves (treasures) in the kingdom of heavens. You, who are negligent about their Holy Masses, woe to you that you have become negligent and strangers to what is profitable. For God says, by mouth of this great prophet Isaiah: "Behold, my servants will eat, but you will go hungry. Behold, my servants will drink, but you will go thirsty. Behold, my servants will enjoy, but you will cry out from the anguish of your heart, because you have left me behind, said the Lord."¹⁵⁷

76 If you do not want to die, O man, do not approach God while you are hesitating whether this is the body of Christ. You, indeed, who are the enemy of your neighbour, with what shameless eyes have you approached the God of peace? You, who are the enemy of your brother, you are far removed from his peace.¹⁵⁸ Know then that Christ will not give you from his holy body and precious blood. Even if you partake, it will be condemnation for you.¹⁵⁹ You, too, O violent man, what is your business with the body of Christ? Rather, you shall violate him in a similar manner! And if you had been present at the time when he was crucified, you would have gone and taken his clothes with violence, just as the soldiers did to him.¹⁶⁰ Did you not hear the words of the Saviour, who tells you: "Whatever you did for one of these little brothers, you did it for me"?¹⁶¹ After having violated Christ yesterday, you came to me today, saying: "Give me from your body and your precious blood!" To you, however, I will not give it, and not only you, but also the others, who commit adultery and then enter (the church).

¹⁵⁶ Pro. 6: 11.

¹⁵⁷ Isa. 65: 13-14.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Mt. 5: 23-24.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. 1 Cor. 11: 29.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Mt. 27: 35; Mk. 15: 24; Lk. 23: 34.

¹⁶¹ Mt. 25: 40.

77 Do not even think, O man who commits adultery with his neighbour's wife, about partaking from the grace of Christ, of which partake the priests of the people. O man, you have your own wife at home and you leave the church and go out alone to be caught in the traps of prostitution.

78 And you, too, who is without wife and the virgin of Christ, pay heed to such snares. The devil and his entire host are hunting you day and night, since he envies you and wants to defile you with the stench of prostitution. Guard yourselves all the time and watch your hearts, for your enemy, the devil, prowls around, roaring like a lion, wishing to devour your souls.¹⁶² Do you not hear the wise saying: "Watch your steps when you go to the house of God"?¹⁶³ Are there then obstacles or traps at the door of the house of God? What is the reason for which the Ecclesiastes spoke this word: "Watch your steps," as long as you have your eyes and see? But he says: "Beware of the traps of prostitution!" He likewise said about the prostitute: "Her heart is like a drag net and a snare is what is in her hands."¹⁶⁴

79 You, then, when you come to church, wash your body with holy water, put on radiant clothes, walk prudently, with your eyes cast down, but your thoughts watching up to heaven and the prayer of God in your mouth, while you are full of fear as if you were on your way to the tribunal of God. When you enter the church, sit down with the men. Remain close to him who recites the word of God, so that you will hear what is lacking you, in order that you pray to God to fulfil you so as to be perfect, and draw freely near to his body and his holy blood, just like a son who gladly kisses his father's mouth,¹⁶⁵ and he will receive you with delight and grant you his Holy Spirit, who came over the fathers, the apostles, according to the word of our Saviour who said: "When I leave, I will send you the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, who will teach you all things and who will make you remember every word that I spoke to

¹⁶² 1 Pet. 5: 8.

¹⁶³ Ecc. 5: 1.

¹⁶⁴ Ecc. 7: 26.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Lk. 15: 20.

you."¹⁶⁶ To God be the glory, the Father and his beloved Son and the Holy Spirit, they who dwell within the Church that will always remain from now till eternity. Amen.

¹⁶⁶ Jn. 14: 26.