



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
ST. JOHN

PART TWO

A PATRISTIC COMMENTARY

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ST. JOHN

PART TWO

CHAPTERS 9 TO 21

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In the Name of
The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
One God.
Amen.

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INEXPRESSIBLE HEIGHTS OF GLORY

During the writing of this book, a certain thought crossed my mind and I often hesitated to document it. I felt sad that I had not begun to enjoy the Gospel of St. John earlier on in my life. Had I done so, I would have spent the rest of my days soaring in the glories that this Gospel offers. These are glories that are hard to communicate in any human language.

As I studied the Gospel of St. John, I came to understand the meaning of what Origen, meant when he wrote his meditations and sermons on this Gospel. He stated that he believed he could not complete his interpretation of St. John until he had passed into heaven. Only there would he be able to complete that task! Indeed, I feel that no one can achieve a full understanding of the depths of St. John's writing; and that all would be revealed only as we meet with our glorified Savior and as we partake in His heavenly glory. Only then will we comprehend the amazing implications of this Gospel, and in a way that transcends all that can be said here.

May the Holy Spirit carry every soul into God's divine embrace. May He enlighten the inner vision so that the soul may enjoy all the divine glory and understanding that our amazing Lord wishes to offer to us. Consequently, we will be ablaze with divine love and longingly seek to meet with our Savior.

CHAPTER NINE

A MAN BORN BLIND RECEIVES SIGHT

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

In the previous chapter, we have read the Lord's proclamation that He is the light of the world (8:12). The Lord tells the Jews that He has come to denounce and dissipate darkness. In this manner, He would pull away those walking in it and carry them unto the light of His glory. The children of Satan (8:44) are in need of the real liberator who would grant them inner enlightenment. They would consequently rejoice with their father Abraham because they would see the amazing day of the Lord (8:56). However, they sought to stone Him. Therefore he disappeared from among them; and appeared to the man born blind in order to grant him sight. This probably occurred a few days or months after that earlier confrontation with the Jews. They should have tried to open their hearts and minds to the One who grants sight. Then they would have realized that He grants insight and understanding as well.

This is the only chapter in all of the Old and New Testament books where there is any mention of opening the eyes of a person born blind. In the Old Testament we read that the light of sight granted to the blind is one of the deeds of the awaited Messiah: "And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness," (Is 29:18); and "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped," (Is 35:5). It is also said of the servant of God (the Incarnate Word): "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes," (Is 42:6-7). The Psalmist also worships the Lord and says "The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind," (Ps 146:8).

By mentioning the deed of granting sight to the blind and specifically to this one who was born blind, it is as though the evangelists are proclaiming the fulfillment of these prophecies. They are being fulfilled through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, as He is the awaited Messiah. He is the Lord who opens the inner eyes of the heart as well as the physical eyes. In Him the prophecies have been fulfilled; for through Him such acts are achieved that no one else could perform, except God alone or through His name.

The healing of the blind man proclaims the person of the Lord and the reason for His coming: to open the inner sight so that believers would comprehend the mysteries of God. At the same time, the blindness of the proud and hypocritical leaders would be exposed. Sadly, they could not discover their spiritual blindness and sinfulness!

Although this unique miracle is greatly significant due to the creation of the eyes of the man born blind, yet the Evangelist does not mention the name of the man. Neither does he provide any details. Rather, he presents the arguments that were raised as a result of the miracle. We are informed of the dialogue between the Lord and His disciples; that between the Lord and the blind man; and that between the Lord and the Pharisees.

St. John does not underline the highly miraculous act of healing because he is more preoccupied with the blessings mankind enjoy as a result of the Lord's divine work in their lives and thoughts.

The Lord used clay to create the eyes of the man. This serves as a confirmation that He is the Creator and Savior. By asking the blind man to go wash in the pool of Siloam, He indicated the need for baptism as it allows us to enjoy the Light of the Holy Spirit through the new birth. The Jews responded by throwing out the enlightened man. However, he found a place in the Lord Jesus Christ: **The Messiah of the rejected and of the despised.**

Some of the Jewish people realized their blindness, besides many of the Gentiles. These two groups were better than the Pharisees who claimed they had sight in spite of their blindness. By such claims, they had no hope through their own stupidity. In contrast, the tax collector and the adulteress confessed their blindness. Therefore the door of hope was opened to them and they enjoyed ultimate insight and eternal life with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Through confession, it is possible to gain insight; **which progressively enables a person to get acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ:**

- * A Man called Jesus (11)
- * He is a prophet (17)
- * A Man from God (33)
- * The Son of God (35)
- * He is worthy to be bowed down to and worshipped as He is the Lord (38)

This chapter is read on the 'Sunday of Baptism' as it is associated with the mystery of baptism which represents inner insight and enlightenment.

1- The Healing of the Blind Man.

2- Dialogues after the Miracle

A- Dialogues between the neighbors and the blind man 8-12

B- Dialogue between the Pharisees and the blind man 13-17

C- Dialogue between the Pharisees and parents of blind man 18-23

D- Dialogue between the Pharisees and the blind man 24-34

E- Dialogue between the Messiah and the blind man 35-38

F- Dialogue between the Messiah and the Pharisees 39-41

1- The Healing of the Blind Man

“Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth.”[1]

The Lord Jesus Christ passed through the crowd of Jewish leaders and disappeared as they picked up stones to throw at Him (8:59). We then see Him passing by the poor blind man who looks at the Lord. The Lord looked at him in a manner that is different from the

way the other people looked at him. He looked at the man with love and compassion. This is a living picture of the Messiah whom the Jews rejected. They took pride in the temple, while the Lord went through the streets seeking the Gentiles. They were disabled to see Him for they had no knowledge of the prophecies, the Divine law, or the symbols. They were like the man born blind whose place was on the roadside and who was poor and begging in a state of misery. Accordingly, Job says “Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery and life unto the bitter in soul;” (Job 3:20).

The Evangelist does not provide the name of the place through which the Lord was passing by or where He was. However, He was passing by as the Bearer of sufferings and He saw this man begging. The man was sitting in a place where charitable people could give him something to help him survive.

The man was known in the city as the one born blind. No one around him, not even the Lord’s disciples, asked or prayed that his eyes would be opened. May be this was because no one expected that it could happen.

The Lord looked at home so that the poor blind person would find Him. Accordingly, the holy Word states in Is. 65:1: “I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, ‘Behold me, behold me’, unto a nation that was not called by my name.” He first loved us, and He loved us before we knew Him. The apostle says in this context: “when ye knew not God,” (Gal. 4:9).

* The Lord truly loves mankind and is concerned with our salvation. He wishes to bridle the mouth of the stupid and will not cease from working even though no one listens to Him. The prophet knew that and said, “that you might be justified when you speak, and be clear when you judge,” (Ps. 51:4). Consequently, in this chapter, we find the Lord leaving the temple and healing the blind. He does so after the Jews had rejected His words, accused Him of being possessed by a demon, and had tried to kill Him. He did the miracle to pacify their cruelty and violence and to underline the facts. He did a supernatural miracle that had no precedence. Listen to the healed person who states: **“Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind,”** [23]. May be some physician had opened the eyes of someone who had become blind, but this never happened to one born blind. Upon leaving the temple, the Lord intentionally went to work. This clearly indicates that it is He who saw the blind man and not vice versa. The Lord looked at him jealously and the disciples understood His compassion¹.

St. John Chrysostom

* This blind man represents the human race. Such blindness found a place in the first man through sin. We all have our origins in this first man and therefore have inherited not only death but evil as well. Now if lack of faith constitutes blindness and faith is enlightenment, then who is the believer that the Lord will find at His coming? The apostle, who traces his origin to the family of prophets, states: “...were by nature the children of wrath, even as others,” (Eph. 2:3)... since evil has found roots for itself within us, then

¹ Homilies on St John, 56:1

every person has been born mentally blind. For if a person could really see, he would not have needed a mentor: but since he needs someone to guide and enlighten him, then he has been blind ever since his birth.²

St. Augustine

“And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” [2]

The Lord left the temple (Jn. 8:59) accompanied by the disciples who did not forsake Him during His trials. They enjoyed getting acquainted with Him and they were having tremendous new experiences. They noticed how the Lord turned His eyes to the poor blind man. He did not look at him in the usual manner for His eyes were full of love. They too, therefore turned their eyes to the blind man. Yet instead of praying the Lord to heal him, they questioned Him for the reason why he had been born blind.

* We might wonder: where did this question come from? Our answer would be: when the Lord healed the paralytic man earlier, He told him “Look, you have been made well, sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you” (John 5:14). Therefore the disciples remembered that the man had suffered paralysis due to his sins. However, this could not be applied to this blind man for he was blind since birth. So had his parents sinned? This too cannot be concluded because the child does not suffer punishment due to his parents... the disciples here wondered because of their own confusion and not because they searched for information.³

St. John Chrysostom.

There is a popular rabbinical saying (quoted allegedly by the rabbis) ‘There is no death without sin and no pain without evil.’ This saying was justified by them as they based it on the words cited in Ezekiel 18:20, and Psalm 89:32. These words were imprinted in the minds of the Jews, including the Lord’s disciples who did not ask if this blindness was due to sin or not. In their opinion, this matter did not need to be questioned or debated. So the question they asked was: ‘who was the one who had sinned and therefore brought this terrible calamity on that person.’ What confused the disciples was: ‘how could the man have sinned before birth and was consequently born like that? Could this be the result of his parents’ sin?’

Some believe that the soul of a person could sin before it is embodied in the flesh. **Origen the Scholar** believed that some suffer pain before they act wrongfully after birth. Others have depended on human logic to explain Divine Justice and how some are born poor while others are born rich, or why one person is born with sharp intelligence and another could lack it altogether; or why one is born physically strong while another is suffering many ailments. Besides, some have depended on affirming the potential to commit error before birth based on the story of Jacob and Esau when they were still in the womb: “...the children struggled together within her...” (Gen. 25:22).

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 44:1

³ Homilies on St John, 56:1

In the writings of the rabbis they deal with what befalls the sons due to the mistakes of the parents. In the context of the need for a man to avoid gazing at a woman, one rabbi states: 'A man who gazes at the heel of a woman will have a handicapped son born to him.' Another rabbi says that this happens to someone who approaches his wife during her impurity. Still another says that a man who has a marital relationship while his wife still has menstruation would have children who would suffer of epilepsy. There are numerous sayings similar to these and which underline the conviction of the rabbis that the sins of the parents are punished by appearance of flaws in their children and of which the children suffer throughout their lives.

This clarifies that what the disciples said was not inspired by their imagination, for it was the result of teachings strongly imprinted in the minds of many Jews. These ideas were the result of the rabbinical writings and teachings.

Some believe that the disciples had heard about the Pythagorean ideas. These claimed that the soul pre- exists the creation of its body. The Pharisees might have adopted that line of thought too. This is evident in their words to the man born blind: **“... you were completely born in sins,” [34].**

Many nations believe in the transmigration of souls. Hinduism is still interested in defining the sin a person had committed when he lived in another body before birth. **Origen the scholar** borrowed a speech given by Jacob that is found in the unofficial Book to the Hebrews where he says: “I am the angel of God, one of the first ranks of the spirits. People call me Jacob, but my true name given me by God is Israel. Plato believes that the air is full of spirits; and that some of these bind themselves to bodies due to their naturally active inclinations. Other spirits detest such a union.”

Jesus answered:

**“Neither this man nor his parents sinned
but that the works of God should be revealed.” [3]**

Rather than condemn the man born blind or his parents, the Lord directed the disciple's attention to the supreme care of God and His hidden plan. God had allowed this blindness in order to grant that person spiritual insight. Consequently, he would testify to the Divine truth before the violent Jewish leaders and would glorify God.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not say that the man born blind or his parents had not sinned. All mankind had fallen into sin. What this blind man was suffering of was not related to any particular sin. What the disciples and all believers should do is to be preoccupied with God's works and His plan for man. He wants us to enjoy inner sight, to get acquainted with the mysteries of God, and to receive fellowship in His eternal glory.

God's hand works incessantly and through hard and happy times. Under all circumstances, He seeks our salvation. Believers have not been promised a life with no trials or sufferings that afflict all other beings. Conversely, they are faced with more tribulations. However, what comforts them is their understanding that God has a plan for

everything. Besides, because they enjoy Divine grace they feel they are fully content. This is what God has promised us through St. Paul's words: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9)

The believer does not complain in the midst of trials. His eyes are fixed on God his tender Father; and his heart is receptive and comprehends God's plan for him.

* The Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior and He mercifully does what He has not granted in the womb. Surely when God had not given eyes to that blind person, it was not due to some error He (the Creator) did. Rather, the plan was to postpone it until the time would come to do a miracle..... **"Neither this man nor his parents sinned..."** God did not grant what He could have granted. He did not grant what He knew He would grant when the time would come for that need.

The blindness was not due to sin committed by the blind man or his parents; 'but **that the works of God should be revealed in him.**' For when we were born, we were all bound with the original sin. Yet in spite of that we were not born blind. Nevertheless, search carefully for we have been born blind. So who has not been born blind? I mean blind in the heart. Yet the Lord Jesus Christ, who has created both heart and body, heals both of them.⁴

St. Augustine

The Lord's words about the blind man: **"Neither this man nor his parents sinned"**, do not clear his parents of sin. He did not just say, **"Neither this man nor his parents sinned"**, for He added **"but that the works of God should be revealed in him."** Indeed this man and his parents had sinned; however the blindness was not a result of that. It is not valid to punish a person for a sin committed by someone else. This fallacy has been rejected by Ezekiel the prophet who says: "The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, "What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die," Ezek 18:1-4. In this context, Moses the prophet also says: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin," (Deut 24:16).

If someone says: How did God tell Moses the prophet "for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;" (Ex 20:5)? Our response would be: "Because this cause cannot be generalized; for it was said of people who had come out of Egypt. This was what it meant: When the Jews left Egypt; they became more experienced through many miracles and wonders. In spite of that, they became more evil than their parents and grand parents who had not seen such miracles. Therefore they were to suffer the same calamities that their predecessors had suffered if they followed the same course

⁴ Sermon on N.T.Lessons, 86:1

of action.

* The Lord says these words not as someone who wants to indicate that they have not sinned since both that person and his parents have sinned. However, his blindness is not the reason of that.... But it is intended for the proclamation of the Glory of God through him. Someone may say: ‘Why should that person suffer for the glory of God? How unjust, explain to me? Then what if God had never created that man?’ Our response is: ‘The man has benefited from his blindness for he received the healing of his inner vision.’ What benefit do the Jews enjoy as they have eyes yet their condemnation has become greater. They saw yet were incapacitated. What is the harm that befell that man as a consequence of his disability... indeed, because of it, his eyes were opened? Therefore the evils of this present life are not evil, neither are the blessings beneficial. Only sin is evil, whereas disability is not evil.⁵

St. John Chrysostom.

St. Jerome wrote to Castrutus of Pannonia to comfort him due to his physical blindness and said:

* I write to ask you not to consider the physical calamity that has happened to you as the result of a sin...do we not see many idolaters, Jews, heretics and those who adopt different thoughts just wading in the mud of lust. They swim in a sea of blood and violence and are worse than savage wolves and stealthy hawks. In spite of that, they have not been inflicted with this epidemic. They are not inflicted like others and they grow in their arrogance towards God, raising their faces up to heaven. Conversely, we see the saints afflicted with sickness, pain, and need ...If you imagine that your blindness is due to sin; and that your sickness which doctors are often capable of healing are proof of God’s anger, then you seem to consider that Isaac is a sinner. You think that is why he was afflicted with blindness, was deceived, and gave the blessing to the one whom he had no intention to give. We accuse Jacob of sin when his eyesight weakened so much he could neither see Manasseh nor Ephraim (Gen. 48:1). Yet, with his inner vision and prophetic spirit he could foresee the distant future, and that the Lord Jesus Christ would come from a royal line (Gen. 49:1)⁶

St. Jerome

It is not appropriate for believers, having comprehended the supreme mysteries of God, to condemn anyone or to consider that matters that befall others are divine punishments inflicted for some hidden sin. If we do so we belittle others even though their sins are apparent. The Jews fell into this error as they considered the righteous One who is without sin, as deserving to suffer and be crucified for some evil or blasphemy he had committed. The Psalmist says: “For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded” (Ps. 69:26). Isaiah the prophet also says: “.....we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace was upon him and by His stripes we are healed” (Is. 53:4-5)

⁵ Hom. 56.PG 59:327

⁶ Letter 68:1

**“I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day;
the night is coming when no one can work” [4]**

These were critical moments when the Lord turned His eyes to the man born blind. They were moments dedicated not only to heal the man born blind but also to reveal the person of the Lord Jesus Christ: He is the light of the world and the giver of inner vision. In spite of that, no one could discover what lay behind this blindness. Until these moments, even the disciples could not read or understand the book of Divine care. However, the time came later on when it became possible to comprehend this Divine mystery and the supreme Divine work.

The Lord did not perform works in order to underline his power to do miracles. Rather He did so to perform the works of His Father who sent Him. However, He does not say I do the work that My Father has commanded Me to do but He just performed the same deeds of His Father. We notice here the following:

First: The Lord came into the world on a mission. He came in the form of the Son of man to fulfill His Father’s will and in complete obedience to Him. The Father’s will is identical to the Son’s will. That is why any person who is obedient shares the feature of obedience with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Second: The Lord performs the same works as the Father. This is what He affirms in the Gospel of St. John: the unity of Divine work. This will become evident in the rest of this Gospel.

Third: In a spirit of love for humanity and in obedience and union with the Father, the Lord finds pleasure in accomplishing His work. Committed by love, the Lord says:” I must work...”

Fourth: The Lord works while it is day; and before the Jews move to kill Him as they are driven by envy and hatred. The period of His service is an opportunity to work openly even if that is done on the Sabbath. This is an invitation for us to move and work and to seize every hour of our lives; lest our work remains unfinished when the day of our lives comes to an end. The Lord has granted us the day so that we may labor (Ps. 104:22-23). Therefore it is appropriate that we do not spoil and idle away the days of our lives. Indeed, we should struggle in obedience to God our Father so that when the night comes we could rest.

Fifth: The Lord invites us to work through Him and with Him. The apostle says accordingly:” For we are fellow workers...” (1 Cor. 3:9). For in working with Him, we find peace, honor, and glory. We share with Him in service as long as we are alive and before the night sets in.

* What do these words convey? What are the ultimate conclusions based on these? So many. What the Lord says implies this: ‘As long as there is light, the nation could believe in Me; and as long as this life goes on, I need to work.’ The night is coming: that is, ‘it is bound to come in the future when no one would be able to work.’ The Lord did not say: ‘I cannot work’ but rather ‘When no one can work.’ This indicates that there will

not be any more time for faith, or service, or repentance⁷.

* Why had St. Paul called this life 'the night' (Rom. 13:12)? But here the Lord calls it 'the day'? St. Paul is not contradicting the Lord for he is saying the same thing. Even though the words are different, yet the meaning is the same. He says: "the night is far spent. The day is at hand." St. Paul calls the present time 'the night' since he compares it to the forthcoming day. The Lord called the future 'the night' as no time will be left to perform acts of repentance, faith or obedience in the next world if we neglect any sin done in this world. As for St. Paul, he called this present life 'the night' because anyone who persists in evil and disbelief exists in darkness. Therefore he directs his speech to believers saying: 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand.' Believers need to enjoy that light, and St. Paul calls the old life as darkness: 'Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armor of light'⁸.

St. John Chrysostom

In this manner, the Lord directs His words to unbelievers. Their lives here are considered to be 'day' if they are compared with their lives in the world to come. Now, they could enjoy the light of the sun of righteousness in the inner hearts, through living faith and true repentance. As for the world to come, they will be enveloped in darkness where there is no way they could return to the Lord and offer repentance. In contrast, St. Paul directs his words to believers. He considers their previous lives as 'darkness' since they performed acts of darkness. Now, the time had come to travel into the future world where they would enjoy the eternal light of the Lord Jesus Christ. Coming into His presence, our present life appears as the darkest night...

* Dear brothers, if we always bear in mind the condemnation we have inherited, then we will know that the whole world is blind. Now the Lord Jesus Christ, who grants enlightenment, has come. Satan causes blindness and he has caused all mankind to be born blind, as he is the one who deceived the first man. Let all run to Him who grants light. Let all run and believe and receive the clay made of spit....let all wash their faces in the pool of Siloam ...This is Siloam: wash your face, be baptized. In this manner you will be enlightened and see while you could not see before⁹.

* First: Open your eyes to Him who says: 'I must work the works of Him who sent Me' (Refer to John 9:4). A follower of Arius would immediately respond: 'As you see, the Lord did not perform His works but rather the works of the Father who sent Him.' Are these works not His works? What does He say who is Siloam and the Messenger Himself, the Son Himself, the only Son, the one to whom you complain and belittle His status? What is the response of the Lord? 'All things that the Father has are mine' (John 16:15)... He did not say: 'all that the Father has, He has given Me.'" Yet, had He said that He would also have revealed His equality with the Father... Hear His words in another verse: "and all Mine are yours, and yours are Mine" (John 17:10). So the doubt ends here:

⁷ Hom 56. PG.59.328

⁸ Hom on St John, 56:2

⁹ Sermon on N.T. Lessons, 85:1

for what the Father and the Son have are in harmony and consist of the same thing. Therefore there is no conflict: what the Lord calls ‘the work of the Father’ are His works too since all that are ‘Yours are Mine’... “For whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner (in the same way) (John 5:19).¹⁰

St. Augustine

Thus the Lord offers Himself as a model. Indeed, He acts on our behalf so that when we disappear within Him we are enabled to perform the same deeds through His Spirit. He did not have to struggle since He performed His Father’s work with inner joy, and in spite of the constant resistance of those around Him. He will continue to act even through our union with Him. Therefore we should not cease to struggle and we should be committed to serve. We need to do so before the night of death comes upon us and the days of our lives come to an end on this earth.

“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” [5]

The Lord Jesus Christ works as long as it is daytime. That means that He works as long as we are able to enjoy His redeeming deeds. For when the day ends and the night of the grave prevails, it will be impossible to benefit any longer of His service. The opportunity to repent and return to Him will have passed away. During the days of our lives, He shines upon us, as He is **‘The light of the world’**: The light of righteousness who gives light to our souls, our minds and all our inner depths.

Earlier, the Lord had proclaimed that His mission involves bringing His light to those sitting in the darkness (John 8:12). As He is the light of righteousness, He grants enlightenment and healing through the rays of His love or with the scope of His wings. As the Head of the Church, He transforms his believers into ‘the light of the world.’ They just have to be fervently fired by divine love to serve others.

* The Lord said these words so that we may believe that He was speaking about the incarnation; and that it was valid as long as He was a human being. He was in the world for a while, yet as He is God and therefore He is present at all times. In another context, the Lord says: “... I am with you always, even to the end of the age,” (Matt. 28:20)¹¹.

St. Ambrose

* Here the Lord reveals that even after His crucifixion, He will grant His tender care to the wicked and attract many to Him because it is still day. However, when the day is over, He will abandon them completely. He proclaims this by saying: **‘As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’** He also told others. ‘...while you have the light, believe in the light...’ (John 12:36)¹².

St. John Chrysostom.

The only incarnate Son is the light of the whole heavenly creation and not only of the

¹⁰ Sermon on N.T. Lessons, 85:3

¹¹ Of The Christian Faith, 3:7 (48)

¹² Hom. 56 PG:59:330

whole world¹³.

St. Cyril the Great.

* He is called “The light of the world” due to His act of giving light to the world: what lies within Him is the light.

He is called the resurrection since He tears away that which is dead and sets up the fullness of life within all those who come earnestly to Him.

On account of other acts, the Lord is also called ‘The Shepherd’ (John 10:11-12); ‘The Teacher’ (John 13:13); ‘The King’ (Zech 9:9; Matt. 21:5; John 12:15), ‘the chosen Arrow’ (Ps. 44:6; Is 49:2); ‘The Slave/ Servant’ (Is 49:3); ‘the Mediator and Sacrifice’ (1 John 2:1-2; Rom 3:25) He is also called the ‘ Logos’ as He strips away all that which is illogical ‘alogon.’ He truly transforms us into wise beings acting always in a manner that glorifies God even as we eat and drink (1 Cor. 10:31) Due to such wisdom, we are enabled to fulfill completely and generally all our acts in this life to the glory of God. Through fellowship with Him, we are enabled to awaken and be enlightened. Besides, He watches over us and directs our lives. Clearly, we walk wisely and divinely as He destroys every irrational and deadly matter within us since He is the Word and the Resurrection (John 1:1; 11:25)¹⁴.

Origen the Scholar

* What is this night in which no one can work as soon as it sets in? Listen to what ‘the day’ stands for; then you will comprehend the implication of ‘the night’ ...let the Lord tell us: **“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”**[5]. See how He Himself is the day. ‘Let the blind wash his eyes in the day so that he might see the day... Then the night, in a certain manner, corresponds to a person’s lack of recognizing Me. Thus when the Lord is no longer there, no one can work’¹⁵.

* It is the night of the wicked. The night of those to whom it will be said at the end of time: ‘Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.’

Now faith works through love. Therefore if we now work- then it is now daytime for the Lord is present now.

Listen to His promise and do not imagine that He is absent; for He Himself has said: “I am with you.” Until when? May we, who are alive, never experience anxiety. As long as we have full faith that His words stand throughout all generation, this is possible.

The Lord said:” I am with you always, even to the end of the age,” (Matt 28:20). There is a time to work, and a time to collect wages. The Lord will reward everyone according to his deeds (Matt. 16:27).

¹³ Explanation on the Gospel. PG 73: 601B

¹⁴ Commentary on John, Book 1:267-268

¹⁵ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate44:5

Go on working as long as you are alive.... For the terrible night will come when all the wicked will faint. In the present, every unbeliever who dies enters into the night where it is impossible to do any work. In this kind of night the wealthy one keeps burning, suffering, and repenting. However, he could not get any relief. He tried to be good when he told Abraham: “Father Abraham, send Lazarus to my father’s house...that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment” (Luke 16:27-28)

What a sad person! When you were alive you had time to work. Now you are in the night where no man can work¹⁶!

St. Augustine.

“When He had said these things, He spat on the ground, and made clay with the saliva; and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. [6]

The manner of healing the man born blind is unique. It is well known that mud would damage a healthy eye. So how does the Lord make mud with His saliva and anoint the eyes of that man? And why did He not heal him in secret in order to avoid arousing the hostility of the religious leaders? Besides why did He not wait till after the Sabbath and then heal him?

First: The Lord confirms that He performs His work in accordance to his divine thought and not according to our wishes and human means.

Second: His prime concern is to grant the blind man sight to his eyes and insight to his heart. He is not concerned with the resistance of the Jewish leaders against Him.

Third: He did not wait until the Sabbath had ended because it was as a day of rest. Therefore the spirit of the Lord finds rest in doing divine acts and in granting enlightenment and rest to others.

Fourth: He sets an example so that we may not postpone doing good works to the next day. Indeed, we should seize every chance to hurry in doing good deeds lest the opportunity is no more there tomorrow.

Fifth: The Lord made clay out of spit and anointed the man’s eyes with His hands. In doing so He confirms that the secret of that power lies in Christ Himself and in the work of His hands. Everything that proceeds from the Lord Jesus Christ possesses power, life and enlightenment. Indeed, His arm is almighty.

* Notice that when the Lord sought to heal the blind man, He did so in a manner that could make his blindness even worse, as He applied mud¹⁷.

* The Lord took earth from the ground and that is just the same thing He did when He created Adam. It would have been true if He had said: “I am the one who took soil from the ground and formed man.” But this would have been very hard on His hearers, as well as too unbearable and repulsive to them. Therefore He chose to reveal His identity

¹⁶ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate44:6

¹⁷ Hom 4. PG 61:27

through a practical event, which nothing could hinder. By taking earth and mixing it with spit, He proclaimed His hidden glory. Indeed, it was not easy for the crowds to comprehend and believe that they stood before the glorious Creator Himself¹⁸.

* If you wonder: ‘Why did the Lord not use water in the mud but rather used spit?’ Our response is: ‘So that the spring of water would not be considered the source of healing. Besides, it is intended to indicate that the power evident in His mouth is responsible for creating the eyes of the blind man and opening them.

St John Chrysostom

* He granted him new eyes¹⁹.

St. Paulinus

* He formed eyes from clay.

Light emanated from the soil

This is how it happened in the beginning...

He ordered that there be light, and it was born out of darkness.

Similarly, here too.

He made clay out of His spit,

And he offered perfection to that which was lacking in nature and that was the case since the beginning.

This was intended to reveal that what He held in His hands was the power to bring perfection to what was imperfect in nature...

As they refused to believe that He was there before Abraham came, He proved to them, through His deeds, that He is the Son of the One whose hands had shaped the first Adam out of the earth²⁰.

St. Efram the Syrian

* He made clay out of the spit and anointed our eyes with it (John 9:6, 7). He made us see clearly (Mark 8:25). He opened the ears of our hearts (Mark 7:33-35) so that we could hear. Therefore we could smell His sweet fragrance (Eph 5; 2 Cor 2:15), and distinguish His name as the aroma of a spilled sweet ointment (Song of Sol 1:3; Phil 2). Now we could taste and see how great the Lord is (1 Peter 2:3; Ps 34:8). Now we can touch Him in the manner that St. John describes: ‘That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the work of life’ (1 John 1:1). Consequently, we have become enabled to kill the Lamb, eat it, and as a result come out of Egypt²¹.

‘And He said to him,

“Go; wash in the pool of Siloam (which is translated, Sent).

¹⁸ Hom56.PG59:328

¹⁹ Poem 23. ACW 40:219

²⁰ Commentary on Tatation’s Diatessaron, 28

²¹ Peri Pasha 18, 19 (Translated by Robert J.Daly- ACW)

So he went and washed and came back seeing' [7]

'Siloam': It is also known as Shiloh, Silo, and Shiloh. This is a natural spring that lies beneath the strong citadels on the east of Jerusalem, in between the city and the waters of Kidron. Some consider that Siloam is the same as En Rogel, which is mentioned in Joshua 15:7; 18:16; 2 Sam 17:17; 1 Kings 1:9. The waters of this spring were gathered in a great storage for the consumption of the city. A stream flowed out of it that fed the pool at Bethesda.

The pool of Siloam got its water from a spring that originated in mount Zion thus the waters of the Tabernacle "were streams that make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle the most high"(Ps 46:4). These are living and healing waters (Ezek 47:9).

(Which is translated Sent): The name is derived from the Hebrew 'Shalach' and means 'Sent.' This was due either because they considered this spring as a blessing granted by God in order to water the city; or because its waters were channeled through canals or pipes to different regions. Some believe that the name refers to a prophecy by Jacob to Judas that the Messiah would be his descendant: "..... Until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people" (Gen 49:10). Thus it is a symbol for the Lord Jesus Christ, sent from the Father to enlighten and heal souls.

The Lord Jesus Christ is called "the Messenger" for He is the carrier of the covenant (Malachi 2:1). He repeatedly says in the Gospel of St. John that the Father had sent Him. Thus when he tells the blind man to go to the pool of Siloam or Sent, He is calling every soul in need of enlightenment to go to Him. He is the messenger who purifies man from sin, and shines with His light upon him. Consequently, he/she enjoys heavenly understanding, and darkness can no longer have a place in him.

* Just as the Lord Jesus Christ is also the spiritual rock (1Cor 10:4), so is the spiritual Siloam also²².

St. John Chrysostom

The Lord Jesus Christ underlined the obedience of the man born blind. On the one hand, he submitted himself to the Lord, whom he had never seen, and let him put clay on his eyes without any objection or even asking how the Lord could use clay to heal eyes? On the other hand, he obeyed, went and washed in the pool of Siloam. He probably had gone and washed there previously but had not recovered his sight. Besides, surely many others had washed in the pool yet had never heard of any blind person being healed by its waters. Consequently, the Lord proclaimed the virtues of that poor blind man which were evident in his assurance, confidence, and calm.

Note the mind set of the blind man: he was obedient in every way. He did not say: 'If the mud and spit will truly heal me, why do I need to go to Siloam? Or, if I need to go to Siloam, why is there a need for clay? Why does He anoint me with (clay)? And why

²² Homilies on St John, 57:1

does He command me to get washed?' He did not think of these matters, as he was ready to do one thing only: he was prepared to obey completely the one who commanded him and he was not inclined to do anything to oppose Him²³.

St. John Chrysostom

The man born blind came to enjoy the light of which he had been deprived before. It is as though he had been granted a new birth that differed from his previous birth. The pool of Siloam represents the baptismal waters that grant inner vision besides purification and redemption from sin. The waters refer to the Messianic age or the Kingdom of the house of David: "In as much as these people refuse the waters of Shiloah that flow softly..." (Is 8:6)

The blind man returned with his sight restored. He could see intangible things and he praised with all his might the One who had granted him enlightenment. Accordingly Isaiah the prophet says: "...your watchmen shall lift up their voices, with their voices they shall sing together; for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord brings back Zion" (Is 52:8).

* The Lord told the blind man to go and, wash in Siloam. If you were to ask: 'Why has the Lord not done the miracle immediately? Why did He send the man to Siloam?' Our response would be: 'To test the blind man's faith and in order to silence the arguments of the Jews.' Besides, it was necessary for all who met him to see him going there with his eyes covered with clay. Such a strange sight would attract everybody's attention, whether they knew him or not. Everybody would notice him in every detail. It would not be easy to recognize the blind man after his eyes were opened (for his features would be changed). That is why the Lord intended to have many witnesses testifying in different ways by creating a strange sight that would be definitely remarkable... in this manner people would be unable, after the miracle had been done, to deny that it was the same person.

St. John Chrysostom

* The man washed his eyes in this pool whose name is translated as "sent." He was baptized in the Lord in a manner that granted him enlightenment. When the Lord anointed him with clay He made him become a believer²⁴.

St. Augustine believes that in making the clay with spit, the reference is to the Word being incarnated²⁵.

2. Dialogues after the Miraculous Healing

²³ Homilies on St John, 57:1

²⁴ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 44:2

²⁵ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 44:2

A. The dialogue between the Neighbors and the Blind man

The neighbors, who were eyewitnesses to the miracle, knew the blind man very well. Due to the miraculous healing and their great astonishment, they went through three stages of doubt, leading to three questions:

The first stage: their doubts in the person of the blind man [8], therefore he assured them he was that same blind man they had known [9].

The second stage: Who had made the miracle? And the answer was “A man called Jesus” [11]

The third stage: “Where is He?” And the answer was: “I do not know”, [12].

The blind man was completely accurate and faithful in answering all the three questions and according to what he knew at that time.

‘Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, “Is not this he who sat and begged?” [8]

The neighbors were astonished as he had been born and had grown among them. They were accustomed to see him blind. Often, he would sit and beg in misery. Suddenly now he could see and his sight was whole for he was walking joyfully everywhere. He had not been able to work on account of his blindness and his damaged psyche. His parents had been unable to support him; therefore he sat by the roadside and begged most of the day. Even his manner of speech and words had become different. Instead of beggars’ words that would were intended to let people give him alms; his words were now full of praise and thanksgiving. All this made his miraculous healing a public event rather than a hidden matter! In spite of that, some were suspicious concerning his identity. There were conflicting views since the healing of a person born blind is something hard to accept. Indeed, according to human knowledge, healing appeared to be impossible in such a case.

* How tender is God! Wherever He went, He tenderly healed even beggars. In this manner, He silenced the Jews. He did not give special attention to famous or outstanding persons or to rulers. Rather He attended to those who seemed unworthy to receive His attention. Indeed, He had come to save everyone²⁶.

St. John Chrysostom

Some said: “This is he.”

Others said, “He is like him.”

He said: “I am he.” [9]

Probably, those who said: **“This is he”** were the ones who had witnessed what had happened to him for everything had been done in public. As far as the others, they did not believe and said:” He is like him.” This was also because his opened eyes made him look different than how he used to look. By saying: “I am he” he testified that he is the same one who had been begging people; but now he was enjoying God’s supreme

²⁶ Homilies on St John, 57:1

blessing.

* He was not ashamed of his former blindness; and he did not fear the anger of the crowd. Moreover, he did not conceal his identity for he wanted to testify to the One who had been kind to him

St. John Chrysostom

**Therefore they said to him:
“How were your eyes opened?” [10]**

When the blind man testified that he was the one who received the blessing of healing, the neighbors asked how it happened. They wanted to know and find the Maker of the miracle. The Psalmist accordingly says:” The works of the Lord are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them,” (Ps 111:2).

**He answered and said:
“A man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes,
and said to me: ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed,
and I received sight” [11]**

He presented the truth simply and according to his experience. He said: “A man called Jesus made clay...” He had not seen Jesus before, but had heard of Him. He heard the Lord’s voice when He commanded him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. He felt that the Lord’s hand put something over his eyes. He discovered it was clay after he had been healed; and that the Lord had made it Himself and anointed his eyes with it.

* Look how he became a preacher through grace. Look how he preaches the Gospel. Having received insight, he became a confessor. This blind man became a confessor and that agitated the hearts of the wicked. This was due to the fact that they had not received in their hearts what this man had received in his eyes²⁷.

St. Augustine

**Then they said to him:
“Where is He?”
He said: “I do not know.” [12]**

Their second question was “Where is He?” Was this question raised due to their doubt in the person who had made the miracle and had broken the law and incited breaking it? On one hand, the Lord had made clay and anointed the eyes of the blind man. On the other hand, He had commanded him to walk to the pool and get washed. May be some asked the question out of curiosity and to find out who was that one that could do such an act; while others could have asked out of a sincere desire to meet Him.

²⁷ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 44:8

The blind man answered: **“I do not know”** as the Lord seems to have withdrawn immediately after He had commanded the man to go to the pool of Siloam. He did not wait until the man would return to thank Him. This reveals that the Lord finds joy in giving freely and without expecting a word of thanks or praise. When He reprimands on account of ingratitude it is intended to teach others who need to be grateful, to rejoice, and to give praise just as the angels do.

* Notice the Lord’s humility. He did not stay with those whom He healed as He did not seek to gather a reward. Neither did He want to boast nor draw the attention of the crowds²⁸.

St. John Chrysostom

B. The Dialogue between the Pharisees and the Man Born Blind

‘They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees.’ [13]

We would have expected the neighbors to be looking for the Maker of the miracle in order to get acquainted with Him and enjoy being with Him. However, they laid hold of the blind man and brought him to the Pharisees and as though he had committed a crime. They led him as a guilty man who had agreed to break the Sabbath even though his eyes had been restored on that day.

The matter was greater than just presenting it to one or more priests. It had to do with the whole nation and so they brought him before the Sanhedrin. In the minds of the crowds, the Council was responsible for issuing the final verdict. Most of the council members were Pharisees and most did all they could to resist the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of the crowds had brought the blind man to the Council in order to reveal the truth, and expose to the Pharisees how this One, whom they resisted, had created eyes for the man born blind. Consequently the crowds would be attracted and adhere to Him rather than resist Him.

Some writers believe that the word ‘Pharisees’ refers to a secondary committee under the council of the Sanhedrim. This would be made up of high priests and Pharisees. The Council consisted of two committees, each included twenty three members. Each member had the right to judge a few cases. In the big cities, there were similar committees.

**Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. [14]
Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight.
He said to them: “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” [15]**

The Pharisees posed the same question that his neighbors had asked. It was not intended to get the truth from its original source. Rather, they hoped to find a fault that could enable them to accuse the Lord of guilt. In this manner they would be enabled to damage His image before the crowds who had gathered around him.

²⁸ Homilies on St John, 57:2

Notice how the man born blind did not get agitated. He did not deny or say anything different from what he had said before. The Pharisees and the other people had brought him hoping he would reject the One who had healed him. Consequently, they were faced with disappointment due to his answers. They got to know fully well the miraculous act of the Lord. That afflicted man had beaten them in every way due to the Lord's miracle.

St. John Chrysostom

The answers of the blind man to the Pharisees were identical to those he had given to his neighbors. However, he did not mention that the Lord had "made the clay." This could be due to the fact that he had not seen Him make it. Even though he could have guessed, he did not want to present to an official council a testimony they could oppose. How could he see the Lord making clay when he was blind? He could have avoided mentioning it since making clay is considered work and he did not wish the Jews to accuse the Lord of breaking the Sabbath. For that same reason, the man did not use the expression "He told me...." Besides, the Lord would be accused of tempting people to break the law since He had told him to go to the pool of Siloam and wash. At the same time, he boldly said: "I washed" and he did not fear them!

Therefore, some of the Pharisees said:

**"This man is not from God,
because He does not keep the Sabbath."**

Others said:

"How can a man who is a sinner do such miracles?"

And there was a division among them. [16]

The creation of eyes for the blind man should have been sufficient to silence the Lord's opponents. However, there arose a division among them: one party observed worship literally and were preoccupied with false glory, these considered that the Lord had broken the Sabbath and so had broken the divine commandments. Instead of enjoying the presence of the Lord, they persecuted Him as though He were a criminal: **"This man is not from God."** The other party considered His deed to be a work of supreme love and an execution of the law. Healing, they believed, is a real sign of the Lord's true mission. However, the second party represented a small minority that could not stand up to the angry majority.

At the end of every teaching or the performance of a miracle, there arose divisions among the crowds. The opponents would go to the Pharisees as they were the judges and possessed religious power. However, this time, the division was among the judges themselves. Maybe this led to the postponement of the judgment concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

* **St. John the Evangelist** reports that **"there was a division among them"** as some loved authority and power so much that it prevented them from recognizing the Lord

Jesus Christ, while others kept silent due to their cowardice and fear from many of the people.

St. John Chrysostom.

The Lord intentionally healed the paralytic at Bethesda on a Saturday. He commanded him to get up, carry his bed and walk (John 5:8). He also intended to heal the man born blind by making clay, and anointing his eyes. In the Book of Gemara²⁹ it says that whoever applies medicine for the eyes on a Saturday is considered sinful, and the Lord also ordered him to go to the pool of Siloam and wash. As Lightfoot mentions, the Lord Jesus Christ broke the Sabbath in a number of ways. Could he not have healed the man on any other day but Saturday and without all these actions? Why did He insist on healing on a Saturday? The Lord did so to underline the true meaning of the Sabbath, for it is intended for resting in the Lord; and in going about doing the Lord's deeds of love and mercy. He wanted to expose the misconception of the literal interpretation and observation of the law which imposed banning essential daily acts and services of love.

* Those who threw the Lord out continued to be blind. They encouraged opposing the Lord for working on the Sabbath, making clay from spit, and anointing the eyes of the blind man. When he healed the blind man with a word, the Jews opened the door to arouse oppositions....

The Lord had broken the Sabbath (literally) but He was not guilty.

What do we mean by saying: 'The Lord had broken the Sabbath?' He is the Light that came and ended the shadows. The Lord God is the One who instituted the Sabbath. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was with the Father when He gave the Law. He established it as a forerunner to future events. "Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come." (Col. 2:16)

Why do the shadows cheer us? Open your eyes, O Jews, for the "Sun" is here. **"We know...."** [24]. What do you know, O you who are blind at heart? **"That this man is not from God because He does not keep the Sabbath"** [16].

O miserable people, the Sabbath has been established by the Lord Jesus Christ whom you claim that He is not from God. You observe the Sabbath in a physical manner. You have not received the spit of the Lord on your eyes, and you have neither gone to Siloam nor washed your faces. Consequently, you persist in your blindness; you are blind to the goodness found in this blind man. He is no longer blind in body or in heart. **"For judgment I have come into the world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind,"** [39]³⁰.

Clearly, He has observed the Sabbath for there was no sin in Him. This is a spiritual Sabbath: when a person is without sin.

²⁹ Gemara 14.

³⁰ Sermon on NT Lessons, 86:3

Truly, my brothers, this is what God encourages us to do when He commands us to observe the Sabbath: “You shall do no customary (slave) work on it,” (Lev. 23:8). Now go back to the previous teachings and ask for the meaning of ‘servile work’ and listen to the Lord’s words: “whoever commits sin is a slave of sin,” (John 8:34)³¹.

St Augustine

They said to the blind man again:

“What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?”

He said, “He is a prophet.” [19]

They threw the net before the blind man so that he would deny that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Messiah. He would be thrown out of the Sanhedrin or killed if he did otherwise.

After asking about the manner of healing, the Pharisees asked the blind man about the One who had healed him. They asked for his personal opinion in the Man and his actions. They put on pressure so that he might respond, even negatively and in the manner by which his parents had responded. They wanted him to report what he knew concerning his recovery and to leave the decision in the hands of the religious leaders who would judge the matter. However, he disappointed them as he honored the One who granted healing to him. According to a new law they had set, they issued a decree of exile against the man in order to teach a lesson to others.

This blind man was like the Samaritan woman (John 4:19). Both thought the Lord was a prophet before they became acquainted with the reality of His being the Messiah—**“The Holiest of the holy”** and the One who grants eternal righteousness. The light began to shine in his heart and inner vision just as it shone in his physical eyes. In hearing the man’s words: **“He is a prophet”**, the Pharisees feared the fulfillment of the writings in the Book of Daniel. It mentions that the One who will come from God within three centuries approximately, and while the nation is in darkness and without a prophet, will be the **seal of all visions and prophecies**: the eternal Messiah, whom all generations await: **“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city. To finish the transgression, to make end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most holy,”** (Daniel 9:24)

* Notice the wisdom of the poor man. He spoke more wisely than all the Pharisees. He first said: **“He is a prophet”** [17]. He did not fear the judgment of the Jews or the opposition of those against the Lord and who said: **“This Man is not from God because He does not keep the Sabbath”** [16], and he responded, **“He is a Prophet”**³².

St John Chrysostom

C. The Dialogue between the Pharisees and the Parents of the Man Born Blind.

³¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 44:9

³² Homilies on St John, 58:1

‘But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight’,[18]

Here the word “Jews” is intended to indicate the religious authorities, especially the Pharisees and the members of the council of the Sanhedrin. These did not believe that the man was born blind. Therefore they called the parents to confirm that this was their son and that he had been born blind. They hoped to find some fault that would diminish the value of the miracle in the eyes of the people.

* Notice the many ways of darkness they used in order to conceal and demolish the miracle. But it is in the nature of truth to work in this manner: it uses the same instruments that evil uses to overcome it. Truth becomes stronger and shines through the same means that were used to blemish or destroy it³³!

St John Chrysostom

**And they asked them saying:
“Is this your son, who you say was born blind?
How then does he now see?”[19]**

These leaders could not bear the light of truth. Therefore they posed a question that carried a kind of arrogance and threat to the parents. They were not satisfied with being evil, but also sought to implant fear among the people. They wanted them to share their renouncement of the Messiah and their rejection of divine truth.

* They did not say: ‘...who was at one time blind.’ Rather, they said: ‘...who you say was born blind.’ They almost seemed to be saying: ‘...whom you have made blind.’

St. John Chrysostom

**His parents answered them and said:
“We know that this is our son,
and that he was born blind” [20]**

His parents were not embarrassed to admit that this was their son, who due to his poverty and blindness used to beg. As they were not eyewitnesses to his healing, they avoided answering the question concerning the manner he was healed. They also feared to be thrown out of the Temple.

**“But by what means he now sees we do not know,
or who opened his eyes we do not know.
He is of age, ask him.
He will speak for himself.” [21]**

It is true that they were not eyewitnesses, yet they surely knew and were assured by their own son who must have told them himself that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One who had

³³ Homilies on St John, 58:1

healed him. They used human wisdom and consequently lost the blessing of witnessing for the Lord Jesus Christ. They deprived themselves of offering thanksgiving and testifying the truth for the one who does miracles. They feared mankind so they laid a trap for themselves and their son. In this context, wisdom says: “The fear of man brings a snare but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe,” (Prov. 29:25).

His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue, [22].

Being thrown out of the temple meant being isolated from the worshippers. This was known as *nidui* and it is the lowest form of excommunication in Jewish practice. *Anathema and Cherem* were applied to Christians in the period following the Resurrection.

The punishment for confessing that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Messiah was banishment from the Council. Such a person was treated like someone who had denied the Jewish faith. Therefore a person who would witness for the Lord would know that he would be exposing himself to be isolated from worshippers. He would also be considered a rebel and a traitor to the religious leadership. By being banished, such a person was made to realize that he was unworthy of being related to God’s people; and prevented from enjoying the privileges of being one of the chosen people of Israel.

Consequently such banishment had dangerous results: deprivation from joining the people in public worship; being regarded as an outlaw, and consequently being deprived of engaging in commercial transactions. In fact, this would lead to the loss of one’s freedom, and the possibility of sequestering one’s possessions.

* Being banished from the temple is no longer a wicked matter, for people would expel but the Lord would receive the outcasts³⁴.

Therefore his parents said: “He is of age; ask him” [23]

* They asked the parents three questions: Was this their son? Was he born blind? How did he come to see? They admitted to two questions only, while they had no answer to the third one. They did so for the sake of providing the truth. No one else could confess except the one who had been healed.

St. John Chrysostom

D- The Second Dialogue between the Pharisees and the Man Born Blind

**So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him:
“Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner” [24].**

They called the blind man a second time and they treated him with great respect

³⁴ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 44:10

and honor. They wanted to win him over, so they said: **“Give God the glory.”** In other words: ‘Swear by the name of God that you will tell the truth.’ Then they tried to dictate what they wanted him to say. They wanted him to say that the Lord pretended to be a prophet and that He had transgressed against the law. In this manner, the blind man would please them and they would honor him. Some writers find that this is a legal religious procedure since they intended to issue a very serious verdict. In other words, there was the threat of being expelled from the company of God’s people, or the pronouncement of the death penalty. It is as though they made God a witness against him before banishing or condemning Him to death.

Probably, they intended to convey by their words the following: ‘He is a wicked and sinful man. Therefore give more glory to God as He has used this Man as a tool to work through Him.’

They wanted to follow the example of Joshua when he condemned Achan to be stoned, for he asked him first: to ‘give glory to the Lord God’ (Joshua 7:16) and to hide nothing. He had asked him to confess because there was ‘an accursed thing in Israel.’

Earlier, the Lord had loudly inquired: “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” (John 8:46). No one dared convict Him in His presence. However, behind His back they said: **“We know that this Man is a sinner.”**

* They did not say anything to the blind man that would make him ashamed to deny that the Lord Jesus Christ had healed him. Conversely, they wished to mask their renouncement in the robe of piety by saying: **“Give glory to God.”** Saying such words clearly indicates their arrogance.

In speaking to the blind man about the Lord and saying: **“We know that this Man is a sinner”**, we ask them: ‘How is it that you did not reprimand the Lord Jesus Christ when He said: “Which of you convicts Me of sin” (John 8:46)?! How have you found out that He is a sinner?’

St. John Chrysostom

* What is the meaning of: **“Give glory to God”**? Renounce what you have been granted. Such behavior would not glorify God; for this would be blasphemy indeed³⁵.

St. Augustine.

He answered and said:

“Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know.

One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see” [25]

That poor man did not care to please the religious leaders. Nor did he want to be honored by them. In all simplicity, he told the truth. Thus he became a true witness to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

³⁵ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 44:11

It is as though he was telling them that the personality of the One who had healed me is not a valid matter for contention or argument. I do not need such confrontation. His deed is beyond discussion. All I know is that I was blind, but now I see. This is my experience with Him. Or it is as though he is telling them that if you claim that He is a sinner, then this is a matter I know nothing about. What I know is my trust in Him. This makes me reject what you say altogether. Practical experience is greater and stronger than theoretical discussions. This is the living experience of believers. St. Paul accordingly says:” For you were once in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.” (Eph 5:8)

They sought to transform the work of the Lord into contentions. Then the crowds would be engaged in them rather than enjoy a living fellowship with Him. However the man born blind chose to experience the new enlightened life rather than engage in stupid arguments.

* Was the blind man truly fearless? This could not be so, or how could he have said: **“He is a prophet”**; and then said: **“Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know.”**

He answered in this manner not because this was his way of thinking, or in order to convince himself. **Rather, he wanted to vindicate the Lord from this accusation through his testimony of the facts and not through his own proclamations about Him. In this manner, the defense becomes strong as the good deed in itself acts as a witness against them.** Therefore after a long discussion, the blind man said: “If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing” [refer to v.33]. They were angered and told him: **“You were completely born in sins and are you teaching us?”** If he had responded like that from the beginning, was there anything else they would not have said? Or was there anything else they would not have sought to do?

“Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know” It is as though he was saying: ‘I am not saying anything in praise of this Man. I do not proclaim anything about Him now. However, I definitely know Him and confirm that He would not have been able to do such acts if He were a sinner.’

In this manner, he removed all doubts from his own mind. He neither damaged his testimony, nor spoke with prejudice. Indeed, he presented a testimony backed by facts³⁶.

St. John Chrysostom

**Then they said to him again:
“What did He do to you?
How did He open your eyes?” [26]**

They pursued interrogating him but used a different method in the hope of finding something contradictory to his earlier responses. They sought to find something they could hold against the Lord Jesus Christ. The reason why they asked the blind man how the Lord had opened his eyes was to discover if He had used some devilish method to

³⁶ Homilies on St John, 58:2

open them. However, the young man became irritated by their unseemly manners and did not respond to them. He answered each question by asking another one and inquiring if they wished to become the Lord's disciples. At the same time he considered himself to be one of the disciples.

**“I told you already and you did not listen.
Why do you want to hear it again?
Do you also want to become His disciples?” [27]**

His response was delivered in a spirit of candidness and courage. It was a living testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ. Besides, his question to them was a watershed for they had to choose between two issues: becoming disciples of the Lord just as he himself had learned to do; or end the discussion with him since there was no point in further discussion anymore.

* What was his answer? Having overcome and disappointing them, he no longer spoke submissively to them. When it was necessary to question and discuss, he spoke cautiously in order to present the proof of his testimony. Now that he had overcome them and scored a great victory, he was encouraged to step over them³⁷.

* Do you see how a beggar can speak courageously before the Scribes and Pharisees? That is how truth is strong and falsehood is weak. When ordinary men adhere to the truth they become glorified; whereas falsehood, even when used by the powerful, turns them to weaklings.

What he said implied the following: ‘You have not paid attention to my words. Therefore I will not continue to speak and answer anymore. You have no goal while you interrogate me; and you do not want to listen in order to get informed. Indeed, you only seek to damage my words³⁸.’

* By asking the question: **“Do you also want to become His disciples?”** the man born blind aligned himself with the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is clear that by saying that, he had become a disciple of the Lord. Now he was speaking sarcastically and this annoyed them greatly. He realized how they felt and therefore pursued to hit them powerfully. He spoke words that were powerful and severe. This was the result of a courageous soul that soared in the heights and that despised their madness. It indicated the grandeur of the honor (of being the Lord's disciple). He was very confident and he revealed that they were insulting the One who deserved admiration. However, he did not care that they were insulting him, and he regarded their reprimands as an honor to himself³⁹.

St. John Chrysostom.

* What do these words imply: “Do you also want to become His disciples?” As for me, I

³⁷ Homilies on St John, 58:2

³⁸ Homilies on St John, 58:2

³⁹ Homilies on St John, 58:3

have indeed become His disciple. Do you want to do the same too? Now I can see, and I see without any fear⁴⁰.

St. Augustine

**Then they reviled him and said:
“You are His disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples” [28]**

When they could no longer resist the truth, they turned to the language of abuse. This is what anyone who adheres to the truth expects. The Lord says: “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake,” (Matt 5:11). They possessed hearts filled with hatred against the divine truth; murderous, their words were as sharp as the piercing of a sword (Prov 12:8; Psalm 55:21).

They belittled him by saying “You are His disciple.” Although the man had neither seen the Lord yet, nor heard his sermons, yet they considered him a disciple as he witnessed for Him. As for him, he was proud to be the Lord’s disciple.

They boasted of their relationship to Moses the prophet. He was their teacher and they did not need or seek another. Previously, they had boasted before the Lord that they were Abraham’s children. Now they were proud to be Moses’ disciples. However, they were estranged from Abraham’s children and Moses according to their deeds and thoughts. If they were truly Abraham’s children, they would have seen with him the day of the Lord and would have rejoiced (John 5:56). Moreover, if they were truly Moses’ disciples, they would have adhered to the Lord Jesus Christ whom Moses foresaw, rather than resist Him.

**“We know that God spoke to Moses,
as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from,” [29]**

It is as though they were saying: ‘We are sure that Moses had a divine mission; but we have no proof that this person has been called to serve. Therefore how could we abandon Moses and follow an unknown person and stranger who is assuming to have a divine mission? They presented proof to justify their pride that Moses was their teacher and that God’s Word came to him. Yet, they did not understand that the Lord Jesus Christ was Himself the Word of God become incarnate. Moses was the faithful servant, who was entrusted with the house of his Master. However, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Son and Owner of the house (Heb 3:5, 6) whom Moses served.

They sarcastically said: “...as for this fellow, we do not know where he is from” [29]. Indeed, they did not and could not know where He came from for they had to search the Old Testament chapters with a real intention to learn. They needed to pray to God to reveal Him to them. If they had searched they would have realized that they lived at a time in which the expected Messiah would come. However, they were like their fathers, who had lived at the time of Jeremiah the prophet who said: “Neither did they say ‘where is the Lord’ ...” (Jer 2:6)

⁴⁰ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 44:11

* They did not say ‘We heard that God spoke to Moses’, but rather said **“we know [29].** O, you Jews are you sure what you heard is true? You know this, yet you consider what you see is less trustworthy than what you hear? You have heard about one person but you have not seen him; while you have not listened to the other though you have seen Him⁴¹.

St. John Chrysostom

* Is this how you follow the slave and turn your backs on God? In doing so, you are not following the slave since He himself leads to God⁴².

St. Augustine

The man answered and said to them:

“Why, this is a marvelous thing

that you do not know where He is from, yet He has opened my eyes,” [30]

The blind man was astonished that the Jewish leaders considered the Lord to be a novice or foreigner to divine ministry. Indeed, He had done works that Moses the prophet had not; such as opening the eyes of someone who had been born blind. The whole city got to hear about this miracle as the blind man had sat and begged on the roadside. People from all parts of the land had seen him and were certain that this was the man who was blind in the past.

He was now there, standing and walking and witnessing to the supreme work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The blind man was astonished that the Lord had created and opened his eyes through his care and supreme authority. Now, he was astonished that these blind leaders sat and occupied the seats of judgment yet they could not see the evident truth, although he had presented to them the following facts:

- * The Lord had opened his eyes and this was a reality and fact that could not be denied.
- * God does not listen to sinners (Ps 66:18). Yet these leaders claimed that this man was a sinner.
- * God listens to the pure that do His will.
- * In history of the world, we do not hear of anybody who has opened the eyes of a blind person. Even Moses did not perform such an act.
- * If the Lord Jesus Christ did proceed from God then he would have had no power. In this manner they had set up a trap; but they fell into it themselves.

“Now we know that God does not hear sinners;

⁴¹ Homilies on St John,58:3

⁴² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 44:12

but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does His will, He hears him,” [31]

The word ‘sinners’ in this verse occurs in the Greek text as ‘*hamartooloom*’ to indicate atheists or unbelievers. Its antonym is ‘*theosebees*’ which means ‘worshipper of God.’ God does not listen to someone who is a lip worshipper and prays to be saved while through his behavior and in his heart he/she insists on adhering to evil and finds pleasure in doing it.

* The Lord here does not only reveal that He is without sin; but that He has given God great pleasure as He does God’s will. The leaders considered themselves ‘worshippers of God’ and God fearing. Besides they claimed to do ‘His will.’ It is as though the blind man is saying: ‘It is not enough for people to know God, for they need to do His will’⁴³.

St. John Chrysostom

* Our perception through faith enables us to see that this blind man was also blind at heart because he too had sinned. We will mention in what respect he had sinned:

First: He thought the Lord was a prophet and he did not know that He was the Son of God. Therefore he answered as a sinner: “...we know that God does not hear sinners,” [21].

If God does not answer sinners, then what hope do we have?

If God does not hear sinners, they why do we pray? Why do we confess all our sins and beat on our chests?

Besides, remember that tax collector who went up to the temple with a Pharisee (Luke 18:10). While the Pharisee stood boastfully before God and recounted all his personal merits; the tax collector stood in a corner, looked down, beat his chest while admitting his sins. This tax collector who had confessed his sins, left the temple vindicated and better off than the Pharisee.

Therefore God definitely hears sinners. Indeed, the person who uttered these words (verse 31) had not yet washed the face of his heart in the pool of Siloam.

The mystery had passed before his eyes, yet his heart had not been blessed by His grace.

When did that blind man wash the face of his heart? When he went to the Lord Himself after the Jews had banished him. When the Lord found him, He said to him “Do you believe in the Son of God?” And the man answered: “Who is He Lord that I may believe in Him?” Indeed, the man had seen the Lord with his eyes; but had not seen Him with his heart? No, he had not yet seen Him with his eyes. Wait and see how he would see Him....

And Jesus said to him: **“You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.”** Did the man doubt? No; he had washed his face now. The man had spoken with ‘Siloam’, which means ‘sent’; and who is that One who has been ‘sent’ other than the Lord Jesus Christ?...He is Himself Siloam. **The man born blind at heart drew close to Him, heard, believed, and worshipped Him. He washed his face and therefore**

⁴³ Homilies on St John, 58:3

saw⁴⁴.

St. Augustine

* Similarly, in the Book of Exodus, the priests, who entered into the Lord God's presence, had to consecrate themselves so that God would not depart from them, (Ex 19:22). This also applied to those who came before the holy altar to serve: they had to have no sin or they would die (Ex 28:43)⁴⁵.

Caprianus the Martyr

* We need to put these matters before us and apply them very carefully. We need to consider very seriously these matters as we anoint priests. It is important to choose only those who are upright and clean. Consequently they would be worthy to offer sacrifices to the Lord in holiness. Such ministers would be qualified to have the ear of the Lord who will hear their prayers. They would offer petitions for the peace of God's people⁴⁶.

Caprianus the Martyr

“Since the world began, it has been unheard that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind” [32].

Since the beginning of all time, before the time of the fathers and prophets, we have not heard of anyone, not even Moses, who opened the eyes of a man born blind.

“If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.”[33]

The blind man came to a correct conclusion. That is if this Man were not from God, He would not have been able to do anything. But He is the source of all goodness and no goodness can be achieved without Him.

**They answered and said to him:
“You were completely born in sins,
and are you teaching us?”
And they cast him out.’ [34]**

It is as though they were telling him: ‘It is because of your former sins that you have received a just reward. Therefore you came into the world in a deformed condition and without eyes. You do not deserve to share in worshipping God with other believers. How is it that you take on the role of teacher to the leaders?’ They then issued the order to deprive him of sharing in worshipping God. Because they were unable to answer to his words, they used their authority to deprive and banish him.

They despised and humiliated him by saying: “You are not like other persons who were born with sin. Rather, they said: **“You were completely born in sin.”** You are completely corrupt. You have corruption in your soul as well as in your body. These are

⁴⁴ Sermon on NT Lessons, 86:2

⁴⁵ Letter 63 to Epictetus: 2

⁴⁶ Letter 69 to Asturica: 2

the signs of corruption that have left their mark on your deformed body and blindness. Besides, they probably thought that his extreme poverty and need to beg were indications of divine anger due to his sins.

They belittled his words and were surprised: how could this illiterate fool, who could not know even the light of the sun since he had never seen it, and who has been sitting and begging, now assume the place of a teacher and stand before the leaders of thought and knowledge?

Due to their pride, they rejected to learn; especially from someone of lesser rank and learning. However, a good person does not reject to learn on a daily basis, and until the last breath of life. Such a person can learn even from young children. To reject learning is foolishness itself and a form of ignorance.

As he touched their conscience, they could not tolerate him and so cast him out. Probably, they called the guards or soldiers to take him away, by force if needed.

When the learned leaders were unable to discuss, they proudly issued the order to cast him out. They threw him out but they could not isolate him from fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. They imagined that he was not worthy of being a member in the Jewish temple, and they did not comprehend that he was qualified to be a member in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They did not realize that their judgment would fire back on them. According to them, the man was completely born in sin because he was born blind. Now he had been cleared of his blindness, and therefore the One who had healed him was also able to tear away and remove his sins. This is the work of God.

* These matters have been recorded that we may be guided by them.

The blind man and beggar, had not yet seen the Lord. He displayed courage and uprightness before being encouraged by the Lord. He stood up before all the murderers who had listened to the devil and were being driven wildly by him. They wanted to condemn the Lord by any means. But the man did not submit to them or proved cowardly. By his courageous confrontation, he silenced their mouths. He preferred to be cast out rather than betray the Truth.

How much more should we be courageous when we speak with those who accuse Christians, and when we need to silence their mouths rather than submit in weakness? Indeed, we are empowered as we have experienced faith for a longer period; we have seen hundreds of miracles performed through faith. We have received greater blessings than this blind man as our inner eyes have been opened. As a result, we have become acquainted with unspeakable mysteries and have been called to such great honor. We believe that we ought to show courage as we speak to those who attack Christians. We should be able to silence them rather than bow down in submissive weakness.

We can stand up for the truth only if we have courage, are grounded in the Holy

Bible, and earnestly follow the Word while abandoning all carelessness⁴⁷.

St. John Chrysostom

* What does 'completely' convey in this verse? Blind to such an extent that even the eyes are blind.

However, He who opened the man's eyes also delivered him 'completely': He who had brought light to his features, would also grant him resurrection and seat him on His right hand⁴⁸.

* When they cast the man out, the Lord welcomed him. As much as he had been banished, he had become a Christian to the same degree⁴⁹.

St. Augustine

E- The Dialogue between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Man Born Blind.

**Jesus heard that they had cast him out
and when He had found him, He said to him:
“Do you believe in the Son of God?” [35]**

It is clear that the Lord was looking for the man and wanted to find him. He did find him when the Pharisees had thrown him out and deprived him of being a member of God's people. His parents probably had refused to welcome him to their home for fear they would have the same treatment and fate. The God of the banished and abandoned found him. He is the Father of orphans and the advocate of widows. He is the One concerned about all those who have no one to look after them.

The Lord's words: **“Do you believe in the Son of God?”** are synonymous with 'Do you believe in the Messiah?' These are two inseparable elements (John 1:34, 49; 10:36; Matt 16:16; Mark 1:1).

St. John Chrysostm believes that the Lord Jesus Christ granted the man the yearning for Him before revealing Himself⁵⁰, because He saw the blind man's courage and love of the truth. That is applicable to everyone who seriously seeks for the truth and is fearless in confronting falsehood. Through love, truth would consequently attract such a person and then reveal himself.

* Those who undergo terrible persecutions and insults for the sake of the truth and for witnessing for the Lord and Messiah, receive special honor...

The Jews had cast him out of the temple and the Lord of the temple found him.
He was isolated from destructive companionship and he met with the Source of

⁴⁷ Homilies on St John, 58:4

⁴⁸ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 44

⁴⁹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 44:15

⁵⁰ Homilies on St John, 59:1

salvation.

He was humiliated by those who humiliated the Lord, so the Lord of hosts honored him.

That is how the Truth grants rewards.

Similarly, when we relinquish the possessions of the world, we will truly gather confidence in the world to come. If we face troubles on earth, we will find rest in heaven. If we are insulted for the sake of God, we will be honored in this life and the one to come⁵¹.

St. John Chrysostom

He answered and said:

“Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” [36]

It is clear that the man had not seen the Lord until that time. However, he had heard His voice when the Lord ordered him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. Now, he discovered that he stood before the One who had healed him and so he believed in Him.

We do not hear of any dialogue between the man born blind and the Lord before he was healed. This is different than when the Lord healed the infirm man of Bethesda. Some explain this by stating that the blind man had not yet seen or heard of the Lord due to his extreme poverty and need to beg. No one had stopped to talk with him, or told him about the Lord Jesus Christ and His amazing deeds. That is why the Lord did not ask him the same question he put to the paralytic: “Do you want to be healed?” When the blind man was deprived of human friends and suffered for his inferior status and isolation, the Lord came to satisfy his needs and to fill his depths with Divine Love.

Some thinkers confirm that the unbelief of the man born blind was not an intentional choice. It was the result of a lack of opportunity to hear and meet with the Lord. This is why, after he had been healed and gone through the many debates around him, and after being banished, the Lord found him. Then He asked him: **“Do you believe in the Son of God?”[35]**. The man’s answer revealed his yearning to have faith: **“Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” [36]**

* The man born blind asked the Lord: “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” because he had not yet recognized Him even though he had been healed by Him. Before he came to his Benefactor, he had been blind. That is why he did not respond and say immediately: ‘I believe.’ Instead his response came in the form of a question: “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” These are words that come from a soul that is eagerly yearning for the Lord.

St. John Chrysostom

‘And Jesus said to him:

“You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you” [37].

A person does not need to travel far in order to meet with the Lord Jesus Christ

⁵¹ Homilies on St John, 59:1

for the Lord is standing by and is very close. St. Paul accordingly says: “Do not say in your heart ‘...who will ascend into heaven?’- that is to bring Christ down from above- or ‘who will descend into the abyss?’- that is to bring Christ up from the dead-. But what does it say? “The word is near you” (Roman 10:6-8).

The Lord had opened the eyes of the blind man so that he may look and see Him. If receiving his sight brought joy to the man, then seeing the Son of God brought him a far greater joy. This was a joy that surpassed the gift of gaining his physical eyes. Seeing the Son of God brought a greater joy to his heart and was more than all the lights of the world could bring. Here we are, presently, enjoying inner insight and therefore seeing the Lord and comprehending the mystery of His being the only Son of God. Truly, we can join the Psalmist in praise and say:” in your light we see light” (Ps 36:9)

Then he said:” Lord, I believe!” And he worshipped Him. [38]

By saying: “I believe”, the man conveyed: ‘I believe that you are the Messiah.’ To prove his true faith, he fell and worshipped Him. He had not seen Him before, and he had met with the religious leaders who had strongly resisted the Lord. Yet he had experienced personally how his eyes had been opened. Therefore he believed in the Lord’s divinity, worshipped Him, and glorified Him as his Savior. His inner vision was opened and he became acquainted with the divine mysteries. In contrast, it was impossible for the members of the Sanhedrin to comprehend or believe these mysteries.

The man born blind believed and confessed his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There was no need for discussions since he experienced this amazing divine miracle and had gained spiritual insight. He believed in his heart and confessed with his tongue before the Lord, before the people, and even before those who resisted the Lord. In this manner, the rejected reed became a tree planted in the spiritual waters and filled with fruit.

‘He worshipped Him’, and so honored Him in a manner that was different from simply thanking another person. He bowed before Him in a manner worthy of worshipping God. In this way, he expressed his faith: by publicly and fearlessly witnessing; and by humbly worshipping God. John the Evangelist does not report anything more about this man after he had worshipped the Lord. Yet the words of the Lord indicate clearly that he had become perceptive, followed the light and lived accordingly.

The man born blind bowed down before the Lord and probably in the presence of the Pharisees. Therefore the Lord commented instantly before them about the fruit of His divine mission in this world. Some believe that this speech occurred in another meeting with the Pharisees and did not take place after the man had worshipped the Lord immediately.

The Lord Jesus Christ had come into the world as a Savior and not as a Judge. However, when the wicked non-believers reject His service they fall into condemnation. The Lord’s divine mission has split humanity into two parties: one party admits its blindness and

consequently believes and accepts the light; the other party believes that they can see already and consequently reject the faith. Rejection keeps them in the darkness while the work of the Messiah becomes a sentence condemning them. In this manner, the world is split into believers and non-believers: This is the clear line of thought in most of the Lord's speeches, which are recorded in this Gospel. His redeeming deeds or His preaching are the essence of life, while they bear the smell of death to the dead. A great light has shone over the Gentiles, granting them light and releasing them from slavery (Is 61:1); but Israel has been stricken with pride and due to its blindness has thrown itself into the circle of death.

* With his face washed and his conscience purified, the man finally recognized the Lord. He knew Him not only as the Son of Man, according to his earlier knowledge, but as the Son of God who had taken on our body. **So he said, "Lord, I believe"...**⁵²

St. Augustine

F- The Dialogue between the Lord and the Pharisees

And Jesus said:

**"For judgment I have come into the world,
that those who do not see may see,
and that those who see may be made blind." [39]**

These were amazing moments that drew the attention of all those standing there. The crowds as well as the disciples and a few Pharisees were amazed as the man born blind bowed and worshipped the Lord Jesus Christ. He proclaimed his belief that the Lord is the Son of God. We believe that such a sight must have drawn the attention of the heavenly hosts as well as those who watched the faith of that person. He was true with himself and faced the resistance against the truth by the highest-ranking religious leaders. Such a sight brings joy to the Lord's heart because He desires everyone to enjoy the heavenly light; and not because He is in need of someone to witness for Him.

The Lord had previously proclaimed that He had not come into the world to condemn it, but had come to save it (John 3:17). By shinning on those that are sitting in darkness, those enlightened by His light become a cause of condemnation to those who have loved the darkness more than the light (John 3:19). They condemn themselves because they stumble and fall into the ditch and because they are blind leaders of the blind (Matt 15:14)

The Gentiles who had been sitting in darkness for ages received the light of knowledge and true vision. However the Jews, who pretended to be the children of the light and the possessors of spiritual knowledge, abused God's longsuffering and mercy. They lost their redemption as they rejected it. They were stricken with spiritual blindness. The blind Gentile was able to become acquainted with the divine mysteries; while the Pharisees, who possessed knowledge, were ignorant of these mysteries. The man born blind had not read the Holy Books. He might have heard some Holy verses and stories

⁵² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate, 44:15

about the history of salvation and simply and faithfully accepted the teachings. In contrast, these leaders had studied and researched these verses thoroughly and upheld some interpretations. However, they did not sincerely seek to know the truth. Therefore they were not qualified to comprehend the clear references to the Messiah.

The mystery behind their blindness lay in their arrogance and belief that they could see: they knew Moses and that they were his disciples; they knew the Sabbath and kept its laws; and they also knew that the man was completely born in sin.

* A serious warning! **‘Those who do not see may see,’ [39].**

Great! This is the work of the Lord. It is a proclamation of the power of healing!

But what is it that you add in this verse, O Lord? **‘Those who see may be made blind?’ [39]** These are the Jews. Do they see? According to their claim, they do see; yet according to the truth, they do not see.

So how **may** they **see**? They imagined that they did. So they believed and imagined that they were protecting the law against the Lord Jesus Christ...those who did not admit their ignorance, became more hardened. Truly, the verse says: **‘Those who see may be made blind.’** Indeed, those defenders of the law, the professors and teachers of the law and its interpreters crucified the Founder of the law.

O what blindness took hold of a part of Israel (Rom 11:25). What do these words mean: **‘Those who do not see may see’?** ‘Until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in’, (Rom 11:25). The whole world has fallen into blindness, but the Lord has come **‘that those who do not see may see and that those who see may be made blind’...**

What serious blindness? They killed the light, but the crucified light has enlightened the blind⁵³!

* Now is the daytime to make the distinction between the light and the darkness!⁵⁴

* You have received the law, you want to keep it, yet you are unable to do so for you have fallen due to your pride and you see your weakness. Yearn for the Messiah, confess to him and believe. The spirit has been added to the letter of the law and by this you can be saved. If you tear away the spirit from the letter ‘the letter kills.’ If it is killed, then where is hope? As for the spirit, he gives life (2 Cor 3:6)

St. Augustine

St. Augustine makes a comparison between the letter and the spirit. The stick that Elijah gave to his servant Hegazi, when the widow’s son was dead, did not revive the dead except when Elijah himself came. The same applies to benefits of the law that we have received from God. We need God Himself to be present so that we may enjoy the

⁵³ Sermon on NT Lessons, 86:4

⁵⁴ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 44:16

power of the Resurrection⁵⁵.

Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him:

“Are we blind also?”[40]

The Pharisees realized that the Lord was speaking about spiritual blindness. They therefore asked Him if He was directing his words at them. Their question was the result of their arrogant souls that could not enjoy the blessings of the grace of God.

They were preoccupied with their honor before the people. They wanted to appear as the ones who possessed knowledge and who occupied the academic seats. They considered the accusation of blindness- which was the result of their unwillingness to learn- to be a deadly stroke. They revealed their inner blindness through their words ‘**Are we blind also?**’ They revealed what lay in their depths as they considered all the people to be blind. That the Lord would include them among the blind people was something that had not occurred to them. They considered that He had humiliated them and committed an unforgivable mistake. They were not accustomed to hear any criticism from any one.

* The words of the Pharisees to the Lord: “...are we blind also” echo their words in another verse: “... we are Abraham’s descendants and have never been in bondage to anyone. We were not born in fornication” (John 8:33-41). This was similar to the response here.

Chrysostom.

Jesus said to them:

“If you were blind, you would have no sin;

but now you say “We see” therefore your sin remains.” [41]

Had they admitted their ignorance, they would not have fallen into condemnation. However, their mouths testified against them since they claimed they had vision, were able to comprehend the truth, and could distinguish it from falsehood. They claimed to have vision, saw divine truth, and understood the law and the prophets. Consequently, they isolated themselves and their sin remained.

⁵⁵ Sermon on NT Lessons, 86:5

Inspired by Chapter 9

O Lord, Grant Me Inner Vision!

- * Your eyes behold me lovingly, as to someone born blind!
We have inherited a blind vision from our father Abraham;
Therefore we no longer enjoy the beauty of your brilliance!

- * There are many, even among those who surround you, who condemn me!
But because of your love, you pray for the healing of my heart and its vision.
You are the day that does not cease to work; you are the light that dissipates the
darkness within me!
May you shine upon me so that I may become the child of the day.
May my eyes never experience sun set O Sun of Righteousness!

- * You are the Creator and you have formed me from the earth with mud.
You grant vision to my eyes.
Through your word, I come to you, for you are 'Siloam' the 'Sent' from the Father.
I wash in your blood, consequently my vision is enlightened.
I see the gates of heaven opened and welcoming me!

- * My soul is heavy from constant discussions with friend and stranger.
There are no more places in my heart for more words.
Your deeds are fully appeasing and witness to your divine power,
Your practical love silences rebellious tongues!
Your light shines within me, it cannot be overcome by the powers of darkness.

- * With the man born blind, I do not fear expulsion
When all reject me, you appear to me,
When I am cast out
I find you bearing the Cross outside the gates.
You are the God of the banished and the rejected.

- * May they all be engaged in lengthy talks,
But I will bow and worship before you,
And enjoy the fellowship of your brilliance and the everlasting gladness of Your
heavens!

CHAPTER TEN

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

The Lord's discourse on the good shepherd takes place after the healing of the man born blind. The Lord reveals the clear difference between the shepherd who cares for his sheep and the hired servants. In other words, He indicates the difference between the Lord Jesus Christ who yearns to deliver mankind and the Pharisees who are preoccupied with their personal honor, authority and profit.

In the previous chapter, the Lord reveals how much He wishes to grant to every soul the gift of vision thus enabling it to become acquainted with the truth. And what is the truth other than comprehending that He incarnates the Word of God, and is the good Shepherd who sacrifices Himself for the sake of His sheep? This chapter is considered as the extension of the Lord's discourse with the Pharisees. The Pharisees had displayed at the end of the previous chapter great hostility towards the Lord. They opposed Him as they considered that they were the teachers and shepherds of God's church. Hence there was no place for the One who had broken the law among them. They demanded the people not to follow Him because He had not been sent by God. The discourse in this chapter reveals those groups: The real shepherds, the hired servants, and the thieves that hide under the guise of shepherds.

The Lord Jesus Christ Satisfies All Our Needs

The Jews who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ were banished from the Sanhedrin. They no longer had any right to enter the temple, to participate in Jewish worship, or practice the rites pertaining to purification and feasts, etc.... Therefore this Gospel intends to proclaim that the Lord Jesus Christ satisfies all the needs of those cast outside the temple. In Him, they can fulfill all their needs, for He has come to replace the authority of all Jewish institutions and the privileges attached to them. He does so in a supremely divine manner.

John 1: The Jews take pride in Moses, the recipient of the law. As for the Lord Jesus Christ, He is the Word, who is with the Father and One with Him: He grants grace upon grace.

John 2: The Jews take pride in the rites of purification according to the law. As for the Lord Jesus Christ, He transforms the waters of purification into a new and unique wine.

John 5: The Jews boast of literally observing the Sabbath. As for Jesus Christ, He proclaimed that the true Sabbath is observed when He does the work of God the Father, (John 5:16-18).

John 6: The Jews boast that their fathers ate the heavenly manna in the wilderness. As for the Lord Jesus Christ, He is the real Passover, the heavenly manna who saves

mankind from the waters (He walked on the water in the same manner as when He crossed the Red Sea with His people).

John 7-8: On the Feast of the Tabernacles, He offered Himself as the living water and the true light.

John 10: Instead of the Feast of Dedication, He offered Himself since the Father had consecrated Him to bring salvation to the world.

The Evangelist presents this eighth discourse by the Lord Jesus Christ as He focuses on His sacrificial care. It comes right after the healing of the man born blind who had then been banished from the Sanhedrin. The real disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ is banished from the Jewish fold or from the literal slavery to the law. Therefore he enjoys membership in the Lord's fold (because his eyes have been opened to behold the mysteries of the kingdom).

1- The Good Shepherd	1-21
2- Union with the Father	22-39
3- The Lord at the Baptismal font	40-41

1- The Good Shepherd

In this parable the Jewish nation appears as a fold of sheep, [1]. The Lord Jesus Christ is the good Shepherd who comes through the door designed for that purpose (through the door of the prophecies) and to care for the sheep. The Holy Spirit opens the door to Him and the real fold responds to Him. He heals their eyes and they behold the Shepherd. He leads the fold away from the literal law [3], from apostasy, and from unbelief. At the same time, those who adhere to the literal interpretation of the law reject Him, [4, and 5].

In this parable, we distinguish the following:

- A. The Lord Jesus Christ, and not the law, is the door to the fold. He is the new Door [7].
- B. All the literally minded Jewish leaders who reject the Lord are thieves, [8].
- C. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Savior who sacrifices himself, [9, and 10].
- D. The Lord is a sacrifice of love and dies on behalf of His fold, [11-15].

The good Shepherd has another fold that consists of the Gentiles. These will be embraced with the Jewish believers and the Lord will gather and form them all into one fold, which is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Core 12:13; Eph 4:4-6).

E. This one fold will interact with the unique sacrifice and voluntary death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lack of faith results in failure: failure to offer anything other than confusion and wicked blasphemy.

**“Most assuredly, I say to you,
he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door,
but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber,” [1]**

The sheep enter the sheepfold at night. Usually this is built close to the shepherd’s house. The sheepfold has one door and it is watched by the guard. Therefore anyone who intends to steal has to creep in by jumping over the wall of the sheepfold.

The Lord Jesus Christ describes Himself as the shepherd who cares for his sheep. The Church in this world is like a pasture that embraces within it the sheep scattered abroad, (John 11:52). Within the Church, the sheep are united as one holy fold that is guarded by the holy shepherd. Because of His care, He becomes as a fiery wall protecting them, (Zech 2:5). The use of the fold as a symbol for the Church is relevant as the sheep bear the features of meekness, calmness, and submissiveness as they come into the shepherd’s embrace. They also adhere to one another.

The Lord Jesus Christ presents this analogy because sheep, characteristically, are unable to defend themselves against any attack. They depend fully on the care and vigilance of their shepherd. They also depend on getting their food and drink from the shepherd who leads them. Even in countries that enjoy heavy rainfall, sheep need someone to lead them for long periods to the drinking spots. They do not search on their own. Besides, they do not begin to enter into the sheepfold, even if they are pursued by danger and threatened by savage beasts, unless the shepherd leads with one or two other sheep and enters through the door. Then the rest would follow behind him or behind these sheep.

* Dear holy brothers and sisters, we could meet any of these three personalities and we need to determine which are the ones whom we love, the ones we ought to tolerate, and those we should be cautious of. Indeed, the shepherd is to be loved, the hired slave is to be tolerated, and the thief is to be watched and not trusted.¹

St. Augustine

* Note the characteristics of the thief: first, he enters unannounced. Second, he does not enter according to the Holy Books, for this does not interest him, **“He does not enter the sheepfold by the door”**, [1]. Here, the reference is to those who came before and to those who will come after Him: the anti-Christ and the pretentious Messiahs, such as Theudas and Judas (Acts 5:36) and those like them.

The word **‘door’** in the Lord’s words **“(those) who do not enter the sheepfold by the door”** refers to the Holy Books. These are the doors that bring us to God. His Word opens to us the way to be acquainted with God, protecting us and preventing wolves to enter in. As a door, the entrance is shut in the face of newsmongers and maintains us from their deceptions. Indeed, we are embraced so that we do not get deceived. Through the holy Word we get to know the shepherd, and recognize those who

¹ Sermon on NT Lessons, 87:5

are not. That explains why the Lord told the Jews:” you search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). This indicates that Moses and all the prophets are witnesses; and the Lord adds: “All those who listen to the prophets come to Me” and “if you believed in Moses, you would believe Me”...He clearly uses the word ‘climbs’ (goes up) rather than the word ‘enters’ since climbing is the act of a thief who intends to jump over the wall. A thief does so even though it exposes him to danger.¹

St. John Chrysostom

* They proclaimed that they were not blind. In spite of that, they could really have possessed sight only if they had become part of the Lord’s fold.

How could they claim to see the light whereas they acted as thieves who oppose the light? It is due to their falsehood, pride and excessive haughtiness. That is why the Lord speaks these words. We too are intended to receive valuable lessons from this discourse as we keep the Lord’s words in our hearts and think about them. In the daily stream of life, there are many who are generally perceived as righteous good men, women, and innocent people. Those who keep the commandments, honor their parents, refrain from adultery, do not kill or steal, do not witness wrongly against anyone, and obey all the other requirements of the law. Yet these are not Christians and they arrogantly ask: “Are we blind also?”...

They work with no goal in mind, and they do not enter from the door leading to the sheepfold.

The atheists might say: ‘We live uprightly’.

Yet, if they do not enter through the door, what good intentions are they displaying and how could they be so arrogant?...

No one can hope to have a good life if he lacks knowledge of life, that is if we do not know the Lord Jesus Christ and if we do not enter the sheepfold through the door!²

* There are philosophers who present excellent discourses on virtues and failings. They distinguish between them and provide their definitions. They conclude by presenting a logical and accurate chain. They fill up books and protect their wisdom by giving long talks. They boldly ask people to follow them and to join their team if they wanted to live happily. However, they do not enter through the door. Such people intend to destroy, kill and murder³.

* Can a Pharisee utter anything righteous?

¹ Homilies on St John, 59:2

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 44:2

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 45:3

The Pharisee is a thorn, so how can we harvest grapes out of a thorn (Matt 7:16; 12:33).

O Lord, that is why You have said: “Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works, (Matt 23:3).

Do you order me to gather grapes out of thorns when you tell me: “Do they reap grapes from thorns?” The Lord answers you and says: “I do not order you to gather grapes from thorns, but to look and notice well, for often when the grapes hang above the ground they could be entangled with the thorns”. My brethren, sometimes we find a vine that has been planted but is surrounded with thorns, and so its branches become entangled with them. The one who wishes to gather grapes does not gather it from the thorns but from the vine that is entangled with them.

In the same manner, the Pharisees were full of thorns. Yet because they occupied the seat of Moses they were surrounded by the vine and the grapes. These are the good words and commandments hanging from them. May you gather grapes without being pricked by the thorns? When you read “Whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works”, be careful for if you do what they do, then know that you will be pricked by the thorns. Therefore in order to reap grapes without getting hurt by the thorns, “... observe and do what they say, but do not do according to their works”.

Their acts were the thorns and their words were the grapes. Yet, the source of the grapes is the vine, which is the seat of Moses¹!

* My conscience is not at ease on account of your praise, for how can you praise what you cannot see?

Yes, may God Almighty, who sees, praise me. Yes, May God mend whatever He finds in me that is displeasing in His sight.

I do not claim to be wholly perfect. I beat upon my chest and pray God: “Have mercy and let me not sin”. I believe that I speak in His presence and pray for your salvation. I ask nothing of you. I constantly rebuke the faults and sins of my brethren; I bear difficulties; my mind torments me; and I constantly reproach but I encourage them as well. All those who remember my words are witnesses that I rebuke those who commit sin without causing any distress².

St. Augustine

**“But he who enters by the door
Is the shepherd of My sheep”. [2]**

The shepherd of the sheep is the owner of the sheep. He cares for each one of them and brings them into the sheepfold through the door because he possesses authority. He enters inside to help them all: “I will feed My flock and I will make them to lie down,” says the

¹ Sermon on NT Lessons, 87:13

² Sermon on NT Lessons, 87:14

Lord God. “I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong and feed them in Judgment” (Ez 34:15-16).

**“To him the doorkeeper opens
And the sheep hear his voice
And he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out”. [3]**

* We do not commit a big mistake when we assume that Moses is the doorkeeper for he was entrusted with keeping the teachings of God¹.

St. John Chrysostom

* May we not be confused in understanding His words, my brethren. He does carry the symbols of both the door and the doorkeeper. For what does the door indicate? It is the way to enter in. And what does the doorkeeper represent? He is the one who opens the door. Therefore who is the One who opens it other than He Himself in order to be revealed and seen?²

St. Augustine.

**“And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them
And the sheep follow him, for they know his voice”. [4]**

The good Shepherd does not send his sheep into a field where there are no wolves. Indeed, He stresses that He sends them ‘in the midst of wolves’ (Matt 10:16). Therefore, He goes before them so that if the wolves attack they would be attacking Him; and He would transform them into gentle sheep. The Lord has gone before His sheep to the pasture of the Cross and of sufferings so that the sheep would not fear the road leading to Golgotha. Therefore, they will not fear death and for as long as they are in the company of the Crucified Lord.

* The shepherds would be doing the opposite of that if they were to walk at the back of their flock. However, the Lord indicates in this passage that He is the One who leads His followers to the truth.

St. John Chrysostom

**“Yet they will by no means follow a stranger,
But will flee from him,
For they do not know the voice of strangers”. [5]**

The sheep, who are unreasoning creatures, know their owner and adhere to him. Because they do not know the voice of strangers, they flee from them. Accordingly, the Bible says: “The Ox knows its owner” (Is 1:3)

**Jesus used this illustration,
But they did not understand the things which He spoke to them. [6]**

¹ Homilies on St John, 59:3

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 46: 4

St. John Chrysostom comments that the Lord used this verse to indicate the distinction between Himself and the false Messiahs. He attempted to clarify this in every possible way.

First: His teachings from the Holy Books testify to Him. Conversely, false Messiahs attracted people away from God's word.

Second: The sheep obey Him, as they believe in Him. They did so, not only when He walked on earth, but also after His death and ascension into the heavens. Conversely, false Messiahs are forsaken by the sheep. This is what happened to Thaeudas and Judas: their followers 'were scattered' (Acts 5:36).

Third: False leaders act like rebels and they cause upheavals. Conversely, when they sought to crown the Lord as king, He disappeared from among them. They then asked Him if it was right to pay taxes to Caesar. He ordered them to pay and He Himself paid taxes, (Matt 22:17).

Fourth: The Lord Jesus Christ came to save the sheep, grant them life, and so 'may have it abundantly' [10]. In contrast, false teachers deprive the sheep from enjoying even this temporal life; for they flee to save themselves in times of danger.

The Jews did not understand the implications of the Lord's parable. They neither understood that He is the good Shepherd, nor that the hired servants were those who seek their personal profit rather than that of the sheep. Besides, the thieves are those who seek personal honor even if that results in the death of the flock.

The Pharisees were unable to understand the Lord's words. They were the ones who claimed to be the teachers of the people. They claimed they possessed knowledge and did not need to learn anything. They held in their hands the Word of God, yet they misinterpreted it due to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their inner vision.

**Then Jesus said to them again,
"Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep" [7]**

The Lord is the door of the pasture, the door of the Church. He closes the door not with the intention of imprisoning the sheep, but with the intention of protecting them from wolves, thieves and so that they may not perish. He is the wisdom, the power and the righteousness. He who enters through the door enters into the Lord's embrace and enjoys all these gifts. He is the door that is closed to wolves; yet He is the door of love that is open to allow the sheep to enter and go out to meet with Him in the fellowship of brotherly love. That is why the Lord calls Himself 'the door of the sheep'. A wolf cannot pass through Him (the door) unless he becomes transformed into a real lamb.

He is the royal and divine Door that allows us to enter before the divine throne and enjoy the heavenly life.

It is astonishing that the Shepherd was treated as a thief. They came to Him

carrying swords and clubs in order to capture Him (Matt 26:55). They did so because He had not entered through those thieves and hungry wolves and He had not taken their permission before ministering to the people. Instead of being His disciples and following in the way of the spirit, they expected Him to be their disciple. They expected Him to follow their spirit, which opposed divine truth and real shepherding love.

When the Lord leads us to the Father, He calls Himself ‘the door’. When He watches over us, He calls Himself ‘the Shepherd’. So that we might not think that His sole mission is to bring us to the Father, He calls Himself ‘the Shepherd’¹.

St John Chrysostom

* The Lord Jesus Christ is everything: all the names are appropriate: He is everything that He proclaims².

Origen the Scholar

* To those who need joy, He becomes a vine. To those who need to enter, He stands as a Door³.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

* He Himself is the door. Let us come and get acquainted with Him. Let us enter and rejoice that we are truly in Him⁴.

* The prophets came before Him: so were they thieves and burglars? God forbid. They did not come as distinct beings from Him for they came with Him. When He came, He sent missionaries yet He occupied their hearts. Do you wish to know how they came with Him who is ever present? Surely He became incarnated in the fullness of time, but what does ‘ever present’ mean? ‘In the beginning was the Word’, (John 1:1). Those who carried the Word of God came with Him. The Lord said: “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). Since He is the truth, then those who came with Him are truthful. However, there are many who by separating themselves from Him are thieves and burglars. In others words, they came to steal and destroy!⁵

* **‘...But the sheep did not hear them’**: this is a point of great importance. Before the Lord came to earth, for He humbly came in the flesh, righteous people heard Him and believed that he would come in exactly the same manner by which He came to us.

Times change yet faith does not...there are changing times, yet there is one Door to true faith. That Door is the Lord Jesus Christ, and we see both past and all present believers entering through Him....

The apostle says: “... and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: that Rock was Christ”, (1 Cor 10:4). Notice how the

¹ Homilies on St John, 59:3

² Commentarium in Joannem 1.PG 14: 50 S 9

³ Catech. 10. Pg 33: 665B

⁴ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 45:8

⁵ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 45:8

faith remained unchanged, but the signs have changed. In the past, the Rock was Christ, whereas for us Christ is on God's altar... many believed in the past - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, all the other patriarchs and prophets- all these prophesied concerning the Messiah. These are the sheep that heard the Lord. They heard only the Lord's voice and not that of anyone else¹.

St. Augustine

**“All who ever came before me are thieves and robbers,
But the sheep did hear them” [8]**

*The Lord here is not speaking about the prophets as the heretics claim. Many who had believed in the Messiah had listened to the prophets and were convinced by them. The Lord is speaking here about Thaeudas and Judas as well as others who incited rebellion. It may seem as though the Lord was praising the fact that **“The sheep did not hear them’ [8]**. Yet nowhere do we hear the Lord praising those who did not listen to the prophets. On the contrary, He reproaches and severely condemns them. He says, “The sheep did not hear them” as He is referring to the trouble making leaders².

St John Chrysostom

“I am the door.

If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture’. [9]

He who enters the pasture through the Lord, the divine Door, not only escapes from thieves and burglars, but also enjoys real liberty. He enters and leaves with full freedom. He enters into the Father's embrace to enjoy His divine fatherhood. He leaves to go into the world in the company of the incarnate Son in order to witness to the divine love, and to attract many others to the divine pasture. He redeems and guides many, through the Spirit, to God who is their salvation. Consequently, He rejoices and is glad with them; and all become filled from the pasture of love: they enjoy the promise of glory and look forward to the day of the Lord. They will have fellowship in the glory of God for they have been saved from the teeth of the lion. They will consequently live in supreme happiness.

The sheep enter through the door and find themselves in the Lord's embrace and feel they are in their Father's house. These are neither strange nor evil sheep. These are the owners of the house who move in complete freedom. When they come in they settle down as though in their father's home. They are able to move about freely and when they come in they settle down as they would in their own homes. In fact, they would have gone out to work for a while, yet only to return and rest!

* The Lord explains that “...the sheep find safety and security. He uses the word ‘pasture’ to indicate his care, His provision of food and His power and authority over

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 45:9

² Homilies on St John, 59:3

them. The sheep remain inside the sheepfold and no one can cast them out. This is what happened to the disciples for they entered and went out and became leaders to the whole world. We find that no one could cast them out¹.

St John Chrysostom

He is not just ‘**a way**’ among many other ways; the Lord is the only way that leads us to the embrace of the Father. In this sense He is the Door and we cannot enter into heaven through any door other than through Him: He is the only Door.

* Let us elevate our thoughts above those of the Jews. They admit in their teaching that there is one God. Yet what does this mean when they deny Him and they worship idols? They also reject God as being the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this way, they contradict their prophets who confirm this in the Holy Books. The holy Word says: “The Lord has said to Me “you are My Son: Today I have begotten you” (Ps 2:7).

Until today, the Jews collectively set themselves against the Lord and against His anointed (Ps 2:2). They believe they can have the Father as their friend while they separate and neglect to worship the Son. They disregard the principle that no one comes to the Father except through the Son who says “**I am the way...**” (John 10:9; 14:6)

Therefore how can the person who rejects the door that leads to the Father and denies the door qualify to enter in the presence of God (the Father)? They contradict the words of Psalm 88 which say: ‘He shall cry to Me ‘You are My Father, My God and the Rock of My salvation’. Also ‘I will make him My first born, the highest of the kings of the earth’,. (Ps 89:26, 27)

St Cyril of Jerusalem

* Truly, we believe that we enter into the sheepfold when we become engaged in training our inner thoughts; and we go out when we get engaged in work outside it. The apostle accordingly states that the Lord enters into our hearts through faith (Eph 3:17). We enter into the Lord means that we submit ourselves to that good faith and wisdom; and with that same faith we go out with the Lord and work with others in the world. The Psalmist says: ‘Man goes out to his work...’ (Ps 104:23); the Lord Himself says: “Let your light so shine before men” (Matt 5:16). We believe that the Lord implies that the faithful would lead a blessed life inside the sheepfold as well as an even more blessed life outside... since no one can go out through the door- that is through the Lord Jesus Christ and go towards that eternal life which lies ahead - unless he enters the church through that same door or that same Lord Jesus Christ. This is where his flock lives in this temporary life, which is endured through faith².

* “...and find pasture” refers to both situations: inside and outside: the faithful will find true pasture as He satisfies those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. This pasture can be found through the One who said: “Today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke

¹ Homilies on St John, 59:3

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 45:15

23:43)¹.

St. Augustine

* The faithful sheep enter to find faith; and progress from faith towards vision. They move from belief to meditation and find pasture (food) to eternal nourishment.

His flock will find pasture because everyone who follows Him with a pure and innocent heart will be refreshed with eternal food.

What do the pastures of these flocks indicate other than the eternal joys of Paradise, which are constantly green?

The pastures where the chosen ones feed are found in the presence of God Himself. When we see Him, our hearts are filled with the food of life to the end.

Those who avoid and escape from the traps of temporary pleasures rejoice in these pastures of eternal perfection. There, the Heavenly hosts sing praise and there the faithful join the heavenly dwellers².

St. Gregory the Elder

**“The thief does not come except to steal and to kill and to destroy.
I have come that they may have life,
And that they may have it more abundantly”. [10]**

Deceitful shepherds are the thieves. They do not enter through the door of love but with a deceitful spirit and with wicked intentions. By their deceit, they kill and destroy souls. Whereas, the shepherd offers a better life; the thief is engaged in the killing and murdering of souls. Entering stealthily into the sheepfold causes death; whereas the coming of the good Shepherd, the incarnate Word, grants eternal life.

The Shepherd has come to His flock in this world in order to redeem, sanctify, and glorify them. He does so to restore to them the life they have lost. They will not return to the condition they were in before sin; for they will find the richness of eternal life, which is invincible by death. That is why the Lord says: **“more abundantly”**.

* If you asked ‘Tell me, what could be better than life?’ Our answer would be: ‘The heavenly kingdom’. However, the Lord until that point in time had not used these words but repeatedly used the word ‘life’ since it was the clearest thing known to His hearers³.

St John Chrysostom

* **“I have come that they may have life”**: That is the faith that works through love (Gal 5:6). **“And that they may have it more abundantly”**: refers to those who patiently endure to the end. They will then go out through that same door: that is through faith in

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 45:15

² Hom 15. Forty Gospel Homilies. PL 76:1127

³ Homilies on St John, 59:3

the Lord Jesus Christ. As true believers they will die and attain a better life when go to the place where the Shepherd abides and where they will die no more¹.

* If we consider the world as a great home, then we perceive the heavens as a dome and the earth as a road or passage. The Lord wishes to save us from earthly matters and so say with the apostle: “we are citizens of heaven”. Adherence to earthly matters results in the death of the soul. This is contrary to the life for which we pray and say: “Let me live”!

St. Augustine

**“I am the good Shepherd.
The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep”. [11]**

The prophets of the Old Testament foresaw the Lord Jesus Christ as the good Shepherd, (Is 40:11; Ez 34:23; 37:24; Zech 13:7). The disciples experienced Him as the bishop of our souls (1 Peter 2:25), as the Chief of the Shepherds (1 Peter 5:4), and as the Great Shepherd (Heb 13:20).

That explains why the title of ‘the Good Shepherd’ holds a special attractive power for Christians throughout all generations. Even to those who have not seen shepherds in their lives, yet they feel the warmth of His shepherding and care. Just as the flock of sheep cannot face life without its shepherd, so do Christians feel when they face wickedness and the evil world: they look to the divine Shepherd who protect them from evil, satisfies their needs, and leads them to the pastures of Paradise.

By saying “**I Am...**” the Lord is using the theological language. “ I am Jehovah” for He is the only and unique divine Shepherd.

The Greek word for ‘good’ is *kalas* and it differs from other Greek words that are also translated as ‘good’. For example, ‘good’ is also used to translate these Greek words: *agathos* which indicates an inner staircase; *dikaios* which indicates an upright person. However, the word *kalas*- according to Abbot Smith’s Lexicon- indicates a goodness that has a special form as it is combined with beauty. E.V. Rieu has translated the expression: ‘I am the good Shepherd’ into ‘I am the beautiful Shepherd’. In any case, the expression ‘the good shepherd’ is an endearing one, for it conveys a goodness that appeals to the flock. Besides feeling the goodness of the Lord’s care, the flock also enjoys His attractive presence or their attraction to Him².

The care of ‘the good Shepherd’ is unique in quality. It involves not only good care, as the Shepherd is preoccupied with His sheep. It is as though He has nothing else to do in heaven and on earth but to care for them. He not only cares for each soul and especially the one that is gone astray; but He does what is even greater for ‘ **He gives His life for the sheep**’.

In the region of Palestine, the shepherds were endangered because of thieves and

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 45:15

² cf Leon Morris, p 377

savage animals. David was faced by a lion and a bear when he was young and watching over his sheep, (1 Sam 17:34-36). Amos, the prophet, tells us about the shepherd who saved two legs or a piece of ear from the lion's mouth (Amos 3:12). At the time of the early fathers, we hear Jacob telling his uncle: "...that which was torn by the beast I did not bring to you: I bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand, whether stolen by day or stolen by night", (Gen 31:39). That reveals how the work of shepherding involves dangers. However, we never hear of a shepherd who willingly goes to his death for the sake of his flock. It is true that he would be exposed to death but it is for his personal benefit, and as the owner of the sheep rather than for the sake of his flock. In contrast, the good Shepherd willingly and happily faced death to save each lamb of his flock.

The good Shepherd sacrificed Himself in order to offer to us His precious Blood. With that Blood, we may wash our souls and get cleaned of all sins as well as drink it as the mystery of eternal life. The amazing thing is that the Shepherd grants His faithful servants the joy of serving and therefore to spend and be spent (2 Cor 12:15). They do so for the sake of the people and in just the same manner endured by the apostle St Paul.

The Analogy between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Shepherd

The Lord did not choose randomly the figure of the Shepherd as an analogy for Himself, for this carries important meanings:

First: The shepherd wears **cheap clothes** when he watches over his sheep even though he may own the flock and however big it is. He does so because he often sits on the ground and his sheep surround him. He also carries in his hands the wounded or unsteady ones, which might be covered with dirt. Similarly, the incarnate divine Word came to share our earth, carry us in His hands. Moreover, He acted as a substitute for us and bore our sins in order to atone for them.

Second: To watch over his flock, the shepherd **walks before his sheep** so that they would follow him. Similarly, our Savior opened the way to heaven by passing through the cross. He did so in order to enable us to share in His sufferings and consequently enjoy fellowship in His glory.

Third: The shepherd often holds a **shepherd's cane** which is shaped as a U at the top. This is intended to lift a lamb if it falls into a hole. Similarly, the Lord holds His Cross, which symbolizes every manner of divine tenderness, and which also indicates the severity and punishment necessary for our constant progress.

Fourth: A shepherd often seeks the shade at noontime and sits and **plays on his flute** while the sheep gather around him. One of the features of the shepherd is his joy amid the troubles and heat of temptations. Similarly, we find in our Shepherd the source of real joy.

Fifth: The shepherd is intensely concerned about **one lost sheep** more than the remaining ninety-nine. He does not rest until he brings it back to the fold (Matt 18:12-14;

Luke 15:3-7).

* **‘I am the good Shepherd’**: the Lord speaks here about suffering and underlines that it brings salvation to the world. He was not obliged to come; therefore He presents the model of the shepherd and the hired servant once more¹.

St. John Chrysostom.

* The Lord speaks of Himself as the **‘Shepherd’**. He also says that He is the **‘Door’**. Both are mentioned in the same place: “I am the Door’ and ‘I am the good Shepherd’. At the head, He is the door and in the body [7, 11]... He is the Shepherd...the one who enters through the door is the Shepherd; whereas the one who goes through another way is a thief and burglar who misguides, scatters, and destroys. Who is the one who enters through the door? He is the one who enters through the Lord Jesus Christ. Who is that one? He is that person who emulates the Lord’s sufferings...²

* Were the (apostles) shepherds? They definitely were shepherds. So how can there be one shepherd? As we have stated earlier, **they were shepherds as they were members of the Shepherd**. They rejoiced in that Head and under His Head, they enjoyed full harmony together. They lived with one Spirit and in unity with one Body. Therefore they all belonged as members of that one Shepherd³.

*What is the meaning, therefore, of presenting the only good Shepherd to the good shepherds, other than teaching the concept of unity in the good Shepherd? The Lord has clarified this meaning throughout His service. Here we remind you, our beloved ones, of the Gospel words: “Listen to what I present of you: I have told you **‘I am the good Shepherd’** because all the others- the good shepherds- are My members”. One Head, one Body, one Savior. This applies to everyone who embraces the shepherds, and the shepherds of the Shepherd, and the flock under their care.

This is exactly what the apostle says in 1 Cor. 12:12: “ For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ”. Therefore, this is all about the Lord Jesus Christ: for a good cause, He embraces within Himself all the good shepherds. They constitute the One who says: “I am the good Shepherd’. I alone and all the others with Me are united together.

He who shepherds without Me, shepherds against Me: “He who does not gather with Me scatters abroad” (Matt 12:30). Let us hear how this unity has brought greater strength, for He says: **“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold”, [16]⁴**.

* We ask and implore you, in the name of His saints, to love the Church as in a marital relationship. Love the good Shepherd for the Bride is most beautiful. She never deceives anyone and does not seek to destroy anyone. Also pray for the scattered sheep: that they

¹ Hom 59. PG 59:349

² Sermon on N T Lessons, 87:3,4

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 46: 7

⁴ Sermon on NT Lessons, 88:5

may come and get to know Him; that they may love Him and **become one flock under one Shepherd**¹.

St. Augustine

* How could I not love you who have loved me so greatly? Although I am black, **you have laid down your life for the sake of your sheep** (John 15:13). You are their Shepherd.

No one has greater love than this; for you have sacrificed your life to grant me salvation.

Tell me, then, where is your pasture? When I find the pasture of your salvation, I will be filled with the heavenly food. Without this no one can attain eternal life. When I run to you, O Divine Source, I will drink for you have made it to overflow in order to water and refresh all who come to you.

Upon striking your side with the sword, water and blood gushed out immediately (John 19:34). Whoever drinks from it becomes a source of living water springing up into eternal life (John 4:14).

As you shepherd me, I will rest peacefully during noontime and in the light where there is no shade. There is no shade at noon for me as the sun sends its rays straight downwards. Yet you will make the light of noontime a comfort to those you feed and **you will gather your children in your bed** (Luke 11:7).

No one deserves to rest at noontime except the Son of light and day (1 Thes. 5:5). The person, who has separated himself from the darkness of the night until the dawn, will rest at noontime with the Son of righteousness (Matt 4:2)².

St. Gregory of Nicea

**“But he who is a hireling and not the shepherd,
One who does not own the sheep,
Sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees;
The wolf catches the sheep and scatters them”. [12]**

This flock is exposed to savage wolves that deceive, capture and destroy (Act 20:29). It is also exposed to thieves who capture the sheep to offer them as sacrifices to the enemy of goodness; or who steal their food. Often the wolves appear in sheep's clothing (Matt 7:15)

In both verses 12 and 13, the Lord tells us about careless shepherds. He calls them 'hirelings' because they serve in return for money or reward and not out of true love for God's people. Their greed for money or for food is what drives them to shepherding. Truly, those who serve the altar eat of the altar; those who preach the Bible also live by it.

¹ Sermon on NT Lessons, 88:10

² Song of Songs: St Gregory of Nicea. Translated into Arabic: Dr George Nawar, 1993, Sermon 2

However, their hearts are concerned with the salvation of souls and not with what they could gather as a reward for their ministry.

* The Lord proclaims that He is just as His Father. He, like Him, is the Shepherd and the sheep belong to Him¹.

St. John Chrysostom

The hireling who flees upon seeing a wolf and abandons the flock commits a mistake. The 'Mishnah' states that the shepherd is obligated to face one wolf, yet vindicates him if he is faced by two or more wolves since he cannot deal with such a situation. As a hireling he has no obligation to protect the flock, if he were attacked by two or more wolves, since his life would be exposed to danger.

* The hireling works as long as he does not see a wolf approaching, and as long as he does not see a thief or a burglar. However he escapes as soon as he catches sight of any of these...

Hirelings ascend through another path... for they ascend an account of their pride...

Those who are not in union with the (Church) have another path: they are arrogant and seek to corrupt the flock.

Now note how they ascend. They state: we are the ones who sanctify, absolve, and choose the righteous...

The wolf is the devil that lies down and waits to deceive. His followers are also deceivers. It has been truly said that they wear sheep's clothing; while they are intrinsically savage wolves (Matt 7:15).

The hireling may find a person engaged in evil conversation, or in soul destructive emotions, or in corrupt and defiling acts; and yet he says nothing to him- such as 'you are committing sin', or reprimanding him in order to save him from losing what is good for his soul. Strangely, that hireling seems to be an important influential person in the Church (who expects to receive benefits since he is a hireling). We believe that this is the meaning of "**the hireling when he sees the wolf coming (he) leaves the sheep and flees**". He does not even tell the wrongdoer: "You act wickedly". This does not constitute merely taking physical flight but a flight of the soul. The one we see physically standing there has, in this situation, escaped in his heart. Seeing a wrongdoer and not telling him "You are committing sin" indicates condoning and agreeing with that person's acts².

* The hireling here does not possess a good character. However, he is useful in other ways or he would not be called a hireling. Neither would he have received a wage from his employer. Therefore who is that hireling who is blamed and yet is useful too? There

¹ Homilies on St John, 59:3

² Sermon on NT Lessons: 87:20

are some who serve in the church and St. Paul tells us the following about them: "...for all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:21). What does 'seek their own' imply? It refers to those who do not love the Lord unconditionally; for they seek temporal benefits and profits, and lust to be honored by men.

* There are hirelings among us too. Yet only God knows about them for He examines and reveals what is in their hearts¹.

* Let us be aware of the fact that even hirelings are useful. It is true that there are many within the church who seek earthly benefit. However, they also preach about the Lord Jesus Christ and through them the voice of the Lord is heard. As a result, the sheep follow the voice of the Lord who speaks through the hirelings. In this manner, the sheep do not follow the hirelings, for they actually follow the voice of the Lord who speaks through the hirelings. The Lord Himself indicated the need to listen to the hirelings in these words: 'The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their work' (Matt 23:2-3). What does He say other than that we should listen to the voice of the Shepherd as He speaks through the hirelings?²

* Listen to the apostle as he is overwhelmed by such matters. He states that some preach the Bible out of love, while others out of some 'weakness' and not sincerely (Phil 1:16-18). However, what they preach is the truth, whereas the preachers themselves are not upright.

Why is the person who preaches the truth not upright? Because he is not seeking God and is seeking some other benefit from the Church.

Seeking God is an act of purity as God is the legitimate husband of the soul.

Praying God for other things besides Him indicates an impure intent while seeking God.

Notice, my brethren, that when a wife loves her husband on account of his wealth she is impure. Evidently, she does not love her husband but loves his gold. If she loved her husband, she would have loved him in his nakedness and poverty. If she only loved him due to his wealth, what would happen if he became suddenly poor? She would probably reject him for she did not love the man but loved his riches. Had she truly loved her husband, she would have loved him all the more when he became poor for she would love compassionately as well³.

* We need to love God who created the wealthy man, rather than love the wealthy man: God promises to give us Himself and nothing else. Find something that is more precious than Him and He will grant it to you. The earth, the heavens, and the angels are beautiful,

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 46:5

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 46:6

³ Sermon on NT Lessons, 87: 9

yet the beauty of the Lord, their creator, exceeds all beauty.

Therefore, those who preach God as the loving God; and those who preach Him for His sole praise are the shepherds of the flock and not the hirelings.

The Lord Jesus Christ desires this kind of purity from the soul and He accordingly tells Peter:” Peter, do you love Me” (John 21:16). What does ‘do you love Me’ imply? Are you pure? Is your heart free of adultery? Do you seek Me and not personal gain from your church? If you are truly pure, then ‘tend My sheep’ for you can therefore be a shepherd and not a hireling¹.

* The shepherd preaches the Lord Jesus Christ in truth; whereas the hireling preaches in pretense (Phil 1:18) as he seeks some other benefit. Yet both preach the Lord Jesus Christ...and Paul, who is a shepherd himself, is glad to have hirelings. Indeed, these work when they can and they are useful as long as they are able to preach... It is rare for the (apostle) to find a shepherd among many hirelings, for the shepherds are few whereas the hirelings are numerous. Yet, what does the Word say about hirelings? “Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward” (Matt 6:2). What does the apostle say about the shepherd? ‘If anyone cleanses himself...will be a vessel of honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work’ (2 Tim 2:26). ... not prepared for certain matters, but “prepared for every good work”².

St. Augustine

“The hireling flees

Because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep”. [13]

St. Augustine likens the hirelings to fences covered with thorns and the vines bearing grapes lean on them. These hirelings work as ministers for their own benefit. However, we need to enjoy the grapes of the vine which is supported by the thorns. Indeed, these grapes are the fruit of the vine, not of the thorns.

The apostle presents an example of these thorns which support the vine: “Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife and some also from good will. The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely...only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; in this I rejoice, yes and will rejoice” (Phil 1:15-18)³.

*This is where the difference lies between the shepherd and the hireling: one seeks his safety regardless of the sheep; while the other seeks the well being of the sheep regardless of his own needs.

In the past, Ezekiel reprimanded the (hirelings) and said:” woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?” (Ezk 34:2 LXX). Indeed, they failed to do so and this is the worst kind of wickedness. It is the root of all

¹ Sermon on NT Lessons, 87:10

² Sermon on NT Lessons, 87:11

³ cf St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 46:6

other evil as the following words reveal: ‘The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost for they looked after themselves and not after the sheep’ (refer to Ezk 34:4).

St. Paul also reveals the following: ‘...for all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus’ (Phil 2:21); and “Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well being (1 Cor 10:21)¹.

St. John Chrysostom

* A person becomes an hireling when he occupies the position of a shepherd yet does not seek the benefit of the souls. He aspires to attain earthly benefits and rejoices in receiving the honor of high posts. He follows the temporary tendencies and enjoys the honors offered to him: These are his rewards ... such a person cannot stand and act when the flock is endangered.

As he now receives honors and enjoys temporal benefits, such a person fears fighting dangers which could cost him the loss of what he loves... When a wicked person invades the company of humble believers, he becomes that wolf that attacks the flock as he tears their minds with temptations. Besides, such an hireling cannot endure the responsibility of protecting the flock

The soul is destroyed while such a person indulges in earthly benefits. Such an hireling has no zeal to fight temptations. He has no love that drives him. While all his concern is to get external benefits, he carelessly allows internal damage to happen to his flock².

St. Gregory the Great

**“I am the good shepherd,
I know My sheep
And am known by My own”. [14]**

The Psalmist interacted with the Lord and good Shepherd in the Psalm of the Shepherd (Ps 23) where he reveals the extent of the Lord’s supreme cares for His flock.

Good shepherding reveals reciprocal love and acquaintance between the shepherd and his flock. The Shepherd knows his flock based on his closeness to them rather than on more regimental knowledge drawn from scholarly books. He relates to his sheep and they relate to Him, and so they become his subjects who are qualified to know Him.

God knew Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, therefore He called Himself “The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob”. Paul knew his great Shepherd and considered Him his Lord and God! It is through such loving shepherding that every sheep in the flock hears his shepherd who assures him and says:” I will be his God and he shall be My son” (Rev 21:7).

¹ Homilies on St John, 60:1

² Hom 15. Forty GospelS Homilies

The Shepherd knows His own sheep for He watches them attentively and lovingly. He knows them, therefore He gladly sacrifices Himself for them. St. John accordingly, says: ‘We love Him because He first loved us’ (1 John 4:19). St. Paul also says: “But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God” (Gal 4:9).

The loving eyes of the Shepherd draw the sheep’s eyes to Him. Just as the shepherd shows his love by his practical acts and union with them, so the sheep get to know Him and find pleasure in uniting with Him. This is the new covenant: The covenant based on love between God and His subjects. Hence they comprehend the words of their shepherd who says: “I know whom I have chosen” (John 13:18). The flock respond with firm faith in the shepherd and say with the apostle: “...for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day”, (2 Tim 1:12).

*The Lord is the good Shepherd. What kind of shepherd was Peter? Was he not a good shepherd? Did he not lay down his life for his sheep? And who was Paul? And who were the other apostles? What about the blessed bishops and martyrs?... What about St. Caprianus? Were not all these good shepherds? Yes, they were all good shepherds. However, it is not merely because their blood was spilled, but because it was spilled for their sheep. They humbly laid down their lives out of love and without any haughtiness.

What do you say, O Lord and good Shepherd? For you are the good Shepherd as well as the good sheep. What do you say? Grant us ears and help us to comprehend. The Lord says: “I am the good Shepherd”. What about Peter? Was he not a shepherd or was he evil? Indeed, he was a shepherd and a good one. Yet he is truly nothing compared to the power of the Shepherd of shepherds and His goodness. Yet, Peter was a shepherd and he was good. Besides, all the others who are like him are good shepherds¹.

* The Lord Jesus Christ is the door I pass through to come to you. Through Him I have access to your hearts rather than to your homes. I enter through the Lord. He is the Lord within me and he is the One you desire to hear. Why do you seek to hear the Lord through me? Because you are His flock and you have been bought by His Blood. You know your worth - it is not paid through me; yet I am the instrument that preaches Him. It is He, He alone, who is the Buyer and He has poured His precious Blood- the precious Blood of the One who is without sin².

St. Augustine

**“As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father;
I lay down My life for the sheep”. [15]**

The Lord did not only desire to sacrifice, even die, for the sake of His sheep; but as a good Shepherd, He also confirms: **“I lay down My life for the sheep”**. He actually fulfilled the plan of sacrifice. He offered His life as a ransom to buy the sheep. He bought

¹ Sermon on NT Lessons, 88:6

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 47:2

the sheep and He was killed as He loved them. The flock is not brought as an offering on behalf of the Owner as in the Old Testament. Conversely, the Owner presents Himself as an offering for the sheep.

* **“I am known by My own...as the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father”**. The Lord’s words ‘I will relate to My sheep and they will adhere to Me’ indicate how He will relate to His sheep and how they will respond to Him. It all begins with the manner by which the Lord and Father knows His true only begotten Son, the fruit of His essence; and how the Son knows the Father, who is the true God. He forms Him out of Himself. Similarly, if we strive to belong to Him, we will be considered part of His family and His children. Truly, we are His offspring (Acts 17:29) and we carry the name of the Son. It is all because of Him who proceeds from the Father and born of God, a true God, who became man and took our nature except for sin¹.

St. Cyril the Great

* He is the Father who knows that He begat Him. He also knows that He is born of Him. In brief, let us refer to the words of the Bible: ‘No one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son’, (Matt 11:27; John 10:15; 17:25)².

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

* The Lord Jesus Christ knows the Father Himself and we know Him through the Lord Jesus Christ...for He says: “No one has seen God at anytime. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him (John 1:18). This is how we get knowledge as He reveals it to us³.

* Remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Door and the Shepherd. He presents himself as the door in order to be revealed. He is the Shepherd too, who allows us to enter through Him. Truly, my brethren, as a Shepherd, the Lord grants his followers (members in his Body) the power to become like Him. Peter, Paul, all the other apostles, as well as all good bishops were shepherds. Yet, none called himself the “Door”. The Lord distinctly used the term to refer solely to Himself. In short, Paul did the work of a good shepherd as he preached about the Lord Jesus Christ. He could do so because he had already entered through the ‘Door’. However, the unruly flock began to cause divisions, and to open other doors... then Paul said that he was not a door: “was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor 1:12-13)

St. Augustine

**“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold,
Them also must I bring
And they will hear My voice;
There will be one flock and One Shepherd”**. [16]

The good Shepherd presents to us in this passage a confirmation of the unique and

¹ PG 74. 653 AB

² Essay 4:7

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 47:3

reciprocal knowledge that exists between the Father and the Son. It is the sign that indicates their unity in thought, will, and work (their oneness in the Divine Essence). This is a model of the knowledge that exists between Him and ourselves: we are His beloved followers who find their eternity by submitting to His will and power; and by working through and by Him! The Lord then speaks about the other sheep that are from other nations. These are the sheep that He will gather with those of the house of Israel to form one flock under One Shepherd.

The Lord confirms His positive role in acquiring the Gentiles as His people. He says: "...**Them also must I bring**" as indeed, He is the One who offers His Blood as the price for salvation. It is He who works, through His Spirit which is within people, to attract them to Himself. Yet, this does not occur against their will. He opens the hearts of His believers and so enables them to love all mankind. All are invited to enjoy the protection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. At the same time, the Lord confirms His all-inclusive plan in order to destroy the haughtiness of the Jews. They imagined the Messiah would come to them alone, and that they were the unique flock of God. Therefore, they considered the Gentiles as dogs among the flock.

By saying '**I must**' the Lord confirms the obligation of love. His Divine love obligates Him to offer His life gladly as a sacrifice to redeem His flock.

The Lord will bring everyone from all the nations to the true pasture- to the one holy Church. He will open the heavenly gates of the Church for all to enter in. After having been lost in the desert for so many years, the Lord will claim them all as His own since they are the flock that He has created. He is concerned about their salvation and offers His Blood as a ransom for their redemption. Thus he restores them to honor and glory.

These sheep, whatever their origin, for they will come from many Gentiles nations, will hear the voice of the One Shepherd and believe in Him. Faith is the outcome of listening. Therefore, they will be attracted to Him and be united as members in one body with one Head. The apostle says: 'There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope in your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, through all and in you all' (Eph 4:4-6). In this manner, the unity of the flock is achieved, or the unity of the church, through the oneness of the Shepherd.

* It is as though the Lord is saying: Why are you astonished to see these people following Me. My sheep hear My voice; when you see other sheep following me and listening to My voice, you will be greatly amazed.

* '**Them also must I bring**': the word '**must**' does not mean '**necessity**'. It is a proclamation of what will truly take place. It is as though the Lord is saying: 'Why are you astonished that these people follow Me when My sheep hear My voice? Indeed, you will see others following Me and hearing My voice and their amazement will be greater'. Do not be confused when the Lord says: '**not of this fold**' for the difference is in the law only. St Paul says: "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything" (Gal 5:6)

“Them also must I bring’ [16]. The Lord reveals that both have strayed and intermingled. They were without shepherds for the good shepherd had not yet come. He therefore proclaims their unity in the future when they will become one flock. This conforms with Paul’s declaration: “... so as to create in Himself one new man from the two” (Eph 2:15)¹.

St. John Chrysostom

*** ‘Tell me, O you whom I love, where you feed you flock? Where you make it rest at noon? For why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of your companions? (Song of Solomon 1:7)**

Where do you go to pasture, O Good Shepherd who carries all the sheep on your shoulders? Indeed, you are truly carrying one sheep on your shoulder and that is our human nature.

Show me the green pastures
Lead me to the still waters (Ps 23:2)
Guide me to filling food
Call me by my name (John 10:16) so that I may hear your voice. I am your sheep:
Grant me eternal life².

St. Gregory of Nicea

* The Lord confronted the Pharisees in various ways. In this passage, He enables them to perceive that they are about to lose their role as shepherds of His people as He Himself will take charge of their needs. He indicates that the intermingling between the flocks of the Gentiles and those who reveal good will among the people of Israel would be His concern and that His rule would embrace all and not the Jews alone. His light will shine over the whole world. He wants the true knowledge of God to be known, from the beginning, not to Israel alone, but that it may spread to all who live under the heavens³.

St. Cyril the Alexander

* There are two boats (Luke 5:2) out of which the Lord called His disciples. These point to the two nations (the Jews and the Gentiles). When they pulled in their nets, they caught a huge amount of fish that almost caused the nets to break. The Bible states: “They filled both boats”. The boats symbolize the Church. Although she consists of two nations yet they are united together in the Lord even though they come from distinct and different places.

We would like to mention here the two wives who had one husband, Jacob: Leah and Rachel are symbols for these two nations (Gen 29:23, 28). So are the two blind men who sat on the road side and the Lord granted them vision (Matt 20:36). If you search through

¹ Homilies on St John, 60:2. PG:353

² Song of Songs: St Gregory of Nicea. Translated into Arabic: Dr George Nawar, 1993, Sermon 2

³ PG 74:656 c.

the Bible carefully, you will find that the churches are really one church. They are not two and there are symbols to indicate this fact in many parts of the Bible¹.

St. Augustine

*Finally, the offerings that are presented to God proclaim that the gathering Christian adhere together through inseparable love. That explains why the Lord called Himself the Bread, whose body is formed out of the union of many grains. This is a reference to His people who are united into one. Similarly, the Lord calls the pressed wine, produced from the clusters of grapes and very small grapes, integrating together as His unique Blood. In the same manner, the Lord indicates that this mixture of sheep constitutes one unified people².

St. Caprianus, the Martyr

**“Therefore, My Father loves Me,
Because I lay down My life that I may take it again”. [17]**

Those who believe that the Father possesses the feature of divine Justice, while the Son has divine mercy are mistaken. These imagine that the Son is filled with love for mankind and that He has offered Himself as a sacrifice of love to remove the anger of the Father. Moreover, some Gnostics in the second Century believed that the God of the New Testament (the Son) came to save the world from the God of the Old Testament because He is an angry God! Here St. John confirms that the offering of the Lord Jesus Christ arises from the Father’s love to us. It is the fruit of the reciprocal love between the Father and the Son. This is because divine love is a feature of the Holy Trinity and is not solely a feature of one hypostasis to the exclusion of the other two in the Trinity.

The only begotten Son is the object of the Father’s love since the beginning of all time. He became incarnate in fact and enjoyed the Father’s love as the Son of Man who offered His life as a sacrifice on men’s behalf. He willingly became a servant and sacrificed Himself for the sake of the world in order to win and bring men to God, His Father. This is expressed in these words about the suffering and faithful servant: ‘Behold! My servant whom I uphold, My elect in whom My soul delights! I will put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles’ (Is 42:1).

Through the divine plan, He offered Himself as the ‘way’. By entering into Him, we share with Him the feature of practical sacrificial love and trustworthiness. Hence we participate in His crucifixion and death to become a source of joy to the Father through Him. Through his sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ redeemed mankind and brought them to his Father. By uniting with him, we are granted the glorious power of being sacrificed and crucified with Him.

The Lord speaks about His death when He says: “**I lay down My life**”; and about His resurrection as He says “**take it up again**”. He has the power and it would have been impossible for all the forces of darkness to act in any manner without His permission. He

¹ Sermon on the NT, 87:6

² Letter 67 Asturcia....:2

has the power to lay down His life and to take it up again. In this simple manner, the Lord presents death and resurrection: there is no fear in facing death and no astonishment when we contemplate His resurrection.

* **“....because I lay down My life”**: may the Jews no longer boast for they cause trouble yet they possess no power. Let them arouse trouble as much as they want; yet if I did not want to sacrifice My life, what would be the result of such disturbance?!

The Jews should not boast that they have won; for it is the Lord who has willingly sacrificed Himself...

You know the words of the Psalm: “I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me” (Ps 3:5)...

It is My pleasure to do so...

However, glory must be offered to God the Father; to encourage us to glorify our Creator, the Psalm says: ‘I awake for the Lord sustained me’. Do you think that the Lord Jesus Christ was deprived in any way of His power: whether the power to die or not, or the power to rise up again? These words could be misinterpreted if they are not properly understood... read this verse in the Bible: “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up”. The Evangelist adds and says: ‘But he was speaking of the temple of His body’, (John 2:19-21)¹.

* By the power of the Word, He lay down Himself and takes it up again by that same power of the Word².

* **“This command I have received from My Father” [18]**: The Word did not receive the command in words, for in the Son -The only Word of the Father- rests all commands. When it is said that the Son receives from the Father what the Son in essence possesses, the implication is that He grants Him the life already indwelling in Himself (John 5:26). Thus the Son has life in Himself. He does not lack any power which the Father has not given to his begotten Son.

The Father has not added any gifts and as though the Son was imperfect at birth. The Begotten of the Father is wholly perfect and He carries all the blessings at His birth. In this manner, the Son has been granted equality with the Father and He was never begotten in a state of inequality with Him³.

St. Augustine

* What other statement could reflect such a level of perfect human features than this. We consider our Lord a beloved One because He died on our behalf? What is the consequence? Was He not beloved before that? Did the Father begin to love Him and we

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 47:7

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 47: 13

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 47:14

were the cause of the Father's love to Him? They said that He was a stranger to the Father; that He was a deceiver who had come to kill and destroy. That is why the Lord told the Jews: "There is nothing that obliges Me to love you; yet the Father loves you. Besides, He loves me too because I lay down My life for you." The Lord wishes to underline a further point and that is that He did not come against his own will. If that were so, how does My act result in love?¹

St. John Chrysostom

**"No one takes it from Me,
But I lay it down of Myself.
I have power to lay it down,
I have power to take it again.
This command I have received from My Father". [18]**

He lays Himself down to take it up again, for He is the Holy God who will not see corruption (Ps 16:10). He became incarnate by His own will. He delivered Himself and so offered His Body to be a sacrifice. In this manner, He would receive it from the Father as a glorified Body. As a result, He opens to us the Door of the resurrection since He Himself is 'The Resurrection'. Through that, He has granted us the right to enjoy the glorified body that is enabled to share with the soul her heavenly glory. The Lord stresses that His death is achieved by His full willingness. He holds the power to die and to arise. Such a sacrifice is the reason for His joy as well as for the joy of the Father. He submitted the matter into the hands of the Father in total obedience in order to fulfill His will. The Father's will is one and the same as the Son's will.

*The Lord desired to eat the Passover (Luke 22:15); to willingly offer His life as well as take it up (John 10:18). Thus His desire has been fulfilled.

St. Augustine

*He lay down His life in order to glorify us. However, He possessed the divine authority to lay it down and to take it up too... His goodness is evident here: He voluntarily lays His life down- now you also observe His authority to take it again².

St. Ambrose

* As they often sought to kill Him, He told them: "Unless I want that to happen, you will work in vain". Through the first preposition, He gives proof to the second: Through His death, He gives proof to the Resurrection. This is what makes it all strange and amazing. Both have been put into a new perspective that defies the norm. Let us reflect carefully on the Lord's words: "I have power to lay it down". Who does not possess the power to lay down his own life? Any person has the ability to kill himself. However, The Lord said that this was not so, yet how can it be? "I have the power to lay it down in this manner and no one can do so without My will." Such an authority does not belong to mankind, for we do not have authority to lay it down by any means other than by killing ourselves. If we were to fall into the hands of enemies and they had the power to kill us; then they

¹ Homilies on St John, 60:2

² On the Christian Faith, Book 2:25-26

would kill us even against our will. This is not true in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ; for even though others conspired against Him, He still had the power not to lay His life down.

Indeed, He is the sole One with the power to lay down His life. He revealed that He possesses that same authority to take it up again.

Do you not observe how He used the first instance to prove the second one: How by His death, He revealed that His Resurrection cannot be questioned?¹

* The Lord says: **“This command I have received from My Father”**. If you were to ask the Lord: ‘What is this command’; He would answer: “It is that I die on behalf of the world.”

St. John Chrysostom

* The Lord informed us in advance that during His sufferings he would separate His soul from His body voluntarily: **“I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it of Myself. I have power to lay it down, I have power to take it again.” [17,18]**

Indeed, David the prophet – according to St. Peter’s great interpretation- perceived the Lord and said: ‘For you will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will you allow Your Holy One to see corruption’, (Ps 16:10; Acts 2:27,31). For His divinity -before His incarnation, after His incarnation, and after His sufferings- is not subject to change. He is, as always, the same at all times- with the same nature. He will remain as He is forever. When he became incarnated, the Almighty completed the plan for our benefit: He temporarily separated the soul from the body. However, this occurred without the separation of the Divine from either of them. Both (soul and body) which were once united, were reunited through Him once more. Hence he grants all humanity a new beginning; and an example of what will occur in the Resurrection of the dead. All the corrupt will be raised in incorruption and all the dead transformed into living beings².

St. Gregory, Bishop of Nicea

“Therefore, there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings”. [19]

This is the third time that a division occurs among those listening to the Lord Jesus Christ (John 7:43; 9:6). It is due to the enemy of goodness who is doing everything to spoil the Lord’s work.

The Lord spoke about His practical endeavor to sacrifice all His life for His sheep and to die that they may live. Some could not bear this supreme divine love and so they imagined the Lord was driven by the devil to speak these words, or that He had a

¹ Homilies on St John, 60:3

² Against Eunomius 2:13

deranged mind. While the Lord desires to grant us eternal glory, some resist and abuse Him. The Pharisees led the crowds to reject His words and therefore there was a division among them.

And many of them said: “He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?” [20]

Some accused the Lord of being possessed by a devil and that He was mad. So why listen to Him? He was unaware of His words and was just hallucinating. Until today, this is the same accusation raised against the Lord Jesus Christ. As He speaks through all those who witness to the truth and speak of the heavens and eternity; listeners still regard such speakers as unrealistic and deceptive

The Pharisees even belittled those listening to Him since they encouraged Him to spread His teachings.

Non-believers are not satisfied with merely rejecting the divine word. They ridicule Him and urge others to resist Him. Often, they consecrate their energies to oppose those who listen to Him and say: **“Why do you listen to Him?”**

* They became ice cold towards the sweetness of His Love and burned with the desire to harm Him. They stood at a great distance away from Him while they were right next to Him¹.

St. Augustine

* Every good virtue, and above all gentleness and meekness, purify us and make us to be different from wild beasts. Virtue makes us worthy to compete with the angels. That is why the Lord often speaks about this and commands us to be gentle and humble. He not only speaks about that, for He also teaches us these through His acts... these people called Him a demon and a Samaritan. They sought to kill Him and threw stones at Him... In spite of that, he did not reject them; and although they conspired against Him, He answered them with great humility².

St. John Chrysostom

**Others said:
“These are not the words of one who has a demon.
Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?” [21]**

This group could not tolerate the subjection of the Lord to humiliation and insult of being a demon; even though they might not have believed that He is the Messiah, the Son of God. Indeed, His teachings did not embody the violence and corruption of Satan and his kingdom. Moreover, Satan would be unable to do His Miracles and deeds.

*The Lord does not deny that He is possessed by a demon. He remained silent as He had

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 48:2

² Homilies on St John, 61:1

already presented through His deeds the proof of who He is. Therefore, there was no need to reprimand them especially that there were those who opposed the others. So the people were split and confronted each other. That is not the only reason why the Lord remained silent. He also tolerated their insults with great gentleness in order to teach us the degree of His gentleness and patience.

St. John Chrysostom

2- Unity with the Father

Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem and it was winter. [22]

Here we also find a discussion between the Jews and the Lord Jesus Christ within the temple. It was the **Feast of Dedication**, *Hanukkh*, in the winter. This feast celebrated the memory of Judas the Maccabean and his deeds in 164/165 B.C. He had purified the temple from the corruption that occurred under Antiochus Epiphanies, the Syrian, three years earlier (1 Mac 4:36-59). Antiochus had forced the Jews to worship idols and forbade the circumcision of children, and observation of the Sabbath. This Feast is mentioned in greater detail in 2 Mac 1:18. The Jews regarded the return to freedom as though they had risen from the dead to enjoy life again. In memory of this, they celebrated a yearly feast on the twenty-fifth day in the month of Kisleu. This parallels approximately the beginning of the month of December. The feast extends for nine days amid great lights. This feast is celebrated not only in Jerusalem, as other feasts are, but everyone celebrates in his own area as is the case with the Feast of Purim (Esther 9:19). As the Jews were celebrating the Feast of Dedication of the temple [22], the Lord proclaimed that He is the One whom God had dedicated and sent into the world [23].

And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch. [23]

Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him:

“How long do you keep us in doubt?

If you are the Christ, tell us plainly”. [24]

The Lord was walking in the temple, in Solomon's porch. This lies in the eastern part of the house of nations, which is the largest house in the area of the temple, it surrounds the inner buildings. This does not mean that it was Solomon who had constructed it since the temple had been destroyed and then rebuilt. However, it continued to be called **Solomon's temple** after the name of Solomon- the first one who had built it- due to his great fame.

The Lord walked alone as one would do who is interested in observing the actions of the Council of the Sanhedrin, They were gathered there; and where we are told: ‘God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the Gods. How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? (Ps 82:1-2). He walked there to offer help to every needy person. He answered all questions in order to open the door to all

who wished to walk with Him in the porch. On the eighth day of the Feast, the Lord was asked if He is the Messiah, and He answered:

- A- The flock know the real Messiah, His divinity and His mission [25-27].
- B- He saves His flock and gives them safety and peace [28-29]
- C- The Lord confirms the Oneness of Essence with the Father. The Jews realized that the Lord Jesus Christ was equating Himself with the Father [30-31].
- D- He defended His divinity through His works and through prophecies in the Holy Bible [32-39].
- E- If the Jews considered their judges to be gods [34-39] because they represented God, then why do they stumble and find difficulty to recognize the true Son of God whom the Father has sent? [36]

He had come to His house and His Father's house. He had come to serve all the souls who sought Him. However, they banded together, as one man, with wicked intention; and asked Him why He kept them in doubt and if He is the Christ to tell them so. Some interpreters consider that the question conveyed an evil accusation.

It is as though they were saying: Why are you drawing people's hearts and encouraging a spirit of cheating and deception? Absalom did that when he rebelled against David his father, and tried to snatch away his throne. Or as though they were saying: why do you deceive the simple-hearted in order to win them as your disciples? The question appeared to be good and as though they really wanted to learn the truth.

They knew that the Messiah would be a king. But they believed, according to their minds, that He would be an earthly king. Therefore, they asked Him to give them a clear answer to that effect. This would enable them to report Him as someone who is a rebel and traitor to the Roman authorities.

The Jewish leaders did not blame themselves for their own corrupt hearts and minds. They blamed the Lord who attracted the crowds and some of the leaders; therefore causing confusion and division in the council of the Sanhedrin. They lay the blame on the Lord and accused Him of leaving them in doubt and confusion. Rather than blame themselves for not accepting the truth, not wishing to learn, they blamed Him. It is as though the Jewish leadership was seeking to pick a quarrel with Him: "How long do you keep us in doubt"? How long will you attract our souls? Be clear and proclaim your Identity! His works bore witness that He is the awaited Messiah. However, they probably needed a clear declaration in order to convict Him once He would state that He is the awaited Messiah.

Some interpreters find that the question was a true reflection of their inner conflict. On the one hand, they sensed His holiness- perceived through His deeds; and they recognized His stature. On the other hand, they feared for their positions; and their corrupt souls prevented them from accepting Him. They wanted a Messiah shaped according to their whims; one who would achieve and grant their temporal aspirations.

They desired to appear as individuals who sought knowledge. Although St. John the Baptist witnessed clearly before them; the heavens declared the Lord's identity. The Lord also spoke to them and declared that He is the light of the world, the good Shepherd and the giver of eternal life. Moreover, all His deeds witnessed to His Person.

Some interpreters find that the word 'us' is used here to denote 'our lives'. They draw on the use the Lord made when He said: "I have power to lay (**My life**) down" to convey His death. Some Jews may have felt that the Lord's teachings about loving and forgiving one another would utterly destroy their lives as a Jewish nation. Caiaphas expressed this when He said: "If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, the Romans will come and take away our place and our nation" [11:48).

*The Lord perceived their intentions when they asked their wicked question. They had surrounded Him and asked: "How long do you keep us in doubt". It appeared as though they asked out of zeal to learn. However, their purpose was devious and corrupt and filled with hidden ulcers... they were not asking with the intent to learn which seemed to be their goal¹.

St. John Chrysostom

Jesus answered them:

"I told you and you do not believe.

The work that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me". [25]

The Jews asked for a clear and frank answer- a yes or a no- This was impossible since their concept of the 'Messiah' was totally different from those in His divine Plan. In spite of that, the Lord Jesus Christ put His finger on the problem: They did not lack the knowledge, but they lacked the will to believe in His works that witnessed to His Person (John 14:11). So the problem lay within them and not in the need to reveal Himself to them. In order to efface their excuses, the Lord indicated that He had informed them previously by words as well as by deeds. He had proclaimed previously that He is the Son of God and the Son of Man who possesses the power of life within Himself; and that He has the Authority to judge... Does this not refer to the Messiah? They pretended that the Lord had left them in doubt; but He confirmed that they were not willing to believe. He referred to His deeds and His life- for He is the One with no sin- His deeds and His acts testify to the reality of His unique Person.

On the one hand, the Lord desires to present all true knowledge- on condition that the person seeking it is sincere- just as He did with the Samaritan woman (4:26); and with the man born blind (29:35-38). Some of His followers recognized Him from the start (1:41); while others gathered around Him when they realized that He is the awaited Messiah. The Lord had previously proclaimed to the Jews: "... before Abraham was, I am" (8:58), and consequently they wanted to stone Him. They had heard enough about His identity and so they accused Him of blasphemy since He had equated Himself to God (5:18).

¹ Homilies 61. PG 59:361

* The Lord here reveals to the Jews that His deeds speak more loudly and more clearly than His voice and words.

St. John Chrysostom

**“But you do not believe,
Because you are not of My sheep,
As I said to you”.** [26]

The Lord puts the blame on them because they had deprived themselves from belonging to his flock. Therefore, how could they recognize Him? They did not belong to His flock due to their lack of faith and not due to lack of evidence to His Person. They had no excuse. There existed a flock that believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as a result of His words and deeds. They recognized His voice which gives meaning to their lives. This flock condemned unbelievers who lacked faith and had not joined the Lord’s flock. Moreover, they neither recognized Him as the awaited Messiah, nor His voice. Consequently, they followed other shepherds.

* It is as though the Lord was telling the Jews the following: ‘You have not followed Me because you do not belong to my flock and not because I am not a Shepherd. The Lord said these words in order to encourage them to want to become His own sheep. He wants to wake them up and plant this desire in them¹.

St. John Chrysostom

*The Lord answered and stated that He is the Son of God. How did He answer? Listen: **Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep”** [25-26]... they are sheep through faith. They are sheep by following the Shepherd. They do not belittle their Savior. They are sheep as they enter through the Door and as they go in and out to find pasture, and they are sheep as they enjoy eternal life. But what is the implication of these words: **“...you are not of My sheep”** [26]. The Lord perceived that they had chosen eternal destruction and would not receive eternal life through His Blood!²

St. Augustine

**“My sheep hear My voice
And I know them
And they follow Me”** [27]

The Lord presented to them the marks of His flock. These are they that hear His voice and recognize that it belongs to their Shepherd. They know the sound of His love and care. Therefore they adhere to Him and get acquainted with Him in new depths. They qualify to be recognized by Him and as the apostle says: “The Lord knows those who are His” (2 Tim 2:19).

¹ Homilies on St John, 61:2

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 48:4

*This is the pasture- remember the words of the Lord earlier: **“They will go in and out and find pasture”**. We enter into the faith and go out when we die. As we enter through the door of faith, we- as believers- quit the body. By going out through the same door we can find pasture; that good pasture is called eternal life. In this pasture, no leaf is dry for all plants are green and flourishing. There is vegetation that is said to be evergreen and it is found and exists only there¹.

St. Augustine

**“And I give them eternal life,
And they shall never perish;
Neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand”.** [28]

In order to convince them of the misery that sets in as a result of rejecting to adhere and belong to Him, the Lord presents the positive aspect. These are the gifts of a blessed life which His flock enjoys. In other words, they enjoy a heavenly eternal life. In contrast, life on earth is full of fatigue and pain. His flock are protected by the Holy Spirit and the enemy cannot touch them. The Psalmist accordingly says: ‘This poor man cried out and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him and delivers them’ (Ps 34:6-7). The Lord knows His flock well: He knows their needs as well as the resistance of the devil who faces them. However, they are protected in Him.

The Lord offers here the gift of eternal life to those who believe in Him. Besides, He reveals the security that they enjoy in Him; for they are kept safely in His hand. This is something they would not enjoy if they changed to the teachings of the Pharisees. By joining the Lord’s flock, believers are granted protection which they could never get through any other means. St. Paul says in this context: ‘For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable’ (Rom 11:29)

The flock of the Lord are a gift that the Father delivers into the hands of the Son; and they remain safely in His hands as well as they rest in the hands of the Father. In other words, they are protected by the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ as well as of the Father.

The word **‘perish’** is used here to indicate the fearsome eternal destruction. Consequently, being saved from such a destiny cannot be over evaluated. The word ‘snatch’ indicates violent action used against a person. No one can protect us from such violence except the powerful Hand that holds and shields us.

* **‘... shall never perish’** [28].... what can the wolf do? What can a burglar- a thief do? They can only destroy those who are singled out for destruction. The apostle says of such sheep: ‘The Lord knows those who are His’ (2 Tim 2:19); and ‘for whom He foreknew, He also predestined... whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called these He also justified; whom He justified, these He also glorified’ (Rom 8:29-30). The wolf does not snatch any of these sheep, neither can a burglar steal them, nor can a thief kill

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 48:6

them¹.

St. Augustine

**“My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all;
No one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand”. [29]**

St. Ambrose explains that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of the Father as well as of the Son. He is the Hand of both Father and Son. Hence, the sheep hear the Lord’s voice and no one can snatch them from the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit².

*The Lord Jesus Christ says: **“... no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand”**: in this manner He indicates that His hand and His Father’s are one in terms of power and in essence for they are the same.

His words **“...neither shall any one snatch them out of My hand, My Father, who has given them to Me...”** are intended for the Jews so that they would not accuse Him of being disobedient to God.

St. John Chrysostom

* Are the Father and Son one hand, or can we say that the Son Himself is the Father’s hand? If we understand that ‘the hand’ stands for power, then the Father and Son have one and the same power. However, if we understand it in the same way used by the prophet: ‘... to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ (Is 53:1); then the arm of the Father is the Son Himself. Yet, we should not understand this as though God had a human form, or that He has human physical members. Indeed, we should comprehend that all things were made through Him³.

St. Augustine

I and My Father are one”. [30]

The Lord does not say ‘I and My Father are identical’ But ‘I and My Father are one’. This indicates a union of love and work as well as a union in the essence. Therefore it is a unique unity which no other creature can attain. Indeed, this union is the supreme model of union to which an adherer to God aspires as he seeks to unit with Him.

This discussion about unity is related to the care of the Son and Father watching over a believer: no one can snatch a believer out of the hands of the Son or the Father. It is as though divine care is a unique entity of love between the two icons of the Father and the Son. The ultimate purpose of this care is to make believers carry this icon/hypostasis of unity.

*The Lord Jesus Christ proclaims: **“I and My Father are One”**. He uses the word **“One”** as there is no separation of authority or of nature. Yet, he uses in another place the

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 48:6

² Of the Holy Spirit, 16:114

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 48:7

word **“We”**: He does so in order to make us realize that the Father and the Son are united in one nature without mingling in the elements/hypostasis: thus we believe that the perfect Father gave birth to the perfect Son¹.

St. Ambrose

* Understanding needs to come after faith so that it is the reward of faith...²

* The Lord says and that truly: **“I and My Father are One”**. What does ‘One’ imply? That we are one in nature and in essence³.

St. Augustine

* **“I and My Father are One”** [30]. The Lord then adds: **“... the Father is in Me and I in Him” [Jn10:38]**, in order to clarify, on the one hand, the Divine Unity; on the other hand, the Unity in Essence. Hence, both are One. Yet, this is not like a (one) object that can be split into two. Moreover, it is not like someone who is called by two names- once ‘the Father’ and another time ‘the Son’.... for the Father is Father and cannot be the Son and the Son is the Son and cannot be the Father.... Thus they are two beings or hypostasis.

Nevertheless, they are one in nature: for the begotten is not unlike His Father: He is in His image and all that the Father has are the Son’s too (John 16:15). Therefore, the Son is not another God since He did not come from outside... Otherwise there would be many other gods. Both are one in their being, one in nature and one in divine unity. As we have explained, the rays are the light and not a source other than the sun or other than the light. They do not result from participation with the light but they are wholly and intrinsically begotten of the light, so such a child is ultimately one with the light- no one can say that there are two lights. Although the sun and the rays are two things, yet the rays of the sun that give light to everything through the rays are one⁴.

St. Athanasius the Apostolic

The Jews could tolerate the Lord Jesus Christ so far; but they could no longer bear to hear Him say: ‘I and My Father are One’. you can see that the Jews understood what the Arians could not. They were angered by this saying and felt that He could not have said these words ‘I and My Father are One’ unless it implied equality between the Father and the Son⁵.

* The Word of God came to mankind to transform them into gods; therefore, what would the Word of God who resides Himself in God be other than God?

If mankind become gods through the Word of God and if by having fellowship with Him they become gods, then could the one through Him they have access to fellowship be any other but God?

¹ On the Christian Faith, Book 1:1:9

² Sermon on NT Lessons, 89:1

³ Sermon on NT Lessons, 98:2

⁴ Discourses against the Arians, 1:23 (3,4)

⁵ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 48:8

If the lights that shine are gods, could the light source that gives light not be God?

You have been enlightened by the light, therefore you have become numbered as children of God. If you drew away from the light you would fall into doubt and find yourselves in darkness. However, that light does not come near (to be enlightened) for He cannot withdraw from Himself¹.

*Sometimes we may say: “We live in God and He lives in us”; but can we say: ‘We and the Father are one?’ We live in God because God embraces us; God lives in us because we have become altars of God... Yet, could you say: “He who has seen has seen the Father” in the same way that His only begotten Son said it (John 14:9)... ‘I and My Father are one’? Get acquainted with the supreme distinction of the Lord and with the gift granted to the servant. **The distinction of the Lord is equality with the Father and the gift of the servant is fellowship with the Savior².**

St. Augustine

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him’ [31]

For the second time, His opponents wanted to stone the Lord Jesus Christ. According to them, He had blasphemed and so deserved to be stoned. He had claimed His oneness with God. The Jews did not comprehend His real identity and therefore could not bear His words.

The unique unity between the Father and the Son, which is at the core of the divine Shepherd’s work, is the source of our inner enlightenment, of our comfort and our inner peace. This unity was unacceptable to the Jews - indeed they considered this as blasphemy against God.

The sin of blasphemy is a killing and deadly sin in the Jewish faith. There is no need to bring the accused to judgment or to hear his defense and the person is punished immediately. The Mishnah mentions that if a person steals a holy vessel, he can be punished without judgment by those who are eager to do so. The same thing applies if a priest serves before a defiled altar. The Mishnah states that his brothers, the other priests, do not bring him before a court but he is carried out of the temple by the younger priests who then smash his brain with clubs. It is a terrific sin that deserves a horrible punishment. With that same understanding the Jews considered that there was no need to bring to Lord to be judged. Indeed, they went outside the temple building to find stones, picked them up and carried them to stone Him. They did not have any consideration for the holy place itself or that it was not right to execute stoning in its vicinity. Their anger was so strong and their pretense to be zealous for God’s glory drove them to behave in this manner.

Jesus answered them

**“Many good works I have shown you from My Father.
For which of those works do you stone Me?” [32]**

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 48:10

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 48:10

The Lord did His divine acts as a living testimony to His identity. These are stronger than discussing and using words. Indeed, these are an easier means to understand the truth.

What does the Lord intend to use the words **‘from My Father’**? Would it not be enough to have said: ‘Many good works I have done?’ he actually intended to confirm that He and the Father work together. The same work the Son does proceeds from the Father. If the Holy Son declares that His good acts come from the Father then how much more should the weak creation declare that all goodness found in us to the grace of God that works within us?

The Lord defied them saying: “...which of you convicts Me of sin?” (John 8:46), and no one could answer back. So how could they stone someone whom they could not convict for even one sin?

The Lord says: **“For which of those works”**, in other words ‘which kind of acts’ that no other creature in heaven or on earth can do since they are acts pertinent to God Himself.

**The Jews answered Him, saying:
“For a good work we do not stone you,
But for blasphemy and because You, being a man, make yourself God” [33]**

The Jews could not deny the works done by the Lord. However, they were unable to tolerate His words as they considered that He had dared to equate Himself to God. They said to Him: **“You, being a man, make yourself God”**; whereas the Evangelist proclaims throughout his whole gospel that the Lord Jesus Christ became Man while He is truly God.

Jesus answered them: “Is it not written in your law; I said you are gods?” [34]

The word **‘your law’** is used here in its broad sense as it refers to the whole Old Testament. The quote of the Lord is taken from Psalm 82:6; and it is directed at the Hebrew Judges who represented the authority of God. The Psalmist goes on to say: ‘But you shall die like men and fall like one of the princes’ (Ps 82:7). Since this was said about the Judges of the Old Testament, then what could be said about the Lord Jesus Christ whom God has sanctified and consecrated to save the world?

In using the word **‘your law’**, the Lord does not intend to break away from the law. Indeed, He regards it to be the Word of God which cannot be criticized or dismissed [35].

* God has not only created us from nothingness, but He has granted us unconditional life with God through the free gift of the Logos. However, mankind has rejected spiritual matters and has become corrupted through Satan’s deceitful lies. Consequently, their corruption has doomed them to die and have become corrupt in nature.

Yet, God planned to open an escape from that natural condition by granting mankind fellowship with the Logos. In this manner, their goodness is being restored.

When the Logos lives among mankind, they will not die on account of their natural state of corruption. In this context, Wisdom says: ‘When God created us, He did not intend for us to die; He made us like Himself. It was the Devil’s jealousy that brought death into the world...’ (Wisdom 2:23)¹.

* The Lord Jesus Christ became Man in order to make us gods. He revealed Himself in the flesh so that we may comprehend the plan of the invisible Father. He tolerated humiliation from men, so that we may inherit everlasting life. While He Himself was untouched by harm in any manner- since He is above all sufferings and incorruptible, as He is the Logos and God Himself, He comforts men who suffer and all those for whom He underwent all this humiliation. He protects them throughout all pain they endure for His sake².

* Indeed, the Lord became incarnated so that we may become gods. He proclaimed Himself by appearing in the flesh to enable us to comprehend the thought of the invisible God. He accepted shame to grant us the inheritance of incorruption³.

St. Athanasius the Apostolic

* “You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High”: For this end the Word of God became incarnated. The Son of God became the Son of Man. Hence, when the man enters into the Logos and accepts to be adopted, he becomes the Son of God. There is no other way that we can attain incorruption and immortality. But how could we have acquired incorruption and immortality, unless incorruption swallow up corruption and immortality annihilate death and so enabling us to be adopted as children?⁴

St. Irenaeus

* Listen to the words of the Psalmist: ‘I have said: You are gods; all of you are children of the Most High’ (Ps 82:6). God calls us with this intention: so that we do not become human beings. Rather, God wants to be in a better condition when we are no longer human. This is possible if we first recognize the reality that we are human beings, **only then can we humbly progress to such heights**. We need to be cautious and should not believe that we are worthy while we are unworthy. Otherwise, we will not only lose what we are but we will also not attain the stature we do not possess⁵.

St. Augustine

**“If He called them gods, to whom the Word of God came
And the Scripture cannot be broken,**

¹ On the Incarnation 4 (5)

² De Incarn. 54 (3)

³ Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi, 54. PG 25:192 BC

⁴ Adv. Haer 3:19 (1)

⁵ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate1:4

**Do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world,
“You are blaspheming”; because I said: “I am the Son of God?” [36]**

* What are the Lord’s words concerning such an attitude: ‘ If those who receive this honor through grace do not find it wrong to call themselves gods, then how is it that you reprimand Me who naturally am the Son of God?’¹

St. John Chrysostom

* Someone may wonder: If the Father has sanctified the Lord Jesus Christ, was there a time when He was not sanctified? The Father has sanctified Him in the same manner by which He conceived Him. When He was begotten, He received the power of being sanctified for the Father conceived the Son in holiness. If the Holy One (the Son) had been sanctified before, then how could we say about God the Father “... hallowed be your Name...”?²

St. Augustine

**“If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe in Me. [37]
But if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works,
That you may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in Him”. [38]**

The Lord Jesus Christ invites His opponents to consider and examine His works so that when they perceive that they are done by His Father, they would believe in Him. By examining His deeds, they will know and believe. The verb occurs in the Greek language and conveys ‘you will begin to know’ or ‘you will come to know’. Some writers interpret the word ‘you may believe’ as ‘you will continue to know these matters’. Hence, it is not enough to know the beginning of such knowledge; but it is necessary to continue learning.

* Believe, therefore, that God’s presence is evident in (the Lord’s deeds). Do you believe in deeds and not belief in the presence (of the Doer)? Then from where do the deeds spring if they are not preceded by His presence?³

St. Ambrose

* Do you not see how the Lord testifies and gives proof that there is nothing in Him that denotes that He is less than the Father and that He is equal to Him in every way. The similarity in the deeds, and as they speak for themselves, act as a proof of His uncontested authority⁴.

St. John Chrysostom

**Therefore they sought again to seize Him,
But He escaped out of their hand. [39]**

¹ Hom 61. PG 59:364

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 48:10

³ On the Mysteries, 3:8

⁴ Hom 62. PG 59:369

Instead of speaking with Him, their only answer was to make another attempt to catch and kill Him.

**‘And He went again beyond the Jordan
To the place where John was baptizing at first
And there He stayed’. [40]**

Of their own full freedom, they were able to accuse Him unjustly, to plan to catch and kill Him, and to arouse anger against Him. However, they could not overcome Him and achieve their plan because they had not been allowed by God to do so up to that moment.

* It was the habit of the Lord Jesus Christ to withdraw quickly after speaking strong words. He did so to alleviate their anger. By distancing Himself, the pan of their fury would calm down. This is what the Lord did at that time.

St. John Chrysostom

*They had failed to catch Him as they had lost their grasp on faith. The Word became flesh, yet it was not hard to save His body from physical hands. In order to grasp the Word in your mind you need to perceive the Lord Jesus Christ correctly.¹

St. Augustine

3- The Lord Jesus Christ at the Place of His Baptism

**Then many came to Him and said:
“John performed no sign,
But all the things John spoke about this Man were true” [41]**

Due to the hostility they displayed towards the Lord Jesus Christ, He traveled to the other side of the Jordan and to the place where St. John the Baptist use to baptize those who came to him. He went there not out of fear He would be killed. He had come to the world to save the world through the Cross; but that had to be at a specific time.

That place held great memories for the Lord Jesus Christ and his disciples. This where St. John the Baptist had witnessed about the Lord, saying: “Behold! The lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”. Probably, those who lived in the area still remembered and repeated St. John’s testimony. St. John had been martyred and passed away, yet the fruit of his testimony appear even after he had left this world: the inhabitants remembered and hade believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. St. John had not done one single miracle, yet they believed his testimony without the need for miracles.

*Since the Jews had believed St. John the Baptist who had not done even one miracle, then it would be logical to find them believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Just watching His miracles indicates the sublime nature and greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

St. John Chrysostom

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 48:11

And many believed in Him. [42]

* Due to His many deeds they were attracted to Him. Moreover, they remembered St. John the Baptist's words when he said: "He who is coming after me is mightier than I" (Matt 3:11). They had also heard the Voice from the heavens and had seen the Holy Spirit that had appeared as a dove.

St. John Chrysostom

Chapter 10

May You carry Me in the Palm of Your Hands and Wash me in Your Blood!

* In the midst of the persistent roaring world,
I see a glowing face; I hear a gentle inviting voice!
It is Your face, who is fairer than mankind!
It is Your unique voice that attracts all my feelings!
You are the good Shepherd, the beloved of my soul!

* You are the Shepherd, the Door and the Guardian.
You are the Shepherd who walks before me, in order to kill every savage wolf.
You are before me to lead me into your unique heavenly pastures.
You are before me to ascend on the Cross, in order to wash me with Your pure Blood!
You carry the staff to kill my enemies and with it You punish me tenderly and gently;
You lead me to come into Your embrace. You carry a flute to proclaim Your joy in me.
Then Your joy overwhelms me, O source of all happiness.

* You are the Door and the Guardian
How can we enter into the Father's embrace except through You?
O Door of the Divine embrace?
Is there any other door but You by which to enter?
You are the Guardian, You lead me to You. You enclose me within You.
Thus the enemy cannot enter in with me or touch me!

* How can I repay such unique and supreme care?
Grant me union with You, and then I will become a shepherd through and with You!
I will love You and so shepherd Your sheep through and with You!
My joy will be complete as many will be saved and I will find pleasure in sharing with
You the spirit of true shepherding.

* Your care has made you willing to die and rise again.
By Your power you sacrificed Yourself and delight those in the graves.
Grant me the glory of sharing Your Cross with You.
Grant me the goodness as I enjoy Your Resurrection!

* On the Feast of Dedication You walked in Solomon's porch.
Now the porch of the King of Peace is within me.
May You enter and walk, so that I may walk with You and hear Your voice
May You celebrate a constant feast of renewal upon Your altar that is within me!

* May you proclaim within me that You are One and equal with the Father.
I believe, O my Lord, for I have seen and enjoyed Your deeds!

Your works witness to You
You have turned my grave into an altar
You have transformed my heart into Your heaven.
You have turned my darkness into light.
You have proclaimed Your presence within me!
What more could I desire!

* * *

CHAPTER ELEVEN

RAISING LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD

THE GIVER OF THE RESURRECTED LIFE

St. John tells us the story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead which probably occurred on the Saturday preceding the Lord's entry into Jerusalem. Thus this event took place a short while just before the last week of the life of Jesus on earth. **The miracle is not recorded in the other three Gospels; and some explain that this is because Lazarus was still alive when these were written. The belief was that such reporting could have caused him many problems. As for St. John, he wrote his Gospel after Lazarus had passed away.** The Evangelist presents the miracle to reveal the person of the Lord Jesus Christ: He is the Resurrection, the Giver of Life; and the Conqueror of death. The Lord was ready to deliver Himself to death and to be buried in a grave; yet He wanted to confirm His authority to lay down as well as raise Himself only when He wanted. The miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead is the last miracle that St. John records; and he gives many details in his account of it.

The event takes place in a small village called Bethany or House of suffering or of pain. There was a family that the Lord Jesus loved very much and who lived there. This family opened their hearts as well as their home to the Lord Jesus. They wanted Him to rest there; and they knew how to talk with Him. In the midst of the bitter and dangerous pain caused by death, the two sisters sent Him a message: "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick" [3]. The sisters did not ask for the healing of their brother. Moreover, they did not ask the Lord to leave His service and visit them in their difficult circumstances.

Lazarus died and the Lord told His disciples: "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." The Lord called death as a sleep for any person who adhered to the Lord Jesus Christ -to the Resurrection- is not touched by death. Death for such a person is seen as a blessing and a time of rest.

Four days after the death of Lazarus, the Lord Jesus Christ came to the Village. Martha met Him and began to reproach Him: "**Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now, I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You**" [22]. The Lord assured her that her brother will rise up again. She proclaimed her faith that her brother would rise again at the last day. Therefore the Lord told her: '**I am the resurrection and the life**' [25].

The Lord could not bear to see the tears of the sisters and '**Jesus wept**' [35]. He sympathizes with us! He is amazing in His love for mankind. He could not bear to see their tears, and He says: "Turn your eyes away from Me, for they have overcome Me" (song of Solomon 6:5). He went to the grave and asked the mourners to roll away the stone that ceiled the grave; so Martha said: "**Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days!**"

St. Augustine comments that the raising of Lazarus from the dead is not a source

of amazement, but rather a source of joy to us. He explains that it is not surprising that the One who has the power to create people into the world is able to raise the dead, yet what makes us rejoice is that He grants us the resurrection and blesses us with salvation¹.

St. Augustine notes that the three other Gospels mention that the Lord raised three people from the dead. He finds that, these miracles carry implications that relate to our salvation: the Lord raised these bodies to indicate the resurrection of our souls.

The Lord raised the daughter of one of the rulers of the synagogue. She was lying in her home (Mark 5:41-43)...may everyone be concerned about his soul; for in sin there is death: sin is the death of the soul. Sometimes we commit sin just in our thoughts. You might find pleasure in what is evil and agree to go along. You are mistaken; for this agreement brings you death. However, it is an inner death since evil thoughts have not matured or become transformed into committed acts as yet. The Lord proclaims that He wishes to resurrect such souls to life. He raised this young girl who had not been carried out for burial yet. She lay dead at home. It is as though sin was not apparent till that time in her life.

Nevertheless, if you not only embrace a feeling of pleasure in evil thoughts but also engage in evil acts, it can be concluded that the dead one has been carried outside the door. Then you would be carried outside and actually carried to your grave. In spite of that, the Lord still raised such a dead one to life when He restored the youth alive to his widowed mother. Repent when you sin for the Lord will raise you up and restore you to the church who is your mother.

The third example of death is that of Lazarus. This is a serious case of death that is particularly marked by sin turned into a habit of committing evil. Falling into sin is one issue, whereas committing sin out if habit is another matter. A person who falls into sin, but promptly submits to reform, rises up to life quickly for he has not fallen into the net of evil habit and has not been laid into the grave so far. However, a person who has submitted to the habit of evil doing is someone who has been buried and of whom this saying is true: **‘there is stench’**. This is because that person is characterized by bad reputation. All such people have become used to commit crimes and have abandoned morality... in spite of that, the power of the Lord Jesus Christ is no less overwhelming and is able to restore life to them. We know and see people, daily, who become transformed and move away from the most evil habits. They become receptive to a kind of better life more than those who blame them... may no one despair or give in².

* Out of all the miraculous deeds done by the Lord Jesus Christ, the raising of Lazarus from the dead occupies a rank of first importance in the preaching of His Word³.

St. Augustine

1- Informing the Lord that Lazarus is sick

1- 16

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate cf. 49:1

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 49:3

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 49:1

2- The Lord travels towards the home of Lazarus family.	17- 33
3- Raising Lazarus from the dead.	34- 44
4- Effects of raising Lazarus from the dead.	45- 57

1- Informing the Lord that Lazarus is Sick

**Now a certain man was sick
Lazarus of Bethany,
The town of Mary and her sister, Martha. [1]**

Lazarus: Probably the Hebrew name is ‘Eliazer’ that means ‘Jehovah helps him’.

Bethany: An Aramaic name that means ‘house of misery’ or ‘of suffering’. It is the name of a village in the south east of Mount Olives- about two miles from Jerusalem. Today, it is known as Elazaria as a reference to the raising of Lazarus from the dead. We read about Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38 etc... that they lived in Galilee. If this is true, then they probably did not change their residence there at that time. It is clear that that home keeper was Martha, the other sister, who hosted her younger sister. St. John mentions Mary first though she is the younger one. The reason could be that Mary was the better known in the early church. She is the one who washed the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ with sweet smelling oil (12:3). Besides, she is the one who chose the ‘good part which will not be taken away from her’ (Luke 10:42).

Mary: A Hebrew name that means ‘rebellion’; **Martha:** The feminine word for the Aramaic word that means ‘educator/lady’

**It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil
And wiped His feet with her hair,
Whose brother Lazarus was sick. [2]**

* This Mary is not the adulterous woman mentioned in the Gospel of St. Luke (7:37-50); for the one mentioned there is one who had committed many bad deeds. The Mary mentioned here by St. John is an honorable woman steadfast in virtue. She persevered in hospitality to the Lord¹.

St. John Chrysostom

**Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying:
“Lord, behold, he whom you love is sick”. [3]**

No prayer could be simpler than this short prayer. It is full of confidence and submission of the matter into hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were satisfied to present the case to Him without asking for anything, without requesting the Lord to come to solve the matter and support them. Probably, they did not ask Him to go to them because of what they had heard a little bit earlier (in the previous chapter) how the Jews in Jerusalem had tried to stone Him; and how He had gone beyond the Jordan to disable

¹ Homilies on St John, 62:1

them from achieving their intentions. Therefore the sisters did not wish to put Him in a dangerous, life threatening situation. At the same time, Lazarus was a friend of the Lord's and so they were satisfied with informing Him of their brother's sickness. They were confident that the Lord would definitely do something.

The sisters neither mentioned the kind of sickness, nor their relationship to Lazarus who was their brother. They just indicated that he is the one **'whom You love'**. We know that the Lord loves all mankind; everyone could sense His gentleness, tenderness and love. However, the expression used by the sisters reveals that the Lord Jesus Christ devoted a special loving relationship with the sick. The sisters did not indicate in their message if the sickness was serious. They might have done so to avoid disturbing Him.

* Why did they not act as the honorable centurion- He left his sick one and went to the Lord. Why they did not go to Him instead of sending Him a message? They had great trust in the Lord and they had strong family ties. Besides, they were weak women overwhelmed with sorrow¹!

St. John Chrysostom

* It is enough for you to know, for You are not like those who love and forget. If God did not love sinners, He would not have descended from the heavens to the earth².

St. Augustine

**When Jesus heard that, He said:
"This sickness is not unto death,
But for the glory of God,
That the Son of God may be glorified through it". [4]**

The Lord proclaimed that this death was not a final one in this life. It was a temporary one that was allowed so that God may be glorified through His power to raise the dead.

Some scholars consider that the word **'glorified'** is used here to indicate an act that a person willingly does due to his love and wish to serve others even though it appears to be below his actual rank. This word is often used in this sense throughout St. John's Gospel. Such acts do not impose obligations on others. This is especially true when the Lord speaks about the crucifixion as the glory of the Son and the Father, where the Son sacrifices Himself to grant the redemption and eternal glory of sinners. Our Savior is eternally driven by His love to work miracles. Often the subject of the raising of Lazarus from the dead is associated with the glory of the Lord's cross for this miracle anticipated and prepared for His eventual crucifixion.

* We appropriately get astonished at the sisters of Lazarus. After they had heard that their brother's sickness would not end in death. They found him dead. However, they were not shaken when events proved contrary to that. In spite of everything, they hurried to the

¹ Homilies on St John, 62:1

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 49;5

Lord and did not utter a bad word¹.

* Notice that the Lord states that the glory due to Him and to His Father is one and the same: **‘for the glory of God’**; then Lord goes on to say: **‘that the Son of God may be glorified through Him’**.

St. John Chrysostom

* Glorifying God does not add anything to the honor due to Him. Yet it adds to our honor, this is clarified by the Lord’s words: **‘not unto death’**. For even that visible death is not death in itself but rather was used to perform a miracle leading people to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, they would escape from the real death².

St. Augustine

‘Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus’. [5]

The reference here is to the Lord’s love for Martha as she is the older sister, then to Mary and Lazarus. The Lord felt comfortable with the family as a whole. Each member felt he had a personal relationship with the Lord who cared and loved them. Each member felt that he had a special place in the Lord’s embrace and love.

* If you were to ask: ‘Why did the Evangelist state clearly here that the Lord loved Lazarus?’ Our response would be: ‘So that we may not be disappointed nor abandon the Lord when good men, who are steadfast in virtue and loved by God, get sick³’

St. John Chrysostom

* One is sick and two are sorrowful: however, the One who loves them is the Rescuer of the sick. He is even more powerful as He raises the dead and comforts those who mourn⁴.

St. Augustine

**“So when He heard that he was sick,
He stayed two more days in the place where He was”. [6]**

With the Lord Jesus Christ, there is for everything an appropriate time. It depends on His divine thought and not on our own human timing. At the wedding in Cana, His mother had told Him ‘they have no wine’ (John 2:3). He answered: “My hour has not yet come”, (John 2:4). In these circumstances, we would expect that the Lord would hurry and go to Bethany to support His loved ones. However, we find that He remains where He was for two days. **He knows the right time for every work.**

In all the previous miracles, the Lord was concerned with underling His love to all sufferers. Here, He delays as He wishes to underline a certain fact through His love for the whole family. He wanted to confirm that He is ‘the Resurrection’ for the time of His

¹ Hom 62. PG 59:369

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 49:6

³ Homilies on St John, 62:1

⁴ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 49:7

death and resurrection were about to happen. That is why the Lord did not hurry to heal Lazarus of his sickness, and He did not go immediately after his death. Indeed, He let him remain in the tomb until the fourth day and until his body decayed. In this manner, everyone who grants life and resurrection even after the body has decayed.

* Why did He stay? So that Lazarus may breathe his last breath and be buried. In that manner, no one could claim that he had not died and that he was just in a deep sleep; or that he had fainted but had not died. For this reason the Lord waited for two days when decay takes place and the sisters would state that there is ‘**a stench**’ [39]¹.

St. John Chrysostom

**Then after this, He said to the disciples:
“Let us go to Judea again.” [7]**

By telling His disciples: ‘**Let us go to Judea again**’ [7], the Lord underlines His mercy even to those who are undeserving. Although Judea was not ready to receive Him, He requests to go another time to those who had rejected Him. The Lord does not cease to offer opportunities to every soul, even though it had rejected Him before, so that it might find pleasure in Him...

* Why did the Lord inform His disciples here about His destination. Note that He did not do so in any other instances. They were in great fear, therefore He notified them in advance to avoid confusing them should any surprises occur.²

St. John Chrysostom

**The disciples said to Him,
“Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You
And are You going there again?” [8]**

Just a few weeks ago the Jews wanted to stone Him in the temple during the Feast of Dedication (John 10:31).

* They advised Him because they wanted to save the Lord from death. Yet, He had come to die in order to save them from death³.

St. Augustine

* They were concerned about His safety, but they were even more so about themselves. They were not perfect and it was on this account that Thomas was shaken with fear and said: ‘Let us also go, that we may die with Him’. This was because Thomas was the weakest and had the least faith than the others. Nevertheless, see how the Lord encouraged them by His words: “**Are there not twelve hours in the day?**” [9]⁴

St. John Chrysostom

¹ Hom 62, PG 59:369

² Homilies on St John, 62:1

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 49:8

⁴ Homilies on St John 62:1

Jesus answered:

“Are there not twelve hours in the day?

**If any walks in the day, he does not stumble,
Because he sees the light of this world’.** [9]

Our path is full of stumbling blocks. He who walks in the light does not stumble. However, those who remain in darkness will stumble. He on whom the sun of righteousness shines will be enlightened; and he will soar from glory to glory. Stumbling, blocks will appear trivial to such a person. Indeed these will be the cause of his victory and crown. As for those who follow the lusts of their bodies, the thoughts of the evil world, and the pride in his heart, these will continue to stumble. Moreover, they will present endless excuses.

The Lord did not fear death for He is the light before whom the powers of darkness will not be able to stand. In the same manner, all those who stay under His wings will walk fearlessly throughout his days of estrangement. They will walk free of fear, confusion and anxiety.

The Jews, like many other nations, used to divide the day from sunrise to sunset into 12 sections or hours that extend or decrease according to the different seasons in the year.

The journey from across the sky does not begin at night when man leaves the earth. It begins in the daytime when he is struggling through life; while he is confident that, through the grace of God, he is moving towards his eternity. God granted us the hours of the day as valuable opportunities to work. These are precious when we spend them appropriately, otherwise they become worthless.

* The Lord indicates that He is the day. He has chosen 12 disciples and says: If I am the day and you are the hours, do the hours give advice to the day? The hours follow the day and not vice versa. He indicates that He is the spiritual day. May the hours listen to the Day, may they preach in the daytime for you become known and enlightened in the daytime. Through hourly preaching, the world gets to believe in the Day. He has summed it up in His brief words: “Follow Me, if you do not want to stumble”

St. Augustine

**“But if one walks in the night, he stumbles
Because the light is not in him’.** [10]

* The Lord spoke these words to reveal that anyone, who feels here is no evil within him, will not be touched by any fearful matter. Conversely, those who do evil will be caught in it. Therefore we should not be afraid for we are doing nothing that deserves death. Or He could be saying that those who see the light of this world are safe. And if this is truly the case, then how much safer are those who are with Me and as long as they do not isolate themselves from Me?! The Lord encouraged His disciples by these words and added that the purpose of their trip to Judea was necessary for them since they had to go to Bethany and not to Jerusalem [11, 12]¹.

¹ Homilies on St John, 62:1

St. John Chrysostom

These things He said, after that He said to them:

**“Our friend Lazarus sleeps,
But I go that I may wake him up”. [11]**

The Lord calls a believer **‘our friend’**. He did say ‘My friend’ for we have signed a covenant with God by which He has made us not only His friend, but a friend of the whole Church, since He is a member of that Church. The death of Lazarus did not mark the end of the friendship between Lazarus and the Lord and the whole Church. He remains a friend of the Lord and of the whole church throughout all ages.

*It is as though He is saying: ‘This time I am going there with a different purpose. I was there earlier in order to discuss and struggle with the Jews. However, I am going this time in order to raise our friend, Lazarus’¹.

St. John Chrysostom

The Lord speaks about death and calls it **‘sleep’**. Sleep indicates physical rest as it helps restore the energy of the body. Thus a person wakes up to start in new day fully active and energetic. This is true as well in the case of the sleep of death; for a believer, when he goes to sleep, rises up into a new life armed with new potentials in a new world.

* Truly, it is not said about saints that they are dead, but rather that they are laying down or resting.²

St. Jerome

In the eyes of his sister, Lazarus was dead. However, in the Lord’s eyes, he was sleeping. He is dead in the eyes of mankind who are unable to bring him back to life; whereas the Lord can very easily raise him out of the grave and as though He is simply waking up Lazarus from his sleep. By His power, the Lord speaks with him as with someone who is asleep. Similarly the Holy Bible speaks to others as though they were asleep and who are most probably dead. In that context, the apostles says: “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope’ (1 Thes 4:13). That is why he also speaks about them as those laying down to rest. The Lord had informed them previously about His resurrection. In that manner, all the dead are resting or laying down - whether they are righteous or wicked³.

St. Augustine

St. Augustine believes that all the dead are more like people asleep. However, some may have happy dreams, while other have nightmares. Or they are like people in a temporary storage area. However, some - like Lazarus, the poor man - enjoying being in his father Abraham’s embrace; while the foolish rich man suffered great thirst and could not find anyone to grant him a drop of water (Luke 16:19-31) Everyone will be called

¹ Homilies on St John, 62:1

² Against Vigiantius, 6

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate cf. 49:9

out to receive according to his deeds¹.

* You might be disturbed when you would be called a ‘widow’ only because you have lost a good husband. We agree with you that in this world there are few men who are as good as your man. Few are like him: loving, noble, humble, devoted, wise and pure.

Indeed, if he were completely destroyed and altogether beyond recovery, then this would be a great catastrophe and the cause of great sadness. However, what actually happened is that **your husband has sailed to a quiet harbor and has gone on a journey to God to whom he really belongs**. Therefore we should not mourn and instead rejoice.

For this death is not death. Rather, it is a kind of migration and a transfer what is bad to what is better: from the earth to the heavens; from living among mankind to being with angels and archangels; even better for we will be with God who is Lord of the angels and archangels.

When your husband lived, he served the emperor and he was surrounded by the dangers of the wicked and their tricks. Now, he has moved into the other world where nothing like it exists. Therefore as much as you are sad that God has taken such a good and honorable person, you need to rejoice **that he has gone to a more secure and honorable place and is relieved of all the dangers of the present life. Indeed, he is now safe and enjoying great peace.**

Surely, we do not need someone to inform us that heaven is much better than the earth. Therefore, why do we mourn when someone departs from this world to go to the other world?!

If your husband were one of those who lead shameful lives that displease God, you would be justified to mourn and weep. Indeed, you would be justified to do so even while he was here and alive. However, as much as he is among the friends of God we need to rejoice while he is alive as well as when he departs and lays down to rest.

We need to do so as the blessed apostle tells us: ‘having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better’ (Phil 1:23).²

St. John Chrysostom

‘Then His disciples said, “Lord, if he sleeps he will get well’. [12]

Sleep is often a good sign that a sick person is healing. That is true especially when it is a deep sleep. That is why when the Lord said that Lazarus was asleep, the disciples believed that it was no longer necessary for Him to go to Judea in order to heal him. They considered that he had begun to heal through that deep sleep. The disciples could not imagine they had to take a two or three day trip with the Lord and go to an area that had

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate cf. 49:9, 10

² Letter to a Young Widow, 3

resisted Him just to wake up a friend out of his sleep.

**‘However, Jesus spoke of his death,
but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep’. [13]
Then Jesus said to them plainly,
“Lazarus is dead”’. [14]**

*The Lord used the word ‘sleep’ to underline that He rejected boastfulness. Then He added the word **‘dead’** when they did not understand!¹

St. John Chrysostom

**“And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe,
nevertheless let us go to him’.[15]**

When Lazarus died and everyone had lost hope he would awake again, the Lord moved in their direction to proclaim that He is the hope of those who have no hope and that He is the helper of those who have no one to help them. When mankind says: ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, we ourselves are cut off’ (Ezek 37:11); then Lord God says: ‘Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people and brought you up from your graves’.

* Why does the Lord say **‘for your sakes’**? In order to avoid doubt or suspicious of deception, I am informing you in advance about the death of Lazarus. Do you notice how the disciples were not completely comfortable in their roles and how unaware they were of the power they had? This was due to the great fear that filled their hearts. Besides, they suffered much anxiety and difficulty within themselves. When the Lord said that Lazarus was ‘asleep’, He added ‘I go to wake him up’ as He did not wish to inform them about what He would do actually. The Lord constantly teaches us to avoid vain glory, and useless promises. However, He did that in the case of the centurion when the Lord told him; ‘go and I will heal him’ (Matt 8:7). This was because of the man’s great faith. If someone were to say: ‘how did the disciples think that Lazarus was asleep? How did they not understand that the Lord was speaking about death when He said: “I go that I may wake him up”’. It is foolish to understand that the Lord would travel fifteen hundred *stadia* in order to wake Lazarus up. Our answer is that the disciples believed the Lord was speaking in the mysterious manner which He often used when He spoke to them².

St. John Chrysostom

The Lord did not say: ‘Let us go to console his sisters’. Rather, He said ‘let us go to him’. This is because death cannot separate the Lord Jesus Christ and His church from a departed one. Everyone would go to Him in love and meet with him as a living member in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord said **‘let us go’** and not ‘I will go’. He intends to include the whole church to go with Him and meet with those who have rested in sleep.

¹ Homilies on St John, 62:1

² Homilies on St John, 62:2

**‘Then Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples:
“Let us also go,
that we may die with Him” [16]**

‘Thomas’ is the equivalent of the Greek work ‘Didymus’ which means ‘a twin’. The disciples were annoyed because of his words. It was hard to understand his intention—was he showing courage and therefore a disregard for death? He seemed to agree that they should all go with the Lord Jesus Christ and get exposed to the death awaiting Him. It was as though he were saying, like Ruth “where you die, I will die and there will I be buried” (Ruth 1:17). He preferred to be in the Lord’s company, even if that would cost him death; rather than live and not be in the company of the Lord. Or did he speak in this manner out of fear or as a kind of objection?

* The disciples dreaded facing the Jews and Thomas was the most fearful. Therefore he said **‘Let us go that we may die with Him’**. In fact, he was the least determined and the least steadfast in his faith compared to the other disciples.

* Some believe that he wanted to die (with the Lord Jesus Christ). Yet that was not the case as the words come from a person who was scared. However, the Lord did not reprimand him but rather supported him. Later on, Thomas became unvanquished and stronger than all the others. The amazing thing is that we see this weak person before the crucifixion took place. After the crucifixion and his belief in the Lord’s resurrection, he becomes more zealous than any other person. Great is the power of the Lord Jesus Christ! That same person who dared not go with the Lord to Bethany, is the same one who could not visibly see the Lord and yet traveled alone the whole world to witness for Him. With that mission, he lived among nations where killing was rampant, and where they sought to kill him¹.

St. John Chrysostom

5. The Lord’s Journey to Lazarus’ family.

‘So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days’. [17]

Other evangelists record some of the events that occurred during this journey towards Bethany. For example, the healing of the blind man in Jericho, the meeting with Zacchaeus and his conversion. Although the Lord loved Lazarus and his sisters and was on His way to raise him from the dead, yet, He did not dismiss the needs of others. Wherever He went, He made good deeds.

St. Augustine finds that the four days that elapsed with Lazarus in the tomb refer to human stages. The first day is the day Adam and Eve fell and sinned and so death reigned on Adam and all his children. The second day refers to mankind who have broken the natural law and testimony of God. The third day refers to breaking the Law of Moses. The final fourth stage refers to the period when the Gospel is being preached and the

¹ Homilies on St John, 62:2

Lord Jesus Christ has granted a new resurrected life to those who have died in sin¹.

The Jews held a belief that the soul continues to roam around the body for three days after death; and that on the fourth day it departs having lost all hope of returning to the body again². Therefore, on the fourth day all hope for the person to return to the world once is lost.

‘Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away’ [18].

The Lord Jesus Christ had done countless miracles in Galilee. From among all the miracles He did in Jerusalem, St John the Evangelist chooses to recount those with special significance to the people and leaders. For example, he recounts the healing of the paralyzed man at Bethesda who had been infirm for thirty eight (38) years; the healing of the man born blind; and the raising of Lazarus on the fourth day after his death.

Bethany is about two miles away from Jerusalem and the Jewish mile is equivalent to four and half kilometers.

* The Evangelist intends to mention this to inform us that the village of Bethany is close to Jerusalem. Probably this would explain why so many people had gone there³.

St. John Chrysostom

‘And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother’. [19]

According to Jewish tradition, mourning lasted for about one month. The first three days were known as ‘days of mourning’; followed by seven days, known as ‘days of condolences’. During the days of mourning the members of the house did nothing and would not even return someone’s greeting. However, during the days of condolence they did nothing more than their needs: they slept on bedding laid out on the floor, they did not wear shoes, and neither washed nor used oil on their bodies. They covered their heads but did not read out of their law or Mishnah or Talmud. During the rest of the thirty days, they did not shave, wear white clothes or new ones; neither did they mend any damage in the clothes they wore to the funeral⁴.

The word **‘Jews’** is used in this Gospel to refer to the opponents of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why some scholars believe that these people, while opposing the Lord, felt the extent of this catastrophe and so came to Martha and Mary. They had not come for a brief visit. Indeed, they intended to stay with the family of the departed one for two or three days. This was observed especially when the departed was the head of the household.

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate cf 49:12

² Leon Morris, p. 409

³ Homilies on St John, 62:2

⁴ Cf. Adam Smith Comm. On John

* How could they comfort the sisters when they knew that the Lord loved them? Had not the Jews declared that anyone who confessed that this person was the Messiah would be banished from the Sanhedrin? Our answer is: they offered condolences either on account of their loss or because the sisters were respected and were more honorable than others. Or it could be that those who had come were not evil since many of them had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

St. John Chrysostom

‘Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary was sitting in the house’. [20]

It seems that Martha was eagerly awaiting the Lord’s arrival. She needed Him to comfort her and her sister. Upon hearing that He was on the way to the house, she abandoned all decorum and traditions of mourning as well as the mourners who were visiting her; and hurried to meet the Lord. She left the house as well as the village and met Him outside. As for Mary, she remained in the house- probably her sorrow prevented her from moving quickly; or it could be that she had not heard of the Lord’s arrival.

Some scholars believe that Martha was the older one who managed the house (Luke 10:40).

* If we were to say: What was Martha’s intention when she left without her sister and went to meet the Lord? Our answer would be: She wanted to speak to Him privately and inform Him of what had taken place. However, when He revealed great hope, she went and called Mary. At that time, Mary was suffering the deepest degrees of sorrow.

Do you not see how great her love was?

This is the Mary of whom the Lord had said: “Mary has chosen that good part” (Luke 10:42)

Someone may say: ‘How did Martha appear more fervent than her?’ She might have appeared as such, but she was not actually. For Mary had not yet heard of His arrival. Indeed Martha was weaker; when she had listened to the Lord’s words, she spoke like a child who was learning to walk: ‘Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days’ [39]. In contrast, Mary immediately believed, and did not speak as Martha, although she had not heard the Lord’s words of hope¹.

St. John Chrysostom

‘Then Martha said to Jesus: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died”. [21]

Martha’s words are the same ones Mary said later on. This indicates that they had not yet fully comprehended the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ. They had not yet realized that He is present everywhere. They believed that His presence could have prevented

¹ Homilies on St John, 62:3

death from touching their brother. Moreover, they trusted His tenderness and gentleness compassion. Yet, their faith was as a shaking reed which the Lord would support and strengthen rather than break it.

“But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You”. [22]

Martha blamed herself and corrected her words with the Lord Jesus Christ. She believed that if the Lord asked of His Father anything -her brother’s resurrection- even though her brother had died- His request would be answered. She dared not ask Him to resurrect her brother. However, she asked for that indirectly and left it up to Him to decide whether to raise Lazarus or not.

She believed that if the Lord prayed God for anything, He would get it. However, she did not realize that He was Life and that He possessed life in Himself: what He did was done through His own power for He is One with the Father.

* Do you see their heavenly wisdom (Mary and Martha)? Even though their resolve was weak, yet they did not collapse into wailing when they saw the Lord. They did not indulge in excessive sorrowful expressions of mourning, such as we would if we saw a number of our acquaintances entering our home in such a situation. The sisters considered the Lord Jesus Christ to be a Teacher and so they believed in Him. However, they did not comprehend the extent of His sublime honor and power. This is evident in Martha’s words: **“I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You”**. The sisters spoke to the Lord as they would to someone who is steadfast in virtue and therefore all his prayers would be answered¹.

St. John Chrysostom

‘Jesus said to her: your brother will rise again.’[23]

The Lord’s response to Martha reveals deep humility and compassion, for He tells her: **“Your brother will rise again’ [23]**

* In this manner, the Lord dismisses her words **‘whatever you ask’ [22]**, for He did not say ‘I ask’. What did He say? **“Your brother will rise again”**. He could have said: “Woman, you continue to look down below. I do not need help from anyone, for I do everything by my own power”. However, this would have been a serious stumbling block to her. By saying **“Your brother will rise again”**, the Lord spoke as one who chose to speak in a moderate tone².

St. John Chrysostom

**‘Martha said to Him,
“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection the last day” [24]**

The subject of the resurrection from the dead was deeply rooted in the minds of

¹ Homilies on St John, 62;3

² Homilies on St John, 62:3

the Jews. Only the Sadducees rejected it. The holy books that were written after the exile were full of teachings about that subject (2 Kings 7:9, 14, 23, 36; 12:43; 14:46; Eccl 5:1-7, 17; 6:6, 7). Jewish writings such as those by the historian Josephus and other translations speak about that.

‘Jesus said to her,

“I am the resurrection and the life.

He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live”. [25]

* By these words, the Lord revealed His authority. He revealed that He did not need anyone to help Him since He Himself is the life. Had He been in need of someone else, how could He have been the resurrection and the life? In spite of that, the Lord implied this in His words rather than declaring it openly¹.

* He demonstrated that He is the giver of all goodness, and that it is appropriate to ask of Him².

St. John Chrysostom

“And whoever lives and believes in Me

Shall never die.

Do you believe this?”[26]

It is as though the Lord was telling her: ‘You say that your brother will arise on the Day of Judgment. Who will raise him up other than Me who grants resurrection and am the source of life? Since I have authority to raise him on the last day, would it be hard for me to raise him now? In this manner, the Lord Jesus Christ opened the door of hope before her. He supported her faith and revealed Himself to her. He is not merely a person. Rather, He is the giver of life and of the whole of existence.

Everyone who believes, even though he dies according to the flesh, will arise and fully enjoy fellowship in His glory. He will no longer die after the death of the body; but will appear in a glorified body with the soul. The believer will thus practice the resurrected life forever. The Lord does not say that the believer will not go through the gate we call death. Rather, He states that the life He grants continues through death: Death cannot delete the life that the Lord Jesus Christ has granted to us.

* Note how the Lord uplifts Martha’s mind. It was not His intention to just raise Lazarus; for He wanted Martha and all those present to learn of this resurrection. That is why He spoke these words before He raise up Lazarus³.

St. John Chrysostom

The Lord asked Martha **“Do you believe this?”** It is as though He were asking her to have the kind of faith that defies nature and death. Her answer came with steadfastness and firmness- there was no hesitation and conveyed affirmation.

¹ Homilies on St John, 62:3

² Homilies on St John, 62:3

³ Homilies on St John, 62:3

**She said to Him, “Yes Lord,
I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world”. [27]**

Martha declared her confession of faith with all due sincerity: **“You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world”, [27]**. This is the same confession of faith that the apostle Peter declared and for which the Lord praised him (Matt 16:16-17). Her confession of faith includes three main issues:

- Jesus is the Messiah, the One the fathers and the prophets awaited. During the 1st century, many of the Jews awaited His coming eagerly.
- He is the natural Son of God (Ps 2:7)
- He came into the world to form it into His holy church: this would include all peoples and not the Jews only.

Since He is the Messiah and Savior of the world and the natural Son of God who had descended to the world to raise it, then He is definitely the life and the Resurrection.

* The Lord certainly raised her humble opinion of Him so that she would not consider Him to be just someone in the crowd. She did not call Him Lord unknowingly, for she did so to restore the honor due to Him. She spoke these words to honor Him and this is revealed again in the words she spoke later on. She neither laughed nor joked and had no doubts at any point¹.

* It seems to us that the woman did not understand the Lord’s words. Even though she realized their gravity, yet she did not fully comprehend them. That is why she gave a different response to the question she had been asked².

* She did not say: ‘Raise my brother’. Rather, she said: **“I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world”**.

St. John Chrysostom

**‘And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called her sister, saying:
‘The Teacher has come,
And is calling for you’’. [28]**

Martha did not wait to hear praise on account of her faith. However, she gained new concepts through this meeting with the Lord. In a short while, she had gained a new experience. She then went to call her sister so that she might share the pleasure she had received. The Lord had asked about Mary as she had not come with her sister. Martha called her secretly because she was surrounded by many mourners. Maybe some of them- men or women- were opposed to the Lord and could not tolerate Him. Martha feared her invitation might cause a disturbance that would prevent Mary from coming out quickly to

¹ Hom. 62.PG 59:181

² Hom 62. PG 59:372

meet with the Lord and enjoy His comforting presence.

We make the following observations about her secret conversation with her sister concerning the Lord's arrival:

First: She called Him **'Teacher'**/ *Didaskalos*. His consolation does not involve more emotions. Rather, He reveals love, tenderness and unique facts of faith. He is able to attract His beloved disciples and friends to divine consolation.

Second: 'He has come': The One whom we have been awaiting for so long, and whom we often have prayed for His coming.

Third: "He is calling for you": for He has inquired about you by name. This is because He cares for you and seeks your peace and desires to console your heart.

**'As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly
And came to Him'. [29]**

Upon hearing the Lord's call from her sister's lips, **'she arose quickly and came to Him.'** **St. John Chrysostom** comments on this noble behavior and credits her for behaving with true philosophy- in other words, with the wisdom that does not seek trivial, unprofitable matters; but rather, that which is truly for her good. On account of her wisdom, she was blessed. Who would imagine that a woman who had lost her brother a few days earlier, and was surrounded by many mourners, who were wailing and weeping, would hurry out at once? Upon hearing about the Lord, she does not wait for Him to come to her and console her? Rather, she ran outside the village to meet the Lord; while the woman around her imagined that she was going to the tomb to weep over her brother!

How badly is our need to divert our eyes from the bitterness that enfolds us in the midst of our tears and trials. We need not be concerned about the burdensome mourners who are unable to offer true peace. Indeed, we need to let our inner depths hurry towards the One who comes to us and fills us with His heavenly consolation. Let us truly avoid all formalities, so that we may lift our hearts with the Holy Spirit of God to our Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is the Healer of our souls and bodies. He is the One who grants life and resurrection. He is the Almighty who constantly initiates love.

How much does the soul need to depart from the midst of the valley of tears, leave all the problems which destroy her and ignore every human comment. The soul needs to do so in order to get away and move in hope towards the One who alone is able to transform her through His Holy Spirit, satisfy her, and raise her to everlasting life!

The constant preoccupation with our sorrows results in a depression that is far more bitter than actual sorrows themselves. In contrast, meeting with the Lord Jesus Christ grants us the gladness of the resurrected life and its constant rejoicing.

* Note, for example, how this woman received her reward through her genuinely wise behavior. When there were all those women sitting around her, when she was weeping and sorrowful; yet she did not wait and expect that the Lord should come to her. Neither did she ask for what seemed to be her right (for sorrowful women are handicapped by this

epidemic which is that they exaggerate their condition besides they're actual misery). As for Martha, she did not behave that way and as soon as she heard, she rose quickly and ran to Him¹.

St. John Chrysostom

**‘Now Jesus had not yet come into the town,
But was in the place where Martha met Him’. [30]**

With divine wisdom, the Lord Jesus Christ moved exceedingly slowly in order to give Martha the opportunity to hurry and call her sister. He also gives Mary the chance to hurry and come to Him. They would then go together with Him to the tomb where He would transform their sorrow into sublime joy. In the same manner, the Lord seems to be slow in solving our problems although He seeks our happiness. He wishes to give us the opportunity to turn to Him and express our inner most thoughts with living faith and steadfast hope. Then we may hurry to Him to discover His sublime and hidden divine plan for us.

* St. John reports that the Lord Jesus Christ **‘had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him’**. He was walking slowly so that no one would think that He was propelling Himself to do a miracle. Rather, He was waiting until they would ask Him for that.

St. John Chrysostom

**‘Then the Jews who were with her in the house, comforting her,
When they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out,
Followed her, saying,
“She is going to the tomb to weep there”’. [31]**

Martha called her sister secretly, informed her that the Lord had asked about her [28], she pulled her away from her weeping and away from the mourners, and made her hurry towards the Lord. In this manner, Mary, by her quiet movements, attracted all those who were with her in the house even though they did not know where they were going. Her love to the Savior, which she demonstrated in a practical way, attracted many to come into contact to see the One who raises the dead.

* She did not go alone, but rather attracted the Jews who were in her house. With great wisdom, Mary called her sister secretly to avoid disturbing those who were gathered in her home. She did not indicate the reason for her conversation. Surely they would have returned to their homes had they overheard. However, now that she went out crying, they followed her. Probably, this would have confirmed the death of Lazarus².

St. John Chrysostom

‘Then, when Mary came where Jesus was and saw Him,

¹ Homilies on St John, 63:1

² Homilies on St John, 63:1

**She fell at His feet, saying to Him,
“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died”. [32]**

The Lord did not enter the village, or the home of Lazarus and his sisters. He only met the sisters and then went with the crowd to the tomb. He Loves His work, and He had come to go to the tomb where He would fulfill His task without delay.

* This Mary was more eager than her sister, Martha. She was neither embarrassed before the crowd, nor of the suspicions which took hold of many concerning the Lord. Many among the mourners were His enemies and these said: **“Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?”** However, when the Master came, she banished all deadly thoughts, and resolved with a strong will to honor the Teacher¹.

St. John Chrysostom

6- Raising Lazarus from the Dead

**‘Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping
And the Jews who came with her weeping,
He groaned in the spirit and was troubled’. [33]**

This situation reveals that the Lord Jesus Christ has indeed become a person with human emotions. He empathizes with those suffering and weeps with those weeping: He is a Man of sorrows (Is 53:3). He was never seen laughing, but he was seen weeping in more than one situation

* The Lord said nothing to Mary. He did not utter the words He had said to her sister, Martha due to the big crowd who was present. It was not the time to say anything; yet He revealed His human nature humbly for He did not desire them to imagine that He was more than that.

St. John Chrysostom

* You may become troubled involuntarily, whereas the Lord Jesus Christ chose to be troubled voluntarily.

The Lord Jesus Christ became hungry. However, this is only because He wanted it to be so.

He was sad. This is a fact; yet it was as He willed it to be. He has the power to be one or the other; to be moved or to be unmoved. That is because the Word had taken on a soul and body. Therefore He carried in Him the same human nature yet this was united with the holy Word and at one with the Lord, Jesus Christ. In this manner, the Word who possesses sublime power, uses weakness at His will- therefore He was **‘troubled’**².

St. Augustine

¹ Homilies on St John, 63:1

² St Augustine; On the Gospel of St John, tractate 49:18

**And He said: “Where have you laid him?”
They said to Him, “Lord, come and see”. [34]**

* If you were to ask: Why did the Lord ask this question? Our answer would be: He did not wish to make the first move. He wanted to know from them what had happened and to pray Him to make a miracle. This was because He wanted to clear the miracle of all false claims.

St. John Chrysostom

* The Lord Jesus Christ will come to your tomb. He may find Martha, the woman who offers righteous services and Mary who sincerely holds the word of God. Mary is like the holy church of God that has chosen the good path. They wept and He tenderly shared their grief.

When you will die, the Lord will find many weeping, He will say: “Where have you laid her/ him?” In other words: at what point is she/ he condemned?

What is her/ his rank among the repentant?

I wish to see the one over whom you are weeping, so that I may be moved by his tears. I will find out if he actually has died of sin; then I will treat him with forgiveness.

The people tell Him: **“Come and see”**.

What does ‘come’ mean? That the remission of sins may come, may life and resurrection be granted to the departed one... May Your kingdom come to this sinner as well¹.

St. Ambrose

* How amazing! The One who came to raise Lazarus from the dead appears not to know where he had been buried, and He asks **“Where have you laid him?” [34]**. Many of the fathers correctly comment that God, who knows all things, appears as someone who does not know the place of darkness. Neither does He know evil nor evil ones. Accordingly, when Adam sinned in Paradise, God asked: ‘Where are you? (Gen 3: 9). On judgment day, God will tell the wicked: ‘I do not know you’ (Matt 7:23). In this passage too, the Lord asks **“Where have you laid him?”**

* I do not see you in My light and in the righteousness which I know².

* What does “see” convey? Be patient: for the Lord perceives and is moved. That is why we ask Him to ‘look at our humility and pain and to Him forgive us our sins’ (Matt 9:13)³.

St Augustine

‘Jesus wept’. [35]

In the Greek version, the verb ‘wept’, used in this passage, is used in a form that is different to the form used to describe the weeping of Mary when she was surrounded

¹ Concerning Repentance 2:7:54-55

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 49:20

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 49:20

by mourners. Here, it does not convey the loud wailing like them. Rather, it conveys that tears ran down His face. It is just a practical testimony to His deep feelings before the crowds; conveys how He shared the pain of the sorrowful who had not yet learned how to deal with death. The crowds saw in the Lord's tears a living testimony of how much the loved Lazarus [36].

St. John Chrysostom observes that every thing the Lord did was intended, by His divine wisdom, so that the crowds would benefit as a result of the miracle. On the one hand, he did not tell Mary, who was surrounded by the crowds, what He had told Martha when He met her alone earlier. He had spoken then about raising Lazarus. The crowds heard Him - many of them were hostile towards Him- they would have left and returned to Jerusalem and would have missed the resurrection of Lazarus. On the other hand, He confirmed His humanity in these moments so that the crowds would not resent any words regarding His divinity.

He wept silently. He was troubled and then took a deep breath as someone trying to control His agitation. He asked about the spot where the tomb was.... All this aroused questions in the mind of the Jews. They wished to know what He would do without resenting Him.

* What did the Lord Jesus Christ do? He did not enter into any form of dialogue with Mary at that time. He did not tell her what He had said to her sister as it was not convenient as there was a crowd. All His acts were measured and done with great humility in order to confirm His human nature. He wept silently and delayed the miracle at that time. It was going to be a great miracle and He was about to make a serious act that would lead many to believe. He did not want to do in the absence of the crowds for then they would find it hard to believe. They would stumble and not benefit by its greatness. He acted in a manner that would not make Him lose His catch. Therefore, He provided many proofs to testify to His humility and confirm His humanity. He wept and was troubled. Normally, sorrow arouses feelings and when He groaned in the spirit- in other words, He controlled His agitation and asked: **“Where have you laid him?”**[34]¹

St. John Chrysostom

* The Lord wept for Lazarus whom He would raise from the dead. He undoubtedly set an example to be like Him and to weep over our dead ones. It is true that He did not give us a commandment to do so; besides we have been granted the faith that they would rise up again to eternal life. In the Book of Wisdom, we are told to weep over the dead as one would who has suffered from great harm. However, we are then advised to be comforted as sorrow may lead to death and a sad heart may deplete strength (Sirach 38: 16- 19)².

St Augustine

* To reveal that He has true human feelings, the Lord mourned for the one whom He would raise from the dead³.

St. Jerome

¹ Homilies on St John, 63:1

² Letters, 263

³ Letter 60:7

**‘Then the Jews said:
“See how He loved him!”[36]**

When the Jews saw the tears of the Lord, they said: **“See how He loved Him.”[36]**. We too, when we see His Blood dripping from His body on the cross, we worship Him and say: “See how He loves us!”

* Do you notice how the Lord showed no sign that He would raise Lazarus? He went, not as someone who would raise Lazarus, but rather as one who would mourn over him. That is how the Jews thought that the Lord was going in order to mourn and not to raise him. This is apparent from their words: **“See how He loved him” [36]**.

St. John Chrysostom

**‘And some said,
“Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?” [37]**

In their ignorance, they imagined that the Lord’s tears indicated disability and incapacity to act. They did not realize that these were tears of love and compassion. Besides, just healing him, they could not understand that He could still raise Lazarus from the dead even after his body had decayed.

* The Jews in this passage admit that the Lord had opened the blind man’s eyes. However, they denied His power to bring Lazarus back to life.

St. John Chrysostom

**‘Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself,
Came to the tomb.
It was a cave
And a stone lay against it.’ [38]**

It should not be understood that when the Lord was troubled He had lost His inner peace. Just as He had descended to take the form of man and live among us as a full and real human being, He voluntarily allowed Himself to feel agitated in order to empathize with the troubled and consequently carry them into His divine peace.

**Jesus said:
“Take away the stone”.
Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him:
“Lord, by this time there is stench,
For he has been dead four days” [39]**

The Lord ordered them to lift the stone so that all the bystanders would see the dead body lying in the grave. They would also smell the door and so be assured that he had decayed. Then when Lazarus would walk out of the grave, they would not imagine him to be a phantom but that it was his body indeed.

Martha's objection probably came after they had started moving the stone and she had smelled the odor.

*Why did the Lord not call Lazarus while He was farther away from the tomb, and then bring him afterwards before their eyes? Or rather, why did the Lord not raise Lazarus while the stone still sealed the tomb? The Lord is He who can, with His words, move the body and reveal it in full life once more. Would it have been too hard for Him to roll the stone just with His word?

The One who has the power, with His words, to make him, who was bound and wrapped in grave clothes, to walk... would it have been hard for Him to make the stone move?

So why did He not do so?

In order to make them witnesses of the miracle. Consequently, they would be unable to repeat what they said concerning the miracle of the man born blind: "It is he"; "It is not he". Now their hands and their presence at the grave are truly a witness that this is the person who had died.

If they had not come, it would have appeared as a vision or that this was a person replacing the other one.

Now, they had come to the spot, raised the stone and had heard the command to untie the dead who was bound in grave clothes. The dear ones who had carried him to the tomb knew from the grave clothes who this was. The sisters did not stay behind (away from the crowds), and one of them said: "**There is a stench, for he has been dead four days**" [39]. We believe that all these matters were sufficient to silence those with wicked tendencies for they had become witnesses of the miracle¹.

St. John Chrysostom

* The Lord will come and order that the stone which has fallen on the sinner's shoulders be lifted away.

He could have moved the stone with a single order; for even mute nature wishes to obey the Lord's orders.

He could have moved away the stone covering the tomb by the power of His silent work. Remember that at the peak of His sufferings many stones moved from over the tombs of the dead and suddenly they became opened.

However, He ordered the men to remove the stone from over the tomb of Lazarus so that unbelievers would believe what they saw as they watched the dead man raised up.

Besides, this miracle carries a symbol that grants us the power to alleviate the burden of sin and the heavy pressure it exerts on the culprit. We have to do our share in moving the burdens, while He resurrects and delivers from the graves those who liberate themselves of their bonds².

St. Ambrose

* The statement: "**He has been dead four days**" truly refers to a condition of the soul that progressively occurs over four stages:

First state: as though a lustful provocation within the heart.

¹ Homilies on St John, 63:2

² Concerning Repentance, Book 2:7:56

Second: acceptance

Third: transforming it into an act.

Fourth: transformation into a habit.

Some people shake off wicked matters and cast them out of their mind as though they found no pleasure in them. Others find pleasure even though they do not find them acceptable. In this case death does not set in, yet it institutes a certain beginning. Besides the sense of pleasure, there is an added sense of compliance. Condemnation of the person instantly occurs then.

Have complied, the sense of agreement progresses and gets transformed into apparent deed.

And deeds get transformed into habits. This leads to a kind of frustration to the extent of being described as **“having a stench for he has been dead four days”**. That is why the Lord came and with Him all things are feasible. In this case, however, there seemed to be a problem. He was troubled in the spirit and revealed the need for great and loud objection in order to resurrect those who had become cruel out of habit. Yet, at the Lord’s cry the bonds of necessity exploded. The forces of hell were terrified and Lazarus returned to life once more. Truly, the Lord rescues even the one who had been dead four days and saves him from wicked habits. Only to the Lord does he appear to be asleep; and he is the one the Lord desires to resurrect¹.

St. Augustine

* Even if you were lying in your grave, the Lord raises you up, even though your body has decayed!²

St. Jerome

The Scholar Origen believes that when the Lord Jesus Christ issued the order to **“take away the stone”**, Martha delayed the execution by her words: **“Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days”** [39]. After that, they lifted it away.

These moments- between the order and the delay, convey a sort of lack of faith. The words: **‘...if you would believe you would see the glory of God’** were not fulfilled. **Moments of delay are moments of lack of faith and rebellion**

* We need to believe that the period of delay in executing a command constitutes a time of rebellion for the person who executes the command later on... Therefore, we need to remember the words: “Come back to the Lord quickly. Don’t think you can keep putting it off”, (Sirach 5:7); and the saying: ‘Do not say to your neighbor, go and come back and tomorrow I will give it, when you have it with you’ (Pro 3:28). We have to consider that Martha was guilty and that the words **‘Then they took the stone from the place’** were added later on. These should have been written immediately after the words: **‘Jesus said, “Take away the stone.”’**³

Origen the Scholar

¹ Sermon on NT Lessons, 48:6

² Letter 147:9

³ Commentary on John, Book 28:19 -22

* The Lord said: **“Take away the stone”** [39]. Take away the burden of the law and preach grace: “for if there had been a law given which could have given life truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (Gal 3:21-22). Hence ‘take away the stone’¹.

St. Augustine

‘Jesus said to her:

“Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?”[40]

* Truly, faith is a great blessing! It works great deeds for those who adhere to truth as they enjoy many blessings.

Through faith, people can perform acts in the name of God. The Lord Jesus Christ aptly said: “ if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, move from here to there, and it will move” (Matt 17:20). Again, He says: “... he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also, and greater works than these...” (John 14:12). What does the Lord mean by “greater works than these? The reference is to the deeds done by the disciples, such as the mere shadow of Peter that raised a dead man. In this respect, it revealed more effectively the Lord’s power. It is less astonishing that while He was alive the Lord did miracles than that after His death others could- in His name- do greater works than His. This is an irresistible proof of the resurrection. For people to believe in the resurrection because they had seen in happening is one thing- even though some could claim it is a vision. It is another matter to see miracles happen by merely calling the Lord’s name - that is greater than His deeds when He lived among men. It is impossible to disbelieve in such a case, unless a person is devoid of feelings.

Hence faith is a great blessing when it is the product of sensitive feelings, great love and a fervent soul.

Indeed, faith makes us wise. It hides our human debasement and discards our excuses. It lends us philosophy (or wisdom) concerning heavenly matters. In other words, it explains the matters which human wisdom cannot discover. Faith can fully and successfully comprehend heavenly matters.

Therefore, let us adhere with faith and lets us cease depending on presenting excuses for ourselves².

St. John Chrysostom

‘Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying.

And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said:

“Father, I thank You that You have heard Me”. [41]

These are awesome moments, when the stone is moved away and the body is revealed as the terrible stench fills the air. At the same time, the Lord is standing there and addressing the Father, thanking Him for answering. On the one hand, the Lord is

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 49:22

² Homilies on St John, 63:3

confirming His relationship with the Father. In this manner, He confirms His divinity to those present; not that He is Beelzebub, head of devils, who exorcised devils according to the claims of some leaders. On the other hands, He was setting an example to the bystanders.

* Once more and as always, we comment that the Lord did not seek own to be honored as much as He desired our salvation. **He was not concerned with presenting sublime heavenly statements. Rather, He sought to say what would attract us to Him.** This explains why His sublime powerful statements were scarce and indirect in contrast to His many humble, lengthy sayings and discourses.

He did not utter sublime divine statements to ensure that this would not be a stumbling block or destructive to those who would come after Him. However, the Lord did not refrain completely from uttering such statements completely so that those living in His time would not stumble too. Indeed, those who crossover from debasement to perfection could benefit from sublime individual teachings to become fully knowledgeable. As for those with weak minds, if they could not constantly hear words uttered at a lower level, they would not ever come to the Lord.

In fact, after the Lord had spoken sublime words such as these, the Jews wanted to stone, persecute, and kill Him for they considered Him guilty of blasphemy... when He equated Himself to God, they said: “This Man blasphemes!” (Matt 9:3). And when the Lord said: “your sins are forgiven” (10:20), they called Him a demon. When He preached that anyone who hears His words becomes stronger than death (John 8:51) and that “the Father is in Me and I in Him” (John 10:38) they abandoned Him. On another occasion, they resisted Him when He said that He had come down from heaven (John 6:33, 60)

Now, the Jews could not tolerate such sublime teachings even though the Lord labored rarely presented complicated issues. Had the Lord’s teachings been loaded with sublime teachings constantly, would they have come and listened to Him?

Consequently, He said: ‘...just as the Father has told Me, so I speak’ (John 12:50), and ‘... I have not come of Myself’ (John 7:28). Then they believed.

Clearly, they believed and as the Evangelist reports: ‘As He spoke these words, many believed in Him’ (John 8:30). Therefore if simple, humble teachings do work and attract people to have faith while sublime words scare them away, then the Lord used simple means to reach His hearers¹.

St. John Chrysostom

* For our own good, the Lord offered thanks. He intended us not to identify the Father and the Son as one icon and as a result of their mutual involvement in one and the same act. Indeed, He intended to reveal that it was not obligatory for someone deprived of authority to repay His blessings. On the contrary, because He is the Son of God who claims He always possesses divine power. He could cry out “**Lazarus, come forth**”! This is definitely an order and not a prayer².

St. Jerome

¹ Homilies on St John, 64:1

² Of the Christian Faith:4:6:72

* He prays as the Son of Man, and orders as the Son of God.¹

St Ambrose

* When someone lifts his eyes towards the heavens, he should do so respectfully. He should also raise sanctified hands especially when offering prayers, without 'wrath and doubting'. (1 Tim 2:8). As a person raises his eyes in meditation and thought and as the hands are lifted to achieve work, the soul is lifted up and is glorified. This is similar to Moses who lifted his hands up (Ex 17:11), and when a person prays: 'Let... the lifting up of my hands (be) as the evening sacrifice' (Ps 141:2). As a result, intangible enemies are overcome, while Israelite thoughts (having a vision of God) that are within us become victorious².

Origen the Scholar

**“And I know that You always hear Me,
But because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me”. [42]**

Here, the Lord clarifies that the relationship between the Father and Son does not require such a prayer. It is intended for those present who need to believe that the Lord has a relationship with the heavens.

* To 'hear' does not imply 'obedience'. Rather, this is an eternal union. In the same manner, the Holy Spirit is said to listen to the Father and glorifies the Son. The Spirit glorifies as He has taught us that the Son is the image of the intangible God (Col 1:15), the brightness of His glory, the upholder of His power (Heb 1:3)³.

St Ambrose

* How would the Lord be more powerful than His disciples if He worked miracles through prayer?

It is appropriate to say that they did miracles through prayer. Indeed, they often did miracles without prayer as they just used His Holy Name. Now, since His name carried that much power, and then He needed to pray, then His name would have had no effect. And what prayer did the Lord need when He created mankind?

The Lord's equality to the Father is apparent in many instances. He said: "Let us make man in Our image". (Gen 1:26). What could be weaker had He needed prayer?

Let us study His prayer: **“Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.”** Who prayed these words at any on time? Before saying anything, He said **“I thank You”**: the Lord underlined that He does not need to pray as He says: “that You have heard Me”. This indicates that he does not lack power, but rather that He and the Father possess one and the same power.

If you said: why do his words take the shape of a prayer? Our response would be: hear the answer from Him and not from me - as He says: **“... because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me”**. The Lord gives the real reason for His prayer. He does not want people to suspect that He is opposed to

¹ Of the Christian Faith:3:4:32

² Commentary on St John, Book 28: 36-37

³ Of the Holy Spirit, Book 2 :12:137-138

God, or to say that He does not come from God¹.

St. John Chrysostom

**“Now when He had said these things, he cried with a loud voice,
“Lazarus, come forth!” [43]**

The Lord could have raise Lazarus, His dear friend, with a soft whisper or even silently. However, he shouted with a great voice and called His loved one: **“Lazarus, come forth”**. He did that so that those present become convinced that the Lord has raised him through His own personal power. He did not use another person’s name, but rather gave an order and the dead arose. Probably, the Lord shouted out loud so that those present would realize that the soul of Lazarus was not inside the tomb. Rather, the Lord was calling the soul to come out of hell and out of a seemingly very distant place. Moreover, He wanted them to realize that He is the One who tells Isaiah the prophet: “I am the Lord, there is no other. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: (Is 45:18).

The Lord spoke to make us realize that He is the One who will come on the last day and speak. Then the dead will hear His voice and come to life (John 5:25).

The Lord called him by his name ‘Lazarus’ as though awakening him from a deep sleep. God told Moses that He knew him by name. This was a sign of personal concern and interest. He did not say to him ‘get up’ but rather said ‘come forth’. The presence of the Lord, the Giver of life, offered him life, but the order was given to him to move.

* Why did He shout out loud as though He did not wish to act in the Spirit and command silently? He wanted to reveal the implication of the words: ‘...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet... the dead will be raised incorruptible’ (1 Cor 15:52). Raising the voice is the response to the sound of the trumpet. He shouted **“Lazarus, come forth”**. Why did the Lord use the name but for the purpose of removing all doubt that it is Lazarus who was raised and not any other person, on that the act of resurrection occurred accidentally and not by His order.²

St. Ambrose

* The Lord Jesus Christ did not tell Lazarus: “In the name of My Father come forth”. Neither did He say: “O Father, resurrect him”. Why did He not use such expressions though He seemed to pray and had already demonstrated His independent authority? This is again an aspect of His wisdom, His words revealed His humility and His deeds revealed His power... they could bring no charge against Him other than He did not come from God. They deceived many by this accusation. Therefore He confirmed by His words and by many examples due to their weakness He provided evidence and many teachings to underline this point. He could have used his power in many other ways to reveal how He was in harmony with the Father and at the same time possessed intrinsic honor. However, the crowds had not attained that level of understanding yet³.

¹ Homilies on St John, 64:2

² On Belief on the Resurrection: 2:27

³ Homilies on St John, 64:2

* The Lord did not say ‘Arise’. Rather, He said: **“Come forth”** as He spoke to the dead one as though he were alive. So who could equal this authority?

Had He done that without possessing power, what would have made Him more significant than the disciples who said: “Why do you look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?” (Act 3:12)

Had the Lord not used His power and not said anything more than what the disciples had said about themselves, then the disciples would have really appeared to be wiser than Him as they rejected praise and glory. In another context, they report why they did so. “We are also men with the same nature as you...” (Acts 14:15). They said these words because they did nothing out of their own power and they wanted people to realize and admit that as well. As for the Lord, when they applied this principle to Him, was it not necessary to dismiss such doubts by using His authority in this situation?

However, the Lord did exactly the opposite of that as He said: **‘...because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe’, [42]...** therefore they may believe that I do not need to pray (to ask)¹.

St. John Chrysostom

* Now, what is the purpose of saying **“Come forth”** other than to reveal that which is hidden?

He who confesses is empowered to come forth.

To **‘come forth’** would have been impossible if he was not alive and he would not be alive if he had not risen again. Therefore, through confession a person comes to understand himself and glorifies God².

* Contemplate the condition of Lazarus: he came out but he was all bound with grave clothes. He was truly alive through confession yet he had not become liberated...he was bound up as he was still tied in the cloth. What does the church do in conformity with the words spoken to her ‘what you loosen will be forgiven’? This is exactly what the Lord told His disciples to do in this context: **“let him loose him and let him go”**³.

St. Augustine

* Do you need a stronger evidence that the faith of others can save someone else? Lazarus had been dead and several days had gone by: his muscles had deteriorated and his body had actually decayed. How could someone who had been dead for four days have faith and personally pray to the Lord?

Nevertheless, what the dead one lacked was available in his two real sisters. When the Lord came, one sister worshipped Him; and when He asked: “where have you laid him?” She answered: **“Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days”**. The Lord answered: **“If you would believe you would see the glory of God”**. It is as though He were telling her: ‘have faith which can resurrect the dead body’.

The sisters had such strong faith that it retrieved the dead from the gates of hell.

If mankind could have such faith and are willing to vouch for one another, then it is possible for the dead to rise again. Would it not be of greater benefit to yourself if you had that pure faith?

¹ Homilies on St John, 64:3

² Sermon on NT Lessons, 17:2

³ Sermon on NT Lessons, 17:3

Indeed, even if you were an unbeliever or had little faith, the Lord and Lover of mankind would be merciful to you when you repent.

On your part, it is appropriate to have a sincere set of mind and say: ‘I believe Lord, help my unbelief’ (Mark 9:24). You need to pray like the apostles: “Lord, increase our faith”. Hence if you have a little faith, you will receive a greater share from God¹.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

* Note that ‘ the Lord gives freedom to the prisoners’ (Ps 14:6-7) and grants peace to those of a humble spirit and who humble at His word (Is 66:2). He may be calling me as I lay in the grave of sin: **“Jerome, come forth”**².

* As I am still lying in the grave of my sins, bound up with the strings of my wickedness, I await the order of the Lord according to the Gospel: **“Jerome, come forth”**³

St. Jerome

* O you who rests in the darkness of the conscience, in the corruption of your sins, as someone imprisoned for a crime, come forth. Admit your sins so that you may be vindicated for ‘with the mouth confession is made to salvation’ (Rom 10:10). If you acknowledge the Lord’s invitation, the bars will be broken and the chains will be loosened. Indeed, the dangerous physical decay and stench will be removed⁴.

St. Ambrose

**‘And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes,
His face was wrapped with a cloth.
Jesus said to them: “Loose him and let him go”. [44]**

How did Lazarus come out though he was bound hand and foot? He came out as someone limping or crawling and he needed someone to remove the grave clothes from his body.

Needless to say that raising Lazarus from the dead resulted in great commotion in all Jerusalem. Many had come there preparing for the Passover feast. This was not a natural event or a miracle that anyone had witnessed before. This was especially astonishing to those who had smelled the stench due to the decayed body.

* St. John the apostle reports that Lazarus **‘who had died came out’** so that we may see what the Lord has done and to witness to His authority. St. John reports: **‘he who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes and his face was wrapped with a cloth’** so that no one would think that this was an imaginary account. The fact that he came out all tied up is just as amazing as his resurrection. The Lord’s words to ‘loose him’ are intended to reveal that this is truly Lazarus since they had to go near him and touch him. To indicate that the Lord’s intention is totally devoid of grandeur appears in His words “loose him and let him go”. He clearly does not follow or lead Lazarus and did not want to walk with him to show him off.

¹ Essay 9:5

² Letter 4:2

³ Letter 7:3

⁴ Concerning Repentance, Book 2:7:57-58

St. John Chrysostom

* We need to pay attention to that too: we need to present deeds worthy of the Lord. Not only do we need to pray so that the dead come to life, but we also need to search and call the one in the cave and grave to attend to matters outside the tomb.

We need to realize that there are many Lazarus types until today. After they had become the Lord's friends, they got sick and died. They have become as the dead in the grave in the land of the dead and with the dead. However, through the Lord's prayer, they have come to life again and they have been invited to come out of the grave by the Lord's loud voice.

Anyone who trusts the Lord comes out bound up with the clothes of death due to his earlier sins. However, his face is still tied up so that he is unable to see, or walk, or do anything because of the bonds of death. He remains in this situation until the Lord Jesus Christ commands the able ones to release him and until He tells him to walk¹.

* Such a person comes out in response to the Lord's voice, yet he is still tied up in his sins. He is alive because he has repented and has heard the Lord's voice yet he has not been liberated from the bounds of sin. He still cannot walk immediately with freed feet. He is not yet liberated to fulfill sublime matters, since his hands and feet are tied up with straps like those grave clothes.

Due to the death that adheres to the straps tying his hands and feet and covering his face with ignorance, such a person remains surrounded with bonds.

That is why the Lord does not only wish that person to live and still remain in the grave and be tied up away from the issues of life outside... Therefore the Lord tells those who are able to serve Him: **"Loose him and let him go"**, [44]².

Origen the Scholar

7. The Effect of the Miracle of Raising Lazarus from the Dead

**'Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary
And had seen the things Jesus did,
Believed in Him.'**[45]

Many of Mary's Jewish friends believed in Him [45]. Most of them had come from Jerusalem which is the nearest city to the village of Bethany. The people of Jerusalem were known for their opposition against the Lord Jesus Christ. Some presented a report of these events to the Pharisees [46], who gathered a council of the Sanhedrim and planned to kill the Lord. Caiaphas, the high priest foretold that one man should die for the whole nation [49-52].

As usual, the fruit of this amazing miracle lends a fragrance of life to life and the smell of death to death. Many believed in the Lord when they saw what He did, while others went to the religious leaders and Pharisees. They went either to arouse them, or to present a testimony of what had occurred, or to invite them to the faith. The response of these leaders and Pharisees was rebellion and opposition towards the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first group of mourners found that there was no need to consult with the

¹ Commentary on John, Book 28:54

² Commentary on John, Book 28: 57-59

priests and Pharisees. They felt that opposing the divine truth should come to an end. Thus the visit to the sad home became the reason that converted them to real faith. They experienced the truth of the wise man's saying that 'it is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting (Ecce 7:2). They had come with a sincere intention to comfort Mary and Martha. Therefore they came out comforted by the work of God and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Giver of resurrection. Indeed, 'he who waters will also be watered himself' (Pro 11:25). That is why no one should cease to do good works as long as he has the power to do so. (Pro 3:27).

Why does the Evangelist state that 'they had come to Mary'? Why did he not also say 'to Martha'? It could be that Mary was better known in Jerusalem so that most of the people had come to comfort her. Some scholars consider that Martha tended to work and move around while Mary was inclined to join calm gatherings (Luke 10:38-40). A person who tends to work does not find time to meet with the mourners, whereas the one inclined to calmness desires to sit with them.

**'But some of them went away to the Pharisees
And told them the things Jesus did'. [46]**

This group represents those who worship superficially. The truth is obvious, and the divine deed is tangible; yet they went to report the event despite their knowledge of the leaders' antagonism towards the Lord.

**'Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said:
"What shall we do? For this Man works many signs" [47]**

The chief priests and Pharisees recognized that they could not oppose or deny the truth for the miracle just shouted it out. Therefore they gathered a council. They realized that the decisions of the Sanhedrim would not be fruitful. The people had gathered around the Lord and such danger threatened the safety of the whole nation. The council was gathered to take practical steps by which they could get rid of the Lord Jesus Christ rather than to deliberate or issue instructions to the people.

They colored the issue with a dangerous political aspect. They analyzed the situation in a manner that defied the truth. Actually, the Lord Jesus Christ had not ceased in doing many unique miracles such as healing the man born blind and raising Lazarus from the dead. These deeds attracted people to Him. They believed in Him and accepted Him as King and the awaited Messiah who would lift up the fallen tabernacle of David. In this manner the Sanhedrim would lose its power and the religious leaders would lose their authority. If the Romans would sense that the people had crowned a king, they would invade the land with an army, seize Jerusalem and destroy the temple. There would be no one to oppose or object to that. In this manner, the Romans occupied the land politically and religiously.

* These leaders disguised their envy and jealousy under the screen of protecting the Jewish nation and the temple. To them, this was the most holy place in the world. Besides, it was the grandest and greatest building.

Notice how the Jews acted: they should have been astonished and amazed at the

resurrection of Lazarus. However, they wished to kill the One who had resurrected the dead.

How could they be so foolish and imagine that they could send to death the One who conquered the death present in the bodies of others.

Note how the religious leaders and Pharisees spoke of Him as they would of any person and said: **“What shall we do? For this Man works many signs?”** ...and yet you ask what to do? You should have believed in Him and sought to His forgiveness. You should have worshipped Him and not have thought that He was a person.

St. John Chrysostom

**“If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him
And the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation”.**
[48]

The Scholar Origen wonders if those who reported to the Pharisees did so in order to allow them to repent and believe, or to arouse them against the Lord so that they would hurry up and plan to discard Him. Origen is inclined to agree with the second possibility.

* What the high priest and Pharisees feared came to be fulfilled in a symbolic way. The high priest represents the lusts of the body that oppose the lusts of the spirit. Therefore, it was impossible for him to conquer the greatest High Priest who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, the Lord has occupied the seat of the high priest but on a heavenly and eternal level. Instead of adhering to the Pharisees’ literal teachings, we experience the joy His of His Holy Spirit. There is no more place for the Pharisees. Concerning the Romans and their occupation of the Jews, they represent the church of nations that has become the New Israel. This Church has become the occupant of the seat of old Israel and constitutes a sanctified nation and priesthood as well as owner of divine promises¹.

Origen the Scholar

* ‘The heathen have been snared by the destruction of their own hands and their feet have been caught in the net they had hid (Ps 9:15). This is the condition of the Jews.

They said that they would kill the Lord to prevent the Romans from coming and occupying their nation and positions. When they killed Him, these consequences happened to them. When they executed what they thought would prevent such consequences, they were unable to escape what they feared. The One who was killed lives in heaven and those who killed Him met their reward in hell².

* It is as though they had said: If the Romans saw that the Lord Jesus Christ created anxiety in the nation, they would suspect we rebelled against them and they would destroy our city. We would then ask one of them: when did you hear the Lord teaching rebellion? Did He not recommend the payment of the tribute to Caesar? When you tried to crown Him king, did He not escape? Has He not led a simple life without any

¹ cf. Commentary on John, Book 28:86-97

² Homilies on St John, 65:1

boasting? He neither owned a house nor any other kind of property?

These claims did not reflect their expectations. They just made them out of envy. Indeed, the One who had healed the sick and taught about the virtuous path in life and recommended submission to the leaders, did not arouse rebellion. On the contrary, He destroyed rebellions and dismantled it

St. John Chrysostom

**‘And one of them, Caiaphas,
Being high priest that year, said to them:
“You know nothing at all”. [49]**

According to the law, the high priest is ordained to serve for life (Ex 40:15). They inherit the office which runs down from Aaron and his children. However, the Romans authority interfered and took the authority to exile and appoint a high priest whenever they wished and at any time. Moreover, they did not observe the law except for the rule regarding the lineage of priesthood. The historian Josephine records that Caiaphas is the name by which he was popularly known; that his real name was Joseph. He was a high priest for eight or nine years. He was deposed by *Vitellius* probably and was exiled in Judah¹.

The Romans did not consider that the Lord Jesus Christ opposed their empire. They were not concerned about His popularity because he recommended submission to the authorities and the payment of the tribute to Caesar. Indeed, he asked St. Peter to pay the tribute for both of them. When He was judged, we find Pilate exerting several times an effort to release Him.

**‘Nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people,
Not that the whole nation should perish.’ [50]**

* The high priest had to wear the breastplate of judgment the ‘Urim and the Thummin’ (Ex 28:30); to pray God to grant him righteous judgment. This matter seemed to have been neglected completely. Thus the high priest presented his advice to the council dictated by his wicked envy and not by consulting God. He presented what seemed to be logical and truthful according to human philosophy. His words seemed to be based on correct thinking. However, the truth was that it was all based on wicked sentiments. He driven by a strong desire to get rid of the One who had revealed their wickedness and seized their popularity. Isaiah the prophet says: ‘Justice is turned back and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street and equity cannot enter’ (Is 59:14).

**‘Now this, he did not say on his own authority,
But being high priest that year,
He prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation.’ [51]**

* Caiaphas did not speak out of his own resources and he was not aware of the meaning of his own words even though he uttered a prophesy. In the writings of St. Paul, ‘we meet teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the thing which they affirm’

¹ Antiq. 18 c. 3

(1 Tim 1:7). This is not the condition of a wise person whom king Solomon describes in the Proverbs: ‘The heart of the wise teaches his mouth and adds learning to his lips’ (refer to Pro 16:23)¹.

Origen the Scholar

* Do you see how the leadership of the priesthood is powerful? Caiaphas qualified to be the head of the priesthood; even though he actually lacked the traits that would qualify him, he prophesied without realizing what he was saying. His mouth was touched by Grace, but He did not touch his unclean heart. Many others foretold matters before they occurred even though they had failed in being qualified for that role. Examples of such people are: Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh, and Balaam. Notice the power of the Holy Spirit and how He could use a sly mind to utter words carrying amazing prophecies².

* What is the implication of the words ‘**being high priest that year**’? Like many other matters, this too had become corrupt since these offices were bought (with money). The high priest was no longer a life time office and lasted for one year only. However, in this case the Holy Spirit was present. Yet, when they lifted up their hands against the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit abandoned them and switched to work in the disciples. This was proclaimed by the veil of the temple being torn in two and as the Lord breathed His last (Mark 15:38); when the voice of the Lord saying: “See! Your house is left to you desolate” (Matt 23:38). Josephus, who lived a short time after that, says that certain angels, who had remained with them in the hope that they would relent from their wickedness, abandoned them³.

St. John Chrysostom

**“And not for that nation only,
But also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.”[52]**

These two verses are provided by St. John the evangelist to show how God uses even the evil of the high priest to give testimony for the truth. Moreover, his words predict the redeeming work of Christ for the Jews as well as for God/s children all over the world: both Jews and Gentiles.

Who are the children of God who are scattered abroad? They are the believers from all nations. They will come together as members of the one Body of Christ. **Origen the Scholar** considers that Israel, according to the flesh, after being scattered, will also accept to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then they too will come to join and be one with Him⁴.

‘Then from that day on they plotted to put Him to death.’

* They really sought to do so before for the Evangelist reports: “The Jews sought all the more to kill Him (John 5:18). The Lord Jesus Christ also asked them: “why do you seek to kill Me?” (John 7:19). Previously, they sought to kill Him, but now they decided to do what they had set their minds upon and they moved to fulfill it.

¹ Commentary on John, Book 28:172-174

² Homilies on St John, 65:1

³ Homilies on St John, 65:1

⁴ Cf. Commentary on John, Book 28: 185

**‘Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews,
But when from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called
Ephraim and there remained with His disciples’. [54]**

Ephraim is a small village near Bethel. The Holy Bible mentions it again in 2 Chronicles 13:19. It is also mentioned by Josephus¹.

It is believed that it is the same village mentioned in 1 Kings 5:46; 2 Kings 12:27. Joshua had given it as part of the lot of the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15:9). Both Josephus and St. Jerome state that Ephraim was about 20 miles away from Jerusalem. Some Scholars believe that the Lord Jesus Christ stayed there from January 24 to March 24: that is for two months².

* We believe that these words and similar ones have been recorded as the Word wishes to warn us against sudden and irrational deeds in an attempt to struggle with death for the sake of truth, (Sirach 4:28), and martyrdom.

On the one hand, it is right not to avoid confession. Besides we should not hesitate to die for righteousness sake whenever we are involved in a struggle and confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, it is not less important to avoid falling into a great dilemma. Indeed, we need to avoid that as much as possible not only because the result is not clear to us, but also so that we do not become responsible for arousing those who do not actually wish to spill our blood. Otherwise, these would commit a crime and become worst sinners and more evil. That would be the case if we sought our own profit and did not care about those who plot against us and our death. Because of us, they would be sentenced to greater punishment- that is if we focused on ourselves and give no consideration to others. Then we would have saved ourselves by our death while there was no imperative need for that³.

* **‘Ephraim’** means ‘giving fruit’. He was the younger brother of Manasseh , which means ‘forgetful’ who left the people behind him ‘ as in forgetfulness’ and this gave rise to the Gentiles. When the Lord ‘turns rivers’ into a wilderness and the water springs into dry ground, it is because of the wicked who live there (Ps 107:33-38). However, the Lord transforms the wilderness which belongs to the Gentiles into wells of water and their dry land into sources of life⁴.

Origen the Scholar

**‘And the Passover of the Jews was near
And many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to
purify themselves. [55]**

* The Jews wanted to paint their feast red by the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. On that day, the lamb was killed and it has become a feast for us through His Blood. The Jews had planned to kill the Lord: the One who have descended from heaven to suffer. He

¹ War, b4, c8, s 9.

² Cf. Adam Clarke Comm.

³ Commentary on John, Book 28: 192-194

⁴ Commentary on John, Book 28: 214

wanted to go near the place where He would suffer because His hour had come.¹

St. Augustine

* What an amazing purification while harboring a determination to commit a crime, with murderous intentions and hands that would spill Blood!²

St. John Chrysostom

‘Then they sought Jesus and spoke among themselves as they stood in the Temple,

“What do you think - that He will not come to the feast?”[56]

The people of Ephraim probably looked for Him where He left their city. He might have gone to Jericho or its suburbs. Maybe those who were looking for Him had been sent by the high priest and were trying to find out so that they would notify him as to where the Lord was staying during the feast celebrations.

* They seized the Feast of the Passover to plot against Him. Besides, they considered this was a good time to commit a crime. He would fall into their hands since He would come to celebrate the feast³.

St. John Chrysostom

* Those who were looking for Him and those who were not doing so are to be blamed. Therefore, may we look for Him so that we might have and hold Him for ourselves and not so that we may kill Him⁴.

St. Augustine

‘Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, That if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him.’[57]

* Let them come to our church to hear from us where He is. Let them hear this Gospel... He has left (and has ascended), He is present here. He has returned yet He has not left us. He has carried His body to heaven yet He has not withdrawn His glory from the world⁵.

St. Augustine

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 50: 2

² Homilies on St John, 65:2

³ Homilies on St John, 65:2

⁴ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 50:3

⁵ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 50:4

Chapter 11

May You shout my name with a loud voice and say: Come Forth

*Mary and Martha sent You a message concerning their brother

“The one whom You love is sick”!

Now my faithful fellows plead for me before You and my brothers who rest in Paradise intercede before Your throne

Who can lift me up from my sickness but You, O Healer of souls and bodies!

* Sickness has struck in my whole being, it occupies my thought, heart and all my senses. Corruption occupies my inner being.

Who will rescue me of this corrupt body but You, O You who is the Resurrection!

*May You hurry to my grave!

For I have caused trouble even to You!

For I am the subject of Your love

May You shout with Your divine voice and call my name and may You say: “come forth”

By coming to my grave, You have granted me the resurrection after being dead.

Death is neared in the presence of the Resurrection!

I admit my sin and I enjoy the apostolic absolution according to Your promise. (Matt 16:19)

*Through You, I enjoy the rejoicing resurrected life!

Indeed, You have restored to me the joy of Your Salvation!

And the mourning has become transformed into an eternal feast!

My brethren on earth and in heaven glorify You.

For You are the Deliverer of souls from the corruption of death!

* I do not possess the words

Yet my life has become a living testimony for Your sublime works.

May many believe in You.

As they see You glorified in my weakness!

May the enemy of righteousness and his army go wild

For they cannot tolerate the light of the Resurrection in me!

* Finally, allow me to pass by the graves with You so that You may call each one by name.

How sweet is Your voice as You shout saying: “Come Forth”

O what an enjoyable celebration.

As the souls come out of their graves, shining with Your glory!

And so many are transformed into heavenly brides

Decorated and ready for the eternal and perpetual marriage!

AMEN

CHAPTER TWELVE

SUPPER IN BETHANY

The previous chapter closed on a depressing picture. The Jewish leaders began a dangerous war against the Lord Jesus Christ. Together with the scribes, they believed that the Lord had betrayed the Sanhedrin. However, we find in this chapter that there are faithful believers who will witness for the truth. They will glorify the Lord and witness for Him in spite of an overwhelming atmosphere of hate and hostility.

The testimony of such believers glorifies the Lord on all levels: on the personal level- as in the case of the sister of Lazarus; and on the communal level- as displayed during the Lord's entry into Jerusalem. Moreover, the heavens witness to Him; and so do the Old Testament prophets; some leaders; and finally the Lord testifies for Himself.

1- Anointing the Lord's Feet with Spikenard	Chapter 12:	1-11
2- The Lord's Entry into Jerusalem		12 -19
3- The Greeks Honor the Lord Jesus Christ		20 - 26
4- The Heavens Glorify the Lord Jesus Christ		27 - 36
5- The Prophets testify to His Glory		37 - 41
6- Some Leaders Witness to His Glory		42 - 43
7- The Lord Witnesses for Himself		44 - 50

1 - Anointing the Lord's Feet with Spikenard

**'Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany,
Where Lazarus was which had been dead,
Whom He raised from the dead'. [1]**

After the Lord had raised Lazarus from the dead, He went to make a friendly visit to his home. It was six days before the feast of the Passover. The home in Bethany was close to Jerusalem, and the Lord's visit seemed to be a preparation for the celebrations of the feast. The Lord wants us to prepare ourselves for spiritual events.

Another factor was that the hour of His crucifixion was drawing near and so He went to Bethany as He knew they would set up their nets to catch Him. He could have escaped and destroyed their nets. However, He had come specifically to offer Himself on our behalf and as a living sacrifice of love.

It was a friendly visit to the home of Mary and Martha whom he loved greatly. He knew that He would be physically separated from them soon. Therefore this was a farewell visit which would be marked by His love and comforting words. Such farewell words would provide support on the day of His trial which was drawing near.

Finally, the Lord had also come to Bethany, after having raised Lazarus, in order to follow up the effects of His deed. It is as though He had come to water what He had planted, and to sanctify it so that it would yield adequate fruit.

The Lord came on the Jewish Sabbath and the feast of the Passover was to be celebrated six days later. Now was the time when each family would choose the lamb which they were going to offer on the day of the Feast. They had to isolate the lamb in a shed for five days and then offer it as a sacrifice on the sixth day which would mark the day of the Passover Feast. Now, here was the Lord who is the true Passover and the Lamb of God. He had come of Himself in order to isolate Himself. He delivered Himself into the hands of His loved ones. They would anoint Him with spikenard and tears on the day following His arrival. Voluntarily, He dedicated His life to be a sacrificial offering on behalf of the whole world. After His visit to Bethany, the Lord He would enter into Jerusalem on the day that would be marked as the Christian Sabbath day (Palm Sunday).

**‘There they made him a supper;
And Martha served:
But Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him’. [2]**

The family offered thanksgiving in a practical manner. The Lord was the One who had raised the head of the family from the dead. They made dinner and each of the three members of the family played a different role. Lazarus sat among those who were gathered around the Lord and he witnessed for the One who had granted Him life. Martha served, while Mary proclaimed her love by anointing the Lord’s feet. Some scholars believe that this was the same event that took place in the house of Simon the Leper (Matt24:6). Others believe that these were two separate events. The dinner here takes place in the house of Lazarus and his sisters. The fact that Martha was serving proves that point. The dinner mentioned in the Gospel of St Matthew took place on the third day of the Passover week, whereas this dinner occurred six days before the Feast. The two occasions may have occurred in Bethany: during the first dinner, Mary used about one measure of the spikenard; while she used all the spikenard she had on the second occasion, (Mk 14:3).

Martha served at the table to express her great appreciation. She considered it to be an honor to serve the Lord in any manner she could. Previously, the Lord had compared her service to that of her sister Mary who had been sitting at His feet. In spite of that, she did not quit the service she did.

But Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him’ [2]...the presence of Lazarus testified to the resurrection that the Lord had granted him. He sat down to confirm that the Lord had truly restored him to life.

* The Lord was eager to visit the person He had raised from the dead. He wished to rejoice on account of the gift of a renewed life. Similarly, the Lord comes to the meal that

the Church prepares for Him to celebrate the One who has risen and is now sitting on high¹.

St Ambrose

* It is clear that the dinner was held in Martha's home as those who loved the Lord received Him in their homes.

The Evangelist tells us that **'Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him'** as this proves the reality of his being restored to life. After so many days Lazarus was there, actually alive and eating with those present²

St John Chrysostom

* Every time that the Lord raised someone from the dead, He asked for food to be offered to that person. In this manner, no one would imagine that the event is an imaginary one. For this reason, after Lazarus had been raised, he is reported to be present at the table and sharing a meal with the Lord³.

St Jerome

**'Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly,
And anointed the feet of Jesus,
And wiped his feet with her hair:
And the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. [3]**

'The pound': a Greek and Roman measure equivalent to about 200 Drahmas.

'Nardine'/ spikenard: a kind of expensive fragrance that people of the ancient world competed to possess. It is mentioned in the Book of the Song of Solomon (1:12; 4:13, 14). The quality of its purity indicated that no wax or resin was added to turn it into a cream.

Mary expressed her love by pouring a pound of pure and costly oil, rubbing the Lord's feet with it and drying it with her hair. Consequently, the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. She had offered the most valuable thing she owned in order to honor the Lord. With great love, she anointed His feet. It was common to anoint the head but she did not do that. Surely some oil must have run over the Lord's clothes as she poured a whole pound of it. She is like the human soul who speaks to her Bridegroom and King and says: "While the king sits at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance", (Sg of Sol. 1:12)

Mary had poured the fragrance of her love and its smell continues to fill the House of the Lord across all generations. The Father smells it as it carries the sweet smell of the Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Cor 2:15). We, the believers, smell the fragrance after so many

¹ Concerning Repentance, 2:7:60

² Hom. on St John, 65:2

³ Against Jovinianus, 2;17

centuries and desire to offer our whole life as a sweet fragrance of love to Him who has loved us first.

* Martha served. This fact indicates that the meal was served in her house...Mary did not serve for she was a disciple. On this occasion she acted spiritually and not as though she had been called to serve. Moreover, she did not offer her services to all the guests in general. She honored the Holy one solely. She approached Him as her God and not as a person. Consequently, she anointed His feet and wiped them with her hair. She did those things as she believed in Him and in that her concept was different from many others¹.

St John Chrysostom

* The spikenard is a symbol for righteousness. It weighed one pound. However, it was a rare and costly fragrance. In the Greek language the word 'faith' has its origin in the word 'faith' and is synonymous to it. One prays to act righteously for 'the just shall live by faith', (Rom 1:17).

Wipe the feet of Jesus...in other words, walk in the Lord's footsteps to reap the fruit of a righteous life.

Wipe His feet with your hair: offer whatever you have which exceeds your needs and give it to the poor. In this manner, you will be wiping the Lord's feet. Hair seems to be an unnecessary addition to the body, therefore present something that is in excess. Even though it exceeds your needs, yet it will be of value when offered at the Lord's feet.

It could be that the Lord's feet on earth are needy; or could He be talking about something other than the members of His body when He says: "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me", (Matt 25:40). Therefore offer whatever exceeds your needs; and yet you will be offering what would be welcome to His feet².

* **'...And the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment'** [3]: The world is filled with the fragrance of the Lord's personal reputation of righteousness; for a good reputation is like a refreshing fragrant smell. Those who walk in wickedness and bear the name of Christ actually bring dishonor to His name. We are told that because of such people 'the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles', (Rom 2:24). If through the wicked people are led to blaspheme against the Lord, then it is through the righteousness that the name of God is honored.

Listen to the Apostle when he says: "For we are the fragrance of Christ in every place". In the Song of Solomon, we find these words: 'Because of the fragrance of your good ointments your name is as ointment poured out' (Sg of Sol 1:3).

St Augustine

¹ Hom 65. PG 59:391

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate50:6

* This fragrance is not different than the one which the bride used and whose fragrance reached the bridegroom: ‘While the king sits at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance’ (Sg of Sol 1:12).

The Gospel mentions that when the oil was poured over the Lord its fragrant smell filled the house where the meal was being served. It appears that the woman who had poured the oil had predicted the mystery of Christ’s death. The Lord proclaimed the act she had done by saying: “For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial...” (Matt 26:12).

The Home which became filled with the sweet odor is symbolic of the whole creation and the whole world for **“...wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman has done, be told for a memorial of her”**. The fragrance of her act would spread as the Gospel is being preached **‘for a memorial to her’**. In the **Song of Solomon**, we are told that the smell of spikenard spreads out from the bridegroom to his bride. In the Gospel too we are told that the sweet smell of the Lord filled the whole house. That sweet fragrance will fill the whole Body of the Church everywhere all over the world¹.

St Gregory of Nicea

**‘Then one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son,
Who would betray Him, said...’ [4]**

* As the sweet smelling aroma of the Lord spread, it brought to some the breath of life, whereas it brought the smell of death to others, (2 Cor 2:14-16). This sweet smell became the smell of death for Judas.

St Augustine

* [in a speech addressed to the emperor, Theodosius wrote the following:]

‘Therefore, O emperor, I address my words not only to you but they also are about you. Notice how God seeks to judge severely. Therefore as much as you have been glorified, it is fitting that you accordingly submit to your Creator. It is written: ‘when the Lord your God brings you into a strange land, and you eat and drink of the fruit of others, do not say: ‘Because of my strength and righteousness I have received this’; for it is the merciful Lord who has granted you these things’. Therefore to show your love for His Body (that is, for His Church) offer water for His feet and kiss them. In this manner you will forgive those who have fallen and committed sin. Besides, you will have corrected and comforted them through your love for peace.

Pour oil over His feet so that the whole house where the Lord Jesus Christ sits becomes filled with your sweet odor. Then will all those sitting there enjoy your fragrance. In other words, honor the humiliated. Then will the angels rejoice because they have been pardoned because they rejoice when one sinner repents, (Lk 15:10). Moreover, the apostles rejoice, and the prophets are filled with gladness².

¹ Song of Solomon: St Gregory of Nicea. Translated into Arabic by Dr George Nawar: Sermon 3

² St Ambrose: 50:26

**“Why was this fragrance not sold for three hundred dinarii,
And given to the poor?”[5]**

In the middle of this heavenly scene where the sweet aroma of the Lord attracted all hearts towards the heavens, there was the stench of persistent greed, treason, and betrayal that came from the heart of a disciple who seemed to belong to the Lord’s party. His heart could not tolerate the sweet smell of the Lord which grants life: it became the aroma of death to death, (1 Cor 2:16).

The woman’s deed made Judas uncomfortable as he considered it was an act of squandering a big sum of money. He calculated that the value of the spikenard was about three hundred denarii. It could have been spent on the poor. He was unable to comprehend the invaluable price of love which cannot be calculated. Judas was a disciple who preached the good News; yet he did not love the spirit of preaching and of love. For him, preaching became his official career and job. It did not bear the sweet smell of love which fills the ‘Church’ which the ‘House of God’.

By seeming to care for the poor, Judas had found the excuse that would enable him to attack that act of love. The devil too transforms himself to appear as an angel of light. He used human wisdom to calculate the service of the poor versus the proclamation of love to the Lord Jesus Christ. All the while, he concealed in his depths his greed and love of money for he was a thief and stole from the treasury box.

That traitor could not tolerate that act of love. How could Mary pour fragrance that could have been sold for three hundred denarii? Yet he was able to sell his Master for thirty pieces of silver. She put three hundred denarii under the Lord’s feet and considered this as nothing. As for Judas, he put his Master under thirty pieces of silver and considered his Master as nothing when measured by that trivial amount.

**‘This he said, not that he cared for the poor;
But because he was a thief,
And had the bag,
And he used to take what was put in it’. [6]**

Some scholars explain that the name ‘Iscariot’ means ‘bearer of the money box’.

Judas had no feelings for the poor had he did not care about them. The ministry for the poor was only an opportunity for him to steal the money. Why did the Lord trust him with the money box? Rather, He could have given that task to Peter or John who were trustworthy. It could be that Judas sought to get the job and attained what he wanted. It could be that the Lord permitted that to happen so that he would have no financial need that would drive him to sell his Master.

Throughout generations, the Church continues to have a very small number of sanctified members who lay and offer all their possessions at the Lord's feet. As a result, the sweet aroma of the Lord who lives within their hearts fills the whole Church. The Church also includes those who hide behind formalities and money boxes in order to steal what belongs rightfully to the Lord, and to sell Him for the price of a slave. However, the Lord does not expose them for He gives them the chance to examine their depths, discover their wickedness and renew their lives by repentance. Then they would go back to their Savior.

* The Lord was very patient with Judas who was a devil, a thief, and a traitor. He permitted him to be accepted among the innocent disciples. These faithful ones knew that such an honor was a reward for loving Him, (that is, being united with the Body and Blood of the Lord)¹.

* Watch and learn how this Judas had not become corrupt only when he accepted the bribe to betray His Master to the Jews...he did not perish at only that moment. Actually, he was evil and a thief from the time he became a follower of the Lord. He followed Him physically but not sincerely. He became the twelfth disciple; yet he had no share in the apostolic blessing...and when he died, another was appointed so that the number of apostles was then met².

* He is the One that angels serve... so why did He have a money box? He intended to demonstrate clearly that His Church would be obligated in the future to have a money depository.

Why did the Lord delegate a thief to hold that responsible job other than to teach the Church to be longsuffering towards thieves?

Nevertheless, the one who has the habit of stealing the money box did not hesitate to deliver his Master for the sake of money³.

St Augustine

* The Love of money is a terrible issue. It corrupts the ears and eyes; and transforms a human being into something worse than a savage beast. It strips a person from his conscience and of any ideals of friendship, brotherhood, or thoughts of personal salvation. His greed attracts him away from all that as it becomes like a fierce woman who subjugates all those she captures...

¹ Letters, 43

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 50:10

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 50:11

Greed transformed Gehazi into a leper instead of being a disciple and prophet. It destroyed Ananias and Saphira with him; and it turned Judas into a traitor.

Greed corrupted the Jewish leaders...it caused hundreds of wars, and filled the streets with blood and the cities with wailing and mourning¹.

St John Chrysostom

**‘Then said Jesus,
“Let her alone: she has kept this for the day of my burial”’. [7]**

Judas condemned her, and considered that Mary had acted unwisely. He judged that she had wasted money on something useless; and the money could have gone to the poor. In contrast, the Lord proclaimed that she had performed a sublime prophetic as she had predicted His burial and the rituals involved. Through her love, she could perceive the Lord’s sufferings, His death, and His burial; and her deed proclaimed the sweet aroma of redemption.

We have never heard of someone whose body was anointed and prepared for burial while he was still alive. Yet the Lord considered the spikenard as burial material for His body which would not see corruption. He had delivered His Body as a sacrifice and a spiritual food when He instituted the Eucharist on Holy Thursday. On that day, and as he willingly offered his Body, He acknowledged the procedure for His burial. In this manner, the Lord confirmed His free and holy will to accept death and burial for the sake of the world, thereby granting us the power and joy of His resurrection

* The Lord indicated the motive for Mary’s act when He said: **“Let her alone: she has kept this for the day of my burial”**

St John Chrysostom

* Note, dear ones, that the Lord did not say: ‘You speak those words because you are a thief’. He knew Judas was a thief; yet the Lord tolerated him and did not condemn him. In this manner the Lord sets the example for us to show tolerance towards evil people within the Church².

St Augustine

**“For the poor you have with you always;
But Me you do not have always”’. [8]**

These words carried a hidden significance and they referred to two acts. On the one hand, there was a purpose hidden behind Judas’ pretense of loving the poor. While claiming to help them, He was delivering His Master to death in a horrible deed of betrayal. On the other hand, there was the amazing act of Mary. She embraced and honored the Body that had been delivered up to die. She gave Him the costly spikenard which was the most precious thing she had. The Lord

¹ Homilies on St John, 65:3

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 50:11

secretly admonished Judas because he claimed to love the poor. He then turned to Mary and praised her because she seized upon an opportunity that would not recur for **'Me you do not have always'**.

Mary prepared the Body of the Lord for burial while He was still alive. Therefore she was praised by the Lord Himself. Nicodemus and Joseph prepared the Body after His death. They were honored too, though this is not comparable to the honor given to Mary. She had offered one pound of precious oil, while they offered hundreds of pounds. Nevertheless, the first offering to the living Body was far more superior to the second one.

Mary continues to invite us today to anoint the living Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can do so by serving His members: the poor, the suffering, those who have been banished, and those who have no one to look after them. Indeed, God has said: "You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land," (Deut 15:11). Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea invite us to honor the Lord's Body by honoring the members who have passed away, i.e. the saints and martyrs.

It is unwarranted to carry out one task at the expense of another. Our love for the poor should be in harmony with our love for the saints who are still alive. Through prayer and constant thanksgiving, these saints express love towards God as well as towards all mankind.

* The Lord Jesus Christ sought to limit the evil in Judas. He did so by treating him with great humility. By not speaking about His knowledge that Judas stole from the money box, the Lord made a statement that would become an obstacle to the wicked desire of Judas. Moreover, the Lord's words would strip Judas of any form of self defense¹.

St John Chrysostom

When we speak about His divine presence with us, the Lord Jesus Christ is with us constantly. When we speak about His physical presence, He is the One who told His disciples: **"Me you do not have always"**, [8].

St Augustine

**'Then people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there:
And they came not for Jesus' sake only,
But that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the
dead'. [9]**

Many of the Jews had heard about Lazarus being raised from the dead. It was the talk of the whole city. Therefore people came not to see the Lord but to see the one who had been raised from the dead. They did not come to hear the Lord, but they came to see and verify the story about the one resurrected from the dead. These people had come to

¹ Hom. 65 PG 59:391-392

honor Him rather than to arrest Him or report Him to the authorities. Some had come to confirm their faith in Him by listening about the miracle of the resurrection from the mouth of Lazarus himself. Others had been driven to come out of curiosity. How could a person arise from the dead, what had he seen when he was dead, and what news can he tell about the other world? During these days of feasting, Lazarus became an amazing center of attention for many wanted to see and hear him.

‘But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;’ [10]

St Jerome wrote a letter to *Marcella* in which he praises *Blaesilla*, the daughter of *Paula*, whose husband had passed away seven months after their marriage. She then suffered from a dangerous disease. This drove her to have faith and she dedicated all her energy towards serving the Lord. This caused a tide of strong attacks against her. **St Jerome** considered her to be the new Lazarus because she enjoyed what was similar to being resurrected from the dead.

* Her previous life had been characterized by a kind of carelessness. She was bound by the ropes of wealth and she seemed to be like a dead person lying in the grave of this world. However, the Lord was greatly disturbed and troubled spiritually and cried: “*Blaesilla*, come forth”. She arose at His call, came out, and sat and ate with the Lord, (Jn 12:2). The Jews angrily threatened her and demanded that she be put to death because the Lord had raised her from the dead, (Jn 12:10). She was content as the apostles offer glory to God. *Blaesilla* realized that she was indebted with her life to the One who had restored life to her. She could now embrace the feet of the One whom she had feared as a Judge just a short while ago...what greater comfort could she find to help her face the words of her opponents...these seemed lighter than smoke?¹

St Jerome

* Did not the Lord have the power to raise those who had been killed since He had the power to raise those who were dead? (In other words, could He have raised himself when the Jews sought to kill Him)?

When you were plotting a violent death for Lazarus, were you disarming the Lord of His power?

If you thought that those who had died a natural death were different from those who had been murdered, than just stop and think again. The Lord went through both these situations: He raised Lazarus who had died a natural death, and He raised Himself after having been murdered².

St Augustine

**‘Because on account of Him, many of the Jews went away,
And believed on Jesus.’ [11]**

¹ Letter 38:2

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 50:14

As more hearts were fired up with the desire to see the Lord Jesus Christ, and as faith in Him increased, so did the jealousy of the chief priests become more intense. They consulted together; and could find no other means to solve the situation other than by killing Him. They exerted every effort to distort His image before the crowds so that they would abandon Him. Their attempts were futile due to the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. There could be no better proof that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Messiah than raising someone from the dead. The Lord had granted Lazarus life because He is real Life.

2-The Lord's Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem

**'The next day a great multitude had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem' [12],
'Took branches of palm trees,
And went forth to meet him,
And cried out:
"Hosanna:
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!
The King of Israel!" [13]**

The palm tree branches are symbols of victory. That is why Cicero who had won many trophies was called 'the man of many palm branches'. The Lord overcame the powers of darkness through His death. That is why He was worthy to have bearers of palm branches pave His way.

Besides, carrying palm branches played an important role during the Feast of Dedication. It was a sign of rejoicing. Similarly, the Lord is our reason to celebrate- He is our Feast as He brings joy to our hearts.

King Solomon states that the soul loved by her bridegroom- who is the Lord Jesus Christ- is similar to a palm tree: "I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of its branches..." (Sg of Sol: 7:8).

Coptic (Egyptian) Christians observe the tradition to compete in buying palm branches, weaving, and decorating them with flowers. They often place a specially cooked loaf (Korban) in the shape of a Cross as part of the work. All this has the purpose of expressing the joy of the soul as she prepares to receive her victorious Bridegroom. It indicates a heart that is glad because of her heavenly King, the Savior of souls from all corruption. Many people continue to preserve the woven palm branches from one Palm Sunday until the next Palm Sunday is celebrated. This indicates the continued expression of welcome to the King within the hearts, as well as within the family inside their home.

The people shouted words of welcome taken from Psalms 118:25-26. This reveals how the people's welcome was in harmony with the spirit of the Holy Bible. It was the result of their perception that He was the awaited Messiah; whereas the religious leaders were struck with spiritual blindness.

Although He came as a poor person lacking glory, yet the crowds welcomed Him as a King and Savior of Israel. They perceived that He was the righteous King who came in the name of the Lord (Ps 2:6). They accepted His kingdom wholeheartedly, and they expressed their feelings by shouting **“Hosanna!”** or ‘Hoshaana’ which means ‘He has redeemed us’.

The crowds opened their hearts to receive the Lord of glory, and they seemed to sing with the Psalmist, saying: “Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in: the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle” (Ps 24:7, 8).

Palm tree branches are also a symbol of praise and a sign of victory. The Lord came to conquer death by dying. With the power of His Cross He defeated the prince of death.

The word that the crowds used to cheer the Lord was **‘Hosanna’**. Some writers who know the Hebrew language believe that the word indicates a positive state of mind. This is similar to our use of certain expressions. For example, to indicate grief, we say “How sad”; to indicate joy, we say “Ha!” surprise-“Wonderful”; and astonishment- “Oh”. ‘Hosanna’ belongs to that same class of words and cannot be translated into Latin or Greek. There are many such expressions, like: “He who tells his brother ‘Rakka’” as this is a tool of astonishment and expresses anger¹.

* **“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel!”** [13].

We get a better meaning of the words **“...in the name of the Lord”** when we realize the implication to be ‘... in the name of the Lord God’. It is also appropriate to understand that He comes in His own name for He is the Lord².

* What kind of intellectual dilemma must the Jewish leaders have suffered as they heard such great crowds proclaiming that the Lord Jesus Christ was their King!

But what Honor does the Lord receive by being king of Israel?

What is the great thing for the Lord of Eternity to become king over mankind?

The Lord’s reign over Israel is not intended for the collection of a tribute, or for the exchange of swords among soldiers, or to defeat His enemies in a declared war. Actually, He is King of Israel as He rules with kingly power over their inner natures; as He plans their eternal concerns; and as He attracts those who have faith, hope, and love to focus on Him and His divine kingdom. Being the Son of God and equal to Him, His act is one of humiliation that does not involve any elevation or grandness. He is the Word and by Him things were made. He willingly became the King of Israel. It is an act of tenderness and does involve any addition of power. Indeed, the One whom they called the King of Israel on earth is called the King of angels in heaven³.

St Augustine

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate, 51:2

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate,51:3

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 51:4

**‘Then Jesus, when he had found a young donkey,
Sat on it; as it is written, [14].**

The Lord was used to walking when going from one place to another. However, He was now riding on a donkey with astonishing humility. He was not riding like king Solomon in a carriage (Sg of Sol 3:9-10) decorated with ‘pillars of silver, supports of gold, and covered with purple’. The Lord’s glory was not a materialistic one. Since His kingdom was not of this world, He did not carry any appearance of grandness.

He **‘sat on it’**: we are not told that ‘He rode it’ as the Evangelist wished to underline the Lord’s status as He sits on the throne.

What is briefly reported in this passage has been reported with elaboration by the other three evangelists, (Matt 21:1-16; Mk 11:1-11; Lk 19:29-48).

**“Fear not, daughter of Zion:
Behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt”. [15]**

The prophet asks the daughter of Zion to look up and see her humble and meek King who fills her life with the joy of victory. Therefore he invites her to rejoice and be glad for her King has come to tear away her fear and anxiety. The prophecy of the prophet Zechariah has been fulfilled: ‘Rejoice greatly (do not fear), O daughter of Zion; ... behold, your King is coming to you: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding on a donkey, and upon a colt the foal of a donkey’ (Zech 9:9). He did not come to take revenge of His enemies- Jews or Romans. Rather, He came so that His heavenly peace and sublime glory may fill them. This is what St Luke expressed in these words: ‘Peace in heaven and glory in the highest’ (Lk 19:38). St Augustine comments on that and says:

* She was told ‘Fear not...’ as she would get to know the One whom she would glorify now. She was encouraged to dismiss fear for He had come to suffer. By pouring His Blood, He will erase your sins, and restore you to life. Concerning the colt who had never had someone sit on him before, (according to the other evangelists), that was a reference to the Gentiles who had rejected the law of the Lord. As for the donkey...he was a symbol of His people, who came from Israel, and submitted to learn about the manger of their Master¹.

St Augustine

“Fear not, daughter of Zion...” for most of those who ruled over the Jews were cruel and unjust. They delivered the people to their enemies and put a ransom to stimulate their attackers...this was not the case with that humble One. It was evident as He rode on a donkey, and did not lead an army as He entered the city. He just sat on a donkey².

St John Chrysostom

‘His disciples did not understand these things at the first:

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 51:5

² Hom 66. PG 59:395-396

**But when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him,
And that they had done these things to him'. [16]**

The disciples were unable to comprehend the real implications of the unfolding events and what they entailed. They could not see how the prophecies of the Old Testament were being fulfilled. It was only after the Lord was glorified upon His resurrection that He opened their hearts with love and their minds with the spirit of knowledge. Only then did they realize how they had been granted the joy of the new covenant, and which the prophets had longed for in the old times.

The Evangelist reports this observation about the disciples to indicate their disability to understand that these events fulfilled the prophecies. He states that they remained in this state until the Lord was glorified through His crucifixion and resurrection. Then they understood. Before that, they were like young children who acted without understanding the context of the events unfolding around them. As soon as they reached a stage of maturity, they were able to perceive the divine mystery which lay behind these events. They finally realized that this was God's plan for salvation

* Do you notice how the disciples did not know most of the prophecies about the Lord Jesus Christ as He had not revealed these to them? Moreover, they did not understand His words: **"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,"** (Jn 2:19). In another Gospel, we are told that: **"...this saying was hidden from them"** (Lk 18:34); and they did not know that He would rise from the dead...

Note the philosophy of St John the Evangelist and how he did not shrink away from revealing how the minds of the disciples were dim at first.

St John Chrysostom

* St John was not ashamed to admit the ignorance of the disciples. Later on, he reveals their knowledge. However, he was not concerned with honoring people for he preached to glorify the Spirit.

St Cyril the Great

People have held different perspectives concerning this unique procession:

1-**The Lord Jesus Christ** viewed it through the Cross and considered it to be a procession of glory. The hour had come for the Son of Man to be glorified by offering Himself as the Passover Lamb sacrificed on behalf of the world. Then He would carry believers over from slavery to Satan into the heavenly Canaan.

2- **The people of the Old Testament** looked on this procession while they were in hell and found it to convey the fulfillment of the symbols and the prophecies. The time had come which they had so longingly anticipated for years. They had awaited the One who would carry them into Paradise and bringing them heavenly treasures.

3- **The disciples** watched the procession but understood nothing! They experienced a condition of great confusion!

4- The chief priests and the Pharisees watched and saw the procession as a great threat. It would cause utter destruction to their position and personal desires.

5- The crowds conceived the procession as a herald to a new age, for that One had come who would free them from the Roman occupation and grant them temporal glory!

6- Finally, the heavenly hosts watched the procession with amazement at the humility of the incarnated Word of God. The One who owned heaven and earth sat on a donkey and was being proclaimed by weak human beings...what were the implications of His humility and His love for mankind?!

**‘Therefore the people that were with him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb,
And raised him from the dead, bore witness.’ [17]**

The reason why all these crowds had come out to meet Him was the miracle He did when He raised Lazarus from the dead. At the same time, it was an opportunity to speak about this miracle, Therefore many got attracted to Him. This increased the envy of the Pharisees all the more. They lost all hope of restricting the Lord’s popularity and power. They could find no other solution to get rid of Him but to kill Him. The Lord had preached often, and had done countless miracles; yet raising Lazarus from the dead attracted the crowds to Him. Nothing could overwhelm and destroy a person like death; and nothing could bring a person more joy like the resurrection from death.

* Many had resisted being converted immediately until they believed in this miracle¹.

St John Chrysostom

**‘For this cause the people also met him,
Because they had heard that he had done this sign, [Jn 12:19]
The Pharisees therefore said among themselves:
“You see that you are accomplishing nothing?
Look, the world has gone after him”. [19]**

At this time, all the fears of the religious leaders became real. The chief priests and Pharisees felt especially threatened as matters seemed to slip beyond their control. Indeed, all the people had joined together in a procession that shook the city. On the hand, the Pharisees were faced with the reality of their inadequacy “...**you are accomplishing nothing...**” [19]. On the other hand, they felt that the whole world had gone and followed the Lord. In this context, the reference is made to the Jewish world—that is every one had become attracted to Him just as a disciple would be. Therefore the Pharisees felt that any further delay in getting rid of Him constituted a danger that would be hard to remedy.

¹ Homilies on St John, 66:2

* The Pharisees were referring to the crowds when they said: "...**the world has gone after him.**" The Holy Bible usually uses the expression 'the world' to refer to the creation and to those who walk wickedly. The Lord had told His disciples: "**The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil,**" (Jn 7:7)

St John Chrysostom

3- The Greeks Honor the Lord Jesus Christ

**'Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast'.
[20]**

Some pagan converts, who were Greeks, desired to see the Lord Jesus Christ. This incident could have taken place a day or two after the Lord had come into the city for the Lord had spent the first day doing general services.

Some scholars believe that these were Jews who had been dispersed and had adhered to the Hellenic culture and were therefore called Greeks, like for example Cornelius and the eunuch of Kadago. Besides, the Jews accepted some Gentiles who were naturally inclined to worship God yet were not familiar with the law of Moses and the prophets. At the same time, there were Gentiles who respected righteous Jewish people and allowed them to worship while they lived among them. They even allowed them to attend their religious gatherings within the established limits. Such Gentiles were the ones whom the Jews considered to be foreigners.

Other scholars believe that these pagans were Gentiles. They note that the Jews in older times had allowed some Gentiles to travel to the temple during the feasts. It is as though they foretold the destruction of the veil that separated the Gentiles from the Jews through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. These Gentiles used to come to the temple to worship without eating the Passover.

At the Lord's birth, He attracted the magi from the east. They worshipped Him and offered gifts. They also witnessed for Him in one way or other in the royal palace and among the priests and high priests. When He was crucified, He attracted the Greeks from the west who for the pleasure of seeing Him. It appears that the Lord had come to bring together the east and the west so that all may become one fold under one shepherd. By His birth and death, He opened the way of faith to the Gentiles so that all may enjoy Him. The Macedonian man became entitled to appear to the apostle Paul in a dream and cry out: "Come over...and help us", (Acts 16:9).

These Greeks did not participate in the procession that took place when the Lord made His entry into Jerusalem. It could be that only the Jews were allowed. However, they were able to find out how to participate spiritually as they proclaimed their sincere desire to see Him. It was as though they joined in their own language and shouted with the Jews, "Hosanna (Redeem us) in the highest"!

Although there was a great crowd around the Lord Jesus Christ, these Greeks did not lose their hope of fulfilling their heart's desire and wish to see Him.

* They were potential converts (i.e. accepting the Jewish faith) and therefore had come to the feast and requested "...to see Jesus"¹, [21].

St John Chrysostom

**'Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee,
And asked him, saying,
"Sir, we would see Jesus"', [21].**

Some writers believe that these Greeks knew Philip, and that they lived close by in Bethsaida- the Gentile area of Galilee. They had probably attended some of the Lord's gatherings and had seen Philip sitting next to Him.

Their message to Philip conveyed their special appreciation of the Lord and their eagerness to meet and speak with Him separately. They had come to the feast, yet they were not impressed with the grandness of the temple, or with the great throngs coming for the feast. Moreover, they had not come to see the wonders and miracles that the Lord did. All they wanted was to have Him for themselves as they yearned to see Him and speak with Him.

Sadly enough, during the Christian feasts- especially during the big feasts of Easter and Christmas- many Christians are so preoccupied with the preparations for the feast that they do not yearn to see the Lord Jesus Christ and to meet personally with Him.

Some scholars believe that these people came from Phoenicia or from Syria. They were probably inhabitants of the Decapolis which is close to the Pool of Genasereth and Bethsaida.

* Note how the sought to kill Him, whereas the Gentiles sought to see Him.

Nevertheless, there were also Jewish people who shouted: **"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel!"**

We find in the crowd some who belonged to the circumcised as well as others who belonged to the uncircumcised. This is like two walls in a house, each having a different direction. Yet they meet and exchange the kiss of peace and share the one faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us therefore listen to the voice of the Cornerstone: **"The hour has come that the Son of Man be glorified"** [23]. Some may think that the Lord was referring to Himself and that He would be glorified as the Gentiles wanted to see Him. But that is not the case for the Lord was actually referring to His vision of the Gentiles. They were going to come into the faith from all nations. This would occur after His suffering and

¹ Homilies on St John, 66:2

resurrection. The apostle accordingly says: “that hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in,” (Rom 11:20). When the Greeks came to see Him, the Lord seized the occasion to announce the future fullness of the Gentile. They would believe after His hour had come; and when He Himself would be glorified in heaven, then the Gentiles would come into the faith¹.

St Augustine

**‘Philip came and told Andrew:
And in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus’. [22]**

It is so wonderful when servants work together! They both came to the Lord to present to Him the souls that yearned to know Him. Philip probably debated with Andrew what they should do. He had often heard the Lord say that He had come to save the lost sheep of Israel. Together they agreed to bring the matter to the Lord.

* Philip went to Andrew as he was his senior. He presented the matter to him and did not act with authority as he had read: ‘Do not go into the way of the Gentiles,’ (Matt 10:5). That is why he spoke and sought the advice of the disciple, then brought the matter to the Lord².

St John Chrysostom

**‘But Jesus answered them, saying,
“The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified”’. [23]**

St John Chrysostom states that the Lord had previously told the disciples: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles”, (Matt 10:5). However, as the hour of the crucifixion drew nearer, the door to the Gentiles would be opened and the time for preaching to the Gentiles had come.

The Lord accepted to see them. His words that “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified”, are intended to encourage the Gentiles to come and get acquainted with Him. The Lord saw that the fields were white and ready for the harvest. It is a moment of glory for Him as the doors of His Church were opened to receive all mankind. It happened as a reaction to the Jews who had rejected Him and had departed from the fold of believers. The Lord’s vision would be fulfilled through His death and resurrection. It would be like a mustard seed placed in the earth to bring much fruit. The disciples and apostles were the first Jews to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. These Greeks were the first Gentiles to believe in Him after the Cross tore the veil which separated heaven from earth- and the Jews from the Gentiles.

It was necessary for the Lord to be glorified through His death and resurrection in order to establish His glorious Church consisting of Jews and Gentiles. His love obligated Him to die. In order to redeem the world which had been destroyed by corruption, it was

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 51:8

² Homilies on St John, 66:2

necessary to wash it from sin, sanctify it, and glorify it in heaven. These are the many mustard seeds and the harvest of His redeeming act.

The hour had come and no one would ever comprehend the depth and mystery of that time except God alone. This was the hour of glory to the Father as well as to the Son. Three years had gone by while the Lord was performing His wonderful deeds and preaching to the crowds. Now the time had come when the seed would fall into the earth, get buried, and die. The time of the winepress had come. The prophet Isaiah had a vision of it earlier and he had heard the Lord's words: "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me", (Is 63:3).

The hour had come when the Lord would stretch out His arms on the Cross and accomplish the reconciliation between the Father and mankind. Moreover, He would embrace the Jews and Gentiles together as members of His one Body.

* Do you want to be convinced that He willingly suffered? Others do not know what will happen to them and they therefore die involuntarily. However, the Lord had foreknowledge and said: "The Son of Man will be delivered and crucified". Do you know why? Why did that 'Friend of Man' not prevent death? In order to prevent the whole world from being destroyed by sin. "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed...and they will condemn Him to death". So 'He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem', (Matt 20:18; Lk 19:38).

Do you really want to know how the Cross brought glory to the Lord Jesus Christ? Listen to His words and not our words. As Judas the traitor was about to betray the Lord of the house, he sat at His table and drank of the cup of His grace which grants salvation. He then left to shed the innocent Blood: 'Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his head against me,' (Ps 41:9). Judas was still holding in his hands the gift of His grace when he planned to betray the Lord and receive a price for delivering Him to death...As soon as he heard the Lord's words, "You have said it", he went out, (Matt 26:25). Then the Lord said: ""The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified". That indicates, my beloved one, how the Cross came to stand for the glory due to the Lord.

Isaiah was not ashamed of being hacked in pieces. Would the Lord be ashamed of dying on behalf of the world?!

"Now the Son of Man is glorified" (Jan 33:32). This did not mean that He was without glory previously. In fact, He had been crowned with the glory due to Him even before the creation of the world (Jn17:5). He has been eternally glorified for He is God. Now He would be glorified as He suffers patiently.

The Lord was not forced to offer His life up. Moreover, He was not obligated to accept death but voluntarily accepted it. Listen to His words: "I have power to lay it down, and I have power that I may take it up again," (Jn 10:18). In other words: 'I deliver Myself willingly to My enemies; otherwise this would not have occurred.

The Lord came with a plan that He put down Himself in order to suffer. He was pleased with that noble deed, and smiled at His crown of glory while taking pride in bringing salvation to mankind. He was not ashamed of the Cross for it was intended to be the salvation of this world. He was not an ordinary man- in fact, He was the incarnated God¹.

St Cyril of Jerusalem

**“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies,
It remains alone:
But if it dies, it produces much grain...” [24]**

However much the world progresses, it is still unable to comprehend the mystery of harvesting much produce from one mustard seed; or how the harvest gets transformed into flesh, blood, and bones of a human body and of animals. Similarly, the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection, which constitute the foundation upon which the glorious Church is built, will remain to be an incomprehensible mystery to mankind.

The Greeks had come to see the Lord. Why did the Lord tell them the parable of the grain of wheat? He intended to underline that they could not see Him as He is unless He would come over to them by way of His death and resurrection. He would then enter their world, and would carry them in Him. He is the Way that would attract their hearts to Him. He would carry them over so that they would speak through Him and cross over with Him into the Father’s embrace. They would become ‘of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones,’ (Eph 5:30).

* If you wondered what the Lord meant when He said: “...unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain...” our explanation would be as follows: The Lord was speaking about His crucifixion. It is as though He was saying: ‘This is what will happen with the grain: it will die and then it will bear much fruit. If this happens to seeds, then it is much more appropriate and essential for this to happen with Me’. However, the disciples were unable to comprehend the words of the Lord.

* Our present life is beautiful and full of pleasure. However, this not true for everyone, and it is only valid for those who cling to it. Therefore, if someone looked up at the heavens and perceived the beauty there, he would hate this life and disregard it immediately. This is because the beauty of any object attracts someone who has not seen something more beautiful than it. However, when something better appears, that person will hate the earlier object. Therefore if we choose to look up and see the beauty and sublimity of the Kingdom up there, then we shall liberate ourselves of our present bonds...for our present emotional inclinations are a form of bondage straps...Listen to these words: ‘If you are unable to tolerate my death bravely, or rather, if you do not die, then you will attain nothing’².

¹ Essay 13:6

² Homilies on St John: 67:1

St John Chrysostom

The grain of wheat became a rare object in the field of Judas for it had died there. In contrast, the oil overflowed like streams in the house of the pagan widow¹.

St Jerome

**“He who loves his life shall lose it;
And he who hates his life in this world shall keep it for eternal life”. [25]**

A person who loves himself more than he loves the Lord Jesus Christ, or who loves his temporal life more than his eternal glory destroys himself. In contrast, a person would surely enjoy eternal life if he destroys himself like the grain of wheat; glorifies the Lord and shares His suffering and death.

The Lord’s death has changed the meaning and values of death. It has also altered our view of life. Death has become a requirement that is necessary to the promotion of a full and fruitful life. Where there is no death, there is no real life. When a person buries the ego, the Lord who is ‘life’ proclaims Himself in him. When a person seeks ‘himself’ then the Lord does not find a place for Him within. Consequently, that person loses the Source of his life.

A new life in the Lord Jesus Christ becomes evident in anyone who dies to his old life and crucifies the world. Such a person experiences the warranty of eternal life.

* If you asked: ‘How does someone who loves his life destroy it?’ Our answer would be: ‘Whoever indulges in the lusts of the soul and allows her to cross over the appropriate limits represents such a person who loves his soul and destroys it. That is why Wisdom warns us and says: “Don’t be controlled by your lust, keep your passions in check. If you allow yourself to satisfy every desire, you will be a joke to your enemies’ (Sirach 18:30, 31). This is because lusts obstruct the path that leads the soul to virtue.

The Lord’s words: “...he who hates his life in this world shall keep it for eternal life” carry the same meaning. If you asked: ‘What does ‘he who hates his life’ imply? We would answer: ‘It is someone who neither submits to life nor obeys it when it commands him to do evil deeds.

The Lord did not say: ‘He who does not submit to it’; rather He said: “he who hates his life’. Just as we find ourselves unable to tolerate hearing the voice or seeing the face of someone we do not like, so we need to step away immediately from our soul if she commands us to disobey God’s commandments.

St John Chrysostom

¹ Letter 54: 16

* If you love, then be ready to suffer loss. If you wish to attain life in the Lord Jesus Christ, then do not fear to die for His sake¹.

St Augustine

This is surely a deep and strange proclamation. It defines the degree to which a person loves his life to the extent of wanting to destroy it. Moreover, this would drive him to hate his life in order to preserve it! If you love your life in a sinful manner, then you truly hate it. However, if you love your life in a righteous manner, then you actually love it even though you hate it. O, how happy are those who despise their lives and so preserve it: for their love does not result in the destruction of their life².

St Augustine

**“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me;
And where I am, there my servant shall be also:
If anyone serves Me, him will My Father honor”. [26]**

First, the Lord presented a new meaning for death and life in the light of His Crucifixion, death, and resurrection. Now, He presents to us a new meaning for service and the ministry. Being a minister does not involve the mere offering services to others. It implies achieving union with the true and unique Servant- the Lord Jesus Christ- and joining and following Him on the road to Gethsemane.

When someone desires to serve and witness for the Lord, the first step he needs to take is to follow Him. That means he needs to become a disciple, learn, obey, and walk with the Lord on the path of the crucifixion and burial. As a result, he would arise and produce much fruit. May a minister/servant forsake worldly pleasures as he focuses on eternal happiness. May he get to be united with the Eternal One and so receive eternal glory from the Holy Father Himself.

Having this new meaning gives a minister the reward for his services. Indeed, he finds himself in the company of His Lord- sharing in His suffering as well as in His joy. Truly, whoever enjoys fellowship with the Lord, and devotes his life to witness for Him, is honored by Him in ways neither he nor others can ever imagine: ‘Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever,’ (Daniel 12:3). The Lord also says: “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me may be with me where I am”, (Jn17:24). As he serves, a servant finds the unique opportunity to speak with the true Servant- the Lord Jesus Christ. On his way and during a minister’s service, the Lord reveals Himself and the Father and so grants His servant divine knowledge.

Anyone who preserves the honor of God and works through Him, the same is honored by God Himself: “...he who waits on his master will be honored” (Prov. 27:18).

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 51:10

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 51:10

By saying this parable, the Lord intended to lead the Greeks, who had come to see Him, to focus and adopt His view of working for His Kingdom. His words reveal the glory which is prepared for those who work in His vineyard. In this manner, He transforms the beautiful yearning to see Him into a serious task. By working for His kingdom, they would be enabled to see Him in His eternal glory. At the same time they would enjoy this glorious fellowship.

* The Lord was speaking about death and the requirements made on those who followed Him. They had to work, and to follow up those they served constantly... “If any man desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”, (Matt16:24). In other words, He says: ‘Be always prepared for dangers, for death, and for departure from this world’. Having stated the difficulties of serving Him, the Lord presents the rewards. What kind of rewards are they? ‘Being His disciples, and being there- wherever He may be found, and underlining that the resurrection always follows death¹.

* But where is the Lord Jesus Christ? He is in the heavens. Therefore may we transport our souls and minds to the heavens even before we the resurrection. Why does the Lord indicate that the person who serves the Lord Jesus ‘... him will My Father honor; rather than saying ‘I will honor him’? The reason is that the disciples had not yet attained the correct concept concerning the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, they did comprehend deeply all that concerned the Father².

St John Chrysostom

* What honor could be greater for the adopted son than to be in the company of the only begotten Son? It is true that he does not attain the rank of a deity, yet he becomes a partner in eternity?³

* The Lord wishes us to understand that those who serve Him should not be seeking their own interests. Rather, they should be seeking to serve and please Him, (Phil2:21). He seems to be stating the following: “He who does not follow Me does not serve Me”. This is the implication of the words “Let him follow Me”. It means: Let him walk along My path and not in his own way. In another passage, it is written: “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked”, (1John 2:6)⁴.

* Everyone is a minister of the Lord just as the Lord is a minister Himself. By serving in His footsteps, a servant will be greatly honored by the Father who will grant him fellowship with the Son. Consequently, such a minister’s joy will be complete for evermore⁵.

¹ Hom 67. PG 59:401

² Hom 67. PG 59:401

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 51:11

⁴ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 51:12

⁵ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 51:12

* My brothers, when you hear that “Where I am, there My servant will be also” do not think that this applies to good priests and bishops only. Rather, it is intended to encourage you also to serve the Lord within your own means: by living uprightly, by offering donations, by preaching in His name and spreading His teachings as much as possible ...¹

St Augustine

4- The Heavens Glorify the Lord Jesus Christ

“Now is my soul troubled;

And what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour:

But for this purpose I came to this hour”. [27]

The Lord spoke about the need for Him to suffer and to die. As the Son of Man, He lifted His heart and said: “Now My soul is troubled”[27]. Indeed, these are strange words coming from the Lord especially after the disciples had witnessed Gentile strangers seeking to meet Him. Then they heard Him say “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified”. However, because He had truly become incarnated, it was natural that His soul got troubled in the face of all that cloud of suffering that enveloped Him. He probably saw through that cloud the sins of all humanity. It appeared before Him so that He would carry them upon His shoulders; and offer Himself as a burnt sacrifice and redemption for our sins.

While the Lord comforted His disciples, and told them “Let not your hearts be troubled” (Jn 14:1), yet He says “Now My heart is troubled” [27]. His troubled heart releases our hearts from being troubled: His pains constitute the mystery of our eternal peace. By His own will and pleasure, the Lord carried the burden of our sins. In spite of His joy, it was inevitable that His heart got troubled due to the immensity of our sins. He carried the weight of our weakness in order to grant us a Spirit of power.

His troubled heart is the expression of holy sadness that generates joy in the hearts of believers. It gives joy to the Father as it reconciles Him with mankind. It causes angels to rejoice as well. His heart got troubled as He entered the narrow path leading to the Cross. In this manner, we are enabled to share in His pain and enter with Him into the heavenly glory. His pains would endure for an hour and it had now come, and then they would pass away. These would be replaced by eternity which is infinite. Some scholars explain that the Greek word used indicates anxiety rather than fear².

The Lord’s words to the Father reveal the joy He finds in carrying the Cross. He says: “...for this purpose I came to this hour...” [27]. In order to carry us to a life of submission and humility, He cries: “Father, save Me from this hour...,” [27].

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 51:13

² Leon Morris, p. 450

* These words do not reflect His divinity. Rather, they reflect His human nature which rejects death and holds on to this present life. In this manner, the Lord underlined that He was not exempt from human suffering. He revealed that holding on to this present life is not a sin, just as hunger and the need for sleep do not constitute failings. The Lord had a body that was untainted by sin, yet it was not released from natural physical needs. That was the wisdom for giving Him a body.

St John Chrysostom

* The Lord took the form of human weakness in order to teach us, that when we are sad or troubled, to say: "...O, my Father, ...not as I will, but as You will..." (Matt 26:39). In this manner, a person is transformed from being human to being divine as he prefers to do the Father's will rather than his own¹.

St Augustine

"Father, glorify thy name".

Then came there a voice from heaven, saying,

"I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again". [28]

The incarnate Son submitted to the Father's will by offering Himself as a sacrifice. The Father proclaimed His acceptance through the resurrection which also brings glory to the Father. At this point the Lord indicates the link between death and glory (the resurrection). Although His soul is troubled, He does not ask that this sentence of death be removed. Indeed, the passage into the resurrection brings a reciprocated glory: the glory of the Son and the glory of the Father.

The Lord refers to God Himself as well as to all His characteristics by using the words 'Your Name'. The Father Himself is glorified, as well as His wisdom, mercy, love, holiness, righteousness, etc...All that is achieved through the redeeming act of the Lord.

The Voice of the Father is heard saying: "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again," [28]. It is as though He was saying: 'I have achieved My plan through You. I have sent You to be atonement for the sins of the world. I have executed justice which will never be void of My love and mercy. You have completed My work. That is why You offer Your Blood on the Cross, and I accept it as a sacrifice of love. Your death and resurrection glorify Me and fulfill My mission towards My beloved: Man. I have glorified You and will glorify You at Your death and at Your resurrection'.

The Lord Jesus Christ was glorified through His teachings, His loving deeds, and the wonders and miracles He did. He was glorified when He was tempted in the wilderness when the angels later appeared and served Him. He was glorified at His baptism when the Voice of the Father was heard bearing witness for Him, and when the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove, (Mk 9:7). At the time of the transfiguration, He was glorified as He appeared with Elijah and Moses and spoke about His 'decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem', (Lk 9:31). He would be glorified through the astonishing events that were going to take place during His arrest, judgment, and

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 52:3

crucifixion. He would be glorified by His resurrection, ascension, and the granting of the Holy Spirit to His disciples. He will ultimately be glorified through his disciples who would successfully preach and spread His Gospel throughout the whole world.

* The words of the Father: “I have glorified it and will glorify it again” may lead you to wonder: ‘Where is His glory?’ Our response is: ‘The Lord has been glorified throughout the previous ages; and He will be glorified after His resurrection.’

St John Chrysostom

* Although they could not accept the gift of Truth, yet they involuntarily recognized Him. In their ignorance, they spoke mysterious words and this resulted in great testimonials from the Son and the Father. In the Book of Job we read: “...the thunder of His power who can understand...” (Job 26:14; LXX).¹

St Ambrose

* “...and I will glorify it again,” [28] when the Lord will arise after His death. Then death will have no authority over Him. Indeed, when He ascends into the heavens as God, His glory will cover the whole earth².

St Augustine

**'The people therefore who stood by, and heard it,
Said that it had thundered.
Others said,
“An angel has spoken to him”. [29]**

Some scholars note that the Voice used a language known to the Jews but not to the Greeks. Consequently, the Jews said that an angel had spoken to Him; whereas the others thought that it had thundered. In St John’s book ‘The Revelation’ the voice of one of the living creatures is likened to thunder, (Rev 6:1).

* You might ask: ‘How could they imagine such a thing?’ Our answer would be: ‘It could be that the Voice could not be identified; or could have occurred too quickly. This could have been a challenge to those who were physically slow, while others were able to hear the Voice clearly.’

St John Chrysostom

**Jesus answered and said,
“This voice did not come because of Me,
But for your sakes’ [30].**

The Lord did not need the Voice from heaven to encourage Him. The Voice had come for the sake of those present and so that they would believe that the Father had sent Him.

¹ Of the Holy Spirit, Book 2:6:55

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 52:4

This would sustain the disciples during the Lord's sufferings and keep them from stumbling. They would find comfort in that Voice just as It filled the Lord with joy.

The Voice could have come for the sake of the Greeks who had come to see Him. They had not seen His deeds and miracles. They had just heard about them. Therefore the Voice from heaven was intended to witness for the Lord in their presence.

What did the Father recommend to His Son? To offer eternal life to mankind. This was something no other being in heaven or on earth could do.

* It is as though He was saying: 'This Voice was not intended to inform Me of something I did not know. Indeed, I know all the hidden matters known to My Father. Truly, this Voice came for you'. The Lord then led them to ask Him what the Voice had said. However, they were so astonished that they did not ask.

St Augustine

* Just as the Voice uttered by God was not intended for the Lord but rather directed to those present; similarly, the Lord's soul was troubled on account of those present and not on account of His own situation¹.

St Augustine

**“Now is the judgment of this world:
Now shall the ruler of this world be cast out”. [31]**

* This is the Voice of the Father whom the Son knows and comprehends His depths. The Voice had come to proclaim the judgment of this evil world, the defeat of the devil- 'the ruler of this world'-and his eviction after being stripped of all power. Satan loses all his sphere of influence as believers proclaim their victory in the arena of battle. Satan exits in great weakness and utter defeat after having won many rounds earlier. That is how Satan loses in his struggle with the Lord Jesus Christ. His defeat continues as he wrestles with believers who are members in the victorious body of the Lord.

St John writes in the certitude of faith and says: "I have written to you young men because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one," (1John 2:14). He also says: "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world- our faith" (1Jn 5:4). Those who enjoy the redeeming act of God also sing praises and say: "Now salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ have come; for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; and they did not love their lives to the death," (Rev 12:10-11).

Through the Cross all those things, which human beings plotted against the Lord Jesus Christ and all what Satan devised in an attempt to get rid of Him, ended in the defeat of

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 52:5

evil and the destruction of Satan's power. The ruler of this wicked world cannot stand before the Ruler of life. The apostle says appropriately: "But you denied the Holy One, and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, and of which we are witnesses," (Acts 3:14-15). St Paul also says about the Lord Jesus Christ: "...that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil," (Heb 2:14).

The Lord spoke with the certainty of being victorious over death. He knew that His death would restore the light of knowledge to many souls and liberate them from the bonds of Satan.

Note that the word 'judgment' is not used with a definite article. This is because the Lord was not referring to the final judgment. Rather, He was referring to the judgment that would begin with His redeeming act. Simeon the elder prophetically says: "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which will be spoken against" (Lk 2:34).

* If you wonder: 'What does glory mean?' Our answer is: According to the Lord Jesus Christ, it is that "...now the ruler of this world will be cast out".

* What do the words 'the judgment of this world' imply? According to the Lord: "It will be a condemnation and disaster". How and in what manner? Satan had killed the first Man as he led him to sin and so was condemned as a criminal. However, there is no sin in the Lord Jesus Christ. So why was He delivered to die? Why was the mind of Judas set on destroying the Lord? Why then is the world to be condemned through the person of the Lord? In the court of justice, the charge against Satan will be: 'Well, you caused the death of all mankind as they have all been found guilty of sin, but why have you killed the Lord Jesus Christ? Is that not due to your wrong doing? Therefore the whole world will be avenged through Him¹.

St John Chrysostom

* Speaking about the judgment that was about to take place, the Lord says these words: "Now is the judgment of this world"; whereas the final judgment would be withheld until the time when the living and the dead would be judged.

That is why Satan has taken hold of mankind and possesses them since they have been charged of sin. Therefore all mankind stand as criminals waiting to be condemned. He rules over the hearts of unbelievers, deceives, and enslaves them. He tempts them to forsake the Creator and worship the created. However, thousands of believers, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, have become liberated from the power of Satan. Through the Lord's death, His resurrection, and the Blood He has poured for the remission of sins, believers have become united into His body. As a result they have become followers of the Head.

¹ Hom 67: PG 59:403

This is what the Lord intended when He spoke about the ‘judgment’. This is the true distinction. It indicates the separation of those who belong to Him and therefore have become liberated from Satan.

* Now the Lord informs us of what He knew: after His sufferings and glorification. Many of the Gentiles spread throughout the world would become believers. Satan had ruled over their hearts but they would reject and cast him out. Through faith they would renounce Satan¹.

St Augustine

“And if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself”. [32]

Satan will be cast out and thrown into hell. In this manner, He would lose the kingdom he had set up among mankind on earth. While the Lord ascends above the earth through the Cross, the enemy descends. The Lord ascends through the Cross in order to enable His followers to ascend with Him into heaven.

We have previously stated that St John the Evangelist looks up to the Cross as a means of elevation (3:14; 8:28) since it is the crowning glory of the Lord.

Here the Lord attributes to Himself the task of drawing **“...all peoples to (Himself)”**. In another passage, the Lord attributes this to the Father, (Jn 6:44). He draws the soul through the attraction of love and not by forceful subjugation or violence. Accordingly Hosea says: “I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them,” (Hosea 11:4).

The souls that were estranged from Him could not tolerate meeting with Him due to their darkness. Now it became possible for them to enjoy His light and be attracted to Him. He would be lifted up to heaven and would attract the souls of those who love Him to join and share the heavenly joys with Him.

The Lord uses the expression **‘all peoples’** to stress the efficiency of the Cross in attracting the heavenly and earthly members to join into one Body. The Blood poured on the Cross would reconcile them all to Him. All will be united in the Lord Jesus Christ. We read that: ‘...all things (will be reconciled) to Himself...having made peace through the Blood of His Cross,’ (Col 1:20). The ultimate Plan is to “gather together into one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth...in Him,’ (Eph 1:10). Moreover, the Lord underlines His attraction to all mankind- Jews and Gentiles- yet He does not seek to attract any against their wishes or through forceful subjugation.

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 52:6

* This means that the Lord attracts those who believe even if they are of the Gentiles. He says that He will **‘draw all peoples’**. It is as though these were being arrested by a tyrant and were unable to come to the Lord on their own. These peoples seem unable to escape from the hands of the tyrant who holds them. In another passage, they are considered ‘exiles’ as the Lord says: ‘...how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man...,’ (Matt 12:29). He spoke these words to confirm His power, and to indicate here that those attracted Him are the same as those whom he had considered earlier as being exiled.

St John Chrysostom

* The Lord Jesus Christ had become a curse on our account in order to redeem us from the curse of the Law. Then why does it amaze us that He submits to the Father on our account too? Accordingly, He wishes us to submit to the Father, and according to His holy words: “...No one comes to the Father except through Me,” (Jn 14:6). He also says: “And I, if I am Lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself,” (Jn 12:32). The Lord is perceived to have submitted to the Father when His believers are taken into account; for all believers- and indeed all mankind- are considered members of His Body. However, He is considered as insubordinate when unbelievers are taken into account; for they are members of His Body, yet they do not submit to faith¹.

St Jerome

“This He said, signifying by what death He would die,” [33].

The Lord Jesus Christ was lifted up upon the Cross and the whole world looked upon Him. Hanging there between heaven and earth, He was seen as someone who deserved such punishment.

The crowds had heard His sermons and seen the thousands of miracles He had made; yet few remained loyal to Him and remained as His disciples. However, once He was crucified He attracted the whole world to Him. Many became believers and continued to love Him loyally.

‘The people answered Him:

**“ We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever,
And how can You say: ‘the Son of Man must be lifted up?’
Who is the Son of Man?’”[33]**

The people of Israel expected something different than what the Lord proclaimed. They had heard the Voice from heaven, and the words of grace that he had spoken with His mouth; yet they could not believe that He would ascend, or in other words that he would die. They would not believe even though the Old Testament had foretold His death, still

¹ Letter 55:5

He was the Priest for evermore (Ps 110:4); and the eternal King (Ps 89:29). In the Book of Daniel, we are told about the Lord that: "...to Him was given domain and glory and kingdom. That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed," (Daniel 7:13, 14). In the Book of Ezekial, we read the following: 'David, My servant, shall be king over them forever,' (Ezek 37:25).The people remembered the words about His immortality; yet they forgot the prophecies concerning His death, and how He would sacrifice Himself to die (Is 53:12), and how His feet and hands would be pierced.

“Who is this Son of Man?” [34]They did not ask this question in order to find out His identity. Rather, it reflected their belief that He was the Messiah, the priest and the eternal king. Now they were surprised to learn that He would die. They became doubtful because He proclaimed that His death was imperative.

* They knew that the Messiah would be eternal and would possess eternal life. Had they not also read, in the same context, about His suffering and resurrection in many other passages in the Holy Bible?

Isaiah the prophet places the two issues side by side, and says: 'He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before His shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth,' (IS 53:7). David also links the two issues in the second Psalm as well as in many other passages. Moreover, Jacob- the father of the holy fathers, revealed His sufferings and resurrection, and at the same stated that: 'He bows down, He lies down like a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse Him?' (Gen 49:9). Nevertheless, the Jewish leaders imagined that they could silence Him and prove that He was not the Messiah. They would use the same issue – that the Messiah would reign eternally- to make their point.

Notice how they handled the matter craftily. They did not say: 'We have heard from the law that the Christ will not suffer or be crucified'. Rather they said the following: "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever...". Yet what they said did not constitute any real objection since the Lord's suffering did not obstruct His immortality. That is why we believe that they understood many matters which they claimed to be suspicious; and which they intentionally chose to handle deceitfully. Therefore they asked: "Who is this Son of Man?" They said so slyly and the implication was: 'We ask you not to believe that we say this about you. Do not think that we oppose You due to any enmity between us. Rather, we do not know about whom You are speaking. We are just expressing our opinion¹.

St John Chrysostom

Then Jesus said unto them,

“A little while longer the light is with you.

¹ Homilies on St John, 68:1

**Walk while ye have the light,
Lest darkness overtake you,
For he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going”. [34]**

The Lord indicated that His death was temporary through His words: “Yet a little while is the light with you...”. It is like the sun whose light does not end but just gets hidden for a while and then shines again. His words to the Jews to “...Walk while ye have the light lest darkness overtake you ...” are intended to motivate them to believe in Him.

He also told them that “...he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going”. How many things had the Jews done up till that moment without being aware of their deeds. They seemed as someone walking in the darkness. They thought they were on the right path whereas they were walking in the opposite direction: they observed the Sabbath and protected the law; they avoided certain foods yet they did not know the right path to take¹.

“While you have the light, believe in the light,” [36]: What was the time frame that the Lord was indicating? Was He referring to the present life as a whole; or was He referring only to the time before His death? We believe He meant both for many came to believe in Him even after His death. On account of His inexpressible love for mankind, He uttered these words to encourage people to believe².

St John Chrysostom

**“While ye have light, believe in the light,
That you may become sons of light.”
These things Jesus spoke,
And departed, and was hidden of them. [36]**

The Lord was concerned with their salvation, therefore He asked them to be preoccupied with their inner depths. This would enable them to walk in the light as long as they had the light, and avoid becoming sons of darkness. Rather than engage with them in worthless arguments, the Lord directed them to issues that would lead them to salvation and growth. He asked them to enjoy the light since He had become incarnated and dwelled among them. Consequently, He would carry them into the eternal heavenly light.

Our life consists of few opportunities which may not come again. Therefore it is appropriate to capitalize on every chance that comes our way to live in fellowship with the Lord. Our Gospel is the light that enlightens the soul. Anyone who rejects its light stumbles into darkness. As for those who enjoy its light, they become children of the light, (Lk 16:8; Eph 5:8); and of the sons of daylight, (1 Thes 5:5).

¹ Hom on St John, 68:1

² Hom. 68 PG 59:405

The Lord warned them that they would yearn to see just one of the days of the Son of Man but would not be able to see Him, (Lk 17:22). He also told them that the kingdom of God would be taken away from them and given to the Gentiles, (Matt 21:43).

* **“While ye have light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”** In other words, ‘that you may become My sons’. Note that the Evangelist had reported from the beginning of his Gospel that those who believe ‘were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,’ (Jn1:13). Here the Lord said that He was the One who gave birth to them. He intended to make them realize that the deeds of the Father and the Son were one and the same¹.

* St John the apostle reports that the Lord Jesus Christ **‘departed, and was hidden of them’**. If you asked: “What was the Lord’s intention by being ‘hidden of them’? They neither carried stones nor blasphemed against Him as they had done before. So why did He disappear?” Our answer would be: “The Lord knew how much their hearts were filled with anger and rebellion. He did not wait for that anger to be vented into the sphere of action, but He disappeared to calm their evil.

St John Chrysostom

The Lord concluded by giving them advice to seize the opportunity of His presence so that His light would shine and dispel their darkness. He explained that time was short and the period left before His departure was very near. He then disappeared to avoid entering into further arguments, and to provide them with the chance to think seriously about their attitude towards Him.

5- The Prophets Testify to His Glory

‘But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him’. [37]

St John the Evangelist presents the testimony of Isaiah the prophet for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the Jew’s rejection of Him because ‘they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God’.[43]

The Evangelist tells us that that the Lord **‘had done so many signs before them’** [37], yet in spite of that ‘they did not believe in Him’. On the contrary, the Lord’s deeds drove them to be envious and to resist Him. They had not only heard about His miracles, but He had done these ‘before’ them. The Lord had not acted secretly but openly and there were many witnesses. Nevertheless they did not believe for their inner eyes were struck with blindness, and their lusts had hardened and corrupted their hearts.

**‘That the word of Isaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke,
“Lord, who has believed our report?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”** [38]

¹ Homilies on St John, 68:1

The prophecy of Isaiah was therefore fulfilled as the Jews did not believe the prophetic testimonies and divine proclamations. Moreover, they rejected the ‘arm of the Lord’ which was revealed in His power, authority, and miracles¹.

St Augustine

‘Therefore they could not believe, because Isaias said again, [39]

St John the Evangelist reveals the condition of the Jews who were characterized by stubbornness and opposition towards God and His prophets. Ever since they lived in Egypt, and even when they left that land and traveled through the wilderness, they rebelled against Moses and Aaron. They did not spare one prophet, and as Elijah the prophet told the Lord God: “...for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword; I alone am left; and they seek to take my life...,” (1Kgs 19:10). St Stephen the Martyr said: “You stiff necked and uncircumcised in hearts and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit, as your fathers did so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold to coming of the Just One, of whom you have now become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels, and have not kept it”, (Acts 7:51-52).

An endless chain of rebellion against the work of God, and a constant persecution of prophets have blinded their inner sights and disabled them from seeing. Their hearts had become hardened and they could no longer enjoy the blessing of faith!

* Note, once more, that the words ‘for’ and ‘said’ do not refer to reason for the lack of faith but they do refer to the situation itself. Isaiah did not say that this was the reason for their unbelief. Rather, he said these words because they did not wish to believe. Therefore why has the Evangelist not say this, rather than show that their lack of faith was due to the prophecy and not that the prophecy sprang from their lack of faith? St John chose to deal with the subject in a positive manner, therefore he wrote: “Therefore they could not believe, because Isaias said again” [39]. He wished to underline the lack of error in the divine Word in many varied ways; and that what Isaiah had predicted earlier had become fulfilled and had not fallen away².

* ‘Therefore they could not believe’ was used to replace ‘They did not want to believe’. Do not be astonished...he did not say that it was impossible for them to be virtuous; but that due to their unwillingness they lost the capacity to believe³.

St John Chrysostom

* In defense of free will, no one would venture to deprive us of praying and asking God to ‘lead us not into temptation’. However, no one denies the role of the will and ventures to make excuses for sinfulness. Let us turn to God attentively as He issues His commandments and offers His support. In both cases He informs us of our commitment

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 53:2

² Homilies on St John, 68:2

³ Hom 68. PG 59:406

to obey and His support as we apply them. Some become ever so lofty and vain due to an exaggerated sense of confidence in their own will; while others stumble into negligence due to an exaggerated sense of lack of confidence.

The first group says: ‘Why do we ask God and not strive ourselves to conquer temptation since we are capable of everything?’

The second group says: ‘Why do we need to struggle to live righteously when it is all in God’s hands?’...

On the one hand, we need to thank God for the power He grants us. On the other hand, we need to pray that our limited power does not fail us completely. This is similar to faith that works through love, (Gal5:6). God grants every person a certain measure, so that we should boast about God and not about ourselves¹.

* No wonder they were unable to believe: they had so much pride in their own will. This led them to ignore the righteousness of God and seek their own righteousness. The apostle comments about them saying that they ‘have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God’, (Romans 10:3). They were proud of their power rather than of their faith, and so they fell against the stumbling Stone. That explains why the expression ‘they could not believe’ is used, while the implication is that they did not want to believe. In the same manner, we are told the following about the Lord our God: ‘If we are faithless, He remains faithful, He cannot deny Himself, (2 Tim 2:13). This has been said about the Almighty One: ‘He cannot...’².

* These Jews ‘could not believe’. It did not mean that these people could not change into better people; but that as long as their thoughts continued along that path then they would be unable to believe. As a result, they were blind and hardened in their hearts: by denying their need for divine help, they could not get help³.

St Augustine

**“He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart;
Lest they should see with their eyes,
And understand with their heart,
Lest they should turn so that I should heal them.”[40]**

They could not believe because they did not want to believe. They neither asked God for His help nor for His grace to support them. Therefore the grace of God did not open their eyes to see the truth and to enjoy salvation. This is the meaning of the words: “He has blinded their eyes...” Their resistance damaged their inner vision and they were not granted healing from the Physician of the heart and body. They became similar to those whose eyes God had blinded. Their persistence and lack of desire to enjoy the truth

¹ St Augustine: on the Gospel of St John, tractate 53:8

² St Augustine: on the Gospel of St John, tractate 53:9

³ St Augustine: on the Gospel of St John, tractate 53:10

disabled them from attaining the living faith. This is the subject of Isaiah 6:9, where the reference could be about the judgment that would be pronounced upon them as a nation.

* Consider how the sun dazzles the weak sighted. It is not due to its normal nature. This also applies to those who are inattentive to God's words. In the case of Pharaoh, we are told that God hardened his heart. Similarly, all those who continue to resist God's Word will be in that same condition

This is the style of the Holy Bible: it is written: 'God gave them over to a debased mind', (Romans 1:28)...The Bible does not present God as the One who inflicts such conditions, but reveals that these happen through the evil in others. The Bible intends the hearer to be in great fear as the Word says: 'God hardened' and 'gave them over'.

In order to underline that God does not deliver or forsake us unless we want it to be so, we need to hear what the holy Word says: 'But your iniquities have separated you from your God.' (IS 59:2 LXX). Hosea says: 'Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children,' (Hosea 4:6 LXX). The Lord Himself said: "How often have I wanted to gather your children...but you were not willing?" (Lk 13:34)

Having known this, may we exert every effort not to abandon God. Indeed, let us be greatly concerned about our own souls, and love one another. May we not amputate our members, for this is the action of mad men. As we see them in wicked situations may we deal with them all the more gently¹.

St John Chrysostom

'These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of him. [41]

Isaiah the prophet said these words when he saw the Lord's glory. He spoke about the Lord when He saw Him seated on a high throne and His train filled the temple. The glory that Isaiah saw was the glory of Jehovah. In this context, St John the Evangelist said that this was the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as he perceived Him to be Jehovah. In the Aramaic translation, it is written: 'My eyes have seen 'Shakinnah' the Lord, (Is 6:5). As 'Shakinnah' denotes the divine light or the divine presence, then what Isaiah saw was the light or the brilliance of God: the rays of His glory and the image of His essence, (Heb1:3).

* If you asked: 'Whose glory did Isaiah see?' Our answer would be: 'He saw the glory of the Father'. You might say: 'Then how does Isaiah speak about the glory of the Father, while John the Evangelist speaks about the glory of the Son, and while Paul the apostle speaks about the glory of the Spirit?' Our answer would be: 'They were not like those concerned with the hypostatic (compound) nature. By speaking in this manner, they intended to clarify one essence or rank present in them. As proof of that, the features of the Father are identical to those of the Son, and those of the Son are identical to those of the Spirit.

St John Chrysostom

¹ Homilies on St John, 68:2-3

* What Isaiah saw was not God as He really is but it was a symbolic means that was within the scope of the prophet's vision and comprehension. Moses had also had a vision of God, but in spite of that we find him telling Him: "Now therefore I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You," (Ex 33:13); for Moses had not seen God as He really is... "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is," (1Jn 3:2)¹.

St Augustine

6- Some Leaders Witness to His Glory

**'Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in him;
But because of the Pharisees they did not confess him,
Lest they should be put out of the synagogue': [42]**

Some of the leaders, like Nicodemus for example, believed in Him, (Jn3). They considered Him to be a teacher sent by God. Joseph of Arimathea is another such example, and he was the one who later went to Pontius Pilate to take the Holy Body. He received the blessing of burying the body in his own newly built grave. There were also many others who believed in their hearts but did not dare to proclaim their faith publicly. We will discuss the Sanhedrin as the end of this chapter God willing.

Elijah thought that he was the only one who worshipped God. He did not realize that there thousands of people who had not bowed to any idol; but God saw them whereas they were unknown to men. This happens in every generation: there are a few undisclosed faithful ones who are esteemed by God but not by men.

'For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God'. [43]

Some did not proclaim their faith as they feared losing their temporary honor. That was due to their love of receiving honor from people more than seeking the glory of God. The Lord Jesus Christ therefore told them: How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?

* These were the Lord's words: "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" (Jn 5:44). In this sense they could really be considered as slaves and not as rulers; since they had strayed away from the faith and followed their lust for vain glory.

St John Chrysostom

7-The Lord Witnesses for Himself

Then Jesus cried and said,

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 52:12

**“He who believes on Me, believes not on me,
But in Him who sent me.” [44]**

This was the final point which the Lord made in the sermon directed to those wicked ones who persisted in their lack of faith. It is the continuation of the sermon that was interrupted in verse 37. The Lord cried out loudly to underline His great zeal for their salvation.

In this situation, the Lord confirms His mysterious unity with the Father: anyone who believes in the Son believes in the Father who sent Him. He who sees the Son also sees the Father as well; and he who honors the Son honors the Father too.

* The expression “believes not” implies that belief is not limited to the physical form or to the limits of the person seen by the eyes. The Lord here indicates our need to believe that He was not a mere human being. It is vital for us to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as being both God and man (at the same time).

St Ambrose

* It is as though the Lord was saying: ‘Why are you afraid of believing in Me? Having faith in Me is transmitted through Me to the Father. In the same manner, your denial of Me affects Him too. Note how the Lord uses every means to clarify that there is no difference in the Essence¹.

St John Chrysostom

* Honoring the Father includes honoring the Father, and this does not diminish His divinity².

* **Now, when the Lord says: “He who believes on Me, believes not on me, But in Him who sent me” [44],** what can we understand other than that He appeared as a person to mankind whereas He remained being the Invisible since He was God? So that no one would imagine that He was nothing more than that which they saw, the Lord indicates the need to believe in Him as being equal to the Father in rank and in character...for he who believes in the Father needs to believe that He is the Son; and he who believes in the Father needs to believe that He has a Son. In such a manner, he who believes in the Father needs to believe in the Son³.

St Augustine

“And he that sees Me sees Him who sent Me.” [45]

* What does all this mean? Does it mean that God has a body? This is impossible! The vision that the Lord is speaking about is in no way associated with the body. Vision here

¹ Hom 60.PG 59: 408-409

² Sermon on N.T. Lessons, 90:5

³ St Augustine; On the Gospel of St John, tractate 54:2

implies mental vision and the Lord indicates that His essence is the same as that of the Father. Here the Lord proclaims fellowship in one and the same Essence¹.

St John Chrysostom

* The Lord said these words [44] so that no one would believe that He was a mere person, that is, that he was just the Son of Man. In the next words [45] He intended everyone to believe that He was equal to the Father...

The Lord Jesus Christ sent out His apostles...yet it was impossible for any one of them to say: "He who believes on Me, believes not on me, but in Him who sent me." This is because there was no basis to validate the words: 'believes on Me'.

We believe the apostle though we do not believe in him. This is because there is no apostle who can redeem sinners. However, we do believe in Him who does redeem sinners and this 'faith is accounted for righteousness,' (Romans 4:5).

The apostle may say: 'Any one who accepts me accepts Him who has sent me'; or he may say: 'Any one who hears me, hears Him who sent me'. Indeed, the Lord says: "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me," (Matt 10:40. That is how the Master is honored through the servant, and the Father through the Son. As a result the Father is honored in the Son and the Lord in the servant.

Truly, the only begotten Son has rightly said: "...you believe in God, believe also in Me," (Jn 14:1). Here He also said: "He who believes on Me, believes not on me, but in Him who sent me." The Lord did not intend to divert the faith of those who believe in Him. However, He does not want a believer to be confined to the status of a slave while having faith in Him. Every one who believes in the Father immediately believes in the Son for without Him the Father would not exist as a Father. In this manner a person achieves belief by equating the Son with Father. This would agree with the words: "...he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me."² [45]

St Augustine

**"I have come as a light into the world,
That whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness". [46]**

Before the Lord, the Sun of Righteousness, came into the world, everything was covered in darkness. By His coming, the darkness faded away. However, only those who possessed healthy eyes were able to see the Sun of Righteousness. He shone on all mankind so that believers could find in Him light and peace. With His light there would be no place for darkness in them; their fears and despair would end; and heavenly joy and hope in eternity would be granted.

* In both the Old and New Testament, the Father bears the same name. The Lord Jesus Christ used that same name too. Therefore St Paul called Him 'the Brightness', (Heb

¹ Hom 69. PG 59:409

² St Augustine; On the Gospel of St John, tractate54:3

3:1). He learned to do so from the same sources. In this passage the Lord also revealed the strong relationship between Him and the Father, and how there does not exist any separation between them. This is evident when He said that believing in Him did not constitute believing in Him since it was passed or got transmitted into belief in the Father. He called Himself ‘the Light’ because He redeems sins and destroys mental darkness¹.

St John Chrysostom

* How good is He who has lifted the earth up to the heavens?! Even the twinkling planets reflect His heavenly glory as in a mirror. The hosts of apostles, martyrs, and priests also shine as glorious planets and grant light to the world².

St Ambrose

* The Lord did not say to His disciples: ‘You have come as a light to the world so that all who believe in you will not live in darkness’. We believe that such a statement would have been impossible to accept for He is the One who gives them light. Light is an integral part of Him and therefore can never be isolated from His own self. Indeed, He is not vulnerable to change! Consequently, all the saints are lights and they have attained light through faith in Him³.

St Augustine

“And if anyone hears My words, and does not believe, I do not judge him: for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.” [47]

The Lord Jesus Christ came to save the world and not to judge it. The words of the prophets who have prophesied concerning the Lord will condemn unbelievers.

* Now is the time for mercy. Later, the time of judgment will come for it is written: ‘I will sing of mercy and justice to You, O Lord,’ (Ps 101:1)4.

St Augustine

“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, Has that which judges him: the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day”. [48]

The Lord desires the salvation and not the condemnation of everybody. On the last day, His words will condemn unbelievers as these words will be a witness against their crimes. Every word that He has uttered, every kindness He has shown, and every gift He has granted will act as a witness against those who have disregarded them carelessly.

* The words: **“the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” [48]**, sufficiently proclaim that the Lord is Himself the Judge who will appear later on. It is He

¹ Hom 69. PG 59:409

² Of the Christian Faith, 2:2:24

³ St Augustine; On the Gospel of St John, tractate 54:4

⁴ St Augustine; On the Gospel of St John, tractate 54:5

Himself who had spoken and proclaimed that. He is the One who has raised Himself to act as a door through which He can enter as a Shepherd to His sheep. Therefore those who have never heard His words will be judged in a manner that is different from those who have heard but disregarded them. In this context, the apostle says: ‘...for as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law,’ (Romans 2:12)¹.

St Augustine

**“For I have not spoken on My own authority;
But the Father who sent me gave me a commandment, what I should say,
and what I should speak.” [49].**

Being the Messiah, the Lord fulfilled the mission of salvation that He had received from the Father. He had to preach and fulfill that mission as the agent of the Father. All His deeds were done for God who has so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son on its account.

The first Adam had failed in his mission. He had rebelled against God and was no longer fit to represent the heavenly One. Therefore the second Adam came filled with the spirit of obedience to fulfill the task delegated to Him: a task of God’s ultimate and divine love. In Him we are enabled to practice the obedience which we lacked due to our kinship with our father Adam.

* The Lord surely spoke these words for their good...Do you not observe how He spoke with great humility in order to attract His hearers and silence those who came after them? That is the reason why He spoke in a manner appropriate to simple men. He knew that His words had no reference to His nature, and that they were fitting for weak hearers².

St John Chrysostom

* Only the Son is the Word of God and His wisdom. In Him is found all the commandments of the Father and at no time did the Son not know them. This made it necessary for Him to acquire at a certain time what He had possessed earlier. What He received from the Father was that He was begotten and so He acquired them at His birth (the Immortal One)...the Father did not give the Son a commandment which He did not know. Rather, we believe that all the commandments of the Father are found in the wisdom of the Father, and the Word of the Son³.

St Augustine

**“And I know that his commandment is everlasting life.
Therefore, whatsoever I speak,
Just as the Father has told Me, so I speak”. [50]**

¹ St Augustine; On the Gospel of St John, tractate 54:6

² Hom 69:PG: 410

³ St Augustine; On the Gospel of St John, tractate 54:7

* Since the Son Himself is everlasting life and He is God's commandments, then what do these words convey other than: 'I am God's commandments'? Indeed, the Lord says: "Therefore, whatsoever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak." [50]

We should not interpret the words "...the Father has told Me" to mean that the Father uses words when He speaks solely to the Word; or to mean that the Word of God needs words to proceed from God.

The Father spoke to the Son in the same manner that He gave birth to the Son. It is not like someone who knew one thing but lacked the other (lacked life). Since He is the Son...He is the Righteous One who gave birth to the Truth, so what can He say to the Truth? Truth that is so perfect has no need for additional truth. Therefore the Father spoke with the Truth for He gave birth to Him¹.

St Augustine

* * *

¹ St Augustine; On the Gospel of St John, tractate 54:8

Chapter 12

The Council of the Sanhedrin

In this Gospel we often read about the high priests and the Pharisees. However, we rarely read about the scribes. Here we wish to present a quick picture of the members of the Council of the Sanhedrin.

The word 'Sanhedrin' is the Aramaic word for the Greek term '*sunedrion*' which means 'council' or 'gathering' (legal).

This council was considered the top authority in the high court of law in Jerusalem. At the time when the Lord Jesus Christ ministered, and when He was judged, this court was presided over by the high priest of Israel.

Historic Setting

The history of this Council dates back to the period of Greek dominion and rule. However, rabbinic scholars attempt to trace its formation back to the Council of the seventy elders which was established in the days of Moses, (Numbers 11:16, 24).

The first time this gathering was referred to as 'geraousia' occurred in the days of Eustachius the Great, 223-187 A.D.

The **Greek emperors** granted freedom in matters pertaining to internal affairs to the local government. Therefore Israel governed itself internally through an aristocratic council of the elders, (1Kgs.6:12; 2 Kgs 1:10, 11:27; 18). This council was headed by the chief priest who acquired the position by inheritance.

When the Roman rule took over under Pompey, the chief priest retained his position as 'ruler of the nation'¹. This explains the presence of the council of the elders during these days.

Gabinus implemented the division of the Jewish region into five districts or five councils¹. In this manner, the council in Jerusalem was no longer sole arbitrator in the judicial court.

¹ Josephus: Antiq. 20:10:1

After ten years, Caesar reinstated Hyrcanus II to his former position and the power of the council of Jerusalem became extended to the region of Galilee². That was the first time for the council of Jerusalem to be called 'the Sanhedrin'.

Herod began his reign by ordering the slaughter of all the members in the council of the Sanhedrin³. He then appointed members who were loyal to him.

After the death of Herod and his son Archelaus, the authority of the Council became extensive. By the time the Lord began His ministry and during the age of the apostles, this Council became the high legislative court of justice.

Undoubtedly, this role came to an end when Jerusalem was totally destroyed in the year 70 A.D.

The Members of the Council

1-The Chief Priests: These were considered the aristocratic party in Jerusalem. It comprised former priests as well as current ones- such as Hannaniah the father-in- law of Jaffa and Caiaphas, as well as some other family members of their children. The office of the High Priests became diverted from its main role which was to handle only religious issues; for they used religion to veil their political ends.

2- The Sadducees: These were either called priests or elders. They were not priests in the religious sense and as indicated in the Books written by Moses. They were more like a judicial authority or party and they worked closely with the high priests. They harbored enmity towards the Pharisees which they tried to disguise.

3- The Pharisees: These considered themselves to be the guardians of the law and of Jewish traditions. They adhered to literal interpretations in an extreme manner, and they had immense authority in the local committees. They mixed among the crowds to arouse questions and arguments directed to the Lord Jesus Christ as they sought to accuse Him before the Sanhedrin. They would report how they believed the Lord had abused the law.

¹ Josephus: Antiq. 14:5:4

² Josephus: Antiq. 14:8:3-5

³ Josephus: Antiq. 14:9:4

4- The Priests: They were scholars in the Law of Moses, (Matt 22:35; Lk 7:30). They were called the teachers of the law or *nomodidashalos*, (Lk 5:17, 34). This class began to appear after the days of Ezra the scribe who used to read the law, (Neh. 6-10).

The role of the scribes evolved to being teachers from being interpreters of the law and enforcing it. Therefore people were required to honor them more than parents since the children and the parents were obligated to honor their teachers.

The Council of Jerusalem and the Local Councils

According to Jewish customs, there were two types of councils or *sunedria*: the high Sanhedrin of Jerusalem which comprised seventy- one members, and the preparatory Sanhedrin found in the other countries. Each local council- preparatory Sanhedrin- consisted of twenty three members who were appointed by the high Sanhedrin.

Based on the Mishna, the high Sanhedrin comprised seventy members including a president, vice president, and court guards as well.

It is believed that membership continued for one's lifetime. New members were appointed by current members or by a high political authority.

The Authority of the Council

In the days of the Lord Jesus Christ, the authority of the Council was confined to the twelve Jewish regions. Consequently, it was not possible to issue a judicial criminal sentence against the Lord as long as he dwelled in Galilee. It would only be possible when ever He would enter the boundaries of Judea.

Legally, the Council had no authority over the Jews. However, local councils and the Jews in general- wherever they were- tended to obey the decisions of the high Council of Jerusalem. These local councils were not obligated to take their cases to that high Council unless they needed an opinion concerning issues specifically related to the law.

The Meetings of the Council

The local councils usually met on Monday and Thursday each week, excluding feast days and Saturdays. The Sanhedrin met in the place called Xystos or Xistus which is found on the east side within the house of the high priest.

Legal Procedures

According to the Mishna, the members sat in a semi circle so that they could all see each other. Two court scribes sat before them, one on the right and one on the left side, and their task was to count the votes that would specifically indict or clear an accused person. Facing these scribes, educated students sat in three rows. Every accused had to appear in humble clothes to indicate his grief.

In cases involving a death sentence, the process began with hearing those who pleaded innocent so that they could present their arguments. The students were not allowed to say one word against the accused. However, they could speak if they could find any point to his favor. Whereas those who presented accusations could also present issues to their benefit, those who presented arguments for innocence could not also present arguments against the accused.

Voting began by the youngest of the members, though it sometimes began with the most important member. The vote for the innocence of a person was decided by a majority vote. The vote for the guilt of a person was decided by the majority vote plus two additional votes.

It was illegal to issue a sentence on the same day of the trial; for it was necessary to discuss the case and then issue a verdict on the next day. The exception to that was made in a case where the accused had misled or deceived the public. Then it was possible to judge him on the same day or on the same night. Other than such a situation, it was forbidden to discuss a case deserving a death penalty on a Friday or the day before a feast day. These had to be postponed till after a Saturday or after feast days.

The religious, civil, and criminal authority of the Council was restricted by the ruling foreign body in Israel. This differed from one period to the other and according to current ruler.

When a person was led to his death, he would be announced by a forerunner proclaiming the verdict and saying: "This named person, son of such a named person, has been found to deserve death. Therefore if anyone wishes to contest the matter, let him come forward and proclaim that"¹.

¹ Sanhedrin 6:1

The person sentenced to death was required to confess his crime so that he may have a share in the life to come.

* * *

Meditations Inspired
by
The Gospel of St John, Chapter Twelve
Your Fragrance is the Mystery of My Life

* Grant me to cross over and come to You
In the company of Your beloved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus,
For wherever You go, You set up a joyful heavenly feast!
With Mary, I pour pure spices at Your feet.
It is not the work of my hands
And I have not purchased it with my money...
What I offer is the fruit of Your Holy Spirit!
I pour out the spices and I smell its fragrance...
Your fragrance has invaded my inner home and has filled my whole being.
Your fragrance is the mystery of my life!
* Truly, Judas the thief smelled it as a fragrance of death to death.
Hence he lost love, for he did not comprehend anything but betrayal.
He counted giving to be a loss;
For the love of money blinded him.
As for me, I smell and live by your fragrance...
Allow me to join Mary and rub Your feet with my hair...
Let me offer all that the world considers to be glorious to serve Your needy children
The poor and needy stand before You, and I carry them and walk to You.
By honoring them, I honor them, I give honor to Your hands.
* With Martha, my hands stretch out to serve Your Body,
For You receive in Your hands every offering made to Your brothers.
Grant me to see Your hand working in and through me in all my actions.
May Your hands embrace my whole being as I work tirelessly!
* With Lazarus, I sit silently:
My life, which You have resurrected, is a living testimony of Your love and glory.
My silence is greater and more powerful than any word can express!
* Here are the foreign Greeks seeking You:
They could meet with You yet they could not rise up upon the Cross.
How could we enjoy the divine Fruit unless we got buried?
You arose, so resurrect us with You!
* See how the heavens witness to You!
You are the subject of all prophecies,
You are the achiever of the Father's will,
You are the Savior of the world!
The fragrance of Your Cross has filled heaven and earth...
The Father joyfully received it,
And the heavens hosts smelled it and comprehended its hidden mysteries.
Mankind recognized Your fragrance and became angels...
The fragrance of Your Cross is the mystery of my life!

THE LORD REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS CHOSEN ONES

CHAPTERS 13 to 17

The Lord's Farewell Speeches Chapters 13 -16
The Lord's Farewell Prayer Chapter 17
The Lord's Farewell Speeches
St John Ch 13 -16

The Lord's Farewell Teachings **John 13-16**

In the previous chapters (1-12), the Evangelist presented the story of Divine Love. In it the Word of God became incarnated and took the form of a human being. This is God's plan in order to save fallen mankind, and to announce the supreme love and care for every needy person. He wishes to direct the eyes of all mankind to Him who loves them. He wishes men to recognize Him as the One who has the power to renew, satisfy, heal, and educate them. Now the time had come to reveal the height of divine love as the Lord walks in the road of suffering, and ascends on the cross for the sake of every human soul. Some scholars have called chapters 13-17, "the Gospel of Love". In these chapters, the Lord meets with His disciples in the upper room, and then takes them with Him to Gethsemane. The Evangelist recounts the service of the washing of the feet, which the Lord undertook all on His own. He did so in order to attract them to participate in His love by washing the feet of their fellow men. The Lord also established, on that day, the mystery of the true Passover which all generations had been anticipating. He had yet to speak about the subject of the praise offered by the heavenly hosts; and finally the Lord gave farewell speeches which have come to be a living legacy for the church.

The Evangelist uses the word "love" as a noun or verb nine times throughout chapters 1 and 2. In contrast, He uses this word 20 times in chapters 13-17. The story of the upper room is essentially marked by its theme of love.

In His farewell speeches, the Lord Jesus Christ revealed many of His mysteries to His disciples. These had to do with the way the Divine Spirit works in their lives. Therefore He reveals the following:

- 1- God's Divine Plan:** In order to prepare a place for them in the great heavens, His plan anticipated the coming of all humanity into the joy and fellowship of eternal glory. The Lord revealed to His disciples that all He had gone through including pain and crucifixion was planned by the Father: through the Son His love for mankind would be fulfilled, and He would carry them unto the Father's embrace
- 2- His Divine Identity:** He is one with the Father, therefore He fulfills the Father's will joyfully. Whatever the Lord says or does are actually the words and deeds of the Father, who is the lover of mankind.

- 3- **He is the New Core:** And disciples and believers are the branches of the Divine Vine. Although man was banished from the Garden of Eden, now he had the Lord as His true vine. Indeed, man had become a branch bearing great fruit into nature. The Lord becomes greatly pleased with the fruit, that is the work of His hands.
- 4- **Their New Potentials:** Sacrificial love for others. The believer considers himself unqualified to sacrifice his life for his fellow men. Yet, he joins the Lord and shares with Him the glory of the cross and of the sacrificial love.
- 5- **The Role of the Disciples in the World:** Disciples need to love mankind even though the world rejects them. They offer what belongs to their kingdom, the kingdom of light and love. In contrast, the evil world offers darkness and hatred, which belong to the kingdom of darkness and of this world.
- 6- **The Divine Support:** God would send the Holy Spirit, who would guide the Lord's children through and above the anxieties and sufferings which they face. They would smell the Divine Love as well as experience love towards mankind, glory, and honor, since they are partakers with the Lord in His sufferings. Indeed, they would smell the fragrance of the crucified Lord. The Holy Spirit would raise them above suffering; therefore nothing could trap or bind them. Such hardship would be seen as the path of Golgotha leading them to the crucified Divine One. With Him, they would rejoice in His heavenly kingdom.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SERVICE OF THE WASHING OF THE FEET

When the Lord had completed delivering His teachings, He began to hold private conversations with His disciples. This was just before He was arrested and His aim was to comfort them throughout the time of His suffering. Moreover, the Lord desired to reveal His mysteries and offer His final advice to them. He spoke to His disciples as a Father would speak to His children. For His wisdom would be an inheritance that would enrich and support them.

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| 1. The washing of the disciples feet | 1-17 |
| 2. His words about His betrayer | 18-30 |
| 3. The glory of the Son of Man | 31-33 |
| 4. Brotherly love | 34-35 |
| 5. Warning to Peter and his denial of the Lord | 36-38 |

1- The Washing of the Disciples Feet:

‘Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end’[1].

St. John Chrysostom comments that the Lord Jesus Christ did great acts from the very beginning of His ministry. Now that the time had come for Him to leave them and ascend to the Father, the Lord embraced them with His ultimate love through the cross. This would support them after His ascension.

We too need to offer sacrificial love to all those around us every second of our lives for we do not know when we will depart from this world. Then we would leave an inheritance of love and memories of unforgettable loving deeds.

Many scholars question the exact day of the Jewish Passover. Was it on Holy Thursday when the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of the true Passover, established the mystery of the Christian Passover? Or was it on Good Friday when the true Passover was fulfilled, and which occurred on the same day of the Jewish Passover, in order to cancel the symbol?

There have been so many writings on this subject, yet there is no doubt that there were some groups that embraced a different calendar than the one the Jewish religious leaders officially used in Jerusalem. This explains why the events reported in the three Gospels reflect a calendar that the Lord Jesus Christ used when He celebrated, with His disciples, the Passover on Holy Thursday. Yet, the Sanhedrin and their followers celebrated the Passover on Friday, so it was not possible to kill the Passover lamb except on Friday. On that day the lamb was presented to the priest on the official Passover day.

The Evangelist is preoccupied with the True Passover: the killing of the **Lamb of God** who carried the sins of the world on the Cross. This is the Passover that encompasses all ages, it is the one that engages the heavens and the heavenly hosts. Therefore St. John is not concerned with the time when the Christian Passover was instituted, although he states that it was **“before the feast of the Passover”**. In the book of Revelations, the Lord Jesus Christ is called the Lamb more than fifteen times. The Evangelist had a vision of the **“Lamb as though it had been slain”**. He also saw the glorified church as the **“Bride of the Lamb”** and how the heavenly life is **“the marriage of the Lamb”** who has come, and this wife had made herself ready, (Rev 14:7). St. John saw the Lamb, the heavenly Holy of Holies or the eternal Tabernacle and Light (Rev 21).

In Chapter 13, the Evangelist reports the **‘washing of the feet’** as a ministry of love and sacrifice. This took place while the mystery of the Eucharist was being prepared, not during the meal itself. It was the custom of the Jews to wash the feet before supper.

St. John the Evangelist did not report the events of Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of the last week in the life of the Lord. These were reported in detail by the earlier three Evangelists. He also does not speak about the institution of the Holy Eucharist (Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19).

Because the Lord Jesus Christ is all omniscient, He allowed the enemy of goodness to have power according to God’s set plan and timing. The Lord allowed the enemy to act and to instigate his followers to resist Him. Accordingly the Lord said: **“This is your hour, and the power of darkness,”** (Luke 22:53).

St. John’s words that **‘His hour had come’** do not indicate that certain things were bound to be fulfilled over which the Lord had no control. In fact, this would be the Lord’s hour when the salvation of the world would be fulfilled through His Divine power. He would convert the evil of the wicked into goodness without forcing the wicked to pursue their evil acts. If there was anything inevitable about the events of this hour, it had to do with God’s sublime love, which demanded the salvation of the world. In proclaiming that His hour had come, the Lord revealed that He had come of His own will and at that very hour.

Two complimentary issues are related to this hour- or it could be considered as one issue with two facets: His departure or ascension to the Father and proclamation of His infinite love for His followers. It appears that His ascension is not planned solely for Himself, rather it is planned so that His loved ones too would enjoy ascending and meeting with the Father.

In this manner, the Lord accepted all the sufferings leading to His crucifixion in a spirit of sublime love. His sufferings were the source of His joy, as St. Paul explains in Heb. 12: 2: **“...for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”**.

* St. John the Evangelist says, “**Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come**”. Actually, the Lord knew about this hour, from a very long time ago, not only when it was about to come.

The Evangelist proclaims, loud and clear, that the death of the Lord is merely relocation as He was going to ‘**...depart from this world to the Father...**’

The words ‘**He loved them to the end**’ indicate that the Lord continued to love them in a constant manner.

* What is intended by: He loved them to the end’? It is as though He were saying ‘My love will never cease’¹.

St John Chrysostom

* He has crossed over to the Father in order to feed us: so let us follow Him in order to get nourished.

* We can enjoy the sufferings of the Lord and His resurrection by passing over from this death-prone life into the other immortal life. In other words, pass from death into life².

* This prophetic symbol now gets fulfilled in the Truth when Christ is led, as a Lamb, to be sacrificed (Is. 53:7). Consequently the utmost pillars of our heart are sprinkled with His blood. By making the sign of His cross on our foreheads, we are saved from the destruction awaiting this world. This is similar to Israel when it was saved from the slavery of the Egyptians who were ultimately destroyed, (Ex 12:23). This perfectly planned Passover is what we practice as we cross over from Satan into the embrace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and from this unsettled world into His well established kingdom. This is definitely how we cross over or ‘Passover’ and belong to the eternal God.

The apostle glorifies God for this grace that has been granted to us by saying: this word ‘**Pascha**’ means ‘passing over’ in the Latin language. Therefore this explains how we have a Pascha and a Passover. From where and to where does He cross over? From this world and into the Father’s embrace.

He has granted hope to the members through the Head. In that manner they will trustfully follow Him as He passes over and takes the lead.

What about those unbelievers who stand apart at a distance away from the Head and the members? Clearly, they are crossing over. However, there is a great difference between those who are crossing over from the world and those who are crossing over with the world. It is a difference between someone moving to the Father and another moving to the enemy. The Egyptians too were crossing over; yet they were not crossing

¹ Hom 70 PG 59:413

² Letters 55

from the sea and into the Kingdom. Rather, they were crossing from the sea into destruction¹.

* **'He loved them to the end'** [1]. He is our end and in Him we pass over, this conveys that His own love is what drove Him to death².

St. Augustine

'And supper having ended, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him,' [2]

The Lord Jesus Christ announced that the time of His death was drawing near, and that one of His disciples would betray Him; another would deny Him; while others would abandon Him. To Him, He perceived that all such events were planned by God to enable Him to fulfill salvation.

At the same time, Satan was preoccupied with dominating the heart of Judas. He planned to move him to betray His Lord. In so doing, Satan imagined he could smother the Divine Light and corrupt the eternal infinite love. However, God, the ever-righteous, transforms Satan's evil into benefits for us.

Some may ask: 'Had not Satan planted the idea of disloyalty unto Judas's mind earlier when he met with the Pharisees and made a deal with them?' Some scholars believe the enemy of goodness had sown from 'the seed of the idea' and that he was watering it with the water of greed and betrayal. Then **the enemy of goodness entered in Judas's heart as the established owner and Lord and not just an instigator or tempter of an idea.** When we open the door to evil, the enemy scatters his seeds just as a guest would do who tries to invade areas which do not belong to him. Then, when we accept his thoughts and ideas, and we begin to act accordingly, he daringly invades us to reign as an owner. He gets hold of the steering wheel and commands the direction while we are hopelessly unable to resist him, That is why, whenever we are careless in resisting him, we are exposing our hearts and minds to the enemy. Then he believes he is entitled to come in and take control.

* His Lord continued, to the last day, to be generous to him³.

St JohnChrysostom

* Referring to Judas, it is written: **'...the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him...'** Consequently, you could apply this to all those who have delivered their hearts to Satan. Satan could put in such a person's heart to commit adultery, or in another person's heart to cheat, or sow a lust for fame...this applies to all the sins scattered by Satan into hearts that are not armed by the

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 55:1

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 55:2

³ Homilies in St John 70:1

shield of faith. Through such a shield it is possible to defeat all the fiery and wicked darts and not just one or two arrows, (Eph. 6:16)¹.

* **‘...the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas’**: in other words he had presented the suggestion to his spirit in the form of an idea. Rather than entering through a physical portal like the ears, Satan entered into Judas through his thoughts. Therefore what we consider to be spiritual does not always convey a praiseworthy matter. Notice that the apostle speaks about certain evil spiritual matters- Eph 6:11- that exist in the heavens; and he testifies that we need to struggle against them².

St Augustine

Jesus knew that the Father had given all things unto His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God.

According to our belief, the Father had entrusted the redemption of believers into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore when the Lord says, “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father,” (Matt 11:22), He was speaking about that kind of trust. In another passage, the Lord Himself says, “They were Yours, You gave them to Me,” (Jn 17:6). He also said: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him,” (Jn 6:44), and St. John the Baptist says, “...unless it has been given to him from heaven,” (Jn 3:27). The Evangelist means to convey that in all cases the Lord takes no lesser role than the Father. Since He came from the Father and has ascended to Him, therefore He posses all things. Consequently, when you hear that He was delivered and handed over; do not give that a human interpretation. Rather, this illustrates the honor of the Father and the Lord’s fellowship with Him. Indeed, just as the Father entrusted Him, so does the Lord entrust His Father. This is apparent in the following words “But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterwards, those who are Christ’s at His coming, then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father,” (1 Cor. 15:23),

However, St. John reveals this manner in a human way to underline the great care of the Lord Jesus Christ towards mankind. The Lord proclaims His ultimate love by caring for men just as He cares for himself. He teaches us them all the righteous ways, such as humility, which He indicated as being the basis and end of every virtue.

It is not without purpose that the Evangelist states that, **“He had come from God and was going to God”**. Rather, it is intended to teach us that the Lord acted appropriately according to His origin as well as His destination. In this manner, He crushed with His feet all forms of pride³.

St John Chrysostom

* He was not entrusted with just a few matters while excluding other concerns, but He was entrusted with “all things”. Accordingly, when David was in the spirit, he had this

¹ Commentary on John, Book 32:24

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 55:4

³ Homilies on St John 70:1

vision and said: ‘The Lord said to my Lord. “Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your foot stool”, ‘(Ps. 110:1). Even the enemies of the Lord are a part of “all things” and the Lord with His fore knowledge, knew that they had been sent to Him by the Father. However, in order to enable us to understand more clearly the implications, let us study carefully the statement, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ, all shall be made alive,” (1 Cor. 15:22).¹

Origen the Scholar

* Since the Lord knew what He would do for the sake of His friends, he patiently used His enemies. In this manner, the Father put all things into His hands: every wicked one as well as the righteous were to be used to fulfill the ultimate goal².

St Augustine

**“He rose from supper and laid aside this garments,
Took a towel and girded Himself”. [4]**

He did not leave His supper, but left His seat at the table after everyone was seated and waited for the supper. The Lord took off His outer garments or coat, and put a towel around His waist to appear as a servant and to get ready to wash and dry the feet of those present.

The washing of feet took place before starting to eat dinner. As the streets and alleys were mostly sandy and the shoes were “open sandals” while socks were not yet known, we can understand why feet got dirty and smelly. This would be especially true of those that had walked long distances in the heart of the land. Therefore the washing of feet was part of the job of the slaves or of one of the least status present at a social gathering.

When David the prophet sent a message to Abigail to marry her, she rose up and said: “Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord” (1 Sam 25:41). Some scholars believe that the Lord started with washing the feet of Judas in the hope that his conscience would reprimand him and make him repent on what he had begun to plan.

Our Lord had humbly told St. John the Baptist: “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness”, (Matt 3:15). At that time the Lord revealed the righteousness of humility which He possessed even before the mystery of the Eucharist was established. So who of us would dare draw near to the Eucharist without first bowing down his soul before the Lord and receiving His blessing and then approach and receive His body and blood that have been sacrificed for each one? It would be a sad day for anyone to approach this mystery with a vain or haughty heart and to come without bowing down to wash even the feet of opponents and oppressors.

¹ Commentary on John, Book 32:26-27

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 55:5

* The words **“rose from supper”** indicate that the supper had been prepared and set on the table before the guests¹.

St Augustine

“Come, O Lord Jesus Christ, remove Your clothes-those that You have worn for my sake. May You be naked in order to cover me up with Your mercy. May you carry a towel around Your waist in order to grant us the grace of eternity. May you pour water in a tub in order to wash our heads as well as our feet-that it may be a cleaning of our souls and inclinations and not just of our bodies. We desire You to take away all the uncleanliness resulting from our weaknesses.”

St Augustine

How great is Your sublimity! As a servant, You washed the feet of Your disciples, and as a God You send dew from the heavens. You wash not only the feet; but You call us to sit with You. Moreover, in accordance with Your generosity, You encourage us and say **“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, you Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet”** [13, 14]

Consequently, I desire to wash the feet of my fellow men myself. I wish to fulfill my Lord’s command. I do not want to feel ashamed nor do I take lightly what the Holy One did in the first place.

A great good mystery that no one understands!”²

St. Ambrose

**‘After that, He poured water into a basin
And began to wash the disciples’ feet
And to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded’. [5]**

The Master waited until all the disciples were reclining on the floor around the table. In those days, it was the custom that people did not sit on chairs around the table. A slave would probably sit on a chair to eat; but free people would recline on the floor during meals. They would be leaning on the elbow of the left arm, their head in the direction of the table, and their feet to the other side.

Usually, one of the slaves would do the washing of feet. If there was no slave, then it was expected that the youngest or lesser in rank would perform the task. However, the Lord Himself undertook this role. In this manner, He elevated the status of slaves. Although slaves are forced to do this task due to their social status, yet the Lord did so wholly and gladly by His own free will and through His humility and love. Consequently, a slave should not resent doing any task as long as he works for the Lord and not out of the fear of men. St. Paul accordingly encourages slaves, saying “Servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh , with fear and

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 55:3

² Of the Holy Spirit 1:1:13-15

trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ, not with eye service, as mean pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatsoever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free” (Eph. 6:5-8)

Origen the Scholar believes that the Lord did not wash the feet of Judas as he could have no fellowship with Him due to his determination to do evil. In contrast, St. John Chrysostom comments that the Lord first began by washing the feet of Judas in order to offer him all the loving acts up to the very last moments before his treacherous deed. The Lord did so to grant him the opportunity to examine himself and withdraw from his evil intentions.

* It appears to us that the Lord first began by first washing the traitor’s feet for the verse says **“began to wash the disciples’ feet”** [5]

* Notice how the Lord demonstrated the way to be humble. He did so not by simply washing their feet but through other clear actions: He got up after they were all reclining and He washed their feet after He had taken off His outer clothes and not while He was fully dressed. Moreover, He girded Himself and filled the basin rather than ordering someone else to do so. He undertook the whole task all by Himself, all the procedures of washing the feet, in order to show us how to apply ourselves diligently in all tasks and not just go through them carelessly.

St. John Chrysostom

* Abraham did not carry water by himself. Neither did he wash the feet of those who had come to him as strangers. Father, he said “please, let a little water be brought, and wash your feet,” (Gen 18:4). Joseph too, did not carry water to wash the feet of his eleven brothers. Rather, it was the man who managed his house who made Simeon bring water to them to wash their feet. In contrast, the Lord Jesus Christ says “I am among You as One who serves,” (Lk 22:27). He truthfully states **“...learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart”** (Matt. 11:29). He Himself poured the water into the basin for He knew that no one could wash the feet of His disciples in the way He could. He would wash them in such a manner that would allow them to have fellowship with Him, [8]¹.

* We believe that the water is the Word that washes the feet of the disciples when they come to be washed and the Lord came before them².

Origen the Scholar

The Bible does not say: “He washed the disciples’ feet”, but rather states that He “began to wash the disciples’ feet”. **Origen the Scholar** comments, therefore, that the Lord began and has not stopped the washing since they are in need of being constantly washed. Indeed, they became unclean that very night after they had been washed; “all of

¹ Homilies on St John 70:2

² Commentary on John, Book32:47-49

you will be made to stumble because of Me this night,” (Matt 26:31). The Lord told Peter “...the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times,” (Jn 13:38)¹.

*Why is it astonishing that the Lord poured water in a basin in order to wash the disciples’ feet? Is He not the One who has poured His blood on the earth in order to wash away the dirt of their sins?

Why is it surprising that the Lord used the towel with which He was girded to wipe the feet He had washed? Is He not the One who, with His own body which enveloped Him, establishes the sound path that His own Evangelists would follow?

In order to gird Himself with a towel, He removed His outer garments. However, when He gave up the glory of His divinity in order to take the form of a slave, the Lord did not abandon what He possessed. Rather, He accepted what He did not possess before².

St Augustine

**Then He came to Simon Peter
And Peter said to Him,
“Lord, are You washing my feet?”[6]**

It is clear that the disciples were in a state of shocked amazement due to the Lord’s act. None of them had spoken a word until Peter’s turn came. Peter had often witnessed to the Lord’s humility, yet he never imagined it would get to the extent of appearing as a slave undertaking to wash feet.

* It is as though Peter was saying: ‘Is it with those same hands, with which you have opened eyes, healed lepers, and raised the dead, that you will wash my feet?’ He could not pray and beg the Lord with words other than these “Lord, are You washing my feet?” These words were enough to indicate clearly what was on his mind.

St John Chrysostom

* It is clear from these words ‘**Then He came to Simon Peter**’ that the Lord did not start by washing Peter’s feet. This confirms that the Lord did not think of anyone as the leader of the disciples.

St. Augustine

**Jesus answered and said to him
“What I am doing you do not understand now
But you will now after this”. [7]**

It is as though the Lord is telling Peter “Allow Me to do this now, and I will soon tell you the nature and purpose of this act”.

¹ Cf Commentary on John, Book 32:52-58

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate55:7

*What do these words imply “...you will know after this?” When? When you will order devils to come out in My name, when you will see Me ascending into heavens, when you know through the Spirit that I sit at the right of God. Then you will understand what is going on¹.

* This means that you will know the great benefit you gather from this. The benefit of the lesson you learn is how the Lord leads us to all manner of humility².

St John Chrysostom

* For Me, washing your feet is a symbol of the essence of your souls. These get purified and prepared to proclaim the message of righteousness (Rom 10:15, Isa 52:7). Besides, you are enabled to touch the human soul by your pure feet. However, you do not know that mystery right now because you have not yet acquired the knowledge pertaining to His person. You will comprehend this mystery later on. You will consequently be enlightened concerning matters that are neither a symbol nor trivial³.

Origen the Scholar

Peter said to Him,

“You shall never wash my feet!”

Jesus answered him:

“If I do not wash your feet, you have no part with Me”. [8]

It was not possible for Peter, the apostle, to see his awesome Master take the position of a slave and perform the task of washing the feet. Therefore he objected to His Master’s action. He had not comprehended the scope of the Lord’s deed who through His sublime love, had chosen to occupy the status of a slave. Indeed, it even allowed Judas to sell Him as a slave, and permitted the enemy of righteousness to fulfill God’s plan for salvation through the Cross.

It is as though the Lord is telling Peter: ‘You cannot be My disciple unless I wash your feet’. Indeed, if the Lord’s hands do not reach unto the inner soul and wash it, a person would not be able to enjoy salvation or become a disciple of the Lord. A believer needs to be washed in the baptismal font by the action of God’s Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:11, Titus 3:5, 6). Moreover, a believer needs to be washed by the precious blood (1 Jn 1:7). We need to wash the feet based on the premise that our souls get unclean while it walks in this world. This is a task that belongs exclusively to the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone can forgive sins and save the soul from corruption. We are able to enjoy Him through the mystery of repentance and confession. Without Him we are unable to partake of the joy of the Lord’s sacrifice (the mystery of the Eucharist).

What do these words imply: **“If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me”** The Lord points out here that the action of washing is His own specialty. On the great day of the Lord, a person will not appear to be pure or receive his share, (of fellowship with

¹ Hom 70 PG 59:416

² Homilies on St John 70:2

³ Commentary on John, Book 32:87,88

the Lord in glory), through His own personal endeavors. This is granted only through the action of the Lord Jesus Himself who washes the souls of the un-cleanliness of sins.

Often we object to the Lord's acts due to our inner blindness and our inability to comprehend His divine wisdom and plans for us.

* Peter could not comprehend the mystery and therefore refused the service. He imagined that by allowing the Lord to serve him it would damage the servant's humility¹.

St Ambrose

* It is clear that Peter spoke to his own harm, even though he spoke to the Master with respect and good intentions. Life is full of such mistakes that are committed by people who imagine they know what is best. Actually they are ignorant, and speak or do things that lead them to adverse paths².

* Peter, who said to the Lord "You shall never wash my feet!" was reprimanded and warned against persisting in this attitude so that he might have fellowship with the Lord. Similarly, it is far better for all of you to seek wisdom before taking decisions, rather than rush and make hasty decisions and promises to do one thing or another and persisting on taking the wrong course³.

* If we do not do so (present our feet to be washed by the Lord) we will neither have fellowship with Him nor will our feet become beautiful. This is a particularly important matter as we are eager and jealous to receive greater gifts, (1 Cor. 1 2:31). Furthermore, we desire to join those who preach righteousness⁴.

* We even dare to add, in harmony with the words "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me", that the Lord did not wash the feet of Judas because he had actually determined in his mind to betray his Master and Lord. The devil found that Judas was not dressed in the full armor of God. He did not possess the shield of faith that would enable him to quench the fiery wicked darts, (Eph. 6:13-16)⁵.

Origen the Scholar

Simon Peter said to Him

"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"[9]

Probably Peter felt that he needed a complete spiritual washing. Consequently, he desired to get his whole being washed and not just his feet. Some scholars consider that Peter's request here reveals some sort of humility even though it carried some sort of pride too. He has not accepted the Lord's thought but rather intended to fulfill his own.

¹ On the Mysteries, 6:31

² Cf Commentary on John, Book 32:57-58

³ Commentary on John, Book 32:96

⁴ Commentary on John, Book 32:101

⁵ Commentary on John, Book 32:19

We often want to advise God so that He would act according to our wishes, even though we would be asking sincerely for spiritual matters.

Origen the Scholar states that Peter did not want to get his hands washed, and that the Lord does not ask for the deadly application of the literal word. An example of that is the washing of hands before meals, (Matt 15:2). Besides, Peter did not need to get his head washed. The Lord did not want that to be covered since the glory of God and His likeness rested on Peter, (1 Cor. 11:7)¹.

* The apostle Peter, hastily excused himself from washing his feet. He was even more hasty to request that his hands and head get washed. In both instances he was motivated by his sincere love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Why did the Lord not ask him to follow His example rather than threaten Him? Because Peter was not chosen to do so. Had the Lord said “Allow Me, for in this way I encourage you to imitate My humility”, Peter would have made hundreds of promises in order to stop the Lord from washing his feet. However, the Lord uttered words that would frighten Peter and scare him profoundly. He informed Peter that he would be separated from the Lord. Note that Peter’s constant question was, “Lord where are you going?”[36] He also said, “I will lay down my life for Your sake”, [37].

St John Chrysostom

Jesus said to him

“He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet,

But is completely clean;

And you are clean,

But not all of you.”[10]

It was a Jewish custom to bathe twice, therefore the Lord underlines that the washing with the baptismal water occurs only once. The washing the feet refers to the tears of repentance which represent the second baptism.

Eleven of the disciples were pure even though they abandoned the Lord and took flight in the critical hours, (Mark 14:50) The Lord described them as being pure and did not reproach them for their weakness. Even though He said “...you will all abandon Me”, the Lord did not intend to reproach them. He merely wanted to confirm that He understands how a person suffers from isolation in times of trouble. Accordingly, the Psalmist cries, “My father and mother have forsaken me...”. Nevertheless, one of the disciples was not pure, for he harbored betrayal in his heart. The Lord had washed his feet though He knew of his deceit. In so doing, He reveals His compassion towards sinners and His desire for them to enjoy His gifts.

No one is without sin-no one in the Old or in the New testaments. No one is without blemish except the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who is ‘without spot and without blemish’, (1 Pet 1:19). It is therefore possible to say that anyone who needs to enjoy repentance, needs to carry the features of his holy Lord. In other words, such a person needs to become holy by adhering to the Lord. He alone can state that “you are

¹ Commentary on John, Book32:102

clean”, (Jn 13:10). This is due to His blood that cleanses us from all sins, (1 Jn 1:7). He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, (1 Jn 2:2)

* The eleven disciples who were washed and had become pure, became more so when the Lord had washed their feet. Judas, however, who had actually become unclean-according to the saying: “He who is filthy, let him be filthy still”, (Rev 22:11) became even more filthy and impure for Satan had entered into him after he had received a piece of the bread, (Jn 13:27)¹.

Origen the Scholar

* Since the disciples were pure, then why did the Lord wash their feet? He did that in order that we might learn humility. That is why He came: not just for any member of the body, but especially for all those who are considered to be the most repugnant of the members.²

* He came for the members of the body which are assumed to be the most honorable. Were the disciples pure, even though they had neither been redeemed of their sins nor had received as yet the Holy Spirit? Where sin was still prevalent and no sacrifice had been offered, then how is it that they were described as being pure?! So that no one would assume that the disciples were pure and had been washed from sin, the Lord explained “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you”, (Jn 15:3). In other words, ‘you are pure because you have accepted the Light and have avoided falling into the sin of Judas’... these disciples had driven out all evil out of their hearts and had befriended the Lord with their whole pure mind³.

St John Chrysostom

* “For to everyone who has, more will be given”, (Matt 25:29). Since the disciples were pure, the Lord Jesus Christ added to their purity by washing their feet. He neither wishes to wash those who did not wash themselves, nor those who were not wholly clean. In fact, the Lord was speaking about those who had become pure through Him. Indeed, if there was one person among all mankind who was perfect but had not enjoyed being washed by the Lord, then that person would not be considered to be pure...⁴.

* The Lord washed their feet because they were pure according to human standards but not according to God. Without our Lord Jesus Christ no one would be pure in the sight of God. This is true even if a person assumes that he had been washed based on his own specific effort⁵.

* The Holy Spirit and the power of the Almighty could dwell in those who have become truly pure even in the eyes of men. It is as though such persons were themselves clothes:

¹ Commentary on John, Book 32:110

² Homilies on St John 70: 2

³ Hom 70 PG 59:416

⁴ Commentary on John, Book 32:72-73

⁵ Commentary on John, Book 32:74

they had been washed through the baptism of the Lord, and He had also washed their feet¹.

* Since the Lord has made the disciples' feet beautiful by washing them, then what could we say about the real beauty that appears in those who are baptized by the Holy Spirit and by fire through the Lord Jesus Christ? (Matt 3; 11)²

* Now the feet of those who preach the good news have become beautiful. When they have been washed, purified, and wiped by the hands of the Lord, they become capable of walking in the Holy path and of crossing over to the One who says, "I am the way", (Jn 14:6). He is the only One; and all those who have had their feet washed by the Lord, can travel on that way. The Lord is the living way and through Him we come to God's presence. That way will not be open to defiled or impure feet. On account of that, Moses removed his shoes since the place he was entering and standing upon was holy ground, (Ex 3:5). The same thing applied to Joshua the son of Nun, (Joshua 5:15)³.

* As for the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, they needed to walk in the living way that is filled with activity. Therefore it was not enough to travel without sandals as He had ordered them (Matt 10:10). They actually had to let the Lord wash their feet after he had removed his outer garments and put them side. On the one hand, He probably made their pure feet even more pure. On the other hand, He probably washed their feet in order to transfer the dirt on them onto His body through the towel which He solely wore around His waist (Jn 13:4). Indeed, He alone does carry our weaknesses (Matt 8:17; Is 53:4)⁴.

* Notice that when the Lord decided to wash the disciples' feet, He chose no other time than when Satan had entered the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, and had driven him to deliver his Master (Jn 13:2). This was in fulfillment of the Plan (sufferings) for the sake of mankind. Before that moment, the time had not been convenient for the Lord to wash the disciples' feet. Who else would want to wash their feet in that crucial moment leading up to His sufferings? That time was not yet right...it became right after the fulfillment of the plan (sufferings). The right movement came when the Holy Spirit visited the disciples who had become pure by the washing of their feet. At that moment their feet were prepared and became beautiful. Consequently, they could preach righteousness through the Spirit (Rom 10:15, Is. 52:7)⁵.

Origen the Scholar

* What do you think dear brothers? Indeed, **in the holy baptismal font a person is wholly cleaned, every single part in him.** In spite of that a person goes on living in this physical world, and does not cease to walk on earth with his feet. Consequently, our own human feelings do not get separated from our deadened life on earth. These feelings resemble our feet with which we walk and which are directly responsible to our human

¹ Commentary on John, Book 32:74

² Commentary on John, Book 32:75

³ Commentary on John, Book 32:80-82

⁴ Commentary on John, Book 32:83

⁵ Commentary on John, Book 32: 84-86

actions. That is why if we said that we were without sin, we would be deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us (1 Jn 1:8)

Each day the One who intercedes for us (Rom 8:34) washes our feet. We are in need to be washed daily. In other words, we need to plan uprightly the way our steps should go. The Lord's Prayer teaches us to say "...forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us". It is also written "If we confess our sins: then truly He who washed the disciples feet is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn 1:9): that is, He washes our feet with which we walk on this earth¹.

* The church, as it walks on her way to the Lord Jesus Christ, could be fearful of defiling her feet which she has washed in the baptismal font².

St Augustine

**'For He knew who would betray Him,
Therefore He said "You are not all clean". [11]**

* If you were to ask "Since the disciples were pure, then why did the Lord wash their feet?" Our answer would be: He did so in order to teach us humility.

St John Chrysostom

**'So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again.
He said to them "Do you know what I have done to you?"[12]**

The Lord had taken off His outer garments in order to wash the disciples' feet. When He had accomplished the task, He put them on again and reclined like them. The clothes are a reference to the body and the Lord's act is a symbol for His will and His resurrection which were achieved by His own personal power.

At this point, the Lord fulfills His promise to Peter the apostle as He explains to Him the implications behind the act of washing the disciples feet. The Lord presents to them a command expressed in the form of a question.

* The Lord asks them: **"Do you know what I have done to you?"** He directs this question to Peter and to all the others as well.

St John Chrysostom

**"You call Me teacher and Lord
And you say well,
For so I am" [13]**

This dual title **"teacher and Lord"** corresponds to "Rabbi" and "Lord" and these were commonly used for the official Jewish teachers.

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 56:4

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 57:1

* The One who sits above the Cherubim washed the disciples' feet. Do you, O earthly person, proudly and vainly overestimate yourself ever so greatly even though you are made of ashes, dust and earth?

St John Chrysostom

**“If I then, Your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet,
You also ought to wash one another’s feet”. [14]**

* When we bend over at our brother’s feet, the feelings of humility are awakened and strengthened in the heart if these feelings are truly found there¹.

* May each person forgive the sins of his brother, and pray for other sinners. In this manner each person would wash the other person’s feet².

St Augustine

**“For I have given you an example,
That you should do as I have done to you”. [15]**

* However, there is no parallel, for He is the Lord and Master, whereas you are slaves and each other’s companions. Then what does “**as I**” convey? It is intended to express doing this act of humility with the same enthusiasm as Mine. In order to motivate us to perform even lesser tasks with humility, the Lord presented many examples of great actions. This is what teachers at school do when they achieve writing in beautiful letters; they intend the children to imitate them even though with lesser results.....and where do those who distance themselves from their colleagues go? Where are they who demand honors? The Lord washed the feet of the traitor who had defiled all sanctities. The feet of the thief who had reached the moment of betrayal and whose condition was hopeless and incurable. In spite of that, the Lord allowed him to share and sit at His table...do you boast and wink your eyes in the belief that you are better? Someone may say: ‘Let us wash one another’s feet’ Is it a great matter to wash the feet of our servants? For us, ‘slave’, and ‘free’, have two different meanings. However, at this point, practical reality presents itself. According to nature, He is God and we are servants. In spite of that, He did not refuse to do the job. Therefore He has made us indebted to one another as He has first performed this task. He has made us indebted to perform even lesser tasks³.

St John Chrysostom

**“Most assuredly, I say to you,
A servant is not greater than his master,
Nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him” [16]**

Origen the Scholar noted that this custom of washing the feet of others was widespread among the simple and naïve, and that the Lord called for believers to perform

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 58:4

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 58:5

³ Homilies on St John 71:1

this service- whether they were bishops, priests, or officials who occupied worldly offices. Just as we are in need to wash each other's feet, we should accept that others wash our feet too.

* As their teacher, the Lord washed His disciples' feet. At the same time, these were the feet of His servants too since He was their Master. The dust of the earth, which is a product of the world, would be cleaned through His teachings. In this manner, the physical world would not affect the innermost parts of the disciples. Matters which defile the feet may be torn away by the Lordship and control of the Ruler. He possesses authority over those who continue to accept being generally defiled. These still bear the spirit of slavery (Rom 8:15)¹.

* You can see how the Lordship of our Lord and Savior transcends that of other Lords who do not wish a slave to have equal status with his master².

Origen the Scholar

* The same love that the Father has is found in the Son...and what love does the Son have other than that He sacrificed Himself for our sakes and saved us by His blood? (Eph. 5:2). The Father sacrificed His Son, and the Son offered Himself. He sacrificed the One who was willing to do so before all ages and who offered Himself as a sacrifice. The Father did not sacrifice the Son as a punishment but He offered Him as a blessing³.

St Ambrose

* The Lord spoke because He had washed the disciples' feet through His words and by setting the example of a humble Lord. By His help we can apply ourselves to the any task at hand. We need to see clearly and work without delay while seeking to perfect matters that confront us⁴.

St Augustine

* 'Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ', (1 Cor 11:1). It is for this purpose that the Lord put on our flesh: to teach us to have virtue through His incarnation. God sent His Son having taken the form of our sinful body, (Romans 18:3). Accordingly, the Lord says "Learn form Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Matt 11:29). He has taught us not by words alone, but by deeds as well.

They called Him a "Samaritan", possessed by devils and a blasphemmer. They stoned Him and the Pharisees sent servants to catch Him once, and they put Him on trial another time. They insulted Him, and when they could not find any fault in Him He would offer them bread through words and deeds...

Let us watch His actions with His disciples and His attitude towards His traitor. The Lord had chosen Judas to be one of His disciples. He invited him to share His table

¹ Commentary on John, Book 32:115-116

² Commentary on John, Book 32:120

³ Of the Holy Spirit 1:12:129

⁴ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 59:1

and His salt (which prevents corruption). Judas had seen the Lord's miracles which called for respect. In spite of that he committed a most dangerous act. This was more serious than any other for he did not stone or insult Him: he betrayed the Lord. Although Judas deserved to be hated, the Lord treated him as a friend and washed his feet because He desired to prevent him from doing evil.

Had He wanted, the Lord could have made him to wither like the fig tree. He could have split him in two in the manner of the rocks that got split, or torn apart as the veil in the temple. However, the Lord did not want to stop him from his act by force. Rather, He wanted Judas to choose voluntarily how to act. That is why the Lord washed his feet. In spite of all that, this wicked and miserable Judas felt no shame¹.

St John Chrysostom

“If you know these things, happy are you if you do them” [17]

Real blessings are obtained through knowing the Lord in a practical manner and this is revealed in obeying Him. A person does not receive joy on account of his great knowledge but on account of being involved and participating in the divine nature. At this point, knowing the Lord is converted into a practical experience.

*** Washing the feet is specifically performed by the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who washes the inner depths and forgives sins. A person who forgives those who hurt him through love and humility applies and shares one of the Lord's greatest features.** Such a person is counted as one who enjoys the new and blessed life in Jesus Christ. When the Lord says “...blessed are you”, He reveals His heavenly glory and life which we experience as we practice such acts.

Origen the Scholar

* **“If you know”** is addressed to everyone. However, **“if you do”** does not refer to everyone. That is why the Lord says: **“happy are you if you do them”**. Therefore I always say (repeatedly) the same thing, though you know it, you need to create the sense of duty in you. Even the Jews “know”, but they are not blessed as they do not practice what they know².

St John Chrysostom

2-The Lord's Words about His Traitor

**“I do not speak concerning all of you,
I know whom I have chosen,
But that the Scripture may be fulfilled
‘He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me’” [18]**

¹ Homilies on St John 70:1

² Homilies on St John 71:2

The Lord unveils the plan of Judas to betray Him. From the start the Lord had known but covered up for him until this moment. But it was getting serious, and the Lord revealed the plan to His disciples who could never have imagined that such a thing could occur by someone from among them. Notice how the Lord did not generalize when He spoke about that sin. Rather, He praised the others for being pure vessels. At the same time He neither gave details about the crime nor revealed the name of the offender. However, the Lord underlines that all these events had been foretold in the Holy Bible (Ps 41:9).

The Lord did not state the motivation that drove Judas Iscariot. It is true that the Evangelists had referred to him when Judas criticized Mary, the sister of Lazarus, for pouring the fragrant oil on the Lord's feet: 'This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and had the money box....' (Jn 12:6). Actually, the other Evangelists are the ones who have recorded the details concerning the betrayal of the Lord, the amount Judas had agreed to receive, how he returned the money after delivering the Lord, and his fall into despair. Still there is no commentary about the inner motives for his act. Scholars have attempted to analyze and elaborate on the reasons and motives for this treacherous deed. However, none of the Evangelists has tried to provide a full presentation of the motives of that traitor

St. John the Evangelist presents this act of betrayal immediately after the Lord had finished the washing of the feet. He reveals the desire of the Incarnate Word to perform the smallest acts in total and sincere humility. Indeed, He offered Himself for the sake of everyone. The Lord served them all even though there was one among them who was plotting a great evil against Him. Judas counteracted the Lord's service in his own manner. He obstinately held on to his own thoughts, and planned for his own profit while he failed to recognize that he was destroying himself.

Our Lord- the true Way, leads us to enter into Him, and work in submission, humility, and sincere love. He is there to raise us, while there is one who seeks to destroy us.

The Lord ultimately stresses that He teaches those He has chosen. It is not that He was uninformed about the personality of Judas when He chose him, but that all events take place by the Lord's consent. The evil in Judas did not indicate he was in control of the situation. Rather, the love of the Lord prevailed. That love transformed that evil into an element used in fulfilling the divine plan of salvation. This grants us total consolation for there is One who loves mankind, who is in control, and who transforms all events so that they work for our well being even when the evil confronts and resists us.

* Could the Lord know those who belong to Him (1 Tim 2: Num 16:5), and those who do not? He had said about some: "I never knew you", (Matt 7:23). Therefore He told Judas who did not belong to Him: "I never knew you" However, Judas belonged to the Lord but he had failed. It would have been possible to tell him "I do not know you, where are you

from?" (refer to Lk 13:27). That explains why the Lord did not say 'I know you all' but rather said **"I know whom I have chosen"**¹.

* Judas raised his heel against his Master when Satan entered his heart after he had received the piece of bread, [27]².

Origen the Scholar

* The Lord did not say "The one who eats bread with Me will deliver Me". He said **"He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me"**. He wished to indicate the covert and deceptive nature of His assassination.

St John Chrysostom

**"Now I tell you before it comes,
That when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He". [19]**

The Lord assures His disciples of His presence everywhere. He also underlines His knowledge of everything, to the extent that He informed them in advance about His death and all the events related to that. Consequently, their belief that He is the Messiah was reinforced. That belief became deeper as they realized that He knew all things and that He was the Savior of the world whom their fathers and prophets expected to come.

* Actually, the disciples had once approached the Lord and asked Him to "Increase their faith" (Lk 17:5). They did not condemn themselves as though they were unbelievers. The word "increase" suggests that they had faith and it could become greater. The word "believe" could be interpreted as "so that you might increase in faith"³.

**"Most assuredly, I say to you,
He who receives whomever I send receives Me;
And he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me". [20]**

The Lord assured His disciples that although there are some people who are ungrateful and disloyal to Him; yet there are those who believe and accept Him. These are therefore counted as having accepted the Father as well.

* What is the relationship between this and what has been said before: **"...happy are you if you do them" [17]**; and why did the Lord add these words **"...receives whomever I send"**? There is a strong link and harmony between both, as the Lord was preparing them to go out into the world. He knew that they would face many difficulties and He was comforting them in two ways. First, He clearly explained, **"If you know these things, happy are you if you do them" [17]**. Second, He says **"...he who receives Me, receives whomever sent Me."** Indeed the Lord had opened before them all the homes they would visit so that they would be dually comforted⁴.

¹ Commentary on John, Book 32:154-155

² Commentary on John, Book 32: 167

³ Commentary on John, Book 32:174, 176

⁴ Homilies on St John, 72:1

St John Chrysostom

* He who accepts the Lord's messenger actually accepts the Lord Himself. And he who accepts the Lord accepts the Father. Consequently, he who accepts the Lord's messenger accepts the Father who has sent the Lord Jesus Christ.¹

* Based on these words, it is possible to accept the reverse implications. He who accepts the messengers of the son of destruction accepts the adversary of the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, he who accepts the son of destruction accepts Christ's adversary as being the word that appears truthful and that falsely claims to be just. Indeed, this indicates the acceptance of the destroyer himself. Let us beware therefore and act as wise bankers. Let us adhere in our belief in the true messengers and reject the ministry of false ones².

Origen the Scholar

Origen noted that the Lord said: **"...receives whomever I send"**, and did not say instead "whomever believes in you, believes in Me", or "whomever sees you, sees Me" (The Lord wishes us to accept His disciples but He does not wish us to have faith in them too).

When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit

And testified and said,

"Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." [21]

The Lord was accustomed to speak about His sufferings and death without feeling troubled. However, when He mentioned the fact of being betrayed by one of His disciples the Evangelist reports that **'He was troubled in spirit'**. Clearly, sins committed by believers sadden the fatherly heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, God says: **"I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me" (Is.1:2)**. He also says: **"In all their affliction he was afflicted...But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit" Is.63: 9, 10)**.

The Lord was troubled 'in spirit' [21]: this refers to the human aspect of His spirit since He had truly taken the form of a full human being. Consequently, His spirit would be troubled on account of betrayal committed by one of His disciples. This feeling was not the due to fear of death or of the unknown, but due to anxiety and concern for that disciple who had dared to betray his Master and Lord.

* The one who is going to betray Me is not an outsider or different from My disciples. Neither is he one of many disciples. Indeed, he is one of the apostles who had been honored as I had chosen them.

There are many who have condemned the Lord and who cried out: "Crucify Him, crucify Him" (Lk 23:21)...however, Judas betrayed the Lord even though he had seen and known the Lord. He had known Him as a Teacher presenting many great lessons. He

¹ Commentary on John, Book 32:212

² Commentary on John, Book 32:213-214

had heard these as he attended the Lord's private meetings with His disciples. He got to know Him as the Lord. Consequently, when he betrayed Him, he betrayed the Lord's greatness which he had come to know...a matter which is inconceivable for someone who has seen the Lord's greatness...

When Judas had learned how great He is; when he had heard the greatness of the Word, the Mind, and the Grace He possessed; then He betrayed the Lord. The weight of his deed was as great as the extent of his acquaintance with the Lord. For this reason it would have been good "... if he had not been born", (Matt 26:24, Mk 14:21). Being "born" could refer to renewal (the second birth) in its deep sense, or to 'birth' in its general meaning¹.

* Had the wickedness of Judas been apparent to the Lord's disciples, they would have known who it was who would betray their Teacher. He told them **"...one of you will betray Me"**, but the disciples **"looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke,"** [22].

The disciples, in fact, felt embarrassed and would not suspect wickedness in Judas because he had acted so nobly previously. Probably Judas was not inclined wholly to wickedness. Even after the devil had entered his heart...he still possessed the sense of being able to make a choice.

When Judas saw the Lord being judged, then tied and delivered to Pilate the ruler (Matt 27:2), he repented and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priest and elders. He told them "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood," (Matt 27:4). Judas, who had loved money, threw the money and went and hung himself (Matt 27:5). He did not even wait to see the end of the Lord's judgment as He stood before Pilate.

Origen the Scholar

The Psalmist testifies that Judas did not feel hostile against the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ps 55:13). Indeed, after Judas had delivered the Lord, he praised the Teacher and Lord as he said he had committed a sin by handing over innocent blood. He admitted his fault before the chief priests and elders. Besides, he threw the money on the ground and did not spend or enjoy it. All these beautiful touches indicate that he could have repented and moved closer to the Lord. However, he sadly opened his heart to the devil for a second time by committing suicide. Consequently, he lost hope in God, the savior of the world.

St. Augustine wonders why the Lord Jesus Christ got troubled in the spirit and said **"Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me"**? Did the Lord not know before hand, and therefore He was troubled in the spirit? Did not the Lord say a little while earlier: **"He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me,"** [18]? Or did He get troubled because the hour had come when the execution of the betrayal would actually take place? The Holy One, who has the power to lay down His life and to take it up again, was troubled in the spirit. The Almighty was troubled, the Rock and stronghold was troubled. However, it was the weakness of our nature which He had put on willingly that got troubled.

¹ Commentary on John, Book 32:235-238

St. Augustine goes on to say: [That is surely the case in point: May the servants never have inappropriate doubts or thoughts about their Lord. May they comprehend that they are members of the One Head who died for our sake. Therefore the Lord was troubled as He stood in our shoes. The One who met death powerfully, was disturbed in the fullness of His power. The One who will transform our humble bodies into the likeness of His glorified body had also transferred into Himself the feelings of our weakness into His own, as well as His sympathy for us. Consequently, when the One who is great, courageous, steadfast, and invincible is troubled, we should not be worried as though He could fail; for He will not perish but will conquer on our behalf!... In His distress, we see ourselves. Therefore when anxiety gets hold of us we should not despair or perish. Through the anxiety of the One who could never be troubled without His will, the Lord grants us comfort when we involuntarily get troubled.^{1]}

* Through His power, He fully took on our human nature. With that same power, He fashioned Himself human feelings which He controlled in an appropriate manner².

St Augustine

St. Augustine comments on the Lord's words **"...one of you will betray Me"** and says: 'The Lord here refers to the disciples as physical persons and not as a communal spiritual group. Actually, Judas Iscariot was not one of them and St. John explains, in 1 John 2:19, that: "they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us," (1 Jn 2:19).

**Then the disciples looked at one another,
Perplexed about whom He spoke. [22]**

It is clear that the behavior of Judas Iscariot did not arouse any kind of suspicion. No one suspected him at all.

When they heard the warning words of their Master, they knew He would not speak lightly or say anything to deceive them. Therefore they turned and looked at each. They were wondering silently: "Who could that be?" Their looks revealed their astonishment and inner turmoil.

When David wept over his rebellious son, all his followers wept with him (2 Sam 15:30). In the same manner, the disciples became troubled when the Lord was troubled and saddened on account of His deliverer. The troubled spirit of the One who grants peace and joy filled the disciples with great fear. The feast was transformed from a time of joy to a time of great trouble and fear.

Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. [23]

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 60:2

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 60:5

In these times, the Jews used to sit in a reclined position at the table. They would lean with their left elbow on a pillow as they sat to eat. This was also the habit of the Greeks and Romans. There would be two leaning on the same pillow. Because St. John was so close to the Lord, he used to sit next to him and his head would be in the Lord's embrace.

**Simon Peter therefore motioned to him
To ask who it was of whom He spoke. [24]**

St. John was the right person who could put the question to the Lord. He occupied a special place and he sat next to Him and leaned on His bosom. Peter, in his usual zeal, wanted to know who would betray the Lord. However, he did not dare to ask and made a sign to John to ask the Lord.

* In every situation, Peter stands out as he reveals his zealous love for the Lord. However, he appears to be in great fear at that moment. He neither spoke nor kept quiet, but he needed to find out through St. John the disciple.

**Then, leaning back on Jesus' breast, he said to Him,
"Lord who is it?"[25]**

St. John addressed the Lord respectfully, even though he had a very close relationship with the Lord and leaned against His bosom. He uses the title "Lord": our closeness with the Lord Jesus Christ should not cancel our sense of awe and respect when we address Him.

St. John was leaning on the Lord's bosom [23]; and when he wanted to ask Him about the person who would deliver Him, he had to lift his head up. **Origen the scholar** comments that deeds are far more sublime and greater than leaning on the bosom¹.

* Their Master just gave them a hint. If you seek to know the reason for that, you would understand that He did so on account of His love.

St John Chrysostom

* The beloved John, who leaned on the Lord's bosom, loved the two breasts of the Word (Jn 13:25). He placed his heart close to the Source of life and enjoyed suckling from the hidden mysteries that are found within the Lord's heart. He absorbed them as a sponge would do.

St. John offers us the breasts that richly carry the Word. Consequently, we can be filled with the same goodness which filled him as he drew out of the Source of goodness. He proclaimed the eternal Word. On this account we can truly say now: **"...we will remember thy love more than wine: We have become like virgins, our minds are no longer childish or under the yoke of childish trivialities, and we are no longer defiled by sin as we draw closer to death due to old age. Therefore let us fully love the**

¹ Commentary on John, Book 32:278

wealth of divine teachings...” (Song of Sol 1:4). John was the disciple whom the Lord loved, and the Lord is the Truth. The expressions used in this passage are far more beautiful and appropriate than those David used when he said, “the Lord is known by the judgment He executes,” (Ps 9:16). The Lord here is called the Truth as He makes “the crooked places straight and the rough places smooth” (Is 40:4). This is achieved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to whom is due the glory forever amen¹.

* Those who were Jews by birth could not regain the virginity they had lost on that account just through reading the Holy Bible. In spite of that, we are told that St. John, who was the youngest one of the disciples, was a chaste celibate when he accepted the Christian faith. He maintained his chastity and on this account, he was especially dear to the Lord and leaned on His bosom. Peter, who was married, did not have the courage to question the Lord, so he asked John to find out the answer, [25]. After the resurrection, when Mary Magdalene reported to the disciples that the Lord had risen (Jn 20:4), both Peter and John ran to the tomb. However, John arrived before Peter. Also when they went fishing in the lake of Geneserath, the Lord stood on the shore and none of the disciples recognized that it was Jesus. Only the chaste disciple recognized the chaste One and he said to Peter, “It is the Lord,” (Jn 21:7)².

St Jerome

Jesus answered,

“It is he whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it”.

And having dipped the bread He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. [26].

When the Lord dipped the bread and gave it to Judas, the disciples thought He had done so in order to have him hurry up and accomplish a certain task rather than wait to have supper with them.

Just as John whispered his question into the Lord’s ear, so did the Lord whisper His response to him so that the other disciples would not hear. Rather than mention the name of His traitor, the Lord was satisfied to give a sign. By so doing, the Lord wants future generations to understand that God desires us to recognize those who rebel against the truth. We are enabled to do so through their wicked fruits and spirit rather than by knowing their names.

It seems that Judas was so embarrassed that he did not dare dip the bread and eat from the same dish out of which the Lord ate. Yet the Lord dipped the bread and gave Judas who had to put out his hand and eat with the disciples. The Lord wanted to remind him of his sublime equal status among the others.

It is clear from the Lord's interaction with Judas that the latter sat closely to Him. This could have been because Judas was the treasurer. Probably the disciples let him sit close to the Lord so that he would be close by should the Lord need anything for the ministry.

¹ Song of Solomon: St Gregory, Bishop of Nicea. Translated by Dr George Nawaar, 1993, Sermon 1

² Against Jovinianus 1:26

Truly, there are many who get close to the Lord Jesus Christ physically. They elbow their way in the crowds wherever the Lord goes. However, they are far apart spiritually from Him. Besides these, there are others who appear far away, yet they carry the Lord in their hearts and thoughts. Such are embraced by the Lord who carries them within Him as members of His own Holy Body.

St John Chrysostom finds that the Lord Jesus Christ used every possible means that would lead Judas to be troubled by his deed. It was common knowledge that even barbarian tribes would not betray those with whom they shared one meal. That is why the Lord used this as the sign that would indicate the traitor. It would be the one who would receive the bread after the Lord Himself had dipped it. He gave Judas to eat of the same food He ate; yet in spite of that, he betrayed the One who offered him food.

* Even the manner by which the Lord reproached Judas should have embarrassed him. The respect for sharing and eating bread did not embarrass him; yet could he not have become overpowered when he received the bread from the hand of the Lord? Yet even this did not overpower Him¹!

St John Chrysostom

* What he received was good, but he received it to his disadvantage since he received that which is good while harboring a wicked spirit².

* The focus is not on what is given but on the person who receives the gift. The nature of that person is greatly important rather than the nature of the object offered. This is because even good things could be harmful; while evil matters could result in good things. It depends on the person who receives and handles an object . . . why was the bread given to the traitor? It could be for no other purpose but to serve as a witness to a blessing received by an ungrateful person³.

St Augustine

**Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him.
Then Jesus said to him,
"What you do, do quickly." (27).**

The devil had entered into Judas because he had surrendered completely to the evil one. Judas became even more servile and a son of the destroyer as he never stopped to think of repenting and refraining from the plan against His Master. St. Paul speaks about the devil and says that 'he works in the sons of disobedience' (Eph 2:2), and that often he works more powerfully and clearly when a person submits totally to his evil authority.

¹ Homilies on St John, 72:2

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 61:6

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 61:1

After the Lord had given Judas the piece of bread, the devil entered into him. If we consider the bread as a symbol of the Lord's tenderness and blessings, then someone who belittles and abuses His gifts sins against God and opens up the door for Satan. That evil one is therefore able to enter and take control.

The Lord's words; "**what you do, do quickly**" [27] is not intended as advice but as permission from the Lord that Judas accomplish his plan. The Lord disrobes him of all blessings because he was resolved to surrender to treachery and evil. It is as though the Lord was telling him: 'You insist on betraying Me and are not willing to open the door to repentance or to return into my embrace. Therefore go and do what you want. As for Me, I do not fear death and indeed I am prepared for it'.

Judas had already laid a plan with the wicked ones. They had agreed on a precise time and place. The hour for the execution of that plan was drawing near. Judas probably did not know how to excuse himself and leave. Therefore the Lord provided his heart's desire and need to leave. We hear the Psalmist say: "The Lord grants you the desire of your heart". Through the Holy Spirit, we need to search our hearts in order to receive what we desire: Is there the desire to see God and have fellowship with Him; or is there a love to be evil and practice it?

The Lord probably told him to hurry and leave before his case would be revealed to the disciples. They would have consequently humiliated him.

Some may wonder: Judas had already planned and agreed with the chief priests and Pharisees to deliver the Lord, therefore why does this passage report that: "**. . . after the piece of bread, Satan entered him**"? Satan had shot one of his fiery arrows at the heart of Judas and discovered an inner response. This opened the doors of his heart and gave access to Satan to enter and reign as king! In the same way, we give access to Satan every time we submit to any evil thoughts and behavior. We would actually be paving the way to a greater evil.

- * The Lord perceived the one who had entered as well as the one who had received him. He also knew of the whole plan against Him and so focused on the fight. He intended to overcome the wicked one in order to save mankind. Therefore He said: "**What you do, do quickly**" [27]¹.

Origen the Scholar

- * St John the disciple speaks about Judas and says "Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him". He is astonished at the traitor's incredible foolishness. The Lord spoke in order to comfort His disciples. He did not wish them to be terrified or filled with sudden dreadful thoughts as this would have added to their anxiety².

¹ Commentary on St John, Book 32:299

² Homilies on St John 72:4

- * As long as Judas remained in the company of the disciples, Satan could not attack him and just played with his mind. However, when the Lord revealed his act and dismissed him from His company, Satan fearlessly jumped into his heart¹.
- * **". . . do quickly"** does not sound like an order or an advice. Indeed, it sounds more like a reprimand coming from One who opens the door for a person's reform. However, when it appeared that there was no way for correction, the Lord permitted him to go his way².

St John Chrysostom

- * After receiving the piece of bread, Satan entered into the Lord's traitor. Judas had submitted to the devil's authority and allowed him full reign over his heart so that he led him to sin.

We do not assume that Satan was not within him earlier and at the time when Judas met with the Jewish leaders. At that time he made the deal concerning the price for betraying the Lord. St. Luke the Evangelist reports clearly: "Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them" (Lk. 22:3-4) . . . **Satan first came in when he planted the idea of betraying Jesus in his heart. Judas was in that spirit when he arrived for supper. Then, and after Judas had received the bread, Satan entered, not to tempt someone who was another's follower, but to claim and rule the one who had become his own**³.

- * Some readers, other than scholars, think that Jesus received the Body of Christ since the Lord had offered to all the disciples present the mystery of His Body and Blood. Judas was there in the room according to Luke's narration in chapter 22:19-22. However, according to St. John, the moment comes when the Lord reveals His traitor by dipping the Bread and offering it to Judas. Probably this was intended to silence other false claims. Indeed, dipping something does not always indicate washing it for it could be done to prevent altering its color. If taken in a positive sense the act of dipping implies ingratitude for receiving something good and therefore deserved to be condemned⁴.
- * **". . . do quickly"**[27], not because you personally possess authority, but because the Lords wants you to do so. He is the Almighty One⁵.

St. Augustine

But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to Him [28]

¹ Homilies on St John 72:2

² Hom 72 PG 59:424

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 62:2

⁴ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 62:3

⁵ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 62:4

Truly, the Lord knows our inner depths more than we do ourselves. Just as He knows the most wicked-such as Judas-He also knows the weakness of saints such as St. Peter the apostle.

- * The Lord did not bring Judas' act out into the light. He knew that, if the disciples would get to know, they would have isolated him. Probably Peter would have killed him. This explains why the Lord did not inform any of those reclining at the table, not even St. John the Baptist . . . the Lord did not want to speak badly of Judas for the rest of the days they would spend together. It is our duty to do the same: we should not reveal the sins of others to those around us; even if they are in the same condition as that one who had gone beyond recovery and when there is no hope in healing him.

St John Chrysostom

**For some thought, because Judas had the money box,
That Jesus had said to him: "Buy those things we need for the feast",
Or that he should give something to the poor" [29]**

The disciples thought that the Lord had asked Judas to "Buy those things we need for the feast" [29]. It is clear that these events occurred the night before the Passover. The disciples knew there would be no selling or buying on Passover Day. Probably, they thought Judas had to go and buy a lamb to offer it on the day of the Passover which was on the following day.

It is clear that no one heard what the Lord whispered in St. John's ear. That is why no one had any reason to suspect Judas. They believed he was doing charitable deeds during the feast. The Lord actually lived like a poor man, yet he put out of the little He had, into the money box. It was as though He obligated everyone, however poor, to donate to others.

- * If someone were to ask: why did Judas carry a money box whereas the Lord had said: "Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor tunics, nor sandals, or staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food" (Matt 10:9, 10). Our answer would be: Judas carried a money box which was used to serve the poor.

St John Chrysostom

Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night [30].

Judas left the house in Bethany and hurried to Jerusalem which was a couple of miles away. He hurried to accomplish his plan at night when his heart was in a state of darkness. In the middle of a cold and dark atmosphere, Judas left so that no one would see him as he did his evil deed which was worse than the dark night.

- * We would like to ask St. John the Evangelist: ‘Why did you mention the exact time?!’ We know that his answer would be: So that you realize the cruelty of his heart since even the time of day did not prevent him from going ahead with his crime¹.

St John Chrysostom

- * He actually ‘**went out**’, not only from the house where the supper was held, but in simple terms, he went away from the Lord Jesus Christ in a final sense. We believe that Judas could not bear to be in the same place as Jesus after having taken the piece of bread and after Satan had entered into him. Indeed, there can be no harmony between Beelzebub (Belial/Satan) and the Lord (2 Cor 6:15)².

- * For the other disciples, (the piece of bread) was intended for their salvation. As for Judas, it condemned him (1Cor 11:27-29), for Satan entered him after he had received the bread . . . as we have said, this was symbolic. The bread, which nourishes fully and in a physical manner, increases the pain of the fever. At the same time it supplies health and energy for a person³.

- * It is appropriate that we understand the symbolic significance of the night in these circumstances. It represents the night that settled upon the spirit of Judas when Satan entered into him. It is the darkness that covered the depths of the world (Gen 1:2) and the darkness God called Night (Gen 1:5) St. Paul speaks about the night and says that we are not children of the night or of darkness, "But you, brethren, are not in darkness. . . we are not of the night nor of darkness", (1Thes 5:4-5). Therefore let us not sleep, we who are of the light, (1Thes 5:5)⁴.

Origen the Scholar

- * The light speaks with the light. In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ spoke with His loyal disciples so that they would obey and love Him as His followers. The night too appeared to recognize the night (Ps 19:2) in the sense that Judas communicated with the unbelieving Jews who plotted to persecute and take the Lord Jesus Christ as a prisoner⁵.

St. Augustine

3. The Glory of the Son of Man

**So when he had gone out, Jesus said:
"Now the Son of Man is glorified,
And God is glorified in Him" [31]**

Until that point, it was hard for the disciples to comprehend what was taking place around them. They were unable to understand what the Lord's words meant concerning

¹ Homilies on St John 72:3

² Commentary on St John, Book 32:301-302

³ Commentary on St John, Book 32:309-310

⁴ Commentary on St John, Book 32:313

⁵ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 62:6

His crucifixion, death, and resurrection. However, they sensed some kind of anxiety as events seemed to take an obscure turn.

In the middle of such anxiety, the evangelist announces the exit of Judas who is on His way to betray the Lord. However, the Son of Man would be glorified and God would be glorified too . . . how?

First: When the corrupt element left and went away from the center of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, who grants righteousness, became glorified. It was impossible for corruption to remain permanently within the Church. Corruption condemned itself by withdrawing from the Lord's real Church.

Second: When Judas left, the opportunity came for the pure disciples to listen to the Lord's long farewell talks. He spoke to comfort them not only as they were about to go through the events of the Cross; but also to offer divine comfort to the Holy Church through out the ages and until He would appear on the clouds. As that corrupt one, intent on corruption, went out, the opportunity was there for the disciples to witness the great and heavenly Chief Priest as He spoke to the Father. He spoke about the mystery of the divine glory and about granting support to the Church so that she might enjoy fellowship in His glory

Third: The Son of Man was glorified because the Father had chosen Him to be the Savior of mankind. The moment had come when His glory would be all the more greatly fulfilled as the people who were to arrest Him started to move. These would deliver Him to be judged and delivered to die on the Cross. This is the glory of His sublime and divine love.

The Lord assures the disciples that the upcoming events would be extremely joyful. It was impossible to separate the role of the Father from that of the Son in achieving the salvation of the world. It is the Father's love that has offered the Cross for us (3:16; Romans 5:8). It is the Father who, through and with the Lord Jesus Christ, became reconciled with the world (2Cor 5:19). It is the Father who has blessed us through the Lord when He chose us long before He laid the foundation of the world (Eph 1:3-4).

- * By speaking to them, the Lord lifted up their thoughts after they had plunged into anxiety. He succeeded in making them rejoice, besides helping them come out of their depression.
- * These matters have been recorded to enable us to forgive and not hate those who beat us. We need to reprimand them as well as pray for them. Weeping over sinners is more appropriate than weeping over those in pain. A greedy person, who accuses others falsely and commits evil, brings upon himself a greater evil. At the same time, he causes us to receive greater benefits if we do not avenge ourselves. For instance, if a person steals something from you, do you thank and glorify God for that? By giving

thanks you would receive hundreds of rewards, whereas the thief would have brought on himself an inexpressible fire¹.

St John Chrysostom

* That is why the Lord says: "**Now, the Son of Man is glorified**" [31]. That was the moment when the plan (the suffering) began and it ended by the death of the Lord. . . it all began at the moment when Judas left the room. After receiving the piece of bread, he left to accomplish his act against the Lord. It would have been impossible for Christ to be glorified if the Father were not glorified in Him. Therefore the Lord says: "**God is glorified in Him.**"²

* Glory was fulfilled as a result of the death of the 'Son of Man' on behalf of mankind. His death was an intrinsic part of His humanity and this is completely unrelated in any manner to the Word and only Son whose naturally never dies. Neither was the Lord's death related to Wisdom and Truth, nor to any other designation used to indicate the Lord's divine attributes. Indeed, death was a physical characteristic of mankind, and the Lord was the 'Son of Man' who was born from the line of David according to the flesh (Rom 1:3)³.

Origen the Scholar

*What did the Day say when the Night left?

What did Lord say when the seller left?

"Now the Son of Man is glorified" (31)

The Lord spoke these words to reveal that the time for His ultimate humiliation was getting close. The bonds, the judgment, the ridicule, the crucifixion, and death were about to occur.

Is that glorification or humiliation?

When the Lord worked miracles, did not St John comment, 'for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified' (Jn 7:39)?

When the Lord raised the dead, He had not yet been glorified. So would the Father be glorified while He drew personally closer to death?

He was not glorified when He did works that only God could do; so would He be glorified as He walked on the path of suffering as a human being?

"Now the Son of Man is glorified" [31]: the Lord said these words to indicate the total withdrawal of the chief of sinners (Judas) from his friends. The ones who

¹ Homilies on St John 71: 3

² Commentary on John, Book 32:321

³ Commentary on John, Book 32:322

remained with the Lord were His saints. **We are the shadow of His glory which will be fulfilled when the wicked will be separated completely. Then the Lord Jesus Christ will abide with His saints in eternity¹.**

* "**Now the Son of Man is glorified**" [31]: the word '**now**' probably does not refer to the sufferings that the Lord was about to face. Rather, it could be a reference to the events that would follow immediately after His resurrection, and as though these have taken place already².

St. Augustine

**If God is glorified in Him,
God will also glorify Him in Himself,
And glorify Him immediately" (32)**

The Lord was glorified promptly and at the moment of His arrest, for all those present drew back at His words. They were unable to arrest Him except when He delivered Himself to them (Jn 18:6). The Father glorified the Lord in His sufferings, and crucifixion when nature herself witnessed that He is the Son of God. As a result, the centurion declared his belief, as well as the thief who was attracted by the love of the crucified.

The greater issue is that the Son of Man was glorified though His death on behalf of mankind. This glory proclaimed the love of the Father who sacrificed His only Son for the sake of the world. Just as the Father was glorified through the death of His Son, so the Father proclaimed the glory of the Son through his resurrection from the dead. Consequently, the Son was glorified in Himself as the One who possesses power and authority. This glory was quickly fulfilled through His resurrection. We will see the fullness of His glory when we meet him face to face. This will also be fulfilled very soon when the great day of the Lord will come.

The glory of the Lord had appeared in the tabernacle, and Moses was unable to enter in due to the cloud which covered it (Ex 40: 34-35). Besides, when the priests came out of the temple they could not go in to continue their service because the glory of God filled the holy house of the Lord (1Kings 8:10-11). Again, when Moses came down the mountain carrying the two tablets of the commandments, he did not know that his face was shining with glory. Therefore Aaron and all the children of Israel were unable to come close to him (Ex 34:29-30). At the Transfiguration the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ was reflected on His clothes which became as white as the light (Lk 9:29-31).

In the Old Testament, the glory of God appeared in the clouds and on the face of Moses. In the New Testament, the glory of God appeared during the ministry of the Lord at His transfiguration. At that event, the brilliance of His face was revealed and He shone as the sun. This glory was reflected on His clothes. On the Cross, the glory of the Father and of the Son was mutually recognized. This has led **Origen the Scholar** to consider

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 63:2

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 63:3

that the glory mentioned in this passage implies 'knowledge' which only the Father and the son know, as well as those to whom the son wishes "to reveal Him" (Matt 11:27). This knowledge is not achieved through 'flesh and blood' but by (the) Father who is in heaven (Matt 16:17).

In these words the Lord Jesus Christ presents four important facts:

1. The Son of Man is glorified through the Cross as He becomes the conqueror over the powers of evil as well as the fulfillment of the divine plan for mankind.
 2. The Father is glorified through the Cross by proclaiming His divine love towards mankind.
 3. The Father glorifies His Son through the Resurrection and Ascension of the Son into the heavens while carrying the Church within Him.
 4. The time had come to fulfill the fullness of His glory promptly and without delay.
- * What does **"God will glorify Him in Himself"** convey? It indicates that God Himself will glorify the Lord and not by using any other medium. . . . **"And glorify Him immediately"** that is through His crucifixion. This occurred when the veil of the temple got split into two, from top to bottom, and there was an earthquake. The rocks cracked, the graves were opened, and many of the saints who were asleep were awakened (Matt 27:51, 52), this is what is conveyed by these words: **"God will glorify Him in Himself"**. The Lord intended to explain that it would not be long; there was no need to wait for the Resurrection, nor to show His radiance. Rather, His glory would be revealed quickly on the Cross where His glory would appear¹.

St John Chrysostom

**"Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer,
You will seek Me: and as I said to the Jews,
Where I am going, you cannot come,
So now I say to you" [33].**

"My children" or **'My little children'** or 'beloved ones'- 'Teknia' expresses great tenderness and feelings. These are similar to a mother's tenderness towards her infant whom she loves greatly.

Now Judas had left and the Lord spoke with great tenderness towards His disciples who were like beloved sons to Him.

The short period indicated in this passage could have been a couple of hours at the most. After that, the disciples were scattered, leaving the Lord Jesus Christ alone throughout His judgment. They could not go into the place where His trial was held. The Cross signified the isolation of the Lord from His enemies as well as from His loved ones. No one could accompany Him on that path and Isaiah heard Him say: "I have trodden the winepress alone" (Is. 63:3). Judas forsook the Lord, and all the wicked ones who were intent on their wickedness went with him. They would come to see the marks

¹ Hom 72. PG 59:425

of the Cross when He will meet them again. Then they will ask the mountains to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them up from the face of the One who sits on the throne. On the way to the Cross, His loved ones forsook Him too for no one other than Him could participate in the sacrifice on the Cross. However, they would be crucified after He has risen so they would be glorified with Him too. They would find His suffering to be glorious and honorable; therefore they would consider that their sufferings are a blessing they do not deserve. Moreover, His loved ones know that sufferings are a means of being in the eternal and joyful presence of the Crucified conqueror.

* The Lord Jesus said these words to the Jews as well as to His disciples. It brought terror in the hearts of the Jews, whereas it awakened the flame of anticipation in the hearts of the disciples.

* ". . . **now I say to you**" [33] . . . when the disciples will run away, and when the Jews suffer beyond description during the siege of their city, and when the wrath of God afflicts them from every side; then the Lord addresses the Jews concerning their lack of faith. As for you, the Lord warns you so that no unexpected trouble would afflict you¹.

St John Chrysostom

* Do not be disturbed by those who say that the Jesus Christ the Savior is the Father of specific person. Indeed, the Lord told the paralyzed man: "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" (Matt 9: 2). He told the woman who was bleeding. . . "Daughter your faith has made you well" (Matt 9:22). Now, the Lord calls the disciples: "**little children**" and we believe that the intention was to underline clearly their humility. We need to learn humility from the disciples who possessed this feature up to that time².

* It is necessary to understand that it is not impossible for someone to change from being a child of the Lord into being his brother. On a human level, the son cannot later become a brother to the person to whom he was previously a son.

* After the Lord's resurrection, those He has called "little children" became His brothers . . . they were as though they have been transformed by the Lord resurrection. This explains the Lord's words when He said: "go to My brethren and say to them . . ." (Jn. 20:17).

In the same manner, it is probably possible to change from being a servant of God. The disciples were servants before they could become 'little children'. The following words explain this point: 'you call me teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am (Jn. 13:13). The following words explain that idea: "a servant is not greater than his master" (Jn13:16) these sayings were expressed before the words '**little children, I shall be with you**'.

¹ Homilies on St John 72:4

² Commentary on John, Book 32:368

Note that a servant first becomes a disciples and then changes into a young child. Next, he changes into being the Lord's brother and finally becomes a son of God¹.

Orgen the Scholar

They were going to seek Him. However, He would spend three days and nights in the heart of the earth (Matt 12:40) when His souls leaves to go to Paradise. The Lord spoke about that when He said: ". . . today you will be with Me in Paradise"(Lk 23:43). There He would carry those who had died with hope and bring them from Hades into Paradise. Nevertheless, the disciples could not accompany Him to His Paradise. At that moment in time they were unable to follow Him.

* The Lord did not want His disciples to think that, being glorified by the Father, he would be unable to have any earthly relationship with them. Therefore He said: **"little children, I shall be with you a little while longer"** [33]. It is as though He was telling them: it is true that I will be glorified through My resurrection. However, I will not ascend immediately into heaven. Rather, "I will be with you a little while longer". Accordingly, we read in the book of the Acts of the Apostles that the Lord spent forty days with them after His Resurrection. During these days, He came, went away, and returned, and stayed in their company, and He ate and drank with them (Acts 1:3) . . . nevertheless, He would no longer share their human weaknesses².

St Augustine

St. Augustine perceives that this short while which the Lord indicated actually applied to the period between His last conversation with them to the time of His crucifixion, death, and resurrection. After that the disciples would seek Him but would be unable to go to Him. During this short while, the Lord would be sharing their human weaknesses. After that He would no longer share these features with them. An alternative explanation could be that the Lord was referring to the forty days between His resurrection and ascension. In that period, He would be with them but would not share the feature of human weakness with them as He would no longer be subject to death. He would then and would no longer be physically present with them³.

4. Brotherly love:

**“A new commandment I give to you,
That you love one another.
As I have loved you,
That you also love one another”.** [34]

Even though Judas, who was so ungrateful, was one of the disciples, yet not everyone was like him. The others were loyal, and the reciprocal love they shared indicated their discipleship. This was an old commandment (1Jn 2:7), yet it was renewed by the Lord Jesus Christ as He gave it greater depths and potentials to apply it. The commandment

¹ Commentary on John, Book 32:368-374

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 64:1

³ cf. St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 64:2-3

was extended to embrace lovingly every person: even enemies and opponents. The ultimate aim is to redeem every soul. There are two Greek words used in the Holy Bible for the word 'new': one means recent, the one used here embodies a desire to flourish and refresh. The old commandment occurs in (Lev. 19:18). However, the Cross offers it to us with a deeper meaning. Here it gains a refreshing concept due to the potential of applying it in a new light.

The commandment to love is a wonderful song which fills the Church with joy and gladness. It is a new command which will always remain new. All will practice it even the heavenly ones. It does not get old or obsolete (Heb 8:13). **Tertullian the scholar** informs us that the pagan speak about Christians and say: 'Look, how they love one another!' **Minucius Felix** reports that the pagan Caecilius says about Christians: 'they love each other even before they get to know one another'. This is a testimony from pagans who resist and attack Christians. **Lucian of Samosata** who never said a good word about Christians, attacked them for being foolish. He said that since they loved one another, it is possible for any pagan to exploit this love and gather from them great wealth.

The Evangelist points to two new topics: the new commandment here and the new tomb where the Lord would be buried (Jn.19:21). By accepting this commandment into our depths, our inner being is transformed into the Lord's tomb. It is a new tomb where the Lord will rest in the company of His angels. Our inner depths will bear witness to His glorious resurrection, and in this manner the new commandment transforms our tomb into a new heaven!

* It is as though the Lord was telling them: you have become anxious because I'm leaving you. However, if you love one another you will be the most powerful¹.

St John Chrysostom

* This is a new commandment since the Lord has stripped away the old and has dressed us with the new human being.

Actually, there is no love that has the power to renew those who submit or obey it. Here the Lord is speaking about a love that is distinctly different from physical emotions as He goes on to say: ". . . as **I have loved you**" [24].

Our Lord has given us a new commandment and that is that we love one another as He has loved us. That is the love that will renew us and transform us into new beings and into heirs of the new promise and testament. Hence we will praise Him with a new song of praise².

¹ Homilies on St John 72:4

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 65:1

* Let us love one another with great concern to win each other and to have the Lord live within us. This love is granted through Him . . . for He has loved us with this goal: that we might love one another. By loving us, He has granted us the power of brotherly love. Consequently we join together in loving fellowship and unite as members joined by the ties of joy. As a result, we become one body to the Almighty Head¹.

* The Lord seems to be telling us: ‘There are other blessings that those who do not belong to Me share with you. They share nature, life, sensations, reasoning, and security. I grant these as blessings to men and beasts. Besides, I grant all the gifts of language, mysteries, prophecies, knowledge, shelter, faith, generosity, as well as freedom to deliver their bodies even to fire. However, because they lack love, they become as sounding brass; as nothing, they are become good for nothing, (1 Cor 13:1-3)².

St. Augustine

**“By this shall all men know that you are My disciples,
If you have love for one another.” [35]**

Sin leads the soul to slip into the path of darkness and death. Conversely the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the word Incarnated leads to resurrection from the grave. He offers divine knowledge and achieves divine wonders. Consequently, through faith the soul adheres to path of righteousness and truth. She shakes away all that is shameful and **expands as it is filled with love to God, to His heavenly hosts, as well as towards all his earthly creatures.**

With such a heart, a person is enabled to walk in the narrow path while carrying a big heart. In contrast, a sinful heart leads its owner into a wide path yet characterized by a restricted heart. The psalmist says: **"I will run in the way of your commandments, for you will enlarge my heart" (Ps. 119:32).**

* If you wondered: 'what was the Lord's purpose when He said these words?' Our answer would be: ‘This love is grater than all other virtues. It transforms people into saints because it is the basis of all virtue’.

If you asked: ‘What do you think: Do miracles help to reveal this love in a more appropriate and devoted manner?’ Our answer would be: ‘It does not reveal it any way’. The Lord Himself said: "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name?' And then I will declare to them, ' I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"(Matt 7:2223).

Besides, when the disciples were glad that the devils obeyed them, the Lord told them: 'Nevertheless do not rejoice in this. That the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven', (Lk10:20). If the making of the

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 65:2

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 65:3

miracles would lead the world into the faith, then love was present even before that. If love does not exist, then the effect of miracles would be short-lived¹.

* How great is love! It is more powerful than fire. It reaches to the highest heavens and nothing can hinder it².

St John Chrysostom

* It is good to extend and enlarge our hearts as much as possible. This would be a safeguard against limitations such as cowardice or destructive and angry energy. Such limitations would disable us from receiving what the prophet calls '**the large road**' of God's commandments into our limited hearts. Moreover, we would be unable to join the prophet and say: "**I will run in the way of your commandments, for you will enlarge my heart.**"³

Fr. Youssef

* I would be unable to run in the path of your commandments if you do not enlarge my heart. . . can you do that on your own? . . . The answer is "no I cannot". It cannot be done with my own will, and as though I did not need Your help; yet I can because You have enlarged my heart.

An enlarged heart is filled with joy which we have received as we walk uprightly. It is a gift from God which leads us not to resent His commands. We obey not due to fear of penalty. Indeed, the heart opens up through love and joy which we have found in righteousness.

St Augustine

* The road to life is narrow and difficult (Matt 7:14). However, the heart that walks uprightly, that is in the path of the Lord's commands, is opened up and welcomes the divine word. Being sanctified, the heart sees God. In contrast, the wide road leads to destruction. (Matt7:13). The heart that walks on that road is narrow and refuses to set up a house for the Father and Son within (Jn.14:23). Through ignorance, such a heart disregards God and restricts itself due to its own cruelty.

Let us meditate on Solomon's teachings. He tells us how to record the divine word on the tablets of our hearts (Prov. 3:4; 7:3; 22:20) He proclaims "Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice. . . (Prov. 1:20) "Outside" refers to the hearts which God intends to enlarge, and not to the streets. .

Origen the Scholar

* The path of the Lord's commandments is narrow. However, the heart of the one walking on that path is opened up and enlarged. This is because the Father, Son and Holy Spirit live within. Therefore that person walks on swiftly and with a big heart . .

¹ Homilies on St John 72:4

² Homilies on St John 73:1

³ St Cassian: Conferences, 16:27

. whereas the road taken by evil doers is wide and their hearts are restricted for there is no place for God within them.

Anthimus, Bishop of Jerusalem

5. Warning to Peter and Denial of the Lord:

**Peter said to Him,
"Where are you going?"
Jesus answered him,
"Where I am going you cannot follow Me now,
But you shall follow Me afterward". [36]**

The Lord had told His disciples previously that they could not go where He was going [33]. In spite of that, Peter dared to ask: "Lord where are you going?" His curiosity led him into a discussion that was not needed as it ended by a confirmation that he would deny His Master three times. This was something Peter could not accept logically. It would have been appropriate for him to accept the Lord's words and to meditate on the commandment of love rather than to inquire about matters outside his scope.

In spite of Peter's impulsive question, the Lord candidly responded with enough information to support him on the road of suffering: he would eventually die with Him, drink of the cup with Him. Yet this would happen later on and then would attain the blessing of joining the Lord. The Lord did not give Peter the answer he wanted. Peter wanted to know the place to which the Lord was going. Peter had accompanied the Lord everywhere and he did not imagine he could be separated from Him. Maybe Peter thought that the Lord was getting some temporal glory or earthly status. However, the Lord revealed to him where he could not accompany His Lord to heaven. Peter had not yet accomplished his earthly task, nor was he mature enough to be raised with the Lord into eternal glory.

* Great love is stronger than fire itself. It lifts us to the heavens. There is no obstacle to hinder its great progression. Peter, the apostle, was so aroused with anticipation when he heard the Lord's words: '**where I am going you cannot come. . .**' (33), and he asks "**Lord, where are you going?**" He said that to reveal his state of mind and emotions, as he was anxious to follow the Lord, and so was not just seeking for just more information. This explains his hasty response 'I will lay down my life for You'.

St John Chrysostom

* The Lord announced that the possibility of following Him had to be postponed. Yet He did not lead Peter to lose hope. On the contrary, He granted him that hope by saying: ". . . **but you shall follow Me afterward**" [36] why are you so impulsive, Peter? The Rock had not yet blessed Him with steadfastness that proceeds from His Holy Spirit. Do not lift yourself up to the heights for "**you cannot . . now**": **and do not fall into despair for "you shall follow Me afterward"**¹.

St Augustine

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 66:1

**Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now?
I will lay down my life for your sake." [37]**

Probably Peter thought the Lord was going on a long difficult journey and He could find no reason that could prevent him from accompanying the Lord. He was ready to accompany Him even it entailed death. Poor Peter did not know his own weakness and his inability to follow the Lord without the divine grace. He did not realize that without the Lord Jesus Christ he could do nothing, (Jn. 15:5).

* When Peter heard the words of the Lord, ". . . **but you shall follow Me afterward**", he could not restrain his strong desire and impulsively asked, "**Lord why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for your sake!**" We ask Peter the apostle: 'What are you saying Peter? The Lord told you; you cannot follow Me now'. Do you ask: 'Why can I not follow You?' With experience, you will learn that your love means nothing if it is not accompanied by help from above.

St John Chrysostom

* This trial is a lesson that teaches us not to belittle the weakness of the flesh lest we get tried¹.

St. Ambrose

* In his mind, he had the desire; however he did not comprehend the measure of his strength.

The weak boasted in his persistence, but the Healer eyed his health. The one promised while the other had foreknowledge. The ignorant was bold, but the all-knowing humbled Himself to be a teacher.

What a great promise Peter made! He only considered his yearning without taking into account his potentials².

St Augustine

**Jesus answered him:
"Will you lay down your life for My sake?
Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow
Till you have denied Me three times". [38]**

* Note the great fall of Peter the apostle! He could have been guilty on or two counts; yet in a short period, he uttered a denial that resulted in three counts of guilt.

St John Chrysostom

* O you who take pride in your ability to die on My behalf, first learn to live and look after yourself. By fearing the death of your body, you open up the possibility of the death

¹ On the Decease of His Brother Saytrus, Book 2:28

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 66;1

of your soul. Acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ is life giving, while denying Him is death¹.

* He who denies the Lord incarnate cannot be reconciled with God through the mediator; for there is only one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (1Tim 2:5).

* Anyone who denies that the Lord Jesus Christ is also Man cannot be redeemed, 'for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners. So also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous, (Rom 5:19). Any one who denies the Lord incarnate cannot be part of the resurrected life. Just as through one man death has entered, so through one Man has come the resurrection of the dead. "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead" (1Cor 15:21-22)².

St Augustine

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 66:1

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 66:2

Chapter 13

Allow Me to be daring and wash My Brother's Feet!

* Greed opened the heart of Judas so Satan could sow his seeds.
He put his hand out to steal more than once so the enemy entered into him.
When he became intent on betraying His Master, the enemy held sway over his heart.
He entered in as one vested with authority and as master of the house!
He found a dark kingdom ready to receive the head of the realm.

* You have chosen him to be a disciple and entrusted him with the money box.
You granted him to work miracles just as the other disciples...
In your tenderness, you concealed his name and did not humiliate him publicly.
Hoping he would retreat from his evil,
Furthermore, you bowed down to wash his feet.
You dipped the Bread in the plate and offered to feed him out of Your hand,
And no one suspected him!

* Humbly, you carried out the task of slaves.
You removed your outer cloths, and tied your waist with a towel
You were not embarrassed to fill the basin with water
And You were not ashamed to wash your disciples' feet.
You began to wash their soiled feet with water
In order to wash our hearts and consciences with Your holy blood.
Who dares to take your place, O You who have washed the feet of mankind!

* May I be bold and share your love.
In your tenderness, allow me to receive this honor
Allow me to gladly wash the feet of my fellowmen who have wronged me!
My heart lovingly washes each deed that seems evil.
With your Holy Spirit, my heart expands to embrace everyone in it
My heart grooms as it yearns to see all feet pure and sanctified.

* Purify me wholly with water and the fiery Spirit in the baptismal waters
When will I see the whole world pure and sanctified in You?
May Your hand wash me from every daily corruption!
May You wash, O Lord, all the feet of Your believers.

* Judas went out at night with a darkened heart to accomplish deeds of darkness.
The disciples remained with you, O True Light
They had true love, for they followed Your example
For darkness cannot invade a heart that is occupied by love.

* Peter yearned to follow You wherever You would go
The poor man failed to realize his weak potentials!
He imagined he could lay down his life on Your behalf
He could not comprehend that he could not make an offering before you had offered
Yourself first on his behalf ...
You clearly revealed his weakness to him
And you filled his heart with amazing hope.
You announced to him that he would ultimately follow You
When he too would be crucified with You for the rest of his life
And when he would die as a martyr for the sake of Your Holy Name!

* You know me, O my Redeemer, more than I know myself!
You are my support,
Fulfilling all the desires of my heart!
May Your hand wash my heart daily, O Lord,
So that Satan's traps would fail to catch me
And the enemy would fail to reign in my heart.
Your Words spread rays of light over me...
Therefore the kingdom of darkness will fail to creep within me.

Amen

+++

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE OTHER COMFORTER

The Lord delivered three farewell talks. St. John the Evangelist provides a record of these in chapters 14-16.

The heavenly Shepherd talks with the remaining few that represent His weak flock. The storm is about to strike in all its power; and Satan, the savage wolf, believes he will surely destroy the Shepherd with his sheep. As for the Shepherd, while He is fulfilling the Divine plan, reassures His flock. He asks them not to be troubled and tells them that it is more appropriate for them to comprehend the mystery of Divine love:

Concerning the Father, the Lord states that the Father has many mansions that are big enough to receive everyone. At the same time, He finds pleasure to come with His Son and abide within the depths of each believer.

Concerning the Son, the Lord states that the storm blowing against Him is just the path that has been prepared to carry His flock through the Cross and onto the Throne. There, they would enjoy the fellowship of His glory. In these talks, we hear the Father speaking with His young children. Even though He would be separated from them physically, He will send His Holy Spirit to comfort them. They would not be left as orphans. Indeed, the Holy Spirit will lead them into the heavens where the risen Lord Jesus has ascended!

Concerning the Holy Spirit: The Lord indicates that the Holy Spirit is the other Comforter who will lead the flock to the full Truth, who is the Lord Himself. The Holy Spirit will grant them the power to witness before the whole world: He will judge the world for not believing, and consequently attract unbelievers to believe through the preaching of the disciples. The world will be judged for righteousness as men will come to know that no one can be righteous except through the righteousness of the Crucified Lord. It will also be condemned when Satan will be destroyed and condemned.

These farewell talks continue to constitute the mysterious power of the Church. She finds in them the mystery of salvation which preoccupies the Holy Trinity. This will be the main concern until the salvation of mankind is wholly fulfilled and all come to enjoy what God has prepared.

Chapter 14 is an extension to the conversation which the Lord Jesus shared with His disciples after establishing the mystery of the Eucharist. He had just condemned the act of Judas and predicted Peter's act of denying the Lord three times. The Lord wanted to comfort and support the rest of the disciples since they were troubled and saddened to know that one of them would betray Him, and another would deny Him. In the previous chapters, we saw how the gathering of the disciples with the Lord was more like a conference characterized by open debate

Anxiety is often the result of fear of the unknown, or due to the expectation of a great loss that would affect the soul, body, or possessions. The cure for anxiety is to have faith. This lends insight to the soul that enables her to recognize her eternal resting place. She realizes that through God she is enabled to destroy obstacles. No power could stand in her way as she enjoys steadfastness in the Trinity of God who governs heaven and earth and all visible and invisible creatures.

1- Eternal Rest	verses: 1-3
2- Christ is the way of Rest	4-11
3- Prayer and Rest	12-14
4- The Other Comforter	15-17
5- The Lord's Appearance	18-24
6- The Comforter and Teacher	25-26
7- The Lord's Joy on Departing	27-31

1- Eternal Rest

St. John Chrysostom comments that the disciples were greatly disturbed especially after the Lord Jesus Christ had revealed to them what Peter would do. If that disciple, who was known for his fiery zeal, had always accompanied the Lord, and had proclaimed his desire to sacrifice his life for the Lord's sake, would deny his Master three times, then what hope could they have? That is why the Lord spoke to them these words: He sought to remove their anxiety and open before them the gates of hope and heavenly joy!

**“Let not your heart be troubled;
You believe in God, believe also in Me” [1]**

The Lord warns us against anxiety and confusion. He offers us faith as a practical cure against the pain of anxiety. Anxiety was evident in the look on the disciples' faces. ‘Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke,’ (John 13:22). The Lord not only saw this, but He also saw their hearts that were inwardly bleeding. Therefore He did not ignore their state as He was concerned about our inner peace. He is also concerned about our inner peace. Now, He opened the door of security and peace before them. This door opens up through believing in Him. They had to believe in Him as the Savior who would suffer and die for them. Consequently, He would grant them the power and joy of the resurrection, open the way to heaven, and grant them the right to pass over into the place of eternal rest.

The disciples had begun to lose the hope of establishing a kingdom on earth. Their dreams concerning the Lord began to disappear. As for the Lord, He raised their minds and sights to the eternal spiritual inheritance. He lifted their hearts to heaven so that they would yearn for the things prepared for them over there.

* Notice how the Lord Jesus Christ comforted them by saying: **“let not your heart be**

troubled". In these opening words He clarifies His divine power as He knew the thoughts that were going on in their minds. Consequently, He incorporated the answer into His words.

By saying: **"... you believe in God, believe also in Me"**, the Lord intends to say that 'all these difficulties will surely pass away since by having faith in Me and in My Father you become far more powerful than all the hardships that you will encounter. That faith will shield you from being conquered by any evil.

St. John Chrysostom

* The Lord constantly confirms this definition of the faith of the Church. It embraces the teaching that there is one God the Father. However, He is never separate from the mystery of the One God. The Father is neither another God nor is He different from the sole Almighty God.

Since the nature of the One God is found in the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is impossible to have a God that is different from Him...for God can neither be separate from the Lord Jesus Christ nor can He be merged in Him. This explains why the Lord spoke carefully and used well chosen words. What He proclaims to be a feature of the Father, indicates in humble terms that these apply to Him too. To illustrate this point, the Lord says: **"... hold steadfastly to faith in God, and believe in Me"**. He and God are equal in honor. We therefore ask: 'How can He be separated from His nature?' The Lord says: **"...believe also in Me"**. He also says: **"...believe in God"**. Do not the words **"in Me"** refer to His nature?¹

St. Hilary, Bishop of Boitier

* You fear death that is about to engulf the likeness of that slave; but **"...let not your heart be troubled"** [1]. Indeed, the likeness of God will raise Him up again².

St. Augustine

**"In My Father's house are many mansions;
If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."**[2]

The Lord Jesus Christ calls the heavens His 'Father's house' for He will return to His Father's house which is His own as well. There, He will prepare places and mansions for His followers. Therefore everyone will feel that he is returning to the house of his heavenly Father or to the home awaiting him/her. By saying **'many mansions'**, the Lord assures us that God has many children; and that the heavens are big enough to hold them all. In the Greek language, 'mansions' denotes permanent dwelling places or permanent residences.

Rather than a temporary kingdom, the Lord directs their sight to the kingdom of eternal glory. This is a huge kingdom that can embrace all mankind if they want; for **'... in My Father's house are many mansions (places)'** [2].

¹ On the Trinity 9:18

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 67:1

Even though the Lord was leaving them physically, He was doing that to bring them to glory: to **'prepare a place' [2]** for them. He was not leaving them to seek His personal comfort and glory. Indeed, His intention was to prepare for each one a specific place in His kingdom.

The Jews boasted that the temple was the house of God and it contained many rooms- (1 Kings 6:5; Ezra 8:29; Jeremiah 35:24; 36:10). However, the heavenly temple consists of many varied houses, so that every believer will find a place there that is ready for him.

'If it were not so, I would have told you': I am not offering you an invalid hope. I have promised you an eternal inheritance so that you would be in the same place where I am going. If there was no place for you, I would not have spoken these words to you.

* The Lord supported Peter who he was saddened by His words '... you shall follow Me afterward,' (13:36). In the same manner, the Lord offered to His disciples this glimmer of hope. So that they would not think He had made that promise to Peter only. He told them: **"In My Father's house are many mansions"**. He also said: **"I go to prepare a place for you"**. This reveals that the place which will receive Peter will receive them as well; for there is plenty of room in these mansions¹.

St. John Chrysostom

Jovinianus comments that these many places in our Father's house refer to the churches that are spread throughout the world. St. Jerome responds to that by saying that the Lord, in this passage, was referring not to the number of churches but rather to the heavenly houses and eternal residences.

* In spite of the variety of heavenly glory, yet everyone will enjoy being in one and the same place. The Lord has ascended there to prepare many mansions. Indeed, He will prepare one kingdom and all will have fellowship in it. Consequently all will feel content and satisfied, even though the glory of each star will differ from that of the others².

St. Jerome

* Is it possible for anyone not to be fearful? Peter who was the most confident and bold disciple was told: "...the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times," (John 13:38).

Beginning with Peter, they all felt doomed to destruction, therefore they became fearful. Then they heard the Lord's words: **"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you"**. This refreshed and pulled them out of their anxiety. Now they could walk confidently and be assured in the knowledge that, after overcoming the horrors of temptation, they would live with the Lord Jesus Christ and in the presence and embrace of God.

¹ Homilies on St John, 73:1

² Against Jovinianus, 2:28

Even though one person could be stronger than the other, or one more righteous than the other, yet **“...in My Father’s house are many mansions”**. **None of them would remain outside that house for everyone will receive a place according to his merits.**

All workers are similar with respect to the talents which the master of the house commanded to give out to all those who worked in the vineyard. There was no distinction between those who worked more and those who worked fewer hours, (Matt 20:9). This payment definitely refers to everlasting life where no one lives for a longer period than the rest. Indeed, there are no variant measurements or discrepancies in eternal life. Besides, the numerous dwelling places indicate the levels of entitlement in the one eternal life. We consider that the sun has a certain glory, the moon another, the stars have yet another. One star could possess a more distinct glory than the other. The same will apply at the time of the resurrection of the dead.

The saints are like the heavenly stars. They are granted various places and various degrees of brilliance. However, according to the talents we have referred to, no one is deprived of the kingdom. God will be the All in all, (1 Cor 15:41, 42); and in His own very special way, which is expressed by love: for God is love (1 John 4:8). Love will achieve this general condition- in a kingdom that will embrace everyone. This is how everyone can truly possess that (kingdom): **each one will desire to see in others what he does not possess... due to this wide variety of brilliance, all jealousy will disappear while the unity of love reigns over all**¹.

* May the Lord Jesus Christ go and prepare for us a place. May He leave and not be visible; and may He remain invisible so that we may practice faith. In this manner, He will prepare a place for us. Having faith in Him, we shall live. May we have the desire to believe in that place in order to attain the spot prepared for us. Yearning for love is the means of getting ready to attain that mansion. May you have ready, O Lord, what you are preparing. You are preparing us to receive You; while You are also getting Yourself ready for us. As much as You are preparing a place in us for You; You are also preparing a place in You for us. Accordingly, You have said: “...Abide in Me and I in you” (John 15:4). Just as each one has fellowship in You ...some to a lesser, others to a greater degree- so also will the various rewards be: each according to his different entitlement².

St. Augustine

St. Augustine wonders ‘how does the Lord Jesus Christ promise to go and prepare a place for us, whereas He simultaneously states that: “...in My Father’s house are many mansions”...which indicates that they have been actually prepared already?’ He comments on that by stating that these had been prepared in hindsight for our sake. Yet He would be literally fulfilling all that in a practical manner. In the Gospels, we read how the Lord chose His disciples and called them. However, the apostle reports that “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,” (Eph 1:4). In this manner, the

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 67:2

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 68: 3

disciples had been appointed before the foundation of the world, and according to His Divine plan. Moreover, He fulfilled it in a practical manner when He became incarnated and called the disciples and apostles to Him¹.

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also”. [3]

The departure of the Lord Jesus Christ from our world opened the way. By leaving our world, He prepares the place and grants us the right to pass through Him into the kingdom of eternal glory. He reminds His disciples of the old times when He led the nation to the place where they would find a home, (Numbers 10:33). Similarly, the Lord will go before His followers, and He will enable them to walk for three days, that is the journey of the resurrection and the victory over death. Ultimately, all will find places in heaven!

The Lord saw the religious leaders. They were greatly disturbed and desired to get rid of Him. Therefore they joined the crowds and shouted: “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Therefore He urged His disciples not to allow this confusion to touch their hearts. Whereas the world around the Lord was in turmoil and sought to get rid of Him, He willingly went out to open the door of glory even to His opponents. Truly, He seeks to redeem all mankind!

The words ‘...receive you to Myself’ in the Greek language denote great love, yearning, and attraction toward the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the work of the Holy Spirit who pours love into the heart. Consequently, it yearns to meet Him face to face and to be received into His embrace. There the heart will enjoy the warmth of the supreme power of the Lord’s love. The attraction to the Lord Jesus Christ, which we enjoy now, and our steadfastness in Him, is a warranty of what we will attain. Yet, it is impossible to make any comparison.

God the Word accepted to become Man and to live among us. He became a citizen of our world in order to carry us into His heavenly kingdom. He sought to grant us fellowship in His Divine nature so that we might be considered ‘members of the household of God’, (Eph 2:19). Therefore, our heart yearns to say with the apostle: ‘...for me, to live is Christ and to die is gain’, (Phil 1:23). We desire to follow Him wherever He goes’, (Rev 14:4). This is the prayer of the heavenly bridegroom for His bride: that she “...may be with Me where I am”, (John 17:24). In other words: that the bride might enjoy the heavenly feast.

* It is as though the Lord Jesus Christ was telling His disciples: ‘I have taken great pains to fulfill that’. He intended to underline that they had to trust, have faith, and yearn intensely to be with Him².

St. John Chrysostom

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 68:1

² Homilies on St John, 73:1

2- Christ is the Way of Rest

“And where I go you know and the way you know.” [4]

The Lord had told His disciples about the Cross, and He had offered to them His sacrificial Blood and Body. He considered that by then they knew where He was going; and the road He would take through the Cross. As a result, He would open the door for them to enter into the embrace of the heavenly Father.

The Lord offered them the blessed heavenly life. To comfort them in the midst of their pain, He indicated the path leading to that life. His words to the disciples conveyed the following: ‘...you have come to know the heavenly home, the home of your Father which is your resting place; and you have learned of the path that would lead you there. I have repeatedly spoken clearly to you about these things and you should have understood all these matters’.

* The Lord spoke these words as He knew they would seek to know this information later on. By telling them: “...**the way you know ...**”, He underlined the yearning in their minds!¹

St. John Chrysostom

* The Lord informs us that in our Father’s house there are many mansions, (John 14:2). In that context, the Lord defines the status of righteousness that every person achieves. Through the rejection of evil and its claim to be a healing prescription, we stay on the Lord’s path.

For example, a person who inherits certain talents early on in life, lives according to the truth, and follows the good path, could be equal to another person who has strived and progressed in the pursuit of truth and goodness.

Another person may develop through a desire for goodness. Another may steadfastly persevere in reaching a peak of virtue; while another may have surpassed him in achieving higher levels.

Some may surpass these, while others may struggle hard to progress.

God the Almighty receives every person coming to Him by his own free will. He ranks each according to his merits. Consequently, He grants rewards to persons who are of a nobler status, as well as to those who are less deserving².

St. Gregory of Nicea

Thomas said to Him:

¹ Homilies on St John, 73:2

² Song of Solomon: Fr Gregory, Bishop of Nicea. Translated into Arabic by Dr George Nawar: Sermon 15

**“Lord, we do not know where You are going
And how can we know the way?”[5]**

In spite of all the Lord’s teachings about the Cross and the Resurrection, the disciples could not comprehend the Lord’s words. Probably, they thought He would be taken up in a fiery chariot in the manner of Elijah; or that the angels would carry Him up to heaven; or that He would rest in the bosom of Abraham which was the desire of every Jew. Thomas was at a loss. So were the two disciples as they were on their way to Emaus, and after they had heard the women reporting and confirming to all the disciples that the Lord Jesus Christ had risen from the dead.

The Lord opened the way for a debate with His disciples through His gentle words to them. At least two of the disciples spoke with Him: Thomas and Philip. Thomas questioned the Lord about the path, without apologizing for contradicting His words “where I go you know”. Thomas was not embarrassed to admit that he could not understand the Lord’s words. Moreover, he admitted he did not know where the Lord was going and consequently he could not know the way. Peter was different: he supposed he could go with the Lord, even if that would cost him his very own life, (John 13:37)

It is good that Thomas admitted his ignorance. However, he is to be blamed for thinking of an earthly kingdom. This made him suppose that the Master was going to leave for another country, and therefore he could not know the way. Thomas did not know if the Lord was going to Bethlehem, Capernaum, or any of the cities of the Gentiles. David had gone to Hebron where he was anointed, and there proclaimed to regain a kingdom for Israel. Did Thomas think that the Lord was going to the invisible world of the spirits...we do not know!

*Peter said these words “Where are you going?” (John 13:36). He asked in order to follow the Lord rather than to get information. However, the Lord rebuked Peter and revealed that what is feasible seemed to be impossible at that time (that the disciples follow the Lord). This obstacle led Peter to desire to know more details. That is why the Lord told the other disciples: **“...the way you know” [4]**, but He told Peter ...“you will deny Me”, (13:38). Before anyone could say another word, the Discerner of the hearts said: **“Let not your heart be troubled”**. Then He said **“... you know”** to reveal the desire in their hearts. Therefore, the Lord excused them for wondering, and for being at a loss. Note that Peter’s question **“where are You going?”** was prompted by pure love, whereas Thomas’ question was prompted by cowardice.

St. John Chrysostom

Jesus said to him:

“I am the way, the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through Me”. [6]

Thomas allowed his mind to roam all over as he tried to search, and to find where the Lord would go. Similarly, Martha was troubled, to the last day, when the Lord informed her that her brother would come to life. In both cases, and in most cases if not in all, the Lord Jesus Christ draws the attention of the hearers to Himself by saying: **“I**

am". In this manner, He underlines that He is the way, the truth, the life, the resurrection, the shepherd, the door, and the bread descended from heaven. In Him we have full satisfaction and contentment. There is no path outside Him and no truth without Him. Life can be found only in Him.

He is the way that leads us to the Father without quitting the Son, for the Son is in the Father. Therefore, by uniting with the Son, we enjoy union with the Father. The Lord presents Himself as the way, the truth and the life. These are inseparable, since the Lord is all of that to us. He is the way: we believe in Him and therefore remain steadfast in Him. He lives in us in order to carry us unto the Father's embrace. He is the truth, whose light shines in our depths and reveals the ultimate knowledge of divine mysteries. He is the life and as we receive Him, He grants life to us. In this manner, we are enabled to enter into the Father's presence, get acquainted with Him, and rejoice in Him.

The Lord corrected the thoughts of Thomas by revealing to him that He is the way that leads to the Father and to an understanding of His way. The Lord is the way based on His teachings (John 6:24); His life (1Peter 2:21); His sacrifice (Hebrew 9:8-9); His spirit (John 16:13). He is the way, where all the divine promises will be fulfilled (2 Cor 1:20). No one can go to the Father except through Him; and no one can know the Father unless the Son informs that person about Him.

The Lord Jesus Christ is **the way** and Isaiah spoke about that, saying: "A highway shall be there, a road, and it shall be called the highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it. It shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there" (Is 35:8-9).

He is **the way** on which He has offered His Blood in order to carry us into His Holy Place, (Heb 9:12). There we will rejoice in the Cross which is the tree of life.

He is **the truth** in whom all shades and symbols mentioned in the Old Testament have been fulfilled: He is the real manna descending from heaven, (John 6:23), He is the Holy Tabernacle (Heb 8:3).

He is **the truth** that erases all that is false and all that is incorrect.

He is **the truth** that destroys all deception; for in Him we find true confidence and truth (2 Cor 1:20)

He is **the truth** and the resurrection: "...consider yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:11).

He is **the way, the truth, the life**. He represents the beginning and the end; as well as all that lies in between. Through Him, we start life, travel on the way, and reach the destination.

* Therefore, the way is itself God's ultimate power. Since the Lord Jesus Christ is our way; and He is the good way, then He is the way that opens up the heavenly kingdom to believers. The Lord is the initiator of our virtue and the beginning of purity¹.

St. Ambrose

* **"I am the way"**: these words are evidence that "No one comes to the Father except through Me".

"I am the truth, the way, and the life"...due to that, all these matters will be fulfilled. I am the truth and there is no falsehood in Me.

Since I am also the life, then even death cannot impede you from coming to Me.

Besides, since I am the way, you will not need anyone to take you by the hand and lead you. Since I am the truth then My words are not lies; and since I am the life, then even though you will die, you will receive what I have revealed to you...

The disciples were greatly comforted by knowing that the Lord is the way. The Lord seemed to inform them that 'since I have the sole power to go to the Father, then you will definitely come to Him, for there is no other way to get there'. Previously, the Lord had said: '...no one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...', (John 6:44); and "...and I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself", (John 12:32). The Lord also said: "No one comes to the Father except through Me", (John 14:6). All these words indicate that He is equal to the One who created Him.

St. John Chrysostom

* The Savior Himself says: **"I am the way, the truth, the life"**, [6]. The apostle comments: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory" (Col 3:4). This is also expressed in the Psalms: 'Because your loving kindness is better than life', (Ps 63:3): life is so much richer because the Lord Jesus Christ is the life within each person².

* This way is the way of righteousness, and it leads a good person to the righteous Father. A person shows righteousness out of his good treasure; and he is the good and faithful servant, (Matt 7:14; Luke 6:45; Matt 25:21). However, this way is narrow and the majority, who have material inclinations, are unable to travel through it. The road is also narrow for those who struggle as they travel through it. In fact, the Lord did not say that it was 'limited' but that it was 'narrow'³.

Origen the Scholar

* Now the way is not susceptible to error. By that we refer to the Lord Jesus Christ who tells us **"I am the way and the life"**. This way leads to the Father, as He says: "No one

¹ On the Christian Faith, Book 3:7:51-52

² Commentary on John, Book 6:41

³ Commentary on John, Book 6:105

comes to the Father except through Me”, (John 14:6)¹.

St. Ignatius of Antioch

* The Almighty and Honorable Father is the Father of truth Himself. In other words, He is the Father of the only begotten Son. The Holy Spirit possesses the Spirit of truth. Therefore, those who worship the Father in spirit and in truth, and hold steadfastly on to this faith, receive great power. The apostle says: “...for we offer glory and prayer through the one Holy Spirit”, (John 4:23, 24). The only begotten Son says: “**No one comes to the Father except through Me**”; therefore, those who honor the Father through My name, do so in spirit and in truth, and they are real worshippers².

St. Gregory Palamas

* Every person seeks the truth and the life, yet not everyone finds the way³.

* As a human being, He gave joy (for He became the way of our salvation through his incarnation). As a result, we are enabled to come to God: we come with Him and in Him.

Do not look for any way other than Him to get to the Father. Had the Lord not offered Himself to be the way, we would have been lost constantly. He has become the way that leads us to Him.

We are not saying: seek for the way; because the way Himself has come to you. Get up and walk in Him. Walk with Life- not with your feet, for many are able to walk well with their feet- but they take their lives into evil ways.

Often, even those who walk in godliness run outside the way. Therefore you may find people who live in godliness yet they are not Christians. They run well, yet they are not running in the way. The more they run the more they get lost, for they are running outside the way. However, if such people come and walk in the way, and stay steadfastly on course, their faith would become ever so strong. As long as they pursue godliness, they will never get lost! However, if they do not persevere in the way, how terrible will their suffering be! Those who know how to be godly will greatly lament! **It would have been better had they stopped on the way rather than to have walked steadfastly outside it**⁴.

* The Lord told His disciples that they knew both matters: (where He was going and the way He would take). However, Thomas declared that he did not know- that is, he neither knew where the Lord was going nor the way to get there. Thomas was not aware that he was uttering lies. Although the disciples knew, yet they were unaware of that knowledge. **Therefore, the Lord convinced them that they actually knew what they thought they did not.** When the Lord said: “**I am the way, the truth, the life**”- [6], they realized that He is the truth and that they knew Him. Since they knew Him who is life, then they knew

¹ Epistle to the Eph. 9

² The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters, Ch 59

³ Sermon on NT Lessons, 91:1

⁴ Sermon on N T Lessons 91:4

the way. Notice how they became convinced that they had known but they had not realized that they had known Him already¹.

* The Lord Himself was going back to Himself. Therefore to whom are we going other than to Him? What way are we taking other than through the Lord Himself? **Through Him we go to Him.** In the same manner, and through the same way, we, together with Him, get to the Father².

* The apostle Thomas was granted to see you, O Lord Jesus Christ, in order to ask you questions. **In spite of that, he could not comprehend until he accepted You within himself.**

I ask You because I know You are superior to me.

I ask and search as much as I can in order to extend myself into that place which is so high above me. There I would listen to You, O You who does not use an external voice in order to convince me of Your teachings.

I pray You to inform me, how do I come to You?

Since You have not come from Yourself but from the Father who has sent You; have You abandoned Yourself in order to come to us?

Truly, we know that You have disrobed Yourself by taking on the form of a slave. However, You have neither stripped Yourself of the Godhead to which You need to return; nor have You lost Him as though this needed to be retrieved... **You have come in the form of a slave, yet You were and still are residing where You came from. Moreover, You will be returning there without leaving the place to which You have come.**

Since You have come and have returned in this manner, then You are not only the way through which we will travel to You, but You are also the way through which You Yourself will go and will return³.

* It seems that the Lord is asking us: 'Which way will you take?' **"I am the way"**.

Where are you going? **"I am the truth"**.

Where will you live? **"I am the life"**.

Let us therefore walk confidently in the way. However, let us be on guard due to the nets set up on either side.

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 69:1

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 69:2

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 69:3

The enemy would not dare to set up his nets on the way because the Lord Jesus Christ is the way. Nevertheless, the enemy will not stop from putting them up on the side tracks.

That is why the words of the Psalm say: ‘...they have spread a net by the wayside’, (s 140:5). In another holy verse, it says: ‘Be conscious that you are walking among hidden traps’, (Sirach 9:13). These traps are not found in the **way but they are in the wayside and we would walk in them if we went there.**

What do you fear? Walk in the way!

Be fearful if you have abandoned the way.

That is why the enemy has been allowed to set traps on the wayside: for through pride you might forget the way and fall into the trap¹.

* The humble Lord Jesus Christ is the way: He is the truth and the life. The Lord is the Almighty Glorious God.

If you walk humbly you will attain glory.

If you are weak in the way you now are, do not belittle the humble, for you will remain gloriously steadfast and empowered².

* He is the way: ‘The Word became flesh’, (1:14)

He holds the way: ‘He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a slave’, (Phil 2:7).

He is the home to which we are going; and He is the way we will take to get there.

May we go to Him and through Him. Therefore we shall not get lost³.

St Augustine

* I find that the true way is the One who embraces me. He is the One who obstructs my wicked paths, (Hosea 2:6). He is the One who says in the Gospel: “**I am the way, the truth and the life**”, [6]⁴.

St. Jerome

* The Lord Jesus Christ is not only God, but actually the true God: true God from true God since He Himself is the truth⁵.

¹ Sermon on NT Lessons 92:1

² Sermon on NT Lessons 92:2

³ Sermon on NT Lessons 42: 3

⁴ Letter 122:1

⁵ Of the Holy Spirit, Book 1:17:108

St. Ambrose

* It is impossible to have any hope in redemption without knowing both (the Father and the Son) at the same time¹.

Caprianus, the Martyr

* Look within yourself to see yourself: ‘..why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in you own eye?’ (Matt 7:3).

The soul that exits from herself is invited to enter into it, for by exiting from herself she has exited from her Lord...

The soul has withdrawn from Him, and does not live any more within herself. She resists herself, has been expelled from herself, and has fallen into matters that do not relate to her...

**The soul has neglected herself due to her love of the world.
Now, let her forget herself, but let it be due to her love for the Creator of the world!**²

St. Augustine

* Many roads, or ways, open up before those who belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. Under His leadership, they need to travel on these roads before they can enter into the Holy Land. After leaving Egypt, and passing through the many stages mentioned in the Holy Book, they then rested: ‘These are the journeys of the children of Israel...at the command of the Lord’, (Numbers 33:1, 2)

Who is the One who planned the roads that the children of Israel had to take throughout these stages of the journey? Who other than God? He planned them by setting a pillar of fire and a cloud of light...

Now, meditate how the same thing is happening to you spiritually as you walk on your journey. If you have come out of Egypt, and are able to follow the Savior Jesus Christ-(Joshua), He will bring you into the land.

Moses (the Law) seems to be the Leader. However, Joshua is there at his side without openly leading.

Wait for Moses to lead until the moment when his time is up. Then when the fullness of time comes (Gal 4:4) the Lord Jesus Christ will lead...He takes over the role of teaching the people, and proclaiming publicly His laws. Therefore let us walk in them and pray: **‘Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes and I shall keep it to the end,** (Ps 119:33).

¹ Letter 73 to Jubauan: 17

² Sermon on N.T. Lessons 92:3

We seek to follow Him since there is **“the way of Your statutes”**

It is not an easy way, and it does not need two or three or even ten days. Actually, we need all the days of our lives as we seek to find the way of His statutes.

In the same manner, we need to find **‘the way to witness’**: “I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies as much as in all riches”. (Ps 119:14). Besides, there is the **‘way of commandments’**, “I will run in the way of Your commandments, for You will enlarge my heart”, (Ps 119:32)

All these roads are really one way telling us: **“I am the way”**, (John 14:6). Let us, therefore, walk in all these roads until we reach our destination. That destination is ‘the Lord Jesus Christ’

Origen the Scholar

* A person does not become contaminated again with the earth’s dust after having washed his feet: the bride says: “I have washed my feet; how can I defile them?” (Song of Sol 5:3). Moses removed his sandals (made of dead animal hides) because he was walking on sacred ground, (Ex 3:5)

The Holy Bible tells us that Moses did not put on his sandals again. He obeyed the instructions that God gave him, when he was on top of the mountain, to make the robes of the priests. They had to be sewed with gold, blue, purple, and red threads; and were to be done of fine linen material so that the beauty of the coverings would throw rays around them (Ex 28:5,8). Moses did not use any ornaments on his feet, for the feet of priests had to be naked and uncovered. This is because a priest walks on holy ground, therefore he should not use shoes or sandals made of animal hides. This explains why the Lord Jesus Christ forbade his disciples to wear shoes for He commanded them to walk in the way of holiness, (Matt 10:5, 6).

You know that road of holiness on which the Lord commanded His disciples to walk when He said: **“I am the way”**, (John 14:6). **We will be unable to walk on that way unless we remove the dead clothes of the old man**¹.

St. Gregory of Nicea

**“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also;
And from now on you know Him
And have seen Him”. [7]**

These are words of reproach uttered by the Lord Jesus Christ. Many of the fathers and prophets had recognized Him through the many symbols and shadows; and had desired to see and adhere to Him. He was their only hope. Sadly, the disciples who had lived with Him, had accompanied Him during His ministry, His journeys, and His retreats, had not come to know Him as they should have. Now, it was time for Him to depart from the world.

¹ Song of Songs: St Gregory, Bishop of Nicea: Translated by Dr George Nawar: Sermon11

The Lord Jesus Christ desires that all believers get acquainted with Him and comprehend their fellowship with Him. This is the prayer of the apostles on behalf of all mankind. St. Paul accordingly wrote to the people of Ephesus: “I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him...that you may know what is the hope of His calling... and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which he worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places”, (Eph 1:16-20).

The Lord’s words: “... **from now on you know Him and have seen Him**” [7], indicate that the hour of the Cross had come now. The world hated the Lord and He was crucified because His followers loved the world. Believers see and recognize the all loving Father in the crucified Son who arose from the dead. The hour of the Cross is a divine opportunity offered to believers in order to recognize and see the Father. Through the Cross, they are reconciled to Him and enjoy stability within His embrace.

A person who truly knows the Lord Jesus Christ understands that He is the Son and the divine God whose kingdom is not of the world. He descended from heaven and ascended to it as He lives in the Father’s embrace. Therefore a person who comes to the Lord comes into the divine embrace of the Father, gets acquainted with Him, and His divine mysteries.

St. John Chrysostom, as well as other fathers, note that the Lord Jesus Christ sometimes told His disciples that they have seen and known Him; while at other times he told them that they have seen Him but have not known Him. At times, the Lord tells them that they have neither seen nor heard Him. So is there a conflict or contradiction? St. John Chrysostom makes a distinction between seeing the Son as flesh only which the disciples could touch with their hands and see with their eyes; and yet they could not see His essence or comprehend the brilliance of His divine glory. Therefore they looked but did not see. At the same time they did not know Him. **Even the disciples, who had seen and had adhered to Him, were unable to comprehend sufficiently His divinity up to the moment of His ascension and the coming of His Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Similarly, a person could know the Lord and yet not know Him. He would know the Lord without comprehending His true identity.**

A person who sees the reality of the Son, and gets deeply acquainted with Him, sees the Father and gets acquainted with Him.

* The Lord Jesus Christ was not contradicting Himself. It is true that the disciples knew Him. However, their knowledge was not as deep as it should have been. They knew God yet they still did not know the Father. Later on, when they received the Holy Spirit, He worked in them and offered them full knowledge.

That was the implication of the Lord’s words: ‘When you comprehend my

essence and stature, you will also come to know the Father and His stature. **You will know and see Him through Me**'. To see indicates knowledge acquired through mental understanding. Often, there are people that we see but do not know. That explains the Lord's intention in saying 'have **seen Him**'. As for those unknown to us, we cannot know or recognize them. We are told in another verse that He is "seen by angels", (1Timothy 3:16). However, the core or essence is invisible; and in spite of that we are told that He is visible... to the extent of our ability to see.

These words were said to inform you that those who see Him recognize Him who gave Him birth. However, they did not see Him in His revealed essence, for they saw Him in the form of the flesh.

The Lord seeks **to equate seeing with knowing**. He says: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God", (Matt 5:8). By pure in heart, the Lord refers to those who have become free of all sin- and not from adultery alone- for every sin defiles the soul.

St. John Chrysostom

St. Augustine comments on verses (7-10) and says that the Lord Jesus Christ stresses that a person who knows Him, knows the Father. This is because no one can come to the Father except through the Lord. While the Lord confirms His unity with the Father, yet He distinguishes between the Father and the Son¹.

Philip said to Him:

"Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us". [8]

When the Lord spoke about the Father, Philip yearned to see Him. However, he was not able to see Him yet.

First: He was unable to see the Father as He yearned to see the Divinity physically. He wanted to see with his physical eyes and in just the same way he was seeing the Lord Jesus Christ at that time.

Second: The cause of his disability to see was that he could not recognize the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He saw the Lord according to the flesh and without recognizing His Divinity.

Finally: He could not comprehend the unique unity of the Father and the Son as one in essence. Therefore he asked the Lord: **"...show us the father and it is sufficient for us"**.

Philip's request resembles the request of Moses who yearned to see the glory of God, (Ex 33:18). It is true that seeing God would be satisfying and sufficient. It is a request that brings joy to the heart. However, what was wrong with Philip's request was his ignorance concerning the unity of the Son and the Father. This is because he had not enjoyed the transfiguration like Peter, James and John. Besides, he also could not

¹ cf. St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, Tractate 70:1

understand, up to the end, the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ; and he could not see the essence of His Divinity.

* Philip reversed the order and said: **“show us the Father”** as though he had come to know the Lord Jesus Christ sufficiently well. However, the Lord set him on the right course and urged him to get acquainted with the Father through Him. Philip wanted to see the Father with his own physical eyes. He had probably heard about prophets who had seen God. Yet these cases had occurred as God condescended to appear to them; and the Holy Word says the following: “No one has seen God” (John 1:18); and “everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me” (6:45); and “you have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form”, (John 5:37). In the Old Testament we are told: “...you cannot see My face, for no man shall see Me and live”, (Ex 33:20).

What does the Lord Jesus Christ say? **“Have I been with you so long and yet you have not known Me, Philip?”**. The Lord did not say: ‘you have not seen Me’ but He said **‘...you have not known Me’**.

Philip could have asked: “Why do I need to learn about you? I am now asking to see Your Father and you are telling me that I did not know You. What is the relationship between this and my question?” Definitely, there is a strong link; for if the Lord is the One who is the Father and He is at the same time the Son, then it will be through Him that we will know the One who gave birth to Him. In order to distinguish between the two hypostasis, the Lord says: **“He who has seen Me, has seen the Father”**. He said these words so that no one would think that the Father Himself is identical with the Son.

Why did the Lord not answer by saying: ‘You are asking for things that are impossible and which are not permitted to any person, yet are possible to Me only?’ Because Philip said: “...it is sufficient for us”. Although he acknowledged that he knew the Lord, he revealed that he had not seen Him. Indeed, had Philip known the Father, he would have been able to see the Son. Therefore, the Lord told him: “...he who has seen Me has seen the Father”. It is as though He was telling Philip: “It is not possible to see Me or see the Father”. This is because Philip had based His knowledge upon his physical vision. Accordingly, he believed he had seen the Son. In the same manner, he wanted to see the Father. However, the Lord revealed to him that he had not seen even the Son Himself.

If anyone wishes to claim that knowledge is vision, then we would not contradict Him if the Lord Jesus Christ had said: “...He who knows Me knows the Father”. However, the Lord wanted to proclaim the fellowship in the essence. He who knows the Essence of the Lord, also knows the Essence of the Father. Is the Lord speaking here about the wisdom of the Father? Or about His goodness? That is not the case. The Lord is speaking about the reality of God, and His intrinsic essence... Indeed, the Lord reprimanded Phillip and said: “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me”? You have enjoyed all these teachings and have seen the miracles that I have done with authority. Besides, you have watched all the divine things that only the Father can do, such as the forgiveness of sins, revealing the hidden secrets, raising the dead, and

creating from the earth (eyes), and yet you have not known Me? The Lord had become incarnate and therefore said: "...yet you have not known Me?" You see the Father, so do not ask for more since you see Me in Him. Once you see Me, you should not become more inquisitive, for you know Him in Me.

* "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?" In other words: I can be seen in the same essence. **"The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority, but the Father who dwells in Me does the works"**, [10]. How is it that the Lord mentioned the words first and then the works? This resulted naturally as He could have said: 'It is the Father who speaks the words'. However, the Lord placed the two elements together: the teachings and the miracles. Probably the Lord said so because the words represented deeds as well. But how does the Father perform both? On another occasion, He says: "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me", (10:37). But, why does He say in this context that the Father does the works? Again, His intention is to reveal that there is no separation between the Father and the Son. His words convey the following: 'My Father does not work in one direction, while I work in another. In another context, the Lord says: "My Father has been working until now and I have been working" (5:17). In the first instance, the Lord indicates the harmony between the work of the Father and the Son. In the second, He underlines the divinity of the Father and the Son¹.

St. John Chrysostom

Jesus said to him,

"Have I been with you so long and yet you have not known Me, Philip?

He who has seen Me has seen the Father;

So how can you say, show us the Father?" [9]

While the Lord reprimanded Philip, He actually was reprimanding all the disciples as He tells them all: "I will be with you". He did not say: 'you will be with Me', for He has descended and lived among us. He is the One who came to us and took the initiative of loving us. Our part is to progress towards Him and let our inner vision be enlightened. In doing so, we can progress and move towards Him. Let us walk with Him as He walks with us. He has descended to us, so that through His Spirit we may ascend to Him.

The Lord Jesus Christ came and lived with the disciples. It was not a fleeting vision, or a few minutes or hours as He had done in the past. He had appeared to the fathers and the prophets in visions, appearances, and dreams. However, He had come and lived among the disciples 'for a period and known measure of time'. That is why they should have seen both Him and the Father. They should have been able to comprehend the Father and be united to Him through the Lord Jesus Christ Truly, the person who has seen the Lord Jesus Christ has also seen the Father!

Can any creature in heaven or on earth dare to proclaim such a thing? Impossible! The Lord considered that anyone who has seen Him has seen the Father. This is achieved once a person discovers the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why the Lord

¹ Homilies on St John, 74:2

reprimanded Philip: because he did not get to know the Lord after living with Him for about three years. The Lord reprimanded Philip not because he yearned to see the Father but because he did not comprehend who the Lord Jesus Christ was. Therefore, he had not enjoyed seeing the Father throughout all that time. Philip did not comprehend the full divinity of the incarnated Lord Jesus Christ, (1 Cor. 2:9). Indeed, the Father is in the Lord in the fullness of His divinity. Any work done by the Lord is done in unison with the Father and reflects one divine act.

* Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? Indeed, anyone who looks at the Son sees the image of the Father. Notice what kind of image the Lord was talking about. The Lord Jesus Christ is the truth, the righteousness and the might of God. He is not dumb for He is the Word; He is not without feelings for He is Wisdom; He is neither a delusion nor foolishness for He is power; He is lifeless for He is life; and He is not dead for He is the Resurrection¹.

* In church, we know one image and that is the image of the invisible God. In the words of the Almighty we are told: “So God created man in His own image...” (Gen 1:27). This is the image which was spoken about to describe the Lord Jesus Christ: “...the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person...”, (Heb 1:3). In the image, we comprehend the Father. The Lord Himself has said: “He who has seen Me, has seen the Father”. This is because this image is not a separate one from that of the Father, it truly teaches us the oneness of the Trinity for the Lord says: “I and My Father are one”, (10:30). He also says: “...all things that the Father has are Mine”, (16:15). Besides, we are told about the Holy Ghost that He is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. Accordingly, it is written: “...whatever He hears He will speak; He will tell you” (16:14)².

St. Ambrose

* Anyone who becomes qualified to have a vision of the deity of the Son gets to enjoy the deity of the Father. These are not our own words. They are the words of the only Son who has said: “**Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father.**” Briefly, do not separate Them and do not cause confusion.

Never say that the Son is different from the Father; do not accept those who say that at certain times the Father is the Father while at other times He is the Son. Such a statement would be bizarre and unthankful, besides being in opposition to the teachings of the church. In giving birth to the Son, the Father did not change and continued to be the Father. He gave birth to wisdom and did not lose wisdom as a result. He created power without becoming weak; He gave birth to God without losing His deity. He did not lose anything as a result of decline or change. Similarly, the One born was not deficient in anyway.

Perfect is the Father, and perfect is the Son.

¹ On the Christian Faith, Book 1:7:50

² Sermon Auxentius, 32

God is the Father; and God is the One born: God from God. However, He calls the Father as His God without feeling embarrassed when the Lord says: “I am ascending to My Father and your Father and to My God and your God” (20:17)¹.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

St. Gregory of Nazinzy speaks about the mystery of his attraction to the Trinity. For a long time, he had been forbidden to preach about that subject to his congregation, but in spite of that he did not abstain of preaching totally².

* May the divine Word lead me, at the end of a life filled with tears, to the eternal home. There I will find my Trinity and the brilliance of His combined sublimity³.

St. Gregory of Nazinzy

* Indeed, the Lord reprimanded the disciple, when He looked into his questioning heart, and perceived that he wondered if the Father was in any way better than the Son. This had led Philip to seek to know the Father. It was also why he did not know the Son for he believed that He was inferior to the Father. In order to correct this concept, the Lord told Philip: **“He who has seen Me has seen the Father, how can you say: show us the Father?”**... Why do you seek to create a gap between Two hypostasis who are alike? Why do you seek to get a distinct and separate knowledge of Two who are inseparable? What the Lord said after that was directed to all the disciples and not only to Philip. We should not limit His words to just that context so that with the Lord’s help we can interpret His words most carefully⁴.

* Philip’s eyes were not wholesome enough to see the Father. Consequently, he could not see the Son who is equal to the Father. The Lord therefore took care of him and healed him with the medicines and creams of faith to strengthen his mental vision which was still weak. His mental eyes were still weak and unable to see such a great Light. The Lord asks him: **“Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?”** May the person who is disabled get to see what the Lord will reveal to him one day. May he pray not to see but to have faith and to believe. May he believe first, so that his sight, which gives him vision, might be healed⁵.

St. Augustine

**“Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?
The words that I speak to you, I do not speak on My own authority,
But the Father who dwells in Me does the works.”[10]**

Our vision of God is achieved in this world through faith and not through sight. That is why the Lord speaks in this passage about ‘faith’. What kind of faith is it? Faith is

¹ Essay 11:18

² De Vita Sua 1102. PG 37:1106A

³ Poemata de Seipso, 11. PG 37:1165-66

⁴ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate, 70:3

⁵ Sermon on NT Lessons, 38:4

believing that the essence of the Son is not complimentary to the Father. Each is within the Other as they are One essence. Therefore, anyone who seeks to see the Father and get to know Him, needs to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ "...is the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him", (John 1:18). Therefore, it is no surprise that the Lord says: "...he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me", (John 12:45).

* There is no difficulty in understanding that the Son is in the Father as though in one source...the Son is in and with the Father. It is not as though He is found outside Him or in another age; but He is within the essence of the Father and shines through Him. This is similar to the shining sun, and the heat of the fire inherent in its essence. In both of these examples we find one element born of the other and yet it constantly shares existence with the other with being separated. One cannot exist without the other yet each maintains His true and natural traits¹.

St. Cyril the Great

* The Lord of truth says: **"I am in the Father and the Father in Me"**. Clearly the One hypostasis/personality in His totality is actually the Other personality in His totality. The Father does not overshadow the Son, and the Son is not diminished in the Father².

* The same feature of divinity is visible in both³.

St. Gregory, Bishop of Nicea

* The Father has made all things wisely as everything is done through His own wisdom and power. Accordingly, it is written: "In wisdom you have made (your works)", (Ps 104:24). Similarly, God the Word does nothing without fellowship with the Father. He does not work without Him. Without the will of the Father, He who is totally holy would not have offered Himself to suffer and to be slaughtered in order to save the whole world (John 3:16, 17; Heb 10:10-12). Without the will of the Father, God the Word would not arise from the dead and ascend to life⁴.

St. Ambrose

**"Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me,
Or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves." [11]**

The Lord witnesses to Himself before His followers; and reveals His divine mysteries to them. He had said earlier: "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true", (John 8:14). In this passage, the Lord is not speaking to Philip only. He is addressing all the disciples and offering a message to all His followers. The Lord also did many acts as a true testimony to reinforce His words. Indeed, His deeds bear witness that the Lord was doing the works of His Father and was speaking His words. The deeds and the words come from both the Father and the Son together. St. Paul says of the Father: "He has in these last days spoken to us by His Son", (Heb 1:2). Besides, the Lord says

¹ PG 73:12 a

² Against Eunomius, 2:4

³ Ibid, 6:3

⁴ Of the Christian Faith, 4:6:69-70

this about Himself: **“The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works”, (John 14:10).**

* When you hear the words “Father” and “Son” it is right not to think about anything else except that this is a confirmation of the One Essence and the shared relationship within that Essence. However, if that does not sufficiently convince you of the joint honor and essence, then learn about them by contemplating the deeds¹.

St. John Chrysostom

* You can see that the Son is God and in Him you see God the Father. The Lord used the same expression in the Holy Gospel: **“I am in the Father and the Father in Me”**. He did not say: ‘I am the Father’. Rather, He said: “...the Father dwells in Me and I in the Father”. He also did not say: ‘the Father and I are Me’. Rather, He said: “I and the Father are One” so that we would not separate them and become confused concerning the Son of the Father.

They are One as far as honor is due to the One Divinity. God gave birth to God. They are One in their kingdom since neither the Father nor the Son rules separately. The Son does not act vainly towards the Father in the manner of Absalom, because the kingdom of the Father is the kingdom of the Son. They are One. There is no conflict or division between them. The will of the Father is the will of the Son: They are One. The creative deeds of the Lord Jesus Christ are not different than those of the Father for the Creator of all things is One. All have been created by the Father through the Son. The Psalmist says: “For He commanded and they were created”, (Ps 33:9; 148:5).

The Son is the ‘very God’ who has the Father in Him but without being the Father, since the Father did not become incarnate. Rather, the Son became incarnate The Father did not suffer for our sake; but He sent Him who would suffer . . .

We do not call the Son as 'Father' in order to honor Him. Besides, we do not think that the Son is one of the Father’s created beings in order to honor the Father. Indeed, there is one Father whom we worship; and we worship Him through one Son without making any separation in worshipping them.

The only Son is proclaimed as He sits on the right hand of the Father, on a throne, before the beginning of all ages. This is not a promotion that the Son has received at a certain time after having suffered. Indeed, He has been sitting there since time infinite².

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

* While we speak, the Lord Himself will not withdraw His presence from us and He is our teacher³.

¹ Homilies of St John, 74:2

² Essay 11:16,17

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 71:1

Are His words deeds? Clearly, this is actually true. Certainly, whoever instructs his neighbor through his words does good deeds¹.

* The Lord attributes all the deeds He did to the Father who works through Him. The Father is not the God (born) from someone else. Yet the Son is the heavenly God who is truly equal to the Father and yet born of Him. Hence, the Father is God who is not born of God; and He is the Light who is not born of the Light; whereas the Son is God, is born of God, and is Light out of Light².

St Augustine

3. Prayer and Comfort/Rest

**"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me,
The works that I do he will do also
And greater works than these he will do,
Because I go the Father." [12]**

Having revealed His unique unity with the Father, and that what He says and does proceed from the Father who lives in Him, the Lord Jesus Christ clarifies that this reality provides redemption and life. Genuine belief in the ones of the Father and the Son grants the ultimate power to do the deeds of the Lord who lives in the believer. Declaring the Father and knowing Him leads the believer to experience the works of the Father within himself. St. Paul accordingly says: "...that Christ may dwell in your hearts...that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (Eph 3:17-20). For faith grants knowledge and inspires the experience to take, possess, and act according to the power of God: "... for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure..." (Phil 2:13).

This is the key to the comfort granted to the disciples after they had learned that the Lord Jesus Christ was leaving them. They were filled with sadness and felt like an abandoned flock with no shepherd. They felt they had no one to help or support them. This was intensified by their awareness of the extent of hatred the Jewish leaders harbored against them.

That is why the Lord Jesus Christ assured them that He would not leave them in their weakness. He would grant them the power to do great deeds, miracles, and wonders that would support them. In this manner, they could do the same deeds as those the Lord had done, and even greater ones. This would not diminish Him, or create confusion between the Lord's entity as the only Son of God and their stature as being His children by adoption as well as being His very own disciples. Indeed, whatever they would do would be done in His name, through faith in Him, and for His glory. In fact, the Lord is not only the wonder Worker but He is the One who grants His disciples to perform wonders.

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 71:1

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 71:1

Why did the Lord tell His disciples that they would do deeds greater than what He has done?

- 1- He did miracles during the three years of His ministry on earth; whereas they would do miracles throughout the ages and to the end of time. The Lord did miracles within the boundaries of the land where He lived; whereas the disciples would do miracles and wonders throughout the whole world and wherever they would preach. They would do miracles that the Lord had not done because there was no need for them in His time: such as the miracle of moving the mountain which Simon the Cobbler did in the days of El Moaz Eldin Allah Elfatimy.
- 2- The Lord laid the foundations of preaching and paid the price through the Cross. However, He allowed preaching to become widespread after His ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples. Therefore greater works took place. This was evident as the faith spread all over the world and was no longer limited to Judea.

The mystery of the strength granted to the disciples is revealed in the Lord's words: **"...because I go to my Father..."** [12]. The Lord would intercede for them. He would carry them to the Father as members in His body. Consequently, they would be working through the power of the Father; and the Son would send the divine Comforter to them- who is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would work in and through them on His behalf and for His glory.

* It is God's will to grant His disciples great powers. It is His will that what the Lord did during His life on earth would also be done by His servants in His name... He gave them the power to raise the dead. Though God could have reinstated the sight of Saul, He sent him to His disciple Ananias. Through his blessing, the eyes of Saul recovered the vision he had lost¹.

St. Ambrose

* The Lord wanted to reveal that He could do not only these works, but greater works than these and many more. He did not say: 'I can do greater works than these,' but what is more astonishing is that He said that 'He could give others the power to do greater works . . . in other words, the Lord was saying to the disciples: 'it is now up to you to work and do wonders because I am leaving'².

* Do you not see that the Lord is the One doing these works? He said: "...that I do..." He did not say: 'I ask the Father', but rather: **"the Father may be glorified in the Son"**...all the miracles which the disciples did have been done by the Lord and the hand of the Lord was with them, (Act 11:21)³.

¹ Concerning Repentance, 1:8:334

² Homilies on St John, 74:2

³ Homilies on St John, 74:2

* Do you not see His authority? What others do is actually done by Him . . . So does the Lord possess no authority to carry out the works He does Himself, and if He does not do them through the Father, how can this be true? So why did He say the rest of the words in that same context? He said them to confirm His words, and to reveal that all His earlier teachings demonstrated His voluntary humbleness. In finishing His words by saying: “**...I go to My Father...**”, the Lord was telling the disciples: ‘I am not going to perish for I will retain the honor due to Me in My heavenly dwelling’. He intended to comfort His disciples through these words. They seemed unable to grasp His teachings about the resurrection and considered that to be a morbid matter. In other instances, the Lord had promised to grant them such powers. He had tried to alleviate their situation in every possible manner as He promised that He would be with them always; besides investing them with them a greater power¹.

St John Chrysostom

* We believe that truly the Lord does ‘**greater**’ works when a person conquers-while he is still in the flesh and liable to be trapped due to frailty- in the war with the demons and evil powers. Then the only weapon which that person has is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and his own personal faith in Him. Such a victory is greater than any other which that person may achieve through his own might.

Origen the Scholar

* The Lord has promised that He Himself would do these greater works. May the slave not boast of being greater than the Master. The Lord says that they would do greater works than those He has done already. However, He is the One working in all things, whether within His disciples or through them. It would not be as though they were self empowered. Consequently, the words of praise directed to Him say: “I will love you, O Lord, my strength...” (Ps 18:1).

What are these greater works?

Are they revealed when the shadow of the disciples heal the sick, (Acts 5:15)? For healing by the passing of a shadow is greater than touching the hem of the clothes of the One who possesses healing power, (Matt14:36). In spite of that, what the Lord recommends is the effective power of His words. Listen to His words: “**The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does the works**” [10].

What works is the Lord referring to other than the words that He has uttered?

The disciples heard and believed, and their faith was the fruit of these same words. When the disciples preached the Gospel with these same words, the numbers and nations converted were far greater in contrast to the few who heard and believed at the time of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no doubt that this was a greater accomplishment².

¹ Homilies on St John, 74:2

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 71:3

* The Lord immediately added these words: "...because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it", [12-14]. What He had said earlier that: '...he (the believer) will do...', He now reiterates and says: "...I will do...". It is as though the Lord was saying: 'It should not seem impossible because whoever believes in Me cannot be greater than I. I am the One who will do greater works than those that I am doing now. I will do greater works through those who believe in Me more than those works I did without them. However, I am the One working through a believer . . . see what greater works the Lord has done when believers preached. These were greater than the deeds done by the Lord when He was actually addressing His hearers¹.

* He works in us, yet He does not work without us².

St. Augustine

**"And whatever you ask in my name,
That will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" [13].**

The Lord Jesus Christ stresses that the deeds that the disciples would do would be done through His name. Indeed, He is the doer. This does not leave out the role of the Father, for the Lord directs our attention to pray to the Father. When He tells us: "...whatever you ask...", the Lord requires us to ask the Father for sublime matters that are worthwhile and which appear to be of great importance to us. We should ask the Father to make us worthy to be truly His children, bearing the image of His only Son. Consequently, we live in Christ 'who became for us wisdom from God- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption ...,' (1Cor1: 30).

* The Father works through the Son in order that the Son becomes glorified through the Father. Moreover, the Son works through the Father so that He might be glorified through the Son. This is due to the fact that the Father and the Son are One and the same³.

St. Augustine

"If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" [14].

As we pray and present our needs to the Father, we call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We therefore pray to attain His righteousness and holiness; and Lord Himself undertakes the work in us, for He says: "**I will do it....**," [14]. By calling on His name, we reveal that we are invoking His divine presence. That is why- in all the divine mysteries, as well as in our personal prayers, the priest or a believer proclaims: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" and so prays for the presence of the Holy Trinity.

The Lord's physical departure strengthened their position since He would work through them for the glory of the Father. The Father sees the disciples through Him and

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 72:1

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 72:2

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 73:4

answers all their prayers. In other words, the Lord's ascension empowered them to work through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that the Lord would send. His ascension to the heavens would remove all the distances between Him and the Father. Indeed, the presence of the Son in a glorified body reflects their actual presence as members in that body.

They had to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and through His redeeming deed which gave joy to the Father. Clearly, they would not depend on their worldly power or rights as they brought their requests or prayers before the Father.

4-The Other Comforter

"If you love Me, keep My commandments." [15].

The Lord spoke earlier about faith as a basis for divine knowledge. Now He is forming the building over the foundations, and this consisted of keeping His commandments. The Lord Jesus Christ accepted to carry us within Him and brings us to God who would fund pleasure in believers and answer their needs. On their part, believers need to love Him and obey His commandments. In this manner, they would find great comfort. Indeed, their love would be demonstrated in a practical manner through their obedience of His laws. Moreover it would grant them the power to work especially in difficult times.

* We need to work and practice obedience to His commands at all times. It should never be a mere exhibit of words . . . God requires love that is demonstrated through deeds. That is why the Lord told His disciples: "He who loves Me, loves my commandments". Having told them: "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it"; He did not want them to think that they only had to ask. Therefore He added: **"If you love Me, keep My commandments"**¹.

St. John Chrysostom

* The Holy Spirit is the Comforter whom the Lord promised to send to His disciples. However, notice the way in which that promise is given: **"If you love Me, keep My commandments, and I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper..."** (15:16). Yet, how can we love in order to receive the One who will enable us to love God (Rom 3:5), unless we obey His commands? . . . let us understand that a person who loves is actually filled with the Holy Spirit, and through Him that person becomes qualified to possess Him who is more perfect. Indeed, by receiving Him who is greater, our love grows greater too.²

* The promise is not invalid to those who have not yet attained the Holy Spirit or to those who have Him. The Comforter is offered to the person who does not have Him so that He might receive Him. He is also offered to the person who has received Him in order to get filled more abundantly. If it was not true that the Spirit could be received in varying

¹ Hom 75 PG 59:438

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 74:1-2

measures, than the saintly Elisha would not have told Elijah: "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me", (2kings 2:9)¹.

St. Augustine

**"And I will pray the Father,
And He will give you another Helper,
That He may abide with you forever". [16]**

When the Lord fulfilled the act of redemption on the Cross, He ascended into the heavens in order to send the Holy Spirit. In this manner, He has granted His Church the sweet fellowship in the Cross, the experience of the powerful resurrection, and the promise of the heavenly life. That is the other Comforter who draws from the treasures of the Lord Jesus Christ and grants them to us.

The work of the Holy Spirit is ever so constant in the life of the Church, and continues to the end of time. Ultimately, He will present her as the bride who carries the hypostasis of her heavenly bridegroom.

The word '**paraclete**' is translated as 'Comforter'. It also means lawyer or advocate, for He stands in defense of the Lord's Church and against her enemies.

The Lord calls Himself the '**Comforter**' since He calls the Holy Spirit '**another Helper**'. The Targum labeled the days of the Lord's life as 'days of comfort'. Indeed, the Lord comforted His disciples when He physically lived among them. When He departed, He sent to them His Holy Spirit to be another Comforter.

The request or the prayer mentioned here is not mere lip service for the Lord offered Himself as a sacrifice of love on behalf of mankind. This entitles His believers to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who would dwell in them. Actually, He had not ceased from dwelling in man since his fall into sin. This gift involves actually receiving the Giver of all gifts. It is a constant gift that accompanies a believer until he leaves this life. The Holy Spirit would never abandon a person as long as that person welcomes and responds to Him. Thus the Lord first presented the basis of knowledge and that is faith. Then He built upon the basis (faith) the deeds of love demonstrated in obedience to His commands. Finally, He sent to us the Holy Spirit from the Father who has the sole power to achieve all this.

The Lord Jesus Christ reveals in the passage the integrated role of the Holy Trinity in fulfilling the plan to glorify us eternally. The Father has sent His Son to comfort us, and the Son offers Himself up to redeem the world. Now the Father would receive the Son when He ascends. In this manner, the Father receives the universal Church-from Adam to the end of time-as represented in the Lord who is the head. He received the first Comforter and is greatly pleased with Him as He fulfilled the redemption of mankind. In doing so, the Lord proclaimed in a practical way, the love of the Father. When the Lord is received in heaven, that Comforter remains comforted on

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 74:2

behalf of all mankind who are still in the flesh. However, He is always present in the midst of His Holy Church. Besides, the Lord prays the Father to send another Helper who fills, enlightens, sanctifies, and leads the Church. He does so without departing or separating Himself from the Father.

In this manner, the reciprocal relationship of love among the Holy Trinity who work for the redemption and eternal glorification of mankind is revealed.

* If you wondered: 'Why did the Lord say: "I will pray the Father" . . . ?' Our answer would be: Because if He had said: "I will send Him, people would not have believed Him. Therefore He said: **"I will pray the Father"**, in order to make His words acceptable to them.

St. John Chrysostom

**"... even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive,
Because it neither sees Him nor knows Him;
But you know Him,
For He dwells with you, and will be in you". [17]**

When the first Comforter, the Lord Jesus Christ, ascended, He would pray that another Comforter be sent and that would be His Holy Spirit. When He who said: "I am the truth" (14:16) ascended, He sent the Spirit of truth to them. And just as the world rejected the first Comforter, the Truth Himself, so they would reject the other Comforter who is the 'Spirit of Truth' ". . . through this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us," (1Jn 3:24). The Holy Spirit grants us to confront the sharp conflict between the spirit of the world and the Spirit of the Truth. This is because the world cannot tolerate, accept, or see the truth. Indeed, the world resists it, and is unable to see or know Him. Consequently, '...if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him,' (1Jn 2:15).

The spirit of the world is a spirit of lies and deceit. The possessions, joys, and pleasures it offers quickly become transformed into neglect, grieving, and bitterness. In this manner, truth cannot find a place in the world just as the love of the world cannot find a place in the eternal divine truth. What God offers is the unchanging truth. That is why the Lord says: "My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give you," (Jn 14:27). " . . . I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, your joy no one will take from you," (Jn 16:22) "Whoever drinks of this water that I shall give him will never thirst," (Jn 4:13). This is the nature of Truth and His gifts and blessings. These are not in harmony with the nature of the world, or its spirit and its passing gifts.

The Spirit of Truth which the world does not know is the basis of knowledge in believers. He dwells and remains with them. He lives in them and they know Him as long as they remain steadfast in Him.

The **'Spirit of Truth'** who testifies that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Truth, attracts souls to accept His message and get acquainted with His mysteries.

“... **the world cannot receive Him**” does not refer to those who have loved Him and carried His name. It refers to those who find their pleasure in the lust of the flesh and the eyes, and the pride of life, (1Jn 2:16). These are afflicted with spiritual blindness and corrupt minds. They are unable to see or comprehend the Spirit of truth.

“... **but you know Him**”: in the Vulgate and in some transcripts, the words used are “...**you will know Him**”. When they will be armed with belief in the Lord, especially after His resurrection, they would be prepared to know the promised Holy Spirit. Moreover, they would enjoy His dwelling and presence in them. This would occur on the day of Pentecost. The Lord constantly attracts us to that which is higher than ourselves.

* The Lord said: “... **the world cannot receive Him because it neither sees Him nor knows Him**” in order to prevent them from thinking that there would be another person. These words served to clarify to the disciples that they should not expect to visually see that other “... **Helper**”.

St. John Chrysostom

* Some Syrian thinkers comment on the words: ‘...The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters...’ and find that they seem to convey the ‘fostering warmth’ of the Shepherd. In other words, God was preparing the nature of the waters so that it would give birth to living creatures. This in itself provides sufficient response and evidence to some people who question the creative power of the Holy Spirit.¹

St Basil the Great

* The (temporary) love of the world has no other eyes than the visible ones, whereas the Holy Spirit cannot be seen except by the invisible eyes².

* He is seen in an intangible manner, and it is impossible to possess any knowledge of the Holy Spirit if He does not dwell in us³.

St. Augustine

5- The Lord's Appearance to the Disciples

**“I will not leave you orphans
I will come to you”. [18]**

The disciples had become so attached to the Lord. They were just as children who get attached to their father. That is why when He was about to leave them, to go through the Cross, and ascend to heaven, the Lord wanted to reassure them that He would not leave them as orphans. In other words, they would not be like children deprived of their parent’s tender love, guidance, and support. The Lord did not want to leave them as a prey to misery and deprivation. By leaving them, as He was going to the Cross and then

¹ Homilia 2 in Hexameron. PG 29:43B

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractae 74:4

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 74:5

ascending to heaven, they would suffer greatly as orphans. The Lord would no longer be with them in the flesh. However, He would transform their orphaned state into one of sublime and new adoption by sending His Holy Spirit who would grant them to become the children of God through baptism.

The Jews used to consider teachers as their fathers, and the students as their children. Thus, in leaving the disciples, the Lord seemed to let his disciples become like those who had no father. As He walked in the valley of death, and then ascended into heaven, the Lord would send them another Teacher. He would be their Comforter, defender and leader on their way to attain the joy of the divine fatherhood. They would not feel any deprivation because His Holy Spirit would dwell in them. Concerning Himself, the Lord would come to them, after arising from death, and He would appear to them. In the same manner, after His ascension, He would come at the end of time to carry them into glory. He also comes to us constantly by His Spirit. He is present in our hearts and in our midst.

* As the disciples did not understand the words spoken to them, and were not sufficiently comforted, the Lord told them: **“I will not leave you orphans”**. They had prayed for that more than anything else. The Lord’s words **“I will come to you”** clarify that He would come again to them.

St. John Chrysostom

**“A little while longer and the world will see Me no more,
But you will see Me.
Because I live
You will live also”. [19]**

The world could see the Lord Jesus Christ due to His incarnation. However, they could not see Him at all due to their inability to comprehend His divinity. Now that He would be crucified and would die, the world could see Him no more- neither according to the flesh nor according to His divinity since He was about to leave and disappear from the world. Nevertheless, the disciples were going to be able to perceive His divine mysteries and experience the power of His resurrection working within them. Therefore although they would be deprived from seeing Him physically, they would enjoy life in its essence and live just as He lives. They would share the words of St. Paul and say: "...God... made us alive together with Christ" (Eph 2:5). Hence "...it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me," (Gal 2:20).

* The Lord is telling them: ‘I will come to you in a manner that is different from my coming the first time. His words: “Because I live, you will live also” indicate that the Cross will not separate us until the end of time. ‘It would just make Me disappear for a short while only’. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was referring not only to His present life, but also to the life to come.

St. John Chrysostom

* We were dead when we did not know Him and lived just for ourselves. However, by His death, He now lives in His own right and for our sakes too. Because He is alive, we are alive as well. Left on our own, we would be overcome by death, for we cannot attain life through our own power¹.

St. Augustine

**“At that day you will know that I am in My Father,
And you in Me, and I in you”. [20]**

Just as I will arise from the dead, so will you as well. My resurrection will confirm your resurrection. Being alive, I will intercede for you before the Father. Death will not be able to destroy you. Indeed, you shall live through my grace and you will enjoy the fellowship of my glory.

After the Lord's death, the unbelievers could not see the Lord. Yet He appeared many times to believers. And to this day, believers enjoy beholding Him within the depth of their souls. The Lord Jesus Christ is still alive as He is present in His Church and in the lives of believers. They experience the life of the Lord who lives within them.

By saying: “. . . you in Me”, the Lord proclaims that He has taken the form (put on) of mankind through His incarnation. His words: “. . .and I in You” indicate His presence in us, and this enables us to enjoy fellowship in His divine nature. By setting up His kingdom within us, He has granted us to become members in His Body.

The Lord granted us the mystery of the holy Eucharist when He said: “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him”, (Jn 6:56) and “. . . so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me,” (Jn 6:57).

* These words refer to the Essence (the Divine One). To the disciples, the Lord's words indicate the oneness of thought and the divine support.

St. John Chrysostom

* Today, too, He dwells in us and we in Him. This is what we believe in today and this is what we will know in the fullness of time. What we now know we hold through faith; what we will get to know will come through actual revelation².

St. Augustine

**“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father,
And I will love him and manifest Myself to him,” [21]**

The true testimony of our love for the Lord Jesus Christ is our obedience to His law and commandments. It is evident in a love that is consistent, dignified, and obedient.

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 75:3

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 75:4

It results in our will being in harmony with the will of our Beloved, and in our behavior that is in agreement with divine wisdom.

1- The fruits of this practical love is the believer's enjoyment of the Father's love to him, of His tenderness and His embrace; for the Father loves the Son and those whom the Son loves.

2. A believer also enjoys the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for "... **I will love him**", [21] as a brother and Savior. He will grant the believer forgiveness of sins and the joy of everlasting life.

3. The Lord, moreover, will reveal Himself to the believer: "... **manifest Myself to him,**" [21]; for He will shine on his thoughts as well as on his heart. Hence the believer will enjoy spiritual enlightenment.

In this manner, the Lord Jesus Christ associates the joy of divine love with actual living and experience based on obedience to the Divine law. He also ties it with divine revelation or Divine presence that is announced in the Holy Spirit who grants enlightenment. In this manner, a person who wishes to see God needs to love, and to translate this love into living and applying the divine commandments.

* It is not enough to just possess the commandments. We need to observe and apply them to the full.

St. John Chrysostom

* He who memorizes (my commandments) and observes them in his life: he who says them with his lips and applies them to his conduct . . . he who continues to listen to them with his ears and applies them in his acts . . . he who has deeds and perseveres in them according to My commandments: such a one "**loves Me**". Love is proclaimed through deeds, whereas literal applications without fruit are mere words (for love)¹.

St. Augustine

* Each word that the Lord utters reveals the mercy of God, His righteousness, and His wisdom. His words could be powerful to the ears if they listened obediently. That is why a hard- hearted and wicked person, who listens unwillingly, cannot comprehend the Divine Wisdom. Indeed, such a person would be crucifying the Lord who has proclaimed these teachings.

Therefore we need to find out if we are listening obediently to the Lord's commandments. For He has said: "If you love Me keep My commandments . . . he who has My commandments, keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him," (Jn 14:15, 21).

Do you see how the Lord uses His commandments as an instrument through which He manifests Himself? The greatest commandment is to love God and our

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 75:5

neighbors. This is achieved once we reject all temporary matters and our minds become steadfast¹.

St. Mark the Ascetic

Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said to Him: "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" [22]

When the Lord had given these divine promises, one of the disciples expressed his astonishment that the Lord would reveal Himself to the disciples and not to the whole world. This is what Judas (not Iscariot) expressed; and he was the brother of James (Lk 6:16). He was related to the Lord according to the flesh, (Matt 13:55) and he wrote the Book of Jude.

Judas was astonished as he felt that he and the rest of the disciples had received a sublime gift and a vision of the Messiah and His deeds. The world did not enjoy these matters. Yet, there remained one question: did Judas realize at that moment what the Lord was proclaiming about Himself, or was he still thinking of the Lord as an earthly king? Did he think he would interact with Him physically only? However, the Lord intended to draw all their thoughts towards heaven.

St. John Chrysostom finds that the Lord Jesus Christ had promised to reveal Himself to His disciples; and this made them think that He would appear to them in their dreams. They could not image that He would rise from the dead and truly ascend into heaven. They thought He would appear in their dreams and as part of their imagination. When they did not dare to ask Him, He corrected their understanding by telling them that He would come with the Father and live within them: the disciples would be like a house in which the Father and the Son would dwell.

* Do you not see how their souls were filled with fear? Judas was confused and frustrated as he thought he would see something like an apparition of a dead one in a dream. In order to remove such imagination, hear the Lord's words: **"We will come to him and make Our home with him,"** [23] . . . this is a matter that is unrelated to dreams².

St. John Chrysostom

**Jesus answered and said to him:
"If any one loves Me, he will keep My word,
And My Father will love him, and We will come
And make our home with him." [23]**

The Lord started to address His disciples as well as all those who believed and loved Him. This divine promise is a general one made to all: the Father and the Son would transform the heart into a divine home or temple.

¹ Philokalia, Book 1

² Homilies on St John, 75:3

Whereas Judas was astonished by the Lord proclamation, yet the Lord speaks collectively about Himself and the Father combined. It is as though He intends believers to make the mental association of His true status as He ascends to the Father and exists with Him. He seems to be asking them: 'Do you wish me to proclaim Myself? I am inseparable from the Father! I dwell with Him in heaven; and when I dwell within your hearts, the Father and I will dwell together within you.

*** The gifts that the Holy Spirit, allocated to each one, are granted by the Father through the Word.** Everything that the Father has is also owned by the Son. Therefore the gifts granted by the Son through the Holy Spirit are the Gifts of the Father. When the Holy Spirit dwells in us, the Word also dwells in us who grants the Holy Spirit, and so does the Father in whom the Word dwells. This is consistent with the words: "We will come to him and make our home with him," (Jn 14:23). Indeed, where there is light, there are rays as well; and where there are rays there is energy and hidden grace.

This is what the apostle proclaimed when he wrote his Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all . . ." (2Cor 13:14). This blessing and gift is granted through the Holy Spirit: proceeding from the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.

Just as the gifts are granted from the Father through the Son, so we cannot enjoy and have a share in these gifts except through the Holy Spirit. **Indeed, when we have fellowship with Him, we are granted the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Himself.**

This fact indicates the unity of the work of the Trinity. The apostle does not intend to convey that gifts are given in small parcels or as a talent granted by each of the hypostasis of the Trinity separately. The gifts that are granted are given through the Holy Spirit and come from the one and only God.

St. Athanasius the Apostolic

* The proof of love is proclaimed in deeds. That is why St. John writes in his Epistle: "He who says: 'I know Him' and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him," (1Jn 2:4). Our love is genuine when we keep our will in harmony with His commandments. A person who wanders here and there to satisfy his/her wicked lusts does not love God truly, for he opposes God as revealed by his acts and will¹.

St. Gregory (the Great)

* In this passage there is a kind of deeper proclamation of God. It is a matter that is unknown to the wicked who do not accept any revelation about God the Father and the Holy Spirit. This is also true about the Son about whom they know nothing other than His physical aspect . . . therefore it will bring them condemnation rather than joy, and punishment rather than reward².

¹ Hom.30. PL 76:1220. Forty Gospel Homilies

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 76:2

* In order to avoid the assumption that the Father and the Son are together and exclude the Holy Spirit as they built mansions for their beloved ones, let us remember what was said earlier concerning the Holy Spirit: **"...the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him, nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you, and will be in you,"** [17].

Through these words, you can learn that the Holy Spirit is also with the Father and the Son; and He also dwells in the saints. In other words, He reigns as the one God in His temple.

The Holy Trinity comes to us just as we go to Him.

He comes to bring support. We come to offer obedience. He comes to enlighten us. We come to receive vision.

He comes to fill us up and we come to enfold and embrace Him. Consequently, our vision of Him will not be an exterior one but an interior revelation.

The indwelling of the Holy Trinity is permanent and is never a temporary one.

The Son does not proclaim Himself in this manner to the world. He has spoken about the world in a previous statement, and He promptly added: "He who does not love Me does not keep My words," [24]. Those who are disobedient will not see the Father or the Holy Spirit. They will see the Son only for a short while: they will see Him as the One who will judge them rather than as a Source of blessings. They will not see Him as God who is equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit and invisible with them. On the contrary, they will only see His human aspect and as the One who voluntarily accepted to be a subject of derision throughout His sufferings. Yet He will be the subject of terror when He comes to judge the world¹.

* The kind of dwelling which the Lord promises in the future has specific attributes or qualities . . . it is a spiritual dwelling that is achieved internally in the mind; whereas the other is physical and is externally proclaimed to the eye and ear (and which refers to seeing the Lord Jesus Christ during His ministry on earth).

One dwelling brings eternal blessings to those who accept it. The other involves time and those who await salvation.

In the first case, the Lord will not withdraw Himself away from those who love Him. In the second case, He would come and then depart; therefore He says: **"These things I have spoken to you while being present with you"** [25]. The Lord spoke to them at that time in a tangible manner as He was physically present with them².

St Augustine

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 76:4

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 77:2

* The Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ dwells in those who carry His image. We are talking here about the form and the features . . . for God offers in His promises to the righteous: "I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people" (2Cor 6:16; Lev 26: 12; Jer 3:23, 32:38; Zech 8:8). The Lord also says: **"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home with him," (Jn 14:23)...**

In other parts of the Holy Bible, we are told about the mystery of the resurrection. It is addressed to those whose ears have been divinely opened. We are told that the Temple which had been destroyed will be rebuilt by using living and precious stones. This allows us to comprehend how everyone who is led by the word of God to struggle with others on the path of purity would be precious stones in the Temple of the only one almighty God.

Consequently, St. Peter says: "...you also as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ..." (1Peter 2:5). St. Paul also says: "... having being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,"(Eph 2:20). There is also a similar passage to these words in Isaiah that implicitly refer to this subject and where the prophet addresses Jerusalem and says: ". . . I will lay your stones with colorful gems, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of crystal, and all yours walls of precious stones. All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children," (Is 54:11-14).

Therefore among the righteous, some are colorful gems, some are sapphires, while others are crystal or precious stone. In other words, there is a wide range of types...¹ .

Origen the Scholar

**"He who does not love Me does not keep My words;
And the word which you hear is not Mine,
But the Father's who sent Me". [24]**

Having spoken about His yearning to come with the Father and dwell in their hearts as in holy temples, the Lord warns believers about love for the world. Its futile pleasures would prevent them from keeping His words and which are also the words of the Father. In loving the world they would be proclaiming their love for the darkness and not for the light. As a result, there would be no place for Him and the Father to dwell in them.

* It is as though the Lord Jesus Christ is stating the following: 'A person who does not observe His words neither loves the Son nor the Father. If observing the commandments

¹ Fr Tadros Y Malaty: The Church According to Origen the Scholar. Translation by Dr George Botros

are proof of love, and these commandments are My Father's, then a person who observes them loves not only the Son but loves the Father as well.

St John Chrysostom

5-The Comforter and Teacher

"These things I have spoken to you while being present with you". [26]

The Lord Jesus Christ encourages the disciples to receive the other Comforter as He is the Teacher who does not compete with the Lord. Indeed, the Comforter will remind the disciples of the Lord's words, and will reveal to them other mysteries: **"He will teach you all things"** [26] as He is the Spirit of Wisdom. He will not bring a new gospel but rather will work in them to remind them of the Lord's gospel, and to reveal to them matters they were unable to accept before.

**"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My Name,
He will teach you all things,
And bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" [26].**

* The Lord speaks of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter due to the anxiety the disciples felt at that time.

The Lord spoke these words as He charged them to endure patiently their separation from Him. This difficult experience would bring great blessings to them.

St John Chrysostom

* The Holy Spirit does not dwell in a person without the presence of the Father and the Son too. Neither does the Son come without the Father or the Holy Spirit, nor does the Father come without them. Their indwelling is inseparable. Yet they could reveal themselves separately in symbols borrowed from the creation. Even though they are never separate in their one essence¹.

St Augustine

* The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit. The Father sends the Holy Spirit as we are told: **"I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper"** [16]. The Son, too, sends the Holy Spirit as He says: "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth. . ." (15:26). Therefore if the Son and the Holy Spirit send one another just as the Father also does, then none submits to the other or is lower in rank for they all are integrated in one authority².

St. Ambrose

* The Greek word '**Paraclete**' means in Latin 'a lawyer' or 'comforter'. He is called 'lawyer' for He intercedes before the Father's judgment seat on behalf of sinners.

¹ Sermon on NT Lessons:21:33

² On the Holy spirit, Book 3:1:8

The One who is of the same essence as the Father and the Son, is said to jealously intercede for sinners. He encourages those He teaches to do so; and that explains St. Paul's words: "...the Spirit Himself makes intercessions for us with groaning which cannot be uttered," (Rom 8:26)...

This Spirit is the same One who is considered as the Comforter for He revives the hope of forgiveness in those who grieve over their sins. He lifts their hearts out of sorrow and despair. He promises to teach them everything. If the Spirit is not present in the heart of the hearer, then the words of the teacher would not be beneficial.

It is not appropriate for a person to attribute to his teacher the things he has come to understand from him: Indeed the apparent and external teacher may vainly exert himself if there is no internal teacher. In that context, St. John says: ". . . the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things . . . just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him," (1Jn 2:27).

No one learns through mere hearing if his heart has not been anointed by the Spirit: "**He will . . . bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you**" as He grants you knowledge. This is possible as He knows things that are hidden, but are not of lesser importance¹.

St. Gregory the Great

The Church embodies the great fellowship in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. She is a blessing of love and life granted by the Father of light. The Lord Jesus Christ is present within her as she calls Him in prayer, remembers His testimony and His powerful ministry with the Holy Spirit. Consequently He leads the Church and her children to perfection through the inner voice of the Spirit.

St. Isaac of Nicibean says: [...when the Spirit establishes His dwelling within a person, that person never stops praying because the Spirit never ceases to pray within Him].

* When we begin to meditate on the One Unity, we are overwhelmed by the brilliance of the Holy Trinity. At the same time that Oneness engages us. When any of the hypostasis of the Trinity appears to us, we perceive that He is the whole Being. He completely fills our eyes and we are unable to look for more. Our very limited mind is unable to retain more! It is because we comprehend one flame as we associate the Trinity as one concept. It becomes impossible to split the one light or to analyze it².

St Gregory Nazianzen

* The Holy Trinity as one whole speaks and teaches, (Jn 6:45; Matt 23:10; Acts 10:20)...for they are inseparable³.

¹ Hom. 30. Forty Gospel Homilies.PL 76:1220

² Gregory Nazianzen: Oral XL, IN Sanctum Baptisma 41. PG 36:417 c.

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 77:2

The Church and the Holy Trinity

The Church is the divine environment where grace works and salvation is offered. According to **St Augustine**, we alone believe that the human being is ‘an extension of the Triune family’. In other words, when God considers man to be in His likeness, then the Lord Jesus Christ occupies the first place in that respect. Consequently, man is governed by the same dynamics as those of the holy Trinity Himself. These are the dynamics of freedom, love, and unity. We alone know that this image and likeness of God, which gets formed within the divine embrace, makes superhuman demands upon us. We have to surmount the struggle in order to attain life, and we need to bypass our egocentricity. In doing so, we will be able to look forward to a fellowship and essential fulfillment for all humanity¹.

St. Gregory of Nazianzen² finds in the Old Testament a clear declaration about the Father, while the statement about the Son is a more mysterious one. In the New Testament, the Son is declared and the divinity of the Holy Spirit is revealed. Therefore the revelation concerning the Trinity occurs gradually. This is intended for the benefit of the people who would otherwise be like those who get heavy with overfeeding; or who get exposed to the sun while their eyes are still too weak. In such a case, there is the danger of losing even the little strength they had. Therefore, according to David the King, they are intended to progress gradually and go ahead and grow from glory to glory. Then the light of the Trinity will shine on those who become enlightened.

* We observe with all due attention the faith we receive from the Church. It is through the work of the Holy Spirit that we are granted this deposit of great value. Our faith is placed in a good vessel and is renewed constantly, and this in turn renews the vessel constantly. **The grace of God (the Holy Spirit) is granted to the Church just as the breath of life was granted to man when he was created.** Consequently, all members are granted fellowship and life through the Holy Spirit. The Church enjoys fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ- that is with the Holy Spirit - and that constitutes a warranty against corruption, a steadfastness in faith, and a ladder to ascend to God...indeed, wherever a church is found, there we will find the Holy Spirit. Moreover, wherever the Spirit of God is found, a church and every good blessing will be found there as well³.

* Through the prophets, God promised to pour His Spirit into His servants at the end of the ages. For that reason, He descended on the Son of God who became the Son of Man. Then it became a common matter for God to dwell in mankind, remain in their midst, live within God's creatures. In this manner, He transforms men from the old into the newness of the Lord and of the Messiah . . . By promising to send the Paraclete, the Lord intends to prepare us to come to God⁴.

¹ Declaration of Msgr Joseph Phourde, Archbishop of Ottawa, at the Synod of Rome on October 19, 1971

² St Gregory Nazianzen, Oratio 31, Theologica 26. PG 36:161

³ Adv. Haer. 3:24:1

⁴ Adv. Haer. 3:17:1-2 PG 7:929-30

* Just as dry flour cannot become dough or a loaf of bread unless it is mixed with liquid, **we all cannot be united in the Lord Jesus Christ without being sprinkled with the water descending from heaven.** This water was received by the Lord as a gift from God; and He grants it also to those who have fellowship with Him by pouring the Holy Spirit over the whole earth¹.

* The priests, who are disciples of the apostles, describe the journey of the redeemed and the stages of their progress: **they ascend by the Spirit to the Son, and by the Son to the Father, and finally the Son delivers his work to the Father.** The apostle speaks of that in 1Cor 15:24².

* **The Father plans and issues commands; the Son fulfills and creates; the Holy Spirit refreshes and develops; and so man ascends the steps towards the Perfect One**³.

* The disciples are activated by the same feelings and praise God; for the Spirit attracts the tribes and peoples from distant lands to unity. They offer the first the nations to the Father. This too is the reason why the Lord promised to send the Paraclete to us; for He is the One who prepares us to come to God⁴.

* Just as a barren land cannot produce fruit unless it is watered, so we who were dry wood previously could not have produced living fruit without the heavenly rain overflowing upon us. Now our bodies are enabled to unite with the Incorrupt through the washing of the Baptism, while our souls are washed and unified through the Spirit. That is why both are essential since both contribute to the divine life⁵.

St. Iraneus

* We still need the other One to reveal to us and proclaim all matters . . . through repentance, which the Lord and Savior preached; through turning away from evil to all righteousness, through the remission of sin that is granted to all believers. All these lead to the fulfillment of goodness. Briefly, all these matters help a **person to be qualified to receive the Holy Spirit.** Nothing can provide righteousness to someone who is void of the Holy Spirit. Only through the Holy Spirit can we comprehend the blessed mystery of the Holy Trinity and attain all goodness⁶.

Origen the Scholar

* **Those who are filled with the Holy Spirit are led to the Word- that is, they are carried to the Son. However, the Son carries them and presents them to the Father**

¹ Adv. Haer. 3:17:2

² Adv. Haer. 5:36:2. PG 7:1223 B.

³ Adv. Haer. 4:38:3 PG 1108 B

⁴ Adv. Haer. 3:17:2. PG 7:930

⁵ Adv. Haer. 3:17:2PG 7:903 A

⁶ In Librum Jesu Nave, Homilia 3:2 PG 12:838 A

and the Father grants them a state of incorruption. Note that without the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to come close to the Father . . . because any acquaintance with the Son is fulfilled through the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the Son grants the gifts of the Holy Spirit in accordance with the pleasure of the Father and His will¹.

A Guide to Apostolic Preaching

The Gift of the Holy Spirit is revealed to us in as much as we seek and pray for it.

* This gift (of the Holy Spirit) that is in the Lord Jesus Christ is one Being, and is offered in full to everyone-no one is deprived of the Holy Spirit. However, each one receives according to the measure of his own will. The Spirit resides within us to the extent to which we qualify and according to our fervor in praying to receive Him. This gift remains with us until the end of the world. He comforts us as we yearn for Him, and grants us peace through the privileges He grants us. We live in the hope that He becomes the guiding light for our minds and the Sun for our souls. This Spirit requires us to seek Him and yearn for Him. As we do so, we need to hold on to Him steadfastly by keeping the faith and obeying God's commands².

St. Hilary, Bishop of Boitier

* **The path of divine wisdom ascends from one Holy Spirit through the one Son to the one Father.** In the same manner, natural righteousness as well as inherent holiness and kingly honor proceed from the Father, through the only Son, and to the Holy Spirit³.

* When we fix our eyes, with the help of the powerful light of the Holy Spirit, on the beauty of the image of God (the invisible) as seen in the Son; then through that image, we are led to the ultimate and genuine beauty of the Father. Consequently, the Spirit of Truth within us appears indivisible for all those who love to see the Truth. Indeed, that Spirit grants us the power to see the image . . . He does not empower externally but rather leads us to knowledge found within Himself⁴.

* He does not dwell in them (sinners); for they easily reject the grace they receive⁵.

St. Basil the Great

7- The Lord's Joy Due to His Departure

**"Peace I leave with you,
My peace I give to you;
Not as the world gives do I give to you.
Let not you heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." [27].**

¹ Proof of the Apostolic Preaching, 7

² On the Trinity 2:35

³ Liber de Spiritu Sancto, 18:47 PG 32:153

⁴ Liber de Spiritu Sancto, 18:14:PG 32:153 B

⁵ Liber de Spiritu Sancto, 26:61:PG 32:180 D

What has the Lord given to His disciples who had abandoned everything and followed Him? **“My Peace I give to you”** [27]: He does not leave them feeling sad and bitter, Rather, He leaves them feeling peaceful as He grants them a precious inheritance: which is His peace! Indeed, He Himself is our peace (Eph 2:14). He has given us Himself as our inheritance and our peace.

That peace is not like the one which the world gives to us. It is not just a verbal greeting. Rather, it is a true blessing that is expressed as He offers Himself to those who believe in Him. The world, with all its potentials, cannot offer such peace. Moreover, in spite of all the sadness in the world, nothing can withdraw that peace from a believer. This is because whatever the world grants affects the body and is limited by time and place. As for the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ, it embraces the whole human being. Neither time nor place can restrict it: the Lord's peace draws the human soul to experience eternity.

“Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let it be afraid...”: Because the peace of the Lord is eternal, no power can tear it away from a person who holds on firmly to it. The peace of the world may tempt a person to sin, either in the form of lusts or vanity. In contrast, the peace of the Lord is evident in the way abundant grace works and enables a person to lead a life of holiness and righteousness. In order to draw the hearts of His disciples towards eternal joy and heavenly peace, the Lord spoke to them as someone who is rejoicing due to His return to heaven. He grants them His peace so that they would find fulfillment in Him, and rejoice as they are lifted up with Him.

* The disciples were greatly troubled when they heard the Lord's words: **"I go to prepare a place for you"**. They imagined that His departure would arouse enmity and wars against them. Notice how the Lord dispels their anxiety when He tells them: **"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you"**. He almost told them: ‘As long as My peace embraces you, what harm can the world inflict upon you?’

St. John Chrysostom

* He grants us His peace while He has departed; and He will offer us His peace when He comes at the end of time. He grants us peace while we are in this world and His peace will embrace us in the world to come. He leaves His peace with us and as we dwell in Him we will defeat the enemy.

He will grant us His peace until there are no more enemies to fight; and consequently we would reign as kings.

He grants us peace so that we may love one another here on earth. Moreover, He will grant us His peace when we reach the heights where no conflicts could occur.

He grants us His peace so that we do not judge one another although we ignore one another's private concerns in this world. He will grant us His peace when ‘He reveals the counsels of the hearts and then each one's praise will come from God’, (1Cor 4:5). In

spite of that, it is in Him and from Him that we are granted peace. Whether that peace is granted by Him as He ascends to the Father, or whether it is the peace He will grant us when He brings us before the Father.

What will He leave to us when He ascends other than His presence which He will not withdraw from us? He is our peace and therefore our status in both conditions remains one and the same. (Eph 2:4). Therefore the Lord constitutes our peace when we believe that He is the Holy One, or when we see Him as He is; (1Jn 3:2).

Although we exist in this corrupt body that overwhelms the soul, yet we proceed with faith and not by any physical power. We are confident that He will not abandon those who have departed but have remained estranged from Him, (2Cor 5:6-7). How much more will that be when we attain that faith, for He will fill us with Himself¹.

*** The peace which the Lord grants us in this world could more adequately be considered as our peace rather than His. Since He is utterly without sin, there is no element of conflict in Him. In contrast, the peace we have possesses an aspect that still makes us pray and say: "...and forgive us our debts..." (Matt 6:12) . . . for it is not a perfect peace since we find a different law in our bodies that opposes the law of our minds, (Rom. 22:7-23)².**

St. Augustine

**"You have heard Me say to you,
I am going away and coming back to you:
If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said; I am going to the Father;
For My Father is greater than I". [28]**

The Lord presents another reason that would explain why their hearts should not be troubled: although He would depart, yet He would come back to them again. He was departing in order to receive the kingdom, authority, and power on their behalf. Consequently, it was appropriate that they should rejoice due to what they were going to enjoy.

"For My Father is greater than I," [28]: The Lord became incarnate, and humbled Himself in order to redeem us. According to the flesh, He became as some one who had lesser glory than the Father. If the pleasure of the Father and the Son require the Son to be humbled for the sake of mankind in order to glorify them, then it is appropriate that believers rejoice with the Son. They rejoice with the Son who finds it an honor to be humbled since His act fulfills their salvation and glory.

* It is clear that He became Man while He continued to be God; for God put on the guise of Man. Yet God was not absorbed or dissolved into a Man. Logically, the following

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 77:3

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 77:4

would also be true: that the Lord Jesus Christ as a Man had a lower rank than the Father. Yet since He is God then he is equal to the Father, and hence equal to God, (John 10:30)¹.

* Many matters are reported in the Holy Bible that speak about the Lord Jesus Christ being in the image of God. Other instances reveal Him as a servant or slave. We will use two of these instances for examples; one to illustrate each aspect. As an image of God, the Lord says: "I and the Father are one," (Jn 10:30). As an image of a slave, he says: "My Father is greater than I"².

St. Augustine

* It does seem odd that He who is the Logos had become incarnated, (Jn 1:14); and that He admits that the Father is greater than Him. Moreover, He appeared of lesser glory than the angels, and took the form of man. "For you have made him a little lower than the angels"(Ps 8:5) . . . and "He has no form or comeliness, and when we see Him, there is no beauty," (Is 53:2-3). That is why He is lower than the Father. Indeed He who has loved you has tolerated death and has granted you fellowship in the heavenly life³.

St. Basil the Great

* Due to His humility, the Lord spoke these words, and they have been exploited cunningly by opponents who attack Him⁴.

* They claim that it is written: "**My Father is greater than I**"; and also that "We did not consider it robbery to be equal with God," (Phil 2:6). Moreover, it is written that the Jews wanted to kill Him because He said that He was the Son of God and equaled Himself to God, (Jn 5:18). In John 10:30, the Lord says, "I and the Father are one," (Jn 10:30). They quote one passage and not many passages; therefore could He be lower and equal at the same time to the One and same entity? No, since one expression refers to His divinity while the other refers to His humanity⁵.

St Ambrose

"And Now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe" [29].

The Lord Jesus Christ informed the disciples in advance about His death so that they would not be confused when this would happen. He revealed to them that His death was a necessary requirement for their salvation. In this manner, the Lord tried to relieve their deep sorrow by granting them hope.

**"I will no longer talk much with you,
For the ruler of this world is coming, and He has nothing in Me". [30]**

¹ Letters, 170

² Letters, 238

³ Letter 8 to the Caesareans, 5

⁴ On the Holy Spirit, Book 2:8:59

⁵ On the Holy Spirit, Book 5:18:224

Some thought that the Lord was speaking about Pontius Pilate who was the Roman ruler. But most thinkers agree that He was referring to Satan as being the ruler of the world, and this according to Ephesians 2: 2 and John 2:31. He is also called the god of this world in 2Corinthians 4:4.

The struggle of the Lord Jesus Christ is not with man but with the armies of spiritual darkness. Man is not an opponent in the struggle. Rather the struggle is between the Lord Jesus Christ and Satan; while man has the choice to hide in one of them. The Lord Jesus Christ speaks confidently as He states that Satan has no place in Him. Consequently, the Lord will surely overpower and conquer Him.

* The words of the Lord: "**For the ruler of this world**" refer to Satan. Satan is called the ruler of this world not because he presides over heaven and earth-otherwise he would have toppled and reversed all creatures. Rather, Satan rules those people who have submitted themselves to him.

St. John Chrysostom

* We are besieged by hostile armies that surround us on every side. The body is frail and will soon turn into dust. It is one entity struggling against many tremendous armies, until the body is finally dissolved; and until the ruler of the world comes and finds it without sin. Until that time comes; let us carefully listen to the words of the prophet: "...you shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day . . ." (Ps 91:5)¹.

* If a bishop is short of a virtue or two out of the list of virtues, it does not indicate that he can no longer be considered as being righteous. Moreover, he would not be condemned for his failings. Rather, he would be crowned for what he possesses. Being perfectly virtuous and having no failings whatsoever are attributes of the Lord Jesus Christ only. Only He is without sin, and He never uttered deceit with His mouth. When He was insulted, He never insulted in return, (1Peter 2:22)².

St. Jerome

* With such words the Lord referred to Satan as a ruler over sinners but not over all God's creations. The Lord refers to such sinners as presently being 'this world'. When He uses the words 'the world' with connotations of wickedness, the Lord is referring only to those people who love the world; to those who are referred to in another passage where it says: "Love of the world is enmity to God," (James 4:4). God forbid that we understand that Satan is the ruler of the world, who possesses the authority to control all the affairs of the world, as well as the heavens and the earth, and all things in them. We have spoken about the world when we spoke about the Lord Jesus Christ as the Word: "...and the world was made by Him," (Jn 1:1). The whole world- from the highest heavens to lowest point in the earth- submits to the Creator and not to the fugitive; to the Savior and not to the destroyer; to the Rescuer and not to the enslaved; to the Teacher and not to the deceiver³.

¹ Letters 22:3

² Against the Pelagians, 1:22

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 79:2

St. Augustine

**“But that the world may know that I love the father,
And as the Father gave Me commandments, so I do.
Arise, let us g from here.” [31]**

Satan cannot find a dwelling in the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, he is incapable of fighting Him. Yet the Lord allowed him to engage with Him in a decisive war in order to fulfill the Father's plan of Salvation; as well as to demonstrate the Son's love for the Father.

That was the Father's commandment: for the Son to save the world by His sufferings. This was the reason why the Lord asked His disciples to arise and leave the place: so that He would deliver Himself to death.

* The Lord spoke these words to lift up the spirit of His disciples. He wanted to let them know that He was going to that death willingly and not due to any coercion.

St. John Chrysostom

Chapter 14

* May your Holy Spirit carry me to your expansive Heavens!

* When my spirit gets troubled within me
Due to the multitude of my sins,
You have revealed to me the extent of your heavens that await each believer!
You grant us all the same everlasting life,
Where Your believers will shine like brilliant planets.
Each one elated and rejoicing on account of the great brilliance of his brother!

* May I soar, through You who is the Way, to the place where You are found.
For You are my divine Path, and You are my Heaven.
Through You I can soar and come to stay with You in the Father's embrace!

* I wonder: how can I, a human being, remain with You?
You have granted me Your Holy Spirit to sanctify my depths.
You have abandoned me physically when you ascended,
You sent your fiery Spirit to shape me in Your image!
He grants me the knowledge of Truth.
Therefore I get to know You, O Truth.
I see You and so see the Father, for You are One!
I perceive You in your humility declaring: 'My Father is greater than I'.
These words do not make me stumble
For I find in them the spirit of humility.
O You who became a slave for my sake!

* I hear Your words and they make me cling to Your love!
Your love made You descend to me
So that You would raise me to the Father's embrace.
Although You are inseparable from the Father,
You became as one lower than Him,
So that You would carry me from my degradation
To the heights of sharing fellowship in Your glory!

* How I would have desired to accompany You
When You lived physically on this earth.
However, Your ascension has lifted my heart to You.
The gift of Your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth,
The giver of all blessings, comforts my soul.
Your grace has comforted my heart,
And I will not ask the Father for anything else!
Your blessings have erased my orphan condition
For I have become the child of the King of Kings who lives forever!
Your gift is the able Teacher who can penetrate my depths,

And lead me- not to theoretical philosophy-but to the whole Truth!

* You shine upon me, O only Son, by the light of the Spirit
Therefore my life is filled with the brilliance of the Holy Trinity.
The world is dead to me with all its darkness,
So that I live in the light of Truth.
Glory be to You, O Father, the Lover of mankind and the Planner of Salvation!

* To You we offer praise, O Holy Spirit,
Who grants holiness and righteousness!
My Spirit plunges into the depths of the love of the Holy Trinity.
As it yearns to enjoy a full vision on the great day of the Lord!

Glory be to God forever

Amen

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A FAREWELL SPEECH

The two chapters (15 and 16) are a farewell speech that the Lord addresses to His disciples on the night He was arrested to be delivered to die. In this speech He makes them ready to face hardship.

In this chapter (15), the Lord speaks to them about:

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 1- The Necessity of Abiding in Him | 1-8 |
| 2- That They Must Love One Another | 9-17 |
| 3- Confrontation of the Hatred of the world | 18-25 |
| 4- Sending the Helper | 26-27 |

1- The Necessity of Abiding in Him

**“I am the true vine,
And My Father is the vinedresser.” [1]**

Having condescended for our sake, He uses temporal metaphors to disclose His identity and His work in us. So He is called the Sun of righteousness that gives light to those who sit in darkness; He is the shining star, and the vine.

No Jewish person could expect the Messiah to liken Himself to a vine. They awaited His coming as their king and savior, having authority to restore dignity to His people in the world and to grant them royal power. On the other hand, the comparison to a vine belonged to the people, or to the church of God.

God planted the Garden of Eden so that Adam and his sons may enjoy its fruits. Nobody was deprived of anything except the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Then man drove himself out of that Garden to live on the earth that brings forth thorns and thistles. But God offered, throughout the ages, divine possibilities to His people to make them a fruitful vine that produces grapes from which is extracted a spiritual joyful wine. Nevertheless, the Old Testament is filled with lamentations over that vine that produced nothing but bitterness.

Thus, in the lamentation of Asaph, he says, “You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations, and planted it. You prepared room for it, and caused it to take deep root; and it filled the land. The hills were covered with its shadow and the mighty cedars with its boughs. She sent out her boughs to the Sea, and her branches to the River. Why have You broken down her hedges, so that all who pass by the way pluck her fruit? The boar out of the woods uproots it, and the wild beast of the field devours it.” (Psalm 80:8-13) In this manner this psalmist moans because the vine that God’s right hand planted was destroyed as well as the fences that God built around it. Its fruit was not given to God but was plucked by all those who passed by the way, by the boar out of the woods, and by the wild beast.

God Himself declared His lamentation over His vine when He said in Isaiah, “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” (Isaiah 5:3-4).

Once more in a lamentation over the same vine, God says, “Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me?” (Jeremiah 2:21)

This is God’s pleasure that all His people become a vineyard that devotes its life to those around it, gladdens God’s heart with its spiritual fruit, and gives joy to the heavenly beings by revealing God’s work in it. However, what happened? The prophet Hosea says, “Israel is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he has increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made godly images. Their heart is divided.” (Hosea 10:1-2) God’s people became not a holy vine for the kingdom of God, but an empty vine that brings forth bitterness, the worship of idols, and the kingdom of darkness. There was no other solution but that the Messiah Himself becomes the true vine feeding the believers so that they bring forth truly spiritual and heavenly fruit.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the vine planted in the soil, for He is the Word that became flesh. With the spirit of prophecy, Isaiah the prophet saw Him without form or beauty (Is 53:2). The fruit of the vine cheers God and man (Judges 9:13). The fruit of wisdom (the Lord Jesus Christ) is better than gold and fine gold (Prov 8:19). He is the vine of Judah that makes Judah rich with the blood of grapes (Gen 49:11). He is also the vine of Joseph whose branches run over the wall (Gen 49:22). And He is the vine of Israel and under Him Israel dwells safely (1 Kings 4:25).

* He did not mention the vine here for any other purpose but to teach His disciples that without the power of the Lord Jesus Christ they can do nothing. In accordance to this metaphor they need to abide in Him as the branch abides in the vine.

Saint John Chrysostom

* We are the Lord’s relatives according to the flesh. Therefore, He says, “I will declare Your name to My brethren” (Heb 2:12; Ps 22:22). As branches are one with the vine (the origin) and the vine is of the branches (John 15:1) so are we also one body homogeneous with the Lord’s body and of His fullness we have all received (John 1:16). Christ’s body is the origin of our resurrection and redemption.

Saint Athanasius the Apostolic

Saint Augustine observes that the Lord Jesus Christ calls Himself the vine and calls us the branches and the vine and its branches have one nature. Similarly, when He became

man He carried our human nature; He thus became the vine and we became the branches abiding in Him since He carried us.¹

* He says, “I am”. We observe that here the Lord Jesus Christ speaks on a personal level because He came among us as a true vine, truth itself. We are planted in Him as the church of the New Testament that enjoys eternal life and so overflows with spiritual wine that gladdens heaven.

The Father is not only the owner of the vine, but is also the vinedresser who works and cares for the vine. He cares for every branch of the vine. He is the protector of divine steadfastness, meaning our steadfastness as living branches in the vine. When we abide in the vine, the only begotten Son, we abide in the Father and are united in Him and so dwell in His bosom forever. We shall never be taken away from Him.

The Father who brought His people out of Egypt in ancient times to plant them as a vine in the Promised Land, is Himself He who sent His Son from heaven to plant us in Him, as members of His body, as branches of the living heavenly vine. He made His Word Incarnate a vine or head so that we may become branches or members of His body. It is as the Apostle says, “He...gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Eph 1:22-23). “And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ” (Eph 1:19-20)

**“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away;
And every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” [2]**

God expects that the vine should bring forth grapes (Is 5:2). He expects that the Christian lives a proper Christian life: observing Christian thinking and behavior and having a Christian heart that loves all human beings. What good is the vine if it produces no grapes? And what benefits the Christian without love?

With the continuous growth in Christian life, and with the bountiful fruit, there is yet always something in us that God does not desire and so He takes it away. God, therefore, does the work of the vinedresser. He prunes the branches of the vine that they may bear more fruit. The Lord said to His disciples when He washed their feet that they are pure. However, they need that He washes their feet with His own hands that they may be clean and purified of what they caught as they walked in the world.

Some commentators think that He hints here at Judas who did not bear fruit and therefore deserved to be cut off from apostleship and deprived of the Kingdom. Judas is like the fig tree which the Lord saw on His way and in which He found no fruit. He therefore cursed it and it immediately withered away.

The promise for those who bear fruit is that they will be cleaned that they may bear more fruit. Or they will be pruned, that is to say every superfluous thing that can stop their growth and fruitfulness, will be trimmed off. In pruning the vinedresser is not

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 80:1.

violent or cruel; he rather cares and tends the vine that its fruit may increase. Saint John Chrysostom observes that pruning here indicates the persecutions that the believers face, for oppression does not destroy them but rather gives them more strength and productivity.

The believers are the numerous apparent branches that stretch in different directions but are united in Christ. He is the unseen root that grants life and fruit. He is the center of their unity. The believers are like the weak branches of the vine; they cannot exist independently without the root. The Lord says in Ezekiel, “Son of man, what is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?” (Ez 15:2)

* Do not wonder then that in this vine that grows and fills all the nations (Ps 79:10) there are branches that are cut off. Those are the branches that refused to bring forth fruits of love.¹

* Why did He not say, “you are clean through baptism in which you are washed” but says, you are clean **“because of the word which I have spoken to you.”** [3] That is because in the water, it is the word that purifies. If you take away the word, the water will be neither more nor less than mere water. But when you add the word to the element, the result is the “sacrament” as though it has become a kind of visible word.²

* This word of faith embodies virtue in the church of God. So, by means of him who is present in the faith, blesses and sprinkles it, he purifies even the small baby who is unable to believe with his heart in righteousness and confess with his lips for redemption. All that is achieved through the word about which the Lord said, “You are already clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.” [3].³

* They are not in Him in the same way that He is in them. Nevertheless, both ways are for their good, not for His benefit. For, in the relation between the branches and the vine, the branches do not partake of anything concerning the vine, but they rather obtain all the means of their life from the vine. On the other hand, the relation of the vine to the branches is that the vine gives the branches their vital strength, but takes nothing from the branches. If a branch is cut off, another branch will grow and have life but the branch that was cut off cannot live separately from its origin.⁴

Saint Augustine

¹ Letters, 52.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 80:3.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 80:3.

⁴ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 81:1.

*The Lord, in saying to His disciples, “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away” He implies that if their lives appear without deeds they do not deserve to be in Him. When He says, “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away” He means that the Lord Jesus Christ cares very much for that branch.

* He does not say that the origin (the root) needs the care of the vinedresser. He says rather that the branches need that care. He mentions the origin only so that they learn that **they can do nothing without His power and that they must abide in Him in faith as the branches abide in the vine: “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away.”**

Here, He indicates the path of life and reveals that without deeds we cannot be in Him. “Every branch that bears fruit He prunes”. Although the root requires much more care than the branches, since the soil is dug and cleaned for the root, yet He says nothing about that. All He says concerns the branches. He shows that the origin has self-sufficiency. But even though the disciples are eminent, they need great help on the part of the vinedresser. He, therefore, says, “every branch that bears fruit He prunes.” One can assert, here, that this was said concerning the persecution of believers. He cleans, that is to say, He prunes the branch that it may bear more fruit. He, thus, shows that persecutions give people more strength.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

* In His zeal to do the Father’s will, He hurried to accomplish the mystery of His physical suffering. But in the next moment He revealed the mystery of His incarnation. Because of His taking the flesh, we became in Him as branches are in the vine. For if He had not become the vine, we would not have been able to bear good fruit. He speaks to us about steadfastness in Him through our faith in the incarnation. Because the Word became flesh, we assumed the nature of His flesh, just as the branches are in the vine. He surrendered the magnificent form of the Father by being humble and taking flesh. He calls Himself a vine, the source of unity of all the branches, and He calls the Father the vinedresser who cuts off the barren, useless branches that they may be burned with fire.²

Saint Hilary of Poitiers

“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”[3]

He may be referring here to His discourse on the institution of the Eucharist and to His words about Judas who betrayed Him (John 13:21-30). After that Judas went out, completed his conspiracy with the high priest, and so removed himself from Christ’s body. The pruning of the branches (the Lord’s disciples) thus took place and it was

¹ Homilies on St. John, 67:1.

² On the Trinity, 9 (55).

fitting to say about them “you are already clean” [3]. Christ’s words separate truth from falsehood, that which is precious from the counterfeit. Each of the disciples became clean because of Christ’s word of truth (John 17:17), because of faith that purified their hearts and cleaned them from all blemish (Acts 15:9). They were cleansed from the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

His allusion may also be to what is written in the Book of Leviticus (19:23-24) about the trees in Canaan. The trees will remain unclean for three years, then in the fourth year they will be pure to glorify God. Likewise the disciples remained with the Lord Jesus Christ for three years. Now as He carries them over to His cross and His resurrection as the Firstborn from the dead, and for their sake and in their name He presents Himself to the Father, they become pure in the eyes of God. He has carried the vine across for three years; now is the year of bliss during which her fruit will be sanctified to the Lord. The first year presents the human race in the Garden of Eden. The second year is governed by the natural law until the coming of Moses the prophet. The Law of Moses rules the third year. The fourth is the year of divine blessing when the Savior of the world came and in Him the fruit was consecrated to the Lord.

* Have you seen how the Lord Jesus Christ shows that He cares for the branches. He indicates that He did not do that act because He needed their service, but that they may succeed.

Saint John Chrysostom

“Abide in Me, and I in you;

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine,

Neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” [4]

We often say that the life of faith is a life of clinging to our Lord Jesus. However, this is not enough in the eyes of the Lord. He asks us and promises us a greater aim: that He lives in us and we live in Him. Our living faith is an experience in Christ. This is the expression that the apostles repeat continuously in their epistles.

“Abide” is a word that Saint John loves very much. It recurs 112 times in the New Testament, 66 times of which are in the Gospel according to our teacher John and in his epistles: 33 times in the Gospel, and 3 times in his first, second, and third epistles. For, the Lord Jesus Christ came so that believers may enjoy steadfastness in Him and consequently their relationship with Him may not be temporary but eternal. In the Old Testament we read about the work of the Spirit in the lives of the prophets and kings and others in temporary periods. But in the New Testament, the Lord did not come, nor did He send His Holy Spirit to offer temporary enlightenment as some philosophers claim. He came so that we may abide eternally in Him. He makes of His believers branches to emphasize their place in Him. They abide in Him (1 John 2:6), in the truth (2 Jn 2), and in eternal life (1 Jn 3:15). This is a divine commandment, or rather a divine promise that we must adhere to Him.

A branch shares the nature of the tree, is animated by its juice, and lives by its life. Likewise, it is proper for us to share the divine nature, to be guided by His wisdom, to have His power and possibilities, and to be purified by His righteousness and sanctity.

* He strengthened their spirits when they weakened with fear, so that they may not be separated from Him because of their cowardice. He attached them to Himself and revealed to them good hopes in the future. For, the origin exists and remains, but the severance or continuance is for the branches. Thus, as He urges them both with the joyful and the painful matters, He indicates first for what we, on our part, need to do.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

“I am the vine, you are the branches.

He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit:

For without Me you can do nothing.” [5]

The Lord offers Himself as the secret of the believer’s life and fruitfulness. For Christ is the Savior and Friend, the Way and Door, the Life and Resurrection. He is the Comforter and the good Shepherd.

He asks us to abide in Him in faith so that He may abide in us through His Holy Spirit and through offering His body and blood a sacrifice, a food and drink for us. We are to rely on Him and trust Him. Through this alliance with Him, we live. We cling to Him and He abides in us through His Holy Spirit. We depend on Him, not like a branch leaning on a wall that supports it, but as a branch that has no value without the root. Thus, our Christ reveals the aim of His divine incarnation, rather from the point of view of man. This aim is that the believer enjoys true life continuously through the divine source.

Abidance in Him is optional but is necessary for the believer. Without this adherence the believer will not enjoy spiritual fruits. This is a final condition: either steadfastness and consequent fruitfulness, or else no fruit at all. There is no middle solution.

* The saints refer everything to the Lord. Let us then learn that we can do nothing without the Lord. For He says, “unless you abide in Me...you can do nothing.” (See John 15:4, 5)

Someone may object saying, “If I refer everything to the Lord, what concerns me?” Let us examine at every point what concerns us so that it may not mingle with what comes from the Lord.

The Psalmist says, “Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes” (Ps 119:33): what concerns us “and I shall keep it to the end.” (Ps 119:33)

¹ Homilies on St. John, 67:1.

Once more, I ask God, “Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law” (Ps 119:34). Then again, “Make me walk in the path of Your commandments” (Ps 119:35). What concerns me? He indicates what concerns me with these words, “For I delight in it” (Ps 119:35).

Let us ask for what comes from God so that we may obtain it. Let us also promise Him what depends on us and let us not relinquish our promise so that we may not break our covenant with the Lord.

This is what the Psalmist says, “Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness” (Ps 119:36). For he knows that covetousness is a depravity that has a strong influence and gives credit to the profits of the wicked. The Apostle called it, “idolatry” (Col 3:5). We therefore learn that covetousness does not agree with the testimonies of the Lord.

Origen the Scholar

**“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch
And is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire,
And they are burned.” [6]**

Here, He warns us against hypocrisy. For there are those who have the name of Christ, but lack partnership with Him. They do not abide in Him, but are like those branches that are a profitless unnecessary burden to the tree. As they practically despise Him, they become despised; and as they refuse partnership with Him, they do not enjoy that secret life in Him. They only deserve to be cast out into the fire. They are dry and fire is the most appropriate place in which they are cleared off.

A branch is not estimated for its wood, for once it is separated from its origin, it is used for nothing but fire. However, by abiding in its origin, the secret link gives it life and makes it flourish and it becomes fruitful. Thus the vinedresser honors it and is preoccupied with it so that it may bear more fruit.

In this discourse our Christ, the true vine, does not terrify us. He rather draws our attention to His true promise that He is responsible for this in accordance to His grace and excessive divine generosity. For, “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made”, (Jn 1:3).

“Is cast out”: When a person separates himself from the Vine, he goes out of that circle and, therefore, does not have Christ’s life. The light of Christ does not shine in him; he does not enjoy the grace and power of Christ; the Holy Spirit does not work in him. This is the case of the Christian who after being a branch in the Vine, he becomes conceited, relying on his abilities, talents, and opinion. He consequently casts himself out and becomes a dry, broken branch that is good for nothing but fire.

The Lord Himself describes the dry branch when in **Ezekiel** He says, “For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourns in Israel, which separates himself from Me (the vine) and sets up his idols (self-conceit) in his heart, and puts the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and comes to a prophet to inquire of him concerning

Me; I the Lord will answer him by Myself: And I will set My face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of My people,” (Ez 14:7-8).

* The Lord Jesus Christ says to His disciples, **“without Me you can do nothing”**. It is a great loss when the branch can do nothing. However, the Lord does not end the punishment at this point but goes further to say, “is cast out as a branch and is withered”. By saying, **“they throw them into the fire, and they are burned”** Christ makes it clear that those who oppose Him will burn.

* He says, “is cast out” and therefore does not enjoy the care of the vinedresser anymore; “is withered” because he has no root he is in danger. He had comforting grace but is now deprived of all help and life.

And what would be the end? He is thrown into the fire. But this is not what happens to those who abide in Him. He indicates those who abide in Him by saying, if **“My words abide in you”**. To them He says, **“If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”** Then He says, “If you love Me, keep My commandments”. (Jn 14:14-15) Here, He says, **“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”** He says this to show that, on the one hand, those who conspire against Him will burn, and on the other hand, He explains to the others that they will not be defeated. He says, **“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”**¹

Saint John Chrysostom

* You do not accept a corrupt shield, but rather a spiritual shield!

Even now you are planted in a hidden Paradise!

You receive a new name that you did not have in the past, for you were called a catechumen, but now you are a believer!

From now on you are grafted into the spiritual olive tree (Rom 11:24). You have been cut out of the wild olive tree and grafted into a good olive tree. You have been taken away from sins and defilement to be guided to righteousness and purity.

You are now partaking of the sacred Vine (Jn 15:1, 4, 5)! Good, for if you abide in the Vine you will grow as a fruitful branch, but if you do not abide in the Vine you will perish with fire.

Therefore, would you bear fruit worthily, so that God may not permit what happened to the barren fig tree (Matt 21:19) to happen to you! Christ has not yet come (for judgment) and has not yet cursed us because of our sterility. Would we were able to say, “But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the mercy of God forever

¹ Hom. 76. PG 59:448.

and ever.””(See Ps 52:8) And here we do not interpret the olive tree in its material meaning, but rather mentally in perfect light.

Since God plants and waters,¹ it would befit you to bring forth fruit. God grants His blessing and you, on your part accept and keep it. Do not despise grace because it is free. Rather accept and treasure it piously.²

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem

* The branch is good only for either way: to be in the vine, or in fire. If it is not in the vine, then its place is the fire. For it to escape the fire it must be in the vine.³

Saint Augustine

**“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you,
you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” [7]**

The Lord Christ connects steadfastness in Him with steadfastness in His words because through His gospel we enjoy true union. This gospel is interpreted practically by keeping the divine commandments, by practicing them and rejoicing in them [10-11].

Steadfastness in Christ’s words is a continuous meeting with the Word and an acquaintance with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ through His words. We, then, abide in Him with all our hearts, thoughts, feelings, senses and will. There is nothing that can separate us ever!

He presents to us a firm promise that all that we desire according to His good pleasure shall be done for us through our abiding in Him. And, what shall we ask for but that we may be His icons carrying in us His will, meeting Him and enjoying partnership in His glory.

Our steadfastness in Christ and in His words, and consequently, His steadfastness in us will cause us to be truly men of prayer, knowing what to ask for and having delight in the certainty of what we desire, because it is according to the good pleasure of God our Father. It is as though the secret of the effectiveness of prayer is in our steadfastness in Christ and His dwelling in us.

* Do you not see that the Son does not participate less than the Father in caring for the disciples? The Father prunes on the one hand and keeps them in Him on the other hand. Abidance in the origin (the root) is why the branches bear fruit.

¹ The Apostle says, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.” (1 Cor 3:6) Saint Cyril ascribes the planting and watering to God who works and gives the increase.

² Article 1:4.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 81:3.

If it is not pruned but abides in the origin, the branch bears fruit but not the proper amount. Yet, if it does not abide in the origin it does not bear fruit at all. However, the pruning belongs to the Son, steadfastness in the origin belongs to the Father who gave birth to the Son. Do you not see that everything, whether the pruning or the ability to have delight comes from the origin?¹

Saint John Chrysostom

* It is true that we desire certain things when we are in Christ, and we have different desires when we are still in this world. Therefore, if we abide in Him, if His words abide in us, we ask what we desire and it is done for us. But, if we ask and do not receive, it is because the things we desire have no relation to our steadfastness in Him, but are rather the persistent desires of the body and its weaknesses, that are not in Christ and in which the words of Christ do not abide. So, concerning His words, in all conditions, they are those of the prayer He taught us when we say, “Our Father who art in heaven” (Matt 6:9). May we not skip any word of this prayer but meditate on every word in our prayer. Then, everything we ask for we shall be given. However, if His words dwell only in our memory and have no place in our life, we, as branches, will not be considered abiding in the vine, for we do not obtain our life from the origin.²

Saint Augustine

“By this My Father is glorified,

That you bear much fruit, so you will be My disciples.” [8]

Here, the Lord Jesus Christ reveals **the wonderful fruit of steadfastness in Him:**

1-The glorification of the Father as the perfect love of the Father is seen in our life. His splendor is revealed in our inner selves. We truly exercise our sonship to Him “that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

2-Increasing fruit as everything we ask for in prayer is done for us.

3-We enjoy being His disciples; we become men of God witnessing for Him to bring back all people to Him so that all may be “members of the household of God”. (Eph 2:19)

* Do you see how he who bears fruit is a disciple? “By this My Father is glorified” means that He is pleased when you abide in Him, when you bear fruit.³

Saint John Chrysostom

¹ Hom. 76. PG 59:447-448.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 81:4.

³ Hom. 76. PG 59:448.

* Some scholars think that the Greek word ‘doxazein’ means literally ‘more splendor’ or ‘clearer’ to people. It also means, ‘glorified’.

* From Him (from Christ) is such grace. Therefore, the glory is not ours but His. Here, the Father is glorified that we bear much fruit and that we have become Christ’s disciples. By whom have we become so but by Him whose mercy precedes and works in us? We are His work “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph 2:10).¹

Saint Augustine

2- That They Must Love One Another

**“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you;
Abide in My love.” [9]**

The Lord Jesus Christ who is love personified speaks to us about love in four forms:

Love of the Father for Him [9]

His love for the Father [10]

The love of Christ for us [9]

Our love for Him and abiding in Him [9].

Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ shows that the foundation of every divine work is the mutual love of the Father and the Son. This indicates that the love of God for us is not based on temporary emotion but is the fruit of the eternal divine mutual love of the Father and the Son. Then, the believers must on their part abide always in love. So, just as there is nothing at all that can stop the love of God for us, we must have the same characteristic in our love for Him. This is what the Lord Jesus Christ asks for us: “that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them”, (Jn 17:26)

He declares His love for them to affirm to them that, though He will leave them physically, by death then later by His ascension, He loves them without limit. He loves them as the Father loves Him, although they are not properly worthy of love.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son whom the Father loves. In the Father’s love for Him, He gave Him everything, because He is One consubstantial with the Father. The Father gave Him the work of the redemption of the human race and Christ’s work of salvation is the object of the love and good pleasure of the Father. Through the mutual love of the Father and the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ advises us to love Him and abide in His love.

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 82:1.

Steadfastness in His love implies our disappearance in Him to rejoice constantly for His love and to share with Him the trait of love. We practically get acquainted with the depth of His sacraments by practicing life in Him.

* So, here you observe the source of good works. Where can we have these works? Are they not works of faith working through love (Gal 5:6)? And how may we be able to love? Is it not because He first loved us?

The Evangelist himself declares quite clearly in his epistle, that “We love Him because He first loved us,” (1 Jn 4:19). However, when He says, “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you”, [9] He does not connote that His nature and ours are equal as His and that of the Father. He rather refers to the grace of the Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Tim 2:5). For the Father truly loves us also, but in Christ. Here, the Father is glorified that we bear fruit in the Vine, that is, in the Son and thus become His disciples.¹

Saint Augustine

**“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love,
Just as I have kept My Father’s commandments
And abide in His love.” [10]**

As the Lord Jesus Christ carried the message of salvation, He as the Son of Man through His perseverance in work abode in the Father’s love. **“He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law.”** (Is 42:4) He kept the Father’s commandments, not only by recording them through the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament prophecies, but also by recording them practically when He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men. He humbled Himself to the point of death, even the death of the cross, (Phil 2: 7-8). He kept the commandments in perfect obedience and accepted suffering with joy, (Heb 5:8; 12:2). He accomplished the commandment fully when on the cross He announced **“It is finished”**, (Jn 19:30). Through our steadfastness in Him and through sharing His characteristics, we keep the commandments, not only in our hearts, nor by meditating on them and studying them, but also by practicing them, being always alert, correct and truly eager that we may enjoy them. For the commandments are not oppressive but bear within them the power of fulfillment with praise and joy because within them is the Word Himself, as **Saint Marcus the Ascetic** says. Keeping the divine commandments is the key to heaven, with it we rejoice in our Christ, the Heavenly Treasure.

The sign of steadfastness in His love is our observance of His commandments, as He has kept the Father’s commandments and achieved His will. Without obedience and surrender we shall not enjoy love.

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 82:2.

* Look how the Lord Jesus Christ strengthens His disciples when He says, “abide in My love”. If you ask how that may be, His answer is **“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”** Consider how the Lord Jesus Christ speaks to them with authority. For He does not say “abide in the love of the Father” but says, “abide in My love”.

Saint John Chrysostom

* “Abide in My love” [9]. How do we abide? Listen to what follows: “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love” [10]

Love brings about the observance of His commandments. But does keeping His commandments bring about love?

Who can doubt that love comes first? He who lacks love has no good foundation to keep the commandments. Therefore, He says, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love” showing, not the source of love but the means by which love is declared. As though He says, “Do not think that you abide in My love if you do not keep My commandments. For only if you keep My commandments you abide.”

Then, let no one deceive himself by saying that he loves Him if he does not keep His commandments. For we love Him in the same measure as we keep His commandments and if keeping His commandments is weak, our love for Him is weak.¹

Saint Augustine

Saint Augustine asserts that Christ’s love for us exists and He desires our redemption. This love is the expectation that urges us to keep His commandments. But not keeping His commandments reveals our lack of love for Him and our lack of steadfastness in His anticipating love.²

**“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you,
and that your joy may be full.” [11]**

In His farewell discourse He repeats these words “these things I have spoken to you” seven times. These are words that **Ezekiel** declares repeatedly, “I the Lord have spoken” (Ez 5:13). It is as though He who speaks to them here is He who spoke to them through the prophets ages ago.

Let us rejoice in the divine promise like branches in the vine. Let us abide in Christ the true vine and abide in His words, His love, and also His joy. The joy of Saint John the Baptist was fulfilled when he saw the Bridegroom coming and heard His voice as He met His bride through the cross (Jn 3:29). Christ rejoiced to give His life for His bride

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 82:3.

² Cf. St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 82:3.

and obtain her a pure virgin bought with the precious blood. And here He calls us to share His joy when we see in our salvation and the salvation of our brethren the fulfillment of heavenly joy.

In the Old Testament redemption was linked with joy. So, **David the Psalmist** repeated “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation” (Ps 51). And the prophet **Isaiah** watched the redeemed of the Lord returning and said, they “shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” (Is 35:10) He saw nature itself: the mountains, the hills, and all the trees of the field singing and clapping their hands, (Is 55:12). Also in the New Testament whenever the Church assembled in the Eucharist sacrament, “they ate their food with gladness” (Acts 2:46).

As He was on His way to the cross with gladness, He urged His disciples to abide in His joy as they shared with Him the cross. Thus their joy may be full.

* The Lord spoke those words to His disciples making it clear to them that the present calamities are not for sadness, but for joy.

Saint John Chrysostom

* What is Christ’s joy in us other than that He is pleased that He rejoices for us? And what is that joy that is ours, about which He says, “may be full” but that we have communion with Him? For this reason He said to the blessed Peter, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me,” (Jn 13:8). So, His joy in us is the grace that He grants us, which is also our joy.

Moreover, He rejoiced since eternity when He chose us before the foundation of the world, (Eph 1:4). We cannot say that His joy was not full, because God’s joy was never at any time incomplete.

However, that joy was not in us because it could not be for us who did not exist. And even when our existence began, that joy did not begin in us. But that joy was always in Him who is truly infallible, who in foreknowledge rejoiced that we shall be His and so had full joy in us as He rejoiced in His foreknowledge and in foreordaining us.¹

* His joy for our redemption that was always in Him through His foreknowledge and His foreordaining us began in us when He called us. Then, it was befitting that this joy is called our joy because in it we also are blessed. However, through perseverance this joy increases, grows and advances to perfection. Thus its beginning is in the belief in rebirth and its perfection is in the reward when we advance.²

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 83:1.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 83:1.

* My joy has always been full even before I called you when you were in My foreknowledge that I will call you. But it found a place in you also when you were reshaped in accordance to My foreknowledge concerning you. “Your joy may be full” when you are blessed; this has not yet occurred as you are now created but you did not exist before.¹

Saint Augustine

**“This is My commandment
that you love one another as I have loved you.” [12]**

The last and basic commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ in His farewell discourse is “love”. And in this speech He connects the commandment and love. If we understand the meaning of love in our Christian life, we do not need another commandment. Therefore, **Saint Augustine** says, “love God and do whatever you like.” Indeed, some people have misunderstood this saying and have used it as a license to a loose life. But, whoever comprehends “love” cannot but act in Christ Jesus according to His divine judgment. Let us love as Christ loves the sinners so that they may become living icons, a new creation in Christ Jesus.

The Apostle Paul says, “he who loves another has fulfilled the law,” (Rom 13:8). He also says, “love is the bond of perfection,” (Col 3:14). The Lord Christ Himself, as He speaks about the commandments to love God and to love our neighbor says, “On “these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets,” (“Matt 22:40).

Saint John the beloved recognized love as the sinew of the Law. And, as **Saint Jerome** says, Saint John in his very old age was carried to the public gatherings of the believers and he always said “my children, love one another”. When he was asked why he continued in this manner, he answered, “because this is the Lord’s commandment and keeping it only is enough.”²

* Abidance is realized through love, and love is achieved through observance of the Law. The commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ is that we love one another. Thus steadfastness in our God consists of the love by which we love one another.

He does not mention love simply, but reveals its nature as He says, “as I have loved you”.

Since love is a powerful irresistible matter and not a mere word, let us declare it through our deeds.

He made peace with us while we were His enemies. Now that we have become His friends let us abide so in His love.

He led the way, let us then at least follow Him.

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 83:1.

² St. Jerome: Common Gal, Lib 3.c.6.

He loved us not for any personal benefit (for He needs nothing), let us then at least love Him for our benefit.

He loved us while we were His enemies, let us then love Him as He is our friend.

Saint John Chrysostom

* Why does He speak about love as though that were a special commandment? That is because every commandment has relevance to love and all commandments are in one commandment because any commandment is founded on love alone. Just as the many branches of a tree stem from one root, so do many virtues proceed from love alone. The branch that is our good deeds has no sap unless it remains sticking to the root of love.¹

Pope Gregory (the Great)

* “This is My commandment” [12] as though there is no other commandment but this. So what do you think my brethren?

Let us meditate on the Apostle’s words, “love is the fulfillment of the law,” (Rom 13:10). Thus, where there is love, what may be lacking? And where there is no love what can be useful?

Satan believes (James 2:19), but trembles and does not love. No one loves but does not believe.

Those who have mutual love have God Himself as an aim of love. They, indeed, love one another and the goal of their love for one another is their love of God. There is no such love among men, for few have the motive to love one another, that God may be all in all, (1 Cor 15:28).²

Saint Augustine

**“Greater love has no one than this,
Than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” [13]**

These words were said not as a sermon to be examined, but as they were expressed on the eve of His crucifixion, these words declared His gospel in practice. Here, He draws the attention of His hearers toward the cross as a practical declaration of divine love for the entire human race, His dearly beloved are not the righteous but the sinners. The Apostle says, “when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son” (Rom 5:10). Our Christ died for the sake of even those who persecuted Him on the cross, and those who persecute His body, the Church.

¹ Hom. 27. Forty Gospel Homilies, PL 76:1205.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 83:3.

No one can love his friend a greater love than to lay down his own life, everything he has, for him. The great friendship uniting David and Jonathan caused Jonathan to give up his kingdom to David, but Jonathan could not lay down his life for the sake of David. On the other hand, the Lord Jesus Christ lay down His life not only for His friends, but also for His enemies and asked for forgiveness for those who crucified Him. The greatest proof of His love for them is that He sacrificed Himself for their sake as no human being may do on the same level. For He, the Creator sacrificed Himself for His creatures that He loved exceedingly. He died for men when they were His enemies, (Rom 5:8, 10).

* “Love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith” is truly a virtue for it is “the purpose of the commandment”, (1 Tim 1:5). It has been truly said, “love is strong as death”, (Song of Solomon 8:6). This is either because nothing can conquer it just as nothing can defeat death, or because in this life the evaluation of love is that it is to the point of death. The Lord says, “what love is greater than that a man sacrifices his life for his friends?” (See Jn 15:13). Or rather, as death separates the spirit from the physical senses, so does love take away the spirit from physical lusts. Knowledge, when useful, serves love, for without love “knowledge puffs up”, (1 Cor 8:1). Knowledge is not in the same measure as love, for love fills the heart with refinement and leaves no room for knowledge to be arrogant.¹

Saint Augustine

* No one persecutes us now to the point of death. How then shall we prove our love for our friends?

There needs be something for us to do at times of peace in the Church so that we may demonstrate whether we are strong enough to die for the sake of our love at times of persecution. Saint John says, “whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1 Jn 3:17). John the Baptist also says, “he who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none”, (Luke 3:11). But does he who gives his tunic give up his life?

Maintain the virtue of love during peaceful times by showing mercy. You will then not be defeated during the times of persecution.

Learn first to give your possessions to the Almighty God, then you will give Him yourself.²

Pope Gregory (the Great)

* Would we follow His example in this spirit of reverent obedience, not that we dare to compare Him to us.³

Saint Augustine

¹ Letters, 167:11.

² Hom. 27. Forty Gospel Homilies. PL 76:1205.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 84:2.

“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” [14]

Abraham was called the friend of God, (Is 41:8; James 2:23) because he believed God and obeyed Him “and it was accounted to him for righteousness”. Moses also was called the friend of God, (Ex 33:11). This is what every believer wishes to enjoy through the living faith.

* What is more precious than the friendship that the angels share exactly like human beings? Therefore, the Lord Jesus says, “make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home,” (Luke 16:9)

God Himself makes of us friends instead of servants as He says, “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” He thus gives us the example of friendship so that we may follow Him.

We need to achieve the desire of our Friend (the Lord Jesus) and reveal to Him the secrets of our hearts. We must not ignore His trust. Let us show Him our hearts so that He may open His heart for us. He therefore says, “I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” [15]. So a friend, if he is truly a friend, does not hide anything, but rather pours out himself as our Lord Jesus pours out His Father’s secrets.

Thus, he who does God’s will is God’s friend and is honored by this name. He who has the same mind is a friend because there is oneness of thought between friends. Nobody is more despised than the offender against friendship is.¹

Saint Ambrose

**“No longer do I call you servants,
For a servant does not know what his master is doing;
But I have called you friends,
For all things that I heard from My Father
I have made known to you.” [15]**

He did not stop at sacrificing Himself for them, but He also made a covenant with them that they become His friends who enjoy knowing His secrets, for they are not servants.

His tongue preaches gentle mercy. Here He calls them friends and after His resurrection He says, “go to My brethren”, (Jn 20:17) and He also says to them,

¹ Duties of the Clergy, 3:22:135-136.

“children, have you any food?” (Jn 21:5) For they are His beloved children. But on their part, they call themselves His bondservants, (2 Pet 1:1). As He honors us, we on our part, must honor Him more. As we rise in His eyes, we feel even more contrite before Him.

There is no comparison between a servant and a friend. The master may love his servant and may treat him gently, but he does not allow his servant to share his personal secrets. A servant receives orders from his master and has no right to discuss those orders. He must only do what he is told; he knows nothing beyond the order. He does not know the aim of the order, nor does he know his master’s mind.. He must obey blindly.

As they are His friends, Christ does not give them commandments from His throne. He comes down to them to speak with them so that they may realize they are in His heart and that they have their special value in His inner self. By descending to them He ends the age of servitude by ending the letter that kills the Law. He brought us to the era of transcendent love as we enjoy being God’s children through the blood of the Only Begotten Son, through the work of the Holy Spirit in the water of baptism. Thus, He raised us and renewed our nature so that we may become His icons and have the right to enjoy knowing the Father and understand His divine sacraments.

* When our Lord Jesus Christ saw that His disciples were about to accept adoption, to know Him, and learn through the Holy Spirit, He said to them, “No longer do I call you servants, but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” (Jn 15:15)

For, those who realized what they became in Christ Jesus cried out saying, “we did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father,’” (See Rom 8:15)

If a man fails to show complete readiness and zeal to rise (from sin), let him know that the coming of our Lord and Savior is judgment to him. Therefore, Simeon (the Elder) from the beginning said, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against," (Luke 2:34) The Apostle later said, “To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life,” (2 Cor 2:16)¹.

The Great Saint Anthony

* He introduces the name ‘friends’ in a way that eliminates away the name ‘servants’. He does not combine the two names in one expression, but rather makes one name take the place of the other.

What does this mean? There are two kinds of fear bringing about two kinds of the frightened. Likewise there are two kinds of service bringing about two kinds of servants. There is fear that perfect love casts out (1 Jn 4:18). There is another fear that is clean and endures forever (Ps 19:9). The Apostle refers to the fear that is devoid of love saying,

¹ Philokalia, Book 1.

“you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear” (Rom 8:15), but he refers to the pure fear when he says, “Do not be haughty, but fear.” (Rom 11:20)

In the case of fear that perfect love casts out there is also the service related to it for the Apostle links service and fear together. He says, “you did not receive the spirit of bondage (service) to fear”. Such a servant is connected to that kind of service. He is that person who was not before the Lord’s eyes when He said, “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing”. He certainly is not that servant who is characterized by clean fear to whom is said, “Enter into the joy of your Lord”. He is rather that servant whose fear perfect love casts out. About him it is said, “a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.” (Jn 8:35)

Accordingly, as He gave us the right to become children of God (John 1:12) may we be not slaves but children. In a true and wonderful manner that cannot be described, we the slaves have the right not to be slaves.

Indeed, we are servants through clean fear that characterizes him who enters into the joy of his Lord. But we are not slaves through the kind of fear of someone who is cast out and that belongs to him who does not abide in the house forever.

Let us bear in mind that it is the Lord who made us able to serve, not as slaves who do not know what their master is doing, but as children. Let not the servant who does some good work be haughty as though he worked independently and not through his Lord. In that case he, and not the Lord, is glorified and in self-deception he boasts as if he had not received from the Lord anything, (1 Cor 4:7).

Dear beloved, may we know what our Master is doing so that we may become friends of the Lord. For it is He who made us, not only human beings, but also righteous. We did not make ourselves what we are.¹

* Do not say, ‘Before I believed I did good deeds and for this reason He chose me’. For, what good deeds can precede faith? The Apostle says, “Whatever is not from faith is sin”, (Rom 14:23).²

* Therefore, beloved friends, He did not choose the righteous, but rather caused the chosen to become righteous. “I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain,” (John 15:16) Is not this the fruit about which He said earlier, “without Me you can do nothing,” (Jn 15:5)? He chose us and appointed us that we should go and bear fruit. So, we had no fruit that made Him choose us. We rather go to bear fruit. He is the Way we take to bring fruit. He appointed us to take that way. This is His mercy for all.³

* Let this love endure, for it is itself our fruit.

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 85:2.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 86:2

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 86:3.

This love in the present is concealed in our yearning, not in our full rejoicing in it. Everything we ask for in our yearning, in the name of the Only Begotten Son, the Father grants us. But if we ask for what is not connected to our redemption, we must not think that we ask for it in the name of the Savior. What we ask for in the name of the Savior is truly connected to the Way of our salvation.¹

Saint Augustine

**“You did not choose Me, but I chose you
and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit,
and that your fruit should remain,
that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” [16]**

He chose them not for their efficiency, wisdom, or goodness, but by way of His love and free grace. God took the initiative. He chose them before they chose Him and before they took that decision. As it is written in Deuteronomy: **“the Lord thy God has chosen you to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people: But because the Lord loves you.”** (Deut 7:6-8).

He chose them and “appointed” them (hetheka hymas) meaning He put them into the ministry (1 Tim 1:12). He crowned them with this honor and granted them His confidence as His ambassadors who will assume the management of His kingdom in this world. They, consequently, must work “that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain”. He asked them to bear the yoke everywhere. They must travel from place to place over the whole world. They must not yield or rest, but they must always act, strive and sacrifice themselves so that they may have fruit as among all Gentiles, (Rom 1:13). **Father Theodore, the bishop of Messissa**, interprets the Greek work as meaning “I planted you”, for He is the vine and they are branches in Him.

The secret of success in service lies in the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself chose the disciples and apostles and helped them. He worked in and through them. Therefore, it is appropriate that **whoever serves in the Lord’s vineyard should have the following traits:**

1. That the Lord Himself plants him with His right hand and chooses him for service.
2. That he abides in the true Vine in order that he may bear fruit and may not be arid.
3. That he realizes that he is called to work and not to laziness. For, as the Lord Jesus Christ begins lovingly to choose His disciples, the chosen, on their part, must go and declare the perfect love of God to the entire human race. While He asks them to unite, He commands them not to cling to one another, but to depart and preach the gospel sharing in the journey of the Church into the entire world so that all may rejoice in the Savior, (Mark 16:15).

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 86:3.

4. That he must wait for the fruit patiently and must not despair. For, He who has chosen him guarantees the lasting fruit.
5. That he ascribes all fruit and success to the Lord.

“And that your fruit should remain”: unlike philosophers in general whose philosophy flourishes for sometime then becomes something of the past. The fruit of the disciples is in the Church of God, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. The loving believer is characterized by persistence in all things: perseverance in rejoicing in the Word of God [7], in love of Christ [9-10], in the joy of Christ and in bearing fruit [16].

The indication of His love is not only in that He chose them, appointed them to work, and caused their fruit to remain, but He also granted them the Father’s blessing that all they ask the Father in Christ’s name the Father gives them.

* Let us believe that whatever we ask the Father in Christ’s name we obtain. For, the Father’s desire is that we ask through the Son and the Son’s desire is that we ask the Father. This does not mean that the Father is unable to act. It means rather that the One Authority is revealed.¹

Saint Ambrose

* As though the Lord Jesus Christ says to His disciples: ‘I loved you first’.

Saint John Chrysostom

* ‘I have formed you for grace. I have planted you so that you may willingly go and bring forth the fruit of your work. I say you need to go willingly. For to say you will do something means that you will go with all your heart’. He then added, “and that your fruit should remain”. What we do for eternal life remains even after death. Let us work for the fruit that will remain.²

* Why did Paul plead with the Lord three times but did not receive, (2 Cor 12:8)? Christ asks the great preacher to demand in the name of the Son!

Why did he not obtain what he asked for?

The name of the Son is Jesus, and Jesus means ‘salvation’. Whoever asks in the name of the Savior asks for what concerns his actual salvation. So, if what he asks for is not for his good, he does not ask the Father in the name of Jesus. Therefore, the Lord said to His apostles when they were still weak, “Until now you have asked nothing in My name”, (John 16:24). This is the reason why God did not give heed to Paul. If he had been made free of that affliction, there would have been nothing to help him in his redemption.

¹ On the Christian Faith, Book 1:2:12.

² Hom. 27. Forty Gospel Homilies

Examine your requests. Do you ask for the joys of salvation? “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you,” (Matt 6:33)¹.

Pope Gregory (the Great)

“These things I command you, that you love one another.” [17]

The Lord Christ combines love of God and love of brethren [12, 17], and He presents Himself as an example, for He loved us and sacrificed Himself for us [13]. He called us ‘friends’ [14], and revealed to us His secrets [15]. He chose and appointed us [16], and gave us grace so that our appeals in His name to the Father may be answered. All this we may acknowledge by loving our brethren.

* This means that I tell you that I lay down My life for you, not to rebuke you, nor to say I hasten to meet you, but rather to lead you to friendship.

Saint John Chrysostom

* This is the fruit that we cannot acquire far from Him, just as the branches can do nothing without the vine. Our fruit is love as the Apostle explains, “from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith”, (1 Tim 1:5). This is how we must love one another and love God. For, there will be no true love for one another if we do not love God. Everyone will love his brother as himself if he loves God. On the other hand, whoever does not love God does not love himself.²

Saint Augustine

3- Confrontation of the Hatred of the World

“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.” [18]

Hatred is the characteristic of Satan and the pillar of his kingdom, just as love is the characteristic of Christ’s kingdom. No wonder, therefore, that those who love the world hate the kingdom of Christ without cause, for this is their nature. There would be no comfort for the disciples if the world hated them because they did something evil. But if the world hated them because it could not tolerate their Christ, this hatred is a glory which the believer does not deserve since he shares the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ Hom. 27. Forty Gospel Homilies

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 87:1.

The evil people are called ‘the world’ because they love the world and carry its name and because they are the majority of the world population. We are not amazed that the world cannot tolerate those whom God loves and blesses. For, there has been enmity between the evil world and God’s children since the time the serpent crept towards Eve to seduce her. Since then, Cain murdered Abel because Abel’s deeds were righteous. Esau also hated Jacob because Jacob obtained the blessing. Likewise, Joseph’s brothers envied Joseph because his father loved him, and Saul hated David because the Lord was with David and gave him success. In all these examples, the saints had no hatred for anybody, nor did they do any evil to deserve such hate.

When **Saint Jerome** faced trouble and was about to leave Rome and travel East, he wrote to Asella saying, “I write to you in a hurry, dear Lady Asella, as I am going to the ship swallowed by grief and tears. Nevertheless, I thank my God that I was counted worthy of the hatred of the world.”¹

* Do not be terrified, dear beloved brethren, of the coming persecution, or of the coming of the Antichrist who threatens. There is no weapon against all circumstances other than the evangelical advice and the heavenly commandments and warnings.

The Antichrist is coming, but Christ triumphs.

The enemy approaches and rages, but the Lord who heals our suffering and wounds accompanies us.

The rebel threatens in anger, but there is He who liberates us from the enemy’s hands.²

The Martyr Cyprianus

* Along with this love we need also to patiently endure the world’s hatred. Why does the member exalt himself above the Head? You refuse to be in the Body if you do not want to bear the world’s hatred of you, the same as its hatred of the Head.³

Saint Augustine

**“If you were of the world,
the world would love its own.
Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world,
therefore the world hates you.” [19]**

The believers are counted as not of the world not because of their wisdom or virtues, nor because their nature is different from that of other people, but because they accepted God’s call. He then chose them and set them apart for action in His kingdom. For this

¹ Letters 45:6.

² Letter 58 to the people abiding in Thibarais, 7.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 87:2.

reason the world hates them. The life of the true Christian silently condemns the evil world. Therefore, the world has no other way but to take revenge of those who do not take part in its evil and calm its conscience.

Here, He refers to Psalm 69: “Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head.” (Ps 69:4). This Psalm is entirely a prophecy about the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

* As though the Lord Jesus Christ says to His disciples, “If you wish to love, you must suffer.” This is implied in His saying, “If you were of the world, the world would love its own.” If the world loved you, it would be evident that you wanted in yourself the world’s malice.

Saint John Chrysostom

* The world loves itself falsely and hates itself truly. For, whoever loves evil hates himself, (Ps. 11:5). Yet it is said the world loves itself as much as it loves the wickedness that causes it to be evil. But it is also said the world hates itself as much as it loves what harms it. Therefore, the world hates its true nature and loves vice.

The world hates what it is as the goodness of God created it. And it loves what it willingly brought upon itself. We are forbidden to love whatever the world loves in itself and we are ordered to love whatever the world hates in itself, that is to say, God’s creation and His various blessings.

We are forbidden to love vice in the world and we are admonished to love nature. But the world loves vice in itself and hates nature.

Thus, we love and hate correctly, but the world loves and hates in a wicked manner.¹

**“Remember the word that I said to you,
‘A servant is not greater than his master.’
If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.
If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” [20]**

The Lord did, indeed, call them friends. But it is suitable for them to consider themselves God’s servants. He did not wish to begin His discourse by mentioning how much they will be persecuted. He began, rather, by speaking about the hardship He will endure. He put Himself at the forefront of the battle between light and darkness. The suffering of His disciples is only their share in the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord set a distinctive parting line between the believers who are sanctified in His truth and the evil people who live in the darkness of foolishness.

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 87:4.

* The Lord has shown, here, that His disciples are like Him. It is as though He says to them, ‘If they persecute you, this is your share in My suffering. Therefore, you should not be perturbed, for you are not greater than Me.’

Saint John Chrysostom

* If “a servant is not greater than his master”, may those who follow the Lord remain close to His footsteps in humility, silence and tranquility. For those who are humble are more glorified¹

The Martyr Cyprianus

**“But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake,
because they do not know Him who sent Me.” [21]**

One of the main reasons of the world’s hatred for believers is ignorance and lack of knowledge. They do not know the Father who sent the Lord Jesus Christ. In that foolishness they ‘eat up’ God’s people. The Psalmist says, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘there is no God’ ... Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call on the Lord” (Ps 14:1, 4).

They do not know the Father and they do not know the Son sent by the Father “for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory,” (1 Cor 2:8).

We do not marvel that the Lord says, “No longer do I call you servants” and then says, “A servant is not greater than his master”. For He does not want to call us servants and at the same time He calls us ‘servants’ and says we are not greater than Him who is our Master. Saint Augustine explains that it is clear that in the first statement He means the servant who does not dwell in the house forever, and who is characterized by that fear that love casts out.²

Saint Augustine comments on the expression “for My name’s sake” saying this means ‘for righteousness sake’, for our Christ is our righteousness. The wicked persecute the righteous in Christ Jesus not for some crime they committed, but for their righteousness. Sometimes the righteous practice harsh punishment of the evil people, just as a judge punishes a criminal or as a policeman arrests rebels. If the judge or policeman is sanctified in the Lord, he is not judged for punishing the vicious because the pervert does not suffer for righteousness sake but for his own vice. Saint Augustine also says that sometimes the vicious persecute the vicious, as for example, the wicked rulers or judges who persecute the righteous, certainly also punish murderers, adulterers and all those who do evil and violate the general law. How then may we interpret the Lord’s words, “If you were of the world, the world would love its own,” [19] The world punishes those

¹ Letter 13 to Rogation, the priest and to the other confessors, 4.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 88:1.

criminals, mentioned above, because they harm the world. However, the same wickedness is in those who punish the criminals and in those who love those crimes. Therefore the world that exists in the vicious and unrighteous hates its own who are criminals but loves the vicious who are serviceable.¹

* He says this, ‘they hate Me in you; they persecute Me in you. As your word is Mine, they do not obey it.’

All they do to you is done to Me, not to you. Therefore, those who do those things have greater misery. He also blesses those who suffer those things for His sake. For He says, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,” (Matt 5:10). They endure the persecution for My name’s sake. As the Apostle teaches us, “He became for us wisdom from God-and righteousness and sanctification and redemption-that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the Lord,’ (1 Cor 1:30-31). The people of the world do those things for evil, not for righteousness. Therefore, both have similar misery, the persecutors and the vicious who are persecuted. Also the righteous who chastise the vicious do that for righteousness, but the vicious who are punished do not suffer for the sake of righteousness.²

Saint Augustine

**“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin,
but now they have no excuse for their sin.” [22]**

The divine promises have been realized, and He whose day Abraham rejoiced to see and for whose coming all the patriarchs and prophets yearned, has come. Because of this, they had no excuse for rejecting Him. Their hatred, however, was foretold in the Holy Bible, (Ps. 35:19; 69:4; 109:3).

* Here, the word ‘sin’, does not mean every sin, but means a great sin that includes all sins. Whoever is absolved of this sin obtains forgiveness of all his sins. This terrible sin is their disbelief in Christ who came specially to renew their belief. If He had not come they would not have this sin, but by His coming the life of those who did not believe was in danger of destruction, while those who believed were saved. As He is the head of the Apostles He became, as they declared, “to the one...the aroma of life leading to life, and to the other the aroma of death leading to death,” (2 Cor 2:16)³.

* He adds saying, “but now they have no excuse for their sin” [22]. Someone may be moved to say, ‘those people to whom Christ did not come and with whom He did not

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 88:3.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 88:2.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 89:1.

speak may have excuse for their sin.’ My answer to this is that they may have excuse for this sin concerning their lack of belief in Christ, but they have no excuse for all their other sins. Moreover, He came with His Church to the nations and spoke to them. The reference here is to the words He said, “he who hears you hears Me,” (Luke 10:16). Paul the Apostle also says, “since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me,” (2 Cor 13:3)¹.

* However, it is clear that they do not escape from judgment: “For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law”, (Rom 2:12). The Apostle’s word ‘will perish’ has a horrible ring, more so than the word ‘judged’. This shows that such an excuse (that Christ did not come to them and did not speak with them) will not benefit them, but rather adds to their aggravation. For those who find excuse in that they did not hear, will perish without law.²

Saint Augustine

“He who hates Me hates My Father also.” [23]

Saint Augustine asks how can it be possible for the Jews who did not know the Father who sent His Only Begotten Son [21] would hate Him [23]? **Saint Augustine** then answers at some length, that a man may often love or hate another without seeing or knowing him, but only by imagining him or hearing about him. So, the Jews hated the Father without knowing Him, but as they imagined Him. **Saint Augustine** writes, “How could they love the Father of Truth when they were full of hatred for truth itself? They did not wish to be judged for their conduct, while the act of truth judged such conduct. Thus, they hated Truth as much as they hated the punishment Truth might submit them to. And as they did not know that He was the Truth who judged such as they were, they hated Him whom they did not know. And as they hated Him, they surely could not but hate Him who was born the Truth. So, as they did not know the Truth by whose wisdom they were judged and who is born of God the Father, they certainly also did not know the Father and they hated Him. Those people were really miserable. For, as they desired to be evil, they rejected Truth that judged them.”³

“If I had not done among them the works which no one else did,

They would have no sin;

But now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.” [24]

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 89:2.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 89:3.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 90:3.

The Lord Jesus Christ did among them great unique works revealing not only His power, but also His kindness, love, and mercy. But, in spite of that, they hated both Him and the Father who sent Him. No wonder they hated those who believed in Him and became His disciples.

* They were sinners before He spoke to them and did such works among them, but they did not have the sin of disbelief in Him. This is the sin that is referred to in particular because it includes all other sins. If they were freed of that sin and believed in Him, they would have been forgiven all the other sins.¹

Saint Augustine

They saw with their eyes full of envy and hate and consequently they hated Him. On the other hand, Saint John saw Him and enjoyed fellowship with Him. For he says, “which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life ...that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1:1, 3)

Saint Augustine says that many prophets did works no one did, but there is no comparison between their works and the works of the Lord Jesus Christ. The countless wonders He did, their variety, and also that He did them with His personal power show that without Him nobody could do anything. Besides, His birth of a virgin and His resurrection the third day are further proof.²

* They themselves were witnesses of this. For they said, “It was never seen like this in Israel,” (Matt 9:33). They also said, “Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind,” (John 9:32). The same was in the case of Lazarus being raised from the dead and all the other works and wonders that were new and beyond thought. Someone may ask, “Why then do they persecute You and us?” The answer is, “Yet because you are not of the world. If you were of the world, the world would love its own”, [19]. As this matter was baffling to us He told us the reason: their viciousness. He did not stop at that but also referred to the prophecy (Ps 35:19; 69:4) to show that this had been foretold a long time before, saying, “they hated Me without a cause,” [25].

Saint John Chrysostom

**“But this happened that the word might be fulfilled
Which is written in their law,
‘They hated Me without a cause.’” [25]**

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 91:1.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 91:2-4.

They hated the Lord Jesus Christ without a cause. His words and teaching were open, presenting truth blended with love. His works were superior and unique based on His rich grace and infinite love. In the Psalms it is written, “Those who hate Me without a cause,” (Ps 35:19; 69:4). ‘Without a cause’ in Greek means ‘for nothing’ since they hated Him and did not think of receiving anything in return for their hatred.

Saint Augustine observes that the Lord Jesus Christ declared that the Jews hated Him and His Father without a cause and that they would kill Him. However, when the Paraclete arrived at Pentecost after the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, He, through the word of the apostle Peter, attracted those who were present. So, about three thousand of those who took part in the uprising and asked for Christ’s crucifixion believed in Him. Thus, the Holy Spirit testifies effectively to the change of those who hated truth to become believers in the Truth.

* As though He says, ‘They hated and killed Me when I was visible to their eyes; but the testimony will be carried for Me by the Helper who will attract them to faith in Me when I am not seen by them’¹.

Saint Augustine

4- Sending the Helper to Them

He gave them a path that seemed extremely difficult as He asked them to abide in Him like branches in the vine. That seemed impossible to a human being, for how can a weak man abide in the heavenly Son of God? How can the earthy unite with the heavenly?

After giving them this difficult path, He asked them to love, not just a temporary human affection, but by giving themselves even unto death as He gave Himself for the world. This commandment also seemed impossible, for who can fulfill it?

Finally, He told them the world would hate and persecute them. All of that seemed to be a narrow way a man cannot pursue. He, therefore, comforted them by His promise to send His Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. He is the heavenly teacher, the true guide who will lead them to Christ’s perfect truth. He will make them firm in the vine as He pours the heavenly love in their hearts. He will grant them the power of testimony for Christ to attract to truth even those who oppose them.

**“But when the Helper comes,
whom I shall send to you from the Father,
the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father,
He will testify of Me.” [26]**

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 92:1.

He speaks here about the Helper who is a hypostasis called “Spirit of truth”. He proceeds from the Father and testifies of the Son through His gifts and blessings to the believers.

He is the Spirit of the Father, for the Son Himself says, “who proceeds from the Father,” (John 15:26) and in another place says, “...for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you, (Matt 10:20). He is also the Spirit of the Son, for the Apostle says, “God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father’, (Gal 4:6). This means He will make you cry out, because this is what we say crying out to and in Him. This means He will fill our hearts with love without which our crying out will be in vain, for the Apostle says, “...if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His,” (Rom 8:9).

Christ had said that He would pray the Father to send the Helper, (John 14:16). Here, He says, “I shall send Him to you from the Father”. So, He is sent from the Father as the administrator of redemption and sanctification, and He is sent from the Son who paid the price on the cross so that the Spirit may dwell in man and find in him the righteousness of Christ.

The Holy Spirit testifies of the Son, and as He dwells in the disciples they testify of the Lord Jesus Christ with the power of the Spirit.

* The same Helper is also sent by the Father, as Christ had already said, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name,” (John 14:26). Consider their unity, for the Father sends Him whom the Son also sends.¹

Saint Ambrose

* The disciples may say, what can we do? If they did not obey Your words, for the same reason they will not keep our words. If they drove You out, they will expel us. They saw miracles no one saw done by anyone but You, and heard words no one heard anything similar said by other than You, and yet they did not benefit from what they saw and heard. If they hated Your Father and Yourself together, why did You cast us to face their opposition? How may we be qualified later so that they may believe us? Who of our tribes will listen to us? The disciples may ask the Lord Jesus Christ these questions. However, so that they do not have these disturbing thoughts, Christ comforts them by saying, **“when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.”** The Lord says that the Holy Spirit whom He calls the Spirit of truth will qualify them to be believed.

Saint John Chrysostom

¹ Of the Christian Faith, 2:9:76.

* We affirm that the Holy Spirit Himself also who works in the prophets is an emanation of God. He proceeds from Him and returns like the rays of the sun.¹

Ethnagoros the Scholar

* The Holy Spirit is in reality a Spirit proceeding actually from the Father but not in the same way as the Son, for the Spirit is not born, but proceeds from the Father.²

Saint Gregory of Nazianzus

* Thus it is impossible for the special attribute of the Father hypostasis to move to the Son or to the Holy Spirit. The attribute of the Father exists without cause, but this does not apply to the Son or the Spirit, for the Son “came forth from the Father”, (John 16:28) and the Scripture affirms that the Spirit “proceeds from the Father”, (John 15:26).³

Saint Gregory the Bishop of Nyssa

Saint Epiphanius uses the expression that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and takes from the Son and that He is of the same essence as the Father and the Son.⁴ **Saint Gregory the Bishop of Nyssa** maintains that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and takes from the Son.⁵

Saint Cyril asserts his teaching concerning emanation by saying, “...the Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father as from a fountain; on the other hand, the Son is sent by God to His creation”⁶.

The International Theological Joint Committee of East Orthodox and Catholic Churches reports that, ‘... the Father is distinct from the two other hypostases in that He is of His essence since eternity, gives birth to the Son and sends the Holy Spirit. The Son is distinct from the two other hypostases in that He is born of His Father. The Holy Spirit is distinct in that He proceeds from the Father. Thus the Father is not born and has no anaitios or origin before Him. He is at the same time the only origin, the only root and the only source of the Son and the Holy Spirit⁷. He alone is aitios who from eternity gives birth to the Son and sends the Holy Spirit...Therefore, the Father has no previous cause anaitios. He is Himself the cause autoaitios; whereas the Son and the Holy Spirit have a source in the Father⁸’.

¹ Legat. 10:24.

² Oratione 39:12.

³ De Oratione Dominica 3.

⁴ Anor.7.

⁵ Adv. Maced.10.

⁶ PG 77:318 b.

⁷ Saint Basil the Great, sermon 24:4, volume of the Greek Fathers 31:9.6.

⁸ Photius: De S. Spiritus Mystaggia 16; Mark of Ephesus: Capita Syllogistica 24.

* It befits us to make sure how many things must be said about that ‘love’ and also how many great things we need to know about God, for He Himself is Love. Just as “...no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him” (Matt 11:27); likewise no one knows Love except the Son, and in the same manner no one knows the Son who is Love Himself except the Father. Moreover, as He is called Love, the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father, alone knows what is in God, just as the spirit of a man knows the things that are within his person, (1 Cor 2:11). Here, then, the Paraclete who is “the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father” (John 15:26), walks about searching for the spirit that deserves and can accept His great love, the love of God that He desires to reveal to men.¹

Origen the Scholar

* Christ told His apostles to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is a confession of belief in the Creator, the only begotten Son, and the Gift. For, God the Father, is One and everything is of Him; our Lord Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son through whom are all things (1 Cor 8:6) He is One, and the Spirit, God’s Gift to us who is all things, He is also One (Eph 4:4). Thus the greatness of the Trinity is in accordance to the benefits the Trinity grants: the One Power from whom is everything, the only begotten Son through whom are all things, and the One Gift that grants us perfect hope. There can be no deficiency in this exalted unity that embraces the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the infinite and eternal like the image that expresses Him and that we enjoy through the Gift.²

* For, our fallen minds are incapable to comprehend the Father or the Son. Our faith that found difficulty in believing in God’s incarnation is enlightened by the gift of the Holy Spirit, the bond of the Unity and the source of Light.³

Saint Hilary of Poitiers

* He fills all with His power. But only those who conform partake in Him. Those who partake of the Spirit enjoy Him as much as their nature allows, not as much as the Spirit can give Himself in that communion.⁴

* As the sun is seen by a clear eye, similarly the Paraclete appears in the same image (the Son) that belongs to (the Father) the Invisible. Through the blessed meditation on the image we shall see the inexpressible beauty of the origin. He is the one who shines in those who are purified from uncleanness and makes them spiritual through communion

¹ Heg Tadros Yacoub Malaty: the Holy Spirit according to the Learned Origen; transl. Into Arabic by Dr. George Boutros.

² On the Trinity 2:1.

³ On the Trinity 2:33.

⁴ Liber de Spiritu Sancto. 9:22 PG 32:108-9.

with Him. And, just as when the sun's rays descend on the bright, transparent bodies they reflect brightness on others, likewise the spirits carrying the Spirit are enlightened and become spiritual imparting grace on the others.¹

Saint Basil the Great

* Christ was born and the Spirit preceded Him. Christ was baptized and the Spirit testified of Him. Christ was tempted and the Spirit carried Him (to the mountain). Christ performed wonders and the Spirit accompanied Him. Christ ascended and the Spirit followed behind Him.²

* The physical works of Christ ended and the works of the Spirit began.³

* If the Spirit is not adored, how may He be able to deify me in baptism? We obtain from the Spirit what renews. You thus see the Spirit working as being God who grants us the gifts and you see what we may be deprived of if we deny that the Spirit is God. Through the Spirit I know God. He is Himself God and in the hereafter. He deifies me.⁴

Saint Gregory of Nazianzus

* Our reform is the work of the entire Holy Trinity equal in every respect. Through the Divine nature as a whole, the will and power traverse everything done through Him. Therefore, our salvation is in reality the work of the One God. And, though what was realized for our sake and took place in all creation seems to refer to each hypostasis, we yet believe that all things are from God through the Son in the Holy Spirit.⁵

Saint Cyril the Great

* The work that befits the Holy Spirit is the accomplishment of our unity with Christ.

* The Spirit unites us. We say He relates us to God; when we admit Him we partake of the Divine nature, we receive Him from the Son, and through the Son from the Father.⁶

* The Son Himself forms us according to His glory and brands us with the stamp of His form.⁷

¹ Liber de Spiritu Sancto. 9:23 PG 32:109.

² Oratio 31, Theologica 5:31. 29 PG 36:159B.

³ Oratio 41 In Pentecosten, 5. PG 36:436B.

⁴ Oratio 31. Theologica 5:28 PG 36:105A.

⁵ In Joannis Evangelium, Liber 10, 15:1 PG 74:333-6.

⁶ In Joannis Evangelium 11:10. PG 74:544.

⁷ De SS. Trinitate Dialogus, 3. PG 75 :837A.

* He grants us the perfect scent of Him who gave birth to Him.¹

* He who grants the divine Spirit the life giver is the Son born of God.²

* The fulfillment given to us by the Father and the Son is accomplished by the Holy Spirit who fills us with divine gifts through Him and makes us partakers of the unutterable Nature.³

* As the Son lives in us through His Spirit in a manner that cannot be described (Gal 4:6), we say that we are called to the spirit of adopted children⁴.

* We are grateful to the union with the Son that is achieved through the Spirit in those who accept Him so we take the form of adopted children⁵.

* If the true image that expresses perfectly the imitation of the Son Himself is without fault, the natural likeness of the Son is the Spirit. We conform to Him in turn through sanctification that gives us the form of the Father Himself.⁶

* We take the form according to Christ and through Him we accept the image (Gal 4:9); the form of the Spirit is altogether good, and there is no one similar by nature to Him.⁷

* Because of His strength and nature, the Spirit can surely reform us so that we have the superior image.⁸

Saint Cyril the Great

In the writings of **Saint Basil the Great** and also of **Saint Cyril the Great** we read that the Holy Spirit works in us to make us the image of the Father. He is the living environment and through Himself He creates in us the similarity of the Father and the Son.

¹ De SS. Trinitate Dialogus, 5 PG 75:837A.

² De SS. Trinitate Dialogus, 3. PG 75: 964A.

³ De SS. Trinitate Dialogus, 3. PG 75: 800G

⁴ De SS. Trinitate Dialogus, 3. PG 75: 833.

⁵ De SS. Trinitate Dialogus, 3. PG 75: 837A.

⁶ De SS. Trinitate Dialogus, 7. PG 75:1089A.

⁷ De SS. Trinitate Dialogus, 7. PG 75:1089B.

⁸ De SS. Trinitate Dialogus, 7. PG 75: 1113A.

* The Son born of God grants the divine life giving Spirit. The Son partakes of life and receives the perfect divine essence from the Father in whom is the Son and the Holy Spirit who gives life to those who obtain Him.¹

* In the One divine essence the three distinct hypostases unite in one exalted beauty. We also take a new form by accepting the mark of adopted children through the Son in the Spirit.²

* Thanks are to the Spirit, for when we are molded according to the Son's exalted divine beauty, we partake of the divine essence.³

* The Son grants us the perfect aroma of His Father. Through Him and in Him we accept the fragrance of knowing God and we become rich through it.⁴

Saint Cyril the Great

Saint Cyril the Great says that the Holy Spirit gives energy as He is the power of God.⁵

* The Son proclaimed Himself and the Father alike. The Word Himself became visible and tangible.⁶

* Concerning His greatness we cannot know God. However, concerning His love, He is perpetually known through His Word and through the Spirit who embraces the human being and grants him authority to the glory of the Father.⁷

Saint Irenaeus

* The Father declares; the Spirit truly works; and the Son serves.⁸

Saint Irenaeus

The feast of the Pentecost is the coming of the Holy Spirit that Christ had promised. The Spirit in the continual Pentecost is an assertion of the presence of Christ in the Church. Thus, the feast of the Pentecost is a messianic feast no less than a feast of

¹ De SS. Trinitate Dialogus, 5. PG 75:964B.

² De SS. Trinitate Dialogus, 5. PG 75:964B.

³ De SS. Trinitate Dialogus, 3. PG 75:837C.

⁴ De SS. Trinitate Dialogus, 3. PG 75:856C.

⁵ De SS. Trinitate Dialogus, 7. PG 75:1112B.

⁶ Adv. Haereses 4:6:6.

⁷ Adv. Haereses 4:20:4. PG 7:1034B.

⁸ Adv. Haereses 4:20:6. PG 7:10367.

the Holy Spirit. It is pneumatological because it secretly consecrates the presence of Christ in Church. The feast of the Pentecost eliminates the confusion arising from Christ's ascension to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, and Christ's promise "I am with you always, even to the end of the age," (Matt 28:20)¹.

Saint Macarius says that when Christ and the Spirit stay in us we experience this fact in various ways: in joy or tears, in silence or rapture. There are many forms of the presence of God; as for the fruit of the Spirit, this always takes the form of the presence of Christ who grants the union that lives in the Church that is in the heart of the believer.²

**“And you also will bear witness,
Because you have been with Me from the beginning.” [27]**

Saint Augustine observes that when the Holy Spirit descends upon the Church, the disciples who accompanied the Lord Jesus Christ from the beginning of His service bear the possibility of witnessing for Him. The disciples were unable to be witnesses when the Lord Jesus Christ talked to them, because the fullness of the Spirit had not yet descended upon them. When the Holy Spirit descends He will grant them faith working through love, and perfect love casts out fear. Thus, Peter the Apostle will not deny Christ again as he did when Christ was to be crucified. He will testify of Christ and joyfully endure suffering and persecution for the sake of Christ's name. “When the Holy Spirit testifies of Christ and inspires such courageous testimony that cannot be defeated. He will free Christ's beloved from fear and will make them love the hatred of their enemies.”³

* In the previous words the Lord strengthens His disciples so that they may endure the hostility of their enemies. He prepares them also by presenting Himself as an example so that they may have more courage in following Him. He gives them the promise of the Holy Spirit who will come and testify of Him so that they may become themselves witnesses through the work of the Holy Spirit in His listeners. This is the meaning of: “And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning”, [27]. He means that when He testifies you also will bear witness. He is in your hearts, and you will proclaim Him with your voices: He will inspire you and you will speak so that the words... “Their sound has gone out through all the earth” (Ps 19:4)... may be realized. For, unless He fills them with His Spirit, He will not achieve much by giving Himself as an example of the goal.⁴

Saint Augustine

¹ Boris Bobrinskoy: *The Mystery of the Trinity*, St. Vladimir 1999, p.72.

² Boris Bobrinskoy: *The Mystery of the Trinity*, St. Vladimir 1999, p.73.

³ St. Augustine: *On the Gospel of St. John*, tractate, 92:2.

⁴ St. Augustine: *On the Gospel of St. John*, tractate, 94:1.

Meditations

Inspired by the Gospel of St John –Chapter 15

* Engraft Me into You

O True Vine

* My wonderful love, reveal to me Your eminent love,

You have planted me as in a divine paradise

You enclosed it with Your love

You expected me to give You fruit to delight Your heart

Yet when I gave You bad grapes You did not neglect me.

* You pulled me from my corruption

And You engrafted me in You who are the true vine!

I bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the grapes of love and joy.

I have Your sweet taste and fragrance

Without You I am not good but be thrown for garbage and fire!

* Would Your love run in my veins

As I am a living branch in and through You.

That Your joy in me may be perfect and my joy through You becomes perfect.

I love You and get to know Your mysteries and will.

I love You and sacrifice myself for Your small brethren!

* I love you even if the world hates me.

I am a branch in You, O divine Vine!

The world cannot endure you and so despises me!

The world does not tolerate your voice;

It cannot accept your words which I pronounce!

* Who will consolidate me in You so that I may not be plucked out of You?

Who will care for me but Your Father the wonderful Vinedresser?

Who will encompass me and work in me

Only Your Holy Spirit, the Comforter
Glory be to You O Trinity who is all love!

AMEN

+++

CHAPTER 16

SENDING THE HELPER

Pain entered the world as one of the fruits of disobedience. However, God in His love allowed His only begotten Son to become man and to suffer as a sacrifice of love offered on behalf of all humanity. Consequently, pain changed from being the fruit of sin to becoming a sign of love. We then obtained the right to suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. Through this unique sacrifice we perceive the meaning of the divine promise that He wounds and heals (Deut 32:39). The Lord Jesus Christ spoke to the disciples openly about how much they would suffer and He promised to them His Holy Spirit the Helper who will descend on them, work in them, and grant them His divine comfort.

* The spirit needs the divine lamp that is the Holy Spirit who lights the dark house. The spirit needs the bright Sun of Righteousness who shines in the heart. The spirit also needs the armor with which it may fight the battle and win.

Saint Macarius the Great

1 – The Painful Arrows of Love	verses	1- 6
2 – Sending the Helper		7-15
3 – The Promise That He Will See Them after His Resurrection		16-22
4 – Answering Their Prayers		23-27
5 – His Ascension to Heaven		28
6 – His Abandonment during His Suffering		29-32
7 – His Victory for Them		33

1 – The Painful Arrows of Love

In perfect faithfulness the Lord Jesus Christ reveals to the disciples the trouble they will face during the missions to which He will send them. However, these are the burdens of love. They are the arrows of love for His sake, for the world hates them as it hates Him.

**“These things I have spoken to you,
That you should not be made to stumble.” [1]**

The expression **“these things I have spoken to you”** is repeated seven times in this chapter. In Greek this expression implies continuity and dignity. It is as though the things He speaks about in His farewell speech are not confined to a particular time. They are vital matters related to the Church throughout all the ages.

The word **“to stumble”** here is interpreted by some scholars as “you will fall into a trap” similar to a bird or an animal that falls in a net.

The Lord informs the disciples beforehand about the sufferings they will endure so that they do not stumble. That is to say, lest they lose their faith and their spirits are harmed, just as a man’s body is hurt when he stumbles in the street or falls in a trap or over a stone.

* “These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble,” [1]. As the Holy Spirit pours in our hearts, the Holy Spirit who was given to us provides (Rom 5:5), to those who love God’s law, great peace so that they do not stumble in anything.¹

Saint Augustine

**“They will put you out of the synagogues;
Yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you
Will think that he offers God service.” [2]**

The Lord refers to the time of suffering as **“the hour of temptation”**.

To cling to Christ and testify of Him was considered a religious crime or blasphemy. Therefore, Christians were put out of the synagogues. They were deprived of the right to pray. They were as considered cursed and unworthy to worship God or participate in prayers with the believers. The pain that the Jew who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ suffered because he was put out of the temple and was deprived of the joy of belonging to the Jewish nation was not less than murder. He then lost the feeling of relationship to the people of God. He lost his peculiar privileges and was considered as one who had broken the law. He was looked upon as a Samaritan, a pagan, a tax collector, and as a traitor of his religion, his people, and country.

They did not stop at putting those who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ out of the synagogues. They pursued them to offer them as human sacrifice and considered doing that for the glory of God. As Isaiah says, "Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for My name’s sake, said, let the Lord be glorified", (Is 66:5). This is what happened to the Apostle Paul when forty men swore that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed him, (Acts 23:12-13). In the Talmud it is written, “...whoever kills an infidel is equal to a person who brings an offering to God”² Thus wolves disguised in the clothes of

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 93:1.

² Bammidar, R.21 ad Num.25:13.

lambs, and the enemies of God appeared as zealous servants. They practiced hostility as a religious obligation toward heaven.

* In truth it was said to those "...they will put you out of the synagogues". That is to say, they have passion for God but have no knowledge, for they ignore God's righteousness. Those punished should have no shame in being cast out by people, as long as God is the glory of their strength.¹

* Those who think that they serve God by killing you do not know the Father or the Son. The Lord added these words to comfort His people who are expelled from the Jewish communities. He says, "The time is coming that" in a manner of one who informs them beforehand of good news that will be followed by major evil. They will truly disperse you and I will gather you, or they will truly scatter you, but the time of your joy is coming.²

Saint Augustine

**"And these things they will do to you
Because they have not known the Father nor Me." [3]**

There is a big difference between a person who speaks or writes about God and a person who knows God and God knows him. Here, when the Lord speaks about knowledge He does not mean mere mental knowledge, but knowledge through life and experience. Therefore, when on the Day of Judgment He says to the wicked "I know you not..." it does not mean that God is lacking information, for He knows everything, He means He does not know them in the context of friendship and communion.

The cause of their wickedness is lack of true knowledge. As is written in **Hosea**: "...because they have transgressed My covenant, and trespassed against My law, Israel shall cry unto Me, my God, we know thee", (Hos 8:1-2). They may know God's will, but they do not know God practically in their conduct. They study the Bible but they twist the interpretation as they like.

* As though the Lord Jesus Christ says to His disciples: 'it is sufficient for you so that you may be comforted, to know that all your suffering is for My sake and the Father's sake.' Here He also reminds them of His beatitudes when He taught them "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matt 5:11-12)³.

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 93:2.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 93:3.

³ Homilies on St. John, 77:3.

**“But these things I have told you,
That when the time comes,
You may remember that I told you of them.
And these things I did not say to you at the beginning,
Because I was with you.” [4]**

He did not tell them those things at the beginning when they followed Him so that they may not be confused or worried. Now that they have become His disciples, He declares this to them as an essential matter in their life and their communion with Him. Before He had spoken to them about the time of tribulation so that they would realize that what will happen to them will not be a coincidence as some believe but will be allowed by God and to the extent that God will permit. Moreover, in this statement, Christ paves the way for them so that they may be ready to face that time with their spiritual weapons and in particular with the sword of the divine Word.

Why did He inform them about that at that particular time? Because the hour of tribulation was approaching. The hour of His suffering was near and the time of their suffering will be soon and He, in the flesh, will leave them. When He was with them in the flesh He comforted and supported them. Now He leaves to them His word and His promise that He will send to them the Holy Spirit the Helper.

* No one should be surprised that we are consumed by continuous persecution and are under unusual oppression, since the Lord has told us beforehand that these things will happen at the end. He also gave instructions to our army and His words teach and encourage us.¹

Cyprian the Martyr

* These words I say enable you to judge and trust in my other speeches. You cannot say that I flatter you by mentioning only what pleases you. I do not cheat you, for whoever wishes to cheat you will not tell you beforehand things that would cause you to leave him. Therefore, I inform you in advance that these things will occur to you, so that you may not be troubled by not expecting these events.

There is also another reason: that you may not say we did not know before that these things will happen. Remember, therefore, that I told you.

¹ Letter 58 to the people abiding in Thibaris, 2.

May we also consider these things at the time of trial? And when we suffer at the hands of evil people: “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith”, (Heb 12:2). These things are caused by the wicked and are for the sake of virtue and for His sake.

For, if we contemplate these matters, everything will be easy and bearable. If one suffers for the sake of his beloved, he glories in doing so; how much more would be his feelings when he endures suffering for the sake of God?

He, for our sake considered this shame, the cross, glory; how much more, then, we need to take this same attitude?

If we can make light of pain, how much more can we disdain wealth and greed?¹

* “And these things I did not say to you at the beginning because I was with you,” [4]. He said that in a human way as though saying: ‘when you were safe and had the authorization to ask Me when you wished, while the entire storm was blowing on Me, it was not necessary that I speak to you about these things at the beginning.’²

Saint John Chrysostom

Saint John Chrysostom asks, ‘why did Christ say to them that He had not spoken to them about those things before; although when He called the twelve disciples He said to them ‘You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake’ and they will scourge you in their synagogues, (Matt 10:17-18)?’ Then Saint John Chrysostom answers his question by saying that what Christ had said to His disciples was about what would happen in the future when they would preach to the Gentiles. But what He speaks about in this verse are things that they will suffer at the hands of the Jews, things that will soon happen. He had not told them anything about those things before.³

**“But now I go away to Him who sent Me,
And none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’” [5]**

Peter had asked Him this question, (John 13:36). Thomas also asked the same question (John 14:5), and He answered both. But now He tells them not to ask Him that question because sorrow filled their hearts, [6].

It befits them, instead of asking where He was going, to understand and trust that all things work together for good to them whom God loves, (Rom 8:28).

¹ Homilies on St. John, 77:3-4.

² Homilies on St. John, 78:1.

³ Homilies on St. John, 78:1.

* Now He promises them that He will go away in a manner through which no one asks Him where He is going. For, a cloud received Him as He ascended from among them. When He went up to heaven, no one asked Him orally; this was rather eye witnessing, (Acts 1:9-11).¹

Saint Augustine

**“But because I have said these things to you,
Sorrow has filled your heart.” [6]**

The Lord Christ had filled their heart with joy before now, (John 15:11). However, when their thoughts were troubled, sorrow filled their hearts and they did not allow Christ’s joy to possess them. Their thoughts were preoccupied with Christ’s exterior kingdom and temporal glory and that they would rule with Him. As worldly thoughts entered their minds, worldly sorrow filled them.

* Their human feelings were distressed because seeing Him in the flesh would end permanently. But He knew what was beneficial for them. For that inner vision through which He will grant them the Holy Spirit for solace is undoubtedly more glorious...since He pours Himself in the hearts of believers. He then adds, “It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you,” [7]. He seems to say to them: ‘it is better for you that the form of a bondservant be taken away from you, for the Word came in real flesh and dwelt among you. But I do not want you to continue in loving Me in the flesh and be satisfied with this milk wishing to remain little children forever. If you adhere to the flesh in a physical way, the Spirit will have no room for you.

What does He mean by “if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you” other than that you cannot accept the Lord as long as you continue in knowing Christ according to the flesh? Therefore, one who obtained the Spirit says, “Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer”, (2 Cor 5:16). For, now even the body of Christ he does not know in a physical way since he achieved the spiritual knowledge of the Word who became flesh².

* Through Christ’s departure according to the flesh, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit became present with them. Thus, Christ left them in a manner so that He may remain in His abode and not with them, and so that the Holy Spirit may be present in them. What then does His promise mean when He says, “I am with you always, even to the end of the

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 94:3.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 94:4.

age,” (Matt 28:20). My Father and I “will come to him and make Our home with him,” (John 14:23)¹.

Saint Augustine

* Extreme sorrow is terrible and brings death. Therefore, Paul says, “...lest such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow,” (2 Cor 2:7)².

* It is no little comfort for them to know that He understands their great sorrow. For, besides their sadness because He will leave them and terrible things will happen to them, they did not know if they could bear all that with a strong will.³

Saint John Chrysostom

2 – Sending the Helper

**“Nevertheless I tell you the truth.
It is for your advantage that I go away;
For if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you;
But if I depart, I will send Him to you.” [7]**

In the Old Testament the prophets comforted the people during trouble by foretelling the coming of the Messiah the Savior as their helper (Is 9:6; Micah 5:6; Zech 3:8). Now the Messiah has come and will depart according to the flesh. Therefore, there is urgent need for another Helper- that is the Holy Spirit- whose coming necessitates Christ’s departure [7]. It was not possible for the disciples to accept that. Consequently, the Lord Jesus Christ affirms “I tell you the truth” that it is for their advantage that He goes away. This teaching was unexpected and strange to them. His ascension is not for His rest, but for their advantage. For, if what He did through the flesh was for the sake of His believers, His ascension is the ascension of the Head that the members of the body do not relinquish.

He had previously declared to them the necessity of His death for man’s salvation (Matt 20:19; 26:2; Mark 9:31; 10:33; Luke 9:44; 18:32). Now, He does not repeat His previous declaration, but rather reveals God’s plan concerning sending the Holy Spirit to the world. This will not be achieved unless our salvation is realized through the cross, resurrection, and ascension to heaven.

Why will the Holy Spirit not come except Christ goes away first? Because He comes to dwell in the human soul that the Lord bought with His blood. He gave men His

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 94:5.

² Homilies on St. John, 78:1.

³ Homilies on St. John, 78:1.

righteousness and the right to enter heaven. Thus, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, His resurrection, and ascension are the path to the enjoyment of the coming of the Holy Spirit into the Church and His dwelling in it so that the believer may enjoy that abode.

On the other hand, Christ's ascension to heaven as the glorified Savior does not take away from Him His preoccupation with His Bride-the Church- whom He has saved with His blood. He sends to her the Holy Spirit who sanctifies her for Him. He beautifies her and makes an icon of her for Him. She gets prepared for the heavenly eternal wedding. Thus, the coming of the Holy Spirit who is Christ's Spirit is better for the Church than the Lord Jesus Christ's staying physically on earth. If the Lord Jesus Christ continues to remain physically on earth, the human eye will turn toward Him. But the coming of the Holy Spirit will draw the human heart to the glorified Christ in heaven. Consequently, the human heart will yearn not for continuing to exist on earth, but for departing to the bridegroom.

The Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven at a critical moment and in strange circumstances, for He left His disciples powerless and having nothing to do but wait.

(1) From the point of view of their private life and faith, until the moment of ascension they were afraid, weak, hard-hearted and of little faith, (Mark 16:14). He left them physically and He gave them difficult commandments, a narrow path, and His severe cross. Who could endure all that?

(2) From the point of view of their work He gave them a difficult mission. He asked them to preach and make disciples in the entire world. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19). He asked them to preach in the name of the Holy Trinity. This was a difficult mission at a time when they did not perform miracles, cure lepers and cast out evil spirits as they had done when He served on earth before His crucifixion.

They were, therefore, in need of support and help. For this reason, He promised to send them the Spirit of Fire, the Spirit of the Holy God Himself. He will work in them to sanctify them and others. **"Behold, I send you the Promise of My Father upon you, but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high,"** (Luke 24:49) The ascension of the Lord, therefore, became a matter of joy and their spirits rejoiced. For, as He blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. They worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. They were continually in the temple praising and blessing God, (Luke 24:51-53). For the Lord said to them, "...if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you," (John 16:7)¹.

About the day of the Pentecost Feast, **Saint John Chrysostom** writes about 'The gifts of the Holy Spirit' and says: [Before these days He ascended to heaven and took His heavenly throne. He took back His seat at the right hand of the Father. Today He grants us the coming on of the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit He distributes among us other heavenly gifts. For, what gift among all gifts do we enjoy in our redeemed spirits, that we did not receive through the service of the Holy Spirit?!

Through the Spirit we are free of bondage and called to freedom!

¹ The author: God Sanctifies Me, 1967, p.3.

Through Him we become the children of God by adoption!

Moreover, if I may say, we were renewed taking off the loathsome burden of sins!

Through Him we see before us the orders of clergy!

Through Him our teachers help us! From Him we obtain the gifts of signs, of healing and all the other gifts with which the Holy Spirit adorns the Church of God.

This is what the Apostle Paul declares saying, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills," (1 Cor 12:11). He says, 'as He wills' not 'as He orders', and he says, 'distributing' not 'distributed'. He thus shows that the Spirit possesses the gifts and does not bow to the authority of another.

For, the authority that the Apostle testifies of that belongs to the Father is the same that is referred to the Holy Spirit. Just as he says about the Father "it is the same God who works all in all", he also says about the Holy Spirit, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things distributing to each one individually as He wills."

Observe this perfect authority for the divine nature is one. Therefore, there is not the least doubt concerning the authority; since there is equality in honor, power and authority must be one.]

* In the Gospels of the three other evangelicals it is clearly shown that He made such a prophecy before the Last Supper, (Matt 10:16-30; Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-17): that the Helper or Intercessor became necessary when Christ would depart. He, therefore, speaks about Him since the beginning as He was with them and His presence was helping them. However, on the night of His departure it was appropriate for the Lord to speak about the coming of the Spirit who will pour love in the hearts of those who will courageously preach the word of God. With the Spirit, they will carry within themselves Christ's testimony. There will be no cause to stumble when the hostile Jews put them out of the synagogues and kill them thinking that in doing so they offered God service. For, love endures all things, (1 Cor 13:7); and that love of God had been poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to them, (Rom 5:5)¹.

Saint Augustine

* As though He says openly: 'If I do not withdraw My flesh from your corporeal understanding, I cannot through My Spirit the Helper guide you to spiritual perception'².

Pope Gregory the Great

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 94:2.

² Moral 8:13.

* We cannot by any means have this blessing, which we who have not seen- yet believe, except by accepting it through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, He specifically said “It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you,” [7]. He is with us always in His divinity. But if He does not leave us in the flesh, we shall always see His body as body and we shall not believe spiritually.¹

Saint Augustine

* Observe how He comforts them again. He is clearly saying, ‘I speak to you not to cheer you, even though you grieved many times, but you need to listen to what is for your good. You truly grieve because you yearn that I stay with you though what is for your good is different’. For, part of the concern for others enforces a person not to be too gentle to them in matters that are for their benefit, or for matters that lead them to what is not to their advantage.”²

Saint John Chrysostom

The Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

The temporal birth of the Lord Jesus Christ opened the way to the coming of the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. For the life of the Lord Jesus Christ everywhere and in every action testifies to the work of the Holy Spirit that is Christ’s Spirit. John the Forerunner came as an angel to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb, (Luke 1:15). The same Spirit came upon the Saint Virgin Mary and overshadowed her, like the smoke or thick cloud that covered Sinai, to make her ready so that the Holy One, who is to be born of her would be called the Son of God, (Luke 1:35). Then, when Saint Mary visited Elizabeth, the Holy Spirit filled Elizabeth and the babe in her womb leaped for joy, (Luke 1: 41, 44). Mary and Zacharias, being inspired by the Holy Spirit, glorified God, (Luke 1: 46, 68) and Simeon the Elder came by the Spirit into the temple to receive the child Jesus, (Luke 2: 25-32). The Holy Spirit also drove our Lord Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted (Mark 1: 12).

The Lord Christ gives us the Holy Spirit to dwell in us so that we carry Christ in us, and He Himself becomes our prayer and worship "in Spirit" as we cry out to the Father, "Abba, Father", (Rom 8: 15; Gal 4: 6).

**“And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin,
And of righteousness,
And of judgment.” [8]**

¹ Sermon on N.T. Lessons, 93:4.

² Homilies on St. John, 78:1.

The mission of the Holy Spirit to the Church fulfills the Lord Jesus Christ's care for the Church. When the Holy Spirit comes He will grant people the life of repentance and a return to Him through the Cross. He alone can enter the heart, reveal sin and unveil it to a person so that he may return to the delightful communion with God. The Holy Spirit can convince the heart, mind, and the entire depth of a man that his happiness, safety, joy, eternal life and incorruption are in his steadfastness with the Savior, not with sin. He will persuade him that the pleasure of life with God is far greater than the pleasures of sin.

The Holy Spirit is called 'the Paraclete'. This is an old Greek word. 'Para' means 'dwell, beside', 'clete' means 'call', 'to help'. Thus, the Paraclete is the dwelling Helper or the Guide and Comforter, the Intercessor and Defender. In Latin Paraclete is 'advocatus' and in French 'avocat' which means 'lawyer' or 'defending intercessor'.

This is the basis of our communion with the Holy Trinity. He intercedes for us before the Father. He presents the case to end our judgment with a verdict of innocence. We thus have the right of communion and of enjoyment of the divine bosom. The plea of the Holy Spirit is powerful, able, and glorious. Nevertheless, it is an argument in truth for He does not advocate for us falsely or with contrivance. He is the Spirit of Truth whose testimony is for Truth. He is Truth Himself. He is just in His defense; He does not hide our sins and mistakes: in His intercession for sinners (Phil 1:20), He does not conceal our sins or cover up their stains with fig leaves as Adam did and as Adam's sons do. He does not show preference, nor does He ask for association of light and darkness, or righteousness and corruption. His work and advocacy for us is that He 'cuts to the heart' of the individual before he believes and before the Spirit dwells in him. He changes his nature, so that He may grant him faith and acceptance of the gift of the Holy Spirit as on the day of Pentecost. "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the hearts, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles "...what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," (Acts 2: 37-38)

Saint Augustine observes that the greatest sin is disbelief in Christ as the Savior of the world. For he who does not believe cannot have the blessing of remission of his sins. Therefore, "He will convict the world of sin" implies urging men to abandon disbelief in Christ and so open the way for forgiveness.

While Peter was speaking to Cornelius and those who were with him, 'the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word....Then Peter answered, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord,' (Acts 10: 44-47).

If the Spirit cuts to the heart of a person before baptism, will He not cut to his heart after He dwells in him through Chrismation?! His work is to convict a person of sin so that he may repent and confess. By means of the sacrament of repentance and confession, his sins are forgiven through the Holy Spirit who forgives by reason of the due rewards of Christ's blood. Christ said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them." Thus, the Holy Spirit does not cover up the sins of unbelievers or believers. On the contrary, as He is the Light, He reveals and exposes sin before a man's inner vision. He discloses our iniquities and their bitterness to our hearts. At the same time He reveals the work of the Cross and the captivating power of God's love.

In this way, the Holy Spirit presents our confessions- full of depravity- along with our tears of repentance, and prayers of faith and joins them with the Blood shed for our sake. Then immediately the verdict of innocence is declared. The person's old sins are forgiven both in the sacrament of baptism and in the sacrament of repentance and confession.¹

* Observe how He begins first by rebuking sin and by scolding not only the Jews but every one who is obstinate and fights the Paraclete. The Holy Spirit's third conviction is of judgment of the ruler of this world. The Paraclete will testify of Christ's glory. He will show to the world the error in deserting Christ and worshipping Satan who by nature is not God. Now Satan is not the ruler of this world rightfully, like one who has the esteem of the governor who inherits his province. However, he retains the glory of this world by deceit and violence as he falsely rules over those, and that because of their evil will he exercise his authority over them.²

Saint Cyril the Great

* We yearn to understand why it seems that there is no sin for a person other than his disbelief in Christ. For He spoke about that sin only saying that the Holy Spirit will judge the world for it. It is obvious that in addition to the sin of not believing in Christ there are various human sins. So why does the Holy Spirit convict the world of this sin only? It is because in disbelief all sins are retained, but in belief all sins are forgiven. This is why God attributes to them this sin more than all other sins. For by having no faith, a man's sins are not forgiven- since he is proud and does not believe in our humble God. It is written, 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble,' (Prov 3:34; James 4:6). This grace from God is God's gift, but the greatest gift is the Holy Spirit who has been called "Grace". For, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God [because] through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned," (Rom 3:23; 5:12).

Saint Augustine

¹ The author: God Sanctifies Me, 1967, pages 12-13.

² The Mission of the Holy Spirit, in Toal 2:369-371. PG 74, 922 B2.

Saint John Chrysostom affirms that the Holy Spirit and also the Father testify of the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world that lies under the sway of the wicked one. Indeed, the Lord Jesus Christ delivered teachings and wonders but the wicked resisted them. But when He ascended to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit who worked in Christ's disciples and apostles to reveal truth. The Holy Spirit achieves great wonderful deeds in Christ's name. He convicts the world so that people may comprehend their wickedness and accept to come back to the Savior.

* **“And when He has come, He will convict the world”** [8]. This means that they will be punished for their deeds when He comes. For, truly the things that were actually done were enough to convict them. However, when those matters are also accomplished through Him (after His ascension), when the teachings become more complete (through the coming of the Holy Spirit), and when the miracles are greater (by the apostles) they will be even more condemned. When they see all that done in My name, My resurrection will be more certain.

Now they can say, ‘this is the son of the carpenter and we know his father and mother.’ But when they see the bonds of death have become loose, evil eliminated, nature's troubles repaired, demons cast out and when they see the abundant help of the Spirit all realized through My mission, what will they say? The Father testifies of Me and the Spirit will also be a testimony though He has testified from the beginning. Yes He will testify and convict.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

Saint Augustine says that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself convicts the world of sin when He says, “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin...”, (John 15:22). He will convict them of righteousness, for He says, “O righteous Father! The world has not known You”, (John 17:25). And He will convict the world of judgment, for He declares that He will say to those on the left hand, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels,” (Matt 25:41). Many statements occur in the Gospels to assert that the Lord Jesus Christ convicts of those matters. Why, then, does He ascribe this to the Holy Spirit as though this was a special attribute to Him? Saint Augustine answers that the Holy Spirit pours out in the hearts of the disciples (Rom 5:5) and grants them love that casts out fear (1 John 4: 18) so that they have the right to reprimand and convict. Saint Augustine continues, ‘I often say that the work of the Holy Trinity is not divided, but each Person of the Trinity has His role, not only without separation, but also without mingling. We rightly understand Their oneness and trinity (distinction)’².

“Of sin,

Because they do not believe in Me.” [9]

¹ Homilies on St. John, 78:1.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 95:1.

The Lord Christ elucidates the role of the Holy Spirit in convicting the world of sin by saying, "...because they do not believe in Me", [9]. If sin rules over the heart, there is no way for casting it out but by the coming of another ruler who is able to annihilate it. This power is the belief in Christ that controls the heart. Sin ruled and became the source of corruption and atrocity. Therefore, there was an urgent necessity for belief in the Savior who will remove corruption and atrocity and replace them with integrity and sanctity. Man broke the law when he sinned and he was cursed. In believing in Christ who fulfilled the law and suffered the curse for us, we become free of the deadly letter and the curse and we enjoy the life-giving Spirit and a blessed life.

The sin of the Jews became extreme when they did not accept Him as the Messiah and Savior, even though He performed the signs foretold by the prophets, (Is 35: 3-6). When the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, some Jews confessed that sin and returned to God, (Acts 2: 37).

* As this sin seems to be the only sin, He mentions it before other sins. For, by persisting in it all other sins remain, and by removing it the other sins are removed.¹

Saint Augustine

* He convicts "of sin": this means He will silence all their excuses and show that they disobeyed and their disobedience was exorbitant.²

Saint John Chrysostom

**"Of righteousness,
Because I go to My Father
And you see Me no more." [10]**

Concerning convicting of righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ says, "...because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more", [10]. This means that He convicts them of not understanding the righteousness and holiness of Christ. His resurrection and ascension to heaven are a proof of His righteousness. Therefore, as the Lord ascends to heaven, He sends His Spirit to carry the human hearts to where Christ sits. They will then get in touch and experience His righteousness in them, or rather Christ will become righteousness for them.

Convicting the world of sin refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in disclosing the reality of the world: that the world sins. But convicting the world of righteousness is

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 95:2.

² Homilies on St. John, 78:1.

exposing the reality of what the world did to Christ; that is His crucifixion. For, Christ's redemptive suffering and crucifixion are for our righteousness. The Spirit that gives light to the eyes to see one's sins gives them light also to comprehend the power of Christ's death that grants righteousness.

The Jews did not properly perceive the value of Moses the prophet until after he departed from our world. Many people also did not know Christ's righteousness until His ascension to heaven. The coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost in accordance to the divine promise is a proof of Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God (Acts 2: 33). This is an evidence of His divine righteousness.

Saint Augustine asks why the Lord Jesus Christ said that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of righteousness because He (Christ) goes to His Father? He answers that when the Word became flesh and came from His Father He revealed His mercy to us. As He ascends to heaven and goes to the Father we rise with Him and seek things that are above where Christ sits. He sits at the right hand of the Father; He sits as the Head and Body, as though the Church that became a body obtains the right to sit in heaven at the right hand of God and enjoys Christ's righteousness.¹

* Therefore, it is proper for us not to consider ourselves separate from that righteousness that the Lord Himself refers to, saying, "...of righteousness because I go to My Father". For we, also, will ascend with Christ and be with Christ our Head. Now by faith and hope for sometime but our hope will be complete in the Last Resurrection. When our hope becomes complete our vindication also will be complete. The Lord who has completed this revealed to us why we need to hope in His body (that is in our Head), this body that rose and ascended to the Father. For it is written: "He was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification," (Rom 4: 25). Thus, the world is convicted of sin in those who did not believe in Christ; and of righteousness in those who rose as members of Christ. For it is written: "...that we might become the righteousness of God in Him," (2 Cor 5: 21). If we are not in Him we have no path to righteousness. But if we are in Him He takes us entirely to the Father and His complete righteousness is realized in us.²

Saint Augustine

* The Apostle states the command clearly: we must believe that the work of the Father and the work of the Son is one work.³

Saint Ambrose

* When He convicts a righteous man (proud of his righteousness) He convicts him of sin, not of righteousness. Therefore, consider the divine words: 'Be not righteous over much,' (Eccl 7: 16, 20). These words are not addressed to the wise righteous person, but

¹ Sermon on N.T. Lessons, 94: 3-5.

² Sermon on N.T. Lessons, 94: 6.

³ Of the Christian Faith, 3: 11: 90.

to the proud and arrogant. For the individual who becomes ‘righteous over much’, with that very excess becomes unrighteous. He makes himself too righteous by saying he is without sin and by imagining that he did not become righteous through God’s grace but through his self sufficiency and will. He is not righteous and living a righteous life, but rather he is satisfied with imagining what in fact he is not.¹

Saint Augustine

* “Of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more” [10]. This means: ‘I have shown a life without blame and this is a proof that I shall go to the Father’. As they always denounced Him saying He is not of God, and therefore, called Him a sinner and rebel, He says that the Spirit will take away also this excuse. For if I seem to them not to come from God and they call me lawless, when the Spirit declares that I go to God, not for a while but to dwell there... ‘and you see Me no more’ implies this.... what will they say? Notice how with these two points He removes their wicked doubt. For, neither the miracles nor dwelling with God may refer to someone wicked. You cannot say about such a man that he is wicked or is not of God.²

Saint John Chrysostom

**“Of judgment,
Because the ruler of this world is judged.” [11]**

Briefly, the Holy Spirit convicts of sin [9] granting faith to human beings and introducing to them the righteousness of the crucified Christ. He also judges the wicked world and grants the believers what belongs to the Son so that they may enjoy sharing the heavenly glory. Thus, the Holy Spirit presents three important facts relevant to our life:

- (1) the corruption of our nature because of sin
- (2) correction of our nature so that we enjoy Christ’s righteousness
- (3) the eternal condemnation of evil.

The Holy Spirit convicts of judgment “...because the ruler of this world is judged”, [11]. While the world thought that they had judged Christ and condemned Him, the Holy Spirit revealed to the believers that through the Cross, the enemy of good was judged and exposed, (Col 2: 15). Satan has been exposed as an impostor and a destroyer of mankind. The nations began to reject and abandon worshipping him when they heard the gospel of Christ’s Cross. The work of the Holy Spirit is an affirmation that Christ is greater and stronger than Satan. Christ grants His disciples authority to trample on the powers of darkness. The believer experiences in his daily life the pledge of authority that he received so that he may enjoy it completely the Day of Judgment, when Satan is judged and the believer obtains remarkable honor. Man will occupy the excellent heavenly

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 95: 3.

² Homilies on St. John, 78:1.

degree from which Satan and all his soldiers fell. For this reason the verb “is judged” carries the sense of continuity, for the victory over the powers of darkness is a daily continuous work.

* Again, the world is convicted “...of judgment, because the ruler of the world is judged”: that is Satan the ruler of the wicked. Satan dwells in the heart of this ‘world’ alone. He dwells in the hearts of those who love ‘the world’ just as our dwelling is in heaven if we are raised with Christ. Thus, just as Christ and we, His body, are one, likewise Satan with all the sinful whom he rules are one body. Therefore, just as we are not separate from righteousness about whom the Lord said, ‘I go to My Father’, similarly the sinful are not separate from that judgment that Christ said, “...because the ruler of this world is judged”.¹

* The ruler of this world is the ruler of darkness or of those who do not believe in Christ. Whoever liberates himself from this world is told, “you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord”, (Eph 5: 8). The ruler of this world about whom Christ says in a different speech, “...now the ruler of this world will be cast out”, (John 12: 31) is, indeed, judged as determined, and condemned to eternal fire.²

Saint Augustine

* As he is judged through Me, they will know who will trample on him later. They will know My resurrection clearly, that is the sign of who judges the ruler of this world. For he is incapable of holding Me. While they said that I have a demon and that I am a deceiver, all these events will reveal they are false. For, I could not have won if I was under sin. But now he is judged and cast out.³

Saint John Chrysostom

**“I still have many things to say to you,
But you cannot bear them now.” [12]**

The Lord Jesus Christ declared to them that He had many things that He did not desire to tell them because they would not be able to accept such things at that time. For, in Him, are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

* Therefore, it is better for you that I depart if you would bear those things through My departure. What will happen? Is the Spirit greater than You and therefore we cannot

¹ Sermon on N.T. Lessons, 94:6.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 95:4.

³ Homilies on St. John, 78: 1.

endure now but later we can? Will the Spirit work better and more perfectly? No. It is not so. For the Spirit also speaks My work.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

* At that time when Christ said to them, “You cannot follow Me now...”, (John 13: 36), the disciples were not ready to die for Christ’s sake. However, later, innumerable men, women, children, boys and girls, young men and young women, old and young obtained the crown of martyrdom. The flock was ready for the sacrifice that the shepherds could not bear when the Lord said those words.²

* Well, would we accept this matter as willingly? Many can bear those things since the Holy Spirit has come; though the disciples could not bear them before the coming of the Holy Spirit.³

* Although I yearn, ask, and pray with all zeal that the Lord uses you to remove my ignorance in this matter, yet though I am unworthy, God forbid! I ask the Lord our God patiently and I believe that I shall not complain if He refuses to open when I knock. I shall remember His words: “I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now,” (Jn 16: 12).⁴

Saint Augustine

**“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come,
He will guide you into all truth;
For He will not speak on His own authority,
But whatever He hears He will speak;
And He will tell you things to come.” [13]**

The Lord Jesus Christ promised they would enjoy the coming of the “Spirit of truth” who will guide them into all truth. The Lord had introduced Himself to them saying, “I am the truth”. Whoever obtains Him has the truth. But how may they obtain Him? Through the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of truth. The Spirit works in them, and makes them firm in Christ who is the divine Truth.

Did the Lord Jesus Christ conceal the truth from His disciples? He came to the world to offer the truth. He spoke to His disciples as much as they could bear, and He spoke to the multitude according to their capability. But they were unable to accept all the truth. He therefore sent His Holy Spirit to guide them and take them into new depths of the truth. Moreover, the Lord affirmed that the Spirit of truth does not teach anything contrary to what the Lord teaches. The Spirit hears from the Father in harmony with the Son, and utters what He hears for the glory of the Holy Trinity and the salvation of mankind.

¹ Homilies on St. John, 78: 2.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 96: 1.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 96: 2.

⁴ Letters, 166: 27.

The Spirit of God leads believers to prophecy (Rom 8: 14). He takes them through the road; He guides and accompanies them. He remains their support until they reach the end where they enjoy all the truth. He is like the captain of a ship who knows all the water ways, and navigates taking the passengers to the mainland safely.

He is the Spirit of truth and He guides the believer only to the truth (1 John 3: 27). He speaks what gives us growth and helps us toward future matters. And, as is written in Joel, “It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions” (Joel 2: 28). This prophecy was realized as seen in Acts 11: 28; 20: 23; 21: 11. The Spirit also spoke about apostasy in the latter times (1 Timothy 4: 1).

* He announced that without the Spirit we should live like small children. He said the Spirit will come and will change the small children into strong men through growth spiritually. He pointed that out, not to put the strength of the Spirit first, but to show that the perfect strength is in knowing the Trinity.¹

* The Son of God says concerning the Holy Spirit that He does not speak in His own authority. This means that the Spirit speaks in association with the Father and the Son. For, the Spirit is not separate or detached; He speaks what He hears. This means the Spirit does not speak without the Son, for He speaks the truth and breathes wisdom. He does not speak without the Father, for He is the Spirit of God. He does not hear on His own, for all things are from God. Therefore, what the Spirit says is the word of the Son, for the Spirit says nothing on His own authority. For the Trinity speaks of nothing outside Himself.²

* This does not mean hearing whatever real, palpable words, but rather means the unity of will and strength that is in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Whatever the Spirit says, the Son says here (Jn 16: 13). Let us learn that what the Spirit says, the Son also says and what the Son says the Father also says. For, the work of the Trinity is one in thought and one in characteristic.³

Saint Ambrose

* He said to His disciples concerning the Holy Spirit, “He will tell you”. He thus raised their distinguished understanding because human beings in general are more at ease when they know the future events. They had asked Him about that matter. Peter asked, “Lord, where are You going?” (Jn 13: 36). Thomas also said, “Lord, we do not know where You are going; and how can we know the way?” (Jn 14: 5). Now, He relieves them by making it clear that the Holy Spirit will tell them everything that is hidden. If you remark, ‘Why the Lord Christ did not give the Holy Spirit to His disciples before He left them?’ I answer, ‘Because the curse had not been removed and our sin had not been forgiven. Therefore, it was not fitting that the Holy Spirit comes when all people were

¹ Of the Holy Spirit, Book 3: 14: 99.

² Of the Holy Spirit, 2: 12 (131, 133, 134).

³ Of the Christian Faith, 5: 11 (133).

convicted. It is as though the Lord Christ says, ‘The hostility must be resolved; we must first make peace with our God, then accept this grant.’

Saint John Chrysostom

Saint Augustine observes that the disciples, even after the crucifixion, the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Christ, were unable to comprehend such facts of belief as that He who created the world was the One crucified. That He was the Son of God who broke the way the Jews kept the Sabbath. Also the disciples could not understand that God was One Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; or that the Son was of one essence with and equal etc. to the Father. The disciples did not grasp all those facts clearly except through the Holy Spirit. When they were granted the Spirit love and zeal in the spirit filled their hearts that were enlightened with the knowledge of the truth.¹

*Therefore, dear beloved, you must not expect to hear us saying to you what the Lord refrained from imparting to His disciples because they could not bear such information. You must rather desire to grow in the love that the Holy Spirit granted to you pours in your hearts (Rom 5: 5). Thus, in your love for the spiritual and in the fervor of your spirit you can know the spiritual light. This will happen not through any sign that the corporal eyes see or a sound that rings in the corporal ear, but through the inner vision and hearing. You will then bear the spiritual word that the worldly people cannot endure. For, it is not possible to love the unknown. However, when a thing is known, even to a small degree, that thing is loved and with that same love a person obtains better and more complete knowledge.

If you grow in the love that the Holy Spirit pours in your hearts “He will teach you all the truth”, or as is written in some manuscripts, “He will guide you into all truth”. As it was said, “Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your Truth” (Ps 86:11). The result is that you will learn those things that the LORD refrained to speak of at that time. You will know them not through teachers outside, but “you will be taught by God” (John 6: 45).

Well, yes, now I have told you some things that have the same quality and you have accepted them. You have not only endured them, but you have also listened joyfully. For, this inner teacher who while He spoke externally to His disciples, said, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now,” [12]. He wishes to speak to us inwardly about what concerns God’s nature that is not incarnate. He wants to speak about that as He speaks to the angels who always see God’s face, but we are unable to endure that.

Therefore, when He says, “He will teach you all the truth” or “He will guide you into all truth” [13], I do not think that the fulfillment is possible in any man’s mind in this life. For, what man who lives in this corrupt body that resists the spirit can know all the truth? The Apostle says, “now, I know in part”. But, the knowledge of all the truth can be realized only through the Holy Spirit whose fervor we obtain now (2 Cor 1: 22). After

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 96: 3. Cf.

that we shall obtain perfect knowledge that the same Apostle talks about saying, "...then face to face" (1 Cor 13: 12).¹

Saint Augustine

* This is our renewal; it makes of us an image of God again. This happens through the regenerating washing of the Holy Spirit that restores us so that we become God's children. We become a new creation again through the communion of the Spirit who delivers us from what was old.²

Saint Basil the Great

Saint Augustine comments on the Lord Christ's words concerning the Holy Spirit that, "He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come," [13]. Saint Augustine says that as the Spirit proceeds from the Father (John 15: 26) eternally, He is from the Father and not from Himself. He is one with the Father in essence and in equality. He is from the Father and has the same knowledge. He hears from the Father from Whom He proceeds. To Him, hearing is knowledge, and knowledge is His existence that we have previously discussed. As He is not from Himself, but from Whom He proceeds and from Whom He has His existence, and knowledge (hearing is nothing but knowledge), that hearing is eternal because knowledge is eternal. What is eternal has neither beginning nor end. The verbs 'hears, knows' may be used in any tense, past, present, or future.³

**"He will glorify Me,
For He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you." [14]**

The coming of the Holy Spirit and His work glorify the Son. For, the Father glorifies Him in heaven, and the Holy Spirit glorifies Him on earth. The Holy Spirit comes in the name of Christ. He works for the benefit of Christ's kingdom realizing the message of His gospel. He does not come to establish another kingdom; it is the very kingdom of Christ that is also that of the Father. For, everything that belongs to the Son, belongs to the Father. And what is the Father's is also the Son's.

As Christ became Son of Man, the Father gave the Son what is His for our sake. The Son, in turn, entrusted the work to the Holy Spirit. This proves the unity of the Trinity in work.

**"All things that the Father has are Mine.
Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you." [15]**

The faithful who are baptized in the name of Christ enjoy fellowship with Him in His death and His resurrection in a manner that is not controlled by the outward senses. This is achieved through the work of the Holy Spirit who comes from heaven when the

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 96: 4.

² Ad. Eunom. 5

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 99: 4-5.

priest calls Him, just as the Lord Christ decreed in His holy church. This is the Spirit who takes of Christ's and gives us (John 16: 15).

The Spirit gives us this sacrament with Christ's grace because "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3: 5). "Blessed be God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1: 3-4).

"He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you," (John 16: 14). According to Vulcanists¹ the intrinsic relationship of the three hypostases is that no one of the three can accept anything from one of the other two except through 'emanation'².

Photius believes that those words do not mean that the Holy Spirit takes from what is the Son's, but rather what is the Father's because the Lord Christ did not say "He will take of Me" but said "He will take of what is Mine." The first statement means that He will take of Me personally, but the second statement speaks of another person who has family relationship with the speaker.³ The LORD added, "All things that the Father has are Mine". Therefore, what the Spirit takes that is Mine, He takes from the Father.⁴ What the Spirit takes, here, is not of the divine essence, but rather of the characteristics of our Lord Jesus Christ so that we may take the image of the Son (Rom 8: 29).

* "All things that the Father has are Mine." What, then, is more clear than this unity? All things that the Father has are the Son's, and all things that are the Son's the Holy Spirit also accepts.⁵

* He has accepted everything from the Father by rights of His eternal birth of Him. The Father appears in His full glory (He loses nothing by what He gives to the Son).⁶

* "All things that the Father has are Mine" does not mean that the Father granted Him all that, but rather means that what He receives from the Father is His right because He is the Son born of the Father.⁷

* There is no matter improbable since the Son has the same will that the Father has.⁸

3 – The Promise That He Will See Them after His Resurrection

¹ That the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. See the article about Vulcanus in the dialogue with the Catholic Church.

² Cross: Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 1985, p. 423.

³ Photius: De S. Spiritus Mystaggia 22.

⁴ Photius: De S. Spiritus Mystaggia 29.

⁵ Of the Holy Spirit, 2: 11 (118).

⁶ Of the Holy Spirit Book 3: 18: 223.

⁷ Of the Christian Faith, 4: 8: 80.

⁸ Of the Christian Faith, 2: 6: 51.

**“A little while, and you will not see Me;
And again a little while and you will see Me,
Because I go to the Father.” [16]**

As the Lord Christ goes the way of suffering and death, He departs temporarily in the flesh from them; this He describes as “a little while”. Then He reappears to them after His resurrection and gives them peace and comfort. A little while He dies and disappears; then He is risen and after a little while He ascends to heaven to the Father. Then He returns on the clouds to take His Church to everlasting glory. Thus, sooner or later, time is always a little while because there is no comparison between time and eternity. The apostle saint Peter says, “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the LORD one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The LORD is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us.” (2 Peter 3: 8-9) As though Christ says, ‘My role necessitates that I leave you, but this is for your good, for your salvation and glory.’

* “And again a little while and you will see Me, because I go to the Father.” He makes it clear, here, that He will not perish; His death is but a passing away. This is a declaration to them that He will return and that His departure is for a little while because He will come back. Their separation will be for a few moments, but His presence will be continuous.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

**“Then some of His disciples said among themselves,
‘What is this that He says to us,
A little while, and you will not see Me,
And again a little while, and you will see Me’
And because I go to the Father’. [17]**

**They said therefore, ‘What is this that He says, ‘A little while’?
We do not know what He is saying.” [18]**

The Lord Christ took pity on them when He saw they were confused and did not understand what He said. For, no one dared to ask Him, but they whispered among themselves asking each other what Christ meant. He did not abandon them in their perplexity, but began to explain what He said.

* The disciples did not understand what the Lord Christ told them. Here, He wonders how in spite of hearing these words several times, they seemed as though they never heard them.

The Lord Christ said those words in His counsel to His disciples clarifying His great love for them and disclosing His Self, who He is.

Saint John Chrysostom

¹ Hom. 79. PG 59 – 465.

**“Now Jesus knew what they desired to ask Him,
And He said to them,
Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said,
‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’? [19]**

**Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament,
But the world will rejoice;
And you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.” [20]**

As the disciples did not understand what He meant, He told them frankly that they would be sorrowful because of His Passion, crucifixion and death. He knew that they longed for knowledge and He, therefore, explained to them that matter. He did not give them the details, but He rather spoke about what would happen to them, about their feelings of sorrow and joy. He did not say more lest their bewilderment may increase. However, He affirmed that this would lead to their joy and enjoyment of the second birth.

The evil people find their happiness in the sadness and suffering of the saints, whereas the believer finds his joy in sharing the pain of those who suffer. He considers the misery of any man as being his own personally.

* He showed them that after sorrow there will be joy and that sorrow will bring about joy. Sorrow will be for a short period.

Saint John Chrysostom

* We understand that the disciples will be sorrowful because of Christ’s death, but will be soon filled with joy because of His resurrection. As for the ‘world’ by which He means the enemies who kill Christ, they will certainly be ecstatic for killing Him, when at the same time the disciples will be sorrowful.¹

Saint Augustine

**“A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow
Because her hour has come,
But as soon as she has given birth to the child,
She no longer remembers the anguish,
For joy that a human being has been born into the world.” [21]**

He did not promise He would abolish anguish, but He promised to introduce a new meaning of pain. Pain will be like labor pains. It is followed by the birth of the child and joy replaces pain.

* What He says is as follows, ‘You will suffer labor pains but these sudden pains will bring you joy.’ These words affirm His resurrection. This journey is like a passage from the womb to daylight. To become a mother, a woman crosses a passage as in sorrow.

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 101: 2.

Here also is inherent that the pangs of death are endured so that a newborn may result from them. He did not only say that the sorrow will go, but also that we shall not remember it. How great is the joy that follows! This is what will happen to the saints. Here He says "... human being", not a child, has been born. This is related to His resurrection, that a man is not born of the pangs of death, but is born of the Kingdom.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

**“Therefore you now have sorrow;
But I will see you again and your heart will rejoice,
And your joy no one will take from you.” [22]**

Although we shall enjoy full joy in eternity, yet we receive the pledge here on earth that we may live in continuous internal joy. (2 Cor 6: 10). The happiness caused by the pleasures and attractions of the world turns quickly to sadness because the world changes continually. On the other hand, spiritual sorrow changes quickly to joy forever because the joy in Christ is constant. He gives us the reason of the joy that no one can take away. This reason is that He will appear to us and see us as members of His body. We shall see Him as our Head. For, this seems as One who has forsaken us for a short moment, but has returned and with great mercy and rich grace has gathered us (Is 54: 7).

His return is a return of joy to the heart. He returns as the true source of perpetual inner joy and satisfaction of the spirit. This joy no man or event can take from us because nothing can usurp the spirit from the Savior or take a man's spirit from the love of Christ.

* “Your joy no one will take from you” [22] because their joy is Jesus Himself.²

Saint Augustine

* He mentioned that example to make clear the temporary sorrow and the permanent joy and that the benefit gained from the Savior is great.

Saint John Chrysostom

4 – Answering Their Prayers

The second reason for their perpetual joy is that as Christ reveals Himself to them and sees them, they will be linked to the Father and whatever they ask Him in Christ's name they will obtain.

He blames them for not asking for anything in His name until then so that their joy may be complete. And, what will they require but that the Holy Trinity resides in them?!

**“And in that day you will ask Me nothing.
Most assuredly, I say to you,
Whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.” [23]**

¹ Hom. 79. PG. 59: 466.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 101: 3.

They do not need to ask for anything now that the Lord Christ has revealed Himself to them, for in Him is all satisfaction. The Lord Christ risen from the dead thus reveals Himself in the heart and so fulfills all needs. They ask for nothing because the Holy Spirit grants them all the truth and guides them into it so that they enjoy Christ's Kingdom.

* If you ask: "What is the meaning of the words of the Lord Christ, 'whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you'?" We answer, "This means that they do not need a mediator, but if they mention His name alone they will be rewarded by receiving everything they require. This demonstrates the power of His name."

Saint John Chrysostom

* At this present time the Church is in the state of labor pains longing for the fruit of her struggle. But then she will give birth to real meditation. Now she moans in labor, but then she will give birth joyfully. Now she gives birth through her prayers, but then she will give birth through Praise.¹

* The Lord is not slow concerning His promise. A little while and we shall see Him, then we shall ask nothing because we shall not yearn for anything and there will be nothing concealed that we may ask about. That little while seems to us to be long because it still continues and will end. Then we shall feel how that period was a little while.²

* In the world to come as we reach the Kingdom and become like Him for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3: 2), what then shall we demand since He will satisfy all our desires with good things (Ps 103: 5)? As is written in another Psalm "I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness" (Ps 17: 15). One asks when one needs something. This has no place where there is abundance.³

Saint Augustine

**"Until now you have asked nothing in My name.
Ask, and you will receive,
That your joy may be full." [24]**

They had not asked for anything until that moment. However, when He who will teach them to pray comes, they will ask for union with God the Father through the only begotten Son in the Holy Spirit.

* The Lord Jesus knows that a man's spirit, that is to say, his rational mind that was created in the Lord's image, cannot be satisfied except by Him alone.

He knows that He is revealed and that He is concealed. He knows that in Him what is hidden has been revealed. He knows all that. The Psalm says, "O how great is

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 101: 5.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 101: 6.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 102: 3.

the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for them that fear thee!
Which thou hast wrought for them that hope in thee,” (Ps 30: 20 LXX Vulgate)

Your kindness is great and varied. You concealed it for those who fear You.
For whom You will disclose it? For those who hope in You.
A double question was raised, but one part of it solved the other part.
Are those who fear You different from those who hope in You?
Are those who fear God the same as those who hope in Him?

There is fear of the law, and hope in grace. The law warns those who are self-confident; grace helps those who trust in God. You serve the law, but if there is no grace, you are punished so that you cry, “O wretched man that I am” (Rom 7: 24). You know that you are conquered and your strength is degraded so you say, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” This is how the law warns whoever depends on himself.

Observe here is a human being who is self-dependent. He tries to struggle; he is prostrate and enslaved and is soon captured. Whoever learns to depend on God while the law kept warning him not to depend on himself grace supports him. As he relies on God, in trust he says: “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord,” (Rom 7: 24-25, Vulgate).

Now contemplate His goodness, taste it and enjoy it. Listen to the Psalm, “O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet” (Ps 33: 9 Vulgate). He is good to you because He delivers you.

You lived in your bitterness when you relied on yourself. Now drink of His goodness and accept the enthusiasm of this great overflow.¹

* What you ask for is nothing compared to what I desire to give you. For, what will you ask for in My name? That the demons become subject to you. Do not rejoice in that, for that is nothing; if it was worthwhile He would have told them to rejoice.

“That your joy may be full” means ask for what may fill you.
When you ask for temporary things you ask for nothing. “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again.” (John 4: 13)
Ask for what gratifies you.

Speak Philip’s language: ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’ The Lord said to him, “Have I been so long a time with you and have you not known Me? Philip, he that sees Me sees the Father also.” (John 14: 9 Vulgate).

Offer thanksgiving to Christ who became weak for your sake because you are weak. Let your desires be for Christ’s divinity so that you may be filled with it.²

¹ Sermon on N.T. Lessons, 95: 1-5.

² Sermon on N.T. Lessons, 95: 6.

* His words, "...whatever you ask..." do not mean just asking for anything. They mean rather asking for something that is truly pertaining to the blessed life.

The words that follow, "Until now you have asked nothing in My name" [24] may have two meanings: either that you have not asked in My name because until now you have not known My name as you should. Or, you asked for nothing compared to what you should have asked. What you asked for may be considered as nothing.¹

Saint Augustine

**"These things I have spoken to you in figurative language;
But the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language,
But I will tell you plainly about the Father." [25]**

He offers us great knowledge concerning the Father so that we may feel His fatherhood, enter His mysteries, and contemplate His extreme glory. The Father will not be strange to us and this will give us full joy.

In spite of all that He explained to them, still He did not reveal all the divine mysteries because they could not bear them then. He spoke to them in figurative language, not plainly. But after His resurrection, His ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit, He will speak to them about the mysteries plainly.

* As though the Lord Christ says to them, 'At My resurrection you will understand all My words perfectly.'

Saint John Chrysostom

Saint Augustine interprets the word 'the hour', or 'the time' here as meaning the future when we see God face to face. It is as St. Paul says, "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known,"(1 Cor 13: L 12).

**"In that day you will ask in My name,
and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you" [26]**

As though He says, 'I do not need to tell you that I shall not stop asking the Father for you through My Blood that was shed for you. My love for you will not cease and the love of the Father for you will not end.'

* How will the Son not ask the Father, for rather the Father and the Son listen to those who ask. No one can comprehend this except with the spiritual mental eye.²

Saint Augustine

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 102: 2.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 102: 4.

**“For the Father Himself loves you,
Because you have loved Me,
And have believed that I came forth from God.” [27]**

The secret behind the Father’s love for the faithful is their faith working through love, (Gal 5: 6). Through their love for the Son they enjoy the Father’s love for them. The faithful then feel free to ask the Father, not in fear, but in the privilege they have, that is the love of their heavenly Father who loves His children.

* The reason for our love is that God loves us. Certainly, our love for God is a divine gift. He gave us this grace, that we love Him. He loved us when we did not love Him. Even when we did not please Him, He loved us so that we may become a cause of joy to His eyes. For, we could not love the Son if we did not love the Father also. The Father loves us because we love the Son. We yearn to obtain from the Father and the Son the ability to love the Father and the Son because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Spirit of the Father and Son, (Rom 5: 5). Through the Spirit whom we love, we love both the Father and the Son. Therefore, God promotes that pious love in us and with it we worship Him. He saw that it was good and on that basis He Himself loved what He promoted in us. However, He would not have worked in us if He did not love to work in us.¹

Saint Augustine

5 – His Ascension to Heaven

**“I came forth from the Father
And have come into the world.
Again, I leave the world
And go to the Father.” [28]**

Here, the Lord speaks to them openly about His incarnation that ends in His ascension so that He may carry the believing humanity with Him. This is the secret of His love, that He appeared in the flesh and carried us to glory.

He came forth from the Father who dedicated Him to this world and sealed Him. He descended to our world with amazing humility and great divine love. Then, He left the world in the flesh and returned in His ascension to the Father. This is the mystery of the entire Gospel: the divine incarnation, His death in the flesh, then His resurrection and His ascension to heaven. This is the key of heaven!

* He says, “I came forth from God” announcing thus that His nature is the same given to Him at His birth.²

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 102: 5.

² On the Trinity, 6 (31).

* “I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world.” The last clause is a reference to His incarnation. The first refers to His essence.¹

Saint Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers

* When Christ says that He “came forth” from the Father, do not imagine a change in place as that happening to the people. Do not interpret “I have come” in the language of motion, but rather as referring to His incarnation.²

Saint John Chrysostom

* He was speaking about His physical suffering and His resurrection and through His resurrection, those who doubted became believers. For, He truly is God who is omnipresent and does not cross from one place to another. But as a man, He leaves but by Himself. He, therefore, says in another context, “Arise let us go from here,” (John 14: 31). He thus leaves and comes. This is the common thing He shares with us.³

Saint Ambrose

* He came forth from the Father because He is of the Father. He came into the world to reveal to the world the body that He took from the Virgin. He left the world by withdrawing in the flesh and He went to the Father by ascending as a man. However, He did not leave the world by withdrawing His active presence that rules the world.⁴

Saint Augustine

6 – His Abandonment during His Suffering

**His disciples said to Him,
“See, now You are speaking plainly,
And using no figure of speech!” [29]**

The gentle loving rebuke of the Lord Jesus Christ gave them confidence and the feeling that He was speaking plainly, and answering the questions they thought about, and could not express or find answers for. The disciples felt He was speaking to them quite frankly and plainly, especially that they believed He was the Messiah for the entire world, knew all things and nothing was hidden from Him. He tests the hearts and minds. He does not need anyone to ask Him, for He knows the secrets, thoughts, and hidden requirements of every one.

Saint Augustine observes that the disciples thought He was speaking to them openly and using no figure of speech, though the hour had not yet come when this would be realized according to His divine promise. This was achieved when He completed His words saying, “Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own,” [32]⁵.

¹ On the Trinity, 6 (31).

² In 1 Cor. Hom. 20.

³ On the Holy Spirit, Book 2: 8: 80.

⁴ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 102: 6.

⁵ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 104: 1.

**“Now we are sure that You know all things,
And have no need that anyone should question you.
By this we believe that You came forth from God.” [30]**

As though they declared, ‘You have known the misgivings that caused us to doubt even before we revealed them and You gave us peace as You said, “for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me,”’ [27].

Saint John Chrysostom

Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe?”[31]

The Lord Christ answers “Do you now believe?” Will your belief remain steadfast? The hour has come, that you will be scattered and leave Me!

* May men not set aside thinking about the Son when they read about God alone, or stop thinking about the Father when they read about the Son only.

The Son on earth is not without the Father (John 10: 30). How then may you think that the Father is in heaven without the Son?

The Son in the flesh is not alone. It is written, “I am not alone, because the Father is with Me”. So do you think that the Father dwells alone in the light?¹

Saint Ambrose

**“Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has come,
That you will be scattered, each to his own,
And will leave Me alone.
And yet I am not alone,
Because the Father is with Me.” [32]**

The Lord came to take our place so that we may enjoy sharing His glory. We all often feel isolated. Our parents may be with us, but we cry with David, “My father and my mother forsook me”. Our friends and beloved may surround us, but we groan, “No one shares my feelings or understands my deep thoughts”. These are the screams of the spirit that sin has broken and alienated us from God, the real provider. There is no one who can fill the inner void. But now that the Lord Jesus Christ has come without sin, He does not feel isolated because He is never separate from the Father and His Holy Spirit. Yet, He was alone among men; He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. When the time of His suffering came, His disciples left Him and He was alone. However, He declares, “I am not alone, because the Father is with Me,” [32]. This is the cry of victory of every spirit that unites with the suffering Christ. For, that spirit will not feel secluded or alone since God dwells in that spirit and never goes away.

7 – His Victory for Them

¹ On the Christian Faith, Book 3: 3: 22-33.

**“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace.
In the world you will have tribulation,
But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” [33]**

Through faith Christ enters our hearts and we enjoy His victory for us. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5: 4-5).

The peace that the Lord Jesus Christ gives them offers the blessed, glorious life so that they may enjoy the spirit of strength and victory along with the heavenly comfort and divine support.

He does not conceal from them the fact that in the world they will have tribulation. However, He asks them to be of good cheer in the middle of tribulation because He will be revealed in their life as overcoming the sinful world.

It is said that an artist wished to present a painting of peace. He chose to paint a very stormy day and a huge rock that was battered by waves on all sides. In this painting there was a ship that was wrecked by the waves and corpses of sailors and passengers floated on the water in the middle of a vortex. A dove that built a nest in a hole in the middle of the rock lay there quite secure. The artist then wrote the word “Peace” on the rock directly below that hole. Thus is our peace in Jesus Christ the Rock of ages. In Him we dwell and have rest amid the vortex and tribulations of life.

* The Lord tells His disciples that in the world they will have tribulation. This means that as long as they are in the world they will be oppressed. This will happen not only in the present, but also in the future.

* He allows us also to overcome by looking up to the Head of our faith. We walk the same path that He passed through for our sake. We are not dead because we struggle with death. We are immortal because of our victory. Does death corrupt our bodies? So what? Our bodies will not remain corrupt, but will rather be in a better state.

Let us then overcome the world. Let us run toward eternity. Let us follow the King. Let us prepare the memorial of victory. Let us despise the worldly pleasures. We do not need much effort to achieve this.

Let us turn to heaven so that we may conquer the world! When you do not desire the world, you overcome it. When you deride it you vanquish it.

We are strangers and passengers. Let us not grieve for any sad thing related to the world.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

¹ Homilies on St. John, 78: 3.

* We trust in Him who says, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” [33], because with His help and protection we conquer Satan our enemy.¹

* Why does He say to us “Be of good cheer”, but that He has overcome for our sake and has fought for our sake?

How did He fight? He fought by taking our nature for Himself.

He overcame for us as He revealed to us His resurrection. Cling, O man, to God who created you a man. Cling fast to Him and put your trust in Him.

Pray that He may be your strength. Say to Him, ‘In You, O Lord, is my strength’. Then, you will sing when people threaten you. And what you will sing are the words the Lord Himself has told you, “In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid, what can man do to me?” (Ps 56: 11)².

* In the trials they faced after His glorification they accepted the Holy Spirit and they did not leave the Lord Christ.

They fled from city to city but they did not run away from Him.

As trials overtook them in the world, they found peace in Him.

Instead of wandering away from Him, they rather found their refuge in Him. The Holy Spirit worked in them and thus they realized Christ’s words, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” [33].

Believers in Christ are joyful and victorious, but in whom? In Him since He conquers the world because His members overcome the world. For this reason the Apostle says, “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory” and adds immediately, “through our Lord Jesus Christ,” (1 Cor 15: 57)³.

Saint Augustine

¹ Letters, 39.

² Sermon on N.T. Lessons, 67: 4.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 103: 3.

Meditations
Inspired by the Gospel of John
Chapter 16

* Do Not Leave Me Alone!

* Look, the world aims its arrows at Me!
They think My death serves God and them!
My solace is that they wanted to be free of You not knowing You are their Savior
They wished to be free of Me yet I shall not stop loving them.

* Do not leave me alone.
As You have been tried, You can help the suffering ones like me!
You have ascended to Your heaven
But You have not abandoned me, for You fill heaven and earth.

* You have sent Your Holy Spirit, the source of my comfort
To convict me of sin, so that I trust in Him who forgives my sins.
To convict me of righteousness, so that I may appear before the Father concealed in Your
righteousness!
To convict me of judgment, so that I may see Satan condemned under my feet!

* May Your Spirit guide me
May He show me Your entire truth
So that I may know Your plan for me!
By filling me You are revealed in me
I see, hear, and feel Your love!

+ Your sweet Spirit overflows with Your sweetness in me
Amid the suffering of the world I enjoy Your divine comfort
He carries me to You in the garden alone.
All have abandoned You, but no one can separate You from Your Father
Give me, in my solitude, the joy of feeling Your divine presence!
Yes, I pray You not to leave me alone.

AMEN

+++

CHAPTER 17

THE FAREWELL PRAYER

After the long but joyful and comforting exposition of the Lord's speech to His disciples (that speech extends over four chapters: 13-16) John the Evangelist gives us the overt farewell prayer delivered before them. This is a unique speech given by the Son in the last moments before He is led to be crucified. This prayer is different from the Lord's Prayer that the Lord Himself has taught us. The Lord's Prayer concentrates on asking for the forgiveness of sins. But this other prayer reveals those longings in the heart of the Lord for His Church. Those yearnings are realized through the Cross. Christ did not need to pray for forgiveness of sins because He is without sin; He is Himself the One who forgives sins.

This is considered the longest prayer of the Lord that the Evangelists record for us. However, we cannot say that it is the longest communication between the Lord and the Father, for He spent the entire night praying before He chose the twelve disciples, (Luke 12:6). There are also other occasions when He spent a long period praying.

This prayer has a special sanctity for the believers because it occurs in the shadow of the Cross. It befits that unique Intercessor and Savior who carries His Church in Himself as the members of His holy body to offer her to His Holy Father. This is the request of the Son for salvation [24] breaking the veil that separated the human race from the Father.

This is considered a family prayer presented by the Head of the family, Jesus Christ, on behalf of His family, the disciples or the entire Church. It is a farewell prayer that He offers, and His disciples hear after His farewell speech to them about the mystery of His relationship with the Father. Now, He speaks openly with the Father for their sakes to reveal to them His role toward them while He sits at the Father's right hand.

It is an ecclesiastic prayer and as **St. Clement of Alexandria** says, in this prayer Jesus is the High Priest who acts on behalf of His people. This prayer is called the high ecclesiastic prayer, or the prayer of the High Priest. He offers it to prepare the human race to accept the fruits of the unique sacrifice. This prayer forms the highest announcement of the mystery of the unity of the Father and the Son.¹ It is not a mere act but a presence in the Father to whose bosom He carries us.

He offered it as a prayer of the soul after the offering of the Christian Easter sacrament. That is to say, He prayed after He had given them His body and blood for the remission of sins and for eternal life for them. This prayer is for their preservation in the grace they received. It is as though the Lord Jesus Christ asserts to us our need to pray

¹ Boris Bobrinsky: *The Mystery of the Trinity*, St. Vladimir 1999, p. 83.

continuously so that we may keep the divine grace, and so that God may guard us in the rich blessings of His divine sacraments.

This is a Lord's prayer presented by the Lord of glory to teach us how to pray. It is a prayer when in confrontation of death. It is filled with sweetness because He faces death in order that He may sanctify His beloved. Jacob blessed the twelve patriarchs, or fathers, before his death. Moses blessed the twelve tribes also before his death. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ blesses the Church in the entire world before He gives His life a sacrifice of love for their sakes. The clear theme in this prayer is the practical affirmation of what He said to His disciples, **"Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"**, (16:33). Now that the moments of His crucifixion are very close, He looks at His death not as a catastrophe approaching Him, but as victory He realizes for the human race. He repeated this truth several times to His disciples, but they were not yet able to comprehend it. Therefore, He asked the Father to support them during the resurrection so that they may understand it quickly and enjoy its blessings. Now while He walks the road of the Cross He delivers His disciples in the hands of the Father. For, there is no power that can support them except the divine grace.

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1- Christ's Prayer for Himself

"Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven" [1]

As the Word of God became a truly perfect man, He prayed to assert His submission even to the law and the system of worship. He prayed also to reveal His relationship to the Father, for He was accused as being Beelzebub, the ruler of the devils and that He was not from God.

The Lord Christ did not need to pray since He is one in essence with the Father. But as our representative, He offers up this prayer for Himself. "Glorify Your Son" [1] so that we do not cease to ask for our glory in Him.

As Christ is God we pray to Him. As He became man He prays so that all righteousness may be complete in Him. It has been said to Him as to us, "Ask of Me, and I will give you," (Ps 2:8). Now, He asks the Father and gives a special honor to prayer so that we may obtain satisfaction in prayer. Paul the Apostle says, "Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered", (Heb 5: 7-8). He bought the human race with His blood. He offered blood to ask the Father to give Him the human race to dwell in Him and be justified. Without Him we

cannot ask God as our Father and we cannot obtain His blessings. He sanctified our prayers with His prayer. He opened for us the way of meeting with the Father through the divine pleasure. He prayed on our behalf, for He knows the depth of our hearts (Ex 23: 9). He understands perfectly our needs and He is the only path that goes up to heaven to the Father's bosom. Therefore, He is the only one who is able to sanctify our prayers.

The Lord Jesus Christ lifted up His eyes to heaven as He had done before (John 11: 41). Why? He dwells in heaven in His divinity and He does not need to lift up His eyes to heaven like someone begging the Father for something. However, as a Son of Man, the Lord sanctified even the movements of the body so that we also may lift up our eyes with His eyes and He lifts up our hearts to heaven during prayer (Ps 25: 1). At that time, the Jews lifted up their heads and opened their eyes toward heaven during prayer. The Lord used this same popular position common at that time so that we may learn to follow the church congregation in the church rites without confusion. This does not mean that prayers must necessarily be offered in no other manner. The Lord praised the tax-collector who did not dare lift up his eyes and stood beating his breast in repentance (Luke 18: 13). The Lord Himself bowed down as He spoke with the Father in Gethsemane (Matt 26: 39).

**“Father, the hour has come.
Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.” [1]**

The Lord Jesus Christ calls the Father, His Father, for He is His Father in essence, so that when we lift up our eyes with Him, we may look at God as our Father by the adoption that we obtained through the Holy Spirit. He guides us to His Father in the spirit of courage, and hope in getting blessings from His divine hands.

“The hour has come” [1] He often repeated that His hour had not come, but now that He begins walking the road of the Cross, He says, “the hour has come” and He knows it. Man does not know his time (Ecc 9: 12), but the Son of Man knows the hour and calls it “this hour” (Jn 12: 27), and “the hour” (Jn 17: 1). For, there is no hour in the entire history of humanity, or since the beginning of time like the hour of the Cross. It opened the gates of heaven, reconciled the human race with the Father, and gave them the right to eternal inheritance and heavenly glory.

The hour of Christ's suffering is, in God's plan, the highest aim of the Lord from the beginning and even before His incarnation. The decisive hour came when the battle between heaven and hell for the glory of God and the happiness for man took place eternally. As though He says, ‘the hour has come when the powers of darkness will afflict Your Son. Now, O Father, glorify Your Son.’ It is a unique hour, the hour of war between Light and the ruler of darkness, between heaven and hell. John the beloved saw it and said, “he went out conquering and to conquer”, (Rev 6: 2). He went out riding the Cross that breaks all powers of darkness.

In the midst of the suffering that the Son accepted joyfully, the Father glorified His Son. When the mobs tried to arrest Him they fell on their faces. After Judas betrayed

Him he confessed his crime and ended by committing suicide. Also Pilate's wife sent to warn her husband not to harm Jesus. Nature also glorified Him. The sun was darkened and also the moon was eclipsed, the rocks were split and the graves opened. The veil of the temple testified also, for the veil was torn. Men saw all that when the Lord was brought to judgment and during His suffering and death. These are signs of glory, but that does not preoccupy the Lord. When He says, "**glorify Your Son**" He is absorbed in the glory that is not visible to the human eye, that is in the glory of victory over Satan, the defeat of the powers of darkness, the freedom of the captives in Hades, and the entrance of the thief on the right into Paradise. The Father glorified Him also in His resurrection and by sending the Holy Spirit to the disciples. He glorified Him by establishing His kingdom in the hearts of men. This was His preoccupation for which He prayed.

Satan wanted to give Him the kingdoms of the world when he tempted Him. That was on condition that He gave up His being the Son of God and refused the glory the Father gives Him. However, the Lord representing us did not accept glory except from the hands of His Father because in Him we inherit glory and we are sanctified as children of God.

The Lord offered up prayer before surrendering to death as a sacrifice for our sins. He prayed so that we may offer up a similar prayer as we travel in the world. When we feel that the hour of our departure from the world has come, we call out to God, 'the hour has come, stand close to me and reveal Yourself to me., My earthy house, this tent, is destroyed and I shall have a building that is not made with hands of men. As You have glorified me with Your grace, glorify my body the day I meet You on the clouds.'

"That Your Son also may glorify You." I give You my will and I devote all my energy and gifts for the sake of Your kingdom. My victory, salvation and glory are a living testimony to Your great glory and rich grace.

Saint John the Evangelist wrote this Gospel so that every soul may deeply experience the pledge of eternal glory and so that it would be possible for the entire person, spiritually and physically, to enjoy sharing that glory. We, therefore, find the word '**glory**' repeated 18 times in this Gospel more than in any other book in the New Testament, except in 2 Corinthians in which the Apostle speaks about the suffering and trouble of the servant of God whom the Lord glorifies. As for the verb "glorify", it is repeated here 23 times, whereas in any other book in the New Testament, it does not occur more than 9 times. It is as though John the Evangelist wishes us to soar with the Holy Spirit so that we may relish the glory that the Lord Christ prepares for us. This is truly the Book of glory in which the Word made Himself of no reputation so that we may encounter Him and get acquainted with Him and His love, and unite with Him and so we are glorified.

This is the glory of the Son that we enjoy His Cross and so share His glory. This is the glory of the Father also for He so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (Jn 3: 16), that is to say, enjoy everlasting glory. Thus, the glory of the Son and His Father is one.

It is glory based, not on necessity or increase in Their glory, but rather on Their love for us. We enjoy sharing this glory through the divine act of redemption.

* **Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven....** When the Lord Christ said to His disciples, “In the world you will have tribulation” (Jn 16:33), He asked them to pray so that their spirits may not be troubled. For, they saw Him as a man, and for their sake He prayed when He raised Lazarus from the dead. He mentioned the reason for His prayer: “because of the people who are standing by”. He said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me,” (Jn 11: 41-42).

You may say, ‘Yes, these things should have happened because of the presence of the Jews. But why should they occur in the presence of His disciples?’ My answer is, ‘ It was necessary that this should take place in front of His disciples who had said, “Now we are sure that You know all things and have no need that anyone should question You,”’ (Jn 16: 30). They needed that He would verify this for them more than for all the other people. And there is another reason: the Evangelist did not call this act of the Lord Christ, ‘a prayer’, but said, “Jesus lifted up His eyes,” (Jn 11: 41) and spoke to His Father in a more precise expression.

The Lord Jesus Christ says to the Father, “**...the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.**” This shows us that He did not go to His Cross unwillingly. How can He do so unwillingly when He prays that this may happen, and He calls it glory and honor not only for the crucified, but also for His Father with Him. For, through the Cross the Son is not glorified alone, but His Father is glorified also with Him. Before the Cross, even the Jews did not know the Father. It has been said, “Israel does not know Me” (Is 1: 3). But after the Cross, the entire world ran toward Him.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

* If the Son had died in the flesh and did not rise again, He would without doubt have not been glorified by the Father, nor would He have glorified the Father. Now that He is glorified in His resurrection through the Father, He glorifies the Father through the preaching of His resurrection., This is revealed in the very arrangement of the words: “Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.” This means, ‘Raise Me up so that through Me the entire world may know You’².

Saint Augustine

Saint Augustine observes that the Greek word for ‘glory’ (doksa) is translated into Latin as ‘clarifica’, meaning, making the matter sparkle. When the Son reveals the Father, He reveals His true Self. The human race then see His radiance and so praise Him. Concerning this, the Scripture says, “Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You” (Ps 84: 4). Praise for God is without end when the

¹ Homilies on St. John, 80: 1.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 105: 1.

knowledge of God is perfect. Because the knowledge is perfect, there is glamour and glory.¹

**“As You have given Him authority over all flesh,
That He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.” [2]**

As He is the Only Begotten Son, His authority is related to the Father’s authority since He is born of the Father and He has no authority from an outside source. He is one with the Father in divine nature and essence. As He accepted in obedience to achieve our salvation and reconcile us with the Father, He obtained authority from Him. But this authority is different from the authority of the kings and rulers of this world. His authority to reconcile humanity with the Father and make us adopted children through the Holy Spirit makes us as relatives and grants us everlasting life. He is Himself everlasting life. As Son of Man He accepted eternal life on our behalf so that through Him He may pour His love in every man.

‘You have given Him’: it has been said that St. John loved the verb “give”, for it occurs 76 times in this Gospel. It is repeated 17 times in this prayer, 13 times of which is about the Father giving to the Son and four times about the Son giving to His disciples. The repetition of this verb bears many meanings to the Evangelist. For, as he speaks about the divine Word being the only Son of God in nature, he sees the Father giving birth to the Son eternally and giving Him all He has because He is the same in essence. So, the Father does not give the Son a gift or a blessing as offered from outside. But, as They are two distinctive hypostases, and yet They are One in essence, the giving cannot be comprehended or expressed in words. It is not subject to time, nor to change in its measure or degree. All that is the Father’s is also the Son’s and all that the Son has the Father also has in divine attributes. Through this extremely divine mystery, the Evangelist sees the Son Incarnate overflowing in grants through the divine grace. His gifts to His believers are free and are given by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Every divine blessing is given to us by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as Saint Cyril the Great repeats.

The Church says in almost every Holy Liturgy that Christ is the **“Lover of Mankind”** to affirm that it is the pleasure of the Holy Trinity to give continually to mankind, and without ceasing so that men may carry the icon of Christ and enjoy the heavenly wedding with Him eternally.

The word ‘flesh’ here means ‘human beings’ in general (Gen 6: 3). He has authority over mankind, on the body as on the soul. As He offered up Himself a sacrifice once for all to reconcile all with God, He tasted death by His grace for everyone (Heb 2: 9). As He is the Messiah, Savior of the world who became man to achieve redemption, He received from the Father general authority over all flesh, that is to say, over all mankind, so that by sanctifying Himself for that deed, He reconciles all with the Father. By His grace He tasted death for everyone (Heb 2: 9). In this way, the realization of the promise that the Messiah would obtain the nations for His inheritance was fulfilled (Ps 2:

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 105: 3.

8). He will join the nations with the Jews (2 Cor 5: 14-15; Rom 5: 21; 1 Tim 2: 4-6). The authority of the Lord Jesus Christ is over all mankind, but He grants everlasting life to the believers whom the Father gives to the Son as an everlasting inheritance. He has power over mankind to grant life to God's children and make all things for them (2 Cor 4: 15). All the divine promises are for their sakes.

In His prayer for Himself that the Father may glorify Him, He bears love for the Father as for us. For, His glory is the glory of His Father and in Him we enjoy communion with His glory. We experience the power of His resurrection and our hearts go up with Him to enjoy the splendor of His glory!

He does not say, 'will give', but says 'give' because the Son's gift for us, or His offering up Himself as a gift for us, is an ongoing gift up to now. We accept it, live it, enjoy it, and grow in it until we enjoy it in a greater and more magnificent way when we meet Him face to face.

* If you say, 'What does the Lord mean by "You have given Him authority over all flesh"?' I answer, 'He has shown from the beginning that preaching Him is not limited to the Jews alone, but extends to the entire world. Here, He announces beforehand the first call to the nations (after the Jews reject Him). For He had said previously, "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles" (Matt 10: 5), but the time came when He said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt 28: 19). He has shown that the Father desired that.'

This matter was completely opposite to the Jews and also to the disciples' views. Even after that it was not easy for them to accept preaching to the Gentiles until they received the Spirit's teaching, for this to the Jews was a stumbling block.¹

* What does 'all flesh' mean? Assuredly not all men believed in Him. However, He offered that all may believe and if some people ignored His words, this is not the fault of the teacher but that of those who did not accept His teachings.²

Saint John Chrysostom

**“And this is eternal life,
That they may know You, the only true God,
And Jesus Christ whom You have sent” [3]**

'Eternal life': Christ offers up Himself a sacrifice and so abolishes the work of sin, that is death. He abides in believers and they abide in Him and enjoy Him who is Life that cannot be opposed. Through Him, the believer can cross the boundaries of time and his spirit can enjoy eternity in heaven. The believer's body is glorified having a new nature befitting eternity. The redemption offered by the Lord Jesus Christ is called 'eternal life' for the following reasons:

¹ Homilies on St. John, 80: 1.

² Homilies on St. John, 80: 2.

- (1) The believer has the right to stand before divine justice, for he is protected by Christ's sacrifice that preserves him from eternal death.
- (2) Life, even in this present world acquires a new taste and message, for the believer, through the redemptive work of the Lord Christ, infuses in others the spirit of joy and inner peace.
- (3) It is eternal life because it goes beyond time boundaries and defies death.
- (4) It reveals the perpetual spirit and body of the believer.

“That they may know You”: knowledge is the path to eternal life. It is knowledge of the Father, the only true God, and worshipping and obeying Him, and accepting the Lord Jesus Christ the Teacher, Sacrifice, Priest, and Savior, the only true Christ.

“The true God”: God is not a mere name or a mental idea. He is the true God who is preoccupied with His creation. He cares for the salvation of mankind. He is active in His infinite love. In His divine love He sent His Only Begotten Son to work salvation for mankind. This is not a mere intellectual knowledge, but is rather an operative knowledge and an appreciation of God's redemptive plan. It is an agreement with that plan, so that the believer accepts Jesus Christ as Lord, Redeemer, Teacher, and He who satisfies the entire needs of the believer. It is a practical acceptance of the Lord's divine message. The believer thus enjoys a continual renewal of his life through the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, knowledge is life and communion with Him Whom we get to know. What is said about the only true God is not contrary to what is said about Jesus Christ, but is rather opposed to paganism and the worship of many gods.

Some writers interpret the verse as follows: ‘that they may know You and Jesus Christ whom You have sent, the only true God.’

Saint Ambrose considers the believer an intelligent merchant who approaches the desk of the spiritual cashier to give the talents and, in exchange, insists to receive the divine promises of a free eternal life and knowledge of the true God.

* This is the Word of the Lord: this is the precious talent through which you are saved. This money must be seen on the spirits' table so that through true continual trade of good currency it would be possible to go everywhere by buying eternal life. ‘This is the eternal life that You, O Almighty Father, grant us freely so that we may know that You are “the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” [3]’¹.

+ In this way He puts an end to the argument of the followers of Sabelius who say that the Three Hypostases are only three names or forms of one hypostasis and also the Jews who heard Him speak. The former group must not say that the Father is the Son, for that would have been possible for them to say if He had not added “and Christ”. The others must not separate the Son from the Father.

¹ On the Christian Faith, Book 5: Prologue: 15.

* The holy Scriptures say that eternal life is based on the knowledge of the Transcendent and on good works.¹

Saint Ambrose

* “The only true God”: He says this in a way that distinguishes Him from others, who are not gods, as He was about to send them to the Gentiles. But if the heretics do not accept this and because of the word “the only” they refuse to believe that the Son is the true God, they, then, refuse definitely that He is God. However, if the Son is God and is the Son of God who is called “the only God”, it is clear that He also is the true God and that the word “only” is for distinction from the others.

If the Son was not the true God, how then could He be “the Truth”? For the Truth is far above “the true”.²

Saint John Chrysostom

* **First:** there is no eternal life in acknowledging God the Father without acknowledging Jesus Christ.

Secondly: Christ is glorified in the Father. Eternal life is specifically inherent in knowing the only true God and also in knowing Jesus Christ whom God has sent.³

* Thus, the Father is glorified through the Son through whom we know Him.

Glory is this: that the Son who became flesh accepted authority from Him over all flesh along with taking us back to everlasting life.

But, what is eternal life? His words inform us that life is “that they may know You and Jesus Christ whom You have sent, the only true God.” Is there any doubt or difficulty here, or any contradiction? Life is that you know the only true God.⁴

Saint Hilary of Poitiers

“I have glorified You on the earth.

I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” [4]

The Lord Jesus Christ announces that He did not come so that He may rest, but so that He may work all day until He finishes the work of salvation. As He carries us in Him we do not know rest except in continual work to achieve our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2: 12). We must not accept a mid-way or solution, but must strive all the time for our redemption.

“I have glorified You”: Our Lord Jesus considered His redemptive work completed in fact, for He bowed His head in acceptance of the cup with love so that He

¹ Duties of the Clergy, 2: 2: 5.

² Homilies on St. John, 80: 2.

³ On the Trinity: 9: 42.

⁴ On the Trinity, 3 (13, 14).

may carry our sins in His flesh and offer up Himself a sacrifice on our behalf. He, thus, achieved His message. He speaks with the Father saying that He has finished the work that He received from the Father. He looks forward to the Gospel being preached everywhere in the world, and to the believers getting to know the love of the true God, and enjoying their union with Him and their worship of Him. He glorified the Father because He pleased the Father and completed His work. In this is also pleasure and glory for the Son.

We did not see the Lord Christ complaining that His life had been full of trouble since His birth to the Cross. He never spoke about how much He suffered insults and accusations, pain and temptation as the Son of Man. For, He came to work for the glory of the Father by declaring divine love practically for mankind. On His way to Golgotha He is involved only in achieving the will of the Father that is one with His own will. We, when we unite with Him, we overstep all incidents and suffering, and care only for the glory of God in us and in our brethren, so that we may complete our message for the sake of God's kingdom. The Lord Jesus Christ did not come to the world to walk a road covered with flowers. He rather came to find His pleasure in fulfilling all righteousness. Likewise, the Father finds His pleasure in Christ because Christ reveals Him practically and realizes His plan concerning man. The Lord finished the work and will of the Father so that we may have salvation. Now, He still fulfills in us that work and will, so that He may be seen in us and so that we may share His glory.

In the same spirit, it befits the servants in the church- who have God's grace- to achieve His divine plan for salvation, to behold mankind with hope for the redemption of many. It befits us as members of Christ's body to glorify the Father by achieving His will and His work as much as possible. We must glorify Him on the earth, which He has given to the human race, in preparation for crossing over to eternity. It befits us to persevere to the last breath in fulfilling the divine work.

+ The Lord Jesus Christ said to the Father, **“I have glorified You on the earth”**. He said that, because the Father is glorified in heaven. He is glorified in His nature, and in His angels who worship Him. Christ does not speak about that glory that the Father has in essence. He rather mentions the glory that is in the worship of people for Him. He said, “I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” If you ask, “If the work of the Lord Christ had not yet been finished, how could He say, “I have finished” it?” My answer is, ‘Either that He meant that He finished the work that concerned Him, or He spoke about what will happen as though it had already happened. Moreover, everything has been achieved because the root of all blessings has been prepared and the fruit will necessarily follow. This will be through His presence and support in all those subjects that will be fulfilled later. He, therefore, says again in humility: “the work which You have given Me”’¹.

Saint John Chrysostom

* What thing did the human nature of the Only Begotten Son not accept? That thing was evil, for He did all that was good as human nature united with the Word through whom

¹ Homilies on St. John, 80: 2.

all things were made. But, how did He finish the work He was given when there still remained the suffering of martyrs for whom He offered up Himself as an example they should follow? For this reason Peter the Apostle says, “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2: 21). He says that He has finished what He surely knows He finished, just as previously in the prophecy the Spirit had used the past tense while speaking about things that would happen after many years. For He says, “They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones” (Ps 22: 16-17). He does not say, ‘They will pierce and will count’. Likewise, He speaks here as having glorified the Father first and asks that He may be glorified. We need, therefore, to understand that He used all the former words about the future and expressed them in the past tense.¹

Saint Augustine

**“And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself,
With the glory which I had with You before the world was.” [5]**

For our sake He made Himself of no reputation leaving His glory; and for our sake He was glorified for He received from God the Father honor and glory (2 Pet 1: 17); that glory that He had before the world was (Jn 17: 5).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings, crowns His believers with His own hands making them kings. There is no degree of honor, not the very highest, that God cannot raise us to if He so wills it. He raises the poor out of the dust that He may seat him with princes or spiritual kings (Ps. 113: 7-8). For, the Lord took David from among his sheep and made him king on the greatest throne on earth at that time. In His worthy precious blood, our Lord Jesus Christ granted us His Holy Spirit that shapes our inner self so that we may share that glory and radiance in the best image.

The glory of the Son bears many forms of honor, authority, and joy to fulfill the will of the Father and finish the work. That glory that He asks for is His glory that He had before the world was created.

First: Eternal glory: One with the Father in glory, for He is the brightest of His glory (Heb 1: 3) inseparable from Him. The expression ‘before the world was’ and similar expressions occur in the Bible to mean eternity (Jn 17: 24; Ps 90: 2; Eph 1: 4; Jn 1: 1).

Secondly: In His incarnation, the divine Word abandoned His glory; His flesh was like a veil to hide His radiance, but that veil did not change His nature or remove His truly eternal glory. The Father was glorified in the Son’s incarnation and condescension even to the Cross to achieve redemption. Nevertheless that condescension of the Son did not deprive Him of His glory.

Thirdly: He again has His glory and is clothed with it to open for us the way to heavenly glory; for through our mingling with the Lord who is glorified we enjoy sharing glory in eternity.

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 105: 4-5.

The Son asks that He may be covered with the glory that He has since eternity before the creation of the world. Thus the law in which He wrapped Himself will be glorious in the resurrection and the ascension to heaven. For He has the authority to lay down His life by death and take it by resurrection because He is the Resurrection. The Father declares the glory of the Son in His resurrection and ascension and in His sitting at the right hand of the Father exalted above every name (Phil 2: 6-9). This is the clear declaration of the prophet Isaiah: **“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief: when you shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand... Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he has poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”** (Is 53: 10, 12) This is the pleasure of the Father in the Cross, because through the Cross human believers become spoil that the Crucified carries to the divine throne, justified and glorified in Him. This is the glory of the Father and of the Son who grants righteousness. It is the glory of humanity who shares heavenly glory. However, as He fulfills the will of the Father, He accepts suffering as the will of His Father and He accepts resurrection as the pleasure of His Father.

This is the glory of the Son incarnate. He does not obtain glory from an outside source. He accepts it from what He has eternally and reflects it in His humanity. He does not ask to be glorified with the rulers of this world. Satan had tempted and offered Him all the kingdoms of this world, but He had refused so that we may deride temporary glory and seek what is heavenly. As though He says, ‘Give the glory of this world to those who long for it. As for Me, My glory is with You in heaven eternally. I do not ask to be glorified with men, but with You.’

We cry with our Christ to ask for our glory not on earth but the glory that is “with the Father”, in the divine bosom so that the divine promise may be realized in us: **“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne”** (Rev 3: 21).

* Think how the Lord did not ask the Father to glorify Him with the glory He has on earth, but prayed that He glorifies Him with the glory He has with Him.

* Where is that glory? He did not accept glory from the people because of the cover He covered Himself with, how then could He ask the Father to glorify Him? What does He say here? What He says concerns the dispensation. For, His human nature is not yet glorified, nor has He yet obtained incorruption. His body (flesh) had not yet shared the royal throne. Therefore, He does not say, “on earth”, but says, “with You”.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

¹ Homilies on St. John, 80: 2.

* I can, thus, remind you of many things now in different ways. But, in every condition I offer you another testimony so that you may be sure that God is called “Father of mankind” having an unsuitable meaning, for He is not the Father of mankind by nature.

This is how God was addressed in Isaiah, “You are our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us” (Is 63: 16) and Sarah was not in labor to give birth to us.

As the Psalmist says, “Let them be scattered before him; a father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows” (Ps 68: 5 LXX). Is it not clear to all that he calls God a father of those who recently lost their fathers, not because He gave birth to them, but rather because He cares and protects them?

Yet, while we call God, Father of mankind inappropriately, He is the Father of Christ alone in essence and not by adoption.

So, to mankind He is a father in time, but to Christ He is Father before time. Christ, therefore, says, “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem

* We understand that the glory of His humanity that is liable to death becomes immortal with the Father. This was fulfilled in the first determined dispensation before the world was and was fulfilled at the fixed time in the world.¹

Saint Augustine

2- A General Prayer for Others

**“I have manifested Your name to the men
Whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours,
You gave them to Me,
And they have kept Your word.” [6]**

His prayer for Himself is very short compared to His prayer for the others. However, His prayer for Himself precedes His other prayer so that we may comprehend our love for our brethren as for ourselves. For, if we ask for our eternal glory and declare our love for our salvation, we need to ask the same for others as for ourselves. His prayer for the others has a special place so that our prayers for the sake of the Church and the salvation of mankind may not occupy a small corner in our prayers. We must not tighten our hearts concerning the others. We must rather have a big heart through the Holy Spirit to ask in abundance for their sake.

After He prayed for Himself, though He did not need to but He prayed in participation with the Father and the mutual, or rather one glory in Them both, He now prays on behalf of His people whom He knows by name. He prays for all those who

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 105: 7.

believe in Him and who seek Him. He teaches us that in our prayer we connect divine love with brotherly love. Thus in His prayer for Himself He reveals His wonderful unity with the Father along with His great heart for mankind.

He desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. But in this prayer of intercession He presents those who accept what the Father offers to them. He desires to carry the entire world to the throne, but He does not carry anyone by force, and He does not ask for those who do not accept His work in him or her. He offers to those whose names have been written in the book of life through His blood.

“I have manifested Your name to the men” [6]: Nature manifests the existence of God in some limited ways. The Law of Moses declares God more, but the incarnation of the Word is a perfect manifestation of God in His love for men and in His characteristics. Christ as a teacher who brought His disciples to the knowledge of God, prays to the Father for those He received from the Father. He is the Son who knows the mysteries of His Father and He gave His disciples the knowledge of the name and person of the Father. He shines on them giving them the light of knowledge and dispersing the darkness of ignorance. So they love, worship and glorify Him. In His teaching He does not ask for what is His although He is one with His Father, for no one knows the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him (Matt 11:27). He alone is able to reveal the truth and take His disciples to enter the truth and the truth enters their hearts.

‘Your name’: The Jews used to look upon the name of God with great reverence. They did not dare pronounce the name “Jehovah” lest they should make a mistake in pronunciation. The scribes also who wrote the Holy Scriptures followed special rites such as washing the pen immediately before writing the name of God. To pronounce the name of God implied His very presence. The early Church had the same Biblical thought and considered uttering the name of Jesus carried with it His presence. The Fathers prayed the “Jesus Prayer” repeating His name and so declaring their feeling that He is among them and in them. For, a name is not merely a way of distinguishing between one person from another; the name of a person is his very essence. It is no wonder, therefore, that Nebuchadnezzar changed the name of Mattaniah to Zedekiah (2 Kings 24: 17). In that manner Mattaniah became one of Nebuchadnezzar’s men and everyone using his new name understood his relationship with Nebuchadnezzar. When Rachel gave birth to a boy as she was dying, she called his name “Ben-oni” meaning “the son of sadness”. But his father refused that the name of his son should be connected to the sadness of his mother, and instead he gave him a name full of hope and strength, for he called him “Benjamin” meaning “son of my right hand” (Gen 35: 18).

Moreover, God Himself often changes the names of His believers so that they may have qualities that are suitable to their divine call to do a certain task. He called ‘Abram’, Abraham to make him father of many nations (Gen 17: 5). Likewise, He changed the name of ‘Sarai’ to Sarah so that she may take the role of a princess. He also called Jacob ‘Israel’ so instead of having the trait of anger because he followed his sibling, he now enjoys the secret of God’s power as a soldier or wrestler for God (Gen 32: 28). Again, when Pashur insulted Jeremiah and smote him then put him in the stocks, God changed

the name of Pashur to ‘Magor-missabib’ (Jer 20: 3) for this name implies terror all around and indicates the divine punishment that will befall him as a result of his violence.

The Lord Jesus Christ also commanded us to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt 28: 19; Acts 8: 16) so that the Holy Trinity may be present and dwell in the baptized person. Thus the name of a person is often used in the Bible to signify the nature of the person. In our love of God we announce our love of His person and essence.

“The men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours”: By “The men whom You have given Me” He means primarily the disciples who followed Him. But these words extend also to include all those who accept Him throughout the ages, those who listen and respond to Him. He knew them all but did not mention any name because He thought of them all. He says, “You have given Me” referring to those who through faith belong to Christ. He says they also belong to the Father who presents them as a gift to be heirs of Christ. Through the Cross, the Lord Jesus Christ offers them to the Father justified and qualified for reconciliation with the Father. The Father in turn offers them to the Son as members of His body having the right to eternal inheritance.

They are related to God the Father, as they are His creation who obtained life through His Son. They are the last honest remnants who are sanctified by Christ’s blood, and He has chosen them.

“They have kept Your word”: This means they were steadfast in Him and continued in Him working through Him. A commandment is kept when it enters the heart. It is sealed in the heart by actual practice. To show our obligation in the accuracy of teaching, He says that He gave them the words that the Father gave Him. It is thus suitable for us to give others the same words that the Lord Christ gave us and with which the Holy Spirit inspired His disciples and holy apostles. He established this living knowledge in the life of His disciples and the apostles He chose. Those kept the Word, for they accepted the Word incarnate in their lives even though the world rejected and opposed them..

* The Lord Jesus Christ says to the Father, **“I have manifested Your name to the men”** for He manifested the Father’s name by His teachings and works. And He says, “the men whom You have given Me out of the world” just as He had said before, “no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father” (John 6: 65); and ‘unless My Father attracts them.’ Likewise, He says here, “whom You have given Me”. He calls Himself “the way”. He establishes two things in what He says: that He does not contradict the Father, and that the will of the Father is that they are given to the Son. “They were Yours, You gave them to Me”. Here, the Lord desires to make it clear that His Father loves Him greatly, for He did not beg the Father that He gives them to Him. And He says, “and they have kept Your word” meaning ‘they kept Your word by believing Me.’¹

Saint John Chrysostom

¹ Homilies on St. John, 81: 1.

Saint Augustine asks, ‘Did those who belonged to the Father not belong to the Son?’ Certainly those who were the Father’s were also the Son’s. Why then does He say, “They were Yours, You gave them to Me” [6]? They were the Father’s as they belonged to the Son the Word; but as the Son came to the world in the flesh they accepted the incarnate Son and became His disciples. He does not say ‘They were Ours’ because the Son born of the Father refers authority to the Father.¹

“Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You.” [7]

* It is possible for someone to ask the Lord Christ, ‘How did they know that?’ He would have answered, ‘from My teachings because I taught them that.’²

Saint John Chrysostom

* When He said, “They have known surely” [8] He desired to explain that ‘they believed’ [8]³

Saint Augustine

**“For I have given to them the words which You have given Me;
And they have received them,
And have known surely that I came forth from You,
And they have believed that You sent Me.” [8]**

The Lord Jesus Christ gives His disciples the divine heavenly teaching, but its essence is in discovering His person and that He came forth from the Father.

Believers understand that the Lord Jesus Christ is the divine Word incarnate. His teachings are divine facts. His commandments are heavenly law and His promises are true and honest because they are divine.

I gave them the words and teachings that are Yours and they thus have the pure learning that comes directly from heaven and is not mixed with human teachings that corrupt the word of truth.

They are quite sure that I am the promised Christ and now they do not ask for another for they enjoy My divine work and heavenly teachings.

**“I pray for them.
I do not pray for the world
But for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.” [9]**

¹ Cf. St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 106: 5.

² Homilies on St. John, 81: 1.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 106: 6.

He offered His life a sacrifice for the entire world. But He prays or intercedes with His blood for those who have accepted and believed in Him. The Lord dies for the sake of the entire world, but He knows perfectly those who will insist on refusing Him because they are not His. Therefore, He concentrates on those who were given to Him out of the world. But those who persist in refusing Him will remain in the world like chaff that the wind drives away or that is thrown into the fire because it is chaff that has no value.

He does not intercede for those who are determined to drink of the cup of evil, to rebel and refuse to believe, not because He does not love them but because they reject His work in them. He does not say, 'I pray against them', for He has no hatred, rather they hate and refuse Him. As for us, since we do not know who are the Lord's and who are not and since we cannot judge anybody, we must pray for all people (1 Tim 2: 1, 4). For as long as there is breath in a man for whose salvation we pray, there is hope and our prayer will find room so that we repeat with Samuel the prophet, "...as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way" (1 Sam 12: 23).

The Lord Jesus Christ devoted His divine possibilities for His chosen ones so that they may be qualified to spread His Gospel in the world. He prays for the people whom He carries in Himself as children of God who have the right of sharing the inheritance. He does not say that He prays for the heavenly beings.

In the mutual love and in obedience of the Father, the Son incarnate gives His precious blood for the salvation of mankind. And, in His love for the Son, the Father gives those men to the Son as a holy bride. The Son accepts the gift from the Father for the sake of mankind, for they are considered honored vessels.

Those who have accepted the word of the Lord Christ and believed in it have entered into the new covenant with the Father. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ considered them to be the Father's, for He says, "they are Yours". They are the Father's gift to the Son, since the Father has revealed His love for mankind by giving His Only Begotten Son to save the world. The Son received them as a gift from His Father, for He regarded them His Father's. They are first fruits to God (Rev 14: 4) through their true union; and so we are considered belonging to the Son as to the Father. We are the people of God the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

* **"I pray for them" [9]** Do You inform the Father of their news as though He ignored them? Do You speak to Him as to someone who lacks knowledge?

Do you not see that the aim of this prayer is that they know His love for them? For He who does not only give what He has but also prays another to do the same to show greater love.

What then? He says, “I pray for them” and “I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me.” He always says, “You have given” so that they may realize that the Father considered this a good thing.

And as He had always said, “They were Yours. You gave them to Me”, He removes evil doubt, lest anyone should think that His authority was new, that He received that authority recently, what does He say? “And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine” [10].¹

Saint John Chrysostom

* He adds, “for they are Yours” [9]. For the Father does not lose those He gives to the Son since the Son continues saying, “all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine” [20]. It is clear enough that all that belongs to the Father belongs also to the Son.²

Saint Augustine

**“And all Mine are Yours,
And Yours are Mine,
And I am glorified in them.” [10]**

The people who are sanctified by Christ’s blood are among His possessions and also those of the Father. It is true that any of God’s creatures can say to the Father, ‘all mine are Yours’, but only the Lord Jesus Christ, who is One with Him in essence, can say, “And all Mine are Yours, and I am glorified in them.” For the Father and the Son are One and equal in might, authority and glory. There is no conflict between Them. There is no ‘this is mine and that is yours’ as among people. Since eternity the Father gave birth to the Son as light from light. The Father is for the Son and the Son is for the Father. They are one in essence. They have one nature. Those who are the Father’s are necessarily the Son’s. He who has the Son and knows Him has the Father and knows His mysteries. All that the Son offers as blessings of salvation are for the glory of the Father as though the Father offers them.

The Son has nothing that does not belong to the Father. The Father has nothing that is not the work of His Son because the Son is the power, wisdom and Word of might of His Father. As we have become members of the body of Christ, He, the head, presents us to the Father as belonging to Him. For the Father is glorified in us through our blessing in listening to Christ’s words, through our obedience, true testimony for divine love, and through our work toward His kingdom. What we do in Christ’s name we do guided by His Holy Spirit for the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

“I am glorified in them”: The Lord Jesus Christ announces beforehand the success of His disciples in spreading the Gospel. Through that, Christ is glorified in those in the world who believe in Him. Christ is glorified in His believers who listen to Him, obey Him, work in His name, and preach His grace. This glory is offered to the Father also.

¹ Homilies on St. John, 81: 1.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 107: 2.

The Lord prays for those who believe in Him because He will ascend to heaven and go to the Father and the members of His body, His believers, will remain on earth glorifying the Father and testifying of Him by carrying Christ's name. The disciples preached and performed miracles in the name of Christ and the Holy Spirit dwelling in them and so glorified Christ (Jn 16: 14). This is also referred to the Father.

* Do you not see the equality in glory? Lest when hearing **“You have given to Me”** you may think they were taken from the authority of the Father or had belonged before and taken away from the authority of the Son, He has removed those two difficulties by saying this. Therefore, **“You have given Me”** is said in great humility, for all that belongs to the Father is the Son's and what is the Son's is the Father's. This cannot be said about sons of men, but the Father and the Son are equal in honor.

He then explains the reason and gives evidence by saying, **“And I am glorified in them”**, meaning ‘I have power over them’ or ‘they will glorify Me and believe in You and Me and glorify Us equally.’

How may He and the Father be glorified equally? They will all die for Him as for the Father. They preach His Gospel as that of the Father and as they say all things were made in the name of the Father they say they were made in the name of the Son also.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

* **“And I am glorified in them”** [10] He speaks to the Father about His own glorification as though that was completed though this would happen in the future. He recently prayed to the Father to fulfill His glory. By saying His glory has actually been achieved showing that it was in fact arranged to be achieved, He desired to show that what will be realized in the future is an absolute fact.

3- A Prayer for Them That the Father May Keep Them

**“Now I am no longer in the world,
But these are in the world,
And I come to You.
Holy Father, keep through Your name
Those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.”** [11]

“Now I am no longer in the world” as though He says, ‘I am about to leave the world in the flesh and consequently they are in need of special help and support. They need that I present them to You so that You may keep them in the truth.’

As He prays that they may be protected, He calls God, **“Holy Father”**. His precious gift to His children is holiness so that they may be holy as He is Holy. He hates sin and therefore He embraces His children so that sin may not creep into them. They, in

¹ Homilies on St. John, 81: 2.

turn, as His children cannot endure sin. They are terrified of sin as the most dangerous enemy they face.

“Keep them through Your name”: As believers are the children of the holy God, He keeps them for the sake of His name’s honor and not because they are themselves worthy. As Christ is ascending to the Father, He carries the names of His believers as on His chest, as the greatest heavenly high priest. He takes them to the throne and has for them all love and kindness. He never forgets them, for their names are inscribed on His palm, sealed on His breast, dwelling in His heart. He had told Peter the Apostle that He had prayed for him that his faith should not fail (Luke 22: 32) and that he should not stumble unaware into the danger that he would soon face. Christ said, “I have prayed for you”. He, the Savior, prays for His disciples that the Father may keep them all their lives from stumbling. He prays that they remain always guided by the Father so that we may share the same love and never cease to pray for the salvation of many, for their spiritual growth in the Lord.

The Son declares that the Father has given Him the chosen to become His, for the Son has offered His blood for the redemption of the entire world. Now, the Son gives, with love, those believers to the Holy Father praying to Him saying, “Keep them through Your name”. He does not pray that they become rich or have worldly honor. He does not pray for their earthly victory, but prays that the Father may keep them through His name from sin and the wicked world until they travel the days of their sojourning and reach the Father’s bosom. He prays that they may be protected in the divine commandments through the Father’s name and that they may enjoy the spirit of unity.

“Those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are”: The Lord Jesus Christ links holiness and true unity. For, where there is holiness there is great love that unites. Where there is sin there is envy, contention, hatred and severance. Whoever has holiness that is from above experiences unity in its highest degree and all holy people become one like the unity of the Holy Trinity.

He prays the Father to keep them through His name, meaning through Him and belief in Him. The aim of this belief or this teaching is that all believers may be one, may become one body and spirit similar to the unity of the Father and the Son. Thus, the Father is glorified in them.

* **“Now I am no longer in the world”** [11] meaning, ‘though I shall not appear in the flesh again, I still am glorified through them.’ But why does He say always, “I am not in the world” and “as I leave them I commit them to You” and again, “while I was with them in the world I kept them”? If anyone interprets these words simply he will face many absurd notions. For, how can it be reasonable to say that He will not be in the world and that as He leaves He gives them to another? These words mean He will leave them forever. But He spoke those words to give them peace and joy.

* He says, **“Keep them through Your name”** meaning keep them through Your help.

* This is what you doubt. He presents Himself to their minds and to their small spirits when they hear Him saying this and giving them up to the care of the Father. After they hear His many counsels and they still do not respond, He speaks to the Father and reveals His love for them.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

After **Saint Gregory of Nazianzus** became a Christian and despised the world, he was suddenly dazzled by the radiance of the Holy Trinity who dwelt in him when he was still in the world. He wrote, “From the day I left the things of the world to devote myself to contemplate the heavenly light, sublime thoughts carried me to take me away from anything that concerned the flesh and hide me in secret places in the heavenly tabernacle. From that day, the light of the Trinity, that exceeds the ability of the mind to comprehend, has blinded my eyes. This light shines on all from the greatly glorified throne. The shared rays of the Trinity cannot be described. This is the source of all that is here below and that is separated by time from the things above. From that day I died to the world and the world died to me.”²

* He declares that He is no longer in the world- that is in the flesh. He prays the Father to care for those He is about to leave (that is, His absence in the flesh) saying, “Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me”. As a man, the Lord prays to God on behalf of His disciples whom He received from Him.³

Saint Augustine

**“While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name.
Those whom You gave Me I have kept,
And none of them is lost except the son of perdition,
That the Scripture might be fulfilled.” [12]**

“I kept in Your name”: We have seen that in the Scriptures often “the name of God” is an expression used to signify “God Himself”. The aim of the Word incarnate is to keep His believers in the Father by presenting Himself to them as being the Divine Truth. The Lord Jesus Christ prays that His believers may be kept as He kept His disciples when He was on earth, so that none of them may be lost except he who insisted on being a son of perdition. He thus prays for the sake of believers also, that the Holy Father may keep them so that they may fulfill the holy Gospel and testify for the divine truth.

None of them was lost except that one who insisted on becoming a son of Satan the deceitful and, consequently, became a son of perdition. That man obtained the blessing of discipleship but willingly and wickedly corrupted that gift because of his love of money. Christ calls Judas “son of perdition” because he withdrew from the membership of the divine family. He refused to be a child of God and insisted on being a son of Satan who destroys and kills. He is the “son of perdition” because he did not seek

¹ Hom. 81. PG 59: 480.

² Poemata de seipsol, PG 37: 984-85.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 107: 4-5.

his own salvation, but instead willfully and wickedly ruined the divine grants offered to him and opened his heart to a series of sins to enter, like greed, betrayal and despair.

“That the Scripture might be fulfilled”: The Holy Scripture prophecies as in (Ps 41: 9; 109: 8) and in him was achieved the symbols of Ahitophel concerning David the king, and Absalom concerning his father, but in Judas betrayal was more horrible.

* The Lord Jesus Christ prays to the Father, **“While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name.”** When He says this He speaks as a man and prophet but does not show that He does anything in God’s name.

He says, **“Those whom You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”** In another passage He says, “of all He has given Me I should lose nothing” (John 6: 39). Yet the traitor was not lost alone. After him many were lost. So, how can He say, “I should lose nothing”? The answer is ‘on My part I do not lose.’ In still another passage He explains more clearly, “and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (John 6: 37) as though saying, ‘I am not the cause of their loss. I did not neglect them and as they willingly go away I do not force them to come back.’¹

* “That the Scripture might be fulfilled” not that the Scripture might be realized, but this is the method of the Scripture: things are correlated as though they happen because they are written.²

Saint John Chrysostom

* He says, ‘as I am about to come to You, keep them in Your name as I have kept them in while I was with them.’ He kept them in the name of the Father. The Son, as a man, kept His disciples while He was with them in the flesh. But the Father also kept those whom He heard in the name of the Son. He answered their prayers offered in the name of the Son. The Son Himself says to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you” (John 16: 23). But we must not interpret this physically, that they take turns in keeping us as though one substitutes the other when one of them goes away. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who are one true blessed God keep us at the same time.³

Saint Augustine

**“But now I come to You,
And these things I speak in the world,
That they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.” [13]**

As the Lord Jesus Christ completes His message on the Cross and is risen from the dead, He goes to the Father. The Father finds His pleasure in this and the Son is

¹ Homilies on St. John, 82: 2.

² Hom. 81. PG 59: 480-481.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 107: 6.

happy in His redemptive mission. He prays that His believers may have His joy fulfilled in them. He carries His people with love in His ascension and as the heavenly High Priest He registers their names on His breast to take them into the heavenly Holiest. He carries them in His heart abiding in Him as He abides in them. He engraves them on the palms of His hands with the nails of the Cross. Then, even if they cannot see Him because He is in heaven, He is still not far from them, nor are they far from Him. He is in their hearts as they are in His heart and mind. He is preoccupied with them until He takes them into the bosom of His Father.

Whoever accepts the good will of God and His good Word must expect the opposition of the evil will and word of the world. Therefore, the Lord prays for His disciples and for all the members of His Church that they may have His joy fulfilled in them in this world. This is the will of the Lord Jesus Christ and the desire of His heart: that every believer may enjoy the perfect continual heavenly joy. He leaves them surrounded by tears, suffering and tribulation, but He achieves in them inner joy that exceeds nature.

May our tears raise our eyes to see our Christ praying His Father for us that we may have His perfect joy. This is a divine promise we must hear with the spirit of faith, in quiet silence and we must adhere to it so that we may obtain it. A person who keeps Christ's word patiently obtains divine special protection at the hour of trial (Rev 3: 10). This has been actually realized when the martyrs were full of joy during their suffering. The joy of Christ is a divine gift and a free blessing. At the same time it is a command we must obey. It is given to those who strive in it. Therefore, the Apostle admonishes us saying, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord" (Phil 3: 1) and again, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice" (Phil 4: 4).

The Holy Spirit shapes whoever conducts himself in the world following the thought of the Lord Jesus Christ and so seeks to become an icon of Christ. He follows Christ's footsteps and does not think of the things of the world. He does not devote his life to serve the world. The Father gives such a man His protection for His Holy Son's sake.

"That they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves": The aim of His address to believers is to pour His divine joy in them. Our Lord Jesus Christ is our eternal perfect joy. He is the source of joy and the Lord of true happiness. Without Him all joy fades away because that joy is linked to the evanescent world. But Christ's joy is eternal like Him. He is the pleasure of the Father. He, therefore, asks this of Him.

Undoubtedly, companionship with the living gives a kind of happiness and bereavement causes sadness and pain. But, the time has now come to tell them that He will leave them in the flesh and they will not meet Him in the same manner they did during the years of His open service on the earth. This separation must be the source not of sadness but of joy. They enjoy His presence in their midst and in themselves for He dwells in their hearts and evokes in them His perfect joy. His joy is their joy and they thus experience the perfect joy.

+ He says that His joy that He gives them must be fulfilled in them. He declares that this is why He spoke in the world. Peace in the future world and its blessing are granted through the manner we choose to live in the present: exercising moderation, righteousness and piety.¹

Saint Augustine

**“I have given them Your word;
And the world has hated them
Because they are not of the world,
Just as I am not of the world.” [14]**

He prays the Father to give support to believers: they need to have Him as their own personal friend because they have many enemies. The world hates them for no other reason but that they are not of the world and they urge humanity to leave the evil world and take delight in the holy One. Therefore, the Psalmist says, “Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head.... Because for Your sake I have borne reproach” (Ps 69: 4, 7). Because they obeyed, they accepted the Word, the world cannot endure them because the world rejects salvation. The world despises what is offered for its glory. The world does its best to destroy the faith and causes ruin. Thus, the children of the world deny the Word of glory and redemption. Instead, they devote all their energy to overthrow the living faith. They, thus, destroy themselves unknowingly.

He tells the world that the believers were of the world but now they are not of the world. They are a new creation (2 Cor 5: 17). They are a new rival though they make a world of love, sacrifice and service even of the rebels. The old world wants all to belong to it. The old world may admire the new creation for their potentiality, possibilities, and conduct; but as it is a selfish world, it will not stop wishing that the new creation returns to its arms and it will not cease from opposing them and getting rid of them.

There is a Jewish proverb that says, ‘If the world does not know the value of its righteous, it will erect (in hatred) a fence of pearls to protect them.’ The farewell prayer of the Lord Christ reveals the great work of God in keeping the servants, believers, and the word of the Gospel. Without this divine blessing faith would have vanished a long time ago. For, throughout the centuries, the world has agglomerated its energy to annihilate faith and destroy the Church and all Christians. However, the words of the Lord Christ are the secret in the survival of faith and of believers to this day.

The Holy Father says, “Once I have sworn by My holiness I will not lie to David.” (Ps 89: 35) As He is holy He does not endure sin. He considers the holy peoples His and He keeps them from sin, which they also hate and regard as a dangerous evil. He, as a Holy Father, cares for His children. He teaches them and keeps them in His direct care. They, on their own, cannot abide in the divine blessings they obtained and, therefore, they need God’s help. They are protected for God as they are His children.

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel or St. John, tractate, 107: 8.

* When we adhere to virtue, evil people persecute us. When we desire virtue they deride us. We must not get confused or angry for these are natural reactions. Everywhere virtue arouses hatred in the malevolent because they envy those who wish to live appropriately. The wicked try to find excuse for themselves when they disparage the others.

They hate them and use every means to abuse their way of life because they behave differently.

We must not be sad, for this is the sign of virtue and for this reason the Lord says, “If you were of the world, the world would love its own.” (Jn 15: 19) and in another place He says, “Woe to you when all men speak well of you” (Luke 6: 26). In the same sense He says here, “I have given them Your word and the world has hated them.” He says, ‘for You and Your word they hate them.’ Because of that they are qualified to enjoy all God’s care.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

* This hatred of the world had not yet affected their lives but would happen later. He speaks about the future in the past tense, as is His custom. He explains why the world hates them by saying, “because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” [14]. They were granted this through their new birth because when they were first born they were of the world. He previously said, “I chose you out of the world” (Jn 15: 19). This is a kind of distinction granted to them as they become like Him, for He is “not of the world”. It is given to them through being saved from the world. In any case, He was never of the world, for even when He took the form of a bondservant He was born of the Holy Spirit of whom they were born again. Thus, because of their second birth they were not anymore of the world, for they were born of the Holy Spirit. For the same reason He was never of the world because His birth or incarnation was of the Holy Spirit.²

Saint Augustine

**“I do not pray that You should take them out of the world,
But that You should keep them from the evil one.” [15]**

He prays that God may keep them from the evil world and explains the two ways to keep God’s children from the world.

The first way is to take them out of the world through sudden, quick death so that they cross over to a better world. This is what some men of God like Job, Elijah, Jonah, and Moses wished when they were in trouble and suffered trials. But the Lord did not ask for this for His disciples, for He came to the world to give His believers a life of triumph through carrying the Cross. He did not wish them to escape from the world. The Lord came to the world to serve humanity; the world, therefore, was not worthy of the believers (Heb 11: 38). The evil world is dark and the Lord Jesus Christ came to illuminate the world and overcome evil and darkness. He made His disciples as bright

¹ Homilies on St. John, 82: 1.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 108: 1.

stars to enlighten the world. The love of the Lord for His believers did not cause Him to withdraw them immediately from the world of darkness, but to sanctify them so that they may give light to the world and have the spirit of victory. Jeremiah, the prophet, wished to run away to the wilderness (Jer 9: 2). But our Christ works through all and as the Apostle Paul says, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Tim 1: 12). Saint Peter wrote, “Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator” (1 Pet 4: 19). Thus, even the ascetic hermit cannot escape the feeling of responsibility to work in one way or another for the sanctification of the world. The Son did not pray to the Father to send a chariot of fire to carry His disciples to heaven and take them away from the evil world.

The second way is to grant them the spirit of strength and triumph over evil in the world. This is what the Lord asked for His disciples, that God should keep them from corruption in the world. He, therefore, entrusts them to the bosom of the Father so that the evil one may not approach. He does not pray that God should keep them by removing trials and tribulation from their path, but that they experience victory in their struggle against evil and that they testify to the power of the rich grace working in them.

* What does the Lord Jesus Christ say to the Father? “Keep them from the evil one.” This means keep them from evil conduct, from sin, and from feebleness of the heart.¹

* He does not pray that they may be saved from trials only, but also that they may persevere in their faith.²

Saint John Chrysostom

* Their existence in the world is important even though they are not of the world.³

Saint Augustine

**“They are not of the world,
Just as I am not of the world.” [16]**

He prays that God should keep them because they have become like Him. As they became similar to their Christ, they are no longer of the world. They are not preoccupied with the pleasures of the world. They are not troubled by its problems because the service of their Christ occupies their thoughts and fills their hearts.

* If you say, ‘What does the Lord mean by saying that His disciples “are not of the world”?’ I answer, ‘They look at another world and have nothing of the earth. They have become like the citizens of heaven. In these words the Lord revealed His love for them, for He praises them and raises their praise to His Father to whom He entrusts them.’

Saint John Chrysostom

¹ Hom 1. On Gal. PG 61: 664.

² Hom. 82. PG 59: 483.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 108: 2.

* It may be asked, ‘If they are not anymore of the world, whether they are or are no longer sanctified indeed in the truth, how then does He pray that God should not take them out of the world?’ That is because those who have been sanctified must remain so that they may grow in sanctity and in holiness. This is not achieved without the grace of God who sanctifies their growth as He sanctified them at the beginning. Concerning this point Paul says, “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1: 6).¹

Saint Augustine

4 – A Prayer for Them to Be Sanctified

“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” [17]

What does “sanctify” mean? The work of God in them does not stop at keeping them from evil and the evil one. It extends to the positive work such as acting in holiness, goodness, and righteous work. He prays that their hearts may burn with the love of holiness. Their sanctification implies also continual growth in faith and inflammation of the heart with the Spirit of God.

The means of sanctification is “by Your truth”, meaning the word of God. By the Word and by prayer every act of the Church, such as the holy sacraments, is sanctified. The spirits of God’s servants are also sanctified.

The prophets did their work through sanctification. Jeremiah (Jer 1: 5) and the Levite priests also acted by sanctification. The servants in the New Covenant are likewise sanctified and consecrated (Rom 1: 1). The Lord Jesus Christ as High Priest sanctifies the priests.

The word “sanctify” ‘Hagiason’ is derived from two syllables: “A” or “Ha” which in Greek, means a negative, and “gee” means “earth”. So, the word means “no earth”. Consequently, sanctification implies removing what is of the earth from the heart so that the heart may devote itself to the love, worship, and service of God. It also implies “purity” since the heart is purified of all temporary blemish and acquires a heavenly spiritual quality. The priest or servant who is troubled by worldly concerns even in the service of the Church dishonors the Gospel and loses divine truth. He loses the holiness of his heart.

The word “sacred” in Hebrew means offering a sacrifice. The sacrifice is dedicated to God alone and its goal is that the people, as God’s people, enjoy communion with the Holy God.

The quality of “holiness” belongs to the Holy God alone. For this reason, the heavenly hosts praise Him saying, “Holy, Holy, Holy”. Our holiness then has no other meaning but our unification with the Holy and sharing with Him a divine nature. A holy

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 108: 2.

life is not merely good conduct but is a relation to the divine life and experiencing the work of the Holy God.

* What does He mean by His words, **“Sanctify them in Your truth”** [17] but to say, ‘Sanctify them in Me.’ The Father sanctifies in the truth, that is His Word, His Only Begotten Son. He sanctifies His heirs and the heirs with the Son.¹

Saint Augustine

+ **“Sanctify them in Your truth”** meaning ‘Make them holy by giving them the Spirit and true teachings.’ Just as He said, “You are already clean because of the word, which I have spoken to you (Jn 15: 3); now He says the same thing: ‘Guide them; teach them the truth’. For, uttering the right teachings concerning God sanctifies the soul. He says that they are sanctified by the word, but this does not only indicate the wonderful works, for the word of God also purifies. But “sanctify them” seems to me also to reveal another similar demand; that is ‘Consecrate them (isolate them) for the word and the Gospel.’ This is shown in what is said later.²

Saint John Chrysostom

+ The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit sanctify together, give life, light and rest. Let no one refer sanctification particularly and especially to the energy of the Spirit alone. After hearing the Savior’s words, ‘Sanctify them in Your name’ (John 17: 11, 17), it is clear that all energy is achieved equally for those qualified by means of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This energy is in every grace, virtue, guidance, life, consolation, change to immortality and crossing to eternal life, and in all other good blessings descending on the human being.³

Saint Basil the Great

* Just as the Father sanctifies, the Son also sanctifies and the Holy Spirit sanctifies. The Father sanctifies, as it is written, “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thes 5: 23). And in a different place, the Father sanctifies, “Father, sanctify them by Your truth” [17].

The same Apostle says concerning the Son, “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor 1: 30).

The Apostle teaches also that the Holy Spirit sanctifies. He says, “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth” (2 Thes 2: 13).

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 108: 3.

² Hom. 82. PG 59: 483-484.

³ Letter 189 to Eustathius, 7.

However, sanctification is one because baptism is one and the blessing of the sacrament is one.¹

Saint Ambrose

**“As You sent Me into the world,
I also have sent them into the world.” [18]**

The Son devoted Himself to the work of salvation and, therefore, the Father sent Him on a mission to fulfill that divine act. He has been called, “Advocate” (1 Jn 2: 1), “Apostle” (Heb 3: 1), “servant” (Rom 15: 8) and “sent forth (Gal 4: 4). However, He was sent forth as Son of God, not like the servants and bondservants.

Why does He link His mission from the Father to His own mission? That is because the mission is difficult and the task is arduous. Therefore, He wanted to affirm to them that He supports them. He works with, through, and in them, for their work is a continuation of His work. The Lord Jesus Christ, as Son of Man, accepted gifts for the sake of men (Ps 68: 18). He then gave those gifts to men (Eph 4: 8).

As He offered Himself as a sacrifice, He opened the way for His apostles to partake of His practical love and, through abiding in Him, become holy offerings (Phil 2: 17; 2 Tim 4: 6). The death of the saints became dear to God because their death was linked to that of Christ.

* The Father sent His Son, not in the sinful flesh, but in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom 8: 3). His Son then sent those who were born in the sinful flesh, after they were sanctified through Him and were purified from the contamination of sin.²

Saint Augustine

* He was accustomed to speak about the future as though it actually happened.³

Saint John Chrysostom

**“And for their sakes I sanctify Myself,
That they also may be sanctified by the truth.” [19]**

As He willingly gives Himself up to death so that He may save humanity, He says He thus sanctifies Himself or consecrates all His life to achieve our salvation. And, as the apostle Paul says, “But Christ...with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb 9: 11-12). He devoted all His life for the redemption of the human race. Nothing else absorbed Him especially that He is the only One who can offer Himself a sacrifice without blemish to save the entire world. Now, being the High Priest and at the same time the sacrifice, He sanctifies Himself not by any outside power. He does not need the blood of animals to sanctify Him, for He is

¹ Of the Holy Spirit Book 3: 4: 25-28.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 108: 4.

³ Hom. 82. PG 59: 484.

without sin. But He wills to devote all His power even to death on the Cross to sanctify His servants and people.

Just as the Son devoted His mission to the salvation of humanity since nothing but human beings preoccupied Him, likewise the believer is sanctified and consecrates all his ability and time for Christ who is “the truth”. This is the pleasure that Paul the apostle experienced and, therefore, described himself as “separated to the gospel of God” (Rom 1: 1). This is what the prophets obtained and so heard the divine voice saying, “before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you” (Jer 1: 5). This was the perception of the Levite priests: that they are consecrated for the service of God. The believer also, even though he does not dedicate his time to service, to preaching and worship, his heart is still sanctified as he does everything, even his food, drink and sleep, for the glory of God.

* Here He says that He sanctifies Himself. He does not say that He helps Himself to be sanctified by purification of the spirit or soul. Nor does He desire to partake of the Holy Spirit since the Holy Spirit is in His essence and He is forever and ever Holy and will remain so. He says here, “I sanctify Myself” because I offer Myself and present Myself as a sacrifice without blemish, for a sweet smelling aroma, because the offering brought to the holy altar is sanctified or is called, according to the Law, holy.¹

* As He is with the Father in existence eternally, He accepts being His Son in the Spirit. And as in the flesh He became similar to the adopted children of God; therefore, it is said that He was sanctified. For, sanctification refers to His humanity or the flesh because human nature cannot acquire holiness of itself.²

Saint Cyril the Great

* What does He mean by, “I sanctify Myself”? He means, ‘I offer Myself a sacrifice because all sacrifice is called holy and those offered to God are in particular sacred. He says this either because their Head was on the way to be so, or because they also offer a sacrifice, for it is said, “present your bodies a living sacrifice” (Rom 12: 1).³

Saint John Chrysostom

* The Lord said these words in order that we may know that He is sanctified in the flesh for our sakes and also is sanctified in His divinity.⁴

Saint Ambrose

* The Word was not only sanctified as a man, but He also sanctifies Himself. He is the source of sanctification for His humanity. **Saint Cyril the Great** affirms that the Lord sanctifies His flesh. He receives the Spirit, His Spirit. He accepts the Spirit as a man, but

¹ Comm. On John 6: 51.

² Dialogue 6 PG 75: 1008D.

³ Hom. 82.

⁴ Of the Christian Faith, 2: 9 (78).

He grants the Spirit to Himself as He is God. He did that for our sake, not for His own sake.¹

* The Word who dwells in His flesh sanctifies His own form by the Holy Spirit and transforms His shape to the image (power) of His nature.²

* Someone may claim that the Lord Jesus Christ was sanctified by the Holy Spirit and used the Spirit as a power other than His own. That is to say, He obtained the force against the evil spirits and the ability to perform miracles in front of the people through the Spirit. If someone says this but does not confess that the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ and by Him He does the divine work, that individual must be anathema.

Anathema 9 by Saint Cyril the Great

* What did He mean by, **“And for their sakes I sanctify Myself”** [19]? The meaning is, ‘I sanctify them in Me because they are (part) of Me.’ Those He speaks about are His members. The Head with the members is Christ. This is what the Apostle teaches as he speaks about Abraham’s seed. The Apostle writes, “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed.” The Apostle says this after saying, “He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.” (Gal 3: 16-29) What does he declare to them when he says, “you are Abraham’s seed” but that, you are Christ’s? In the same sense the same Apostle writes in a different epistle, “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ” (Col 1: 24). He does not say, ‘my afflictions’, but says, “the afflictions of Christ” because he is a member of Christ and in his oppression he filled up his share of the afflictions, for it was destined for Christ to bear pain in His entire body. And, so that you may be sure of that meaning in the statement before us, read what follows: “that they also may be sanctified by the truth” [19]. This only means “by Me” according to the fact that the Truth was the Word who was in the beginning and was God.³

Saint Augustine

5 – A Prayer for Unity

**“I do not pray for these alone,
But also for those who will believe in Me through their word.” [20]**

He prays for those who believe in Him through the word of His disciples and apostles. This prayer extends across the ages and carries all souls so that they may rejoice in the redemptive prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ for their sakes. They will then be protected in His honorable blood, sanctified and united with the other members. His farewell prayer extends to include all those who are ready to accept salvation across the generations and to the end of time. For, He is the Intercessor by His blood for all those

¹ In Joannis Evangelium 11 PG 74: 548B.

² In Joannis Evangelium 11. PG 74: 549.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 108: 5.

who accept His redemptive act so that all may become one. They will then enjoy true unity, pure heavenly wisdom, and glory from the Father.

Why is this prayer only for those who believe in Him equally in the present and the future, while we should pray for all humanity? We have already said that He desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, but He does not force anyone to be saved or to come to the knowledge of the truth. As He knows who will reject Him, He does not pray against them, but He does not intercede for them and their salvation since they insist on refusing salvation, lest it might be thought that He compels them to accept the faith, or that His prayer is ineffective, God forbid! On the other hand, we do not know who are believers and abide in the faith and who definitely refuse or deny later, therefore it befits us to pray for all.

He prays on behalf of the weak in faith so that they may become strong and abide in Him. He also prays for those who in the future will believe.

* The Lord Jesus Christ says about His disciples, “And for their sakes I sanctify Myself” [19]. But lest someone may think that what He does is for the sake of His apostles only, He says, here, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word.” He thus comforts the spirits of His apostles by showing them that many will become their disciples. He cheers them also by revealing to them that they will become the agents of salvation for many people.

Saint John Chrysostom

* Since the apostles who accompanied Him preached the word of faith in this manner at the beginning, their message was therefore called “their word” [20], but in all cases this is no reason to think that their word is not ‘the word of God’ because it was called “their word”. Therefore, the Apostle says to the Thessalonians, “when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God” (1 Thes 2: 13). It is the word of God because it was granted freely by God, but it is called “their word” because it was given to them chiefly and at the beginning so that they may preach it.¹

Saint Augustine

**“...that they may be one,
As You, Father, are in Me, and I in You;
That they also may be one in Us,
That the world may believe that You sent Me.” [21]**

After He prays for their protection from the evil one and for their sanctity, He prays for the unity of the entire Church that will be established only after evil is cast out. For, evil causes rivalry and division, but holy life grants love and unity. Unity is based on the action of God in the life of the servants (the apostles, disciples, and priests) just as His deed is in all believers among the people.

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 109: 5.

The Lord Jesus Christ repeats the clause **“that they may be”** seven times (verses 11, 19, 21 twice, 22, 23, 24). Four of the seven times He prays that His followers may be one. Thus was Jesus the Lord of glory concerned in particular with unity.

Unity preoccupied the heart of the Lord Christ, for He had prayed for it [13] and He now prays persistently to the Father for it. He desires that the inner relationship in the Church may be similar to the relationship between the Father and the Son. This is what the Lord repeats in His prayer. The secret of the unity of the Church is in that the Church clings to the Holy Trinity who has a unique unity in essence. It is also in that the believers’ hearts may be filled with love so that everyone may have a place there. Pray that all become one: one body, one heart, one thought, one hope, and one in enjoying the divine promises.

This prayer was fulfilled in the first Church when the ministers and the people had one faith and one heart, although they had different cultures among the Gentiles. Each expressed his faith in the way that befitted him, but believers of Jewish origin united with Christians of Gentile origin in one body. We are quite sure that Christ’s farewell prayer will be fulfilled when the Church in the entire world will unite round one faith with one spirit and one aim, that is meeting the Lord Jesus Christ eternally and carrying the spirit of adopted children to the one Father.

* **“That they may be one in Us”** means that they may be one in believing in Us.

* What does “in Us” mean? It means belief in Us. For, as there is no harm done to humanity more than division, it is a prerequisite that they become one. All believers through the apostles are one, though some have seceded.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

* We must verify how God the Father is, how the believer will finally be, and how the saints have been promised to be like the Father and the Son, that they become one in themselves and become one in the Father and the Son.²

* The truth must be imprinted in the mind in more details. We are not one in the Father and the Son in essence, but by grace, for the essence of the human spirit and that of God cannot be one as the followers of Mani claim.³

* John the Evangelist who drank the word in Christ’s bosom says, “By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit....Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.” (1 John 4: 13, 15). If you believe in Christ, as the apostles believed, you become one body with them in Christ. But if you are quick in claiming that you have faith and works like them while

¹ Hom. 82. PG 59: 484.

² Letter. 124: 10.

³ Against Jovinianus, 2: 29.

you do not have the same faith and deeds, you will not be able to have the same position they have.¹

* “Do you not know that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 3: 16; 6: 19)? He says, “temple”, not ‘temples’, to show that God dwells in all similarly. Call the Church what you like: bride, sister, mother, for the gathering of the Church is one only. The Church does not need a husband, a brother, or a son. The belief of the Church is one, and the Church is not contaminated with various teachings nor divided by heresy. The Church remains a virgin and where the Lamb goes the Church follows. Only the Church knows the song of Christ.²

Saint Jerome

* The Trinity is in us and we are in the Trinity for the Three are One in essence and we are one in nature. The Trinity is in us as God is in His temple. We are in the Trinity as creation in the Creator.³

* “That they also may be one in Us” [21]. He adds, “in Us” so that we may know that our becoming one in that love in the one faith is referred to God’s grace, not to ourselves. But as the Apostle says, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light” and lest one refers this to himself, the Apostle adds, “in the Lord” (Eph 5: 8).⁴

Saint Augustine

* It is more appropriate here to quote the words of the Gospel, “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (Jn 17: 21). O, the majesty and glory that holds this unity! The Holy Spirit is that glory and majesty. No one who examines carefully the words of the Lord Jesus Christ who says, “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them” (Jn 17: 22) can deny that. In truth the Lord Jesus Christ gave that glory to His disciples when He said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn 20: 22).

The Word of God received that glory that He had before the creation of the world, when He took human nature for Himself. Therefore, human nature was glorified by the Holy Spirit. From that relation results the distribution of glory of the Holy Spirit to everyone united in Christ, beginning with the disciples. Christ thus says, “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one; I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me” John 17: 22-23).

Whoever grows quickly from youth to a perfect man arrives at the level of this spiritual stature (Eph 4: 13). Even though he was born a slave, or a bondsman, he will obtain the royal merit and the glory of the Holy Spirit in purity.

¹ Against Jovinianus, 2: 19.

² Against Jovinianus, 2: 19.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 110: 1.

⁴ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 110: 2.

This is the undefiled dove that the Bridegroom looks for when He says, “My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her.”¹

Saint Gregory of Nyssa

**“And the glory which You gave Me I have given them,
That they may be one just as We are one” [22]**

This may refer to the glory that the Word incarnate obtains by performing the miracles and attracting the lost souls to their salvation. For He grants His disciples this ability in His Holy name, for He is not ashamed to call them brethren (Heb 2: 11). They receive adoption by the Father and have this glory, the glory of adopted children. But they do not obtain it in essence like the Lord; for they obtain it by grace. Glory is a divine gift: “The Lord will give grace and glory” (Ps 84: 11).

Through the suffering on the Cross the Lord carries us to His glory: “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb 2: 10). As our hearts soar we see that Glory about which it has been said that the angels cover their faces before Him. This Glory shines on the heavenly sublime Jerusalem, for the Lamb is the light of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21: 23).

The world does not know God the Grantor of knowledge of life and unity with Him. But believers know Him as their Father with whom they are united. They experience His continual love and they offer Him an uninterrupted thanksgiving offering.

The Lord Christ affirms that the source of the unity that believers enjoy is in His acceptance as Son of Man of glory from the Father to give it to His believers. Thus, our abiding in the One Christ and our pleasure in having that glory are our way to this true unity. The unity of the Church is real; it is a divine blessing and a living testimony that Christ is the true Messiah. It is a testimony of the great love of God for mankind.

The Lord Jesus Christ, thus, stresses unity as a basic and essential matter. It is not a superficial unity such as in the meetings of church leaders; it is rather the unity of the action of the Holy Spirit who gathers all in the spirit and in divine power to a perfect and holy aim, not on the level of Church politics. The center of this unity is that all become one in the Father and the Son, just as They are One. Whoever accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as the “Way” walks through Him to the Father’s bosom united with Him and walks through Him to the hearts of the believers to experience the unity of the brethren.

As the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, some people consider Him the Spirit of unity. He grants unity; He unites all to work all in all (1 Cor 12: 4).

¹ Song of Solomon by Gregory, bishop of Nyssa, translated into Arabic by Dr. George Nawar, sermon 15.

* “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them” so that by signs and doctrine they must be one spirit. For, this is the glory: that they become one and this is even greater than the signs. Just as we glorify God in whose essence there is no conflict or difference, and this is His great glory, He says ‘may these qualities were also causes of glory to them.’ One may ask, ‘How does He pray to the Father to give them glory and yet He says that He Himself has given them that same glory?’ The answer is, ‘whether His sermon is about the signs or about harmony and peace among them, He grants them those gifts, while He prays that the Father may give them peace (He prays to the Father on their behalf).’¹

Saint John Chrysostom

* He is Jesus who prays, “**as You, Father are in Me, and I in You; that they may be one in Us**” (Jn 17: 21). For, if God who is One is in everyone, He will make all become one and the number will be lost in the unity.²

Saint Basil

* What was that glory but immortality that human nature accepts in Him? For He did not accept that alone, but in His usual way according to His anticipated fixed dispensation He refers to the future using the past tense. For, now that He is in His glory, that is His resurrection by the Father, He raises us He Himself to the same glory at the end.

What He says here is similar to what He says in a different context, “For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.”

The Father does not work in one manner, and the Son works in another manner. They work ‘in the same manner’ (See John 5: 21, 19). In that Christ has risen by Himself, the Lord indicated earlier, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (Jn 2: 19). Thus, the glory of immortality that He said He took from the Father, it is understood, He also gave to Himself, though He did not say so.³

Saint Augustine

* Love casts out fear and as the Apostle says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love” (1 Jn 4: 18). But if fear changes into love, that unity is achieved as a result of redemption. For all are united with that one good through the perfection symbolized by the dove: “My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her” (Song of Solomon 6: 9).

The Lord Jesus Christ explains this idea in the Gospel more clearly. When He gave the disciples all power through His grace, He also gave blessings to His saints through His prayer to the Father. He crowned these blessings when He added, “ And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one” (Jn 17: 22). This means, they must not differ in doing what is good; they must unite in

¹ Homilies on St. John, 82: 2.

² Letter 8 to Caesareans, 7.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 110: 3.

one thought through the unity of the Holy Spirit. As the Apostle Paul writes, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit” (Eph 4: 3).¹

Saint Gregory of Nyssa

**“I in them, and You in Me;
That they may be made perfect in one,
And that the world may know that You have sent Me,
And have loved them as You have loved Me.” [23]**

* Is it true that human beings can, with God the Father’s grace, love that same love of the Son in whom the Father is well pleased (Matt 3: 17)? This is the pleasure of the Father in Himself, and we are His pleasure through the Son. We in whom God sees the image of the Son through adopting us and therefore are His children.

Eternal love in God’s essence is one thing; love through grace is another. The Father loves the Son a perfect, eternally secure love. As for us, our growth in grace qualifies us for God’s love.²

Saint Ambrose

* How does He give them glory? By being in them, He and with Him the Father, so that they unite. He shows that peace is more powerful than miracles in attracting men. Just as conflict causes separation, peace grants unity.³

* The Lord Jesus Christ makes it clear here that He does not love His disciples alone, but His Father also loves them.

Saint John Chrysostom

* “I in them, and You in Me” [23] meaning ‘I am with those You have sent Me to and You are in Me, I who reconcile the world with You through Me.’⁴

Saint Augustine

* The Father loves us in the Son because He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world (Eph 1: 4). For, He who loves His Only Begotten Son, surely loves the Son’s members through His work. He has engrafted us in Him through adoption, but in this we are not equal to the Only Begotten Son through whom we were made and recreated. For He says, “I have loved them as You have loved Me.” A person is not always equal to another when it is said, ‘as this so is the other’.

He loves the Son as divinity, for He begot Him equal to Himself. He loves Him also in the flesh, because the Only Begotten Son became man. He loves Him as the Word for the body of the Word is dear to Him. But as for us, as we are members of Him

¹ Song of Solomon by Gregory, bishop of Nyssa, translated into Arabic by Dr. George Nawar, sermon 15.

² On the Christian Faith, Book 5: 7: 89-90.

³ Homilies on St. John, 82: 2.

⁴ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 110: 4.

whom He loves, and so that we may be so, He loved us for that reason before He created us.¹

Saint Augustine

6 – A Prayer for Them to Be Glorified

**“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me
May be with Me where I am,
That they may behold My glory which You have given Me;
For You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” [24]**

* The aim of the Lord Jesus Christ’s redemptive intercession for those who believe in Him is that they enjoy existing with Him eternally in heaven. After He prays that they may be protected in the Holy Name, in sanctification, and in unity, He prays for their glory. As the Psalmist says, “The Lord will give grace and glory” (Ps 84: 11). This is God’s plan concerning us that we may be blessed with eternal union with Him, in the Kingdom of Heaven, and with a life blessed and glorious.

What is heaven? It is where the Lord Jesus Christ is: “with Me where I am”. His presence is the heaven of heavens, the perfect blessing and the joy. Heaven is to be with Him (Phil 1: 23). It is seeing the glory of the Son before whom the angels cover their faces (Jn 12: 41). The Lamb is the light of the uppermost New Jerusalem (Rev 21: 23). Just as the bride shines with the light of her groom, the radiant glory shines on the Church that carries His icon and rises from glory to glory.

He prays to the Father who has authority to give eternal life. He speaks as King of kings, as the greatest Chief Priest, as Savior of the world, and as the Offering of love for humanity and obedience to the Father. He prays from a superior position of power as the Son of God, the Only Begotten Son who grants life.

* He says, “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am.” This is what they desired to know, for they often said, “Lord, where are You going?” (Jn 13: 36) The Lord says to the Father, “that they may behold My glory” as He mentions here, in a mysterious way, that perfect peace is in that His disciples look at the Son of God and this will make them glorified. This is what the Apostle Paul means when he says, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3: 18). And just as those who look at the sun and enjoy the gentle wind enjoy themselves by doing that, this will be our case. For that sight of the glory of the Lord gives us much more pleasure than the joy of those who look at the radiant sun..

Saint John Chrysostom

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 110: 5.

* The glory that the Word has is also the glory of the Father. The Apostle writes, “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2: 10-11). Therefore, concerning His divinity, the Son has His glory, and the glory of the Father and that of the Son is one. The Son is not less than the Father in majesty, for the glory is one. Neither is He less in divinity, for the fullness of divinity is in Christ.¹

Saint Ambrose

* Undoubtedly it is enough that He says, “I desire that those may be with Me where I am” and He says, “with Me” because being with Him is the greatest blessing. We cannot doubt that the true believer is with Christ in faith. For, about this, He says, “he who is not with Me is against Me” (Matt 12: 30). But when He said, “I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am” He spoke particularly about that vision when we see Him as He is (1 Jn 3: 2).²

Saint Augustine

**“O righteous Father! The world has not known You,
But I have known You,
And those have known that You sent Me.” [25]**

When He prayed that they may be sanctified He called the Father, “Holy Father”; now that He prays that they may be glorified, He calls the Father, “O righteous Father”. The glory that we may have is the crown of the righteousness that the righteous Judge gives us. The righteousness of God is the source of all good and glory for us; that glory which the righteous Father promised us and which the crucified Son offered as a price that we may be qualified to have it.

* He has shown us here that no one knows God the Father unless he knows God’s Son. As though the Lord Jesus Christ says to the Father, ‘I wished that the people may have their share, but they did not know You.’ And I think that He says this here finding their stupidity difficult to accept because they refused to know that He is good and righteous.

Saint John Chrysostom

* Because You are righteous the world does not know You. That is the world destined to judgment that it truly deserves. But the world that has been reconciled through Christ is qualified to know You, not because it is itself worthy, but through grace. For, what does He mean by knowing Him, but having eternal life? That eternal life He bars from the world that will be judged, and gives to the world reconciled with Him. Thus, the world does not know You because You are righteous and in return the world gets what it deserves, that is not knowing You. In the same way, the world reconciled with You knows that You are merciful, not because it is itself worthy but it is given grace because it needs help to know You.

¹ Of the Christian Faith, 2, 9 (82).

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 111: 2.

He then says, “but I have known You” [25]. He is the spring of grace Who in essence is God and by grace became man, indescribable, by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin, and as God’s grace is through our Lord Jesus Christ, He adds, “and these have known that You sent Me” [25]. This is the case of the world that is reconciled with Him. ‘But because You sent Me they knew’, that is, through grace they knew.¹

Saint Augustine

**“And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it,
That the love with which You loved Me may be in them,
And I in them.” [26]**

He concludes His farewell prayer by praying that they may have divine knowledge. After He prays that God may keep them from evil, He prays that He may sanctify them for the divine work. Then He prays that they may have heavenly unity, and now He prays that they may have that knowledge that is fulfilled only when they lift up their hearts to live in heaven and discover divine glory.

The knowledge that we enjoy is the fruit of our unity with Him; we know the Son who carries us up to the knowledge of the Father. It is a knowledge that grows continually: “I declared to them Your name, and will declare it.” This is the knowledge of God’s mysteries: that the Son who alone perfectly knows the divine mysteries presents, for He is one with His Father. We have known the Son and He has taken us to the knowledge of the name of the Father. He will also give us knowledge through our growth in our holy love, and through our continual discovery of God’s love and the dwelling of the Word in our hearts.

Knowledge is a dynamic process that does not stop. Through grace, the believer continues to grow in the knowledge of the Father who grants gifts. The believer grows in the knowledge also of the Son who is the Messiah fulfilling salvation. And he grows in the knowledge of the Holy Spirit whom the Lord in His prayer calls “the Spirit of truth”.

Among the blessings of unity is that believers experience the love of the Father for them through His love for His Only Begotten Son. They rejoice in the divine love and in that the Son dwells in them. For, the Son is love in them; He is the source of perfect joy (Jn 17: 13).

* We also will rejoice in accordance to our measure if we are wise. Therefore, Paul says, “if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together” (Rom 8: 17). But there are those who act against themselves because of their laziness and sleep. When such glory, rather than being sent into Hades, is shown to them, when they can reign and be glorified with the Son of God yet they still deprive themselves of such great blessings; then they deserve a profusion of tears and they become more miserable than any being.²

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 101: 5.

² Homilies on St. John, 80: 3.

* Do you see how the Lord reaches a good aim with His words? The good aim is love that is the source and perfection of all good work. May we, therefore, know God and love Him so that it may not be said, “They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him” (Titus 1: 16). Once more, it is written, “he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim 5: 8) because while the unbeliever cares for his family, relatives and strangers, he who denies the faith neglects even his family. For, what excuse do you have when they blaspheme against God and disrespect Him because of you?”¹

Saint John Chrysostom

* I have declared to them Your name through faith and I will declare it publicly. I have declared Your name to those whose journey on the strange earth has a definite end. I will declare Your name to those whose kingdom will have no end.²

* Christ’s prayer ends and His suffering begins.³

Saint Augustine

¹ Homilies on St. John, 82: 3-4.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 101: 6.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 101: 6.

**Meditations Inspired
By
The Gospel of St John, Ch 17**

Do You Lack Glory,
O You wholly glorious?

+ I stood among Your disciples, amazed!
I heard You pray 'Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You!
Do You lack glory, O You wholly glorious glory?
And does the Father need glory,
He who dwells in unapproachable light?

+ Your glory and Your Father's glory are one,
That the fallen humanity may be glorified with heavenly glory!
You desire all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
You desire that dust may become heaven!
That the corrupt may rejoice in incorruption!
This is the wonderful glory!

+ Carry me to where You speak to Your Father.
My spirit will then be comforted in this dark world
As long as You put the souls of Your believers in Your Father's safe
They will be protected and no thief can come near them!

+ You carry them to Your Holy Father!
So that just as You have consecrated Your life for our sanctity
We may be sanctified in You,
And we may be considered holy and righteous before Your Father.

+ Carry us all to the Father
As members of Your one body
So that the spirit of division may not sneak in!
But that we may enjoy eternal and true unity!

+ You pray for us because You are the heavenly High Priest
You pray on our behalf because You are the Head of the Church
You alone can, through Your blood, request
Because through Your Cross You raised us up to heaven
You hid us in Your pierced side
And with Your blood You bought and redeemed us!

+ Your prayer is certainly fulfilled in us!
When we see You in Your glory
We rejoice in the radiance of Your glory covering all Your Church

And all are glorified through You and in You forever!

Amen

+++

CHAPTER 18

YOUR SUFFERINGS REVEAL YOUR GLORY

+ The hour of Your suffering has come. It is the hour of Your glory.
You willingly entered the garden with Your disciples.
You, O the Sun of Righteousness entered and waited
For the procession of darkness to come to You.
They carried swords and sticks to capture You.
All nature expected a word from You to destroy them.
They carried torches to look for the Sun of Righteousness!
They all did not realize You willingly delivered Yourself up to them
For the sake of Your wonderful love of their salvation.

+ They wanted to arrest You
But they fell down on their faces
You delivered Yourself up to them
So they bound You cruelly, lest You should escape.
Your hands bled
Yet with love You healed the wound of the servant Malchus!

+ They took You to the high priest in the dark night
You who desire to take them with Your Holy Spirit to Your divine glamorous light.
The evil high priest advised that it is better that You should die for the nation.
He did not understand that You are the heavenly High Priest
That You die to end the death of the human race
And You rise to raise them up with You.

+ The high priest enveloped himself with religious temporary popular authority
But everybody abandoned you
One disciple betrayed you, and another denied you
The power of the high priest is in human evanescent inner possibilities
But you are the Power, Word and Wisdom of God
Your divine glory does not need human support!

+ They delivered you up: You the King of kings to a human ruler.
They demanded that you should be killed as an evildoer
The governor found no fault in you at all!
He used every means so that he might not do what was against his conscience!
But the stubborn people insisted murdering you.
They accepted Caesar as their only king and rejected your kingdom.
They released Baraboo so that you should be crucified, you who are all goodness!

+ In weakness Pilate gave you up to be crucified.

For he could not lose Caesar's friendship as a price for justice.
All the powers of darkness gathered against You

And did not know that by doing so, they revealed the Light of Your glory!

+++

1 – Pilate's Judgment

So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. [1]

Pilate tried to release the Lord because he was sure Christ was innocent. He thought he could release Him because he traditionally used to release a prisoner at the Passover; yet he failed because of the people's uprising. However, as he was still convinced that Jesus Christ committed no crime, he used another method, that is he allowed his soldiers to scourge and scorn Him so that he might prove to the people that Christ was helpless and therefore they should forgive Him.

The Evangelist gives us an exposition of the judgment of the Lord. It is full of injustice: the plaintiffs are confused, the judge wavers between his feeling of injustice to Jesus and his fear of the rebellion of the multitude against him, and their claim that Jesus wanted to be king and oppose Caesar. Pilate failed to acquit Jesus, and therefore he was obliged to let the case proceed in accordance to the rules. He had to treat Jesus cruelly because of the danger and nature of the accusation. Pilate first condescended to the wish of the people and ordered his soldiers to scourge Jesus and treat Him as a rebel. Pilate hoped that by doing this he would legally prove that Jesus was innocent.

Pilate was not serious in judging justly. For, though he knew that Jesus was righteous, he condemned Him to be scourged like a criminal [1]. Luke the Evangelist says that Pilate said to the multitude, "I will chastise Him and release Him" (Luke 23: 16). Pilate's aim in scourging Jesus seems to have been his hope that the Jews would change their minds concerning His crucifixion. Clearly, Pilate felt that Jesus did nothing to deserve crucifixion.

It seems that the scourging was executed in accordance to the Roman rules, which were far crueler than the Jewish rules. The Romans usually scourged those condemned to crucifixion. The Lord Jesus Christ accepted this for our sake. As Isaiah writes, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Is 50: 6). The Psalmist says, "The plowers plowed on my back; they made their furrows long" (Ps 129: 3). The Lord Himself had said, they will "deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify" (Matt 20: 19; see Mark 10: 34; Luke 18: 33). Saint Peter says, "by whose stripes we were healed" (1 Pet 2: 24). The Physician was scourged so that the sick would be cured. He endured

being scourged for our sake so that the believers would find their pleasure in enduring suffering for Him and partaking of His pains and crucifixion (Acts 5: 41; 16: 22, 25).

Scourging was a terrible punishment. The historian **Eusebius** explains that they used a whip made of several strips made of leather with bits of metal or bone at the tips so that the flesh of the person scourged would be torn. Sometimes the veins and inner layers of the scourged were exposed. The Roman writer, **Cicero**, says that sometimes scourging caused death. The Roman soldiers were cruel and had no mercy. It may be that Jesus Christ could not carry the cross to the place of the crucifixion because He was scourged. Some scholars point out Christ's quick death on the cross as the result of the cruel scourging. The Evangelists mention the fact that Christ was scourged but do not describe His pain.

The Lord considered all sorts of suffering and abuse for our sake as easy. He loves us and longs for our redemption so that we should regard our partaking with Him, of His shame and pain, a glory that we do not deserve.

* John the apostle says, 'Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him'. Pilate probably wished to calm the Jews and evade their anger. Just as he could not rescue the Lord with his first address to the Jews, he failed in stopping their wickedness to that extent.

Saint John Chrysostom

* We need to believe that Pilate did this for no reason but to let the Jews see this cruel treatment and be satisfied, without madly asking for His death. For the same reason the governor allowed his soldiers to do what followed. He may have commanded them to do that, though the Evangelist said nothing about this¹.

Saint Augustine

**And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns
And put it on His head,
And they put on Him a purple robe. [2]**

The soldiers used to scorn those who were convicted, especially that the soldiers represented the occupying authority that abused rebels against Rome. Their sarcasm fitted the accusation that He was "King of the Jews". They did not find a king to put to death often, and they thought that scorning a king of the Jews was a farce hard to repeat. "Purple": this is an expensive color. It is a mixture of violet and red made of some kinds of rare fish shells. Purple clothes were expensive and linked to royal life, and worn by the rich and high ranking men in the nation.

Matthew the Evangelist writes that they "put a scarlet robe on Him" (Matt 27: 28). This color is extracted from some dead insects and a scarlet robe is much cheaper than a purple garment that the military captains wore. The soldiers perhaps brought an old robe that a military commander had thrown away because it was old. The soldiers

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 116: 1.

then used the purple gown to dress a poor Galilean (Jesus) who would be king! The crown of thorns and the purple robe denote royalty but the world uses them for wicked humor.

* St John reports, ‘And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe.’ This Pilate did to please the angry Jews. For this reason he led the Lord Jesus Christ out, crowned with thorns, so that when the Jews would see Him so abused, they give would vent out their sickness a little and throw out their poison.

Saint John Chrysostom

**Then they said,
“Hail, King of the Jews!”
And they struck Him with their hands.” [3]**

Thus Pilate delivered Him up to the soldiers so that they deride Him. They therefore twisted a crown of thorns for Him and put it on His head instead of the crown of a king. They put on Him a purple robe as a king and in scorn they struck Him with their hands as they said, “Hail, King of the Jews!”

**Pilate then went out again,
And said to them,
“Behold, I am bringing Him out to you,
That you may know that I find no fault in Him.” [4]**

Pilate brought Him out to the Jewish leaders and the tumultuous crowds to show them that their accusation against Him, that He wanted to be king, was some kind of illusion. For here He was before them, His flesh torn with scourging and He had become an absurd subject of scorn. Pilate hurt the Lord Jesus Christ even though he knew that He was innocent. Then he brought Him out to the accusers hoping that they might drop their case against Him. Pilate declared that according to the Roman law he “found no fault in Him” [4]. There was no fault at all in Him, he repeated (Jn 18: 38). Thus Pilate pronounced himself guilty because since there was no fault in Christ at all, why then did he scourge Him and give Him to the soldiers to abuse Him? Why did he bring Him out to His prosecutors and did not release Him immediately as justice decrees?

**Then Jesus came out,
Wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.
And Pilate said to them,
“Behold the Man!” [5]**

By saying, “Behold the Man” Pilate may have wished to assert to the Jews that if they thought Christ wanted to be king and oppose Caesar, this was false. For now that they saw Him so weak and helpless, having no followers who might oppose authority, they should not fear Him.

By bringing Him out wearing the crown of thorns and with His head, face, and all His body covered with blood, to those who denounced Him, Pilate gave them the chance to insist on crucifying Him. For Pilate treated Him as a slave. He unjustly tortured Him because a slave had no right to defend himself. On the other hand, it was necessary to prove that a free man was guilty before tormenting him so cruelly.

The Lord came out to become a spectacle, in front of the people, carrying our reproach. This is why the apostle Paul later said, “Let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb 13: 13).

His sight was so painful that Pilate said, “Behold the Man” without mentioning His name in some derision. That sight moved the heart of the man of wisdom almost a thousand years before. For he said, “Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousal, and in the day of the gladness of his heart” (Song of Solomon 3: 11).

Some believe that the words of Pilate, “Behold the Man” bear a secret meaning. The word ‘Adam’ in Hebrew means ‘man’ “Behold the Man” may thus mean ‘Here is Adam whom God created to be king and given him power over all creatures, but he has become miserable and has brought a curse upon himself and all creation. Thus the Second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, has taken the place of the first Adam to bring the royal heavenly life to those who have lost even their temporary peace. Instead of death that the first Adam brought, Christ became life giving (1 Cor 15: 22, 45). This is what Pilate said and unaware of the meaning of what he said!

Pilate faced the outburst of rage and hostility to Jesus by declaring His innocence. In so doing he became a witness across history. But Jesus did not utter a word. Pilate said, “Behold the Man”. He did not say, ‘Behold the culprit’. As though he meant that according to him Christ was innocent of any guilt at all.

**Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him,
They cried out, saying,
“Crucify Him, crucify Him!”
Pilate said to them,
“You take Him and crucify Him,
For I find no fault in Him.” [6]**

After hearing Pilate repeating that he did not find fault at all in Jesus, and after seeing Jesus’ body torn with scourging, His head and forehead pierced with thorns, and His face swollen with beating, the people could have asked for His release. But the chief priests and officers quickly cried out saying, “Crucify Him, crucify Him.” Their envy and malice were so extreme that they did not accept Pilate’s judgment. They were not sorry for the Lord’s pain. They, instead, considered Him deserving death even if He was innocent. For in their opinion their safety and the peace of the city necessitated His crucifixion and removal.

The chief priests and their followers had come for one purpose, which is to stress the importance of Christ being crucified no matter what the price might be. They did not listen to anything Pilate said. But as they perceived his strong wish to release Him, they for the first time, said the words, “Crucify Him”. This was what the chief priests and officers said, disclosing what was in their hearts.

For the third time Pilate declares the innocence of the Lord and then he says to them, “You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him.” [6]. He knows very well that they cannot crucify Him. He says this only to rebuke them as though he says, ‘If your envy drives you to crucify Him, do not use me as an obedient means of that envy. I would then do evil against justice. My conscience is troubled. Act according to your envy if you can!’

* Observe how the judge presented his defense in many ways to acquit the Lord of the accusations against Him. But nothing of all this shamed them. They insisted on fulfilling their aim. The statement, “You take Him and crucify Him” is an expression of one who wants to be innocent of committing a crime, and wants to force the Jews to do something illegal. For, they brought the Lord to him to decide on crucifying Him. But what happened was the opposite, for, the judge declared the innocence of the Lord and did not indict Him.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

**The Jews answered him,
‘We have a law,
And according to our law He ought to die,
Because He made Himself the Son of God.’” [7]**

The accusation that He opposed Caesar and the Roman authorities and stirred up the people proved false. So they charged Him with an offence which Pilate had no right to discuss. That accusation was that He had blasphemed and opposed the Jewish law. This was the business of the high priest and the Sanhedrin. Pilate and his men could not interfere in religious matters. The leaders accused the Lord of blasphemy and claiming He was divine, “because He made Himself the Son of God”. These religious men leaders understood from the Lord’s many speeches that by saying, “the Son of God”, He meant He was equal to God. They, therefore, accused Him of blasphemy.

The prosecutors presented their indictment, which is that He blasphemed and therefore deserved death (Lev 24: 16). They were proud of the law even when they broke it and sinned against God. He who makes his boast in the law, does he dishonor God through breaking the law? (Rom 2: 23). They broke the law and thought they honored it. They did not listen to the prophecy, “Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed” (Is 10: 1).

* Contemplate the accusation: “He made Himself the Son of God” [7]. Tell me is this an accusation that He who does the deeds of the Son of God calls Himself the Son of God? What then did Christ do? While they proceeded with one accusation after another, He

¹ Homilies on St. John, 84: 2.

continued His calm, thus fulfilling the words of the prophet, “He opens not His mouth. In humiliation His judgment was taken away” (Is 53: 7, 8 LXX).¹

Saint John Chrysostom

Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid,...” [8]

When he heard that the accused did not only claim to be king, but also that He was divine, Pilate was greatly troubled and afraid. The case became more difficult for him. He could calm the people concerning His claim to royalty, but Pilate could not appease the terror of the people if Jesus said He was divine. At the same time Pilate feared the personality of Jesus because he was unable to identify Him. Pilate was sure that the religious leaders hated Jesus, but how could he be sure that Jesus was truly the Son of God. Pilate was afraid of taking part with them in the crime of opposing the incarnate Son of God.

**‘...and went again into the Praetorium,
And said to Jesus,
‘Where are You from?
But Jesus gave him no answer.’ [9]**

Pilate asked the accused a question inside the Praetorium. That question revealed what went on in his mind, which is that the personality of Jesus was a puzzle. As though he asked, ‘What is Your secret origin? Who are You? Tell me.’ This was a question that was often addressed to the Lord. The Jews asked Him, “Who do You make Yourself out to be?” (Jn 8: 53). He answered the Jews that no one knows Him except He who is with Him all the time and is of the same essence. For He said, “If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me” (Jn 8: 54). The Jews were confused because He announced, “It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him” (Jn 8: 54-55).

As Pilate was troubled and afraid he asked the Lord Christ, “Where are You from?” [9] Pilate spoke to Him in the Praetorium, in the court away from the noise of the Jewish leaders and the people. Jesus had answered Pilate’s previous questions, but concerning this question, ‘Jesus gave him no answer’ (Jn 19: 9). Pilate asked for information about Jesus in relation to this world. But the answer to the question needs leaving this world to comprehend the eternal. For, Christ is not a mere prophet among prophets, nor just a teacher, a worker of signs and cures. Therefore, He was silent. Pilate had asked Jesus, “Are You the King of the Jews?” (Jn 18: 33) and again, “Are You a king then?” (18: 37). Jesus answered, “You say rightly that I am a king”. Now Pilate does not ask, ‘Who are You?’ or, “Are You the Son of God?” He asks, “Where are You from?” implying, ‘Are You a human being or celestial? Are You from beneath or from above?’ Pilate knew the town of the Lord- the man, and he was surely asking whether He was greater than man or not. It was not possible for him to ask this question directly, lest he should be accused of intruding in religious beliefs, and which the religious leaders only should decide.

¹ Homilies on St. John, 84: 2.

The Lord said nothing, not because He could not, or because He did not care for Pilate's salvation, but because He wished to give Pilate a chance to think carefully. Earlier, He had answered saying, "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn 18: 36). In that discourse He had made it clear to Pilate where He was from.

In the spirit of prophecy, Isaiah wondered at the Lord's silence. Isaiah said in many passages, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street" (Is 42: 2). "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth" (Is 53: 7).

* Pilate was afraid when he heard the Jews saying, "He made Himself the Son of God" [7]. He was terrified lest what they said should be true and he should be violating the law. He therefore did not ask Jesus what He did, but trembling with fear, he began examining Jesus as a person. He asked, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer because He had already said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn 18: 36) and "For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth" (Jn 18: 37). Pilate should not have resisted what he heard.¹

* The apostle John says, "But Jesus gave him no answer." As the Lord was silent and gave Pilate no answer, He made it clear that He obediently came to His agony.

Saint John Chrysostom

* He walked to judgment without opening His mouth. He was not like one with an evil mind convinced he had sinned. Rather in meekness He offered Himself a sacrifice for the sins of others.²

Saint Augustine

**Then Pilate said to Him,
"Are You not speaking to me?
Do You not know that I have power to crucify You,
And power to release You?" [10]**

Pilate boasted of having power and was angry because the Lord did not answer his question. Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" Pilate exaggerated in showing his power because he thought that he was in control of the situation. He did not realize that on the one hand he had no right to crucify an innocent person, and release another person who should be crucified according to the Roman law. On the other hand, Pilate forgot that God Almighty is there and nothing happens without His permission.

We realize that the silence of our Lord Jesus was not because He refused to answer the question, but because Pilate could not understand the truth. Pilate therefore

¹ Homilies on St. John, 84: 2.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 116: 4.

thought that he had power to crucify or to release Him [10]. Jesus then answered that Pilate had what limited power allowed to him from above.

* Do you see how Pilate condemned himself first. For, if he was in power, why did he not release Him when he found no fault in Him at all?

Saint John Chrysostom

**Jesus answered,
“You could have no power at all against Me,
Unless it had been given you from above.
Therefore, the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.” [11]**

Pilate may have expected that his words would give Jesus Christ a chance to speak to him so that he would release Him. But the Lord rebuked him for his pride, and for boasting of having power over justice, ignoring the role of God Almighty. The Lord Jesus Christ answered him so that He would remove his stupidity. As Solomon writes, “Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit” (Prov 26: 5). When Pilate used his power and unjustly scourged Him, the Lord Jesus was silent. However, when he proudly announced that he had power, Jesus scolded him so that he might know his limitations. Pilate forgot that “...he that is higher than the highest regards and there be Higher than they” (Ecc 5: 8). These are the last words that the Lord said to Pilate in this Gospel. Christ asked Pilate to know that every power a man on earth has is divinely given to him by heaven, not by Rome. God is truly Almighty and He, not the emperor or those that the emperor appoints as rulers and governors, has power over all human affairs.

Pilate had not experienced such moments as this- when he had to judge a person whom some considered the Son of God and the King of Israel. He thought he was in control of the destiny of this person. But the Lord made it clear to him that he was only a tool in God’s hands, and that he could have done nothing without permission from God (Acts 4: 27-28). Still the Lord gave him some excuse when He compared his sin to that of those who delivered Him to be judged. However, this does not justify Pilate, nor does it relieve him of his responsibility. The responsibility of those who delivered Him is greater because they had read the Scriptures, and had heard the prophecies that were fulfilled in Him, and had also seen the miracles He had performed and the divine power He had.

Some observe that here the Lord Jesus Christ was referring to Judas, the disciple who betrayed and delivered Him. But it is obvious that He did not mean Judas alone when He mentioned the one who delivered Him. He meant the entire Jewish nation and the chief priests. As Pilate had said before, “Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me” (Jn 18: 35). Indeed, Pilate did not find in Jesus Christ fault for which He should die. Judas, on the other hand, was a disciple and friend of Jesus and was given many blessings and possibilities to work for the heavenly kingdom. Pilate deviated from justice, but did not accept a bribe like Judas. Pilate was wrong in not insisting on releasing the innocent, but he was not envious and full of hatred and hostility like the Jewish leaders who opposed Jesus Christ.

What does the Lord mean by sin here? According to John the Evangelist, He meant “not knowing God” as seen in Jesus Christ.

* The Lord destroyed Pilate’s pride and arrogance. For He said to him, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.” He made it clear that this event is unlike many other incidents, for what was happening was done in a mysterious way.¹

* When you hear the words of the Lord Jesus Christ to Pilate, “...unless it had been given you from above”, do not think that Pilate is innocent of transgression. The Lord said, “...the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin”; this shows that Pilate sinned.

Saint John Chrysostom

* When He did not answer, He was silent like a lamb; and when He answered, He taught us as a Shepherd. Therefore, may we learn the lesson as the Apostle also says, “...there is no authority except from God” (Rom 13: 1). He who delivers an innocent man to the ruler to kill him is more sinful than he who has power to kill for fear of a higher authority.²

Saint Augustine

**From then on Pilate sought to release Him,
But the Jews cried out, saying,
‘If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend.
Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.’” [12]**

The words of the Lord Jesus Christ did not cause Pilate to defend his power, but on the contrary they made him more earnest in wanting to prove the Lord’s innocence and release Him. This is evident in the uprising of the Jews and their screams as they accuse Pilate himself of not being Caesar’s friend if he neglected punishing the Man who opposes Caesar. Pilate then would lose his position if he did not perform his duty.

Christ’s enemies found the means by which they could put more pressure on Pilate when they accused him of negligence in punishing a rebel. For, the Roman law respected the right and customs of the people they governed within their community. Moreover, the Roman law was extremely cruel and had no pity in crushing rebellion. Therefore, Pilate was in danger if the multitude persisted in complaining that he was lenient towards the accused.

Pilate feared their protest against him before Tiberius Caesar, for he was known as the most passionate emperor. Tiberius listened to remonstrations against many men and he did not trust those who served him. Pilate was willing to free Jesus, but he was not ready to face an accusation that he failed in his duty as a friend of Caesar. He could not get into trouble with Rome at any price.

¹ Homilies on St. John, 84: 2.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 116: 5.

* When the Jews could not find in their law an accusation against the Lord, they slyly turned to laws outside their own laws. For they said, “Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.” Now I ask the Jews, “How did the Lord Jesus Christ appear to be a rebel and usurper? How can you prove this? Please, explain! Was He wearing a crown? Did He look like a usurper? Did He have soldiers? He walked with twelve disciples. He was simple in the food He ate, the clothes He wore, and the place where He slept!”¹

Saint John Chrysostom

**When Pilate therefore heard that saying,
He brought Jesus out
And sat down in the judgment seat
In a place that is called the Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.” [13]**

The Pavement here was like a stone pavement usually in the open air. This was where the judgment seat was on which governors and rulers sat to judge. It was paved with blue, white, and black stones and marble. That place was called **Gabbatha** in Hebrew. The name is derived from ‘gaba’, which means ‘high’ because where the judge sat was usually high so that everybody could see the judge, follow the procedure, and hear the verdict. The judge stepped up on marble steps to the seat. The Pavement may be the name given to those steps. Some say that the word, ‘Gabbatha’ means a closed place because there was a wall surrounding it, made to prevent anyone from attacking the accused during the trial surrounded it. Others think that the place was confined to the trial of criminals who were dangerous to the state.

The verdict was about to be announced because the governor sat down in the official judgment seat, or ‘curule’, an ivory seat for Roman judges and their representatives.

**Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover,
And about the sixth hour.
And he said to the Jews,
“Behold your King!” [14]**

The Evangelist first describes the place of judgment then specifies the time. That was about the sixth hour, meaning at noon, on the Preparation Day of the Passover, the days of unleavened bread (Luke 23: 54) and the Jews were preparing for the Passover Sabbath. This timing augments the guilt of those who crucified Him, for they did not wait until after the feast. This shows their bitter hatred and their haste in achieving their aim. They removed the old yeast from every house, but they did not remove their old nature from their hearts, minds and conduct.

That was between the third and the sixth hour, because He was on the Cross at exactly the sixth hour.

¹ Homilies on St. John, 84: 2.

Mark the Evangelist writes that it was the third hour when they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 15: 25). He considered the scourging as the beginning, but John the Evangelist said it was the sixth hour when Christ was actually on the Cross.

Some writers believe that the sixth hour here is according to the Roman time that considers midnight as the beginning of a new day. The other Evangelists, however, used the Jewish time that marked the day as beginning and ending at sunset. So, the sixth hour in the morning was when the sentence was pronounced and the actual procedure of the crucifixion began. In some manuscripts and writings of the Fathers, the hour was the third, not the sixth hour.

As the Jews turned their accusation against Pilate, he angrily ridiculed them saying to them, “Behold your King!” [14] He meant, ‘If you strongly seek to crucify Him, you hurt yourselves for He is your King.’ This arrow was his last attempt at saving the Lord Christ from crucifixion.

* Pilate delivered the Lord Jesus Christ up to the Jews thinking they would pity Him. The proof that this was his aim is that he said to them, “Behold your King!”

Saint John Chrysostom

Deriding the Jews, Pilate announced, “Behold your King!” The Lord was at that moment probably crowned with thorns and wearing the purple or scarlet robe. Pilate did not realize that Christ was truly not only the King of the Jews, but was also the King of the entire world. In Him the prophecies were fulfilled that He was the Lord Jesus Christ. In the past, Gideon had refused to be king over Israel and looked forward to the Lord Himself to be the true King (Judges 8: 23). When the people asked Samuel the prophet to name a king for them like all the nations, God said to Samuel that the people did not reject him but rejected the Lord Himself to be their King (1 Samuel 8: 5, 7). Men of the Old Testament expected the fulfillment of the divine promise, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth, for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron’ (Ps 2: 7-9).

It would have been proper for Pilate to announce to the entire world, ‘Behold your King who cares for the souls and raises them in His eternal kingdom of heaven.’

The Lord Jesus Christ came as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1: 29). He is the Lover of mankind, but He cannot bear to see their sins. He takes away their sins so that they may come to the Father carrying His righteousness. But here we see men not tolerating their Savior. They want to stop seeing Him. The wicked cannot endure God's love and cannot even behold Him!

But they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!”

Pilate said to them,

“Shall I crucify your King?”

The chief priests answered,

“We have no king but Caesar!” [15]

They cried out more that they could not bear His sight, “Away with Him, away with Him!” [15] They refused to be related to Him or have any relationship with Him. They had no king but Caesar. Isaiah the prophet looked at Him and said, “...whom the nation abhors” (Is 49: 7). He also said, “He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not” (Is 53: 2-3).

Capital punishment by crucifixion was known in the past in and out of the Roman Empire. The ancient world looked at crucifixion as the most horrible manner of death because it was a shame and a curse. Ancient writers avoided describing crucifixion in details. Cicero wrote that crucifixion was “the most cruel and disgusting punishment” and Josephus said it was the meanest method of execution. The Roman philosopher, Seneca, explained that crucifixion was a slow and extremely painful death and wondered if anyone wanted willingly to die in this manner. He said, “Is it possible that a person would prefer to waste time in enduring the painful death of his organs one after the other and let his life end drop by drop instead of giving up his spirit at once? Does anyone wish to be nailed to the cross, a curse for a long time, disfigured, his body swollen because of his shoulder and chest wounds, and breathe while suffering extended bitter pain? Indeed, he would find many reasons to prefer death before crucifixion.”¹

The Roman citizen was rarely condemned to be crucified. This punishment was used to deter slaves from rebellion and force them to accept humiliation and distress. As they stood against the Lord, the Jews did not want freedom; they did not want to be saved; they only hoped to get rid of Jesus. Thus, they became Caesar’s slaves. They lost their feeling that they were under Roman rule. The Jews, especially their leaders, hated Caesar and his representatives, but because of their hostility to the Lord they thought that loyalty and subjugation to Caesar was a better choice. They were ready to be under the rule of any tyrant representing Caesar. They would willingly obey him if that resulted in the removal of the Lord Christ.

The answer of the chief priests implied their fear that their priesthood institution would come to an end. They accepted Caesar as their only king and they forgot God’s Kingdom.

* Observe the Lord carefully in His trial. He allowed soldiers to drive Him. Pilate sat down to judge Him. He who sits at the right hand of the Father stands before the judge! The people He saved from Egypt were now crying out, “Away with Him! Crucify Him!” Why, O Jews? Is it because He healed the blind among you? Or is it because He made the lame walk and gave blessings to many? The prophet is amazed and says, “...against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue?” (Is 57: 4). The Lord Himself says in prophecies, “Mine heritage is unto Me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against

¹ Martin Hengel: *Crucifixion*. London 1977, pp. 30-31; Leon Morris, p. 655.

Me: therefore have I hated it” (Jeremiah 12: 8). I did not reject them but they rejected Me, therefore I say, “I have forsaken My house” (Jer 12: 7).¹

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem

* They forced him saying, “Crucify Him.” Why did they strive to kill Him by this method? It is a shameful death! They feared lest in the future He would be remembered and therefore they condemned Him with a curse. They did not know that the Truth is glorified in all impediments. To prove that this was their fear, listen to what they said, “...we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise’” (Matt 27: 63). Therefore they stirred up all the people to turn the matter upside down to destroy further threats. The leaders corrupted the confused people who then cried out repeatedly, “Crucify Him!”²

* “We have no king but Caesar”: they willingly submit themselves to punishment. God therefore gave them up, because as children they expelled themselves from His care and great guidance. As with one voice they glorified that foreign power, He permitted them to fall, as they required.³

* Here they came down from Christ’s Kingdom and claimed for themselves Caesar’s kingdom.⁴

Saint John Chrysostom

2 – The Crucifixion

**Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified.
So they took Jesus and led Him away.” [16]**

As he did not fear God but feared men, Pilate signed the condemnation to crucifixion and delivered Jesus to those who should crucify Him. He who testified several times that Christ was innocent, finally dictated His punishment as a criminal. Pilate washed his hands (Matt 27: 24) to announce that he was innocent of that judgment. However, washing his hands will not make him innocent before God. To save time, the Jewish leaders went with the executors of judgment. They were afraid that Pilate would change his edict, for they saw him from time to time proclaiming the Lord’s innocence. Moreover, they feared the multitude might reconsider when they remembered the wonderful works of the Lord Jesus Christ and the testimony of Pontius Pilate that Christ was innocent. The multitude would then turn against the wish of the chief priests. This is how the adversary stirs up his followers to take every chance to hasten the destruction of faith in the Lord in the life of every believer so that he should not enjoy it.

¹ Article 13: 15.

² Homilies on St. John, 84: 2.

³ Hom. 84. PG 59: 501.

⁴ Hom. 85. PG 59: 503.

In their opinion, the leaders felt that they were successful in their plot and that the victim had fallen into their trap. They took the lamb to be slaughtered and did not comprehend that the prophets foretold what happened as God's redemptive plan.

* As Pilate heard them he quite foolishly delivered Him up to them. He should have ascertained that Christ aimed at obtaining royal authority. But he, out of fear only, pronounced his judgment. Christ had already said, "My kingdom is not of this world." But Pilate was totally involved in temporary matters and did not rule, as he should. His wife's dream was enough to terrify him, but nothing made him act well because he did not contemplate heaven, but he delivered Christ.

Now they gave Him, as an evildoer, the cross to carry. They hated the cross and refused to touch the wood. That was the condition of the symbol, Isaac, when he carried the wood. But at that time, what should happen depended on the father's decision because it was a symbol. But here the reality was accomplished practically.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, Which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha." [17]

As part of His suffering, He actually carried the cross. The slender, sensitive body carried the heavy cross. He carried it alone at first. Then He could not because of His weak body, the wounds caused by the scourging, the crown of thorns, and the slapping of His face. Therefore, Simon of Cyrene helped Him carry the cross (Matt 27: 32). As Isaac carried the wood of the burnt offering on his way to become a burnt sacrifice, similarly Christ carried the wood of the cross. As the prophet says, "...the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Is 53: 6). Saint Peter says, "who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness" (1 Pet 2: 24).

They brought Him to the place of execution outside the city, to a place called Golgotha. Origen the Scholar referred to a tradition that said that this was the place where Adam was buried. There, where death defeated the first Adam and changed him into dust, Christ, the Second Adam died to vanquish death and give life back to Adam and his descendants. That place was on Mount Moriah where Abraham was about to offer his son, Isaac, as a burnt offering but God sent him a ram to offer instead of Isaac. Some writers believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on a hill that looked like a skull.

* Some say that Adam died and was buried there and that Jesus achieved victory at the same place where death ruled. Christ went carrying the cross and triumphed over death. His cross was a symbol of victory, though the Jews intended something else.²

Saint John Chrysostom

¹ Homilies on St. John, 85: 1.

² Hom. 85. PG 59: 504.

* He bore our pains and accepted suffering on the cross. He took our flesh and if He had not suffered He would not have shared our human life. He first suffered then descended. But what were those sufferings that He endured for our sake? Those were the sufferings of love!¹

Origen the Scholar

**Where they crucified Him,
And two others with Him, one on either side,
And Jesus in the center. [18]**

Two others were crucified with Him, one on either side. This was probably not the time for them to be crucified; but the chief priests insisted they should be crucified as an insult for Him to be crucified with criminals. This may be why the two thieves reviled and abused Him because His crucifixion hastened theirs so that they may be crucified with Him. The high priest did not demand that two of His disciples should be crucified with Him. That might have been considered an honor that they were crucified for the sake of the truth and that the disciples shared His suffering. The high priest instead insisted that two criminals must be crucified with Him. Those two might have belonged to the group of Barabbas the thief.

The Jewish leaders wanted to declare that He was the most evil of the three because they crucified Him in the center. Yet, they did not realize that by doing this the prophecy was fulfilled that He was numbered with the transgressors.

* If you ask, ‘What was the aim of the Jews that they crucified Him, and two others with Him? I would answer, ‘By doing this they unwillingly fulfilled the prophecy. For, Isaiah the prophet mentioned this long ago when he said, “And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death” (Is 53: 9). Satan wanted to conceal what happened but he could not. For, the three were crucified but only Jesus was glorious so that you know that His power is above all.’

There were signs when the three were crucified, but nobody referred the miracles to any of those two, but only to Jesus alone. Satan’s plan failed totally and instead, one of the two thieves was saved. He did not dishonor the cross, but he increased that honor to a great degree. For, the rebirth of a thief on the cross and his admission into Paradise is not less than the trembling of the rocks.²

Saint John Chrysostom

3 – The Title Put on the Cross

**Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross.
And the writing was:
‘Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews’. [19]**

¹ Homilia 6 in Ezechielem 6 PG 13: 714 D.

² Homilies on St. John, 85: 1.

St John calls the writing on the cross ‘a title’, ‘titlos’. Matthew calls it ‘the accusation’, ‘citiei’, while Mark and Luke describe it as an inscription ‘apigraphe’. John the Evangelist often points out the importance of the cross in the life of Jesus Christ. Thus, in chapter three, when Jesus met Nicodemus at night He said, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (Jn 3: 14). Again, in His speech to the Jews the Lord says, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He” (Jn 8: 28). And to the Greeks He says, “And I if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”

The Evangelist elevates our minds so that we may see the exaltation and glory we received through the Crucified. In Him we see our Christ glorified in and with His Father. We now have the right to go to the Father’s bosom. The essence of the cross is that He is lifted up on it to draw all peoples to Himself so that they may live at a more sublime level on earth.

The Apostle Paul sees God’s love in the form of a Cross, drawn on humanity. For, he speaks of the width and length and depth and height of the love of God (Eph 3: 18). The measures of the cross seem to be the acquaintance with the secret of divine love.

In eastern tradition the Cross is celebrated as a living person. It is seen as Jesus crucified requesting the heights, separating darkness from light, and ignorance from knowledge. As it became a sign of judgment, it distinguishes between those who yearn for the eternal light and those who are pleased with darkness.

The meaning of the Cross is that one is lifted up beyond this world. It means that a person is open to the eternal world and regains partaking of the enlightenment so that he may go to God and let Him enter his life.

The use of the words ‘up’ and ‘down’ is significant in the Gospel according to St. John as he talks about the person and work of the Crucified. Though this Evangelist does not write about the Last Supper, yet he records at great length the speech of the Lord about the Eucharist (Jn 6: 32-40). Christ affirms that He is the bread that comes down from heaven, or from above. Also the Lord’s speech about baptism, which is immersion, draws our hearts to birth from above to see, through the Cross, the depth of the love of God our Father (Jn 3: 3-8).

In short, in the Cross, we are not of the world even though we are in the world (Jn 7: 6, 14, 16, 18). We are from above. We become partners of Christ who is risen from the dead and whom Mary Magdalene did not recognize until He called her by name. She and the disciples whom the Lord Jesus Christ accompanied as they were traveling to Emmaus thought He was a stranger.

* Christ is the King of the Jews whose circumcision is that of the heart in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God (Rom 2: 29). They are those related to the free Jerusalem, our eternal mother in heaven, the spiritual Sarah who cast

out of the free house the bondwoman and her children (Gal 4: 22-31). Therefore what Pilate wrote was written because the Lord said His word.¹

Saint Augustine

* In this way, Pilate combined two aims: his revenge of the Jews and his apology to the Lord Christ. For, when they defamed the Lord Jesus Christ by crucifying two thieves with Him, Pilate silenced them, and all who would blame the Lord, and made it clear that they rebelled against their King. In this way he took revenge of the Jews. As for his apology to the Lord, he expressed it by putting the writing on a board announcing clearly, though not completely, the Lord's victory and the foundation of His kingdom. This board was similar to the sign given to the victorious conqueror.²

Saint John Chrysostom

* he enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ testified that He is the King, King of Israel, for they wrote over His head on the Crss, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (Matt 27: 37). We accept this testimony even though it may be understood that His power and divinity are limited to the children of Israel. The title written on the cross testifies of Christ's divinity not only to the Jews but also to all the people. He is King over the entire earth and rules over all its parts.³

Gregory of Nyssa

**Then many of the Jews read this title,
For the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city;
And it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin." [20]**

This title was written in three languages that were prevalent at that time. Hebrew, which is the language of the Law, Greek, the language of philosophers, and Latin, the language of the rulers. For, the Lord was crucified to be King over all.

* Even in His crucifixion, the chief priests envied the Lord Christ. I say to them, 'this title does not harm you because if the Lord Jesus Christ was dead and weak and His name would be forgotten, why should you be afraid of what is written, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"?' [19]

Saint John Chrysostom

**Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate,
"Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,'
but, 'He said, I am the King of the Jews.' [21]**

Crucifixion was not enough to satisfy their thirst for revenge. So they put pressure on Pilate to change the title and write, 'He said, 'I am the King of the Jews' [21] but Pilate refused to do as they wished. They had already pushed him enough, and he could not do more. They wanted to declare that the Lord was a usurper of honor and authority and that

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 117: 5.

² Homilies on St. John, 85: 1.

³ Song of Solomon by St. Gregory of Nyssa, translated into Arabic by Dr. George Nawar, sermon 7.

they were loyal to Caesar; yet they were in submission to a foreign ruler and secretly wanted a Jewish ruler having full authority. They did not understand that their Ruler will “be cut off” (Daniel 9: 26).

**Pilate answered,
“What I have written, I have written.” [22]**

The Roman law forbade the change of the wording of the sentence once it is announced. It seems that Pilate unwillingly prophesied that this was the Messiah who will alone rule over the hearts. This prophecy is in Psalm 18: 22 written about a thousand years before the Crucifixion.

4 – Distribution of His Garments

**Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus,
Took His garments and made four parts,
To each soldier a part, and also the tunic.
Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece.” [23]**

He carried our sins. He also did not refuse to be naked on the Cross, so that we may see our own nakedness and pray that we put on the Lord Jesus Christ, our righteousness.

It was an almost worldwide custom that the belongings of those who were condemned to death went to the executors of the sentence. Saint John the Evangelist presents to us the extremely few belongings of the Lord. These were His garments cast on the ground. The four soldiers who carried out the verdict distributed His garments among themselves. The seamless tunic remained. It was woven from the top in one piece. They cast lots for it so that they may not tear it. He became as though He did not own anything, not even the tunic that was like a second skin. His garments were on the ground belonging to nobody because the condemned to death had no say or right even to His own clothes. A man’s clothes in Israel at that time consisted of an outside robe, an under robe, a head cover, a belt, sandals and underwear. However, there were no sandals among Christ’s belongings.

The Jewish Philon of Alexandria writes that the tunic of the high priest in the temple in Jerusalem was always seamless and woven from the top in one piece. This was a ritual obligation. Some commentators say that this symbolized the priesthood of Christ. Some say that Christ’s tunic was similar to that of the high priest. The Jewish historian Josephus describes it as without seam, one piece on the shoulders and sides. It was long and had an opening for the neck and two for the arms.¹ It has been reported that Christ’s mother made that tunic for Him when He was a child. Like the clothes of the people of Israel in the wilderness, Christ’s tunic was not torn, nor became old.

* I think that John the Evangelist wrote this to reveal the common simplicity of the garments.

Saint John Chrysostom

¹ Antiq. B3c.7.s.4.

Origen the Scholar observes that this tunic is symbolic of the perfect doctrine of Christ that must be preserved without a tear or division in parts. Saint Cyril the Great says it symbolizes the birth of Christ of a virgin, for she remained a virgin after His birth. But Saint Cyprian, who groaned because of the schism in the Church in North Africa, considers that the tunic without seam refers to the truly united Church that is never torn or mended.

Saint Augustine wrote in a letter to the Donatists, “Why do you want to divide the Lord’s garments. Why do you not keep the tunic of love in the world whole, woven from the top. That tunic that even His oppressors did not tear?”¹

Father Theodore of Mopsuestia believes that this type of clothes was common at the time of the Lord Christ, though by then, soldiers only wore it.

* The garments were distributed for our sake. Nobody can have everything when the lots are cast. For the distribution of the Holy Spirit is not according to a man’s will. For, “...there are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit...But one and the same Spirit works all those things, distributing to each one individually as He wills,” (1 Cor 12: 4, 11). Thus was the distribution of His garments, His works, and His blessings.

We read that the tunic was “woven from the top in one piece.” The belief in Christ is woven in the same manner: for He came down to humanity since He was born of God before all ages and He accepted the flesh.

The statement, “the tunic was without seam” also refers to faith, for faith must not be torn. It must remain whole.²

Saint Ambrose

* The garments of the Lord Jesus Christ that were “made four parts” stand for the cardinal Church that spreads over the entire world. For, the world consists of four equal harmonious parts in four regions. For this reason, He says that He will send His angels and they will gather together His elect from the four winds (Matt 24: 31). Those are the four cardinal points of the world: the east, the west, the north and the south.³

* The tunic, for which they cast lots, refers to the unity of all the parts bound by love. When the Apostle wishes to speak about love he says, “I show you a more excellent way” (1 Cor 12: 31). He says again, “...to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge” and in another Epistle he writes, “But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection” (Col 3: 14). If love is a more excellent way, if it passes knowledge and is above all things, then the tunic that represents love must be woven from the top and must be without seam.⁴

¹ Letters, 76.

² Exposition 10: 116, 119, 120.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 118: 4.

⁴ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 118: 4.

**“They said therefore among themselves,
‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,’
That the Scripture might be fulfilled which says:
‘They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots’.
Therefore the soldiers did these things.” [24]**

* Contemplate the prophecies that were fulfilled in the discussion of the soldiers. The crucified were three, but the prophecies were fulfilled in the Lord Christ. Why did not the soldiers do the same with the clothes of the other two crucified, and they did this with Christ alone? Observe the accuracy of the prophecy because the prophet David did not only say, “they divided My garments”, but he also mentioned what they did not divide. For they divided some garments, but His tunic they did not tear, but cast lots for it for one person to have it.

Saint John Chrysostom

Saint Jerome writes the Eustoichim about the life of virginity and the proper conduct of virgins. He observes that such virgins imitate the Lord Jesus Christ who had a tunic woven from the top, heavenly. May the married sew for themselves garments because they lost the robe woven from the top.

In the same letter, he asks the virgins not to wear shoes. He writes, “Moses and Joshua had orders to take off their shoes because the land they stood on was holy (Ex 3: 5; Joshua 5: 15). That command had a secret meaning. Likewise when the disciples were appointed to preach, they were asked not take with them sandals or shoes (Matt 10: 10). When the soldiers began to cast lots for the clothes of Jesus, they did not find shoes to take because it was not possible for the Lord to have shoes when He prohibited His servants to have them.”¹

5 – His Care for His Mother

**Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother,
And His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas,
And Mary Magdalene.” [25]**

In Matthew 27: 56, and in Mark 15: 40, it is written that Mary the wife of Clopas is the mother of James the Less and of Joses and that her son James is the son of Alphaeus. It seems that Clopas and Alphaeus are two names for the same person. Hegesippus quotes Eusebius² saying that Clopas was the brother of Joseph, Saint Mary’s betrothed.

While all the disciples, except John, had run away, the women (His mother, her sister, and Mary Magdalene) remained with Him by the cross. The women were not

¹ Letters 22: 19.

² H.E.1:3:11.

afraid of the cruelty of the wicked or the horror of the spectacle. Indeed, they could do nothing, but they showed their loyalty to the end. They accompanied Him on the way of salvation, which He walked, and in which the prophecy of Simeon the Elder was fulfilled. He said to Mary, “a sword will pierce through your own soul” (Luke 2: 35). Though they were extremely sad, they did not behave inappropriately as was the custom of women at funerals at that time. They accompanied the Lord because they were loyal and loved Him. Truly, that was God’s great blessing that supported those women, especially His mother.

While four soldiers executed violently and cruelly the sentence of crucifixion, in contrast, four women stood with Christ during His suffering.

* The women stood by the Cross. The weak sex showed more manliness and everything changed definitely.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

**When Jesus therefore saw His mother,
And the disciple whom He loved standing by,
He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” [26]**

At that moment, Saint Mary’s heart was certainly totally absorbed by her Son’s agony. As for Him, His pain did not distract Him, for it was the fruit of His great love for His mother and for all humanity. He was involved in the redemption, the growth, and glorification of everybody. In a last sign of kindness to His mother, He wanted to secure care and help for her after His departure. He therefore gave her to whom He loved and was closest to Him out of all the disciples. Joseph the carpenter had certainly died years before. There was no one to care for Saint Mary. The Lord therefore, while on the Cross, gave her to Saint John the beloved as his mother, and gave to her Saint John as her son. By this, John obtained a new relation; he became the son of the mother of Jesus, the Lord of Glory.

He left nothing for His mother since He had neither gold nor silver that she might inherit. The money box was for all the disciples and Judas who had it had probably squandered it. The soldiers took His clothes and Jesus had nothing to give His mother but to entrust her to whom He loved, John the apostle!

Through the Cross, His mother enjoyed the motherhood of the others after her only Son, Jesus, was lifted on the cross. He did not say to her, ‘Mother’ but said ‘Woman’. This was no contempt or rejection of her motherhood, but rather not to increase her pain as a mother hearing her Son speaking in His last moments before His death. He may have desired to assert to her that He was not of this world. He therefore spoke to her, not in terms of mere blood relationship, but as she being a representative of the Church that He loved exceedingly.

¹ Hom. 85. PG. 59: 506.

Nicephoros¹ says that the Virgin Mary lived eleven years in the house of John in Jerusalem. Some say that she went with him to Ephesus.

* I would like you to meditate on the fact that the Lord did everything without confusion while He was on the Cross. He spoke to His disciples about His mother. He fulfilled the prophecies: He gave good hope to the thief. Yet, although He willingly accepted crucifixion, He broke into a sweat; He suffered and was troubled. What does this mean? It is not difficult to understand it. Before His crucifixion He showed the weakness of human nature, but here He revealed the greatness of His power.

Besides, He teaches us that before the terrible things happen, we are troubled yet cannot prevent them. But after the battle begins, we find things are possible and easy. Therefore, may we not fear death. Naturally our spirits love life, but it happens that the bonds of nature become loose and our desire for temporary life becomes weak.²

Saint John Chrysostom

* That disciple gained a hundred times more than he gave when he received the mother of Him who grants everything.³

Saint Augustine

**Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!”
And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. [27]**

* On the cross, Christ saw and divided the acts of piety between His mother and His disciple. The Lord testified not only on the general level, but also on the individual level. John referred to that testimony and gave witness to the greatness of this commandment.⁴

* His mother stood and disregarded the danger that surrounded her. She did that because of her zeal for piety. He disdained the dangers and gave His mother a pure devout Son.

This passage teaches us to practice actual kindness. It also teaches children to respect their mothers. He declared that she who gave birth to God remained a virgin. Still, she was delivered in a secret manner to John, the youngest of the disciples. Here is the mystery of the Church. For, the Church at first was related in appearance, not practically, to the old nation. But she gave birth to the Word that was planted in the bodies and minds of men, through faith in the cross, and the burial of the Lord’s body according to God’s commandment. She then chose to adhere to the younger group.⁵

Saint Ambrose

* How wonderful that honor was that the Lord Christ gave to His disciple! How abundant that honor was because when He departed at that time He gave her to His

¹ Eccv. His. Lib 2, 3.

² Homilies on St. John, 85: 1.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 119: 3.

⁴ Letter, 63: 109.

⁵ Exposition 10: 129, 132, 134.

disciple, That disciple cared for her and as she needed help the Lord entrusted her to His beloved disciple.

* He teaches us to give unusual respect to our mothers. When our parents oppose us concerning spiritual concerns we must not cling to what is ours. Although they do not know us fully, we must offer them respect and prefer them to others because they are our parents who brought us up and endured terrible things for our sakes.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

* The Holy Bible teaches us that not only the biological father is called father, but also others may be called ‘father’. Listen to what the Apostle says, “For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Cor 4: 15). Paul was father to the Corinthians, not according to the flesh but through teaching. And he begot them again through the Spirit.

Listen also to Job who says, “I am father to the poor”. He calls himself father not because he begot them all, but because he cared for them.

The Only Begotten Son of God Himself when He was nailed to the tree at the crucifixion, He looked at His mother in the flesh and at John, the most beloved of His disciples, and said, “Behold your mother!” He said to His mother, “Behold your son”. He declared she should pour her ‘parental’ love in John² In this manner He indirectly explained Luke’s words, “and His father and mother marveled at Him”, these are the words that the heretics quote saying that He was born of a man and a woman.

Just as Mary was called a mother of John because of her ‘parental’ love, not because she gave birth to him, likewise Joseph was a father of Christ because he cared for Him and brought Him up, not because he begot Him. For, the Gospel says, “...and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son (Matt 1: 25).³

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem

* He is the virgin son who accepted the Virgin Mother an inheritance from the Lord.⁴

Saint Jerome

6 – They Offer Him Vinegar

**After this Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished,
That the Scripture might be fulfilled, said,
“I thirst.” [28]**

¹ Hom 85. PG 59: 506.

² The Greek word is used about the love that the mother or father has for the son, or that the son has for his parents.

³ Article 7: 9.

⁴ Letter 127: 6.

The Evangelist mentioned previously, in his account of the Lord's encounter with the Samaritan woman, that the Lord was thirsty and that also was at the sixth hour. Some say that it was at that hour, noontime, that Adam went out of Paradise. God, thus, shows His great love of mankind and His thirst for humanity to return to His divine bosom.

During His service, the Lord Jesus Christ declared to the Samaritan woman that He was thirsty (Jn 4: 6-7) for He asked for her belief. At the end of His journey and on the Cross, He declared that He was thirsty for mankind to enjoy His redemptive work. We read that the flames of hell caused the rich man to feel thirsty and beg for a drop of water to wet his tongue. Our Christ, having taken our place, declared that He was thirsty so that we may drink of the fountains of His love.

It was natural that the Crucified felt thirsty because his body lost a lot of water because of perspiration and the wounds. Our Christ did not complain of pain of the flesh because of the crown of thorns, the nails, and the spear. The only complaint that He uttered was that He was thirsty. Here He expressed His inward thirst in addition to His physical pain. The Psalmist David foretold this in the Psalm about the Crucifixion. He said, "My tongue clings to My jaws" (Ps 22: 15) and also in Psalm 69: 21. The synoptic Evangelists do not mention the Lord's thirst. John the Evangelist alone records it.

**Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there;
And they filled a sponge with sour wine,
Put it on hyssop,
And put it to His mouth. [29]**

Some writers are inclined to think that this was to intensify His pain, but this was unnecessary because He was dying. It was usual to give the crucified a cup of wine to reduce his pain in his last moments. But in the case of the Lord they frivolously gave Him a sponge filled with sour wine or vinegar. Other commentators say the exact opposite. For, those who investigated the truth found proof that for a long time the Roman soldiers in the hot climate countries were given a special drink called 'Pouska'. That was a mixture of water and vinegar that would quench their thirst.

Some people ask how can a sponge filled with vinegar be put on hyssop, which is a weak plant, and raised to the mouth of the crucified. They thought that the word 'hyssop' meant 'a stalk' because in Greek the word has those two meanings. The word 'stalk' appears in an eleventh century version. However, most researchers reject this meaning because 'hyssop' appears in all the former manuscripts and the manuscripts of the early Church Fathers.

Raymond E. Brown says that there are eighteen plants that are called hyssop. There are also several kinds that have a long stalk that can lift a sponge to reach the mouth of a crucified man.¹

¹ Leon Morris, p. 668.

The Lord Jesus Christ refused to drink wine before He was crucified (Matt 27: 34; Mark 15: 23). That was the wine that would have relieved His pain.

* Who has such authority to shape what such a “Man” did to arrange everything concerning His suffering? But this Man is the mediator between God and men. The Man about whom we read in the prophecy...Who knows Him? He is He who revealed Himself bearing all those pains. He is Himself hidden, for He is God who prepared all the suffering.

He saw everything that would happen and requested that it should be fulfilled. He therefore accepted to drink vinegar: ‘And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink’, (Ps 69: 21)¹.

* He said, “I thirst” [28] as though He said, ‘One thing you have failed to do, that was to give Me what you are.’ For the Jews were themselves, vinegar was extracted from the wine of the Father patriarchs and prophets. They were like a vessel full of the evil of this world. Their hearts were like sponges, for they were deceitful and in their depth were irregular pores. As for the hyssop on which they put the sponge filled with sour wine, that is a weak herb that cleans the heart and fits the humility of Christ whom they encompassed and thought they had absolutely trapped. It is therefore said in the Psalm, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean” (Ps 51: 7). For Christ’s humility purifies us, because if He had not humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Phil 2: 8), His blood would not have been shed for the remission of sins; in other words for our purification.²

Saint Augustine

7 – He Gives up His Spirit

**So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said,
“It is finished!”
And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. [30]**

By saying, “It is finished!” the Lord Jesus Christ declared that the hostility of His persecutors had reached the end, and that the prophecies concerning His crucifixion had been entirely fulfilled. The shadow has been removed completely and the truth has been realized. He was sold for thirty pieces of silver; His hands and feet were pierced; His garments were divided, and they cast lots for His tunic. Moreover, they had just given Him vinegar for His thirst and finally His side was pierced. Now His sufferings are complete so that He may go carrying the spoils to Paradise. In replacement of the sad environment, He opens the gates of Paradise so that the spirits that are reposed in hope may rejoice. Now that He has offered His body a sacrifice, He, as the Great Heavenly High Priest goes to the Father so that the Father may smell the sweet savor.

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 119: 4.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 119: 4.

‘He gave up His spirit’: His life was not taken from Him by force; He willingly gave it up. He said to the Father, **“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”** He thus expressed His acceptance of death as His choice to redeem many spirits.

‘And bowing His head’: Those who are crucified usually raise their heads to breathe. They do not bow their heads except at the very last breath. But to indicate His willing choice, the Lord Christ bowed His head, as in sleep or as surrendering to declare, first, that He carries the burden of our sins and evils. Some commentators observe that bowing His head proclaims the extent of the weight of our sins that He willingly carried for us. “For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me” (Ps 38: 4). “For innumerable evils have surrounded me” (Ps 40: 12). Bowing His head declares also His submission and obedience to His Father who is pleased to offer His Only Begotten Son a sacrifice of love for the human race.

On the Cross, Jesus gave up His human spirit into the hands of the Father so that He may give His Holy Spirit to His Church.

* **‘And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.’** This means that He died. Yet, giving the last breath does not come after bowing the head; but what happens here is the opposite. What happens to us did not happen to Him. We bow the head after the last breath, but He bowed His head and then gave up His spirit. The Evangelist clearly shows that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.¹

* Do you see how the Lord did everything He desired with authority and without confusion?

Saint John Chrysostom

* He bowed His head and completed the journey of His spirit in comfortable work for it. Now His spirit is in the bosom of the Father who cares and strengthens it in His bosom. The Learned Origen

* Who can sleep when he wants to, as Jesus died when He desired? Who is he who took off his clothes when he wished, as Christ put off His flesh as He pleased? Who is he who travels in this manner when he wants, like Christ who departed from this life as He pleased? How great is the power of Christ for whom we long and whom we fear, for He is the Judge. That greatness of power and authority He proclaimed while He was a dead man!²

Saint Augustine

8 – His Side Is Pierced with a Spear

**Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day,
That the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath
(for that Sabbath was a high day),**

¹ Hom. 85. PG 599: 507.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 119: 6.

**The Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken,
And that they might be taken away. [31]**

Every Sabbath was holy. But this Sabbath was during the Passover week when they ate unleavened bread and offered their first fruits. Therefore some considered it a 'high day' or 'megale hemerra'. It was the greatest of the days of preparation for the Passover. The preparation for every Sabbath started at the ninth hour (3:00 PM) of Friday. **Josephus**¹ writes that the Emperor Augustus decreed, for the sake of the Jews, that no one was obliged to offer greetings on the Sabbath beginning with the ninth hour of the day of preparation in accordance to the Jewish rites. Dead bodies were not allowed to remain on ordinary days (Deut 21: 23). Now they may have felt compunction and could not bear to see His body hung before them to remind them of their horrible crime and spoil the joy of the feast. Moreover, there were many strangers in Jerusalem, because of the feast, and the Jews did not want the body of the crucified Christ to remain hanging.

Some writers observe that the Jews did not ask Pilate that the heads of the crucified might be cut off so that they die quickly without much pain. They rather asked their legs might be broken so that they suffer even more. Thus, even in asking for mercy (to take away the bodies from the cross) they were very cruel. When they pretended to be holy (the bodies did not remain so that the land might not be defiled) they were evil. They cared to keep the Sabbath, but had no regard for justice or righteousness.

* The Jews swallowed a camel and strained out a gnat. They committed a great sin, but were very careful in keeping the Sabbath.²

Saint John Chrysostom

**Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other
Who were crucified with Him. [32]
But when they came to Jesus
And saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. [33]**

The Lord Christ died quickly before the two thieves. That may be because His body was weak and He was gentle and could not endure all that suffering. Or, He may have permitted Himself to die before them so that everybody might comprehend that He died of His own will. He gave up His spirit into the hands of the Father at the time He chose. He surrendered to death of His own will, not as an obligation, but through His victory in love.

**But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear,
And immediately blood and water came out. [34]**

The incident of piercing the side of Christ is recorded in this Gospel only. Jesus, who truly died in the flesh when His spirit left His body, declares that He is the beginning

¹ Josephus: antiq. 6. 16.c.6.s51.

² Homilies on St. John, 85: 1.

of life that conquers death. By His death He vanquished death and gave us back eternal life.

The early **Church Fathers**, such as the saints Augustine, Ambrose and John Chrysostom, consider this (blood and water that came from Christ's side) the first indication of the sacraments. Water is a symbol of baptism and blood is the Eucharist. We thus drink directly from the wound in the side of our Lord Jesus. The Learned Tertulian, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, and Saint Jerome believe that water and blood here are symbols of baptism and martyrdom.¹ Others think that water stands for the Old Testament and blood is for the New Testament because in it the promise was fulfilled and the people of both Covenants enjoyed salvation.

It is said that the name of that soldier is Longinus, and that when blood and water gushed from the Lord's side some drops of blood fell on the soldier's sick eyes and healed them. He then believed in Christ and preached in Cappadocia and received the crown of martyrdom there. Some say that the name Longinus is a phonetic corruption of the Greek word 'longchee' that means lance or spear, a word that occurs in this verse.

The debate continues concerning which side, the left or right, of the Lord Christ was pierced. The Holy Spirit does not inform us through the Gospels but just says that Christ's side was pierced with a spear in fulfillment of the prophecy. Some believe that the spear pierced the Lord Jesus Christ to the heart, and opened a window through which the spirit saw Christ's heart full of divine love, or extremely fiery love for mankind. It is an open window through which the believer can meet God and send to Him affection. It is the window of the heart that is never closed to any repentant.

God allowed the soldier to attack the heart of the Lord with a spear so that we may see in that heart the Rock that was struck for our sake (1 Cor 10: 4). We also see the fountain that flows for us (Zech 13: 1) and the wells of salvation that were dug for our sake (Is 12: 3). We see the river that overflows to give joy to the city of God.

* The Lord was wounded in His suffering and blood and water came out of the wound. The water is for purification, the blood for drinking, and the spirit for His resurrection. For Christ alone is our hope, faith, and love. Our hope is in His resurrection, our faith is in the font, and our love is in the sacrament.²

Saint Ambrose

* The soldiers came and broke the legs of the others but did not break Christ's legs. However, they pierced His side with a spear to please the Jews and as an insult to the dead body. Now, the prophecy is fulfilled, "and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced" (See Zech 12: 10). Moreover, this act became an evidence of faith for those who did not believe later, like Thomas and similar people. This also conveys a great mystery that has been realized. For, blood and water came out and this was neither a coincidence nor did it lack purpose. The two springs flew together and through them

¹ Letter 69: 6.

² Concerning Virgins 3: 5 (22).

the Church was established. Those initiated in the sacraments know this: that through the water they obtain a new birth, and through the Blood and Body they are invigorated. The mysteries were founded, thus from the beginning, so that when you approach the cup full of awe, this is like approaching Christ's side to drink.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

* Just as His work and service on the earth began with water, it also ended with water. They pierced His side with a spear, and blood and water gushed as symbols of baptism and martyrdom.²

Saint Jerome

He announced this before, when He ordered Noah to make a door in the side of the ark (Gen 6: 16) through which all the animals, symbolizing the Church, enter so that they would not perish in the flood. He created the first woman from the man's side as he slept (Gen 2: 22-23). She was called life (Eve) the mother of all living (Gen 3: 20). The Second Adam bowed His head and slept on the Cross so that from the side of the sleeping Man, the Bride may be formed. What is more pure than that Blood? What can grant health more than that wound?³

Saint Augustine

**And he who has seen has testified,
And his testimony is true;
And he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. [35]
For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled,
'Not one of His bones shall be broken.' [36]**

Saint John testifies that he saw that with his own eyes, and that it happened miraculously. He affirms this because the other Evangelists do not relate this incident and because what happens here asserts Jesus Christ's death.

The Scripture is fulfilled in accordance to the promise given to all the righteous as a reference to what would be realized concerning Jesus the Righteous. Psalm 34: 20 says, "He guards all his bones; not one of them is broken." By the Spirit, David writes, "All my bones shall say, 'Lord, who is like You?'" (Ps 35: 10). Again, the Jews were forbidden to break any bone of the Passover lamb (Ex 12: 46; Numbers 9: 12). Our Christ is our Passover who was sacrificed for us (1 Cor 5: 7). He is the Lamb of God (Jn 1: 29) and therefore His bones were not broken.

Bones, to the Hebrews, denote the strength of the body because they form the skeleton of the human being. Not breaking Christ's bones signifies that even though the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified as in weakness, yet there is strength in His weakness. Sin breaks our bones and destroys our strength. The Psalmist David therefore says in the Psalm of repentance, "That the bones You have broken may rejoice" (Ps 51: 8). But sin

¹ Hom. 85. PG 59: 507.

² Letter 69 to Oceanus, 6.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 120: 2.

could not break or crush Christ's bones, for He stood steadfastly carrying the burden of our sins to save us.

This was previously said in describing the lamb to the Jews. However, the symbol is present for the sake of the truth and has become clearer. For this reason the Evangelist quotes the Scripture in the middle of what he says.

* Saint John declares loudly the required sacraments in advance. As he saw the treasure in the sacraments, he was scrupulous in relating what happened and how the prophecy was fulfilled. "Not one of his bones is broken" (See Ex 12: 46; Ps 34: 20). This was said about the lamb of the Jews for the sake of the truth to which the symbol referred beforehand. In Him the prophecy was perfectly fulfilled. Therefore, the Evangelist quotes the prophet. Saint John introduces himself always as a witness, but if his testimony might be doubted, he introduces Moses as a witness: what happened did not lack purpose, but was rather mentioned earlier in old times.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

**And again another Scripture says,
'They shall look on Him whom they pierced.' [37]**

The Scripture speaks also concerning Him who was pierced with a spear. In the book of Zechariah the prophet, we read, "and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn" (Zech 12: 10; Rev 1: 7). We also read that He was wounded in the house of His friends (Zech 13: 6).

* Those miserable people who scorned Him when they saw Him hung on the precious Cross, will look upon Him and see Him crowned with divine glory. They will go down the pit of destruction as a just punishment for their transgression concerning Him.²

Saint Cyril the Great

* Once more St John supports the prophet's words with his own testimony. I have told you those words so that you may know the great relation that exists between the symbol and the truth. Do you not see the effort he took concerning these things, and so that they may believe by comprehending through what seems shameful and disgraceful!?

The soldier's abuse of the dead body was worse than the crucifixion. However, not even through ignominy can anyone harm our cause. For, what seems to be extremely shameful is itself an extremely exalted record of the good concerns.³

Saint John Chrysostom

9 – The Burial of the Lord Jesus Christ

After this, Joseph of Arimathea,

¹ Hom. 85. PG 59: 507-508.

² Comm. On St. Luke, Hom. 145, ch. 22.

³ Hom. 85. PG 59: 508.

**Being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews,
Asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus;
And Pilate gave him permission.
So he came and took the body of Jesus. [38]**

As the Jewish Passover was imminent, the quick burial was necessary. The Evangelist describes the burial in an impressive manner, and as a dignified act of faith and love of two secret disciples. Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, but in his weakness he followed the Lord secretly during His service. However, at the critical moments, when the body of the Lord was hung on the cross, Joseph of Arimathea went courageously to ask Pilate to give him permission to take the body of Jesus. In doing this he obtained great honor. Nicodemus accompanied him. He had once come at night to the Lord, but now he was not afraid of being expelled from the Sanhedrim. If those two men had not buried Jesus, the soldiers would have buried Him with the two thieves in an old grave and His resurrection would not have been affirmed. People would have even claimed that another man had risen from the dead.

* Joseph was not one of the twelve disciples. He was probably one of the seventy apostles.

Saint John Chrysostom

**And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came,
Bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. [39]**

Myrrh and aloes are used to preserve the body for a long time. Some researchers say that a hundred pounds of that mixture would be enough to preserve two hundred dead bodies and they think this was a mistake in writing. However, this was a custom in the case of important or loved personalities. It has been said that a huge quantity of the mixture was used in the funeral of Aristobulus. It has also been said that five hundred servants carried the aloes used to preserve the body of Herod¹ and eighty pounds of spices were used at the funeral of the great Gamaliel. A pound is a Greek and Roman measure equal to a hundred dirhams.

* Here is myrrh for burial. The aloe juice is for crossing over to the underworld where every drop goes down. And cinnamon is provided for the body on the Cross.²

Saint Basil the Great

* Your original smell is better than all spices (Song of Solomon 4: 10) used in the burial of the Savior [39]. The sweet smell flows out, when the pleasures of the body members are destroyed. But the other smell is like the smell of Lebanon (Song of Solomon 4: 11) that produces the smell of incorruption of the body of our Lord, the pure flower of virginity.³

Saint Ambrose

¹ Josephus, b15 c.3, s.14, b17, c.8.s.c.

² Hom. 17, Ps. 44: 7, Exegetic Homilies in Fathers of the Church vol 46, p. 290.

³ Concerning Virgins 1: 7: 39.

**Then they took the body of Jesus,
And bound it in strips of linen with the spices,
As the custom of the Jews is to bury. [40]**

* What does that signify, that not His disciples, but Joseph and Nicodemus are the ones who buried the Lord?

One of them is good and just (Luke 23: 50) and the other has no hypocrisy. Thus Christ's burial is done without deceit or evil. There is no room for trickery. If the apostles had buried Him, the Jews would have said, those certainly never buried Him. But a just man wrapped Christ's body in costly linen (Matt 27: 59; Luke 23: 53) and an honest man anointed Him with spices. Therefore, what happened did not lack purpose, for, righteousness envelops the Church, and innocence serves grace.

Cover the body of the Lord, the Church, with garments and anoint Him with myrrh and spices, so that the Church may become to God the fragrance of Christ (2 Cor 2: 15).

Joseph brought expensive linen. That may have been what Peter saw descending from heaven and in it all kinds of animals, a symbol of the Gentiles (Acts 10: 11-12). The Church is thus wrapped, linking a variety of people in partaking of their faith in that pure fragrant mystery.¹

Saint Ambrose

* I believe there was no lack of purpose in saying, "as the custom of the Jews is to bury" [40]. For, if I am not mistaken, by saying this he urges us to practice such service for the dead in accordance to the custom of our country.²

Saint Augustine

**Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden,
And in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. [41]**

Christ's body was buried in a new tomb that Joseph of Arimathea had prepared in a garden he owned outside the city near Golgotha where Christ was crucified. Joseph did not expect that in that tomb the Lord Jesus Christ would be buried.

In a garden, the Lord had bowed His head to joyfully deliver His will up into the hands of the Father and be carried to the cross. In that garden He was arrested, and in a garden the Lord rose from the dead to announce that through His suffering and death He has defeated death and has granted the resurrection. In the garden was buried the grain of wheat about which the Lord Jesus Christ had spoken (Jn 12: 24) and it produced thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold. In the garden, the Lord let the streams of life flow (Song of Solomon 4: 15).

¹ Exposition, 10: 136, 137.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 120: 4.

The tomb was new and the Lord rose from it while the stone was rolled over it as its door. Just as He was born of a virgin He rose from a virgin tomb. Everything concerning Him, even the tomb, was new so that He may grant us a new life.

* In that garden, I sang to My Bride, in the Song of Solomon, “I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse” (5: 1). For the place where He was crucified was a garden. What did He take from there? “I have gathered my myrrh with my spice” for He drank myrrh with vinegar. After that He said, “It is finished” because the mystery was accomplished, the Scripture was fulfilled, and the sins were forgiven. “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most High Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ...cleanse your conscience” (Hebrews 9: 11-14).¹

* Again He says in the Song of Solomon, “I went down into the garden of nuts” (6: 11) for He was crucified in a garden. For though that place is now decorated with royal gifts, yet it was a garden and the landmarks and traces still exist. He is “a garden enclosed...a fountain sealed” (Song of Solomon 4: 12). The following was written about the Jews who said, “we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise.’ Therefore command that the tomb be made secure” and “So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard” (Matt 27: 63-64, 66).²

* He was buried in a garden where a vine was planted for He said, “I am the true vine” (Jn 15: 1). He was planted in the earth so that He may pluck out the curse that happened because of Adam. For the earth then brought forth thorns and thistles. The vine sprang out of the earth so that the words of the Psalm may be fulfilled: “Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven” (Ps 85: 11).

What does He who was buried in the garden say? He says, “I have gathered my myrrh with my spice” (Song of Solomon) and “myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices (4: 14). These are the signs of burial as is recorded in the Gospels, “certain other women with them came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared” (Luke 24: 1); “And Nicodemus...also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes” (Jn 19: 39). It is also written, “I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey” (Song of Solomon 5: 1) for He ate myrrh before crucifixion and honey after the resurrection.³

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem

* Just as no one before or after Him was born of the Virgin Mary, likewise no one before or after Him was buried in this tomb.⁴

¹ Article 13: 32.

² Article 14: 5.

³ Article 14: 11.

⁴ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 120: 5.

Saint Augustine

**So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day,
For the tomb was nearby. [42]**

There was no funeral service for the Lord Jesus Christ because He was crucified, rejected by His people, and because there was no time and therefore the burial had to be in a hurry before sunset. The Sun of righteousness was buried at sunset and it was impossible for the tomb to imprison His light. Darkness could not control Him. The soldiers stood guard lest He should rise and proclaim that He paid our debt, His sacrifice for us was accepted, and that He justified us before the Father. However, the soldiers' watch became a testimony of the truth of His resurrection.

This conduct (the quick burial) shows that His resurrection was not in anybody's mind in spite of the continuous references to it before His crucifixion. The burial took place in this manner because there was no time and there was no tomb prepared for Him. No one thought of burying Him in the family cemetery because the sun was about to set and it was difficult for the family to prepare for burial especially in such bitter circumstances. This is from the human point of view. However, concerning the divine dispensation, everything was amazingly arranged. Thus, Isaiah foretold this seven hundred years beforehand when he said, "And he made his grave...with the rich in his death" (Is 53: 9).

* It was arranged that the body of the Lord was laid in a new tomb in which no one was buried before, so that nobody might think that there was another buried with Him who rose from the dead. Also this enabled His disciples to come to the tomb and see what happened, for the tomb was nearby.

Saint John Chrysostom

CHAPTER 19

THE CRUCIFIXION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

We noticed in the previous chapters that St John the Evangelist is not inclined write a chronological narration. His aim is to reveal the person of Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word of God who came to save the world. Now that he speaks about the crucifixion of the Lord, he does not relate the historical events, but rather presents the person of the crucified Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior of mankind. He exults and is proud of the cross.

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1 – Pilate’s Judgment

So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. [1]

Pilate tried to release the Lord because he was sure Christ was innocent. He thought he could release Him because he traditionally used to release a prisoner at the Passover; yet he failed because of the people’s uprising. However, as he was still convinced that Jesus Christ committed no crime, he used another method, that is he allowed his soldiers to scourge and scorn Him so that he might prove to the people that Christ was helpless and therefore they should forgive Him.

The Evangelist gives us an exposition of the judgment of the Lord. It is full of injustice: the plaintiffs are confused, the judge wavers between his feeling of injustice to Jesus and his fear of the rebellion of the multitude against him, and their claim that Jesus wanted to be king and oppose Caesar. Pilate failed to acquit Jesus, and therefore he was obliged to let the case proceed in accordance to the rules. He had to treat Jesus cruelly because of the danger and nature of the accusation. Pilate first condescended to the wish of the people and ordered his soldiers to scourge Jesus and treat Him as a rebel. Pilate hoped that by doing this he would legally prove that Jesus was innocent.

Pilate was not serious in judging justly. For, though he knew that Jesus was righteous, he condemned Him to be scourged like a criminal [1]. Luke the Evangelist says that Pilate said to the multitude, “I will chastise Him and release Him” (Luke 23: 16). Pilate’s aim in scourging Jesus seems to have been his hope that the Jews would

change their minds concerning His crucifixion. Clearly, Pilate felt that Jesus did nothing to deserve crucifixion.

It seems that the scourging was executed in accordance to the Roman rules, which were far crueler than the Jewish rules. The Romans usually scourged those condemned to crucifixion. The Lord Jesus Christ accepted this for our sake. As Isaiah writes, “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting” (Is 50: 6). The Psalmist says, “The plowers plowed on my back; they made their furrows long” (Ps 129: 3). The Lord Himself had said, they will “deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify” (Matt 20: 19; see Mark 10: 34; Luke 18: 33). Saint Peter says, “by whose stripes we were healed” (1 Pet 2: 24). The Physician was scourged so that the sick would be cured. He endured being scourged for our sake so that the believers would find their pleasure in enduring suffering for Him and partaking of His pains and crucifixion (Acts 5: 41; 16: 22, 25).

Scourging was a terrible punishment. The historian **Eusebius** explains that they used a whip made of several strips made of leather with bits of metal or bone at the tips so that the flesh of the person scourged would be torn. Sometimes the veins and inner layers of the scourged were exposed. The Roman writer, **Cicero**, says that sometimes scourging caused death. The Roman soldiers were cruel and had no mercy. It may be that Jesus Christ could not carry the cross to the place of the crucifixion because He was scourged. Some scholars point out Christ’s quick death on the cross as the result of the cruel scourging. The Evangelists mention the fact that Christ was scourged but do not describe His pain.

The Lord considered all sorts of suffering and abuse for our sake as easy. He loves us and longs for our redemption so that we should regard our partaking with Him, of His shame and pain, a glory that we do not deserve.

* John the apostle says, ‘Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him’. Pilate probably wished to calm the Jews and evade their anger. Just as he could not rescue the Lord with his first address to the Jews, he failed in stopping their wickedness to that extent.

Saint John Chrysostom

* We need to believe that Pilate did this for no reason but to let the Jews see this cruel treatment and be satisfied, without madly asking for His death. For the same reason the governor allowed his soldiers to do what followed. He may have commanded them to do that, though the Evangelist said nothing about this¹.

Saint Augustine

**And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns
And put it on His head,
And they put on Him a purple robe. [2]**

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 116: 1.

The soldiers used to scorn those who were convicted, especially that the soldiers represented the occupying authority that abused rebels against Rome. Their sarcasm fitted the accusation that He was “King of the Jews”. They did not find a king to put to death often, and they thought that scorning a king of the Jews was a farce hard to repeat. “Purple”: this is an expensive color. It is a mixture of violet and red made of some kinds of rare fish shells. Purple clothes were expensive and linked to royal life, and worn by the rich and high ranking men in the nation.

Matthew the Evangelist writes that they “put a scarlet robe on Him” (Matt 27: 28). This color is extracted from some dead insects and a scarlet robe is much cheaper than a purple garment that the military captains wore. The soldiers perhaps brought an old robe that a military commander had thrown away because it was old. The soldiers then used the purple gown to dress a poor Galilean (Jesus) who would be king! The crown of thorns and the purple robe denote royalty but the world uses them for wicked humor.

* St John reports, ‘And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe.’ This Pilate did to please the angry Jews. For this reason he led the Lord Jesus Christ out, crowned with thorns, so that when the Jews would see Him so abused, they give would vent out their sickness a little and throw out their poison.

Saint John Chrysostom

**Then they said,
“Hail, King of the Jews!”
And they struck Him with their hands.” [3]**

Thus Pilate delivered Him up to the soldiers so that they deride Him. They therefore twisted a crown of thorns for Him and put it on His head instead of the crown of a king. They put on Him a purple robe as a king and in scorn they struck Him with their hands as they said, “Hail, King of the Jews!”

**Pilate then went out again,
And said to them,
“Behold, I am bringing Him out to you,
That you may know that I find no fault in Him.” [4]**

Pilate brought Him out to the Jewish leaders and the tumultuous crowds to show them that their accusation against Him, that He wanted to be king, was some kind of illusion. For here He was before them, His flesh torn with scourging and He had become an absurd subject of scorn. Pilate hurt the Lord Jesus Christ even though he knew that He was innocent. Then he brought Him out to the accusers hoping that they might drop their case against Him. Pilate declared that according to the Roman law he “found no fault in Him” [4]. There was no fault at all in Him, he repeated (Jn 18: 38). Thus Pilate pronounced himself guilty because since there was no fault in Christ at all, why then did

he scourge Him and give Him to the soldiers to abuse Him? Why did he bring Him out to His prosecutors and did not release Him immediately as justice decrees?

**Then Jesus came out,
Wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.
And Pilate said to them,
“Behold the Man!” [5]**

By saying, “Behold the Man” Pilate may have wished to assert to the Jews that if they thought Christ wanted to be king and oppose Caesar, this was false. For now that they saw Him so weak and helpless, having no followers who might oppose authority, they should not fear Him.

By bringing Him out wearing the crown of thorns and with His head, face, and all His body covered with blood, to those who denounced Him, Pilate gave them the chance to insist on crucifying Him. For Pilate treated Him as a slave. He unjustly tortured Him because a slave had no right to defend himself. On the other hand, it was necessary to prove that a free man was guilty before tormenting him so cruelly.

The Lord came out to become a spectacle, in front of the people, carrying our reproach. This is why the apostle Paul later said, “Let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb 13: 13).

His sight was so painful that Pilate said, “Behold the Man” without mentioning His name in some derision. That sight moved the heart of the man of wisdom almost a thousand years before. For he said, “Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousal, and in the day of the gladness of his heart” (Song of Solomon 3: 11).

Some believe that the words of Pilate, “Behold the Man” bear a secret meaning. The word ‘Adam’ in Hebrew means ‘man’ “Behold the Man” may thus mean ‘Here is Adam whom God created to be king and given him power over all creatures, but he has become miserable and has brought a curse upon himself and all creation. Thus the Second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, has taken the place of the first Adam to bring the royal heavenly life to those who have lost even their temporary peace. Instead of death that the first Adam brought, Christ became life giving (1 Cor 15: 22, 45). This is what Pilate said and unaware of the meaning of what he said!

Pilate faced the outburst of rage and hostility to Jesus by declaring His innocence. In so doing he became a witness across history. But Jesus did not utter a word. Pilate said, “Behold the Man”. He did not say, ‘Behold the culprit’. As though he meant that according to him Christ was innocent of any guilt at all.

**Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him,
They cried out, saying,
“Crucify Him, crucify Him!”**

**Pilate said to them,
“You take Him and crucify Him,
For I find no fault in Him.” [6]**

After hearing Pilate repeating that he did not find fault at all in Jesus, and after seeing Jesus' body torn with scourging, His head and forehead pierced with thorns, and His face swollen with beating, the people could have asked for His release. But the chief priests and officers quickly cried out saying, “Crucify Him, crucify Him.” Their envy and malice were so extreme that they did not accept Pilate's judgment. They were not sorry for the Lord's pain. They, instead, considered Him deserving death even if He was innocent. For in their opinion their safety and the peace of the city necessitated His crucifixion and removal.

The chief priests and their followers had come for one purpose, which is to stress the importance of Christ being crucified no matter what the price might be. They did not listen to anything Pilate said. But as they perceived his strong wish to release Him, they for the first time, said the words, “Crucify Him”. This was what the chief priests and officers said, disclosing what was in their hearts.

For the third time Pilate declares the innocence of the Lord and then he says to them, “You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him.” [6]. He knows very well that they cannot crucify Him. He says this only to rebuke them as though he says, ‘If your envy drives you to crucify Him, do not use me as an obedient means of that envy. I would then do evil against justice. My conscience is troubled. Act according to your envy if you can!’

* Observe how the judge presented his defense in many ways to acquit the Lord of the accusations against Him. But nothing of all this shamed them. They insisted on fulfilling their aim. The statement, “You take Him and crucify Him” is an expression of one who wants to be innocent of committing a crime, and wants to force the Jews to do something illegal. For, they brought the Lord to him to decide on crucifying Him. But what happened was the opposite, for, the judge declared the innocence of the Lord and did not indict Him.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

**The Jews answered him,
‘We have a law,
And according to our law He ought to die,
Because He made Himself the Son of God.’” [7]**

The accusation that He opposed Caesar and the Roman authorities and stirred up the people proved false. So they charged Him with an offence which Pilate had no right to discuss. That accusation was that He had blasphemed and opposed the Jewish law. This was the business of the high priest and the Sanhedrin. Pilate and his men could not interfere in religious matters. The leaders accused the Lord of blasphemy and claiming

¹ Homilies on St. John, 84: 2.

He was divine, “because He made Himself the Son of God”. These religious men leaders understood from the Lord’s many speeches that by saying, “the Son of God”, He meant He was equal to God. They, therefore, accused Him of blasphemy.

The prosecutors presented their indictment, which is that He blasphemed and therefore deserved death (Lev 24: 16). They were proud of the law even when they broke it and sinned against God. He who makes his boast in the law, does he dishonor God through breaking the law? (Rom 2: 23). They broke the law and thought they honored it. They did not listen to the prophecy, “Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed” (Is 10: 1).

* Contemplate the accusation: “He made Himself the Son of God” [7]. Tell me is this an accusation that He who does the deeds of the Son of God calls Himself the Son of God? What then did Christ do? While they proceeded with one accusation after another, He continued His calm, thus fulfilling the words of the prophet, “He opens not His mouth. In humiliation His judgment was taken away” (Is 53: 7, 8 LXX).¹

Saint John Chrysostom

Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid,...” [8]

When he heard that the accused did not only claim to be king, but also that He was divine, Pilate was greatly troubled and afraid. The case became more difficult for him. He could calm the people concerning His claim to royalty, but Pilate could not appease the terror of the people if Jesus said He was divine. At the same time Pilate feared the personality of Jesus because he was unable to identify Him. Pilate was sure that the religious leaders hated Jesus, but how could he be sure that Jesus was truly the Son of God. Pilate was afraid of taking part with them in the crime of opposing the incarnate Son of God.

**‘...and went again into the Praetorium,
And said to Jesus,
‘Where are You from?
But Jesus gave him no answer.’ [9]**

Pilate asked the accused a question inside the Praetorium. That question revealed what went on in his mind, which is that the personality of Jesus was a puzzle. As though he asked, ‘What is Your secret origin? Who are You? Tell me.’ This was a question that was often addressed to the Lord. The Jews asked Him, “Who do You make Yourself out to be?” (Jn 8: 53). He answered the Jews that no one knows Him except He who is with Him all the time and is of the same essence. For He said, “If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me” (Jn 8: 54). The Jews were confused because He announced, “It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him” (Jn 8: 54-55).

As Pilate was troubled and afraid he asked the Lord Christ, “Where are You from?” [9] Pilate spoke to Him in the Praetorium, in the court away from the noise of the

¹ Homilies on St. John, 84: 2.

Jewish leaders and the people. Jesus had answered Pilate's previous questions, but concerning this question, 'Jesus gave him no answer' (Jn 19: 9). Pilate asked for information about Jesus in relation to this world. But the answer to the question needs leaving this world to comprehend the eternal. For, Christ is not a mere prophet among prophets, nor just a teacher, a worker of signs and cures. Therefore, He was silent. Pilate had asked Jesus, "Are You the King of the Jews?" (Jn 18: 33) and again, "Are You a king then?" (18: 37). Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king". Now Pilate does not ask, 'Who are You?' or, "Are You the Son of God?" He asks, "Where are You from?" implying, 'Are You a human being or celestial? Are You from beneath or from above?' Pilate knew the town of the Lord- the man, and he was surely asking whether He was greater than man or not. It was not possible for him to ask this question directly, lest he should be accused of intruding in religious beliefs, and which the religious leaders only should decide.

The Lord said nothing, not because He could not, or because He did not care for Pilate's salvation, but because He wished to give Pilate a chance to think carefully. Earlier, He had answered saying, "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn 18: 36). In that discourse He had made it clear to Pilate where He was from.

In the spirit of prophecy, Isaiah wondered at the Lord silence. Isaiah said in many passages, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street" (Is 42: 2). "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth" (Is 53: 7).

* Pilate was afraid when he heard the Jews saying, "He made Himself the Son of God" [7]. He was terrified lest what they said should be true and he should be violating the law. He therefore did not ask Jesus what He did, but trembling with fear, he began examining Jesus as a person. He asked, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer because He had already said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn 18: 36) and "For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth" (Jn 18: 37). Pilate should not have resisted what he heard.¹

* The apostle John says, "But Jesus gave him no answer." As the Lord was silent and gave Pilate no answer, He made it clear that He obediently came to His agony.

Saint John Chrysostom

* He walked to judgment without opening His mouth. He was not like one with an evil mind convinced he had sinned. Rather in meekness He offered Himself a sacrifice for the sins of others.²

Saint Augustine

**Then Pilate said to Him,
"Are You not speaking to me?"**

¹ Homilies on St. John, 84: 2.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 116: 4.

**Do You not know that I have power to crucify You,
And power to release You?” [10]**

Pilate boasted of having power and was angry because the Lord did not answer his question. Pilate said to Him, “Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?” Pilate exaggerated in showing his power because he thought that he was in control of the situation. He did not realize that on the one hand he had no right to crucify an innocent person, and release another person who should be crucified according to the Roman law. On the other hand, Pilate forgot that God Almighty is there and nothing happens without His permission.

We realize that the silence of our Lord Jesus was not because He refused to answer the question, but because Pilate could not understand the truth. Pilate therefore thought that he had power to crucify or to release Him [10]. Jesus then answered that Pilate had what limited power allowed to him from above.

* Do you see how Pilate condemned himself first. For, if he was in power, why did he not release Him when he found no fault in Him at all?

Saint John Chrysostom

**Jesus answered,
“You could have no power at all against Me,
Unless it had been given you from above.
Therefore, the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.” [11]**

Pilate may have expected that his words would give Jesus Christ a chance to speak to him so that he would release Him. But the Lord rebuked him for his pride, and for boasting of having power over justice, ignoring the role of God Almighty. The Lord Jesus Christ answered him so that He would remove his stupidity. As Solomon writes, “Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit” (Prov 26: 5). When Pilate used his power and unjustly scourged Him, the Lord Jesus was silent. However, when he proudly announced that he had power, Jesus scolded him so that he might know his limitations. Pilate forgot that “...he that is higher than the highest regards and there be Higher than they” (Ecc 5: 8). These are the last words that the Lord said to Pilate in this Gospel. Christ asked Pilate to know that every power a man on earth has is divinely given to him by heaven, not by Rome. God is truly Almighty and He, not the emperor or those that the emperor appoints as rulers and governors, has power over all human affairs.

Pilate had not experienced such moments as this- when he had to judge a person whom some considered the Son of God and the King of Israel. He thought he was in control of the destiny of this person. But the Lord made it clear to him that he was only a tool in God’s hands, and that he could have done nothing without permission from God (Acts 4: 27-28). Still the Lord gave him some excuse when He compared his sin to that of those who delivered Him to be judged. However, this does not justify Pilate, nor does it relieve him of his responsibility. The responsibility of those who delivered Him is

greater because they had read the Scriptures, and had heard the prophecies that were fulfilled in Him, and had also seen the miracles He had performed and the divine power He had.

Some observe that here the Lord Jesus Christ was referring to Judas, the disciple who betrayed and delivered Him. But it is obvious that He did not mean Judas alone when He mentioned the one who delivered Him. He meant the entire Jewish nation and the chief priests. As Pilate had said before, “Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me” (Jn 18: 35). Indeed, Pilate did not find in Jesus Christ fault for which He should die. Judas, on the other hand, was a disciple and friend of Jesus and was given many blessings and possibilities to work for the heavenly kingdom. Pilate deviated from justice, but did not accept a bribe like Judas. Pilate was wrong in not insisting on releasing the innocent, but he was not envious and full of hatred and hostility like the Jewish leaders who opposed Jesus Christ.

What does the Lord mean by sin here? According to John the Evangelist, He meant “not knowing God” as seen in Jesus Christ.

* The Lord destroyed Pilate’s pride and arrogance. For He said to him, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.” He made it clear that this event is unlike many other incidents, for what was happening was done in a mysterious way.¹

* When you hear the words of the Lord Jesus Christ to Pilate, “...unless it had been given you from above”, do not think that Pilate is innocent of transgression. The Lord said, “...the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin”; this shows that Pilate sinned.

Saint John Chrysostom

* When He did not answer, He was silent like a lamb; and when He answered, He taught us as a Shepherd. Therefore, may we learn the lesson as the Apostle also says, “...there is no authority except from God” (Rom 13: 1). He who delivers an innocent man to the ruler to kill him is more sinful than he who has power to kill for fear of a higher authority.²

Saint Augustine

**From then on Pilate sought to release Him,
But the Jews cried out, saying,
‘If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend.
Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.’” [12]**

The words of the Lord Jesus Christ did not cause Pilate to defend his power, but on the contrary they made him more earnest in wanting to prove the Lord’s innocence and release Him. This is evident in the uprising of the Jews and their screams as they accuse Pilate himself of not being Caesar’s friend if he neglected punishing the Man who opposes Caesar. Pilate then would lose his position if he did not perform his duty.

¹ Homilies on St. John, 84: 2.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 116: 5.

Christ's enemies found the means by which they could put more pressure on Pilate when they accused him of negligence in punishing a rebel. For, the Roman law respected the right and customs of the people they governed within their community. Moreover, the Roman law was extremely cruel and had no pity in crushing rebellion. Therefore, Pilate was in danger if the multitude persisted in complaining that he was lenient towards the accused.

Pilate feared their protest against him before Tiberius Caesar, for he was known as the most passionate emperor. Tiberius listened to remonstrations against many men and he did not trust those who served him. Pilate was willing to free Jesus, but he was not ready to face an accusation that he failed in his duty as a friend of Caesar. He could not get into trouble with Rome at any price.

* When the Jews could not find in their law an accusation against the Lord, they slyly turned to laws outside their own laws. For they said, "Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar." Now I ask the Jews, "How did the Lord Jesus Christ appear to be a rebel and usurper? How can you prove this? Please, explain! Was He wearing a crown? Did He look like a usurper? Did He have soldiers? He walked with twelve disciples. He was simple in the food He ate, the clothes He wore, and the place where He slept!"¹

Saint John Chrysostom

**When Pilate therefore heard that saying,
He brought Jesus out
And sat down in the judgment seat
In a place that is called the Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha." [13]**

The Pavement here was like a stone pavement usually in the open air. This was where the judgment seat was on which governors and rulers sat to judge. It was paved with blue, white, and black stones and marble. That place was called **Gabbatha** in Hebrew. The name is derived from 'gaba', which means 'high' because where the judge sat was usually high so that everybody could see the judge, follow the procedure, and hear the verdict. The judge stepped up on marble steps to the seat. The Pavement may be the name given to those steps. Some say that the word, 'Gabbatha' means a closed place because there was a wall surrounding it, made to prevent anyone from attacking the accused during the trial surrounded it. Others think that the place was confined to the trial of criminals who were dangerous to the state.

The verdict was about to be announced because the governor sat down in the official judgment seat, or 'curule', an ivory seat for Roman judges and their representatives.

**Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover,
And about the sixth hour.
And he said to the Jews,**

¹ Homilies on St. John, 84: 2.

“Behold your King!” [14]

The Evangelist first describes the place of judgment then specifies the time. That was about the sixth hour, meaning at noon, on the Preparation Day of the Passover, the days of unleavened bread (Luke 23: 54) and the Jews were preparing for the Passover Sabbath. This timing augments the guilt of those who crucified Him, for they did not wait until after the feast. This shows their bitter hatred and their haste in achieving their aim. They removed the old yeast from every house, but they did not remove their old nature from their hearts, minds and conduct.

That was between the third and the sixth hour, because He was on the Cross at exactly the sixth hour.

Mark the Evangelist writes that it was the third hour when they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 15: 25). He considered the scourging as the beginning, but John the Evangelist said it was the sixth hour when Christ was actually on the Cross.

Some writers believe that the sixth hour here is according to the Roman time that considers midnight as the beginning of a new day. The other Evangelists, however, used the Jewish time that marked the day as beginning and ending at sunset. So, the sixth hour in the morning was when the sentence was pronounced and the actual procedure of the crucifixion began. In some manuscripts and writings of the Fathers, the hour was the third, not the sixth hour.

As the Jews turned their accusation against Pilate, he angrily ridiculed them saying to them, “Behold your King!” [14] He meant, ‘If you strongly seek to crucify Him, you hurt yourselves for He is your King.’ This arrow was his last attempt at saving the Lord Christ from crucifixion.

* Pilate delivered the Lord Jesus Christ up to the Jews thinking they would pity Him. The proof that this was his aim is that he said to them, “Behold your King!”

Saint John Chrysostom

Deriding the Jews, Pilate announced, “Behold your King!” The Lord was at that moment probably crowned with thorns and wearing the purple or scarlet robe. Pilate did not realize that Christ was truly not only the King of the Jews, but was also the King of the entire world. In Him the prophecies were fulfilled that He was the Lord Jesus Christ. In the past, Gideon had refused to be king over Israel and looked forward to the Lord Himself to be the true King (Judges 8: 23). When the people asked Samuel the prophet to name a king for them like all the nations, God said to Samuel that the people did not reject him but rejected the Lord Himself to be their King (1 Samuel 8: 5, 7). Men of the Old Testament expected the fulfillment of the divine promise, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth, for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron’ (Ps 2: 7-9).

It would have been proper for Pilate to announce to the entire world, 'Behold your King who cares for the souls and raises them in His eternal kingdom of heaven.'

The Lord Jesus Christ came as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1: 29). He is the Lover of mankind, but He cannot bear to see their sins. He takes away their sins so that they may come to the Father carrying His righteousness. But here we see men not tolerating their Savior. They want to stop seeing Him. The wicked cannot endure God's love and cannot even behold Him!

But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!"

Pilate said to them,

"Shall I crucify your King?"

The chief priests answered,

"We have no king but Caesar!" [15]

They cried out more that they could not bear His sight, "Away with Him, away with Him!" [15] They refused to be related to Him or have any relationship with Him. They had no king but Caesar. Isaiah the prophet looked at Him and said, "...whom the nation abhors" (Is 49: 7). He also said, "He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not" (Is 53: 2-3).

Capital punishment by crucifixion was known in the past in and out of the Roman Empire. The ancient world looked at crucifixion as the most horrible manner of death because it was a shame and a curse. Ancient writers avoided describing crucifixion in details. Cicero wrote that crucifixion was "the most cruel and disgusting punishment" and Josephus said it was the meanest method of execution. The Roman philosopher, Seneca, explained that crucifixion was a slow and extremely painful death and wondered if anyone wanted willingly to die in this manner. He said, "Is it possible that a person would prefer to waste time in enduring the painful death of his organs one after the other and let his life end drop by drop instead of giving up his spirit at once? Does anyone wish to be nailed to the cross, a curse for a long time, disfigured, his body swollen because of his shoulder and chest wounds, and breathe while suffering extended bitter pain? Indeed, he would find many reasons to prefer death before crucifixion."¹

The Roman citizen was rarely condemned to be crucified. This punishment was used to deter slaves from rebellion and force them to accept humiliation and distress. As they stood against the Lord, the Jews did not want freedom; they did not want to be saved; they only hoped to get rid of Jesus. Thus, they became Caesar's slaves. They lost their feeling that they were under Roman rule. The Jews, especially their leaders, hated Caesar and his representatives, but because of their hostility to the Lord they thought that loyalty and subjugation to Caesar was a better choice. They were ready to be under the rule of any tyrant representing Caesar. They would willingly obey him if that resulted in the removal of the Lord Christ.

¹ Martin Hengel: Crucifixion. London 1977, pp. 30-31; Leon Morris, p. 655.

The answer of the chief priests implied their fear that their priesthood institution would come to an end. They accepted Caesar as their only king and they forgot God's Kingdom.

* Observe the Lord carefully in His trial. He allowed soldiers to drive Him. Pilate sat down to judge Him. He who sits at the right hand of the Father stands before the judge! The people He saved from Egypt were now crying out, "Away with Him! Crucify Him!" Why, O Jews? Is it because He healed the blind among you? Or is it because He made the lame walk and gave blessings to many? The prophet is amazed and says, "...against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue?" (Is 57: 4). The Lord Himself says in prophecies, "Mine heritage is unto Me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against Me: therefore have I hated it" (Jeremiah 12: 8). I did not reject them but they rejected Me, therefore I say, "I have forsaken My house" (Jer 12: 7).¹

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem

* They forced him saying, "Crucify Him." Why did they strive to kill Him by this method? It is a shameful death! They feared lest in the future He would be remembered and therefore they condemned Him with a curse. They did not know that the Truth is glorified in all impediments. To prove that this was their fear, listen to what they said, "...we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise'" (Matt 27: 63). Therefore they stirred up all the people to turn the matter upside down to destroy further threats. The leaders corrupted the confused people who then cried out repeatedly, "Crucify Him!"²

* "We have no king but Caesar": they willingly submit themselves to punishment. God therefore gave them up, because as children they expelled themselves from His care and great guidance. As with one voice they glorified that foreign power, He permitted them to fall, as they required.³

* Here they came down from Christ's Kingdom and claimed for themselves Caesar's kingdom.⁴

Saint John Chrysostom

2 – The Crucifixion

**Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified.
So they took Jesus and led Him away." [16]**

As he did not fear God but feared men, Pilate signed the condemnation to crucifixion and delivered Jesus to those who should crucify Him. He who testified several times that Christ was innocent, finally dictated His punishment as a criminal. Pilate washed his hands (Matt 27: 24) to announce that he was innocent of that judgment.

¹ Article 13: 15.

² Homilies on St. John, 84: 2.

³ Hom. 84. PG 59: 501.

⁴ Hom. 85. PG 59: 503.

However, washing his hands will not make him innocent before God. To save time, the Jewish leaders went with the executors of judgment. They were afraid that Pilate would change his edict, for they saw him from time to time proclaiming the Lord's innocence. Moreover, they feared the multitude might reconsider when they remembered the wonderful works of the Lord Jesus Christ and the testimony of Pontius Pilate that Christ was innocent. The multitude would then turn against the wish of the chief priests. This is how the adversary stirs up his followers to take every chance to hasten the destruction of faith in the Lord in the life of every believer so that he should not enjoy it.

In their opinion, the leaders felt that they were successful in their plot and that the victim had fallen into their trap. They took the lamb to be slaughtered and did not comprehend that the prophets foretold what happened as God's redemptive plan.

* As Pilate heard them he quite foolishly delivered Him up to them. He should have ascertained that Christ aimed at obtaining royal authority. But he, out of fear only, pronounced his judgment. Christ had already said, "My kingdom is not of this world." But Pilate was totally involved in temporary matters and did not rule, as he should. His wife's dream was enough to terrify him, but nothing made him act well because he did not contemplate heaven, but he delivered Christ.

Now they gave Him, as an evildoer, the cross to carry. They hated the cross and refused to touch the wood. That was the condition of the symbol, Isaac, when he carried the wood. But at that time, what should happen depended on the father's decision because it was a symbol. But here the reality was accomplished practically.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, Which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha." [17]

As part of His suffering, He actually carried the cross. The slender, sensitive body carried the heavy cross. He carried it alone at first. Then He could not because of His weak body, the wounds caused by the scourging, the crown of thorns, and the slapping of His face. Therefore, Simon of Cyrene helped Him carry the cross (Matt 27: 32). As Isaac carried the wood of the burnt offering on his way to become a burnt sacrifice, similarly Christ carried the wood of the cross. As the prophet says, "...the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Is 53: 6). Saint Peter says, "who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness" (1 Pet 2: 24).

They brought Him to the place of execution outside the city, to a place called Golgotha. Origen the Scholar referred to a tradition that said that this was the place where Adam was buried. There, where death defeated the first Adam and changed him into dust, Christ, the Second Adam died to vanquish death and give life back to Adam and his descendants. That place was on Mount Moriah where Abraham was about to offer his

¹ Homilies on St. John, 85: 1.

son, Isaac, as a burnt offering but God sent him a ram to offer instead of Isaac. Some writers believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on a hill that looked like a skull.

* Some say that Adam died and was buried there and that Jesus achieved victory at the same place where death ruled. Christ went carrying the cross and triumphed over death. His cross was a symbol of victory, though the Jews intended something else.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

* He bore our pains and accepted suffering on the cross. He took our flesh and if He had not suffered He would not have shared our human life. He first suffered then descended. But what were those sufferings that He endured for our sake? Those were the sufferings of love!²

Origen the Scholar

**Where they crucified Him,
And two others with Him, one on either side,
And Jesus in the center. [18]**

Two others were crucified with Him, one on either side. This was probably not the time for them to be crucified; but the chief priests insisted they should be crucified as an insult for Him to be crucified with criminals. This may be why the two thieves reviled and abused Him because His crucifixion hastened theirs so that they may be crucified with Him. The high priest did not demand that two of His disciples should be crucified with Him. That might have been considered an honor that they were crucified for the sake of the truth and that the disciples shared His suffering. The high priest instead insisted that two criminals must be crucified with Him. Those two might have belonged to the group of Barabbas the thief.

The Jewish leaders wanted to declare that He was the most evil of the three because they crucified Him in the center. Yet, they did not realize that by doing this the prophecy was fulfilled that He was numbered with the transgressors.

* If you ask, ‘What was the aim of the Jews that they crucified Him, and two others with Him? I would answer, ‘By doing this they unwillingly fulfilled the prophecy. For, Isaiah the prophet mentioned this long ago when he said, “And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death” (Is 53: 9). Satan wanted to conceal what happened but he could not. For, the three were crucified but only Jesus was glorious so that you know that His power is above all.’

There were signs when the three were crucified, but nobody referred the miracles to any of those two, but only to Jesus alone. Satan’s plan failed totally and instead, one of the two thieves was saved. He did not dishonor the cross, but he increased that honor

¹ Hom. 85. PG 59: 504.

² Homilia 6 in Ezechielem 6 PG 13: 714 D.

to a great degree. For, the rebirth of a thief on the cross and his admission into Paradise is not less than the trembling of the rocks.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

3 – The Title Put on the Cross

Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross.

And the writing was:

‘Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews’. [19]

St John calls the writing on the cross ‘a title’, ‘titlos’. Matthew calls it ‘the accusation’, ‘citiei’, while Mark and Luke describe it as an inscription ‘apigraphe’. John the Evangelist often points out the importance of the cross in the life of Jesus Christ. Thus, in chapter three, when Jesus met Nicodemus at night He said, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (Jn 3: 14). Again, in His speech to the Jews the Lord says, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He” (Jn 8: 28). And to the Greeks He says, “And I if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”

The Evangelist elevates our minds so that we may see the exaltation and glory we received through the Crucified. In Him we see our Christ glorified in and with His Father. We now have the right to go to the Father’s bosom. The essence of the cross is that He is lifted up on it to draw all peoples to Himself so that they may live at a more sublime level on earth.

The Apostle Paul sees God’s love in the form of a Cross, drawn on humanity. For, he speaks of the width and length and depth and height of the love of God (Eph 3: 18). The measures of the cross seem to be the acquaintance with the secret of divine love.

In eastern tradition the Cross is celebrated as a living person. It is seen as Jesus crucified requesting the heights, separating darkness from light, and ignorance from knowledge. As it became a sign of judgment, it distinguishes between those who yearn for the eternal light and those who are pleased with darkness.

The meaning of the Cross is that one is lifted up beyond this world. It means that a person is open to the eternal world and regains partaking of the enlightenment so that he may go to God and let Him enter his life.

The use of the words ‘up’ and ‘down’ is significant in the Gospel according to St. John as he talks about the person and work of the Crucified. Though this Evangelist does not write about the Last Supper, yet he records at great length the speech of the Lord about the Eucharist (Jn 6: 32-40). Christ affirms that He is the bread that comes down from heaven, or from above. Also the Lord’s speech about baptism, which is immersion,

¹ Homilies on St. John, 85: 1.

draws our hearts to birth from above to see, through the Cross, the depth of the love of God our Father (Jn 3: 3-8).

In short, in the Cross, we are not of the world even though we are in the world (Jn 7: 6, 14, 16, 18). We are from above. We become partners of Christ who is risen from the dead and whom Mary Magdalene did not recognize until He called her by name. She and the disciples whom the Lord Jesus Christ accompanied as they were traveling to Emmaus thought He was a stranger.

* Christ is the King of the Jews whose circumcision is that of the heart in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God (Rom 2: 29). They are those related to the free Jerusalem, our eternal mother in heaven, the spiritual Sarah who cast out of the free house the bondwoman and her children (Gal 4: 22-31). Therefore what Pilate wrote was written because the Lord said His word.¹

Saint Augustine

* In this way, Pilate combined two aims: his revenge of the Jews and his apology to the Lord Christ. For, when they defamed the Lord Jesus Christ by crucifying two thieves with Him, Pilate silenced them, and all who would blame the Lord, and made it clear that they rebelled against their King. In this way he took revenge of the Jews. As for his apology to the Lord, he expressed it by putting the writing on a board announcing clearly, though not completely, the Lord's victory and the foundation of His kingdom. This board was similar to the sign given to the victorious conqueror.²

Saint John Chrysostom

* he enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ testified that He is the King, King of Israel, for they wrote over His head on the Crss, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (Matt 27: 37). We accept this testimony even though it may be understood that His power and divinity are limited to the children of Israel. The title written on the cross testifies of Christ's divinity not only to the Jews but also to all the people. He is King over the entire earth and rules over all its parts.³

Gregory of Nyssa

**Then many of the Jews read this title,
For the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city;
And it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin." [20]**

This title was written in three languages that were prevalent at that time. Hebrew, which is the language of the Law, Greek, the language of philosophers, and Latin, the language of the rulers. For, the Lord was crucified to be King over all.

* Even in His crucifixion, the chief priests envied the Lord Christ. I say to them, "this title does not harm you because if the Lord Jesus Christ was dead and weak and His name

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 117: 5.

² Homilies on St. John, 85: 1.

³ Song of Solomon by St. Gregory of Nyssa, translated into Arabic by Dr. George Nawar, sermon 7.

would be forgotten, why should you be afraid of what is written, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews”?’ [19]

Saint John Chrysostom

**Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate,
“Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’
but, ‘He said, I am the King of the Jews.’ [21]**

Crucifixion was not enough to satisfy their thirst for revenge. So they put pressure on Pilate to change the title and write, ‘He said, ‘I am the King of the Jews’ [21] but Pilate refused to do as they wished. They had already pushed him enough, and he could not do more. They wanted to declare that the Lord was a usurper of honor and authority and that they were loyal to Caesar; yet they were in submission to a foreign ruler and secretly wanted a Jewish ruler having full authority. They did not understand that their Ruler will “be cut off” (Daniel 9: 26).

**Pilate answered,
“What I have written, I have written.” [22]**

The Roman law forbade the change of the wording of the sentence once it is announced. It seems that Pilate unwillingly prophesied that this was the Messiah who will alone rule over the hearts. This prophecy is in Psalm 18: 22 written about a thousand years before the Crucifixion.

4 – Distribution of His Garments

**Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus,
Took His garments and made four parts,
To each soldier a part, and also the tunic.
Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece.” [23]**

He carried our sins. He also did not refuse to be naked on the Cross, so that we may see our own nakedness and pray that we put on the Lord Jesus Christ, our righteousness.

It was an almost worldwide custom that the belongings of those who were condemned to death went to the executors of the sentence. Saint John the Evangelist presents to us the extremely few belongings of the Lord. These were His garments cast on the ground. The four soldiers who carried out the verdict distributed His garments among themselves. The seamless tunic remained. It was woven from the top in one piece. They cast lots for it so that they may not tear it. He became as though He did not own anything, not even the tunic that was like a second skin. His garments were on the ground belonging to nobody because the condemned to death had no say or right even to His own clothes. A man’s clothes in Israel at that time consisted of an outside robe, an under robe, a head cover, a belt, sandals and underwear. However, there were no sandals among Christ’s belongings.

The Jewish Philon of Alexandria writes that the tunic of the high priest in the temple in Jerusalem was always seamless and woven from the top in one piece. This was a ritual obligation. Some commentators say that this symbolized the priesthood of Christ. Some say that Christ's tunic was similar to that of the high priest. The Jewish historian Josephus describes it as without seam, one piece on the shoulders and sides. It was long and had an opening for the neck and two for the arms.¹ It has been reported that Christ's mother made that tunic for Him when He was a child. Like the clothes of the people of Israel in the wilderness, Christ's tunic was not torn, nor became old.

* I think that John the Evangelist wrote this to reveal the common simplicity of the garments.

Saint John Chrysostom

Origen the Scholar observes that this tunic is symbolic of the perfect doctrine of Christ that must be preserved without a tear or division in parts. Saint Cyril the Great says it symbolizes the birth of Christ of a virgin, for she remained a virgin after His birth. But Saint Cyprian, who groaned because of the schism in the Church in North Africa, considers that the tunic without seam refers to the truly united Church that is never torn or mended.

Saint Augustine wrote in a letter to the Donatists, "Why do you want to divide the Lord's garments. Why do you not keep the tunic of love in the world whole, woven from the top. That tunic that even His oppressors did not tear?"²

Father Theodore of Mopsuestia believes that this type of clothes was common at the time of the Lord Christ, though by then, soldiers only wore it.

* The garments were distributed for our sake. Nobody can have everything when the lots are cast. For the distribution of the Holy Spirit is not according to a man's will. For, "...there are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit...But one and the same Spirit works all those things, distributing to each one individually as He wills," (1 Cor 12: 4, 11). Thus was the distribution of His garments, His works, and His blessings.

We read that the tunic was "woven from the top in one piece." The belief in Christ is woven in the same manner: for He came down to humanity since He was born of God before all ages and He accepted the flesh.

The statement, "the tunic was without seam" also refers to faith, for faith must not be torn. It must remain whole.³

Saint Ambrose

* The garments of the Lord Jesus Christ that were "made four parts" stand for the cardinal Church that spreads over the entire world. For, the world consists of four equal

¹ Antiq. B3c.7.s.4.

² Letters, 76.

³ Exposition 10: 116, 119, 120.

harmonious parts in four regions. For this reason, He says that He will send His angels and they will gather together His elect from the four winds (Matt 24: 31). Those are the four cardinal points of the world: the east, the west, the north and the south.¹

* The tunic, for which they cast lots, refers to the unity of all the parts bound by love. When the Apostle wishes to speak about love he says, “I show you a more excellent way” (1 Cor 12: 31). He says again, “...to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge” and in another Epistle he writes, “But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection” (Col 3: 14). If love is a more excellent way, if it passes knowledge and is above all things, then the tunic that represents love must be woven from the top and must be without seam.²

Saint Augustine

**“They said therefore among themselves,
‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,’
That the Scripture might be fulfilled which says:
‘They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots’.
Therefore the soldiers did these things.” [24]**

* Contemplate the prophecies that were fulfilled in the discussion of the soldiers. The crucified were three, but the prophecies were fulfilled in the Lord Christ. Why did not the soldiers do the same with the clothes of the other two crucified, and they did this with Christ alone? Observe the accuracy of the prophecy because the prophet David did not only say, “they divided My garments”, but he also mentioned what they did not divide. For they divided some garments, but His tunic they did not tear, but cast lots for it for one person to have it.

Saint John Chrysostom

Saint Jerome writes the Eustochem about the life of virginity and the proper conduct of virgins. He observes that such virgins imitate the Lord Jesus Christ who had a tunic woven from the top, heavenly. May the married sew for themselves garments because they lost the robe woven from the top.

In the same letter, he asks the virgins not to wear shoes. He writes, “Moses and Joshua had orders to take off their shoes because the land they stood on was holy (Ex 3: 5; Joshua 5: 15). That command had a secret meaning. Likewise when the disciples were appointed to preach, they were asked not take with them sandals or shoes (Matt 10: 10). When the soldiers began to cast lots for the clothes of Jesus, they did not find shoes to take because it was not possible for the Lord to have shoes when He prohibited His servants to have them.”³

5 – His Care for His Mother

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 118: 4.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 118: 4.

³ Letters 22: 19.

**Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother,
And His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas,
And Mary Magdalene.” [25]**

In Matthew 27: 56, and in Mark 15: 40, it is written that Mary the wife of Clopas is the mother of James the Less and of Joses and that her son James is the son of Alphaeus. It seems that Clopas and Alphaeus are two names for the same person. Hegesippus quotes Eusebius¹ saying that Clopas was the brother of Joseph, Saint Mary's betrothed.

While all the disciples, except John, had run away, the women (His mother, her sister, and Mary Magdalene) remained with Him by the cross. The women were not afraid of the cruelty of the wicked or the horror of the spectacle. Indeed, they could do nothing, but they showed their loyalty to the end. They accompanied Him on the way of salvation, which He walked, and in which the prophecy of Simeon the Elder was fulfilled. He said to Mary, “a sword will pierce through your own soul” (Luke 2: 35). Though they were extremely sad, they did not behave inappropriately as was the custom of women at funerals at that time. They accompanied the Lord because they were loyal and loved Him. Truly, that was God's great blessing that supported those women, especially His mother.

While four soldiers executed violently and cruelly the sentence of crucifixion, in contrast, four women stood with Christ during His suffering.

* The women stood by the Cross. The weak sex showed more manliness and everything changed definitely.²

Saint John Chrysostom

**When Jesus therefore saw His mother,
And the disciple whom He loved standing by,
He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” [26]**

At that moment, Saint Mary's heart was certainly totally absorbed by her Son's agony. As for Him, His pain did not distract Him, for it was the fruit of His great love for His mother and for all humanity. He was involved in the redemption, the growth, and glorification of everybody. In a last sign of kindness to His mother, He wanted to secure care and help for her after His departure. He therefore gave her to whom He loved and was closest to Him out of all the disciples. Joseph the carpenter had certainly died years before. There was no one to care for Saint Mary. The Lord therefore, while on the Cross, gave her to Saint John the beloved as his mother, and gave to her Saint John as her son. By this, John obtained a new relation; he became the son of the mother of Jesus, the Lord of Glory.

¹ H.E.1:3:11.

² Hom. 85. PG. 59: 506.

He left nothing for His mother since He had neither gold nor silver that she might inherit. The money box was for all the disciples and Judas who had it had probably squandered it. The soldiers took His clothes and Jesus had nothing to give His mother but to entrust her to whom He loved, John the apostle!

Through the Cross, His mother enjoyed the motherhood of the others after her only Son, Jesus, was lifted on the cross. He did not say to her, 'Mother' but said 'Woman'. This was no contempt or rejection of her motherhood, but rather not to increase her pain as a mother hearing her Son speaking in His last moments before His death. He may have desired to assert to her that He was not of this world. He therefore spoke to her, not in terms of mere blood relationship, but as she being a representative of the Church that He loved exceedingly.

Nicephoros¹ says that the Virgin Mary lived eleven years in the house of John in Jerusalem. Some say that she went with him to Ephesus.

* I would like you to meditate on the fact that the Lord did everything without confusion while He was on the Cross. He spoke to His disciples about His mother. He fulfilled the prophecies: He gave good hope to the thief. Yet, although He willingly accepted crucifixion, He broke into a sweat; He suffered and was troubled. What does this mean? It is not difficult to understand it. Before His crucifixion He showed the weakness of human nature, but here He revealed the greatness of His power.

Besides, He teaches us that before the terrible things happen, we are troubled yet cannot prevent them. But after the battle begins, we find things are possible and easy. Therefore, may we not fear death. Naturally our spirits love life, but it happens that the bonds of nature become loose and our desire for temporary life becomes weak.²

Saint John Chrysostom

* That disciple gained a hundred times more than he gave when he received the mother of Him who grants everything.³

Saint Augustine

**Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!"
And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. [27]**

* On the cross, Christ saw and divided the acts of piety between His mother and His disciple. The Lord testified not only on the general level, but also on the individual level. John referred to that testimony and gave witness to the greatness of this commandment.⁴

* His mother stood and disregarded the danger that surrounded her. She did that because of her zeal for piety. He disdained the dangers and gave His mother a pure devout Son.

¹ Eccv. His. Lib 2, 3.

² Homilies on St. John, 85: 1.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 119: 3.

⁴ Letter, 63: 109.

This passage teaches us to practice actual kindness. It also teaches children to respect their mothers. He declared that she who gave birth to God remained a virgin. Still, she was delivered in a secret manner to John, the youngest of the disciples. Here is the mystery of the Church. For, the Church at first was related in appearance, not practically, to the old nation. But she gave birth to the Word that was planted in the bodies and minds of men, through faith in the cross, and the burial of the Lord's body according to God's commandment. She then chose to adhere to the younger group.¹

Saint Ambrose

* How wonderful that honor was that the Lord Christ gave to His disciple! How abundant that honor was because when He departed at that time He gave her to His disciple, That disciple cared for her and as she needed help the Lord entrusted her to His beloved disciple.

* He teaches us to give unusual respect to our mothers. When our parents oppose us concerning spiritual concerns we must not cling to what is ours. Although they do not know us fully, we must offer them respect and prefer them to others because they are our parents who brought us up and endured terrible things for our sakes.²

Saint John Chrysostom

* The Holy Bible teaches us that not only the biological father is called father, but also others may be called 'father'. Listen to what the Apostle says, "For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Cor 4: 15). Paul was father to the Corinthians, not according to the flesh but through teaching. And he begot them again through the Spirit.

Listen also to Job who says, "I am father to the poor". He calls himself father not because he begot them all, but because he cared for them.

The Only Begotten Son of God Himself when He was nailed to the tree at the crucifixion, He looked at His mother in the flesh and at John, the most beloved of His disciples, and said, "Behold your mother!" He said to His mother, "Behold your son". He declared she should pour her 'parental' love in John³ In this manner He indirectly explained Luke's words, "and His father and mother marveled at Him", these are the words that the heretics quote saying that He was born of a man and a woman.

Just as Mary was called a mother of John because of her 'parental' love, not because she gave birth to him, likewise Joseph was a father of Christ because he cared for Him and brought Him up, not because he begot Him. For, the Gospel says, "...and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son (Matt 1: 25).⁴

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem

¹ Exposition 10: 129, 132, 134.

² Hom 85. PG 59: 506.

³ The Greek word is used about the love that the mother or father has for the son, or that the son has for his parents.

⁴ Article 7: 9.

* He is the virgin son who accepted the Virgin Mother an inheritance from the Lord.¹
Saint Jerome

6 – They Offer Him Vinegar

**After this Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished,
That the Scripture might be fulfilled, said,
“I thirst.” [28]**

The Evangelist mentioned previously, in his account of the Lord’s encounter with the Samaritan woman, that the Lord was thirsty and that also was at the sixth hour. Some say that it was at that hour, noontime, that Adam went out of Paradise. God, thus, shows His great love of mankind and His thirst for humanity to return to His divine bosom.

During His service, the Lord Jesus Christ declared to the Samaritan woman that He was thirsty (Jn 4: 6-7) for He asked for her belief. At the end of His journey and on the Cross, He declared that He was thirsty for mankind to enjoy His redemptive work. We read that the flames of hell caused the rich man to feel thirsty and beg for a drop of water to wet his tongue. Our Christ, having taken our place, declared that He was thirsty so that we may drink of the fountains of His love.

It was natural that the Crucified felt thirsty because his body lost a lot of water because of perspiration and the wounds. Our Christ did not complain of pain of the flesh because of the crown of thorns, the nails, and the spear. The only complaint that He uttered was that He was thirsty. Here He expressed His inward thirst in addition to His physical pain. The Psalmist David foretold this in the Psalm about the Crucifixion. He said, “My tongue clings to My jaws” (Ps 22: 15) and also in Psalm 69: 21. The synoptic Evangelists do not mention the Lord’s thirst. John the Evangelist alone records it.

**Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there;
And they filled a sponge with sour wine,
Put it on hyssop,
And put it to His mouth. [29]**

Some writers are inclined to think that this was to intensify His pain, but this was unnecessary because He was dying. It was usual to give the crucified a cup of wine to reduce his pain in his last moments. But in the case of the Lord they frivolously gave Him a sponge filled with sour wine or vinegar. Other commentators say the exact opposite. For, those who investigated the truth found proof that for a long time the Roman soldiers in the hot climate countries were given a special drink called ‘Pouska’. That was a mixture of water and vinegar that would quench their thirst.

Some people ask how can a sponge filled with vinegar be put on hyssop, which is a weak plant, and raised to the mouth of the crucified. They thought that the word

¹ Letter 127: 6.

‘hyssop’ meant ‘a stalk’ because in Greek the word has those two meanings. The word ‘stalk’ appears in an eleventh century version. However, most researchers reject this meaning because ‘hyssop’ appears in all the former manuscripts and the manuscripts of the early Church Fathers.

Raymond E. Brown says that there are eighteen plants that are called hyssop. There are also several kinds that have a long stalk that can lift a sponge to reach the mouth of a crucified man.¹

The Lord Jesus Christ refused to drink wine before He was crucified (Matt 27: 34; Mark 15: 23). That was the wine that would have relieved His pain.

* Who has such authority to shape what such a “Man” did to arrange everything concerning His suffering? But this Man is the mediator between God and men. The Man about whom we read in the prophecy...Who knows Him? He is He who revealed Himself bearing all those pains. He is Himself hidden, for He is God who prepared all the suffering.

He saw everything that would happen and requested that it should be fulfilled. He therefore accepted to drink vinegar: ‘And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink’, (Ps 69: 21)².

* He said, “I thirst” [28] as though He said, ‘One thing you have failed to do, that was to give Me what you are.’ For the Jews were themselves, vinegar was extracted from the wine of the Father patriarchs and prophets. They were like a vessel full of the evil of this world. Their hearts were like sponges, for they were deceitful and in their depth were irregular pores. As for the hyssop on which they put the sponge filled with sour wine, that is a weak herb that cleans the heart and fits the humility of Christ whom they encompassed and thought they had absolutely trapped. It is therefore said in the Psalm, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean” (Ps 51: 7). For Christ’s humility purifies us, because if He had not humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Phil 2: 8), His blood would not have been shed for the remission of sins; in other words for our purification.³

Saint Augustine

7 – He Gives up His Spirit

**So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said,
“It is finished!”
And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. [30]**

By saying, “It is finished!” the Lord Jesus Christ declared that the hostility of His persecutors had reached the end, and that the prophecies concerning His crucifixion had

¹ Leon Morris, p. 668.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 119: 4.

³ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 119: 4.

been entirely fulfilled. The shadow has been removed completely and the truth has been realized. He was sold for thirty pieces of silver; His hands and feet were pierced; His garments were divided, and they cast lots for His tunic. Moreover, they had just given Him vinegar for His thirst and finally His side was pierced. Now His sufferings are complete so that He may go carrying the spoils to Paradise. In replacement of the sad environment, He opens the gates of Paradise so that the spirits that are reposed in hope may rejoice. Now that He has offered His body a sacrifice, He, as the Great Heavenly High Priest goes to the Father so that the Father may smell the sweet savor.

‘He gave up His spirit’: His life was not taken from Him by force; He willingly gave it up. He said to the Father, **“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”** He thus expressed His acceptance of death as His choice to redeem many spirits.

‘And bowing His head’: Those who are crucified usually raise their heads to breathe. They do not bow their heads except at the very last breath. But to indicate His willing choice, the Lord Christ bowed His head, as in sleep or as surrendering to declare, first, that He carries the burden of our sins and evils. Some commentators observe that bowing His head proclaims the extent of the weight of our sins that He willingly carried for us. “For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me” (Ps 38: 4). “For innumerable evils have surrounded me” (Ps 40: 12). Bowing His head declares also His submission and obedience to His Father who is pleased to offer His Only Begotten Son a sacrifice of love for the human race.

On the Cross, Jesus gave up His human spirit into the hands of the Father so that He may give His Holy Spirit to His Church.

* **‘And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.’** This means that He died. Yet, giving the last breath does not come after bowing the head; but what happens here is the opposite. What happens to us did not happen to Him. We bow the head after the last breath, but He bowed His head and then gave up His spirit. The Evangelist clearly shows that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.¹

* Do you see how the Lord did everything He desired with authority and without confusion?

Saint John Chrysostom

* He bowed His head and completed the journey of His spirit in comfortable work for it. Now His spirit is in the bosom of the Father who cares and strengthens it in His bosom. The Learned Origen

* Who can sleep when he wants to, as Jesus died when He desired? Who is he who took off his clothes when he wished, as Christ put off His flesh as He pleased? Who is he who travels in this manner when he wants, like Christ who departed from this life as He pleased? How great is the power of Christ for whom we long and whom we fear, for He

¹ Hom. 85. PG 599: 507.

is the Judge. That greatness of power and authority He proclaimed while He was a dead man!¹

Saint Augustine

8 – His Side Is Pierced with a Spear

**Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day,
That the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath
(for that Sabbath was a high day),
The Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken,
And that they might be taken away. [31]**

Every Sabbath was holy. But this Sabbath was during the Passover week when they ate unleavened bread and offered their first fruits. Therefore some considered it a 'high day' or 'megale hemerra'. It was the greatest of the days of preparation for the Passover. The preparation for every Sabbath started at the ninth hour (3:00 PM) of Friday. **Josephus**² writes that the Emperor Augustus decreed, for the sake of the Jews, that no one was obliged to offer greetings on the Sabbath beginning with the ninth hour of the day of preparation in accordance to the Jewish rites. Dead bodies were not allowed to remain on ordinary days (Deut 21: 23). Now they may have felt compunction and could not bear to see His body hung before them to remind them of their horrible crime and spoil the joy of the feast. Moreover, there were many strangers in Jerusalem, because of the feast, and the Jews did not want the body of the crucified Christ to remain hanging.

Some writers observe that the Jews did not ask Pilate that the heads of the crucified might be cut off so that they die quickly without much pain. They rather asked their legs might be broken so that they suffer even more. Thus, even in asking for mercy (to take away the bodies from the cross) they were very cruel. When they pretended to be holy (the bodies did not remain so that the land might not be defiled) they were evil. They cared to keep the Sabbath, but had no regard for justice or righteousness.

* The Jews swallowed a camel and strained out a gnat. They committed a great sin, but were very careful in keeping the Sabbath.³

Saint John Chrysostom

**Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other
Who were crucified with Him. [32]
But when they came to Jesus
And saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. [33]**

The Lord Christ died quickly before the two thieves. That may be because His body was weak and He was gentle and could not endure all that suffering. Or, He may have permitted Himself to die before them so that everybody might comprehend that He

¹ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 119: 6.

² Josephus: antiq. 6. 16.c.6.s51.

³ Homilies on St. John, 85: 1.

died of His own will. He gave up His spirit into the hands of the Father at the time He chose. He surrendered to death of His own will, not as an obligation, but through His victory in love.

**But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear,
And immediately blood and water came out. [34]**

The incident of piercing the side of Christ is recorded in this Gospel only. Jesus, who truly died in the flesh when His spirit left His body, declares that He is the beginning of life that conquers death. By His death He vanquished death and gave us back eternal life.

The early **Church Fathers**, such as the saints Augustine, Ambrose and John Chrysostom, consider this (blood and water that came from Christ's side) the first indication of the sacraments. Water is a symbol of baptism and blood is the Eucharist. We thus drink directly from the wound in the side of our Lord Jesus. The Learned Tertulian, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, and Saint Jerome believe that water and blood here are symbols of baptism and martyrdom.¹ Others think that water stands for the Old Testament and blood is for the New Testament because in it the promise was fulfilled and the people of both Covenants enjoyed salvation.

It is said that the name of that soldier is Longinus, and that when blood and water gushed from the Lord's side some drops of blood fell on the soldier's sick eyes and healed them. He then believed in Christ and preached in Cappadocia and received the crown of martyrdom there. Some say that the name Longinus is a phonetic corruption of the Greek word 'longchee' that means lance or spear, a word that occurs in this verse.

The debate continues concerning which side, the left or right, of the Lord Christ was pierced. The Holy Spirit does not inform us through the Gospels but just says that Christ's side was pierced with a spear in fulfillment of the prophecy. Some believe that the spear pierced the Lord Jesus Christ to the heart, and opened a window through which the spirit saw Christ's heart full of divine love, or extremely fiery love for mankind. It is an open window through which the believer can meet God and send to Him affection. It is the window of the heart that is never closed to any repentant.

God allowed the soldier to attack the heart of the Lord with a spear so that we may see in that heart the Rock that was struck for our sake (1 Cor 10: 4). We also see the fountain that flows for us (Zech 13: 1) and the wells of salvation that were dug for our sake (Is 12: 3). We see the river that overflows to give joy to the city of God.

* The Lord was wounded in His suffering and blood and water came out of the wound. The water is for purification, the blood for drinking, and the spirit for His resurrection.

¹ Letter 69: 6.

For Christ alone is our hope, faith, and love. Our hope is in His resurrection, our faith is in the font, and our love is in the sacrament.¹

Saint Ambrose

* The soldiers came and broke the legs of the others but did not break Christ's legs. However, they pierced His side with a spear to please the Jews and as an insult to the dead body. Now, the prophecy is fulfilled, "and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced" (See Zech 12: 10). Moreover, this act became an evidence of faith for those who did not believe later, like Thomas and similar people. This also conveys a great mystery that has been realized. For, blood and water came out and this was neither a coincidence nor did it lack purpose. The two springs flew together and through them the Church was established. Those initiated in the sacraments know this: that through the water they obtain a new birth, and through the Blood and Body they are invigorated. The mysteries were founded, thus from the beginning, so that when you approach the cup full of awe, this is like approaching Christ's side to drink.²

Saint John Chrysostom

* Just as His work and service on the earth began with water, it also ended with water. They pierced His side with a spear, and blood and water gushed as symbols of baptism and martyrdom.³

Saint Jerome

He announced this before, when He ordered Noah to make a door in the side of the ark (Gen 6: 16) through which all the animals, symbolizing the Church, enter so that they would not perish in the flood. He created the first woman from the man's side as he slept (Gen 2: 22-23). She was called life (Eve) the mother of all living (Gen 3: 20). The Second Adam bowed His head and slept on the Cross so that from the side of the sleeping Man, the Bride may be formed. What is more pure than that Blood? What can grant health more than that wound?⁴

Saint Augustine

**And he who has seen has testified,
And his testimony is true;
And he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. [35]
For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled,
'Not one of His bones shall be broken.' [36]**

Saint John testifies that he saw that with his own eyes, and that it happened miraculously. He affirms this because the other Evangelists do not relate this incident and because what happens here asserts Jesus Christ's death.

¹ Concerning Virgins 3: 5 (22).

² Hom. 85. PG 59: 507.

³ Letter 69 to Oceanus, 6.

⁴ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 120: 2.

The Scripture is fulfilled in accordance to the promise given to all the righteous as a reference to what would be realized concerning Jesus the Righteous. Psalm 34: 20 says, “He guards all his bones; not one of them is broken.” By the Spirit, David writes, “All my bones shall say, ‘Lord, who is like You?’” (Ps 35: 10). Again, the Jews were forbidden to break any bone of the Passover lamb (Ex 12: 46; Numbers 9: 12). Our Christ is our Passover who was sacrificed for us (1 Cor 5: 7). He is the Lamb of God (Jn 1: 29) and therefore His bones were not broken.

Bones, to the Hebrews, denote the strength of the body because they form the skeleton of the human being. Not breaking Christ’s bones signifies that even though the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified as in weakness, yet there is strength in His weakness. Sin breaks our bones and destroys our strength. The Psalmist David therefore says in the Psalm of repentance, “That the bones You have broken may rejoice” (Ps 51: 8). But sin could not break or crush Christ’s bones, for He stood steadfastly carrying the burden of our sins to save us.

This was previously said in describing the lamb to the Jews. However, the symbol is present for the sake of the truth and has become clearer. For this reason the Evangelist quotes the Scripture in the middle of what he says.

* Saint John declares loudly the required sacraments in advance. As he saw the treasure in the sacraments, he was scrupulous in relating what happened and how the prophecy was fulfilled. “Not one of his bones is broken” (See Ex 12: 46; Ps 34: 20). This was said about the lamb of the Jews for the sake of the truth to which the symbol referred beforehand. In Him the prophecy was perfectly fulfilled. Therefore, the Evangelist quotes the prophet. Saint John introduces himself always as a witness, but if his testimony might be doubted, he introduces Moses as a witness: what happened did not lack purpose, but was rather mentioned earlier in old times.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

**And again another Scripture says,
‘They shall look on Him whom they pierced.’ [37]**

The Scripture speaks also concerning Him who was pierced with a spear. In the book of Zechariah the prophet, we read, “and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn” (Zech 12: 10; Rev 1: 7). We also read that He was wounded in the house of His friends (Zech 13: 6).

* Those miserable people who scorned Him when they saw Him hung on the precious Cross, will look upon Him and see Him crowned with divine glory. They will go down the pit of destruction as a just punishment for their transgression concerning Him.²

Saint Cyril the Great

¹ Hom. 85. PG 59: 507-508.

² Comm. On St. Luke, Hom. 145, ch. 22.

* Once more St John supports the prophet's words with his own testimony. I have told you those words so that you may know the great relation that exists between the symbol and the truth. Do you not see the effort he took concerning these things, and so that they may believe by comprehending through what seems shameful and disgraceful!?

The soldier's abuse of the dead body was worse than the crucifixion. However, not even through ignominy can anyone harm our cause. For, what seems to be extremely shameful is itself an extremely exalted record of the good concerns.¹

Saint John Chrysostom

9 – The Burial of the Lord Jesus Christ

**After this, Joseph of Arimathea,
Being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews,
Asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus;
And Pilate gave him permission.
So he came and took the body of Jesus. [38]**

As the Jewish Passover was imminent, the quick burial was necessary. The Evangelist describes the burial in an impressive manner, and as a dignified act of faith and love of two secret disciples. Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, but in his weakness he followed the Lord secretly during His service. However, at the critical moments, when the body of the Lord was hung on the cross, Joseph of Arimathea went courageously to ask Pilate to give him permission to take the body of Jesus. In doing this he obtained great honor. Nicodemus accompanied him. He had once come at night to the Lord, but now he was not afraid of being expelled from the Sanhedrim. If those two men had not buried Jesus, the soldiers would have buried Him with the two thieves in an old grave and His resurrection would not have been affirmed. People would have even claimed that another man had risen from the dead.

* Joseph was not one of the twelve disciples. He was probably one of the seventy apostles.

Saint John Chrysostom

**And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came,
Bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. [39]**

Myrrh and aloes are used to preserve the body for a long time. Some researchers say that a hundred pounds of that mixture would be enough to preserve two hundred dead bodies and they think this was a mistake in writing. However, this was a custom in the case of important or loved personalities. It has been said that a huge quantity of the mixture was used in the funeral of Aristobulus. It has also been said that five hundred servants carried the aloes used to preserve the body of Herod² and eighty pounds of

¹ Hom. 85. PG 59: 508.

² Josephus, b15 c.3, s.14, b17, c.8.s.c.

spices were used at the funeral of the great Gamaliel. A pound is a Greek and Roman measure equal to a hundred dirhams.

* Here is myrrh for burial. The aloe juice is for crossing over to the underworld where every drop goes down. And cinnamon is provided for the body on the Cross.¹

Saint Basil the Great

* Your original smell is better than all spices (Song of Solomon 4: 10) used in the burial of the Savior [39]. The sweet smell flows out, when the pleasures of the body members are destroyed. But the other smell is like the smell of Lebanon (Song of Solomon 4: 11) that produces the smell of incorruption of the body of our Lord, the pure flower of virginity.²

Saint Ambrose

**Then they took the body of Jesus,
And bound it in strips of linen with the spices,
As the custom of the Jews is to bury. [40]**

* What does that signify, that not His disciples, but Joseph and Nicodemus are the ones who buried the Lord?

One of them is good and just (Luke 23: 50) and the other has no hypocrisy. Thus Christ's burial is done without deceit or evil. There is no room for trickery. If the apostles had buried Him, the Jews would have said, those certainly never buried Him. But a just man wrapped Christ's body in costly linen (Matt 27: 59; Luke 23: 53) and an honest man anointed Him with spices. Therefore, what happened did not lack purpose, for, righteousness envelops the Church, and innocence serves grace.

Cover the body of the Lord, the Church, with garments and anoint Him with myrrh and spices, so that the Church may become to God the fragrance of Christ (2 Cor 2: 15).

Joseph brought expensive linen. That may have been what Peter saw descending from heaven and in it all kinds of animals, a symbol of the Gentiles (Acts 10: 11-12). The Church is thus wrapped, linking a variety of people in partaking of their faith in that pure fragrant mystery.³

Saint Ambrose

* I believe there was no lack of purpose in saying, "as the custom of the Jews is to bury" [40]. For, if I am not mistaken, by saying this he urges us to practice such service for the dead in accordance to the custom of our country.⁴

Saint Augustine

¹ Hom. 17, Ps. 44: 7, Exegetic Homilies in Fathers of the Church vol 46, p. 290.

² Concerning Virgins 1: 7: 39.

³ Exposition, 10: 136, 137.

⁴ St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 120: 4.

**Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden,
And in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. [41]**

Christ's body was buried in a new tomb that Joseph of Arimathea had prepared in a garden he owned outside the city near Golgotha where Christ was crucified. Joseph did not expect that in that tomb the Lord Jesus Christ would be buried.

In a garden, the Lord had bowed His head to joyfully deliver His will up into the hands of the Father and be carried to the cross. In that garden He was arrested, and in a garden the Lord rose from the dead to announce that through His suffering and death He has defeated death and has granted the resurrection. In the garden was buried the grain of wheat about which the Lord Jesus Christ had spoken (Jn 12: 24) and it produced thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold. In the garden, the Lord let the streams of life flow (Song of Solomon 4: 15).

The tomb was new and the Lord rose from it while the stone was rolled over it as its door. Just as He was born of a virgin He rose from a virgin tomb. Everything concerning Him, even the tomb, was new so that He may grant us a new life.

* In that garden, I sang to My Bride, in the Song of Solomon, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse" (5: 1). For the place where He was crucified was a garden. What did He take from there? "I have gathered my myrrh with my spice" for He drank myrrh with vinegar. After that He said, "It is finished" because the mystery was accomplished, the Scripture was fulfilled, and the sins were forgiven. "But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most High Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ...cleanse your conscience" (Hebrews 9: 11-14).¹

* Again He says in the Song of Solomon, "I went down into the garden of nuts" (6: 11) for He was crucified in a garden. For though that place is now decorated with royal gifts, yet it was a garden and the landmarks and traces still exist. He is "a garden enclosed...a fountain sealed" (Song of Solomon 4: 12). The following was written about the Jews who said, "we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore command that the tomb be made secure" and "So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard" (Matt 27: 63-64, 66).²

* He was buried in a garden where a vine was planted for He said, "I am the true vine" (Jn 15: 1). He was planted in the earth so that He may pluck out the curse that happened because of Adam. For the earth then brought forth thorns and thistles. The vine sprang

¹ Article 13: 32.

² Article 14: 5.

out of the earth so that the words of the Psalm may be fulfilled: “Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven” (Ps 85: 11).

What does He who was buried in the garden say? He says, “I have gathered my myrrh with my spice” (Song of Solomon) and “myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices (4: 14). These are the signs of burial as is recorded in the Gospels, “certain other women with them came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared” (Luke 24: 1); “And Nicodemus...also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes” (Jn 19: 39). It is also written, “I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey” (Song of Solomon 5: 1) for He ate myrrh before crucifixion and honey after the resurrection.¹

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem

* Just as no one before or after Him was born of the Virgin Mary, likewise no one before or after Him was buried in this tomb.²

Saint Augustine

**So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day,
For the tomb was nearby. [42]**

There was no funeral service for the Lord Jesus Christ because He was crucified, rejected by His people, and because there was no time and therefore the burial had to be in a hurry before sunset. The Sun of righteousness was buried at sunset and it was impossible for the tomb to imprison His light. Darkness could not control Him. The soldiers stood guard lest He should rise and proclaim that He paid our debt, His sacrifice for us was accepted, and that He justified us before the Father. However, the soldiers' watch became a testimony of the truth of His resurrection.

This conduct (the quick burial) shows that His resurrection was not in anybody's mind in spite of the continuous references to it before His crucifixion. The burial took place in this manner because there was no time and there was no tomb prepared for Him. No one thought of burying Him in the family cemetery because the sun was about to set and it was difficult for the family to prepare for burial especially in such bitter circumstances. This is from the human point of view. However, concerning the divine dispensation, everything was amazingly arranged. Thus, Isaiah foretold this seven hundred years beforehand when he said, “And he made his grave...with the rich in his death” (Is 53: 9).

* It was arranged that the body of the Lord was laid in a new tomb in which no one was buried before, so that nobody might think that there was another buried with Him who rose from the dead. Also this enabled His disciples to come to the tomb and see what happened, for the tomb was nearby.

Saint John Chrysostom

¹ Article 14: 11.

² St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate, 120: 5.

**Meditations Inspired by the Gospel of St John
Chapter Nineteen**

With You I Am Judged, and with You I Am Crucified

- + They led You to the court of justice, You O Judge of all!
Your presence sanctified the tribunal
Acceptance of injustice
For Your love and Your children's love became my spirit's pleasure!
You remained silent before Pilate who was therefore troubled.
You declared to him that Your kingdom was not of this world
So Pilate wanted to know who You are.
They released Barabbas the robber
And You, O Righteous, were crucified.
Yes, You opened the gates of captivity
And released my spirit from prison.
- + I shall go out with You to Golgotha.
In the act of Your cross I find honor I do not deserve.
I look at Your crown of thorns
And I see that You are preparing for me a crown of eternal glory.
- + The road to Golgotha has become a royal road
Who deserves to cross it
To enter with You to Your heavenly glory?
- + You carried the wooden cross to carry all mankind who believe in You.
In Your wonderful love You thirst for all mankind
They gave You vinegar to drink,
So that You may give us to drink the river of life in Jerusalem above
You bowed Your head and gave Your spirit up into the hands of Your Father
So that You may raise our heads before Your Father
And glorify our spirits and bodies!
- + They pierced Your side with a spear and blood and water came out!
Your blood sanctified me entirely
And through the water You granted me the Spirit of prophecy to the Father
- + In Your crucifixion You were numbered with the transgressors
So that You may declare that You are the Savior of sinners.
In Your death You were buried in the grave of a rich man
You are the lover of sinners for their justification
You gather the poor and the rich
You are the lover of mankind.

+ They buried You in a garden
Because the first Adam died in the garden
And in the garden You have come to restore life to us once more!.

Amen

CHAPTER 20

THE LORD'S RESURRECTION TESTIFIES TO HIS DIVINITY

The Resurrection: The first and eight day combined

The Lord Risen from the Dead

St. John opens the first chapter of his Gospel by proclaiming the eternal existence of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a completely different beginning in contrast to the opening chapters in the other three Gospels. St. John elaborates that the Lord, being the word of God, and being one with Him, was born since time eternal. However, in the closing chapters of his Gospel, St. John writes about the same events recorded in the other Gospels as they all speak about the Lord's resurrection. This is because His resurrection represents the focal point of the act of salvation. The Lord spoke repeatedly about that subject; and He presented the story of Jonah the prophet inside the whale as an example of His burial and resurrection (Matt 12:40). None of the evangelists have explained to us how the Lord arose. They were preoccupied with confirming His resurrection. In every possible way, they wanted to convince everyone of that great event. As much as the disciples and apostles confirmed the Lord's resurrection, as much as unbelievers resisted this fact. Indeed, His resurrection entailed a confirmation of the crime committed in killing the Messiah, the Giver of life. The resurrection confirms the redeeming act: since He was slaughtered for our sake, then His resurrection confirms the acceptance of this sacrifice. Since He was crucified on account of our debts, then His resurrection proclaims the payment of the debt. Nothing has preoccupied the minds of preachers more than the need to confirm the Lord's resurrection. This is because the Lord was publicly crucified and the sun became darkened at that moment. The Lord arose in order to appear to His followers and those loyal lovers who seek their salvation.

Each Evangelist has underlined an aspect of the resurrection that differs from that recorded by the other writers. What St. John has underlined is not recorded in the other Gospels. He does not relate the story found in St. Luke's Gospel about the Lord's meeting with the two disciples on the way to Emaus. St. John does not include the story in St. Matthew about the Lord's meeting with some of the women who were going to the tomb. He also does not relate the story in St. Mark about the youth who was dressed in white and who informed the women that they would see the Lord in Galilee.

1- Dawn: The Empty Tomb	verses 1-10
2- Morning: Mary Magdalene and the Two Angels	11-13
3- Morning: Mary Magdalene and the Lord	14-18
4- The Lord Meets the Disciples on Sunday Evening	19-25
5- Meeting with Them the Next Day	26-29

1- Dawn: The Empty Tomb

**Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early,
While it was still dark,
And saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.[1]**

St. John has reported many events where women played great roles: the first miracle he reports reveals the holy virgin Mary, the mother of the Lord, as an intercessor for those present at the wedding in Cana. In chapter four, the Lord meets with the Samaritan woman who attracted the whole city of Sychar. After the Lord had revealed Himself to her, she wanted them all to enjoy meeting with Him. In the incident of the raising of Lazarus from the dead (Ch. 11), the presence of the two sisters, Martha and Mary is of great significance. In this Chapter, Mary Magdalene appears with her amazing inner faithfulness. She came to the tomb while it was still dark. She was driven by her great love to the One who was absent from her at that time. Her personal and immense sorrow seem to be the driving force leading her to go to the tomb. She felt overwhelmed by the finality of absence which the grave always inspires. She was the first person to see the stone rolled away from the grave. The Lord intended her to witness that the One who takes away the sins of the world has risen (John 1:29), and that the final veil has been removed.

The word 'Magdalene' is the feminine for the word 'Magdala'. Here the word 'Magdalene' means 'Mary, from Magdala'. The Talmud mentions that there was a city called Magdala, and it took about twenty minutes to walk from Tiberia (on the Sea of Galilee) on the northern side to that city. The word 'Magdala' means 'tower'. Actually there was a tower in the region which carried that name- probably a watch tower.

St. John mentions St. Mary Magdalene solely, and has not referred to the other women who went to the tomb with her. Probably, this is due to her great eagerness to go there. The Lord had shown her great love and she had adhered to Him and had used her money to provide for His needs (Luke 8:2-3). She had listened to His teachings, and loved Him to the end. She stood by the Lord up to the moment of His death on the Cross. Now, she had come to His tomb without fearing the possible obstacles and dangers. Indeed, her love for the Lord stripped her of the fear of death and of the grave. She came to the tomb to weep bitterly and to pour frankincense and spices on His Body. This was Mary Magdalene who had adhered to the Lord up to the last moment of His burial. Now she would be the first to enjoy the news of His joyful and glorious resurrection: the empty tomb!

Mary Magdalene came to the tomb **at the beginning of the week**. That is, she came as soon as the Sabbath of the Old Testament was over. According to the literal application of the law, it would have been incorrect to visit the tomb until the new Sabbath day - the first Sabbath of the New Testament- when the Lord arose from the

dead. Mary Magdalene, in this context, has become a representative of the Church that fulfills the law of the Lord Jesus Christ. She celebrates the new Sabbath as she hurries to the Lord's tomb in order to enjoy fellowship in His resurrection. The Gospel here begins with the first day in the new week. It opens before us a totally new age. It proclaims, in that new age, a new resurrected life and a new world. Since that time, Christians have designated Sunday as the day of rest: it is celebrated in memory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is called 'the Lord's day' (Rev 1:10).

She came to the tomb in the early morning. Indeed, love drives the believer to meet with the One resurrected from the dead at the first possible opportunity and as early as possible, without delay or procrastination. She came while it was still dark, yet the Sun of Righteousness could shine within her and brighten the path to the empty tomb that stood as a witness to the glory of the Lord's resurrection. It was still dark, but love provided the light to her path.

She 'saw that the stone had been taken away'. As she was preoccupied with thoughts about the Lord, she did not worry about the problem of rolling the stone in order to offer the spices (Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1). At the same time, when she came and found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty, she did not realize immediately that the Lord had risen. She thought the body had been taken away. The Lord intended her to enjoy the news of the resurrection gradually.

The Lord arose while the stone was in its place with the seals on it. However, to ensure that all the others would be completely assured, it was necessary to open the tomb after the resurrection. This is what happened, and this is what drove St. Mary Magdalene to take action. She was so filled with love for her Lord, that she could not rest; and as soon as the Sabbath ended, she went very early to the tomb. She was anxious to find some comfort in that place. When she got there, and saw the stone rolled away, she did not enter inside. She did not even bend down. Rather, she ran eagerly to the disciples. She zealously wanted to get back to them and report promptly what happened to the body. This explains why she ran and the words she said to them¹.

St. John Chrysostom

**Then she ran and came to Simon Peter,
And to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them,
"They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb,
And we do not know where they have laid Him." [2]**

As the two disciples ran towards the tomb, it was hard for Mary Magdalene to join them. So she probably returned to the tomb while they were there or maybe after they had already left. She began to weep and it was then that the two angels appeared to her to console her.

She had quickly run to Peter and John because they lived on the outskirts of the city and close to the tomb. Therefore she just ran to them. It never occurred to her that the

¹ Homilies on St John, 85:4

Lord had risen according to what He had said to His disciples. Yet, there were clear indications of the resurrection, and the testimony was powerful. She probably suspected that the high priest had ordered that the body be moved to another place as a form of humiliating the Lord. Or could Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus have feared that the Jews would be angered by their act so they had carried the Lord's body to another tomb?

Mary Magdalene ran to the two disciples to beg them to look for the Lord's body. Her grief due to His death did not erase her need to see the Lord's body. She wanted to offer spices as an indication of her love even after His death.

The amazing thing is that Peter and John stuck together. Peter's denial had humbled him, yet he did not despair. Through repentance and tears, he came back to share fellowship and service with John. Lovingly, John did not reject drawing close to that one who had denied the Lord; for Peter showed remorse.

Some believe that Mary Magdalene ran to Peter and John while the other women ran to report the news to the rest of the disciples.

The mother of the Lord went to the tomb where she met the rest of the women.. Being the Theotokos, she alone realized the power of the angels' words- She and the other women listened to the glad news concerning the resurrection- Mary Magdalene told them how she had met with her Son and Lord. Mary Magdalene had seen the One risen from the dead. She had recognized Him before all the other women. She fell down and touched His feet and became an apostle to His disciples¹.

Fr. Gregory Palamas

**Peter, therefore, went out, and the other disciple,
And were going to the tomb. [3]**

They both went out as quickly as possible to check the news. They wanted to be personally assured, and they wanted to look for the Holy body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

St. John Chrysostom believes that St. Mary Magdalene imagined that the body had been stolen because she was not thinking clearly about the resurrection. However, the evangelist St. John does not deny praising her for her action. Moreover, he does not consider it shameful that the disciples heard the news first hand from a woman who had spent the whole night vigilant and anxious to see the body of the Lord Jesus Christ².

The Evangelist exposes the stages one takes to progress towards understanding and comprehending the resurrection. The first step is the immediate shock that Mary Magdalene got on discovering the empty tomb. Then St John sees and experiences what the Lord had declared previously that 'He would arise from the dead.

So they both ran together,

¹ Homily on the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women. PG 151:244 CD, 245

² Homilies on St John, 85:4

And the other disciple outran Peter, and came to the tomb first. [4]

The two disciples ran together as soon as they heard the news from Mary Magdalene. Her words did not lead them to despair though the matter was out of their control and they could do nothing. However, they wanted to act quickly in order to comfort her and to find out the real situation. They ran together and did not compete as to who would enter into the tomb first. Even though John outran Peter due to his youthful age, yet they cooperated. The incentive one of them had to run to the tomb did not impede the other. Each ran as fast as he could. Peter did not envy John as he ran faster, nor did John despise Peter for his slowness. Peter had repented denying the Lord. His guilt feelings slackened his movement towards the tomb. Yet he was not deprived of the One risen from the dead. This is serious spiritual friendship, which bears the spirit of communal action with no impediments to others. The wise prophet accordingly says: 'two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor' (Eccl 4:9).

Some believe that Mary Magdalene ran to the disciples after she and the women with her had seen the angel who told them that the Lord had risen. However, she was so stunned that she did not report to the disciples what the angel had told her. All what preoccupied her was to find the Lord's body and to meet with Him. Her vision of the angel and his conversation with her could have seemed more like a dream or part of her imagination. Note that the only disciples, who moved at her words, were Peter and John only.¹

**And he stooping down and looking in,
Saw the linen clothes lying there, yet he did not go in. [5]**

John did not go in because he trusted that the words of Mary Magdalene were true and that the body was no longer in the tomb. He was assured just by looking inside the empty tomb. However, as soon Peter stepped inside, John followed him. Then they saw and believed that the body was no longer in the tomb.

**Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb;
And he saw the linen clothes lying there. [6]**

They looked and saw the linen clothes placed in order and folded. This was a sign of the resurrection. Indeed, anyone who intended to steal or remove the Body would not have stripped the linen clothes from it. A thief would not have bothered to fold the clothes; and anyone intending to move the Body would not have taken off the clothes. If some persons had stolen the Body would they have engaged in complicating their job by removing the handkerchief and placing it in another place after folding it? What had happened definitely was not the action of grave diggers or thieves looting corpses.

* St. John stooped to look inside. However, St. Peter entered in and saw the linen clothes. He stopped and did not speak immediately. The jealous one entered and looked in more deeply to discover and see more detail. Then he called on the other disciple to come in.

¹ Cf. Adam Smith; Comm. On St John 21:2

After he had first seen for himself, Peter called John to enter and see the linen clothes and how the handkerchief that had covered His head was put in another place separately¹.

Out of necessity, they would have removed the Lord as He was (with the linens on Him). That is why St. John the evangelist reports in the earlier chapters that His Body was covered with a lot of spices. These would let the linen clothes stick to the Body just as hard as lead. Consequently, when we hear that the handkerchief was lying in a separate place, we do not accept the words of those who claimed that the Lord's Body was stolen. A thief would not perform a needless act: why would he remove the burial clothes and the handkerchief? Besides, how could he escape if he had spent all this time to dismantle the Body and risk being discovered red handed? He would have been arrested if he had delayed and taken time at the job. Again, why would the clothes be placed away from the handkerchief and folded separately? So that we might learn that the action did not take place hastily or nosily².

* If you were to say: "what is the purpose of the handkerchief not lying with the linen clothes, but folded together in a place by itself?!" Our answer would be: So that you would know that the act was done by someone who was not hurried nor anxious. Therefore they believed in the Lord's resurrection based on that action.

St. John Chrysostom

* If the enemies had stolen the Body, then they would not have left the burial clothes behind in order to ensure some material gain. If the Lord's follower were the ones who did that act, they would not have accepted to strip the Body and humiliate Him. The best explanation is that the incident reveals that the Body had crossed over into eternity and had no need for clothes in the future.³

St. Amonius of Alexandria

**'...and the handkerchief that had been around His head,
not lying with the linen clothes, but folded together in a place by itself. [7]**

The Lord left the burial clothes and the handkerchief that covered his head behind in the tomb. He had risen and would not die again or need burial. **His Body was now enveloped in glory and He had abandoned the earthly clothes that would deteriorate inside the tomb.** In Paradise, we do not need clothes as we do on earth; for we are enveloped in the Lord's righteousness and share His glory. When Elijah was taken up in the fiery chariot that soared into the heavens, his cloak fell away as he did not need it.

Let us abandon with the Lord the burial clothes behind. For we carry the promise and warranty of incorruption, which replaces the corruption that has come upon us.

The Lord has left us the burial clothes placed in an orderly manner inside the tomb; as well as the handkerchief that covered His head in a place by itself. **He intended that every believer, whenever he goes to his own burial, to find coverings that the**

¹ Hom 85. PG 59:510

² Hom 85. PG 59:509- 510

³ Leon Morris, p 692

Lord has prepared by His precious burial clothes. There, the believer would also find the Lord's handkerchief to wipe away the tears shed during his struggle on earth.

St. Chrysostom comments on the burial clothes and handkerchief that were left in the tomb. He says that the Lord encourages us not to spend too much when we bury our dead. The body of the dead person will arise in brilliant glory and will not need grand clothes!

* How majestic is the power of the One crucified! He encourages those who physically die as death is not final. Therefore they should not behave as persons who will ultimately die. Conversely, they should behave as persons who are sending the departed one to a distant and better home. He encourages people to know that this corrupt earthly body will wear more glorious clothes than those made of silk and golden threads- a clothing of incorruption. It is therefore appropriate not to worry over burial, since people need to consider that a virtuous life is clothing similar to an amazing breeze...

* What excuse do we have if we decorated a body that will be eroded with corruption and worms; while we neglect the Lord Jesus Christ who is thirsty and walks naked and estranged? Let us therefore stop this meaningless toil. May we conduct the funerals of the departed in a manner that contributes to our benefit and to theirs for the glory of God. Let us be giving for their sakes, and let us look with them for food on the way... let us send the departed to the tomb while he is wearing these clothes (of giving) so that the Lord would be his inheritance!

St. John Chrysostom

**Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first,
Went in also; and he saw and believed. [8]**

John had arrived first as he raced towards the tomb. However, Peter showed more courage as he stepped into the tomb looking for the body. He wanted to check the matter in all its possibilities. Some persons are characterized by their speed, others by their aggressiveness, and all support one another through their talents and their various skills. John's speed encouraged Peter to move more quickly; while Peter's courage led John to step inside the tomb. Peter saw and marveled (Luke 24:12); John saw and believed, (John 20:8).

The physical death of the Lord Jesus Christ has removed our fear of death and of the grave. Death will eventually take hold of us, and we will be laid in a tomb. Therefore, it is appropriate that we repeat with the righteous Job: "...I say to corruption you are my father, and to the worm, you are my mother..." (Job 17:14).

**For as yet they did not know the Scripture,
That He must rise again from the dead. [9]**

St. John the Evangelical explains why he and Peter were slow to believe. It was due to their lack of deep knowledge of scriptural prophecies. They need God to open up their minds to understand the Holy Book in the same way it happened to the disciples who were going to Emaus, (Luke 24:44-45) All the disciples did not understand the prophecy of the Psalmist who said: 'For you will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will you allow your Holy One to see corruption,' (Ps 16:10). They also did not understand what the Lord had told them about the fulfillment of Jonah's miracle by His own resurrection, (Matt 12:40).

The Evangelist does not say: 'He will arise from the dead', but he stated 'that He must rise again from the dead'. On the one hand, the resurrection was part of God's plan to save and redeem us. Therefore it was an expedient matter. On the other hand, it was not possible for death to imprison the Lord, or for the grave to seize Him who had said: "I am the Resurrection"!

Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. [10]

They returned to the place where all the other disciples were gathered. They all had no homes in Jerusalem, so they gathered in a home there and they did not return to their homes after the crucifixion. John and Peter did not go to the other disciples in order to proclaim the resurrection, or to confirm that they could not find the body. They returned probably because they feared future troubles. It was hard for them to know what the Jewish leaders would do upon discovering that the Body was no longer in the tomb. They returned and joined their fellow disciples and waited to hear from God. They definitely spoke about what had happened, and they decided to meet all together in the evening on that same day. It was then that the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to them; but Thomas was not there. It was essential for them to meet together especially that the two angels had appeared to Mary Magdalene, whereas no angel had appeared to Peter and John.

St. John Chrysostom believes that the two disciples had gone each to his own home at first as they felt amazed. There the resurrection began to touch their minds. Then they returned and met with the other disciples according to the Lord's command.

2. In the Morning: Mary Magdalene and the Two Angels.

**'But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping,
And as she wept she stooped and looked into the tomb.' [11]**

Whereas the two disciples hurried back to their fellow disciples, Mary Magdalene stayed by the tomb and wept. It was hard for her to leave the tomb without seeing the Body of the Lord.

The soul is bound to the Lord Jesus Christ by love. She desired to get acquainted with His mysteries and longs to see Him. While Mary wept she stooped and looked inside the tomb. She was assured that the Body was no longer there. The two disciples had also entered and were assured. However, her love drove her to keep stooping and looking

inside time and again. She hoped to find something that would console her!

* The female species is characteristically emotional to a great extent, and is more inclined to tenderness. We say that so that you would not be surprised why Mary wept so bitterly at the tomb, while Peter showed no emotions! The Holy Word reports that ‘... **the disciples went away again to their own homes**’. As for Mary, she stood there weeping; on account of her weak nature and because she had not yet comprehended well enough the matter of the Resurrection. In contrast, the two disciples marveled and believed after having seen the burial linen clothes; and so returned home. Why did they not go back immediately to Galilee according to the command the Lord Jesus Christ had given them before His suffering? Maybe it was because they were waiting for the arrival of the others as well as due to their own state of ultimate astonishment. These two disciples therefore went on their way home, whereas Mary remained by the tomb. As we have said earlier, just looking at the tomb gave her great comfort...

All things considered, she received a blessing on account of her great zeal. This is not to be discounted, for what the disciples had missed, this woman was the first to see: she saw two angels seated, one at the feet and the other at the head, and even their white clothes reflected the brilliance with joy¹.

St. John Chrysostom

**And she saw two angels in white
Sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet,
Where the body of Jesus had lain. [12]**

After the two disciples had left, and probably after the sun came up on that same day, Mary returned alone. She was still searching for the One she missed. Her condition had not changed, though when she stooped and wept, the tomb presented another proclamation. She saw two angels sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet. It was as though they were measuring the Body with heavenly standards rather than earthly ones. Therefore they could present the Body risen from the dead throughout all ages, to establish out of Him the one universal church as His Holy Body.

The Lord responded to her love and tears. So he opened her eyes to see the two angels witnessing to His resurrection- for based on two witnesses, a testimony is acceptable. She had not seen them before; nor had the two disciples when they had entered the tomb. St. Matthew and St. Mark report that Mary saw one angel- they were probably satisfied with making reference only to the one who spoke to her.

White clothes indicate purity.

Why were the angels sitting? Angels do not need to sit in order to rest for they do not possess a body that is liable to get tired. Their sitting down indicates an invitation to shake off our fear of the grave. Wherever the Lord is present, we may sit and rest. Although the world had positioned guards to secure the tomb and prevent the Lord's

¹ Homilies on St John,86:1

resurrection, yet He arose, and the guards trembled and ran away. As for the guards of the Lord, they are the angels who were sitting in security and assurance in the Lord's conquest and victory over the forces of darkness.

The two angels are a reference to the two cherubim who stood over the Ark of the Covenant where the throne of mercy and God's presence among His people was found (Ex 28:18). They did not carry swords, like those standing at the gate of the Paradise of Eden, in order to prevent men from entering. These angels were sitting at the head and feet where the Body had been laid, and they welcome us. They lead every believer to enjoy fellowship with the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. They invite us to enjoy eternal life through the cross that is the tree of life.

St. Gregory the Great comments that the angel seated at the head proclaims the Lord's divinity: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (John 1:1). The other angel, seated at the feet proclaims the Lord's incarnation: 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1:14). They could also be a reference to the two Testaments, the Old and the New Testaments. Both present the same message: that the Lord became incarnate, died, and arose from the dead. They are like the two cherubim who sat on the Ark of the Covenant where the glory of God shone. The word 'cherubim' means 'perfect knowledge'. What else could that mean other than the two Testaments? What is the mercy seat other than the Lord who became man? The Old Testament proclaims a matter that is imperative and bound to happen. The New Testament announces that this proclamation has been fulfilled and completed. Both Testaments faced each other while they faced the seat of mercy at the same time. They contemplated the Lord who became incarnated; and with one heart, they explained the mystery of His plan¹.

* Why was one angel seated at the head, while the other was seated at the feet? Is it not because the Greek word for angels is translated into Latin as 'untie' (bearing/carrying news)? Therefore the angels refer to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that is preached from head to foot- or from the beginning to the end of time².

St. Augustine

* The woman's comprehension had not soared sufficiently to accept the Resurrection based on the evidence of the handkerchief and the burial linens. Then something else occurred, for she saw the two angels seated and dressed in shining clothes. They were there to alleviate somewhat her great sorrow and to comfort her. They did not speak about the resurrection, but she was led to that knowledge gently. She saw unusual brilliant features, shining clothes and heard a soothing voice³.

St John Chrysostom

* The Jews honored the Holy of Holies because it contained the cherubim, the seat of mercy, the bowl of manna, Aaron's rod, and the gold censor. Does the Lord's tomb less honorable than the Holy of Holies? On entering there, we would probably see the Savior

¹ cf. Hom 25: Forty Gospel Homilies, PL76:1189

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 121:1

³ Homilies on St John, 86:1

in burial clothes; and if we stayed longer, we would see an angel seated at His feet and another at His head. This tomb had been carved by Joseph of Arimathea, and the prophetic words of Isaiah inform us of his glory: ‘...and his rest shall be glorious,’ (Is 11:10). This indicates that the burial place of the Lord would receive universal honor¹.

St Jerome

**Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?”
She said to them, “Because they have taken my Lord,
And I do not know where they have laid Him.” [13]**

The two angels behaved tenderly towards Mary Magdalene. They marveled at her weeping because they expected her to rejoice that He had risen. Indeed, the heavenly ones lovingly share our sorrows. They are surprised that we are saddened because they know what glory the resurrected Lord has prepared for His followers.

Even the sight of the angels could not satisfy the heart of Mary Magdalene. She had come to seek the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The two angels stopped her tears for what else could they be proclaiming other than that, in one way or another, the matter promised future joy... They raised the question: ‘why are you weeping?’ It is as though they were telling her: ‘Do not weep’. But she assumed that they asked this as they did not know the cause of her tears².

St. Augustine

* In all these circumstances, it was as though a door was opening up before her so that she could gradually acquire the knowledge of the Resurrection. The manner in which the angels were sitting down was an invitation for her to ask them for they indicated that they knew what had happened. Therefore they did not sit together, but each sat apart... What did she say? She spoke with emotion and excitement: ‘**...they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.**’ What are you saying? Have you not learned anything about His resurrection until now? Do you still imagine that He is still lying somewhere? Do you not see that Mary Magdalene had not yet acquired superior knowledge?³

St. John Chrysostom

* She was not looking for the Body. She was looking for the Lord who had been taken away⁴.

St. Gregory the Great.

* ‘By night on my bed I sought the one I love’ (Sg of Sol 3:1). It is also written: ‘Mary

¹ Letter, 46:5

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 121:1

³ Homilies on St John, 86:1

⁴ Hom 25. Forty Gospel Homilies, PL 76:1189

Magdalene came...while it was still dark': 'By night on my bed I sought the one I love, I sought him, but I did not find him' And in the Gospels, Mary says: '**...they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him?!**'¹

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

1- In the Morning: The Meeting of Mary Magdalene with the Lord Jesus Christ.

**'Now when she had said this,
She turned around and saw Jesus standing there,
And did not know that it was Jesus.'** [14]

The special 'place' where the Lord stayed, and where He went is a vital topic. At the beginning of the Gospel, the first two chosen disciples asked the Lord: '... where are You staying?' (John 1:38). During the last supper, Thomas said to the Lord: "Lord we do not know where You are going..." (John 14:5). At the tomb, Mary Magdalene asked Him: "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away" (John 14:15). When the Lord asked her to proclaim His resurrection, He guided her to the place where He was going for He wanted her and the disciples to reach a higher degree of knowledge concerning His resurrection.

Before the angels could answer her, the answer came in a practical fashion: the Lord Jesus Christ stood behind her, spoke with her and answered her question. The desire of her heart was to see the Body of the Lord who had died. However, the Lord granted her a greater blessing for the 'One risen from the dead' appeared to her. Indeed, the Lord grants us over and above what we pray for and request.

She turned around probably because she saw the angels acting in an unusual manner such as bowing down towards the Lord. Or their eyes looked in great awe as they turned away from her. Mary Magdalene saw an ordinary person and did not recognize the Person of the Lord. Her psychological condition or her mind was not prepared for meeting with the resurrected One. It is true that she was seeking Him with tears and a broken heart; but she did not realize that He 'is near to those who have a broken heart', (Ps 34:18), and closer than they think. Therefore it is appropriate for us to realize that He is very close to us -more than anyone can imagine- when we seek Him. Indeed, He lives within us, and seeks to reveal Himself to us.

St. John the evangelist does not report that one of the angels informed Mary Magdalene about the Lord's resurrection. Probably this is because the other three evangelists have mentioned it, (Matt 28:5-7; Mark 16:6-7; Luke 24:5-7).

* It seems to us that the Lord appeared to her suddenly, and immediately after she had said: 'they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him'. When the angels saw the Lord, their appearance, looks, and behavior revealed that they seen their Master. They wanted to draw Mary Magdalene's attention to Him.

¹ Essay 14:12

That was how the angels saw Him- as their Master. However, the Lord did not reveal Himself to her in the same manner, as He did not want to scare her when her eyes would see Him for the first time after His death. Therefore He appeared to her as a simple human being so that she thought He was the gardener.

This was expected of a mind that was not fully ready for heavenly matters. Rather than providing a big portion of knowledge all at once, the Lord quietly asked her: **“Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”**¹

St. John Chrysostom

* Because she loved, she complained, and she saw Him but did not recognize Him. Her love revealed Him to her, yet her doubts prevented her from recognizing Him².

Pope Gregory the Great

**Jesus said to her,
“Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”
She supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him,
“Sir if you have carried Him away,
Tell me where you have laid Him and I will take Him away.” [15]**

It could be that the Lord’s questions were spoken in a stern manner: **“Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”**. It is as though He was telling her: why have you come here so early?!

Her behavior was previously reported symbolically by Joseph in the Old Testament. He had acted as a foreign person towards his brothers before revealing himself to them, (Gen 44, 45). The Lord was reprimanding her: **“Why are you weeping? I am risen! Whom are seeking? I am here before you! My resurrection is the answer to all your questions, and it fulfills all your needs.”**

Her answer implied the following: ‘Why do you blame me for my many tears? Why do you ask about whom I am seeking? You know the reason for my tears and the purpose of my search.’ As she thought Him to be the gardener, she begged Him to tell her where she could find Him if he had carried the Lord away to another place.

She probably believed that as a gardener he did not want the body of a person, who had been rejected and crucified by society, to be placed in the new graves prepared for his employer and masters. Therefore he had carried Him elsewhere. She asked to take the Body and she would find another tomb where to lay Him. Her love led her to forget the weight she would have to carry in order to move the Body and find an appropriate burial place.

* Again, Mary Magdalene spoke about the Body as though she was speaking about a dead body that was laid down or carried far away. Her words implied: ‘If you have

¹ Homilies on St John, 86;1

² Hom 25. Forty Gospel Homilies.PL 76:1189

carried Him away because you feared the Jews, inform me, and I will take the Body.’ Her feminine tenderness and spontaneous love were so great! However, she lacked a sublime vision. Therefore He gave her the message through the sound (of His voice) and not through vision¹.

St. John Chrysostom

* The Lord asked her about the reason for her sorrow in order to augment her yearning. He asked the woman who was searching to see, in order to inspire in her a stronger charge of feelings and love towards Him².

Pope Gregory the Great

**Jesus said to her, “Mary!”
She turned and said to Him
“Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher). [16]**

She searched for Him zealously and lovingly. This qualified her to be the first to hear His joyful voice. The Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to grant her the joy of His resurrection. Consequently, He intended her to testify and preach the Gospel of His resurrection. He spoke to her in the loving tone with which she was familiar, and not in the manner of a gardener watching over the garden. She heard her name uttered through His lips and so she recognized Him. This conforms with what the Lord had said about His sheep who know His voice (John 10:4). One word sufficed and it was the Lord calling her by her name. The church accordingly says: ‘The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping upon the mountains...’ (Song of Solomon 2:8).

She said to Him, ‘**Rabboni**’. This is a title that carries an honor that is greater than that of ‘Rabbi’. It conveys the meaning of ‘My greatly honored teacher’.

* Until the moment when the Lord called her by her name, and had appeared to her, she still believed that He had died and asked where He had been laid. He called her by her name and seemed to be telling her: ‘May you know the One who knows you’. As soon as she was called by her name, Mary Magdalene recognized her Creator. He was the One she was seeking beyond herself, whereas He was teaching her to seek Him inside her³.

St. Gregory the Great

* The reason for her sorrow was that she did not know where to go to comfort herself. However, the time had come when the two angels would announce to her what would transform, to some extent, her sorrow into joy. They asked her not to weep⁴.

* When she turned around (to look behind her) she thought Him to be someone else (15). However, when she let her heart guide her, she recognized Him for who He really was⁵.

¹ Homilies on St John., 86:1

² Hom 25. Forty Gospel Homilies, PL 76:1189

³ Hom 25. Forty Gospel Homilies, 193

⁴ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 121:1

⁵ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 121:2

**Jesus said to her
“Do not cling to Me,
For I have not yet ascended to My Father;
But go to My brethren
And say to them, I am ascending to My Father and your Father,
And to My God and your God.”[17]**

Mary Magdalene did as she was commanded, and went and informed the disciples that she had seen the Lord. She confirmed her experience of having met the Lord who had risen from the dead.

To confirm His resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ allowed His disciples to touch the places where the nails and wounds had been. He also allowed the women to touch His feet and worship Him (Matt 28:9). As for Mary Magdalene, the Lord asked her not to touch Him with her hands for He wanted her to reach out to Him with her heart. Probably the reason for that was that He knew she would imagine that He had risen and would live with them on earth just as Lazarus had done. The Lord wanted her to preach His resurrection and ascension into heaven He did not arise in order to establish an earthly kingdom. He arose in order to ascend and establish His kingdom in our hearts. The Lord had prepared the minds of His disciples earlier, and had told them about His crucifixion and ascension into the heavens. Therefore He did not want the joy of His resurrection to be transformed into a yearning for Him to stay with them on earth.

Leon Morris explains that the word ‘touch’ in Greek implies the meaning of ‘do not continue to touch’ and not ‘do not start with touching’. The Lord wanted her to stop touching and it is as though He allowed her to touch Him only for a moment. He wanted to assure her that He had risen with a new life and this shared nothing in common with the old life He had left on earth. Having this new life, He would grant the faithful believers this renewal in the final great day of the Lord, (1 Cor. 15:51-53).

Once again, as Mary Magdalene experienced His resurrection, He confirms to her that He has not ascended yet to heaven. The time had come to preach the resurrection and to prepare the minds for the ascension. There was no time for temporal relationships or for His physical presence among them. There was no time to speak with Him. The Lord had to fulfill His mission, and it was time to preach the joyful news.

Although He had risen and had proclaimed His ascension, yet He was not embarrassed to call His disciples as His **‘brothers’**.

The Lord sent a message to His disciples through Mary Magdalene. They had deserted Him when He was arrested; and they did not accompany Him to the cross. He did not tell them one word of reproach. It was as though the message He sent was telling them, ‘I forgive and forget, and I do not reproach!’

The Lord sent the message with Mary Magdalene from whom He had cast out seven devils. She was the one who would preach the glad news of the resurrection to the disciples.

In His message to them, the Lord proclaimed His yearning for unity. Their union with Him was His desire. Consequently they would be adopted sons of God and God would be their Father. The Lord Himself would be united with them for the Father would be His God, and the Lord would be the Son of Man who is a representative of all mankind. However, the Lord makes a distinction between His status as the true and eternal Son and their status as children by adoption; since He does not say: **‘our Father and our God’**, Although John and Peter left Mary Magdalene alone in the garden, looking for the Lord and weeping, she ran back to the disciples as soon as she met Him. She returned to preach all the things she had seen, heard and found. She had found the Messiah, the Savior of the world who would prepare them to ascend with their hearts into the Father’s embrace.

Saint Jerome responds to the question raised by **Marcella** about the harmony between the words in John 20:16 ‘Do not cling to Me..’ and the words in Matt 28:9, ‘...they came and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him’ (Mat 28:9). St. Jerome says that in the first case Mary Magdalene failed to recognize the divinity of the Lord. In the second case, the women recognized Him, and therefore were granted the privilege which Mary Magdalene was denied at first¹.

* In other words: ‘you are not qualified to touch the One risen from the dead and whom you imagine is still in the grave.’²

St. Jerome

* The Lord Jesus Christ taught this woman a lesson after which she knew that He was the Master. That was how she had called Him in her response to Him. That gardener was planting in her heart the mustard seed just as He would have planted it in His garden. So what did He intend to convey when He told her: **“Do not cling to Me”**? He also added—as though the reason for that needed an explanation, **‘for I have not yet ascended to My Father’**. What does this mean? If human beings cannot touch Him while He stands on this earth, then how could we touch Him when He is seated in heaven? He surely came before His ascension, to His disciples, so they could touch Him (Luke 24:29).. This woman symbolizes the gentile church who did not believe in Him except after His actual ascension to the Father. In this manner the Lord intends the Gentiles to believe in Him. They need to cling to Him spiritually as He and the Father are One..

* It was appropriate that Mary Magdalene was forbidden to touch the Lord who said: ‘Do not cling to Me..’ because she still did not believe that He was equal to the Father. It conveyed to her that she could not go on having faith based on her current concept. He seemed to be telling her: ‘Do not let your thoughts wander away from all what I have

¹ Letter,59, Question 4

² Letter 39:6

gone through for your sake and without transcending and comprehending that which goes beyond your present condition...you will cling to Me when you believe that I am God and am in no way unequal to the Father¹.

St. Augustine

* We believe that this woman wanted to resume her friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ and accompany Him as she had done before. She was so overjoyed that she did not comprehend the huge event. Even though He still carried the same Body, yet He was in a far more glorious state. By forbidding her, the Lord lifted her thoughts so that she would see Him in greater awe and reverence. The words 'do not cling Me' actually meant: 'Do not approach Me in the manner you did previously'.

* Whereas we saw the Lord all alone at His crucifixion, we do not see Him in that state afterwards. Indeed, He appears among His brothers. On the day of His resurrection, He offered the joyful message: '...go to My brethren and say to them; I am ascending to My Father and your Father' (John 20:17). We hear Him talk to His disciples as His brothers on the day of His glorious resurrection after He had gone through His suffering. As we become sanctified through His redeeming act (the pains of the cross), He not only bears no grudge or embarrassment but also feels greatly pleased to call them His 'brothers', (Heb 2:11-12).

* The bridegroom says: 'If you desire to open the door of your soul so that the king of glory enters in, then you need to have a sense of yearning in your soul. As the Evangelist reports: 'for whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother' (Matt 12:50). It is appropriate that you draw near to the Truth, and to become His partner so that you are never separated from Him.

St. Gregory, Bishop of Nicea

* **"Go to My brethren and say to them, I am ascending to My Father and your Father."** Although His ascension was not going to occur immediately, and would happen after forty days, why did the Lord say these words? He desired to raise their thoughts and motivate them to comprehend that He was leaving this world and going to heaven².

St. John Chrysostom

* When the Lord would go(to the Father), He would be carrying His victory and conquest in His Body, resurrected from the dead...then some of the hosts would inquire: "who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel?" (Is 63:1). And those in His company would answer the guards at the doors of heaven saying: "Lift up your heads, O you gates!...and the king of glory shall come in" (Ps 24:7). As they would need more explanation, and when they will see traces of blood on His side and all the wounds on His Body, they will ask: 'why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?' And His answer is: 'I have trodden them and trampled them..' (Is 63:2-3)³.

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 121:3

² Homilies on St John, 86:2

³ Commentary on John, Book 6:2888-289

Origen the Scholar

* The Lord asked Mary Magdalene not to touch Him as He had not yet ascended. **He would prepare glorious things and then she could touch Him after His ascension when she would be able to comprehend matters which hands cannot grasp, and have a vision of things not found here below.** The Lord probably intended to inform her by asking her not to touch Him, that she should not consider Him to be just a human being; but that He is the Holy One. He wanted to lead her to ‘lift up your heart and thoughts to heaven and seek for Me there. I am going to ascend to the Father whom I have never left and have never become separated from Him. I will raise you and carry you up to My throne!’

The reason why He should not be touched is stated: ‘... **for I have not yet ascended to My Father ...**’ The heart that does not believe in the equality of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father would maintain that the Lord has not yet ascended to the Father. But a person who believes in his heart that the Lord is one with the Father since the beginning of times is uniquely enabled to touch Him... Because I have become incarnated, then He is My God. Because you have been liberated from sin, He is become your God. He is My Father and God in a manner that is distinct and different from yours for He gave birth to Me as a God before the beginning of the creation but became created as a man in the fullness of time¹.

Pope Gregory the Great

* It is vital to avoid thinking naively or rashly and tenaciously, that the Lord’s words, ‘**I am ascending to My Father and your Father**’ indicate a person’s equality in honor with the righteous. Therefore it is important to make a distinction: the name ‘Father’ refers to One- that is- ‘He is the Father to one Son’. Concerning His role, it is a multiple one as He ‘he calls sons through the adoption of many’: Because the Lord Jesus Christ Himself knew that, He who is without sin, has said: ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father’. He did not say: ‘Our Father’ for He distinguished between the two.

He first said what applies to Him: ‘I am ascending to My Father’ which is the natural relation. And then He added ‘... and your Father’ that is the result of adoption. For however great is the privilege we have received when we pray ‘Our Father who is in heaven’; yet this is a gift we have received due to God’s merciful love. We call Him Father because we have been transferred from slavery to adopted children, and not because we have been born naturally from our heavenly Father. By the grace of the Father, through the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we have been allowed to say these words. It is due to God’s love and His unspeakable mercy².

* To prevent the thought that in some way He is Father of the Son as well as of all creation, the Lord Jesus Christ made the following distinction: He said “ My Father and your Father’, which is to say: ‘He is my Father by nature, and your Father through

¹ Hom 25. Forty Gospel Homilies, 193-195

² Essay 7:7

adoption'. He did not say: 'I am ascending to our Father', otherwise all creation would be a partner with the only Son (based on His earthly status)¹.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

* If you are seeking Him among the earthly creatures, just as Mary Magdalene was doing, then be careful or He will tell you the words He told Mary: 'Do not cling to Me for I have not yet ascended to My Father'. Your doors are narrow and cannot be lifted up and you are therefore unable to enter in. Go on the way to my brothers, that is to the eternal doors through which you will see the Lord Jesus Christ ascending... The doors of the church are eternal. The prophet yearned for them and proclaimed within its doors the praises of the Lord in these words: "that I may tell of all your praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion", (Ps 9:14)².

* The Son of God reveals the difference between birth and grace when He says: 'I have not yet ascended to My Father... I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God'. He does not say: "I have not ascended to our Father and our God"; and this distinction marks the difference because the One who is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is at the same time our Creator³.

* The Lord's purpose in being incarnated is to prepare for us the path to heaven⁴.

* The Lord actually told Mary Magdalene: '**Do not cling to Me**'. However, the wholly pure One did not say: "because I am pure". So do you dare to claim, O Novatian, and say that you are pure? In fact, by claiming this, you will be considered impure even if your deeds were pure⁵.

St. Ambrose

* The Lord Jesus Christ was about to sit on His Father's throne, while everyone else remains standing. Even though He became our brother according to the flesh, yet He possesses honor that is wholly different than ours, and to a degree that is impossible to express⁶.

St. John Chrysostom

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, And that He had spoken these things to her. [18]

Observe how the sin of the human race fell way just in the same manner when it was initiated. In paradise, the woman was the cause of man's death (Gen 3:6). Now, a woman leaves the tomb to proclaim life for mankind. Mary recounted the words of the One who restored her life to her; and it was a woman who had recounted the words of the snake

¹ Essay 11:19

² On the Christian Faith, Book 4:2:25-26

³ On the Christian Faith, Book 1:14:90

⁴ On the Christian Faith, Book 3:7: 50

⁵ Concerning Repentance:1:8:38

⁶ Homilies on St John, 86:2

and which led to death. It seems that the Lord was telling the human race through deeds and not through words: ‘Receive the source of life from the hand that had offered the death potion’¹.

St. Gregory the Great

2- The Lord’s Meeting with His disciples on Sunday Evening

**Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week,
When the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled,
For fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them,
“Peace be with you.” [19]**

We do not hear that the Jews wanted to attack the disciples at that time. It is the weak faith of the disciples that led them to think that their turn would come after the Jews had crucified and buried the Lord. Indeed, no one had touched them since the Jews had been told: “let these go their way”, (John 18:8). The goal of the leaders was to get hold of Jesus Himself. Therefore acting against the disciples was useless once Jesus had died in disgrace on the cross and was no longer present. So they considered the matter of the disciples of little importance.

The Lord’s appearance in the midst of the disciples while the doors were closed was not a miraculous event. This is the nature of the body resurrected from the dead. Matter cannot hinder or obstruct it. The Lord wanted to confirm that He had risen with the same body. However, it was a glorified body. His resurrection did not mean that He had returned to a normal life on earth. Conversely, it proclaimed the uplifting of believers and ascending while carrying them into the Father’s embrace.

The word ‘doors’ in the plural form occurs only in the Gospel of St. John. The upper room probably had more than one door, or he could have meant that the front door of the house as well as the door of the upper room was both locked. As the disciples were greatly frightened, they were not content to close the front door only.

In the other Gospels, the evangelists underlined how the disciples lived in fear immediately after the resurrection. It was not an easy thing for them to see the One, who had died and had been buried, still alive and appearing to them. Here, however, St. John the evangelist reveals another reason for their fear, and that is ‘the Jews’. The disciples felt that their lives were exposed to real danger even after the Lord’s resurrection. They feared they would be accused of having stolen the Body.

The Lord appeared on the first Christian Sabbath in order to bless and sanctify that day. The disciples had probably met in order to pray and worship. They might have wanted to discuss the current events of that day. The women, Peter, and John had confirmed that the tomb was empty. Mary Magdalene recounted her meeting with the Lord and reported the message He had entrusted her to deliver. He had also appeared to

¹ Hom 25. Forty Gospel Homilies, 195

the women on that day, (Matt 28:9). He had also appeared to the two disciples on the way of Emaus. He had conversed with them, opened their minds, and inflamed their hearts with love, (Luke 24:13), etc...

They had probably met to pray as they feared they would be arrested, The Jews claimed that the Lord's disciples had gone at night and stolen the Body. Anyhow, the disciples knew how to gather and pray in moments of stress.

The Lord's words: "Peace be with you" were not mere words uttered as a usual form of greeting exchanged among friends. Indeed, these words were a form of unusual blessing that carried power and offered the fruit of the resurrection: inner peace with God, peace for man with himself, peace in the Lord Jesus Christ. A peace unlike the fake peace of the world.

The Lord Himself is chaste. His mother is a virgin as well. Indeed, although a mother, she remained a virgin for the Lord had entered while the doors were closed. In His grave, a new tomb had been cut out of an extremely solid rock. No one had been laid there before or after Him, (John 19:41). St. Mary is a closed paradise... 'A sealed source', (Song of Solomon 4:12). According to Joel (3:18) the waters of the river flow from this source¹.

St. Jerome

* Truly, the Lord was able to enter through the doors without opening them. He is the One who was born and yet the virginity of His mother remained untouched².

St. Augustine

* The disciples had gathered behind closed doors due to their fear of the Jews. (John 20:19). When a person remains in the city of revelation, feeling secure, and overcome by holy meditation- while in fear of evil spirits, and enclosing his senses, that person welcomes the word of God. Then it is revealed to him in a mysterious manner rather than through the senses. It proclaims peace to him, while granting calmness and freedom from lusts...as he inhales this breeze, it grants him the many gifts of the Holy Spirit and the power over evil spirits, while revealing to him the marks and concepts of the divine mysteries.

St. Mark the Ascetic

**And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side.
Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. [20]**

By entering while the doors were close, the Lord Jesus Christ confirmed to the disciples that His resurrected Body had a new nature. At the same time, He confirmed that it was the same body since it bore the same wounds of the cross. However, this was a glorified body.

¹ Letter 48:21

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 121:4

The resurrected Lord spoke through His mouth. He granted them a new and sublime peace. He spoke as He carried His wounds in His hands and feet. Therefore He granted them a unique joy by His presence among them. He showed them His hands and side to assure them that He is the same Jesus who was crucified in the same body. The traces of His wounds were a living testimony of His resurrection. These wounds will continue to be a source of joy and glory until the end of time. They will remain to be a sign of the amazing divine love that is endless and that seeks the salvation of mankind. He had placed a cover shield on the brilliant glory of His resurrected Body so that they could look at Him and speak to Him.

The Lord Jesus Christ continues to spread His hands and expose His side. He embraces us with His love and satisfies our thirst from the source of His amazing blood. Consequently, we learn that since He is living then we are alive through His cross. Death will not be able to destroy us. The wounds of His cross are the language of a love that can tear away our fear of this world. A language of love that grants us a sublime inner joy.

He always grants us insight through the wounds of His cross. We eventually realize that we not only enjoy depth of vision but that we also enjoy His presence among us.

* Certainly the form of the bodies resurrected from the dead will be in the same state as now, however they will attain a sublime glory. After the Lord's descent into Hades, He had the same body which had been crucified. He showed the disciples the marks of the nails in His hands and the wound in His side.

If we deny the condition of His body because of the manner he entered the room though the doors were closed- and this is not a feature of human bodies- then we need to remember, as well, that Peter and the Lord Jesus Christ each possessed two real bodies since they walked on the water. This too contradicts nature, (Matt 22:30)¹.

St. Jerome

What are the features of a body resurrected from the dead?

A resurrected body is comparable to the body of the Lord Jesus Christ after His resurrection. With this body, He came out of the tomb while the sealed stone was still placed there; and He entered the upper room while the doors were closed. (John 20; 19-20). He soars over time and place, as well as over physical boundaries and obstacles. It is an ideal body that collaborates with the soul so that it enables man to progress towards the Lord. Such a glorious fellowship, coupled with vision and meeting face to face is ultimately achieved. This does not mean that it is a different body than the one we now have. It is the same identical body we have now dressed in incorruption. (1 Cor 15:53)

St. Augustine deals cautiously with this problem of **'the nature of the resurrected body'** and says: **(At any rate, whatever the nature of the spiritual body is, and however great is its blessing, yet I fear to speak about it. This is because we**

¹ Against Jovinianus, 1:36

still have no experience related to the reality of this subject)¹.

The resurrected body possess these characteristics:

1- After the resurrection, the human body becomes spiritual. However, it is recognizable and can be distinguished from other bodies. The saint clarified the expression of **‘the heavenly body’ does not mean the denial of the real bodily nature that the spiritual body possess². (The spiritual body does not imply that it is no longer a body. Rather, just as “the living body” implies “life”... “the spiritual body” implies a body that obeys the spirit)³.**

2- It is the same body as ours, yet it will be wholly transformed into incorruption. The resurrected body will not possess the imperfections or defects of our bodies **as (it will be transformed wholly into something far better at the moment of the resurrection⁴).**

3- **The wounds of martyrdom will leave their marks on His body.** They will not appear as defects but as clear marks revealing the mystery of great love the martyrs bore for Jesus Christ. These will convey honor, and glory and will not appear as imperfections or defects in the body⁵.

4- The resurrected body will be a glorified one that resembles the body of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

5- (It is possible and reasonable to believe that we shall see the new heaven and the new earth. In this manner, we shall see God more vividly wherever we turn our eyes. He will be present everywhere as He rules the whole universe⁶.)

6- We are introduced to the concept of the spiritual body as a factor that will no longer preoccupy us from meditating on God. It will no longer be a stumbling block for the soul as it will submit to it. According to **St Augustine**, this will be a vital issue as there will no longer be a conflict between the spirit and the body. Indeed, the resurrected body will interact with the spirit – **[the same body that troubles us and makes us continue to sin, will submit to us in the resurrection. It will no longer trouble us with the obstacles it puts in our way as we seek to study God’s divine laws and commandments⁷].**

In his book ‘The Holy City of God’, St Augustine explains this concept in great depth and says: **[The spiritual body will submit to the spirit, yet it will remain a body and not a spirit. Just as in this life the earthly spirit submits to the body yet it**

¹ De civitate Dei, 22:21

² Retractiones 2:3

³ Sermon 242:8:11

⁴ De doctrina Christiana, 1:19:18

⁵ City of God 2:19

⁶ De Civitate Dei, 22:229:3 cf. De Genesi ad Litteram 12:35

⁷ To Fortunastus 22

continues to be a spirit and is not a body¹]. Instead of there being a conflict between the soul and the body, there will be a complete union within one spiritual nature, where the body will not rebel against the spirit. **St Augustine explains: [Why do we speak of a spiritual body, O dearly beloved, except that it does not fail to submit to the spirit? Nothing will remain in you that struggles or rebels against you. There will no longer be reason to lament as the apostle does when he says: “The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh,” (Gal 5:17)²].**

* The outer features of this world will pass away- that is, all the consequences of the fall will end. This will not involve the destruction of the essence or composition of the creation; but just the outer form of the world that will pass away. Then man will be renewed and flourish in the incorrupt form and origin of life. It will no longer be possible to grow old, for there will be ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ (Rev 21:1). In this new heaven and earth, man will live in a state of constant renewal and he will be engaged in an eternal dialogue with God³.

St Irenaeus

* The Lord arose with the same body He had at His burial. As Christians, we have been given the promise of the resurrection, and we look forward to experience a resurrection similar to that of the Lord’s. He has risen before any of us came into the faith so that His resurrection becomes the basis of our belief. But why? Is it so that we are no longer the same, after the resurrection, as we are now? The Lord Jesus Christ arose and ascended into the heavens with His body. When He lived on earth, His body possessed all its human functions. Therefore this proves that the body that was buried is the same that arose. But will there be a need for food in heaven? We have read that angels had appeared on earth in the form of men, (Gen 18). They visited Abraham and ate with him. An angel appeared to Tobias and also ate with him. Do we suppose that they seemed to eat but did not do so actually? Is it not a fact that Abraham indeed killed a calf, baked bread, and laid it on the table? Did he not offer food to the angels and they ate?! (Gen 18:1-9)⁴.

St Augustine

* God, who is loving and merciful, has released the body from its imprisonment, and has liberated it from the slavery of destruction. A slavery that is deadly and bitter. He has granted the body immortality in the eternal life. In this manner, He has granted the human body the gift of holy eternity, making it immortal and alive for ever⁵.

St Clemet of Alexandria

**Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you!
As the Father sent Me, I also send you.” [21]**

¹ De Civit. Dei, 22:21

² Sermon, 242:8

³ K Ware: the Orthodox Way :SVSP., p182

⁴ Sermon 242:8

⁵ Pedagogus 3:1

The Lord repeated and confirmed His gift, **“Peace to you”** [21]. Through this gift, the disciples would therefore become qualified for the heavenly mission. They would preach, with authority from above, the news of the joyful resurrection. They would act as ambassadors of inward peace for they would become members in the risen body of Christ. The Head would work in them so that they would witness to the world concerning the risen life which they practice through the Holy Spirit.

*This is what the Lord had said before His crucifixion, “...I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one can take away from you,” (16:22). These words were now being fulfilled in a practical manner. It led the disciples now to have true faith...these were the Lord’s first words after His resurrection¹.

St John Chrysostom

**And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them,
“Receive the Holy Spirit”. [22]**

The Lord granted the disciples the Holy Spirit for the first time on the eve of the first day of His resurrection... It was the culmination of a series of events that had started at dawn. This preceded the Pentecost and it has led many to question the difference between the granting of the Holy Spirit in this passage and the event that took place on the day of the Pentecost.

In the Holy Bible, the verb ‘breathed’ or ‘emphiso’ has been rarely used. However, it is used in the Book of Genesis where it carries much weight. We read at first that ‘the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters’; then we read that God ‘breathed into (man’s) nostrils the breath of life’, and man became a living soul; (Gen 2:7). In the Book of Ezekial, we are told that when the bones of the dead came together, the Spirit breathed into them and granted them life, (Ezk 37:9). From the above, we understand that a new creation is born and inaugurated through the breath of the Holy Spirit which was granted to the disciples. It is possible to describe the work of the Holy Spirit as a mission with the objective of leading the disciples to work by the Holy Spirit in order that the world might enjoy the new creation of the resurrected life. He granted them the breath of the Holy Spirit to empower them to carry out the ministry and service of their mission. Thousands of years earlier, God had breathed into the earth and had created Adam into a living being. Now He breathed into the disciples’ faces in order to raise in them the new being; and so that they would be blessed by the gift of the active Spirit working within and through them.

Fr Maximus the Confessor comments as follows: [Since we have been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, (in other words, we have participated in His death and resurrection), we have been granted our first liberation from the corrupt flesh in the name of the Lord and through His Spirit. However, we look forward to the final liberation...as spiritual beings].

¹ Homilies on St John, 86:2

* We know that it is possible to be baptized only in the Church and at the hands of priests. The Church is established upon evangelical principles; and her priests are ordained in the Lord Jesus Christ and authorized to baptize and grant absolution for our sins. Without them it would be impossible to absolve or retain sins since there would be no one to determine such issues¹.

* The Lord gave the disciples the power to forgive sins. He also gave that power to the Churches where He had sent the disciples to lay down the foundations; and to the bishops whom they had ordained and who had succeeded them².

Caprianus the Martyr

* Notice that sins are absolved through the Holy Spirit. As for human beings, they undertake this function as they fulfill the service of absolving sins. They do not claim that they are entitled to do so due to some kind of authority they personally possess. In fact they forgive sins in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and not in their own name. Man prays the Divine One to grant forgiveness; for man performs the service, but the Almighty grants the blessing³.

St Ambrose

* Why were the disciples granted the Holy Spirit on earth at first, and then later as tongues of fire descending from heaven? Because there are two commandments for love: loving God and loving our brothers. The gift of the Holy Spirit on earth promotes love for our brothers, while the gift coming from heaven promotes love for God

Just as there is one love and two commandments, so there is one Spirit and two gifts or blessings.

The first blessing is the one the Lord granted when He lived on earth. **The second one** when He went to heaven. By loving our brothers we learn how to develop our love for God. It is true that the one Holy Spirit had lived in the hearts of the disciples from a very early stage in order to grant them faith; however, the gift was not fully or clearly granted except after the resurrection.

This explains why it is written, ‘...for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified,’ (Jn 7:39). It is important to realize that those who possessed the Holy Spirit acknowledged and proclaimed Him publicly only after the Lord’s resurrection. They did so not only to support the small number of believers but for the sake of many others⁴.

Pope Gregory the Great

**“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them;
And if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” [23]**

¹ Letter 73 to Jubauan: 7

² Firmilian to Cyprian: Letter 75:16 (on 256 AD)

³ Of the Holy Spirit, Book 3:18:137

⁴ Hom. 25. Forty Gospel Homilies

The Lord Jesus Christ forgives sins (and also expels demons) through His Holy Spirit. This is clear in His words to His disciples after the resurrection, “**Receive the Holy Spirit...;**” and then went on to say, “**If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; and if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.**” [22-23]

* The task of the priest is to grant the Holy Spirit, to exercise his right to forgive - through the Holy Spirit- and to retain sins¹.

St Ambrose

* As a King, the Lord sent the disciples to be rulers, and He granted them the power to be thrown into prison and to come out from there. He assigned that same power to them and that was how He sent them out².

St John Chrysostom

Pope Gregory the Great warns against the abuse of such authority. This could occur if a person is driven by personal whims and not according to the nature of the One to whom they are subject. In such a case, the following words would be pertinent, ‘...to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live...’, (Ezk 13:19)³.

**But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus,
Was not with them when Jesus came. [24]**

Thomas was characterized by his frankness. His decision was very clear when he stated that he would not believe unless he saw the hands of the Lord and the traces of the nails, and unless he touched the marks of the nails and put his hand in the Lord’s side, [25]. This happened during the first day and events reached their peak as the Lord continued to appear. His object was to attract this world and call everyone to enjoy the experience of the resurrection.

The absence of Thomas from the meeting of the disciples deprived him from the golden opportunity of seeing the Lord, hearing His words, and receiving His blessing. He might have been unable to attend – due to a health problem for example- yet what excuse could he have for refusing the testimony of his brothers who told him they had seen the Lord?

* We have a reason for celebrating the holy liturgy at the beginning of the week on Sundays. Moreover we stand up for we have risen with the Lord, and pray for heavenly matters as we reach out to Him. We observe all this as we consider that this day represents a picture of the age to come. Therefore we consider that this is the beginning

¹ Concerning Repentance, 1:2:8

² Homilies on St John, 86:3

³ cf. Hom 25. Forty Gospel Homilies, 205

of the days of the week and we call it day one and not the first day. Moses accordingly repeats these words in the Book of Genesis: ‘So the evening, and the morning were ...’

St Basil the Great

* That past Sunday (the day of the Passover) was the Sunday of salvation. But this Sunday- which comes eight days later, and which we call the Sunday of Thomas- is the commemoration and confirmation of Salvation. The former was the Sunday that stands in between the grave and the resurrection; while the latter one (Sunday of Thomas) is the day God spends to create. Just as He had begun the first creation on day one, He also began His second creation on that same day which is at the same time day one-in relation to the days following it; and day eight – in relation to the days that follow it....and the day He returns to live in heaven.

St Gregory of Nazianzen

**The other disciples therefore said to him,
“We have seen the Lord,”
But he said to them, “Except I see in His hands the print of the nails,
And thrust my hand into His side,
I will not believe.” [25]**

That is how the Evangelist reports to us the event of the first day of the Lord’s resurrection, which is also the eighth day of the disciples’ deep sense of loneliness and loss. The Lord appears to them in a similar way on both days. Then the Evangelist draws our attention to the Lord’s wounds so that we might all shout and say with Thomas, **“My Lord and my God!”**

* Thomas disbelieved the disciples when they told him, “we have seen the Lord”. This was not because he mistrusted them. Neither did he discount their testimony or believe that the resurrection was impossible, for he did not say, ‘I do not believe you’. His words were, **““Except I see in His hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe”¹.**

St John Chrysostom

5- The Lord’s Meeting with the Disciples on the Following Sunday

**And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them,
Then came Jesus, the doors being shut,
And stood in the midst, and said:
“Peace be unto You.” [26]**

In the first century, it was usual in Palestine to include the first and last day when specific of a specific period of time. Therefore, the words ‘**after eight days**’ would convey to us the eighth day, or after the seventh day...which would be the first Sunday

¹ Homilies on St John, 87:2

after the Lord's resurrection. That was when the Lord revealed Himself to Thomas... the eighth day being as reference to the age and life to come.

The Evangelist reports another meeting with the disciples while the doors were closed. He had not met with them as a group throughout the week- between Monday and Saturday- in order to confirm that He would no longer accompany them as He used to do before His crucifixion. The time had come to prepare them for His ascension. After the resurrection, His natural place- as the Son of Man resurrected from the dead- was in the heavens. At the start of His ministry, the Lord had disappeared for forty days when Satan had tempted Him, (Matt 4:1-3). He wanted to confirm to His disciples that He had come to fight on their behalf, and to offer them His victory. Now He would remain forty days hidden from them, and meeting them only intermittently, to confirm the glory prepared for them by His ascension into the heavens.

The disciples used to meet together weekly on the day of the Lord which was the Christian Sabbath day. He appeared to them on that day to confirm His promise- that where two or three are gathered in His name He would be in their midst- in a tangible manner. Thomas made sure he would be present as he was eagerly expecting the Lord to appear to the disciples.

* If you were to say: 'Why did Jesus not appear to Thomas immediately, and did so only after eight days?' Our answer would be, 'So that the disciples would inform Thomas and he so that his heart would be more eager. Besides, he would become a stronger and more willing believer as a result¹.

St John Chrysostom

* Is it astonishing that the Holy One, Who- being resurrected and on His way to eternal life- would make His entrance through closed doors? He is the One who had come out of the sealed womb of the Virgin in order to die on earth. He appeared to His disciples immediately after His death to reveal that His body is incorruptible and materially real. He confirmed that His body, after the resurrection is made of the same nature as our bodies, yet different in its aspect of glory².

Pope Gregory the Great

**Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here,
And look at My hands,
And reach your hand here,
And put it into My side,
Do not be unbelieving, but believing". [27]**

*Note the Lord's compassion! For the sake of one soul, He revealed Himself carrying His wounds. He came to save each one personally.

St John Chrysostom

¹ Homilies on St John, 87:1

² Hom. 25. Forty Gospel Homilies, 201

* After the resurrection, we will possess the same body, blood, and bones. What will be judged- according to the Holy Bible- will be our deeds and not the physical nature of these elements¹.

St Jerome

And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God.” [28]

Thomas was not a doubting person to the degree he believed himself to be. As soon as he saw the Lord Jesus Christ standing before him and as soon as he heard His voice, he no longer felt the need to touch the wounds of His Master. He immediately proclaimed Him and cried out, **“My Lord and my God”**. Probably, just the sight of His Lord made him withdraw what he had told the disciples – that unless he touched the Lord’s wounds, he would not believe- and now he declared to the whole world what he felt in his heart. The Lord what Thomas had said without being informed by anyone.

Opinions differ, and some scholars believe that Thomas declared his faith without touching the Lord’s wounds. Others believe that he actually declared his faith but obeyed the Lord and touched His wounds, even though he no longer needed to do so in order to believe.

* He saw the Lord’s Body and touched Him; and he comprehended His Divinity that can neither be seen nor touched².

St Augustine

* Just as the Father is God and the Son is Lord; so also the Son is God and the Father is Lord³.

St Ambrose

Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” [29]

The Lord did not tell him, ‘You have believed because you have touched My wounds.’ Rather, He said, **“because you have seen Me”**. Seeing the Lord led him to have faith.

* The Lord, Who has the power to arise without any traces of wounds, retained them so that the doubting disciple could touch them. This would heal his wounded heart⁴.

* When the doubting disciple touched the wounds in His Master’s Body, the wounds inflicted by his unbelief were healed. The lack of faith displayed by Thomas was more beneficial to our faith than to the believing disciples. When Thomas regained faith by touching the Lord, our minds were released of all doubt, and have become steadfast in the faith⁵.

¹ To Pammachius Against John of Jerusalem, 28

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 121:5

³ Of the Holy Spirit, Book 3:15:108

⁴ Sermon on N.T. Lessons, 48:1

⁵ Hom. 25. Forty Gospel Homilies, 206-207

Pope Gregory the Great

* The Lord knew how much the disciples' hearts were hurting. In order to heal them, He retained the traces of the wounds in His Body¹.

* It is possible to confirm that the disciple did not dare to touch the Lord when He asked Thomas to do so as it is not reported that 'Thomas touched Him'. However, whether Thomas believed by only seeing Him, or by touching Him as well, he surely saw and believed. What the Lord declared was a reference to what would happen concerning the faith of the Gentiles: "Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed."

St Augustine

7- The Aim of the Gospel

**And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples,
Which are not written in this book.' [30]**

The Evangelist reveals the aim of writing this Gospel. It is not intended to present a full documentation of the life, work, and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. St John knew a lot which he did not record as his aim was to get every reader to enjoy the living faith and not just to believe. Living faith provides real knowledge which leads to eternal life.

**But these are written,
That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God,
And that believing you may have life in His name. [31]**

Believing in Christ as the Messiah and Son of God does not leave a person unchanged and in the same status. This faith leads the believer to enjoy eternal life, rejoice in the Lord's name and in His person as He is life itself.

* '... **in His name**' or through His name, for He is life².

St John Chrysostom

The Events related to the Day of the Lord's Resurrection³

Many scholars have attempted to provide a sequence of events for this amazing first day of the Lord's resurrection. They based their attempts on the writings of the holy Gospels. Wescott has put them in the following order:

Saturday * Before 6 a.m., Mary Magdelene, and Mary the mother of James, went to the tomb, (Matt 28:1)

¹ Sermon on N.T. Lessons, 38:2

² Hom. 87. PG 59:521

³ B.F. Wescott: (Cf. Leon Morris, p. 696)

* Later on, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Jacob, and Salome prepared the spices and oils, (Mk 1:16)

Sunday * The resurrection occurred early in the morning, and it was followed by an Earthquake and the angel came and opened the tomb, (Matt 28:2-4).

* Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, and probably some other women went to the tomb at dawn. Mary Magdalene headed to the tomb immediately, and returned with Peter and John, (Jn 30:1).

* The other women arrived there by sunrise, (Mk 16:2). They saw an angel, and received a message for the disciples, (Matt28:5 etc; Mk 16:5etc...)

* Other women came later on while it was still early in the morning, among them was Joanna, (Lk24:1 etc). Two angels, who appeared as two young men, appeared to them, (Lk 24:4 etc...).

* Peter and John came to tomb, (Jn20:3-10). Mary Magdalene saw two angels, (Jn 20:11-13). Other women told the news to the disciples, (Lk 24:10 etc...).

* The Lord appeared to Mary Magdalene, (Jn20:14-18; Mk16:9).

* The Lord appeared to other women on their way home and as they were returning from their visit to the home, (Matt28:9 etc...).

* The Lord appeared to two disciples on their way to Emmaus, (Lk 13:24 etc...)

* He appeared to Peter later on in the evening, (Lk24:34; 1 Cor 15:5).

*He appeared to the twelve while they were gathered with others, (Lk 24:36; Jn 20:19).

End of Chapter 20

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CHAPTER 21

A FEAST IN TIBERIA OR THE CROSSING INTO THE COMING AGE

As the writer concluded the previous chapter by stating his aim in writing his Gospel, some have assumed that this chapter had been added at a later time. However, there is no strong proof supporting that claim, besides, all other transcripts that have been found of that Gospel do contain this chapter. Indeed, the Church has not separated or made a distinction between this chapter and the rest of the other chapters of this Gospel.

Some wonder: what was the need for this chapter after the writer had expressed his aim in writing and seemed to have concluded His Gospel? He began his Gospel by revealing the origin of the eternal Word Who had no beginning. He concluded in the previous chapter by reporting His appearance as the One resurrected from the dead on the eighth day of the Christian Passover and which essentially symbolizes eternity. In this chapter – chapter twenty one- the Evangelist appears to be taking us to the thresh hold of the Coming Age. The beloved St John the Evangelist concludes His Gospel by reporting the meeting of the Lord Jesus Christ with some of His disciples by the lake of Tiberias where He eats with them as though at a banquet. This is like an invitation to enjoy the heavenly banquet.

This chapter is considered to be the long report of the Lord's appearance in Galilee after His resurrection.

* It is appropriate to note that the Lord is described as though He was someone setting up a final banquet with seven of His disciples. Why did He do so other than to indicate that these alone were filled with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit- Isaiah 11:2,3- and that they would be with Him in His eternal banquet?...The apostle St Paul correctly declares: “...**Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.**”, (Rom 8:9). What he means is that it will no longer be possible to rejoice upon seeing the Divine glory if a person is not led by God Who lives within him¹.

Pope Gregory the Great

¹ Hom. 25, Forty Gospel Homilies, PL 76:185-6

1- The Lord's appearance by Lake Tiberias	1-14
2- His conversation with Peter	15-19
3- His words about John	20-22
4- Concluding words of St John	24-25

1- The Lord's appearance by Lake Tiberias

After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and in this way He showed Himself. [1]

Here St John reports to us one of the instances when the Lord appeared after His resurrection from the dead. It was not a day of worship, nor was the appearance within the Temple, or during a prayer gathering. He appeared on a working day and as they were engaged in their job which was fishing. Our Lord is eager to reveal Himself to mankind even as they perform their work. This is what happened when He sent angels to announce the news of His birth to the shepherds who were staying up all night to guard their sheep.

Earlier, the Lord had appeared several times to the women and to the disciples in Jerusalem and at the tomb. He commanded them to go to Galilee, and promised that they would meet with Him, (Matt 28:7, Mk 16:7). This promise was fulfilled as St John reports in this chapter. Some believe that this is the seventh time that the Lord appears after His resurrection, and the third time He appears to the disciples [14]. The meeting reported in this passage occurred on the third day after His resurrection.

The verb 'appear' occurs in the text as 'genoumenis' which has been translated into Hebrew as 'made apparent' to indicate that '**He made Himself visible**', or 'He proclaimed Himself'. It is as though the natural place for the Lord is to be in the other world after His resurrection; and that these appearances are revelations that He makes to His disciples and to others so that they are assured of His resurrection... This action reveals the sublime state of our Lord Jesus Christ since we can no longer meet Him in this world. He is the One who makes Himself present in this world whenever He wishes. He is the One who becomes visible according to the time and place which He chooses. He did not appear on that shore as a person would do by moving from one place to the other: He suddenly stood there and appeared to His disciples in this manner.

The verb '**He made Himself visible**' could also indicate what went on in the thoughts of the disciples as a result of that. They had not yet experienced the joy of knowing Him after His resurrection. Consequently, He spoke to them as a stranger would do, and called them by using the general term of '**children**', [5].

* Do you notice that He neither stayed with them forever, nor in the same manner as before? He appeared suddenly, in the evening, and then vanished. He then appeared another time on the eighth day and also vanished then. After that He made an awesome appearance again by the shore. What does '**appear**' convey? It is clear that He could not

be seen except when He condescended to do so, for His Body is incorruptible and possesses the inseparable purity of a spiritual Body¹.

St John Chrysostom

* He re-established their hope in Him and which they had not regained. The Lord intended to come to them to remove the despair that filled their minds. He returned to them alive and out of the tomb, He made the great proclamation concerning the reality of the renewal of His Body which He presented before their eyes and hands. He could be seen as well as touched, and held so they could examine the traces of His wounds. He did that so that Thomas, who had refused to believe previously, would declare his faith. Earlier, the Lord had breathed the Holy Spirit upon them and they had heard with their ears the words coming from with His own lips: **“As the Father has sent Me, I also send you....If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”** Suddenly, they had become once more fishers of fish and not of men².

St Augustine

This scene took place by the shore of Lake Tiberias in Galilee. The disciples had traveled north to the place of their homes and where the Lord met them.

The ‘Lake of Tiberias’ was the name used for the ‘Sea of Galilee’ in the Lord’s times. In the Old Testament it was known as the ‘Sea of Chinnereth’. In Luke 5:1 it is called the ‘Lake of Gennesaret’. In about the year 20 A.D., a city was founded on its shores and it was called ‘Tiberias’ after the name of the emperor. So the lake became the Lake of Tiberias’. This change occurred over several years, and the evangelist has used the name that was popular at the time of writing this Gospel.

**Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin,
Nathanael of Cana in Galilee,
The sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples were together [2].**

Seven disciples had come to the shore of Lake Tiberias and the Lord appeared to them. He could have done so in compliance with the Roman law which required seven witnesses to testify. The Lord made Himself visible to these seven disciples, among them was Nathaniel whom John had not mentioned after the Lord’s meeting with him in chapter one. Some believe he is the same as Bartholemew, one of the twelve disciples. As for the two disciples whose names are not given, these could be Philip from Bethesda and Andrew from Capernaum.

Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing”. They said to him, “We are going with you also”. They went out, and immediately got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing. [3]

¹ Homilies on St John, 87:2

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 122:2

There is no doubt that the period through which the disciples lived between the time of the Crucifixion and the ascension was filled with obscurity. Even though the Lord's appearances had opened the doors of hope to them, and had revealed many divine mysteries, yet their psychological condition was unstable. The future was unclear, and they could not comprehend the nature of their new life after being physically separated from the Lord Jesus Christ. They had received the mission of preaching to the whole world, but they had not yet experienced the joy of the Holy Spirit that would guide them in their new task. It is true that the Sunday of the Resurrection had replaced the sadness of the Friday of the Crucifixion; yet what was God's plan for them? The situation was a most difficult one and therefore Peter called them to go fishing and they responded in order to do any activity. The time had not come to begin preaching about the Lord and His redeeming action. They had to wait until the Lord's ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon His Church.

The disciples did not know how to lead an idle or lazy life. Therefore they went fishing, though not as a form of leisure but in order to work and provide for their physical needs. The apostle Peter called them to go fishing as a source of income to them. Before the Crucifixion, they lived on what others provided in the money box (Lk 8:3). This is the reason why St John the Cassian reports, about monasticism in Egypt, that the monks were committed to work in order to provide for their needs. They had to care for the poor; and they had to consider that their work was a training that developed their spiritual development. The monk was not to be too engaged in these tasks, yet he was not to depend on relatives or others to provide his necessities.

* By disdaining all wealth, we choose to obtain our daily needs through the work of our hands and without any dependence on the wealth of our relatives. Our reading and meditation on the Bible will therefore become deeper as we will not tend to remain idle if we do nothing else besides that. It is preferable to belong to the working poor according to the example that the apostles have set, or as we have seen in the laws of our fathers. Then we would find much joy in doing so.

It is also worth noting that there is an even greater danger than the previous one; and that is of obtaining your food through the help of others even though you are physically sound and well built. This is appropriate for those who are weak only...Therefore it is necessary for everyone to depend on their daily work and the proceeds of his hands for his livelihood. We need to remember the commandment to love which the apostle teaches when he forbids the wealthy from helping lazy people and says: "For even when we were with you, we commanded you this. If anyone will not work, neither should he eat," (2 Thes. 3:10).

These are the words which the **blessed Anthony** told a certain person, and he taught by setting him as an example¹.

Fr Abraham

¹ Cassian Conferences, 24:12

It is so beautiful for brothers to meet together, not only to worship in Church but also to exchange conversation filled with love. Besides, their reciprocal love would increase if they work together as they will find joy in such practical unity.

St Peter's decision was a natural outcome; even though some feel that it was not according to God's will since he went with his companions without asking God, in prayer, for guidance. That is why they did not catch any fish all night long. Any way it was a practical lesson that demonstrates failure of any human endeavor- whatever the goal- as long as it is not supported by Divine help. This is especially true in the case of fishing for souls for the kingdom of God.

* The Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Truth, has said: "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God," (Lk 9:62). Why did Peter return to do what he had left? We know the he was a fisherman while Matthew was a tax collector. Peter resumed his work after he had become a believer, whereas Matthew never returned to be a tax collector. That is because obtaining a livelihood through fishing is one thing, while tax collecting is another. There are many jobs that cannot be partially or wholly done without committing mistakes. It is forbidden to resume such jobs after becoming believers as they are associated with sin¹.

Pope Gregory the Great

St Augustine responds to the following question: 'Since the Lord has said, "...seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you", (Matt6:32), why was no food provided for them and they had to go fishing?' It was the Lord who had made available the fish in that place so that it could be caught. He made the disciples feel a need which obliged them to go fishing, and consequently, they discovered the miracle which He had prepared for them. Moreover, this incident would strengthen the message proclaimed by the preachers of His Gospel. Indeed, the Bible reinforces itself by the great mystery which makes its imprint on their minds due to the huge amount of fish that was caught².

* The disciples were not forbidden to pray for the needs required by their work as long as that work was intrinsically legal and acceptable; and as long as this did not affect their apostolic mission which they had to continue doing. They had to pray and work whenever they needed to get their daily food. Therefore no one should think or doubt that St Paul did not achieve the stature of those who had abandoned everything and followed the Lord Jesus Christ. St Paul found it necessary to work with his hands in order to provide for his needs and not be a burden on anyone to whom he preached the Gospel. More significantly, he states that he "...labored more abundantly than they all...", and then he adds: "...yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me," (1 Cor 15:10)³.

St Augustine

¹ Hom. 24: Forty Gospel Homilies, PL 76:1184

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 122:4

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 122:3

**But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore:
But the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. [4]**

The disciples did not recognize the Lord Jesus Christ. This could have been to the lack of light and visibility as it was too early in the morning, or because they were too far away, or because He had taken a different form as in Mark 16: 12 (on the road to Emmaus).

St John Chrysostom says that the Lord did not reveal Himself to them in order to engage them in conversation.

* Before the resurrection the Lord had walked on the water before their eyes, (Matt 14:25). What does the sea indicate other than to the present generation that is so disturbed by the conditions and noise of this passing life? What does the stability of the shore indicate other than the continuity of eternal and endless peace? Since the Lord had actually crossed over beyond the limits of this mortal life, He therefore stood on the shore after His resurrection. Through this act, the Lord was as though telling His disciples about the mystery of His resurrection¹.

Pope Gregory the Great

**Then Jesus said to them,
“Children, have ye any meat? “
They answered him, “No”. [5]**

The word for ‘children’ in the Greek language is ‘Paidia’ and it is used when a speaker addresses someone with whom he shares strong ties and tender emotions. The Greek word ‘pais’ literally means ‘young children’ or ‘the loving ones’. St John the evangelist used it when he spoke about the youngest child of one of the nobles, (4:49), and he used it again for a new born child, (16:21). However, it is possible to use this word for adults, while it may also be used for soldiers. The Lord spoke to the disciples as a father would speak to His dear children. Although He possessed a glorified Body after the resurrection, yet this glory was revealed in the spirit of eternal love and sublime tenderness. Based on their ages, the disciples could not be classified as children, yet they became God’s children and enjoyed His divine adoption.

As a father who is filled with tenderness and concerned with providing their physical need for food, the Lord satisfied all their physical and spiritual needs. Our risen Lord continues to **pass through each of the homes of believers**, especially those of the poor and the needy, and He asks: ‘My children, do you have food?’ He knows they have no food; yet He arouses in them the desire to pray with faith and ask Him to satisfy their need. He does not satisfy their need through a human hand, but He fills them with food provided from stores; and waters them Himself in one way or another by His sources of love. He opens their eyes of their hearts and enables them to see Him and become acquainted with His mysteries.

¹ Hom. 24: Forty Gospel Homilies, PL 76:1184

* His manner of speech was more like that of human beings and as though He wanted to buy something from them. However, when they indicated that they had not caught anything, He ordered them to throw their nets to the right side of their boat¹.

St John Chrysostom

Their answer to Him was a negative one -‘No-’ which expressed their bitter disappointment as they had worked all night and had caught no fish. They did not want to talk about this not in any detail, for it is hard for a person to speak about His failure.

**And he said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat,
And you will find some.”
So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in
Because of the multitude of fish. [6]**

It seems that, according to their experience as fisherman, they had to throw their nets to the left of their boat when they fished in that part of the lake. However, without knowing who was the One giving them advice, they humbly obeyed and struggled patiently, without raising any objection or assertion of self confidence gained by their long practice in the fishing industry. The gentle conversation of the Lord and His attitude could have obliged them to obey and submit to His advice.

Catching such a great number of fish was a miraculous work. It was made to proclaim the Lord’s care and concern to provide people’s needs; especially for those who had abandoned everything for His sake. It was not done merely to underline the authority the Lord had even over the fish and the seas. **This was a symbolic act in which the struggle of the disciples through the night corresponds to the struggle of the prophets and the holy men of the Old Testament. These struggled to catch souls for the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, they caught nothing. Then the Lord came and opened the doors of Paradise with His Cross. He also granted the disciples the authority to catch fish. Consequently, the boat of the Church was filled with fish.**

The disciples had struggled all through the night, and they felt that they had failed as they had caught nothing. However, the Lord does not disregard or forget the struggle of His children, and in a few moments, He compensated their great fatigue and labor due to a long night’s work. In this manner, the Lord renews the spirit of hope within us. You might be tired as you serve for many long years, yet fruit appears at the last moments of our lives on earth.

Indeed, when the Lord directs to serve for His kingdom, and when we obey Him, there will not be any empty nets. He is the only One who knows where to find the souls that are thirsty for the joy of salvation. Even though there may not be any clear signs marking them, He is the One who will lead us to them. He is also the One who will attract them to the net of His holy Church.

¹ Homilies on St John, 87:3

* We read twice in the Holy Bible that the Lord gave the command to cast the nets.

The first time occurred before His passion, (Lk 5:4-6). He did not indicate if the nets should be thrown to the right or left side. The disciples caught so many fish **that the nets were breaking**. The second time occurred after His resurrection, and the Lord commanded the disciples to throw the nets on the right side; and although the number of fish caught was very great, the nets did not get broken.

The righteous are indicated to be on the right side, and the wicked on the left side, (Matt 25:33). The first catch indicates the Church at the present time where the righteous and the wicked are gathered. The Church does not choose those who enter her doors as she does not know who she could choose. Look closely at the last catch taken on the right side where the Church of the chosen alone is found, and where there are no wicked deeds. There you will see the fullness of the Lord's glory.

In the first catch, the nets were breaking due to the wicked ones who had entered with the chosen ones. They pierced the nets with their blasphemy. In the second and last catch, many fish were caught and the nets did not get torn. This is because the holy Church, composed of the chosen ones, possesses the peace of her Creator. No obstacles and no divisions exist within her to tear or break Her down¹.

Pope Gregory the Great

**Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter,
“It is the Lord.”
Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord,
He put on his outer garment, (for he had removed it,)
And plunged into the sea. [7]**

Peter ‘... put on his outer garment’, or the fisherman’s clothes, or ‘ependuteen’ which is like a man’s coat nowadays.

The words ‘...for he had removed it’ are used to indicate a specific person who does not wear the outer clothes. This expression was also used when Saul took off his outer clothes ‘himatra’ and lay down naked the whole day and night, (1Samuel 19:24). It is reported that David was girded with a linen ephod and then uncovered himself in front of the maids of his servants, (2 Samuel 6:14, 29).

Peter‘... plunged into the sea’: clearly, he was close to the shore- 132 yards approximately- and that the water was shallow, since he put on his outer clothes in order to cross over to the shore. If the water was not shallow, he would not have worn his outer clothes so that he could swim to the shore.

John, whom Jesus loved, realized that He was the Lord. Indeed, the Lord reveals His mysteries to His beloved ones. He does not deprive anyone from the joy of knowing Him. Everyone who places his head on the Lord’s chest enjoys the divine mysteries. Moreover, a person who accompanies the Lord to the Cross and shares His passion is

¹ Hom. 24. Forty Gospel Homilies, 181-182

blessed by the purity of heart and clarity of vision which enables him to outrun others in comprehending heavenly matters. This is how St John reached out to the Lord, and he could not hide his knowledge and consequently proclaimed it. Even though Peter outran him to meet the Master, John rejoiced that all could enjoy what He saw and experienced.

St John Chrysostom considered the apostle Peter as being characteristically enthusiastic and jealous, while St John had a calm nature. Consequently, although John was the first to calmly recognize the Lord, Peter was to first to reach the shore as he plunged into the sea and swam to Him. He could not wait to go with the others who were with him in the boat¹.

* When Peter recognized the Lord, he left the fish and the nets and put on his clothes... he must have been filled with great awe and longing! Although the distance was 100 yards approximately, he could not wait for the boat to reach the shore, and so he plunged and swam².

St John Chrysostom

Although Peter had denied the Lord three times, yet he had shed tears of repentance and experienced a love and friendship that time could never tear away. As soon as he knew that the Lord was standing on the shore, the boat could no longer hold him and he could not wait till it would come to the shore. He threw himself into the water in order to hurry and meet with his Beloved.

* While the other disciples did not know, the disciple whom Jesus loved told Peter: **“It is the Lord”**. Being chaste, John was the first to recognize the chaste Body and that He was ‘Jesus’ Himself. However, the other disciples did not see Him in the same manner³.

St Jerome

**But the other disciples came in a little boat;
(for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits,)
Dragging the net with fish. [8]**

Two hundred cubits or 100 yards approximately.

**Then as soon as they had come to land,
They saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. [9]**

Just as the great catch of fish was miraculous, so was the sudden provision of fish placed over the coals and the bread which had been prepared by the Lord Jesus Christ. The disciples had found [9] like those at the house of the high priest (Jn18:18); but this time there was fish over the coals and bread next to them. The scene had a sense of ‘celebration’ to it.

¹ Hom. 87. PG 59:522

² Hom. 76. PG59:522

³ To Pammachius Against John of Jerusalem,35

Although the Lord asked them if they had any food, and as though He was hungry, yet He offered them food that did not require or depend on weak human efforts. The Lord has truly invited us to work for His account, but the gladdening fruit and heavenly food, which pleases the Father, are the work of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and the act of His Holy Spirit.

* The One who desired to grill His Body by pain while He was in the flesh, feeds us with His divinity for He says: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven,” (Jn6:51). Therefore He eats with them grilled fish and bread to reveal to us that He has suffered pain while He was in the flesh, and has offered us food through His Divinity¹.

St Gregory the Great

* He prepared grilled fish on coals in order to be a tangible proof to the doubtful disciples, who did not dare to come close to Him as they thought they were seeing a spirit and not a body².

St Jerome

Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have just caught”. [10]

* The Lord commanded the disciples to bring of the fish that they had caught in order to clarify that the miracle before them was not a mere imagination.

* Things seemed to evolve counter to nature. What are these things?

First: They had caught a lot of fish

Second: The nets were not broken

Third: Before they came to the shore, the coals were ready and the fish on top, and the bread with them. These were not prepared from materials that were actually present. They were there through a special Providence and in harmony with the Lord’s work before His crucifixion³.

St John Chrysostom

Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land full of large fish,

One hundred and fifty and three:

And although there were so many, the net was not broken. [11]

The first time the disciples had gone fishing, (Lk 5:11-11), we saw how their nets were getting torn for they were subject to the laws of the world. In this passage, however, **‘the net was not broken’** as it was subject by the laws of eternity.

The Evangelist focused on the number of fish, yet in his mind they did not indicate quantity but quality of existence. We note how he indicated that the wedding in Cana took place on **‘the third day’**, (Jn2:1). He also wrote about **seven** miracles, and **seven** sermons. The word **‘God’** occurs eight times in the introductory chapter of the

¹ Hom. 24. Forty Gospel Homilies, 184

² To Pammachius Against John of Jerusalem, 34

³ Hom. 76. PG 59:522

Gospel, and it occurs eight times throughout it. The word 'Logos' occurs four times in the first chapter; and forty times in each of the Gospels. As for the number 153, innumerable thinkers have invested it with different meanings across the years.

St Augustine presents to us a symbolic interpretation to this miracle. He states that the disciples who went out fishing were seven which is the number that denotes perfection or fulfillment of the times, (seven days in the week). The Lord came to them in the morning which stands for the end of all time. Drawing the nets to the shore symbolizes the coming Judgment at the end of time. As for the attempt to catch fish throughout the night, it indicates the ministry before the Lord's resurrection when no one enjoyed the blessing of the resurrection or the spread of the holy Word. The act of throwing the net on the right side of the boat points to the great harvest of believers after the resurrection.. In fact, the net contained big and small fish to convey that there are the good ones as well as the wicked ones within the Church These will be picked and separated from each other on the day of the Lord. The number of big fish were 153 and this corresponds to the righteous men in the Old Testament, (ten is a symbol for the law). Add to them the seven disciples in the new Testament, (seven being a symbol of perfection), and the total is 17. The number 153 is the result of adding all the numbers from 1-17.

Some numbers are designated as being three dimensional or three-sided: for example the number 10 is the tripartite of number 4, ($1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$). The number 153 is the tripartite of number 17 and it includes 7 and 1 which make 8. The number of disciples who stood on the shore was 7, and the number 8 stands for eternity.

St Gregory the Great notes that every act recorded in the Old Testament is associated to the Ten Commandments. Besides, they are completed and fulfilled in the New Testament through the Holy Spirit who grants seven blessings: '...the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord...'.The two Testaments are referred to as number 17 [7+1]; and all the major events recorded are 17 in number. When this is multiplied by 3, the result is 51. The jubilee is celebrated in the year (50) and we begin with the year 51...this is the year of rest in the Old Testament. In the New Testament we multiply 51 by three (in reference to the Holy Trinity) and the result is 153. This is the number of the chosen ones, from both the Old and New Testaments, who are in the heavenly Church or –in other words-in our heavenly home¹.

St Augustine presents a wonderful comparison between the two miracles of the fish that are recorded in the Gospel of Luke 5:3-7, and in the Gospel of John 21:1-11.**Pope Gregory the Great** used this in his own writing. It is possible to summarize this comparison in the following points with some changes²:

1- The first miracle (Lk 5) occurred before the Lord's resurrection, whereas the second miracle occurred after His resurrection. That is why the first miracle is taken to indicate

¹ Hom.24. Forty Gospel Homilies,182-183

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 122:7-9

to **the Church in the present world** which enjoys the blessings of the Lord Jesus Christ. The second miracle refers to **the Church in the world to come, or the Church that comes after the resurrection**. At that time the Church will enjoy the glory of the Lord.

2- In the Gospel of St John, the miracle occurred in the early morning hours and after a very long night. This refers to the appearance of the Church in her full glory with the second coming of the Lord. He will shine upon her with a new morning.

3-In the Gospel of St Luke, the Lord does not ask them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat; but He tells them to go farther into the deep sea. Consequently, their nets were filled with good and bad fish. In the Gospel of St John, the Lord asks them to cast their nets on the right side, and as a result, they caught fish that was all good. The first miracle refers to the Church that is filled with believers; though not all are righteous as the good and the wicked are mixed together and it is impossible to separate them. Inside the Church, there are the true believers who enjoy fellowship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, there are those who appear to be believers but who are hypocrites and careless about their salvation and that of others. They are wholly preoccupied with satisfying their vanity, or their physical lust and its pleasures, as well as clinging to material matters. In the Gospel of St John, we find the Church, at the onset of the new age, separating the true believers from the wicked ones. The good and righteous will stand at the right hand side of the Lord Jesus Christ as God's blessed children who are entitled to the eternal inheritance; whereas the wicked will have no place on the right hand side of the Lord. They will stand on His left and as though they do not exist as they have no share with the Savior.

4-In St Luke's Gospel, the nets **were about to break**; but in St John's Gospel they were filled with fish, yet we do not hear this expression. The Church is exposed to so much in this world in the form of attacks of conjurors, heretics, and troublemakers that she seems near breaking point due to such divisions. However, the true Church remains mysteriously covered and without divisions in God's sight. All her members remain steadfast members in the one Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the heavenly Church- i.e. after the Resurrection- we see one net which will not be exposed to any breaking. Rather, she will glow with the brilliance resulting from her union with the Lord Jesus Christ who is her heavenly Bridegroom.

5-In the first miracle there were two boats: in them were the circumcised people (of the Old Testament, and the uncircumcised (the Gentiles who became believers). In the world, both the Church of the Old Testament and the Church of the New Testament have existed. In both of them, the Messiah has worked in one way or another. However, with the coming of the night, there will not be any distinction, for they will all be found in one boat holding together.

6-St Augustine comments that the boat was about 200 cubits away from the shore. As it contained both the circumcised and the uncircumcised, then the number 100 refers to those standing on the Lord's right hand, and the number 200 refers to both groups

standing together and at the same distance. This implies that both groups enjoy the same rewards and the same glory.

- 8- Many fathers have presented different interpretations for the 153 fish. They are all symbolic meanings to this number.
- 9- The fish are described as being big, in reference to believers who are considered to be great in the kingdom of God.

Jesus said to them.

“Come and eat breakfast”.

Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are you?”

- knowing that it was the Lord. [12]

“Come and eat breakfast”- the word ‘eat’ occurs as a literal translation for the Greek word ‘aristeasate’. Some believe that the origin of the word has been used to mean ‘breakfast’; as it had been used this way in the writings of Homer, Xenophom, and Plutarch. It was also used to refer to an early meal, or even for lunch. The Lord seemed to be inviting them to ‘come and eat breakfast’ as it was early in the morning.

As a personal friend, **Jesus said to them “Come and eat breakfast”** [12]. He invites them to the feast He had prepared for them. So they ate and were filled. Nevertheless, a lot of fish was left for them to sell and have the money to buy their daily needs.

They recognized the Lord, although neither the disciples nor the Lord had exchanged any words. It is as though He had carried them into the silence of the heavens where only the language of heavenly love is spoken, and where no human language is heard.

* **‘...none of the disciples dared ask Him...’**, and none began to speak with Him. They just sat down and looked at Him silently and in great fear and awe **‘knowing that it was the Lord’**. That is why they did not ask Him **“Who are You?”** They could see from His looks that He was changed and they were greatly frightened. Yet in spite of that, they knew He was no one else but the Lord, and this made them control their need to ask.

St John Chrysostom

Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. [13]

The Lord dealt with them as a friend; and offered to them what they needed. However, they felt shy and because they knew He was the Lord, they did not dare ask: Who are You? In order to open for them this door for meeting with Him, and to prove His great love, the Lord came to them, took the bread and the fish and offered it to them.

St John the Evangelist does not report whether the Lord shared the food with them or not. Surely His risen Body was not in need for food, however He might have eaten in

order to confirm that He possessed a real body and that what they saw was not a shadow or figment of their imagination.

* The Lord made it clear that the miracle was not an imaginary one. However, the Evangelist does not say that the Lord ate with them. St Luke is clear as he reports: ‘...He took it and ate in their presence,’ (Lk 24:43). The Lord ate not because the nature of His Body needed the food, but He humbly ate in order to prove His actual resurrection.

* He no longer acted as He used to do before...in this incident, the Lord did not look up to the heaven (to bless the food), nor did He do other human actions. This confirmed that the way He had acted before was a sign of His humility. He wanted to make them know that He would neither be staying with them forever, nor in the same manner in which He had been with them before. This explains why St John reports that **‘this was now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples...’**¹ .

St John Chrysostom

This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead. [14]

‘This is now the third time’ that Jesus appeared to His disciples while they were all or partially present together. He had appeared to ten of them, (Jn 20: 19); then to eleven of them, (Jn 20:27); and then to seven of them, (Jn 21:2). Some scholars believe that this was the seventh time that the Lord appeared between the time of His resurrection and the time of His ascension:

- 1- To Mary Magdalene, (Mk 16:19; Jn. 20:15-16).
- 2- To the women who went to the tomb, (Matt 28:9).
- 3- To two of the disciples on their way to Emmaus, (Lk 24:13).
- 4- To Peter only, (Lk 24:34).
- 5- To the ten disciples when Thomas was absent, (Jn.20:19).
- 6- To the eleven disciples on the eighth day when Thomas believed, (Jn 21:26).
- 7- To seven disciples, (Jn 21:2), and that was some time between the eighth and fourteenth day after His resurrection.
- 8- To His disciples on a certain mountain in Galilee, (Matt 28:16).
- 9- To more than 100 brothers at one time, (1 Cor 15:6), if that was not the time appearance as the previous one mentioned here.
- 10- James saw Him, (1 Cor 15:7).
- 11- To all His disciples on the day of His ascension into the heavens, (Mk 16:19-20; Lk24:50-53; Acts 1:3-12; 1Cor 15:7).

These are the appearances that have been mentioned in the Holy Bible, but we can confirm that there were many other appearances that have not been mentioned.

¹ Homilies on ST John,87:2

* To clarify that the Lord Jesus Christ, after His resurrection, neither stayed for a continuous time with His disciples nor lived with them as He did before, the Evangelist states that **‘This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples’**.

* When you hear about these events, you become aroused and consider how those who were with Him were happy; and how glad they will be on the Day of Judgment. Let us do our best so that we get to behold that amazing Face. If now we get aroused and become eager just by hearing, and thinking what it would have been like if we had lived at the time when the Lord lived on earth. What it must have felt to hear His voice, see His Face, to come close and touch Him, and serve under His leadership! Then think how great it was to see Him in a Body that was no longer corruptible, and no longer doing human acts. Now He possessed a Body that is guarded by the angels; and consequently, we ourselves have put on pure form that has no mingling with our former selves.

We see Him and enjoy all other blessings that cannot be expressed by any language. I beg you to use every means that will enable you not to lose such a glorious blessing. There is nothing that is impossible if you have the will; and there is nothing burdensome if you are focused and ‘walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory’, (1 Thes 2:12)¹.

St John Chrysostom

1- A Dialogue with Peter

The Lord confirmed to His disciples that He is the Creator of both the body and the spirit. He offered them breakfast which He had prepared with His hands in order to provide for their physical needs. Then He became concerned with providing their spiritual food to satisfy their spiritual needs

The dialogue between the Lord and Peter took place after the disciples had eaten and were filled. It could have taken place during the meal when the Lord would have turned to Peter and spoken with him. The Lord had previously met with the disciple, after His resurrection, at least twice or three times but He had not spoken to Peter in that manner. It could be that the Lord wished to console Peter and show him that His repentance had been fully accepted, and that what he had done would not affect the relationship between him and the Lord. After giving him this assurance, the Lord opened the topic. Some scholars believe that Peter did not speak about what had happened as he feared that the Lord would declare other weaknesses or failures that he would face. Peter realized that the Lord knew his inner depths more than he knew himself. The apostle Peter was in need of that meeting with the Lord in order to regain confidence in God’s working power in him.

**So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,
“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?”
He said to Him, “Yes Lord, You know that I love You.”
He said to him, “Feed My lambs”. [15]**

¹ Homilies on St John, 87:3

The Lord took this tender and personal initiative towards Peter in order to reinstitute his full fellowship with him. This is a relationship that exists with all those who have become sealed with the seal of the resurrection. The Lord did not use the new name of 'Peter' which He had given him, and it was as though He were renewing the promise with him.

“...do you love Me more than these?” Some scholars believe that though the Lord asked: Do you love Me more than all the others, He intended to ask if Peter still believed that his love for the Lord was greater than that of the others. Peter had made this declaration when he had said that he would follow to Lord even if he had to die for Him and even if others would deny Him. Peter the son of Jonah did not dare to utter the words: ‘... **more than these**’, for he feared he had a weakness of which he was unaware. He had repented for having declared that he would not deny Him even if all others would; therefore he felt embarrassed and in awe. Peter had learned not to depend on himself and to submit himself into the Lord’s caring hands. He therefore said, **“You know...”**. He no longer trusted his own testimony, and it was impossible to ask that others witness for him. He asked for the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who perceives the heart and has the power to sustain the weak.

The Lord did not ask him about his repentance for having denied Him three times. He was satisfied to ask about Peter's love for Him. **Repentance is essentially the practice of loving God.** This is what the Lord requires of every sincere repentant. That is why He praised the repentant adulterous woman. He told Simon the Pharisee: “...her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much,” (Lk 7:47).

In order to regain Peter to the ministry of saving souls, the Lord Jesus Christ asked him, **“Do you love Me?”** This reveals that the Lord does not entrust a person with this ministry unless his heart is filled with love for Him. What that person offers to mankind for its salvation actually consists of offering the Lord Himself. Someone who does not love the Lord cannot minister to souls and cannot be concerned for their salvation since he does not realize their value to Him. The Lord has died for these souls and offered His precious Blood to redeem them. The Lord used the word **‘aghapas’** to express sublime love and its honor, Peter, however, is embarrassed to use the same term and humbly used the word **‘phileo’** which is used to speak about the love for friends.

* The Lord asked Peter to **“Feed (His) lambs”...**, and did not mention his denial or challenge what he had done. It was as though the Lord was telling him: ‘You had said that you would sacrifice yourself for my sake, so now I am asking you to sacrifice yourself for my lambs’.

* Actually, there are so many ways which would endear us to God and would reveal that we belong to the shining chosen ones. One of the most effective ways to win the approval of the Most High is to show a tender concern for our fellow brothers. This is what the Lord asked Peter to do¹.

St John Chrysostom

¹ Homilies on St John. 88:1

* When the dead assumes eternal life, and the corruptible assumes the incorruptible and swallows death in the victorious Lord Jesus Christ; then God reigns over all. Consequently, wisdom is not found only in Solomon, or sweetness only in David, or zeal in Elijah and Phineas, or faith in Abraham, or total love in Peter who was asked, **“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?”**. Besides, zeal is not only found in the preaching of the chosen fathers, or virtue in just one or two. Rather, God is wholly perfect in everyone; and the fragrance of fellowship with the saints is evident in every set of virtues while God reigns over all¹.

St Jerome

**He said to him again a second time,
“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?”
He said to Him, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.”
He said to him, “Tend My sheep”. [16]**

The first time the Lord asked the question so that Peter would compare himself with his brothers, and find out if his love for the Master was greater than theirs. Now that Simon Peter had learned to be humble, and did not answer with pride and confidence in his own power; the Lord no longer compared him with his brothers when He posed the question for a second and third time.

* If we watch the sheep and are fearful, and are concerned about the sheep, then how much are the sheep more concerned about themselves? Our share is to watch the sheep, and your share is to be obedient. Our share is to vigilantly keep watching, and your share is to be humble sheep. If we seem to be speaking from a higher platform, **we lay ourselves at your feet in fear, for we know the danger of that sublime position²**.

St Augustine

* Peter’s faith had been shaken due to the suffering of the Lord, and now he shed bitter tears as he heard the Lord’s tender words, **“Tend My sheep”³**.

St Jerome

**He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things: You know that I love You.”
Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.”[17]**

In the first two times, the Lord Jesus Christ used the word **‘agapas’**; and Peter used the word **‘philo’** in his answer which conveys the endearing relationship of love that exists between cherished ones. In the Lord’s question for the third time, the word **‘philo’** occurs and He seems to be asking Peter, **‘Do you love Me, dear friend?’**

¹ Against Pelagians, 1:18

² Sermon on the N.T. Lessons, 96:1

³ Letter 35:1

The distinction between the two expressions has occupied many of those who have studied this Gospel. Many find that the word 'agapo' is a general word that denotes love which is based on poised mental thought coupled with practical devotion of one's life for the loved one. As for the word 'philo', they find that it refers to emotional love that involves personal tenderness towards the loved one. Therefore the Lord seems to ask His disciple, 'Will you devote your life to Me?'; and the disciple answers, 'I love You with all my feelings.'

William Hendrickson makes a distinction between the two expressions as he says: The word 'agapo' is used generally here, as well as in the rest of the other Gospels, to refer to love offered with one's whole being. It dictates not only the emotions, but the mind too, and plays an outstanding role as it is based on appreciation of the loved one due to obvious reasons. The word 'phileo' refers to instinctive natural or spontaneous love in which emotions play a main and greater role than the mind or will. In this manner, we could make a distinction between the two expressions: in the first two questions, the Lord asked Peter if he felt a sort of sublime love and richness in his emotions, mind, and active will. Peter's response conveyed that he could not claim to have love that matched such a wonderful standard; but that he was sure that he carried strong genuine feelings of love towards the Lord... even though this was less than the love that the Lord asked for¹.

C.H.C.MacGregor finds that the first verb denotes the presence of appreciation and respect between the two parties; while the second denotes the presence of personal emotions between two members of the same family².

St Peter was saddened as the third question reminded him of his denial for three times. It is painful to remember our sins even though we have been forgiven. He might have been saddened through fear that the Lord perceived a weakness in his depths of which he was unaware. That is what had happened before when he declared himself ready to die with the Lord.

The Lord invited Peter three times to watch His sheep and care for them through his love for the Owner of the sheep. The Lord had claimed Himself to be like a good shepherd who lays down his life, (Jn 10:11). Isaiah accordingly says: 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young', (Is 40:11).

* May the role of love be the factor that feeds the sheep of God. ..those who aim at watching over the Lord's sheep as though they were not the Lord's, but rather owned by them, will be condemned since they love themselves and not the Lord. Such shepherds desire to boast, to possess power, or to make money. Seeking to be obedient, to serve and to please God...what do these indicate other than that you love Me and therefore neglect to feed yourself while you feed My sheep because they are Mine and not yours? Seek My authority and not yours, seek My profit and not yours. In doing so, you will avoid

¹ Cf. Leon Morris: Reflections on the Gospel of St John, Hendrickon Publishers, 2000, p.737.

² Ibid, p. 737

following the path of those who belong to the dangerous times- who love themselves and all the consequences that come along with the onset of these evil ways¹.

St Augustine

* As surely as he had denied the Lord three times, he proclaimed Him three times. It was night time when Peter had denied the Lord, and now it was daylight when He proclaimed Him².

St Ambrose

**“...Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself
And walked where you wished;
But now you are old, you will stretch out your hands,
And another will gird you
And carry you where you do not wish.” [18]**

Having restored to Peter his status as an apostle, the Lord went on to inform him concerning his martyrdom. In using the words ‘Most assuredly’ the Lord wanted to confirm that what He was saying was greatly important and serious, and that it would surely be fulfilled.

In his youth, he was free to gird himself whenever he wanted, and to go wherever he wished. Because of this freedom, he submitted himself into the hands of his Savior so that He would gird him and carry him according to His divine will. It would not be according to Simon’s plans or those of other believers. He submitted his will to the Lord so that He might be glorified even at his death. For this reason, Peter will be glad to suffer. Even at his death, which would glorify God, he will be glad as he witnesses to the divine Truth.

Wetstein finds that the expression ‘you will stretch out your hands’ refers to the custom practiced in Rome when a person was crucified. The head of the person was placed on the cross and his hands would be stretched out to the extreme. Then he would be led through the streets of the city where he would be crucified.

Another person would gird him with iron chains and he would be carried to a place against his will. He does not wish to be crucified for having loved the Lord, but because he wishes to live to preach and serve Him.

* The Lord clearly told Peter about the manner of his death for Peter the apostle always desired to go through dangers and difficulties for the Lord’s sake. Therefore He was telling him: ‘Rest assured that I will fulfill your desire in that matter, and even in your old age you will meet troubles which you have not experienced in your youth.’

* What is intended by the expression ‘**where you do not wish**’? Here the Lord is speaking about natural feelings, the needs of the body, and how the spirit leaves the body

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 123:5

² Exposition on St Luke 10:90

involuntarily. Even when the will is steadfast, nature is weak...therefore the expression **'where you do not wish'** refers to natural human feelings¹.

St John Chrysostom

* Love was the end result achieved by this person who had denied his Master. He had lost his path through his own boldness, and fell through his denial. He was washed by his tears, was forgiven by his confession, and crowned by tolerating suffering.

This is where he ended: by dying with complete love for the sake of the One to whom he had boldly promised he would die for Him. He did so when he was strengthened by the Lord's resurrection...the object of his promise which he vowed when he was still immature. The ultimate order of things was that the Lord should die first, and then Peter would die as a result of preaching the Lord Jesus Christ².

St Augustine

**This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God.
And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me". [19]**

Denying the Lord three times had shaken Peter deeply. Therefore the Lord sought to grant him the joyful spirit of hope, and assured him that he would glorify God. He would do so not only through his preaching but also to the very last breath of his life when he would glorify Him in his death. In this manner, he could sing and proclaim: "For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's, (Rom 14:8).

Thirty four years later, after this dialogue, Peter's martyrdom took place and it was for the glory of God. He had considered himself unworthy to die in the manner of his Master and therefore requested to be hung with his head downwards. This has been recorded by **Josephus, Prudentius, St John Chrysostom, and St Augustine**.

* There is no longer a reason to fear crossing over from our present life, since we have come to possess a strong example of the life to come through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, Peter you do not have to fear death any more, for He is alive whom you sorrowed over when He died. The One whom you tried to prevent, driven by your mortal love, (Matt 16:21-22), from dying for our sake is alive³!

St Augustine

* He did not say 'you are expected to die' but he said: **'...by what death he would glorify God'**. This is intended to teach us that suffering for the sake of the Lord constitutes glory and honor for the suffering one⁴.

St John Chrysostom

¹ Homilies on St John, 88:1

² St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 123:4

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 123:4

⁴ Homilies on St John, 88:1

It seems that when the Lord told Peter **‘Follow Me’**, He began to walk and Peter followed Him. However, when he looked behind him, he found that John was also following him. He probably was tested by some kind of curiosity as he wished to know whether John too would be martyred with him.

2- The Lord’s Words about John

Then Peter turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, Who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?”[20]

St John does not write his name as he probably felt he was worthy to have his name mentioned in the Holy Bible. At the same time, it was impossible to ignore the special love the Lord expressed towards him.

St Augustine comments that John was the one who enjoyed the Lord’s love more than any of the disciples because he was a celibate, and had led a pure life since his childhood¹.

St Augustine

Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, “But Lord, what about this man?”[21]

Some scholars find that Peter was a curious person, and was concerned with matters that concerned others rather than focusing on his obligations as the Lord’s disciple. He might have felt jealous of John who had practically leaned and put his head on the Lord’s chest, even though he had not proclaimed never to deny the Lord. Moreover, John had followed the Lord to the Cross, and the relationship between him and the Lord and had not been hurt in the way it had with Peter.

* This is one of the great mysteries of divine love. Even in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ, there was no exception concerning the death of the flesh. Although He is Lord over nature, He did not refuse the Law governing the body He had put on. It is necessary for me to die, but in His sight this does not have any importance².

St Ambrose

* Peter asked the Lord a question concerning someone other than himself; and John was silent, while Peter talked. This illustrates Peter’s love and loyalty towards John. He loved him greatly, and expressed it in many instances later on. There are many references to their mutual affection and close fellowship in the Gospels and in the Book of the Acts. He wished to have John as his partner and so he asked the Lord, **“what about this man?”** In other words, ‘Is he going to have the same path as mine?’

St John Chrysostom

¹ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate

² On the Decease of His Brother Saytrus, Book 1:4

**Jesus said to him,
“If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?
You follow Me.” [22]**

Some scholars explain that the Lord wished to clearly tell Peter that John would not die as a martyr. Ancient historians state that John was the only disciple out of the twelve who did not die in this manner.

The Lord’s words ‘...till I come’ do not mean that John would not die until His second coming. Rather, they are intended as a reproach to Peter for his curiosity and preoccupation with the future and with his missionary work. Some other thinkers consider that it is an indirect way of stating that John will not die until the destruction of Jerusalem occurs at the hands of Titus the Roman. Many have interpreted the Lord’s words as an indication that John would live to see the Lord’s coming to judge Jerusalem and pronounce its destruction. St Peter was martyred in the year 67 A.D. – that is seven years before the destruction of Jerusalem, while St John continued to live for about thirty years after that.

St Augustine and other writers believe that the Lord’s words mean the following: If I wanted John to live to the Day of My coming, and then took him with Me after being subject to a natural death, how does that concern you? Follow Me so that you might carry your cross. Indeed, history reports and confirms that John is the only disciple who did not die as a martyr but died a natural death. He remained alive when all the others had died as martyrs.

Some seem to believe that the apostle Peter was alone with the Lord when they were talking together. Peter knew how much John loved the Lord and so he thought that he would join them as they walked; but the Lord indicated His wish to leave matters I His hands. He might leave John, and return later to him after He had ended His conversation with Peter.

* Peter spoke these words as he paid a lot of attention to John. He did not want to be separated from him. Therefore the Lord wished to show him that His love for John was much greater than his. Therefore He said, **“If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?”** Peter had always been fiery and rash in these matters, so the Lord wished to restrain him and teach him not to go beyond his limits by uttering these words.

* The Lord teaches us not to mourn, or be upset, or curious. We should not ask questions that seem to be outside the scope of matters directly affecting us¹.

St John Chrysostom

**Then this saying went out among the brethren
That this disciple would not die.
Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die,
But, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?”[23]**

¹ Hom. 88 PG 59:527

Because John lived long after all the disciples had been martyred, many believers thought that he would not die and that he would live to see the Lord's second coming. However, St John corrects them as they had really misinterpreted the Lord's words, and he confirms that the Lord did not say any such thing.

Some thinkers find that the two apostles mentioned here refer to two ways of life within the Church: the meditative and the active. A person who practices a meditative life is not subject to death like the one who leads an active life. Death in the case of a meditative person leads to perfection. This is especially true when the Lord comes. At that time, there will be no need for missionary or charity work, for it will be a time for offering praise and meditating on Him.

* Nothing should frighten us of death, and nothing should make us sorrowful because the natural life we have accepted has been taken away from us, or we have sacrificed it for His sake and as an obligation to which we have committed ourselves. Who of us wishes to let things continue to be as they are whether for religious reasons or to practice a certain virtue? This is what they thought was the promise given to John. But this was contrary to the truth...he himself denies in his writings that there was any promise that he would not die. We learn from this example that it is inappropriate to hold on to empty hopes¹.

St Ambrose

St Augustine writes that what is reported here concerning the two disciples has a symbolic significance. St Peter represents the believer who struggles on earth and witnesses to the Lord through his great love. That is why Peter is considered to be the one who loved the Lord the most; and the Lord had asked him, "**Peter, son of Jonah, do you love Me?**" St John, on the other hand, represents the believer who has enjoyed eternal glory in the life to come. He was not asked the question, "Do you love Me?" for his whole being was absorbed in his love for the Lord. Whereas Peter was the one who loved the Lord the most, John was the one whom the Lord loved the most and therefore he named himself 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'. The Lord invited Peter '**to follow**' Him as a loving believer is committed to translate his love into willingness to share in the Lord's pain and to follow Him to the cross. The Lord said about John: "**If I will that he remain till I come**" where death cannot creep into a believer who enjoys eternal glory. Believers like Peter follow in faith, while those like John enjoy the glory of the resurrection while they live².

3- Concluding Words of St John

**This is the disciple who testifies of these things,
And wrote these things,
And we know that his testimony is true. [24]**

¹ On the Decease of His Brother Saytrus, Book 2:49

² cf. St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 124:6-7

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the writer records that he is the disciple of the Lord. Moreover, he states that he gives a true testimony of what he saw and heard himself from the Lord; and that his testimony proclaims the truth.

**And there are also many other things that Jesus did,
Which if they were written one by one,
I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be
written. Amen. [25]**

Some scholars believe that the last two verses have been added by those to whom St John had delivered the Gospel. They might have done so in order to confirm that the Gospel is a testimony of that trusted disciple.

As we noted in the introduction, this Gospel often repeats the term ‘**the world**’ in order to underline that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior of the whole world and not just the Jews.

The miracles and deeds done by the Lord are more than can be counted. Besides being innumerable, they are greatly varied. Consequently, some scholars believe that this verse could be interpreted literally. It is impossible for the world to record fully all the acts of our infinite Lord. His works are unlimited, some are apparent while others are invisible.

The goal of the Gospel is not to include all the work and words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rather, the purpose is to reveal His character, features, and effect in the life of the believer. The other evangelists have used expressions that reveal the many miraculous deeds of the Lord, (Matt 4:23-24; 9:35; 11:1; 14:14, 36; 15: 30; 19:2; etc). For example, St Paul uses an expression from the Lord’s sayings, yet it does not appear in any of the four Gospels, (Acts 20:35). What has been recorded in the New Testament about the Lord’s person, and His deeds and words have been food enough for the Church. Therefore she has enjoyed knowing Him, as well as and His teachings and His deeds.

Some critics have misunderstood this concluding verse. However, many scholars have recorded similar expressions which have not been criticized. They appear in the works of Eastern as well as Western writers. Such statements involve a certain degree of exaggeration and are a form of expression which also appears in the different books of the Holy Bible. An example of this is what the spy says, in Numbers 13:33: “...all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature...there we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight”. In Daniel 4:11, we read: ‘The tree grew, and became strong. Its height reached to the heavens. And it could be seen to the ends of all the earth.’ In Deuteronomy 1:28, we read: ‘The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to heaven’. Josephus, the historian, reports that Jacob was given the promise that Canaan would belong to him and his

children who would fill all the land where the sun shines- whether it be on earth or in the seas¹. In the West, Cicero writes that the splendor of the Roman people can barely be surpassed by the glory of the heavens, while the planet earth can scarcely contain it².

* We do not assume that the writer is specifically referring to the actual area of the earth which cannot contain Roman splendor. Otherwise, how is it possible to write about it if the world could not contain it at the time of writing? It probably could be that it is impossible to understand these writings due to the readers' capacity.³

St Augustine

Amen: This word is used to conclude all the Gospels. It means 'Let it be so'. It would be correct to use it to mean 'May we have faith in what has been written here, and obedience to what He has commanded us, and may we enjoy His promises to us.'

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¹ Antiques lib. 10 ch.20

² Phil. 2:44

³ St Augustine: On the Gospel of St John, tractate 124;8

Meditations

Inspired by the Gospel of St John

Chapter Twenty One

- * My spirit moans with your disciples, and shouts out:
I have worked hard all night and have caught nothing.
My experience, potentials, and energy seem useless!
May You carry me over, O Lord,
For by Your word I could catch many fish in the nets of the Church.
Say one word, for souls are lost in waters of the world.
Not to me, not to me,
But to You many are attracted by Your Word.

- * Grant me the love and purity of John so that I may know You
With the peace of a strong heart, he proclaimed: 'It is the Lord!'
Grant me Peter's jealousy,
So that I may run towards you and worship at your feet.

- * Prepare for me grilled fish,
Grant me food for my soul,
So that she would not hunger nor thirst for the world.

- * I know that You long that I spend time with You.
You reproach Me in a spirit of love,
And without hurting my feelings with any word!
With Peter, who denied You, I proclaim:
'You know that I love You'
Yes, I love You.
Even though my soul moans on account of my sins;
According to Your words I will tend Your sheep
You carry me in the palm of Your hand,
Therefore I will carry my brothers in mine.
Who can carry the burdens of Your people,
If You would not carry them all!

- * I join myself with Peter and here You whisper to me:
'Do you love Me more than these?'
You ask if I love You,
With all my heart, mind, and will
I devote all my energy to You and to Your children
O most beloved One
And I reciprocate your appreciation and pride in me
O amazing One, who am I to be loved?
You have made me a member of the divine family!

Therefore I shout with Peter:
'You know that I love You!'
You are wholly mine,
And I am wholly yours, O beloved of my heart!
What do you wish me to do?

* I have been spoiled throughout my life!
Now I stretch out my hands as on the cross
That I may be crucified with You
Just as Your disciple Peter, and with my head downwards.
My life is in Your hands
For You are the amazing Shepherd of my soul.

* You astounding acts are so many,
If I were to write them, the world would not be able to contain these books.
Rather than record them in books,
Let Your Spirit engrave them in my heart!
Then I will become – through Your Holy Spirit
An open Bible that people may read.

Amen

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

PART FIVE: The Lord's Resurrection Testifies to His Divinity

**Chapter Twenty: The Resurrection: The First day and the Eighth combined
The Resurrected Lord**

Meditations inspired by John Chapter Twenty

PART SIX: Concluding Words

Chapter Twenty One: A Feast by the Sea of Tiberias

OR The Crossing Over into the Coming Age

Meditations inspired by John Chapter Twenty One

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OVERVIEW OF BOOK ONE AND BOOK TWO

BOOK ONE: CHAPTERS 1- 8

BOOK TWO: CHAPTERS 9- 21

PART ONE: THE WORD INCARNATED

CH 1

PART TWO: SIGNS AND DEEDS REVEALING HIS DIVINITY

CH 2- CH 12

PART THREE: HE MANIFESTS HIMSELF TO HIS FOLLOWERS

CH 13 -CH 17

PART FOUR: THE SACRIFICED SON OF GOD

CH 18-CH 19

PART FIVE: HIS RESURRECTION TESTIFIES TO HIS DIVINITY

CH 20

PART SIX: CONCLUSION

CH 21

BOOK ONE: Chapters 1- 8

Preface: Inexpressible Glories

Introduction to the Gospel according to St John

The Gospel of St John and the early church. The writer. The place and date of writing. The writer's object for writing, and other objects of the Gospel. The response to heretics and inventions current at the time of writing, as well as to opposing Jews. First: the response to the rebellious Jews. Second: the response to the followers of John the Baptist. Third: the response to some of the initiators of inventions. Fourth: a call to Christians of Jewish origin living abroad. Fifth: offering support to Christians in the world- whatever their origin. The Gospel of St John and the three Synoptic Gospels. The Gospel of St John's place between theology and history. The increasing importance of it's historical perspective. Main features of the Gospel of St John: Preaches: 1- divine holiness. 2-Faith based on love-redeeming and life giving. 3- Truth. 4- The Holy Spirit. 5-Witnessing for the Lord Jesus Christ. 6- The new commandment-or the Gospel of love. 7- The Messiah of joyous youth. 8- Discourses of the Lord Jesus Christ. 9- The liturgy. 10- Power and action. 11- Focus on some significant numbers. 12- A style that is purely sublime. 13- The last book written in the Holy Bible. 14- A timeless literary form. 15- The use of comparisons. 16- Variety in style. The Gospel of St John and the Old Testament. The Gospel of St John and the Gnostics. The Gospel of St John and Hellenism. The Gospel of St John and the Lord Jesus Christ...Who is Jesus Christ? The Gospel of St John and the Father. The Gospel of St John and the Holy Spirit. The Gospel of St John and the Church. The Gospel of St John and the universality of the Church. The Gospel of St John and eternal life. The Gospel of St John and the miracles. The legal status of the Gospel: First: The testimony of the universal Church and heretics. Two: The testimony of atheists. Objections raised concerning St John being the writer of this Gospel. Implications found in the Gospel indicating the person of the writer: A- He is a witness. B- He is the beloved disciple. C- He knows the Palestinian background...written according to John, the fisherman. The different parts/sections and meditations inspired by the Gospel of St John.

PART ONE: The Incarnate Word and Grantor of Grace

Chapter One: The Incarnate Word and Witness to Him

Witnessing to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Divine Word. The Word became incarnated. Witnesses to the incarnated Word. The testimony of John the Baptist. The testimony of His first disciples. Philip's call to Nathaniel. What does the fig tree signify?

Addendum to Chapter One: Divine Grace (grace for grace)

What does grace mean? Grace and the Word of God. The grace of creation. The grace of free will. The grace of the law. The grace of restoring what we have lost. The grace of the resurrection and of victory over death. The grace of being God the Father's adopted children. The grace of the Holy Spirit. The grace of fellowship and partaking of the divine nature. The grace of possessing life in Christ. The grace of the pleasing smell of Christ. The grace of virtue. The grace of the Father and the Son. The grace of the inheritance of the Kingdom. The grace of living there eternally. The grace of enjoying the knowledge of divine truth. The grace of steadfastness in the Father and the Son. The grace of fulfillment and joy. The grace of light. The grace of preaching and witnessing. A dynamic grace. A universal grace. The Giver of grace pleads for grace on our behalf. Meditations inspired by Chapter One.

BOOK ONE - PART TWO

Chapters 2-12

The Lord's Miracles Proclaim His Divinity

SEVEN STAGES AND SEVEN MIRACLES

Chapter Two: The Bridegroom: The Giver of Joy to the Soul (the wedding at Cana)

Turning the water into wine-Purifying the Temple-Asking for Miracles-Meditations inspired by Chapter Two.

Chapter Three: Nicodemus and the New Birth. The Master and Grantor of the New Birth

A discourse about the new birth- the new birth and the sacrifice of the Cross- enlightenment and faith-the opinion of the Baptist concerning the baptism of Christ. Meditations inspired by Chapter Three

Chapter Four: Meeting with the Samaritan Women (The Amazing Winner of Souls)

The Lord's departure from Judea- His arrival to Samaria- the discourse with the Samaritan woman- the successful preaching of the Samaritan woman- the belief of the Samaritans in the Lord- The Lord goes to Galilee- the healing of the nobleman's son. Meditations inspired by Chapter Four.

Chapter Five: Healing at the Bethesda Pool (The Divine Physician

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

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The feeding of the multitudes- Jesus walks on the water- the multitudes seek Him in Capernaum- I am the Bread of Life- some complain- where is He going? Meditations inspired by Chapter Six.

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