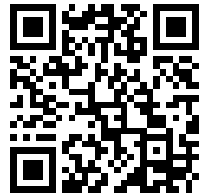

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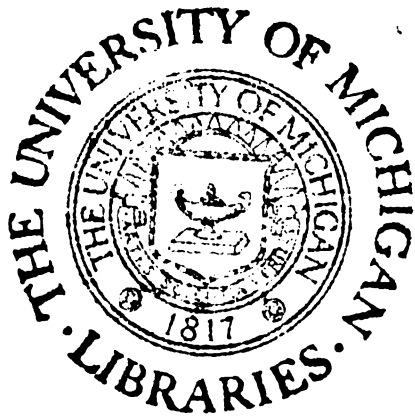
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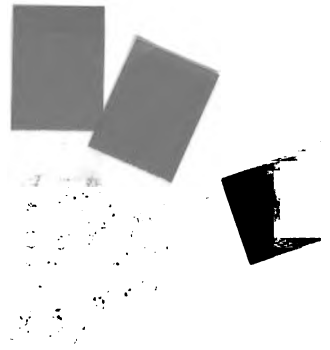


THE WORKS OF
SAINT AUGUSTINE

*A Translation
for the 21st Century*

SERMONS





SERMONS

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A Translation for the 21st Century

Part III — Sermons

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THE WORKS OF SAINT AUGUSTINE
A Translation for the 21st Century

SERMONS

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(184-229Z)
on the Liturgical Seasons

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Edmund Hill, O.P.

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Sermons

SERMON 184

ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Date: before 396¹

Let the humble hold fast to the humility of God

1. The birthday of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the day on which *Truth sprang from the earth* (Ps 85:11) and Day from Day² was born into our day, has dawned once more,³ brought round again by the cycle of the year to be celebrated by us; *Let us rejoice and make merry on it* (Ps 118:24). For what the humility of such sublime greatness has bestowed upon us is grasped by the faith of Christians, while far from the comprehension of the godless; since God *has hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and revealed them to the little ones* (Lk 10:21). So let the humble hold fast to the humility of God, in order that, helped by this wonderful conveyance as by a kind of vehicle for their weakness,⁴ they may arrive at the heights of God. As for the wise and the prudent there, they aim at the loftiness of God without believing in his humble lowliness; and so, by overstepping this and not reaching that, they have remained, empty and weightless, inflated and elated, at a windy middle level, suspended between heaven and earth.

They are indeed wise and prudent, but in the affairs of this world, not of the one by whom the world was made. Because if they were possessed of the true wisdom, which is from God and is God, they would understand that it was possible for flesh to be taken on by God without his being changed into flesh; they would understand that he took to himself what he was not, while remaining what he was; and that he came to us in a man without ever departing from the Father; and that he continued to be what he is, while appearing to us as what we are; and that his divine power was confined in the body of an infant without being withdrawn from the whole mass of the universe.

The whole universe is his work as he remains with the Father; his work as he comes to us is the virgin's child-bearing. The virgin mother indeed provided a demonstration of his greatness, being found a virgin after giving birth just as she was a virgin before conceiving, being found, not put, with child by her husband;⁵ without male intervention carrying a male in her womb; all the more blessed and admirable for receiving the gift of fertility without losing that of

integrity. They prefer to regard this stupendous miracle as fiction rather than fact. Thus in Christ, true God and true man, they despise the human because they cannot believe it; they do not believe the divine because they cannot despise it. We, however, find the body of man in the humility of God all the more welcome, the more contemptible it seems to them; and the more they think it is impossible, the more divine it seems to us that a man was born by a virgin bringing forth.

Rejoice, all Christians; it is the birthday of Christ

2. So then, let us celebrate the birthday of the Lord with all due festive gatherings.⁶ Let men rejoice, let women rejoice. Christ has been born, a man; he has been born of a woman; and each sex has been honored. Now therefore, let everyone, having been condemned in the first man, pass over to the second.⁷ It was a woman who sold us death; a woman who bore us life. *The likeness of the flesh of sin* (Rom 8:3) has been born, so that the flesh of sin might be cleansed and purified. And thus it is not the flesh that is to be faulted, but the fault that must die in order that the nature may live; because one has been born without fault, in whom the other⁸ who was at fault may be reborn.

Rejoice, holy brothers, who, choosing above all to follow Christ, have not sought to get married. The one you have found to be so worth following did not come to you by way of marriage,⁹ in order to enable you to set aside that by which you came into the world. For you came by way of carnal marriage, without which he came to his spiritual marriage; and he has given you the grace to turn your backs on any thought of weddings, because it is you above all whom he has invited to the wedding.¹⁰ The reason you have not sought the state from which you were born, is that you have loved more than others the one who was not so born. Rejoice, holy sisters, virgins; for you a virgin gave birth to the one whom you may marry without loss of virginity; neither by conceiving nor by giving birth can you lose what you love.

Rejoice, you just (Ps 33:1); it is the birthday of the Justifier. Rejoice, you who are weak and sick; it is the birthday of the Savior, the Healer. Rejoice, captives; it is the birthday of the Redeemer. Rejoice, slaves; it is the birthday of the one who makes you lords.¹¹ Rejoice, free people; it is the birthday of the one who makes you free. Rejoice, all Christians; it is the birthday of Christ.

The two births of Christ

3. Born of his mother, he commended this day to the ages, while born of his Father he created all ages. That birth could have no mother, while this one required no man as father. To sum up, Christ was born both of a Father and of a mother; both without a father and without a mother; of a Father as God, of a mother as man; without a mother as God, without a father as man. Therefore, *who will recount his begetting* (Is 53:8), whether that one without time or this one without seed; that one without beginning or this one without precedent; that

one which never was not, or this one which never was before or after; that one which has no end, or this one which has its beginning in its end?¹²

Rightly therefore did the prophets foretell that he would be born, while the heavens¹³ and the angels announced that he had been. The one who holds the world in being was lying in a manger; he was simultaneously speechless infant and Word. The heavens cannot contain him, a woman carried him in her bosom. She was ruling our ruler, carrying the one in whom we are, suckling our bread. O manifest infirmity and wondrous humility in which was thus concealed total divinity! Omnipotence was ruling the mother on whom infancy was depending; was nourishing on truth the mother whose breasts it was sucking. May he bring his gifts to perfection in us, since he did not shrink from making his own our tiny beginnings; and may he make us into children of God, since for our sake he was willing to be made a child of man.

NOTES

1. The style of this sermon is so unusually elaborate, the work of a man pulling out all the rhetorical stops of the professional orator (which Augustine had been before his conversion), that I cannot agree with Kunzelmann and others who date it after 412. It was only as a recently ordained priest, between 391 and 396 when he became bishop of Hippo Regius, that Augustine preached in this way. As he grew into his pastoral duties he deliberately simplified his preaching style, and while still using the tricks of the trade in order to delight his audience and keep their attention, he did so much more simply and spontaneously than is the case in this sermon. This is a very formal, carefully prepared and polished piece—something done much better by Leo the Great in the next generation (see for example his Sermon 1 on the Nativity). It was his mature style, but not Augustine's. Augustine matured, so to say, in the opposite direction.

2. A kind of variation on the Nicene Creed's "God from God, Light from Light."

3. Did the African liturgy at that time have the three Christmas Masses of the Roman: midnight, dawn, and day; and is this expression an indication that this sermon was being preached at the dawn Mass? I like to think so.

4. The Latin has a play on words which suggests that at the back of his mind were both the parable of the good Samaritan, and Jesus' Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem: *ut in hoc tanto adjumento, tamquam in infirmitatis suae jumento*; that in/on this so great help, as on a beast for their infirmity . . . ; the beast, *jumentum*, recalling both the Samaritan's mount on which he placed the man found half dead, and the donkey on which Christ rode into Jerusalem.

But taking this sentence with the next, I also get the impression of a much more daring image: the humble are conveyed up to the divine heights by a kind of rocket (Augustine could have also been thinking of the winged horse Pegasus of classical mythology), while the wise and prudent are tossed about by the wind in mid-air like so many hot air balloons and bits of paper and plastic bags in the dry wind blowing through a southern African town—Cape Town, for instance. He talks of them being inflated, so he cannot just have been thinking of something like autumn leaves. Did they have such toys in those days, innocent of both rubber and of plastics? Something similar, anyhow.

5. See Mt 1:18.

6. Perhaps referring to the third, mid-morning, Christmas Mass.

7. See 1 Cor 15:45-49. He goes on from Christ the second Adam (second man) to Mary the second Eve.

8. Adam, and all his descendants.

9. Something that might have been better put, implying as it may to some ears that Mary was not married and Jesus was a bastard—which would seem to have been the common gossip among his enemies during his life (see, for example, Mk 6:3, where there is no mention of his father being known). Augustine, of course, can have intended to imply no such thing. See Sermon 51, 17-22, where he staunchly defends the right of Joseph, as Mary's true husband, to be called the father of Jesus. In this sermon, however, by *conjugium*, marriage, he is clearly referring to the sexual union of husband and wife; he goes on to specify this by talking of "carnal marriage." This theological looseness of language is for me yet another indication of the early date of this sermon.

"Holy brothers" translates *sancti pueri*, for which "holy boys" would hardly do!

10. Christ's spiritual marriage, which he goes on to talk about, is either the wedding of the divine Word to human nature in the bridal chamber of the virgin's womb—a common theme of the Christmas season liturgy; or of Christ to the Church; or of course, both. There are allusions here to Jn 3:29 and Mk 2:19-20, as well as to the parable of the wedding feast, Mt 22:1-10.

11. *Natalis est dominantis*. To translate *dominantis* as "the one who makes you lords" is indeed to take a great liberty. I do it, because otherwise Augustine seems to be giving slaves scant reason to rejoice, if one takes *dominantis* in its obvious meaning of "the one who is lording it"—which is, of course, what the slaves' owners, their masters and mistresses, *domini* and *dominae*, did over them. My justification for the liberty is that *dominantis* is balanced with the *liberantis* of the next sentence, which does indeed mean "the one who makes you free." But then, I admit, one should ask whether Augustine's audience would have been able so to interpret him. I can only hope so! If not, if that is not what he meant, then the best one can do is to take *dominantis* as signifying "the Lord of lords," that is, "the Master of your masters and mistresses."

12. By "end" here he presumably means "end" in the sense of goal, or purpose or final cause. The divine begetting of the Word, like God himself, has no final cause, goal or purpose. It is simply the end, goal or purpose of all creation; hence also and especially of the incarnation.

13. The star seen by the Magi. See also Ps 19:1.

SERMON 185

ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Date: about 414¹

Truth has sprung from the earth

1. It is called the Lord's birthday when the Wisdom of God presented itself to us as an infant, and the Word of God without words uttered the flesh as its voice.² And yet that hidden divinity was signified to the wise men by the evidence of the heavens,³ and announced to the shepherds by the voice of an angel. And so we celebrate this day every year with great solemnity, because on it was fulfilled the prophecy which said, *Truth has sprung from the earth, and Justice has looked forth from heaven* (Ps 85:11). Truth, which is in *the bosom of the Father* (Jn 1:18), has sprung from the earth, in order also to be in the bosom of his mother. Truth, by which the world is held together, has sprung from the earth, in order to be carried in a woman's arms. Truth, on which the bliss of the angels is incorruptibly nourished, has sprung from the earth, in order to be suckled at breasts of flesh. Truth, which heaven is not big enough to hold, has sprung from the earth, in order to be placed in a manger.

For whose benefit did such sublimity come in such humility? Certainly for none of his own; but, if we are believers, totally for ours. Wake up, mankind; for you God became man. *Rise, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you* (Eph 5:14). For you, I repeat, God became man. You would have died for eternity, unless he had been born in time. You would never be set free from the flesh of sin, unless he had taken to himself *the likeness of the flesh of sin* (Rom 8:3). You would have been in the grip of everlasting misery, had it not been for the occurrence of this great mercy. You would not have come back to life, unless he had adjusted himself to your death. You would have faded away, if he had not come to the rescue. You would have perished, if he had not come.

Justice has looked forth from heaven

2. Let us celebrate joyfully the coming of our salvation and redemption. Let us celebrate the feast day, on which the great and eternal Day came from the

great and eternal Day into this so brief and temporal day of ours. He it is who *was made for us justice and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written: Whoever boasts should boast in the Lord* (1 Cor 1:31; Jer 9:24).

Now we must not be like the pride of the Jews, who *being ignorant of God's justice, and wishing to establish their own, did not submit to the justice of God* (Rom 10:3); for that reason, after saying, *Truth has sprung from the earth*, it at once added, *and Justice has looked forth from heaven* (Ps 85:11), in case the weakness of mortals should claim this justice for itself, and call these things its own, and mankind, through believing that it was justified by itself, that is that it became just on its own, should refuse God's justice.

So *Truth has sprung from the earth*; Christ, who said *I am the truth* (Jn 14:6), has been born of the virgin. *And Justice has looked forth from heaven*; since by believing in the one who was so born, mankind has been justified not by itself but by God. *Truth has sprung from the earth*, because *the Word became flesh* (Jn 1:14); *and Justice has looked forth from heaven*, because *every best endowment and every perfect gift is from above* (Jas 1:17). *Truth has sprung from the earth*, flesh from Mary; *and Justice has looked forth from heaven*, because *man cannot receive anything unless it has been given him from heaven* (Jn 3:27).

See whether you can find anything but grace

3. *Justified therefore by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we also have access to this grace in which we stand and boast in the hope of the glory of God* (Rom 5:1-2). With these few words of the apostle, brothers and sisters, which you recognize with me, it is a pleasure to mix a few words of this psalm, and to discover the way they fit each other. *Justified by faith, let us have peace with God*, because *justice and peace have kissed each other* (Ps 85:10). *Through our Lord Jesus Christ*, because *Truth has sprung from the earth* (Ps 85:11). *Through whom we also have access to this grace in which we stand and boast in the hope of the glory of God*. He didn't say "our glory," but *the glory of God*, because *justice* has not proceeded from us, but *has looked forth from heaven* (Ps 85:11). Therefore, *whoever boasts should boast*, not in himself, but *in the Lord* (1 Cor 1:31).

Thus it was, you see, that the voices of the angelic choir sang the praises of the Lord born of the virgin, whose birthday we are celebrating today: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will* (Lk 2:14). Why *peace on earth*, I mean, unless because *Truth has sprung from the earth*, that is, Christ has been born of flesh? And *he is our peace, who has made both into one* (Eph 2:14), that we might be people of good will, agreeably linked together by the bonds of unity. In this grace, therefore, let us rejoice, that our boast may be the testimony of our conscience,⁴ where we should be boasting not in ourselves but in the Lord. That, you see, is why it says, *My glory and the one who lifts up my head* (Ps 3:4). I mean, what greater grace could have shone upon us from God, than that having his only-begotten Son he should make him a Son of man, and thus in exchange make the Son of man into the Son of God?⁵ Look for merit

there, look for a cause, look for justice; and see whether you can find anything but grace.

NOTES

1. For only one of these Christmas sermons, from 184 to 196, do any of the scholars suggest a place; for 196 they tentatively suggest Hippo Regius. But where there is no positive evidence against it, I think we may safely assume that all the others were preached there too, in Augustine's own Church.

2. A curious sounding phrase. But he often compares the flesh which the Word became to the voice, in human communications, which carries the human word, the sound which conveys the meaning from one mind to another.

3. The star which appeared to them in the east.

4. See 2 Cor 1:2.

5. He is here referring exclusively to the grace of Christ, that is to the grace by which the man Christ Jesus was united to the eternal Word; by which he, the Son of man, was at the same time the eternal only-begotten Son of God. This, for Augustine, is the supreme paradigm of grace.

SERMON 186

ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Date: after 400¹

A virgin for ever

1. Let us rejoice, brothers and sisters; let the nations be glad and exult. It is not this visible sun, but its invisible creator, who has consecrated this day,² when the virgin mother gave birth from her fertile and unimpaired womb to the one who became visible for us, by whom in his invisibility she herself was created; a virgin in conceiving, a virgin in giving birth, a virgin when with child, a virgin on being delivered, a virgin for ever. Why be astonished at these things, O man? That is how he made her, who was himself made from her. He already was, you see, before he was made; and being almighty, he was able to be made, while remaining what he already was. He made a mother for himself, while he was still with the Father; and when he was made from his mother, he remained in the Father. How could he cease to be God on beginning to be man, when he enabled his mother not to cease to be a virgin when she gave him birth?

Hence that *the Word became flesh* (Jn 1:14), does not mean that the Word passed into flesh by perishing, but that flesh was attached to the Word to prevent flesh itself from perishing; with the result that just as man is soul and flesh, so Christ would be God and man. The same one God who is man, the same one man who is God; not by a compounding of nature, but by unity of person. In a word, the one who as Son of God is coeternal with his begetter and always from the Father, is identical with the son of man who began to be at a particular time from the virgin. And thus humanity was indeed added to the divinity of the Son; and yet this did not result in a quaternity or foursome of persons, but the Trinity or threesome remains.

One who was God became man

2. So please don't go along with the opinion of some people, who don't pay enough attention to the rule of faith and the oracles of the divine scriptures. They say, you see: what happened is that the son of man became the Son of God, not that the Son of God became the son of man. What made them say this was a

consideration of something true, but they didn't have the ability to state the full truth. What they considered, you see, is that it was possible for human nature to be changed for the better, but not for the divine nature to be changed for the worse. That is certainly true; but so is this: that without in any way being changed for the worse, the Word still became flesh. Nor does the gospel say, after all, "The flesh became Word," but it says *the Word became flesh*. But the Word is God, because *the Word was God* (Jn 1:14.1). And what is meant by flesh, but man? Human flesh in Christ, after all, was not without a soul; which is why he said, *My soul is sorrowful unto death* (Mk 14:34). So if the Word is God, and flesh is man, what else is *the Word became flesh* but "One who was God became man"?

And thus the one who was the Son of God became the son of man by the taking on of the lower element, not by the changing of the principal one; by accepting what he was not, not by losing what he was. I mean, how could we confess in the rule of faith that we believe in the Son of God who was born of the virgin Mary, if it wasn't the Son of God but the son of man who was born of the virgin Mary?³ Would any Christian deny, after all, that the son of man was born of that woman; but that all the same God became man, and only in this way did man become God? *The Word, you see, was God, and the Word became flesh*. What we have to confess, therefore, is that the one who was the Son of God, in order to be born of the virgin Mary, took on the form of a servant,⁴ and became the son of man, while still remaining what he was and taking on what he was not; beginning to be that which made him less than the Father, and always remaining that by which he and the Father are one.⁵

The Word of God became man

3. Well, if the one who is always the Son of God did not himself become the son of man, how can the apostle say about him, *Who while he was in the form of God, did not think it robbery to be equal to God; but he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and found in condition as a man* (Phil 2:6-7)? It wasn't, after all, someone else, but he himself, equal to the Father in the form of God, who is of course the only-begotten Son of God, that *emptied himself, being made in the likeness of men*. Nor was it somebody else, but again he himself, equal to the Father in the form of God, who *humbled, not somebody else but himself, becoming obedient to the death, death indeed on the cross* (Phil 2:8). The Son of God only did all this in the form in which he is the son of man.

Again, if the one who is always the Son of God did not himself become the son of man, how can the apostle say to the Romans, *set apart for the gospel of God, which he had promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures about his Son, who was made for him of the seed of David according to the flesh* (Rom 1:1-3)? There you have the Son of God, which of course he always was, made of the seed of David according to the flesh, which he wasn't always. Again, if the one who is the Son of God was not himself made son of

man, how is it that *God sent his Son, made of a woman* (Gal 4:4)? This word, by the way, according to Hebrew usage, does not deny the honor of virginity, but simply indicates the sex of femininity.⁷ Who, after all, was sent by the Father, but the only-begotten Son of God?

Born of the Father without any time-measured day, born of his mother on this day; this day, I mean, which he created, on which he chose to be created, just as he was made of a mother whom he made. Because this very day, from which the daytime from now on receives an increase of light, represents the work of Christ, by whom *our inner self is being renewed from day to day* (2 Cor 4:16). It was indeed proper for the creator, when created in time, to have that day as his birthday which marked creation as bound by time.⁸

NOTES

1. Some date the sermon more precisely to 411 or 412. Again there is no reason to suppose it was not preached in Hippo Regius. It deals with the mystery of the incarnation in theological language that looks forward to the Council of Chalcedon in 451. This possibly favors the later date. On the other hand, the christological mystery was already a matter of controversy between the rival schools of Antioch and Alexandria at the turn of the century, and Augustine as a well-informed bishop and theologian would have known all about it by 400.

2. The connection of 25 December, the winter solstice in those centuries, when the days begin once more to lengthen, with a pagan festival in honor of the Unconquered Sun, *Sol Invictus*, was still very fresh in people's minds.

3. He here voices the orthodox objection to the Nestorian position that Mary was not the mother of God, *Theotokos* or God-bearer, but the mother simply of the man Jesus, the son of man.

4. See Phil 2:7.

5. See Jn 14:28; 10:30.

6. Paul is referring to himself.

7. A point Augustine invariably makes when he quotes this text. Clearly, at least in the Latin Africa of that time, to be a *muller* meant not to be a *virgo*. Perhaps, like Spanish *mujer* and Italian *moglie*, it was coming more and more also to mean "wife."

8. A rather labored conceit, whose antitheses look a little better in Latin. It adds nothing to the suitability of Christmas falling on or just after the winter solstice—in the northern hemisphere of course, and temperate climes. In the tropics and the southern hemisphere one has to think of other proprieties for Christmas falling in mid-summer, or the middle of the wet—or dry—season, as the case may be. And because of this more Catholic or universal experience of Christianity in different regions of the globe, one has to differ from Augustine's assumption that God chose that particular day on which to be born; instead to rest happily with the knowledge that the Church came to choose it as the day on which to celebrate his birth. It is not a matter of divine revelation, not a dogmatic fact.

SERMON 187

ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Date: before 411¹

The greatness and the humility of Christ

1. *My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord* (Ps 51:15); of that Lord *through whom all things were made* (Jn 1:3), and who was himself made among all things; who is the revealer of the Father, creator of his mother; the Son of God from the Father without inother, the son of man from his mother without father; great as the day of the angels,² little in the day of men; the Word, God before all times, the Word, flesh at the appropriate time; the maker and placer of the sun, made and placed under the sun;³ marshaling all the ages from the bosom of the Father, consecrating this day from the womb of his mother; remaining there, coming forth from here;⁴ producer of heaven and earth, appearing on earth under heaven; unspeakably wise, wisely speechless as an infant; filling the world, lying in a manger; directing the course of the stars, sucking his mother's breasts; so great in the form of God, so small in the form of a servant,⁵ in such a way that neither the greatness was diminished by the smallness, nor the smallness overwhelmed by the greatness.

When he took human limbs to himself, after all, he did not abandon his divine works; nor did he stop reaching mightily from end to end, and disposing all things sweetly.⁶ When he clothed himself with the weakness of the flesh, he was received, not locked up, in the virgin's womb; thus the food of wisdom was not withdrawn from the angels, while at the same time we were enabled to taste and see how sweet is the Lord.⁷

The human word and the divine Word

2. Why should all this surprise us about the Word of God, seeing that this sermon I am addressing to you flows so freely into your senses, that you hearers both receive it, and don't imprison or corner it? I mean, if you didn't receive it, you wouldn't learn anything; if you cornered it, it wouldn't reach anyone else. And of course this sermon is divided up into words and syllables; and yet for all that, you don't each take portions and pieces of it, as you would of food for

the stomach; but you all hear it all, each of you hears it all. Nor am I afraid, while I'm talking, that one of you by hearing it may swallow it all, so that another would be left with nothing to eat; but I wish you all to be so attentive, cheating nobody's ears and mind, that each of you may hear it all, and leave all of it for the others to hear too. Nor does this happen at successive times, in such a way that the sermon being delivered first comes into you, then has to go out from you if it is to enter someone else; but it comes simultaneously to all of you, and the whole of it to each of you. And if the whole of it could be retained in the memory, just as all of you have come to hear the whole of it, so you could each go away with the whole of it.

How much more, then, could the Word of God, *through which all things were made* (Jn 1:3), and which while abiding in itself *renews all things* (Wis 7:27); which is neither confined in places, nor stretched out through times, nor varied by short and long quantities,⁸ nor woven together out of different sounds, nor ended by silence; how much more could this Word, of such a kind as that, make a mother's womb fruitful by assuming a body, while still not departing from the bosom of the Father; come forth from there to be seen by human eyes, from here continue to enlighten angelic minds; go forth from there to all the earth, from here to stretch out the heavens;⁹ from there become man, from here make man?

Thought and Word

3. None of you therefore should believe that the Son of God was converted and changed into a son of man; but rather we must believe that while remaining the Son of God he became the son of man, and that the divine substance was not consumed, while the human substance was perfectly assumed. Just because it says, *you see, the Word was God, and the Word became flesh* (Jn 1:1.14), it doesn't mean that the Word became flesh in such a way that it ceased to be God; considering that in that very flesh which the Word became Emmanuel was born, *God with us* (Mt 1:23).

Just as the word which we carry in the mind becomes voice when we utter it from the mouth; and yet it isn't changed into this voice, but remains whole in itself, while the voice is assumed to carry it out to others; and in this way what is to be understood can remain inside, and what is to be heard can sound outside. Yet for all that it's the same thing that is uttered in a sound as had previously sounded in silence; and thus when word becomes voice, it isn't changed into voice, but remaining in the light of the mind, it both goes forth to the listener in the voice of flesh it has assumed, and still does not abandon the one who thought it.

I don't mean the voice which is thought about in silence, and which is either Greek or Latin or any other language; but I mean when the matter itself, before any variety of expression in any language, is so to say naked to the intelligence in the bed-chamber of the mind, and which in order to come out from there is clothed in the voice of the speaker. Each of these, however, both what is being thought of by intelligence and what is sounding out loud in speech, is changeable

and dissimilar;¹⁰ the first won't remain when you've forgotten it, nor will the second when you stop speaking. But *the Word of the Lord remains for ever* (Is 40:8), and abides unchanged and unchangeable.

Christ, God and man

4. And when from the world of time it took flesh, in order to come forth into our time-bound life, it did not in the flesh lose eternity, but rather on the flesh too bestowed immortality. Thus *he like a bridegroom coming forth from his chamber, exulted like a giant to run his course* (Ps 19:5). *Who, when he was in the form of God, did not think it robbery to be equal to God*; but in order for our sakes to become what he was not, *he emptied himself*; not losing the form of God, but *taking the form of a servant*; and through it *being made in the likeness of men*; not in his own proper substance either, but *being found in condition as a man* (Phil 2:6-7). All this, you see, that we are, whether in soul or in body, is our nature, but his condition; we, if we weren't this, wouldn't be at all; he, if he weren't this, would still of course be God.

And when he began to be this thing that he was not, he became man while remaining God, so that not just one of the following but each of them could be said with perfect truth: both *Since the Father is greater than I* (Jn 14:28), because he has become man; and *I and the Father are one* (Jn 10:30), because he remained God. Because if the Word had changed into flesh, that is God been converted into man, it's only *the Father is greater than I* that would be true; while *I and the Father are one* would be false, because God and man are not one thing. But perhaps he would be able to say, "I and the Father were one," not "are one." I mean, what he had been and has stopped being, obviously he isn't, but was. As it is, however, he could both truly say *The Father is greater than I* because of the form of a servant which he had taken, and also truly say *I and the Father are one* because of the true form of God in which he remained.

So he emptied himself among us, not by becoming what he was not in such a way that he would no longer be what he had been; but by concealing what he was and openly displaying what he had become. Accordingly, because the virgin conceived and bore a son, *a child is born for us*, on account of the manifest form of a servant. But because the Word of God which abides for ever became flesh, in order to dwell among us, on account of the form of God which is hidden but remains, we call his name, as Gabriel announced it, *Emmanuel*.¹¹ He became man, you see, while remaining God, in order that the son of man too might rightly be called *God with us*; not one person being God, another being man.

And so let the world exult in the persons of all believers, for whose salvation the one through whom the world was made has come. The maker of Mary, born of Mary, the son of David, *David's Lord* (Mk 12:37), the seed of Abraham *who is before Abraham* (Jn 8:58), the maker of the earth, made on earth, the creator of heaven, created under heaven. *He is the day which the Lord has made*, and the Lord himself is the daylight of our minds. Let us walk in his light,¹² *let us exult and be merry in it* (Ps 118:24).

NOTES

1. Considering the style, elaborate if slightly laboriously so, I myself would put the date considerably before 411; really in the early days of his episcopate, even before 400. And considering the somewhat indigestible nature of the theological content (all perfectly orthodox, of course), though he employs an analogy or comparison that was always a favorite of his, I would guess at a somewhat select audience, more likely to be found in Carthage than in Hippo Regius.

2. Meaning the eternal daylight which shines on the angels, the eternal truth on which angelic intelligences feed.

3. An echo of Eccl 1:3. 9 etc.

4. An echo of Ps 19:5; the virgin's womb is being compared to this bridal chamber, from which the sun, Christ, comes forth.

5. Echoing Phil 2:6-7.

6. As the divine Wisdom, Wis 8:1.

7. See Ps 34:8.

8. Like the syllables of words in all languages. In some languages (like Greek and Latin in particular) more attention is paid to quantity, the length of time devoted to each syllable, in others to the stress or accentuation placed on the syllable, in others to the tone. But all exhibit variations of quantity—as also of stress and tone.

9. See Ps 104:2.

10. It is not clear what he means by this; he goes on to illustrate "unchangeable," but not "dissimilar." He sometimes seems to use the word as expressing some absolute quality (of a negative kind), not as referring to something else in the way the word normally requires: dissimilar, or similar, to what? He will talk, for instance, of the prodigal son departing to "a region of dissimilarity," the far country of Lk 15:13. It seems thus simply to signify our fallen condition, in which the divine image, by which we are intended to be similar to God, has been defaced and distorted; so, dissimilar, by remote implication, to God. But this hardly seems to fit this context. So perhaps he means, what he doesn't quite say, that the spoken word never perfectly represents, with complete similarity, the thought word, but that there is always some dissimilarity between the two.

11. See Mt 1:23, quoting Is 7:14; and it is not Gabriel, but Matthew himself who is doing the quoting. Augustine is getting his infancy narratives mixed up.

12. See Is 60:3.

SERMON 188

ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Date: uncertain¹

*Small wonder if we human beings cannot explain in words
the Word through which all things were made*

1. If we were really to make the effort to praise the Son of God just as he is with the Father, equal to him and coeternal; the one in whom all things were established in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible; the Word of God, and God, the life and light of the human race; then it's small wonder that no human thoughts, no words would be adequate. After all, how can our tongues have the capacity fittingly to praise one whom our hearts still lack the capacity to see, our hearts in which he put the eyes that he could be seen with if they were purged of their iniquity and healed of their infirmity, and blessed would be the pure of heart, because they shall see God?² It's small wonder, I repeat, that we cannot find the words with which to speak the one Word, by which it was decreed that we should be, and that we should speak something about him.

These words, you see, that we think and utter are formulated by our minds; but our minds are formulated by that Word.³ Nor do we make words in the same sort of way as we ourselves were made through the Word; because neither did the Father beget the one and only Word in the same way as all things were made through the Word. God certainly begot God; but begetter and begotten are together one God. On the other hand, God made the world; the world passes away, God remains. And just as the things that were made did not, of course, make themselves; so also the one through whom they could all be made,⁴ was not made by anyone. Small wonder therefore, if we human beings, who are among all the things that were made, cannot explain in words the Word through which all things were made.

The eternal day

2. So for a few moments let us direct our ears and thoughts to this following point, and see if we are capable of saying something fitting and suitable, not exactly on the subject of *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with*

God, and the Word was God (Jn 1:1); but on the subject of the Word became flesh; see if perhaps we can say by what means he dwelt among us (Jn 1:14); see if perhaps there is something sayable at the point where he willed to be visible. That, after all, is the reason why we are celebrating this day on which he saw fit to be born of the virgin, a begetting of his which he certainly had men tell the tale of; as for that eternity in which as God he was born of God, his begetting, who shall tell the tale of? (Is 53:8). There the day is not one to be annually and solemnly celebrated; after all, it doesn't pass and return with the yearly round, but abides without any sunset, because it didn't begin with a sunrise.

So that one and only Word of God, *that life, that light of men (Jn 1:4)*, is indeed the eternal day; while this day, on which he was joined together to human flesh and became *like a bridegroom coming forth from his chamber (Ps 19:5)*, is now today and tomorrow will become yesterday. Nevertheless this day brings to our notice the eternal day born of the virgin, because the eternal day born of the virgin has consecrated this day.

What praises, then, should we be singing to God's love, what thanks should we be expressing! I mean, he loved us so much that for our sake he came to be in time, though all times were made through him; and he was prepared to be younger in age than many of his servants in the world, though he is older in eternity than all the world. He loved us so much that he became man though he had made man; that he was created from a mother whom he had created, carried in arms he had fashioned, sucked breasts which he himself filled; that he lay squalling in a manger wordless in infancy, though he is the Word without whom human eloquence would be at a loss for words.

The only thing which could lift you up was divine humility

3. Observe, O man, what God became for you; acknowledge the teaching of such incalculable humility, even coming from a teacher not yet able to speak. You, once upon a time in paradise, were so fluent that you gave names to every living, animate, creature;⁵ yet for your sake your Creator was lying there, a speechless infant, and didn't even call his mother by her name. You there, in the broad acres of groves of fruit trees, lost yourself by neglecting obedience; he out of obedience came as a mortal to a cramped and crowded lodging house, in order by dying to look for you who were dead. You, though you were a man, wished to be God,⁶ and so got lost; he, though he was God, wished to be a man, and so find what had been lost. Human pride pressed down on you so heavily, that the only thing which could lift you up was divine humility.

The virgin holy Church

4. So let us celebrate with joy the day on which Mary bore the Savior, a married woman the creator of marriage, a virgin the chief of virgins; Mary who both had been given to a husband, and was a mother not by her husband;⁷ a

virgin while with child, a virgin while breast feeding. The almighty Son certainly did not in any way deprive his holy mother of her virginity by being born, seeing that he had specifically chosen her to be born of. Yes, fruitfulness in marriage is certainly a good thing, but integrity in the consecrated state is a better one. So the man Christ, who could grant both as God (the same person, of course, as man and as God), would never have given his mother the good thing that married people value, in such a way that he deprived her of the better one for whose sake virgins decide against being mothers.

And so the virgin holy Church celebrates today the child-bearing of the virgin. It is to the Church, you see, that the apostle says, *I have attached you to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ* (2 Cor 11:2). How could it be a *chaste virgin* in so many communities of either sex, among so many, not only boys and girls, but also married fathers and mothers? How, I repeat, could it be a *chaste virgin*, except in the integrity of faith, hope, and charity? Hence Christ, intending to establish the Church's virginity in the heart, first preserved Mary's in the body. In human marriage, of course, a woman is given to her husband so that she ceases to be a virgin anymore; the Church on the other hand could not be a virgin unless she had found that the husband she had been given to was the son of a virgin.

NOTES

1. If the African Church had the same custom as the Roman of celebrating Christmas with three Masses, then I would guess that this sermon was preached at the midday Mass, for which the gospel is John 1:1-18. Though nobody has suggested a date or place for this sermon, I would also make an informed guess, from the maturity and lightness of the style (full of typical conceits though it is), and also from the content and the encomium on the religious life at the end, that it was preached in Hippo Regius, to his own people, any time between 410 and 420.

2. See Mt 5:8.

3. "Formulate" translates *format* and *formatur*. While it may sound odd to talk of the mind being formulated by God, still Augustine means more than just "formed," which in English says little more than made or produced.

4. That is, specifically the Word, the Son, not just God without distinction.

5. See Gn 2:19-20.

6. See Gn 3:5.

7. Words that could bear a rather shocking interpretation. So early editors, following the lead of some inferior manuscripts, added the words, "but more chaste than if she had been a mother by her husband."

SERMON 189

ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Date: before 410¹

Who can this day from day be?

1. This day has been sanctified for us by the day who made all days, about whom the psalm sings, *Sing to the Lord a new song, sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord and bless his name; proclaim the good news of the day from day,*² his salvation (Ps 96:1-2). Who can this day from day be, but the Son from the Father, light from light? But that day who begot the day which would be born of the virgin on this day; so that day has neither rising nor setting; the day I mean is God the Father. Jesus, after all, would not be day from day, unless the Father were day.

What is day but light? Not for eyes of flesh, not the light which is common to human beings and animals, but the light which shines on angels, the light which hearts are cleansed for seeing.³ This night, you see, is passing, the night in which we are living now, in which the lamps of the scriptures are lit for us; and that is coming, of which another psalm sings: *In the morning I will stand by and gaze upon you* (Ps 5:3).

What justice can there be without faith?

2. So that day, the Word of God, the day which shines on the angels, the day which shines in the home country we are in exile from, clothed himself with flesh and was born of Mary the virgin. Born in a wonderful way; what could be more wonderful than a virgin giving birth? She conceives, and is a virgin; she gives birth, and is a virgin. The one who created her, you see, was created from her, and he brought her fertility, he did not spoil her integrity.

Where did Mary come from? From Adam. Where did Adam come from? From earth. If Adam's from earth, and Mary's from Adam, then Mary too is earth. If Mary is earth, let us realize what we are singing: *Truth has sprung from the earth. What sort of benefit has this brought us? Truth has sprung from the earth, and Justice has looked forth from heaven* (Ps 85:11). The Jews, you see, as the apostle says, *not knowing the justice of God, and wishing to establish*

their own, did not submit to the justice of God (Rom 10:3). From where can you or anyone get to be just? From yourself? Who is the poor man who can give himself bread? Who, if naked, can cover himself, unless he receives a garment? We didn't have any justice; the only things here were sins.

Where does justice come from? What justice can there be without faith, since *the just lives by faith (Rom 1:17)? Any who call themselves just without faith are lying. How can they not be lying, when there is no faith in them? If they want to speak the truth, let them turn to the truth. But it was so far away. Truth has sprung from the earth. You were asleep, it came to you; you were snoring, it woke you up. It made you a way along itself,⁴ in order not to lose you. So, because truth has sprung from the earth, our Lord Jesus Christ was born of the virgin; Justice has looked down from heaven, in order that people may have a justice which is not their own, but God's.*

Christ was born that we might be reborn

3. What infinite consideration! Preceded by what fearful indignation!⁵ What was the indignation that preceded it? We were mortal, we were weighed down by sins, we were bearing our punishments. Every single human being, as soon as born, begins with misery. No need to look for a prophet; question the child as it's born, and see how it cries.⁶ So with this great indignation of God on the earth, what sort of consideration was suddenly shown? *Truth sprang from the earth. He created all things, he was created among all things; he made the day, he came on the day; he was before all times, he set his seal on the times.*

The Lord Christ is for ever, without beginning with the Father. And yet ask what today is; it's a birthday. Whose? The Lord's. Has he really got a birthday? He has. The Word in the beginning, God with God,⁷ has a birthday? Yes, he has. Unless he had a human birth, we would never attain to the divine rebirth; he was born that we might be reborn. Let nobody hesitate to be reborn; Christ has been born;⁸ born, with no need of being reborn. The only ones in need of rebirth are those who have been condemned in their first birth.⁹

And so let his mercy come to be in our hearts. His mother bore him in her womb; let us bear him in our hearts. The virgin was big with the incarnation of Christ; let our bosoms grow big with the faith of Christ. She gave birth to the Savior; let us give birth to praise. We mustn't be barren; our souls must be fruitful with God.

The two births of Christ

4. The birth of Christ from the Father was without mother; the birth of Christ from his mother was without father; each birth was wonderful. The first was eternal, the second took place in time. When was he born of the Father? What do you mean, when? You're asking about "when" there, there where you won't find any time? Don't ask about "when" there. Ask about it here; it's a good question, when was he born of his mother. When was he born of the Father is

not a good question. He was born, and he has no time; he was born eternal, from the eternal, coeternal. Why be astonished? He's God. Take divinity into consideration, and any reason for astonishment disappears.

And when we say he was born of a virgin, it's a great thing, you're astonished. He's God, don't be astonished; let astonishment give way to thanksgiving and praise. Let faith be present; believe that it happened. If you don't believe, it still happened, but you remain unbelieving. He agreed to become man; what more do you want? Hasn't God humbled himself enough for you? The one who was God has become man. The inn was crowded and cramped, so he was wrapped in rags, laid in a manger; you heard it when the gospel was read.¹⁰ Who wouldn't be astonished? The one who filled the universe could find no room in a lodging-house; laid in a feeding trough, he became our food.

Let the two animals approach the manger, the two peoples.¹¹ *The ox, you see, recognizes its owner, and the donkey its master's manger (Is 1:3).* Be in attendance at the manger; don't be ashamed of being the Lord's donkey. You will be carrying Christ, you won't go astray, walking along the way; the way is sitting on you. Do you remember that young donkey that was brought to the Lord? Don't any of you feel ashamed—that's what we are. Let the Lord sit upon us, and take us wherever he wants. We're his mount, we're going to Jerusalem. With him seated on us we aren't weighed down, but lifted up; with him guiding us, we can't go wrong. We are going to him, we are going by him, we are not going off the rails.¹²

NOTES

1. This is the date suggested by Kunzelmann in 1931 and Fischer in 1963. I have my doubts about it; again, the style seems to me to point to a date more likely to be some time after that year. And the theme of grace in section 2 also suggests a later date. None of these considerations, of course, are decisive one way or the other. Again, Hippo Regius seems to be the most likely place for the sermon. See note 10 for reason to suppose it was preached at the midnight Mass.

2. *Bene nuntiate diem de die.* Elsewhere, as in *Expositions of the Psalms* 95, 3, he reads *de die in diem*, from day to day. The literal translation he follows here in fact probably meant the same thing. But he chooses to take it in the most literal possible sense, for excellent theological and homiletic reasons; he would never claim it was the only possible interpretation.

3. See Acts 15:9.

4. See Jn 14:6.

5. This *indignatio* is contrasted with *dignatio* in the first exclamation; an impossible word, really, to translate.

6. These things are all signs of the divine indignation.

7. See Jn 1:1.

8. A little nudge to all the unbaptized present that they should put their names down for baptism right away, and not prolong their catechumen status indefinitely.

9. The *damnosa hereditas* of original sin.

10. The gospel for the midnight Mass; see Lk 2:6-7.

11. Jews and Gentiles. The Jews are the ox, a sacrificial animal; the Gentiles the donkey.

12. Such a gross anachronism, that it cannot deceive anyone, and I trust will offend no one either. The Latin is *non perimus*, concluding a characteristic play on words: *ad illum imus, per illum imus, non perimus*.

SERMON 190

ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Date: 391-400¹

Even the day of Christ's birth contains the mystery of his light

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before he was born of his mother, chose not only the mother of whom he would be born, but also the day on which he would be born. Fallible human beings often choose days, one for planting, another for building, another for setting out, and sometimes even for marrying a wife. When people do this, the reason they do it is in order that something already born, so to say, may grow up or turn out well. Nobody, however, can choose the day on which actually to be born. But he was able to choose both, because he was able to create both. Nor did he choose the day in the same way as people do, who vainly hang the fates of individuals on the dispositions of the stars. I mean, in this case the one who was born was not made lucky by the day, but he gave good luck to the day on which he was graciously pleased to be born.

Because even the day of his birth contains the mystery of his light. That, you see, is what the apostle says: *The night is far advanced, while the day has drawn near; let us throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us walk decently as in the day* (Rom 13:12-13). Let us recognize the day, and let us be the day. We were night, you see, when we were living as unbelievers. And this unbelief, which had covered the whole world as a kind of night, was to be diminished by the growth of faith; that's why, on the day we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, the night begins to be encroached upon, and the day to grow longer.

So, brothers and sisters, let us keep this day as a festival; not, like the unbelievers, because of that sun up there in the sky,² but because of the one who made that sun. That which was the Word, you see, became flesh, in order to be able for our sakes to be under the sun.³ Under the sun, indeed, in the flesh; but in divine greatness over the entire universe, in which he placed the sun. Now, though, he is also over that sun even in the flesh,⁴ the sun which people worship instead of God, because in their mental blindness they cannot see the true sun of justice.⁵

Christ wished to honor each sex in his birth

2. So, Christians, let us celebrate on this day, not his divine, but his human birth, by which he adapted himself to us, in order that by means of the invisible one made visible we ourselves might pass over from visible things to invisible. Catholic faith, you see, obliges us to accept two births for the Lord, one divine, the other human; the first apart from time, the second in time; both, however, wonderful; the first without mother, the second without father. If we can't grasp this one, when will we ever tell the tale of that one?⁶

Who can grasp this new, unheard of novelty, unique in the history of the world, something unbelievable that has become believable and is unbelievably believed throughout the whole world; that a virgin should conceive, a virgin should give birth, and a virgin she should remain in giving birth? Faith grasps what human reason cannot work out; and where reason falls back, faith marches on. Who's going to say, after all, that the Word of God *through whom all things were made* (Jn 1:3) could not make himself flesh even without a mother, just as he made the first man without either father or mother?

But the fact is, he himself created both sexes, male and female; and that's why he wished to honor each sex in his birth, having come to liberate each of them. You know, of course, about the first man's fall, how the serpent didn't dare speak to the man, but made use of the woman's services to bring him down. Through the weaker he gained a hold over the stronger; and by infiltrating through one of them he triumphed over both. In order, therefore, to make it impossible for us⁷ with a show of righteous, horrified indignation, to put all the blame for our death on the woman, and to believe that she is irredeemably damned; that's why the Lord, *who came to seek what was lost* (Lk 19:10), wished to do something for each sex by honoring them both, because both had got lost. In neither sex, then, should we wrong the Creator;⁸ the birth of the Lord encouraged each to hope for salvation. The male sex is honored in the flesh of Christ; the female is honored in the mother of Christ. The serpent's cunning has been defeated by the grace of Jesus Christ.

Both speechless infant and Word

3. So let each sex be born again in the one who was born today, and let each celebrate this day; not as the day on which the Lord Christ began to be, but on which the one who was always with the Father brought to light the flesh he had received from his mother; bringing his mother fertility, not depriving her of integrity. He's conceived, he's born, he's an infant. Who is this infant? Infant, you see, means one who cannot *fari*, that is, cannot speak. So he's both speechless infant and Word. He says nothing through the flesh, he teaches through angels, by whom the prince and shepherd of shepherds is announced to the shepherds; and he lies in the manger, the feeding trough, as fodder for the faithful beasts. This had been foretold, you see, by the prophet: *The ox recognizes its owner, and the donkey its master's manger* (Is 1:3).

That's why he sat on the little donkey, when he entered Jerusalem to the

plaudits of the crowd going ahead and following behind.⁹ Let us in our turn recognize him, let us approach the manger, eat the fodder, carry the Lord who directs us, so that under his guidance we may come to the heavenly Jerusalem. Christ's birth from his mother bears the stamp of weakness; but from the Father comes all-embracing greatness. Among the days of time he has a day of time;¹⁰ but he is himself eternal day from eternal day.

That weakness might become strong

4. Rightly are we stirred by the voice of his psalm, as of a heavenly trumpet, when we hear, *Sing to the Lord a new song, sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord and bless his name* (Ps 96:1-2). So let us recognize, and proclaim, *the day from day* who was born in the flesh on this day. Day the Son from day the Father, God from God, light from light. This, you see, is the salvation about which it says elsewhere, *May God have mercy on us and bless us; may he shed the light of his countenance upon us; that we may recognize your way on earth, among all the nations your salvation* (Ps 67:1-2). What he means by *on earth* he repeats by *among all the nations*; and what he means by *your way* he repeats by *your salvation*.

We remember that the Lord said himself, *I am the way* (Jn 14:6). And just now when the gospel was read,¹¹ we heard how the old man, the blessed Simeon, had received a divine response that he would not taste death unless he had first seen the Christ of the Lord. When he took the infant Christ in his arms, and recognized how great this little one was, *Now, Lord*, he said, *you are letting your servant go, according to your word, in peace; since my eyes have seen your salvation* (Lk 2:29-30).

So let us proclaim the good news of *the day from day, his salvation*; let us proclaim *among the nations his glory, among all the peoples his wonders* (Ps 96:2-3).¹² He lies in a manger, but he holds the whole world in his hands; he sucks his mother's breasts, but feeds the angels; he is swaddled in rags, but clothes us in immortality; he is suckled, but also worshiped; he could find no room in the inn, but makes a temple for himself in the hearts of believers. It was in order, you see, that weakness might become strong, that strength became weak. Let us therefore rather wonder at than make light of his birth in the flesh, and there recognize the lowliness on our behalf of such loftiness. From there let us kindle charity in ourselves, in order to attain to his eternity.

NOTES

1. This is the date proposed by Kunzelmann and Fischer. Again, for reasons similar to those given in Sermon 189, note 1, I myself would be inclined to date it ten to fifteen years later. It does not sound to me like Augustine the newly ordained priest, or the newly ordained bishop, speaking.

2. 25 December was the pagan festival of *Sol Invictus*, the unconquered sun.
3. An echo of Eccl 1:14; 2:11 etc.
4. Having ascended into heaven.
5. See Mal 4:2.
6. See Is 53:8.
7. Us, meaning us men.
8. By presuming that he totally rejected either of them.
9. See Mk 11:7-10.
10. His birthday, 25 December.
11. If it included the story of Christ's birth in Bethlehem and the angels telling the shepherds about it, which he alluded to in section 3, then it must have been a very long gospel, the whole of Luke 2.
12. The last two paragraphs have been a complex process of explaining the connection between "day from day" and "his/your salvation," which are treated as being in apposition to each other in the psalm just quoted. But he did not point this out when he first quoted it at the beginning of this section.

SERMON 191

ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Date: 411 or 412¹

Christ inserted himself into the passing procession of the years

1. The Word of the Father, through which all times were made, on being made flesh himself, gave us his birthday in time; and he wished one particular day to mark his human beginning, though without his divine behest no single day can run its course. He, with the Father, was there before all the vast extent of the ages; he, coming from his mother on this day, inserted himself into the passing procession of the years.

The maker of man, he was made man, so that the director of the stars might be a babe at the breast; that bread might be hungry, and the fountain thirsty; that the light might sleep, and the way be weary from a journey; that the truth might be accused by false witnesses, and the judge of the living and the dead be judged by a mortal judge; that justice might be convicted by the unjust, and discipline be scourged with whips; that the cluster of grapes might be crowned with thorns, and the foundation be hung up on a tree; that strength might grow weak, eternal health be wounded, life die.²

It was in order to endure these and similar indignities for our sake; in order to set free those who had forfeited all dignity, though he deserved no evil but endured such terrible evils on our behalf, and we deserved no good, but received such splendid goods through him; so it was for these reasons that the one who was before all ages the Son of God, without beginning of days, was prepared in these last days to become a son of man; and that the one who was born of the Father, not made by the Father, was made in the mother whom he had made; so that he might exist here for a time, being born of her who could never and nowhere have existed except through him.

Mary's virginity

2. Thus was fulfilled what the psalm had foretold: *Truth has sprung from the earth* (Ps 85:11); from Mary, a virgin before conceiving, a virgin after giving birth. I mean, God forbid that in that earth, that is in that flesh from which Truth

arose, virginal integrity should vanish. It's like the instance after his resurrection, when they thought he was a spirit, not a body: *Feel*, he said, *and see; because a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you can see that I have* (Lk 24:38). And yet that hefty body of a young man had introduced itself to where the disciples were, without any doors being opened. So why could not the one, who could enter through closed doors when he was a big man, also come out as a tiny child through undamaged parts of the body?

But the incredulous are unwilling to believe either the one or the other. That's why faith prefers to believe both; because unbelief does not believe either. This, of course, is the unbelief which cannot see any divinity in Christ. So then, if faith can believe that God was born in the flesh, it does not doubt that each of these things was possible for God; to present an adult body to those inside a house without its entrance being unbarred; and for the infant bridegroom to come forth from his chamber,³ that is from the virgin's womb, without damage to his mother's virginity.

The Church is virgin and mother

3. It was there, you see, that the only-begotten Son of God was pleased to join human nature to himself, in order to link to himself as undefiled head an undefiled Church; a Church which the apostle Paul calls a virgin, contemplating not only those in it who are virgins also in the body, but craving⁴ the uncorrupted minds of all its members. *For I have betrothed you*, he says, *to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ* (2 Cor 11:2). So the Church imitates the Lord's mother—not in the bodily sense, which it could not do—but in mind it is both mother and virgin. In no way, then, did Christ deprive his mother of her virginity by being born, seeing that he made his Church into a virgin by redeeming her from fornication with demons.⁵

It is from the Church's uncorrupted virginity that you holy virgins have been begotten. Setting at nought earthly marriages, you have chosen to be virgins also in the flesh, and you rejoice in solemnly celebrating today the one whom the virgin bore. He indeed was born of a woman, without being begotten by a man of a woman. Since he brought you the gift you would cherish, he certainly did not deprive his mother of this gift that you do cherish. As he heals in you the hurt you have derived from Eve, perish the thought that he should spoil what you have valued in Mary.

*What you marvel at in the flesh of Mary,
perform in the depths of your soul*

4. She, therefore, in whose footsteps you are following, not only conceived without staying with a man, but also gave birth while still staying a virgin. Imitate her as far as you can; not in her fruitfulness, because you cannot do this and preserve your virginity. She alone was able to have both the gifts, of which you have chosen to have one; because you would lose this one, if you wished

to have both. She alone was able to have both, because she gave birth to the Almighty, through whom she was able to have both.

It was right, you see, that only the unique Son of God should become a son of man in this unique fashion. It does not follow, however, that Christ is nothing for you, just because he is the offspring of one single virgin. You have not, indeed, been able to bear him as a son in the flesh, but you have found him as a husband in your hearts; and such a husband that your fidelity can cling to him as redeemer, while your virginity need not fear him as ravisher. After all, he did not deprive his mother of her virginity even by his bodily birth; much more then does he preserve it in you by his spiritual embrace.

Nor should you count yourselves barren because you remain virgins; since this very integrity of the flesh, chosen for love, contributes to the fruitfulness of the mind. Do what the apostle says: since you are not thinking of the affairs of the world, how to please husbands, think of the affairs of God, how to please him in all things,⁶ so that instead of wombs fruitful with offspring, you may have minds fruitful with all the virtues.

Finally, I wish to address everybody. I have something to say to all of you. It is the whole chaste virgin which the apostle betrothed to Christ that I am summoning and appealing to by these words. What you marvel at in the flesh of Mary, perform in the depths of your souls. When you believe in the heart unto justice, you conceive Christ; and when with the lips you confess unto salvation,⁷ you give birth to Christ. In this way let your minds be exuberantly fruitful, and perseveringly virginal.

NOTES

1. This time I would differ from our two authorities, Kunzelmann and Fischer, by putting the sermon probably ten to fifteen years earlier, about 395. And the reason is the same; the self-conscious elaborateness of the style.

In the last two sections Augustine has a special word for the consecrated virgins, the nuns as we would call them now. He could have done this, of course, at any time during his thirty years of ministry, and in any Church where he preached. But I think he is much more likely to have spoken like this in his own Church of Hippo Regius than anywhere else. And if the date I suggest is correct, then he was almost certainly preaching there and not in another church, because most bishops at that time did not approve of mere priests preaching. His own bishop, Valerius, was a singular exception.

2. Here are some of the texts alluded to in this elaborate chain of paradoxes: Ps 147:4; Jn 6:35; Lk 4:2; Ps 36:9; Jn 7:38; Jn 19:28; Jn 8:12; Mk 4:38; Jn 14:6, 4:6; Jn 14:6; Mk 14:57; 2 Tm 4:1; Mt 27:26; 1 Cor 1:30; Mk 14:64; Nm 13:23; Mk 15:17; 1 Cor 3:11; Jn 14:6.

3. See Ps 19:5.

4. He makes a contrast, impossible to reproduce in English, between *considerans* and *desiderans*, both of which, strangely enough, had to do with star-gazing, observing the *sidera*; *considerans*, putting them together, noting their relative positions; *desiderans*, missing a particular star one particularly wanted to see.

5. That is, from the worship of idols and false gods. He is thinking only of the Church from the Gentiles.

6. See 1 Cor 7:34.

7. See Rom 10:10.

SERMON 192

ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Date: after 412¹

We are filled with wonder at the virgin's bearing a child

1. Today *Truth has sprung from the earth* (Ps 85:11); Christ has been born from the flesh. Celebrate the feast with rejoicing; and let this day also remind you to think about the everlasting day, and to long with unshakable hope for eternal gifts. Having received the power to be so, have the nerve to be children of God.² For your sakes the bringer about of all times was himself brought into time; for your sakes the founder of the world appeared in the flesh, for your sakes the creator was created. Why let yourselves, while still mortal, be amused and distracted by mortal things, why put so much effort into holding on to this fleeting life, as if it were possible in any case? A far, far more brilliant hope has lit up the earth: the promise to earthlings of life in heaven.

To help us believe in this hope, something much more unbelievable has been paid us in advance; in order to make gods of those who were merely human, one who was God made himself human;³ without forfeiting what he was, he wished to become what he himself had made. He himself made what he would become, because what he did was add man to God, not lose God in man.

We are filled with wonder at the virgin's bearing a child, and we strive to persuade unbelievers of the truth of this new way of being born, when in a womb unseeded a seedling offspring began to grow, and a lap untouched by carnal embrace brought forth a son of man without having received a man as his father; when virginal integrity remained closed in conceiving, and undamaged in bearing. The power is certainly wonderful, but still more to be wondered at is the loving kindness; that the one who was able to be born in this way was willing to be born at all.

He was already, you see, the only Son of the Father, when he was born as the only son of his mother; and he that was made in his mother had already made his mother for himself. Eternal with the Father, born today of his mother; made from his mother after his mother, before all things from the Father—but not made. The Father was never without him; without him his mother would never have been.

Mary is the mother of unity

2. Be jubilant, virgins of Christ; the mother of Christ is your companion. You have not been able to give birth to Christ; but for Christ's sake you have declined to give birth at all. He wasn't born of you, but he was born for you. And yet, if you remember his words, as indeed you ought to, you, yes you too are his mothers, because you do the will of his Father. He said himself, you see, *Whoever does the will of my Father is my brother and sister and mother* (Mk 3:35).

Be jubilant, widows of Christ;⁴ you have dedicated your holy continence to the one who made virginity fruitful. Be jubilant too, married chastity, all of you living faithfully with your husbands;⁵ preserve in your hearts what you have foregone in the body. Where the flesh can no longer be preserved from sexual relations, let the conscience remain virgin in faith, in the way in which every Church is virgin.⁶ With Mary, loving virginity gave birth to Christ; with Anna, aged widowhood recognized Christ the babe; with Elizabeth, married chastity, and an old woman's fertility, enrolled under Christ's banner.⁷

So then, because Christ is truth and peace and justice, conceive him in faith, give birth to him in works, so that what Mary's womb did for the flesh of Christ, your hearts may do for Christ's law. How, I mean to say, can you have no part in Mary's childbearing, when you are members of Christ? Mary gave birth to your head, the Church to all of you, because she too is both mother and virgin; mother in her womb of charity, virgin in the integrity of her faith and piety. She gives birth to whole peoples,⁸ but they are members of one person, whose body and wife she is. In this respect too she resembles that virgin mother, because in all that multitude she is the mother of unity.

Christ bent down to pick us up

3. And so let us all together, one in mind and heart, with chaste thoughts and holy affections, celebrate the birthday of the Lord, the day on which, as I said at the beginning of this sermon, *Truth sprang up from the earth*. Already, you see, what comes next in the psalm has happened. Because the one who sprang from the earth, who was born, that is, from the flesh, seeing that he came from heaven and is above all,⁹ has undoubtedly, after ascending to the Father, as *justice looked forth from heaven* (Ps 85:11). This is the justice, indeed, which he commends to us in his own words, when he promises the Holy Spirit: *He will convince the world, he says, of sin, and of justice, and of judgment. Of sin, because they have not believed in me; of justice, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me* (Jn 16:8-10). That's the justice which has looked forth from heaven. *From the height of heaven, you see, is his going forth, and his return is as far as the height of heaven* (Ps 19:6).

In case, though, anyone should think lightly of truth because it sprang from the earth,¹⁰ when *like a bridegroom he came forth from his chamber* (Ps 19:5), that is from the virgin's womb, where the Word of God was mated to the human creature in an inexpressible kind of marriage; so in case anyone should think

lightly of that, and should believe that Christ, while born indeed in a wonderful way, and a wonderful person in word and deed, was for all that, because of his likeness to the flesh of sin,¹¹ no more than a man; the psalm, after saying *Like a bridegroom coming forth from his chamber, he exulted like a giant to run the course*, immediately added, *from the height of heaven is his going forth* (Ps 19:5-6).¹²

So when you hear *Truth has sprung from the earth*, it is stating his condescension, not his condition; it's kindness, not wretchedness. In order that Truth might spring from the earth, he came down from heaven. In order that the bridegroom might come forth from his chamber, his going forth was from the height of heaven. That's why he was born today, a day than which none is shorter on earth,¹³ but from which the days begin to grow longer. So in bending down to pick us up, he chose the smallest day, but the one from which light starts increasing. Thus by his very coming in this sort of way he is silently exhorting us, as effectively as if he shouted it aloud, to learn to *be rich in the one who became poor for us* (2 Cor 8:9); to accept freedom in the one *who for our sake accepted the form of a slave* (Phil 2:7); to take possession of the heavens in the one who for our sake sprang from the earth.

NOTES

1. This time I will not presume to argue with the vague date proposed by Kunzelmann and Fischer. I will still maintain that unless there are indications to the contrary, Hippo Regius is the most likely place for all these sermons to have been preached in.

2. See Jn 1:12.

3. That the divinization of humanity was the purpose of the incarnation is generally accepted as being a commonplace of the theology of the Greek Fathers, and the Orthodox tradition; and it has been too lightly assumed that it is to all intents and purposes lacking in the Latin tradition. Well, here we have Augustine, the kingpin of the Latin tradition, being as Greek as you could wish.

4. At that time there was a distinct order of widows in most Churches, just as there was an order of consecrated virgins. See for its origin 1 Tm 5:1-10. In Augustine's time, however, it was probably beginning to coalesce with the order of virgins in what we would now call religious houses or convents. Thus Augustine's sister, a widow, was superior of a house of nuns in Hippo Regius. It was for her and her community that he wrote the letter which came to be known as the *Rule of Saint Augustine*, Letter 211.

5. I think he was addressing married women specifically, not married persons of both sexes, though the word I have translated "husbands" is not so specific, meaning "consort" or "marriage partner." But the model is all the time Mary, virgin and wife and mother (and eventually widow, though this is not noticed). I presume that men and women stood respectively in opposite sides of the church at that time, as is still the case in many Catholic communities. And so the bishop would have been turning his eyes in this whole section 2 toward the women's side of the church; first resting his gaze on the consecrated virgins in their quarter, then on the dedicated widows, then on the rest, the married women and marriageable girls—for whom he has nothing particular to say. In the next paragraph he perhaps turns more to the congregation as a whole, both men and women.

6. See 2 Cor 11:2.

7. See Lk 2:7.36-38; 1:39-45.57-63.

8. He did not, I think, mean peoples in the sense of nations, but in the sense of local Christian communities or Churches, each of which constituted a *populus* or *plebs*.

9. See Jn 3:31.

10. Something ultra-spiritual people would be tempted to do; Neoplatonists, for example, or even more the Manichees, and those influenced by them.

11. See Rom 8:3. He here seems to describe accurately enough the view of Jesus that would be held by Moslems, for example; or by Unitarians, though I imagine these would not accept the virgin birth.

12. The psalm, as Augustine knew perfectly well, is actually talking about the sun, as one of God's most splendid creatures. But it represents Christ; and therefore Augustine can apply the whole passage to Christ without a thought for the sun.

13. In the northern hemisphere, of course, and north of the tropics. Modern readers, if not Augustine, need to be reminded, perhaps, that the opposite is the case in the southern hemisphere, and that in the tropics all days are practically the same length. In the contemporary, really world-wide Church this "calendar" symbolism for Christmas (and a corresponding one for Easter) is possibly just a little parochial. Owing to that mystery, "the procession of the equinoxes," 25 December is no longer the winter (or summer) solstice.

SERMON 193

ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Date: 410¹

Glory to God, and on earth peace

1. When the gospel was read, we heard the voices of angels announcing to the shepherds that the Lord Jesus Christ was born of the virgin: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will* (Lk 2:14). Festive voices, congratulating not just one woman whose womb had been delivered of offspring, but the whole human race, for whom the virgin had borne the savior. It was right, you see, and altogether fitting, that the one who carried in her womb the Lord of heaven and earth, and after giving birth to him remained virginally intact, should be hailed in her child-bearing, not by a pack of women with solemn human rites,² but by angels with glorious divine praises. Let us too then say, and say with all the jubilation we can muster—because we aren't announcing his birth to shepherds watching their flocks, but celebrating his birthday with his sheep; let us too say, I repeat, with faithful hearts and loyal voices, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will*.

Let us take as close and shrewd a look as we can at these divine words, these praises of God, this exultant joy of the angels, and meditate on it in faith and hope and charity. For in accordance with what we believe and hope and desire, we too will be glory to God in the highest, when with the spiritual body³ rising again we are snatched up to meet Christ in the clouds;⁴ provided that meanwhile, as long as we are on earth, we pursue peace with good will.⁵ But all who would have life and love to see good days, let them curb their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit; *let them turn aside from evil and do good* (Ps 34:12-14); and in this way be people of good will. And let them *seek peace and pursue it* (Ps 34:14), because *on earth peace to people of good will*.

Christ's mercy gets in ahead of us every single time

2. But if you say, man,⁶ “Look, *to will is available to me, but to perform the good I do not find in myself*; and if you *delight in the law of God according to the inner self, but see another law in your members fighting back against the*

law of your mind, and taking you prisoner to the law of sin which is in your members; persist in your good will, and cry out what follows: Wretched man that I am, who will set me free from the body of this death? The grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 7:18.22-25).

He, you see, after the war in which *the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that it is not the things you wish that you do (Gal 5:17)*, is peace on earth to people of good will, because *he is our peace, who has made the two into one (Eph 2:14)*. So let good will persist in standing firm against evil desires, and persist in imploring the help of God's grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The law in the members of the flesh is fighting back against it, and here it is, already being taken prisoner. Let it implore help and not trust in its own powers; and even if weary and in distress, let it at least not be too proud to confess. One will be at hand, don't forget, who said to people that already, as he could see, believed in him, *If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will recognize the truth, and the truth will set you free (Jn 8:31-32)*. Truth will be at hand to set you free from the body of this death. That, for sure, is why *Truth*, whose birthday we are celebrating, *has sprung from the earth (Ps 85:11)*, in order to be peace on earth to people of good will.

Is anybody, I mean to say, in a position to have both the will and the ability, unless the one who granted us the will by calling us, also helps us to have the ability by inspiring us? The fact is, his mercy gets in ahead of us every single time; to call us when we were lacking the will, and then to ensure we obtain the ability to do what we will. So let us say to him, *"I have sworn and determined to keep the judgments of your justice (Ps 119:106)*. I have indeed determined, and promised obedience because you have ordered it; but because *I can see another law in my members fighting back against the law of my mind, and taking me prisoner to the law of sin which is in my members (Rom 7:23)*, *I have been utterly humbled, Lord; give me life according to your word (Ps 119:107)*. Look, *to will is available to me (Rom 7:18)*; therefore, *approve, Lord, the voluntary offering of my mouth (Ps 119:108)*, so that your peace may come on earth to people of good will."

Let us say all this, and anything else that loyal devotion, instructed by the holy readings, may suggest,⁷ so that we don't come thronging in vain to the celebration of the Lord's birth of the virgin; but rather begin with good will, and end up made perfect with the fullest charity,⁸ which is poured into our hearts, not through our own doing, but *through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom 5:5)*.

NOTES

1. This is the one precise date given by Kunzelmann and Fischer, in which they are supported by La Bonnardière. I suspect the sermon was preached at the midnight Mass; not only does the

gospel he comments on indicate this, but also the beginning of the last phrase, “but rather begin with good will”: *inchoati a bona voluntate*. See note 8. The sermon is a rather original reflection on *Gloria in excelsis Deo* in combination with Rom 7:18-25.

2. Referring presumably to customary rituals and blessings connected with childbirth, and no doubt presided over by midwives. Augustine exhibits a characteristically male disdain, probably disguising suspicion and fear, of such feminine mysteries, by calling what I have translated “a pack of women” *mullerculae*; a word that is male chauvinist to its very core.

3. See 1 Thes 4:17. It is to be noted that by “spiritual body” neither Augustine nor Paul (1 Cor 15:44) means a non-material, non-physical body, which is a contradiction in terms, though one cheerfully entertained by some modern interpreters of the apostle. For Augustine and Paul a spiritual (or “pneumatic”) body is contrasted with an “animal” (or “psychic”) body; that is to say, it is a body, solidly material, quickened by *spirit* as opposed to the body we have at present, which is quickened merely by *soul, anima, psyche*. The old edition of the Jerusalem Bible hits the nail on the head with its rendering of 1 Cor 15:44, “When it is sown, it embodies the soul; when it is raised, it embodies the spirit.” The New Jerusalem Bible, in this as in some other respects retrogressive, reverts to “what is sown is a natural body, and what is raised is a spiritual body.”

4. See Heb 12:14.

5. See Ps 102:27; also Ps 27:13; 34:12.

6. In South African English “man” is a mode of address that is undoubtedly of common gender. A South African boy—or girl—for example, may say to his mother after enjoying her cooking, “That was a smashing dinner, Mom, man” (or possibly “man, Mom”). Well Augustine was a North African; and if he had spoken English at all, it would have been the South African variety.

7. It would seem that the holy readings included the passage from Romans 7, and a section from Psalm 119, probably verses 105-112.

8. This suggests to me he was preaching at the midnight Mass, where they were beginning the celebration of the feast, and that he was hoping they would all be full of charity at the end, its culmination with the final Mass on Christmas day.

SERMON 194

ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Date: before 411¹

Love what you believe, proclaim what you love

1. Listen, children of light, adopted into the kingdom of God; dearest brothers and sisters, listen; listen, and *exult, you just, in the Lord, so that praise can befit you, the upright* (Ps 33:1). Listen, and hear what you know, reflect upon what you hear, love what you believe, proclaim what you love. Just as we are celebrating the great anniversary of this day, so be eager to hear the sermon that is owing on this day. Christ is born; God from the Father, man from his mother; from the Father's immortality, from his mother's virginity; from the Father without mother, from his mother without father; from the Father timelessly, from his mother seedlessly; from the Father as the beginning² of life, from his mother as the end of death; from the Father to regulate every day, from his mother to consecrate this day.

You see, he sent a man ahead of him, John, to be born at the time of year when the days were beginning to diminish, while he himself was born when the days were beginning to grow.³ This would prefigure what John himself said, *He must grow, while I must diminish* (Jn 3:30). Human life, you see, has to fade away in itself, gain force in Christ, *so that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died for all and rose again* (2 Cor 5:15); and that each one of us might say what the apostle says: *I live though, no longer I, but it is Christ who is living in me* (Gal 2:20). He, you see, must grow, while I must diminish.

Both angels and human praise Christ

2. He is praised just as he ought to be by all his angels, whose eternal food he is, nourishing them on imperishable fare; because he is the Word of God, on whose life they live, on whose eternity they live for ever, on whose goodness they live for ever in bliss. They praise him as he should be praised, God with God, and they give glory in the highest to God. *We, though, his people and the sheep of his hands* (Ps 95:7), in the measure of our weakness should try to be

reconciled by good will and so earn peace. You see, the song of the angels really does belong to today, the song they poured out exultantly when the Savior was born to us: *Glory in the highest to God, and on earth peace to people of good will* (Lk 2:14).

They then praise him suitably; we should praise him obediently. They are his messengers, we are his cattle. He has loaded their table in heaven, he has filled our manger on earth. He is the fare on their table, because *in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (Jn 1:1). He is the fodder in our manger, because *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us* (Jn 1:14). In order that man, you see, might eat the bread of angels,⁴ the creator of angels became man. They praise him by living with him, we by believing in him; they by enjoying, we by seeking him; they by grasping him, we by inquiring; they by entering, we by knocking.

The treasures of wisdom and knowledge

3. Is there any human being, after all, that has known all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are hidden in Christ,⁵ and concealed in the poverty of his flesh? Because *for our sake he became poor, though he was rich, that we might be enriched by his poverty* (2 Cor 8:9). You see, when he assumed mortality and consumed death, he showed himself in poverty; but that meant that he promised us riches he was deferring, not that he had lost riches he had forfeited. How multitudinous his sweetness, which he has hidden for those who fear him, but perfected for those who hope in him!⁶ For we know in part, until that which is perfect has come.⁷

In order to render us fit for grasping that, he being equal to God in the form of God and made like us in the form of a slave,⁸ reforms us to the likeness of God; and having become a son of man though he is the one and only Son of God, he makes many sons and daughters of men into sons and daughters of God; and by rearing slaves on the visible form of a slave, he perfects them as free persons for seeing the form of God. After all, *we are children of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. And we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is* (1 Jn 3:2).

I mean, why talk about those treasures of wisdom and knowledge, about those divine riches, if not because they are what suffices us? And why talk about that multitudinous sweetness, if not because it is what satisfies us? So, *show us the Father, and it suffices us* (Jn 14:8). And in one of the psalms somebody, one of us, or in us, or for us says to him, *I will be satisfied when your glory is revealed* (Ps 17:15). But he *and the Father are one* (Jn 10:30); and whoever sees him *also sees the Father* (Jn 14:9). Therefore, *the Lord of powers, he is the king of glory* (Ps 24:10).⁹ He will convert us and show us his face, and *we shall be saved* (Ps 80:4); and we shall be satisfied, and it will suffice us.

Let us celebrate the birthday of the form of a slave

4. So, let our hearts say to him, *I have sought your face; your face, Lord, will I search for; do not turn your face away from me* (Ps 27:8-9). And may he answer our hearts, *Whoever loves me keeps my commandments; and whoever loves me, will be loved by my Father; and I will love him and show myself to him* (Jn 14:21). Those he said this to could of course see him with their eyes, and hear the sound of his voice with their ears, and with their human minds they thought of him as a man; but what eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered the mind of man, all that is himself, the very self he was promising to show to those who love him.¹⁰

Until this happens, until he shows us what can suffice us, until we drink him, the fountain of life, and are satisfied;¹¹ for the time being as we walk by faith and are wandering in exile from him,¹² while we are *hungering and thirsting for justice* (Mt 5:6), and longing with an ardor beyond words for the beauty of the form of God, let us express our allegiance by devoutly and loyally celebrating the birthday of the form of a slave. We cannot yet contemplate how he was begotten before the daystar by the Father,¹³ so let us crowd in to congratulate him on being born of the virgin in the middle of the night.¹⁴ We cannot yet grasp how his name endures before the sun; let us at least acknowledge that he has pitched his tent in the sun.¹⁵ We cannot yet gaze upon the Only-begotten abiding in his Father;¹⁶ let us recall *the bridegroom coming forth from his chamber* (Ps 19:5). We are not yet fit and ready for our Father's banquet; let us honor the manger of our Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTES

1. For once I will not question the date suggested by Kunzelmann and Fischer; I would only say that I would put the sermon some ten to twelve years before 411. There is a very definite quality of excitement about it, especially in the opening form of address and the closing section, which could of course be accounted for by all sorts of things; but from which I infer that he had not yet preached many Christmas sermons. So perhaps we could even place it as his first Christmas sermon after he became bishop of Hippo Regius in 396.

2. See Jn 8:25, where, as Augustine read the text, Jesus answered the question "Who are you?" with the words "The beginning, who is also speaking to you."

3. John the Baptist on 24 June, at that time the summer solstice, and Christ, of course, on 25 December, the winter solstice—in the northern hemisphere.

4. See Ps 78:25.

5. See Col 2:5.

6. See Ps 31:19.

7. See 1 Cor 13:12.10.

8. See Phil 2:6-7.

9. Why "therefore" it is not very easy to see; except that this quotation is bringing back the term "glory" into the train of thought. There certainly is a train of thought, but it is not a single line; more of a multi-track, or like a very complex railway junction or shunting yard.

10. See 1 Cor 2:9.
11. See Ps 36:5; Jn 4:14; 7:37.
12. See 2 Cor 5:7.6.
13. See Ps 110:3.
14. An indication, perhaps, that he was preaching at the midnight Mass.
15. See Ps 72:17; 19:4.
16. See Jn 1:8.

SERMON 195

ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Date: after 412¹

His begetting who shall tell the tale of?

1. The Son of God, who is also the Son of man our Lord Jesus Christ, born of the Father without mother, created every single day; born of his mother without father, he consecrated this particular day; invisible in his divine birth, visible in his human one, in each of them wonderful. Thus it's difficult to judge about which of the two the prophet is more likely to have prophesied, *His begetting who shall tell the tale of?* (Is 53:8); whether of that one in which, never not born, he has the Father coeternal with himself; or of this one in which, born at a particular time, he had already made the mother of whom he would be made; whether of that one where he was always born, since he always was.² Who, after all, will tell the tale of how light was born from light, and they were both one light; how God was born from God, and the number of gods didn't grow; how it can be said that he was born, as of something that has been accomplished, though in that birth time hadn't passed to put it in the past, nor gone before, to put it in the future, nor just been present, as though it were still happening and wasn't yet finished?

Also, who will tell the tale of this begetting from the virgin, where his conception in the flesh was achieved without the flesh, where his birth from the flesh filled the breasts of the one who would suckle him, but did not cancel the virginal integrity of the one who bore him? Either of them, then, or each begetting, who shall tell the tale of?

The Son of holy Mary

2. This is the Lord our God, this is the mediator between God and men, the man our Savior,³ who, born of the Father, also created his mother; created of his mother also glorified the Father; the only son of his Father without female parturition; the only son of his mother without male embrace. This is the one, fairest in form above the sons of men,⁴ the son of holy Mary, the bridegroom of holy Church, which he has restored to be like his mother; because he has both

made her a mother for us, and kept her a virgin for himself. It is to her, of course, that the apostle says, *I have matched you to one man, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ* (2 Cor 11:2). Again he says of her that she, our mother, is not the slave woman but the free woman, and that the children of the abandoned wife are more than those of the one who has a husband.⁵ So the Church too, like Mary, enjoys perpetual virginity and uncorrupted fecundity. What Mary, you see, was found worthy to possess in the flesh, the Church has preserved in the mind. Except that the former gave birth to one, the latter gives birth to many, who are, however, to be gathered together into one through that one.⁶

Christ came in the flesh

3. So this is the day on which the one who made the world came into the world; on which the one who is never absent in his power became present in the flesh; because he was in this world, and he came to his own. He was in the world, but he escaped the world's notice; because the light was shining in the darkness, and the darkness could not comprehend it.⁷ So he came in the flesh, with the intention of cleansing the defects of the flesh. He came in medicinal earth,⁸ with which he would cure our inner eyes, which our outer earth had blinded; so that once they were healed we, who were *once darkness*, might become *light in the Lord* (Eph 5:8); and thus the light would no longer be shining as present to darkness that was absent, but would appear plainly to people who could distinguish it.

It was for this that the bridegroom came forth from his chamber, and *exulted as a giant to run the course* (Ps 19:5). Comely as the bridegroom, strong as the giant, lovable and terrible, severe and serene, beautiful to the good, harsh to the bad, abiding *in the bosom of the Father* (Jn 1:18), he filled the womb of his mother. In that chamber, that is in the virgin's womb, the divine nature coupled the human to itself; there *the Word became flesh* for us, so that coming forth from his mother he might *dwell among us* (Jn 1:14); and that going ahead to the Father, he might prepare a place for us to dwell in.⁹ So let us celebrate this day as a high and happy holiday; and faithfully long for the eternal day through him, who being eternal was born for us in time.

NOTES

1. Again, this very brief sermon gives every indication of coming from his later years, well after 412.

2. He forgets to complete the sentence, being carried away by contemplation of the mystery of the eternal birth of the Son from the Father. But he returns to the temporal birth of Christ from Mary after this long rhapsody.

3. See 1 Tm 2:5.

4. See Ps 45:2.

5. See Gal 4:31.26-27.

6. See Jn 11:52.

7. See Jn 1:11.10.5.

8. A striking expression, which alludes to Jesus' cure of the man born blind by spitting on the ground and making mud with the spittle and anointing the man's eyes with it, Jn 9:6. Augustine consistently interprets the spittle mixed with earth as a symbol of the Word becoming flesh.

9. See Jn 14:3.

SERMON 196

ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Date: after 420¹

Two births of our Lord Jesus Christ

1. This day has dawned upon us, the birthday feast of our Lord Jesus Christ. The birthday, on which the Day was born;² and today, for the good reason that from today the day starts growing. There are two births of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one divine, the other human; both marvelous; the first without a woman as mother, the second without a man as father. What Saint Isaiah the prophet says, *His begetting who shall tell the tale of?* (Is 53:8), can be applied to both of them. Who could worthily tell the tale of God begetting? Who could worthily tell the tale of the virgin giving birth? The first apart from any day, the second on a particular day; each of them beyond the limits of human imagination, and calling for unstinted admiration.

Consider that first begetting: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (Jn 1:1). Whose Word? The Father's own. Which Word? The Son himself. The Father has never been without the Son; and yet the one who has never been without the Son begot the Son. He both begot, and yet did not begin to do so. There is no beginning for one begotten without beginning. And yet he's the Son, and yet he's begotten. Mere man is going to say, "How begotten, and he doesn't have a beginning? If he doesn't have a beginning, how was he begotten?" How, I don't know. Are you asking a mere man how God was begotten? I'm overwhelmed by your questioning; but I appeal to the prophet: *His begetting who can tell the tale of?*

Come with me to this other human begetting; come with me to this one in which *he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant* (Phil 2:7), to see if perhaps we can grasp this one, if perhaps we are capable of saying something at least about this one. I mean to say, who could ever grasp, *Who, while he was in the form of God, did not think it robbery to be equal to God* (Phil 2:6)? Who could ever grasp that, who could ever think worthy thoughts about it? Whose mind would dare to scrutinize it, whose tongue dare to pronounce upon it? Whose thought would be capable of grasping it? Let's leave that for the moment; it's too much for us. But so that it shouldn't be too much for us, *he emptied*

himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men (Phil 2:7). Where? In the virgin Mary. So let us say something about that, as far as we can. The angel makes the announcement, the virgin hears, believes, and conceives; faith in the mind, Christ in the womb.³ The virgin conceived; you're astonished; the virgin gave birth; you're more astonished still; after giving birth she remained a virgin. So this begetting too who will tell the tale of?

Three kinds of life in the Church

2. Let me tell you something to delight you, dearest friends. There are three kinds of life in the Church of the members of Christ: the married, the widowed, the virginal. Because these kinds of life, these forms of chastity were going to be found among the holy members of Christ, all three of them bore witness to Christ. First, the married life: when Mary the virgin conceived, Elizabeth the wife of Zachary had also conceived; she was carrying in her womb the herald of this Judge.⁴ Holy Mary came to her to see how she was and greet her. The infant leapt in Elizabeth's womb. He leapt, she prophesied.⁵ There you have the testimony of married chastity.

Where is the widowed sort? In Anna. You heard just now when the gospel was read that she was a holy prophetess, a widow for eighty-four years, who had lived seven years with her husband,⁶ and how she used to frequent the temple of the Lord, serving with prayers night and day. And this widow recognized Christ. She saw him so small, she recognized his greatness. She too gave her testimony.⁷ You have in her the widowed form of life, in Mary the virginal.

Let each of you choose from these three kinds of life whichever you wish. Anybody who chooses a life outside the scope of these three is not disposed to be among the members of Christ. Married women mustn't say, "We don't belong to Christ"; there have been holy women who had husbands. Virgins mustn't give themselves airs; however great they may be, they should humble themselves on all occasions, among all sorts of people.⁸ All the models of salvation have been set before our eyes; let nobody deviate out of orbit.⁹ No one besides your wife; better without a wife. If you are looking for an example of married chastity, you have Susanna;¹⁰ if of widowed, you have Anna; if of virginal, you have Mary.

*We have Christ as an infant;
let us grow up with him*

3. The Lord Jesus wished to be a man for our sakes. Don't hold this kindness cheap; Wisdom is lying there on the earth. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (Jn 1:1).* O food and bread of the angels! The angels take their fill of you, they are contented with you, and they don't grow tired of you; they derive their life from you, their wise judgment from you, their bliss from you. And where are you for my sake? In a cramped and crowded hostelry, in rags, in a manger.

For whose sake? The one who regulates the stars is sucking his mother's breasts; he fills the angels, speaks in the Father's bosom, is silent in his mother's. But he is going to speak when he reaches the right age, and to fill up the gospel for us.¹¹ Going to suffer for our sakes, going to die for our sakes, going to rise again as the model for our reward, going to ascend into heaven before the eyes of the disciples, going to come from heaven in judgment. There you have the one who was lying in a manger; he made himself small, but didn't lose himself; he took on what he was not, but remained what he was. There you are, we have Christ as an infant; let us grow up with him.

New Year's Day

4. Let that be enough for your graces. Because I can see that there are many people here for the feast,¹² I really must speak. The first of January is coming soon. You are all Christians; by God's grace, the city is Christian; there are just two sorts of people here, Christians and Jews.¹³ Don't let the sort of thing occur that God hates; wicked games, offensive jokes.¹⁴ People shouldn't make judges for themselves, or they may fall into the hands of the real Judge. Listen, you're Christians, you're members of Christ. Think about what you are, think about how much you have been bought for. Finally, if you want to know what you're doing—I'm talking to those who in fact do these things; those of you who don't like them mustn't take what I say as wronging you; I'm talking to those who do do them and those who approve of them. So do you want to know what you're doing, and what sort of grief you cause me? Do the Jews take part in all this? Let that at least shame you into stopping it happening.¹⁵

On the birthday of John the Baptist, six months ago that is (that, you see, is how many months there are between the herald and the Judge), Christians took part in a superstitious pagan festival by going to the sea and baptizing each other.¹⁶ I was away; but, as I learned, the presbyters, being zealous for the discipline of Christians, imposed a fitting ecclesiastical penance on some persons. People grumbled about it, and some said, "Was it so much trouble to warn us? If we were forewarned in good time, we wouldn't do it. Had the presbyters themselves forewarned us, we wouldn't have done it." Well, here's the bishop forewarning you; I'm warning you, I'm telling you beforehand, I'm formally commanding you. Let the bishop's orders be listened to, the bishop's warning be listened to, the bishop's entreaty be listened to, the bishop's adjuration be listened to. I adjure you by the very one who was born today, I am putting you under a strict obligation; you must none of you do these things. I absolve myself from blame; it's better that you should heed my warning, than that you should experience my sorrow and indignation.

NOTES

1. This is my estimate of the date, based on the preacher saying in section 4 that by God's grace it was a Christian city, with only two sorts of people in it, Christians and Jews; no pagans, and he doesn't even mention Donatists. I doubt if he could have called Hippo Regius a Christian city when he first became bishop in 396—and he certainly could not have passed over the Donatists in silence. Because he calls himself bishop in that last section, Kunzelmann and Fischer date the sermon "after 396." It is not that I disagree with them; it is just that I think they are carrying cautious prudence to extremes. And other authorities say that it was "probably" preached in Hippo. But since in this last section Augustine is appealing precisely to his authority as bishop, it is hard to see where else he can have been preaching, but in the city of which he was the bishop.

2. We have already found him calling Christ "the day." The text behind this attribution was probably Ps 118:24, *This is the day which the Lord has made*. As he speaks of the day dawning, he was probably preaching at the dawn Mass, or the Mass later in the day.

3. He makes the rough word-play we have met before—I think he got fonder of it the older he grew, no doubt because he found people remembered it—between *in mente* and *in ventre*.

4. Roman magistrates were accompanied, or rather preceded, by heralds, chosen no doubt for their lung power; they acted as a kind of public address system. So Christ the judge was preceded by his herald, John the Baptist.

5. See Lk 1:39-45.

6. Almost all translations say that Anna was eighty-four years old. But that is not, I think, what Luke says; he says that having lived with her husband for seven years from her girlhood (or virginity), she was a widow "up to" eighty-four years. If one assumes, conventionally, that she was married at the age of 14, this would make her 105 years old; indeed "well advanced in years," and the same age as the heroine Judith lived to (Jdt 16:22-23). Eighty-four, while a respectable age, is nothing unusual.

7. See Lk 2:36-38.

8. See Sir 3:18.

9. *Nemo exorbitat*.

10. See Dn 13.

11. I think he means, cause the four gospels to be written.

12. The "occasional Christians," not usually to be seen in Church.

13. No mention of divisions among Christians, of the Donatists above all. It is this passage, together with all sorts of little points of style and manner, that convinces me this is a late sermon, after 420.

14. Ecclesiastical disapproval has, of course, never managed to suppress the rowdy celebration of New Year. For some details of what this entailed in those days, see Sermon 198. Perhaps the next sentence suggests one kind of activity, mimic court cases such as are held—or used to be—on ships crossing the equator; or could there have been something like modern beauty contests, for the title of Miss and Mr. Hippo Regius? Another interpretation is that Augustine was warning his congregation not to set their "private judgment" about the rightness and wrongness of the New Year junketing against the official judgment of the Church. But that doesn't quite fit the Latin, which doesn't say "People shouldn't make themselves judges," *non se faciant iudices*, but "People shouldn't make judges for themselves, *non sibi faciant iudices*. Also, this interpretation looks rather like a post-Reformation anachronism.

15. The Jews, clearly, were better at avoiding pagan syncretism than average Christians, most of whom had a pagan background. My view is that this is one of the cases in the history of the Church in which *vox populi*, rather than *vox episcoporum* eventually proved to be the *vox Dei*.

16. A summer solstice ritual, no doubt. I believe in Ireland the custom long survived of leaping over bonfires at midsummer on the eve of John the Baptist's day—purification by fire instead of by sea water.

SERMON 196A

Date: after 420¹

By Christ's justification we are circumcised in the heart

1. Dearest brothers and sisters, the invisible loftiness of our Lord Jesus Christ has become visible lowliness. His loftiness is not measured by days, his weakness has undertaken to have its day. Where there's lowliness, there's also weakness. But God's weakness is strength for the lowly. From his exalted loftiness he made the world, by his lowly humility he conquered the world. Unless Christ had agreed to be humble, there would be no signing of the faithful today with the sign of Christ.² You heard what the apostle said about him, that since he was true God, *he did not think it robbery to be equal to God*. How could it be robbery, when it was his nature? But what did he do? *He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant* (Phil 2:6-7). And that is what we are celebrating today.

Many people have despised the humble Christ and have not attained to the exaltation of Christ. Those, however, who have worshipped him in his humility have found him in his sublimity. So on the eighth day the Lord was circumcised as that custom was, and the sacrifice Moses had laid down was offered for him.³ Jews hear about this, and say, "Christ was one of ours." Well, if you acknowledge him as one of yours, why did you kill him? A superb arrangement, my dearest brothers and sisters! He is going to do away with circumcision, he received circumcision. He received the shadow, he is going to give the light; he received the figure, he is going to fulfill the truth. You see, this very circumcision, which was so instituted that the tiny infant should be circumcised on the eighth day,⁴ signified Christ.

But you'll say to me, "How are we circumcised in the heart by the resurrection of Christ?"⁵ So what he was going to do in the heart was being prefigured in the body. You see, the apostle Paul says about the Lord Christ that *he was handed over for our transgressions, and rose again for our justification* (Rom 4:25). Circumcision is justification. What is circumcision? Laying aside the likings of the flesh, being circumcised from the world, serving God and having truth in the heart. What, after all, is added to a person who has had a little piece of skin removed from his flesh? But it's a sign. It's a sign, where the truth is in Christ.⁶ How is it in Christ? I have already said. It's by his justification that we are justified. So by his justification we are circumcised in the heart.

Now look at the eighth day, the Lord's day. Christ died on the sixth day of the week, was buried on the seventh,⁷ rose again on the next day. So notice that he rose again after the sabbath, that is on the first day of the week. So if any Jew has heard that Christ was circumcised, let him come and be circumcised by Christ. But he says to me, "I am not the one to forsake my law." Would Christ himself have refused to accept circumcision? Would he have condemned what he commanded to be observed? Where would be the fact that it was he himself who gave the law?⁸ Or do you suppose that Christ only began to exist when he was born of Mary? Christ existed before his mother, because he created her to be his mother. He existed before Abraham.⁹ That's little enough I'm telling you: he existed before Adam. And that too is little enough I'm telling you: he existed before heaven and earth, because *all things were made through him* (Jn 1:3). So do you suppose that anyone else but the Only-begotten of the Father, the Word of God, gave the law through Moses? I'm asking you, dearest brothers and sisters, what greatness was it that the old man Simeon saw in a small child?¹⁰ What he saw was being carried by his mother; what he perceived was governing the universe.

The humility of Christ has conformed itself to us

2. Tell me, what sort of thing was it that Elisha did, when he brought back to life the son of his hostess? In that figure the law was given away. What happened? He was told, "The child is dead." He gave his servant his staff, and said, *Go and place it on the dead child* (2 Kgs 4:29). The servant took his staff, placed it on the dead child, and he didn't rise again. Elisha came himself, conformed himself to the dead child, and brought the dead back to life. Pay attention, brothers and sisters, pay attention. The staff sent by the servant, that's the law given by Moses. The staff was placed on the dead child, and he didn't rise again. The Jews could receive the law, but they couldn't live by it. So they shouldn't despise the humility of Christ; they shouldn't despise him placed on top of weakness.¹¹

Look, he's believed in, he's conceived, he's clothed with flesh, he's born of a woman, he's wrapped in rags, he's laid in a manger. Don't despise him when he does such things as that; he's conforming himself to the dead. Take a good look at what you're laughing at; if you are converted, you will be living by it. The humility of Christ has conformed itself to us, as to dead people who are to be made alive. By this we have already risen again for the time being by faith, and eventually in fact it will be in the flesh.

"But I," he says, "hold on to what God handed over to Moses." Listen to what God says through the prophet. What is God telling Jeremiah? *Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, and I will confirm upon the house of Jacob a new covenant* (Jer 31:31). Leave the old aside, take up the new, and you can see that you ought to leave aside circumcision, and unleavened bread taken literally, and the sabbath taken literally, and the sacrifices taken literally. Listen to how the new covenant is promised: *Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, and*

I will confirm for them a new covenant, not like the covenant which I gave to their fathers, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt (Jer 31:31-32), when the law of commandments was given, when the people were led through the desert. It's not like that that I will give the new covenant. So don't go on wearing the old tunic; that was what crucified Christ. Your father crucified him, you hate him. He by his own hand, you in your heart, both of you have carried out the crime. Therefore be displeased with what your father did, and listen to what your Lord has done.

Let Christ start growing in your hearts

3. Let these few words be enough for you, considering the solemnity and the shortness of the day. These, after all, are the year's shortest days in which Christ was born, but in which the days begin to grow longer. Let Christ, therefore, start growing in your hearts. Make progress and have faith, so that you may attain to eternal life.

NOTES

1. Pierre Verbraken, who edited the sermon, suggests no date or place. Hippo Regius again seems to me to be the obvious place. The sermon is directed largely to the Jews, and is a reflection mainly on the circumcision of Christ. From this I infer that it was preached on 1 January. But it makes no reference whatever to the pagan revels held on that day—which would be surprising if they were still attracting considerable numbers of Christians. So I conclude that the line Augustine took in Sermons 196 and 198 and others had had its effect. So this sermon would be later than all those, perhaps even after 425. The editor gives it no title, there being none, presumably, in the manuscripts.

2. This could be just a reference to the sign of the cross; or more specifically to some ceremony, no doubt including the sign of the cross, by which the faithful rededicated themselves to Christ on New Year's Day; the forerunner of our New Year's resolutions.

3. See Lk 2:21-24. Augustine seems to assume that the presentation of Jesus in the temple coincided with his circumcision, instead of taking place thirty-three days later, according to the prescription of Lv 12:2-4.

4. See Gn 17:12.

5. An exceedingly abrupt transition, since he hasn't yet referred at all either to the resurrection or to circumcision of the heart; an indication, perhaps, that he really was getting old? There are others. The argumentation is really very disjointed and inconsequential.

6. By truth he probably means the thing signified by the sign. But he may also mean that circumcision is a real sign for Christians who understand the truth of Christ, and a meaningless sign for Jews who don't.

7. Just possibly true, if he were buried after sunset on the Friday; but I think the old preacher is just being careless.

8. These questions are all directed at the Jew, who would surely have found them quite baffling. The implication probably underlying them is that by refusing to be "circumcised by Christ" he was rejecting the meaning of the circumcision commanded by the law.

9. See Jn 8:58.

10. See Lk 2:25.

11. Like Elisha on top of the child, as it were shrinking himself to the child's proportions.

SERMON 197

AGAINST THE PAGANS, ON 1 JANUARY: FRAGMENTS, FROM A SELECTION OF
TEXTS ON PAUL COMPILED BY BEDE AND FLORUS

Date: before 400¹

From creature to Creator

1. *For the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness* (Rom 1:18). Whose, if not that of both Jews and Gentiles? But in case it should be said, “Why against the ungodliness of the Gentiles? After all, the Gentiles never received the law and became transgressors of it.² The wrath of God is rightly revealed against the Jews to whom the law was given, and who were unwilling to keep it. But it wasn’t given to the Gentiles”: consider carefully, brothers and sisters, what he says, and understand how he shows that all are guilty, and all in need of salvation and of God’s mercy.³ *For the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and injustice of those people who hold down the truth in iniquity.* Notice how he didn’t say they do not have the truth, but *they hold down the truth*, he says, *in iniquity.*

And as though you were to ask and say, “How can they have the truth, if they didn’t receive the law?” he continues: *because what is known of God is manifest among them.* And how could what is known of God be manifest among them, if they didn’t receive the law? He continues, and says, *For his invisible things can be contemplated from the creation of the world, being perceived through the things that have been made; as also his power and divinity* (Rom 1:19-20) being perceived can be contemplated, he means, of course. Why, I mean to say, should you look at the works, and not look for the workman? You look at the earth bearing fruit, you look at the sea full of its animals, you look at the air full of flying creatures, you look at the sky bright with stars, and all the rest, and you don’t look for the skilled producer of such a great work?

But you answer me, “I can see these things, I can’t see him.” For seeing these things he gave you the eyes in your head; for seeing himself, he gave you a mind. After all you can’t even see the soul of a person. So just as from the movements and control of the body you perceive the soul, which you cannot see, in the same way perceive the creator from the control of the whole world and from the guidance of souls themselves.⁴ But it’s not enough merely to perceive; because

they did perceive, and notice what the apostle says: *Because knowing God, they did not glorify him as God, or give thanks to him; but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened.* For what other reason, but pride? Because just notice what follows: *For by asserting they were wise, he says, they became foolish* (Rom 1:21-22). They ought not, you see, to arrogate to themselves what he had granted them, nor to boast about what they had got from him, not from themselves. They should, of course, give him the credit, so that in order to keep hold of what they have been able to see, they might be cured by the one who enabled them to see. Because if they did this, they would preserve humility, and be able to be purified, and so continue to enjoy that most blissful contemplation.⁵

But because there was that pride in them, that self-deceiving and deceitful and proud being⁶ intruded himself, with ready promises that their souls could be purified by their playing goodness knows what proud parts;⁷ and thus he made them into worshippers of demons. That's the origin of all the sacred rites celebrated by the pagans, which they claim are effective for purifying their souls. And listen to the things the apostle goes on to say next, because they are what they received as the reward for their pride; because they did not honor God as God should be honored. *And they changed the glory of the imperishable God into the likeness of the image of perishable man.* So now we have idols. And these to be sure are the ones of all the Greeks and the other nations, which resemble human beings. But in fact there is no more monstrous and superstitious idolatry than that of the Egyptians; because Egypt flooded the world with the kind of fabrications the apostle goes on to mention. After saying *into the likeness of the image of perishable man*, he added, *and of birds, and quadrupeds and reptiles.* I ask you, brothers and sisters, have you ever seen idols in other temples with heads of dogs or bulls, or reproductions of other irrational animals? These, you see, are the idols of the Egyptians. So it is to include both sorts that the apostle says, *into the likeness of the image of perishable man, and of birds and quadrupeds and reptiles. That is why God handed them over to the desires of their hearts, to impurity; so that they would treat their bodies with abuse among themselves* (Rom 1:23-24).

These evil deeds of theirs stem from their ungodly pride. But because these sins come from pride, they are not only sins, but punishments as well. You see, when he says *God handed them over*, it means it's now the retribution for some sin, that they should do these things *who changed the truth of God into a lie.* What does it mean, they changed the truth of God into a lie? *Into the likeness, namely, of the image of perishable man, and of birds and quadrupeds and reptiles.* And in case any of them should say, "I don't worship idols, but what idols represent," he immediately added, *and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator* (Rom 1:25). Get this straight: either, you see, they worship an idol, or a creature. Whoever worships an idol is changing the truth of God into a lie. Because the sea is a truth; but Neptune is a lie made by man, a truth of God turned into a lie; because God made the sea, while man made the idol of Neptune.⁸ In the same way, God made the sun; while man, by making

an image of the sun,⁹ turns a truth of God into a lie. But in case they should say, “I don’t worship the idol, but I worship the sun,” that’s why he said, *they worshipped the creature rather than the creator.*

Hold on to Christ

2. But someone may say, perhaps, “Even if he was born in humble circumstances, he wanted to be able to boast about the nobility of his disciples.” Well, he didn’t choose kings, or senators, or philosophers, or orators; on the contrary, he preferred to choose common people, poor people, uneducated people, fishermen. Peter was a fisherman, Cyprian an orator.¹⁰ Unless the fisherman had faithfully led the way, the orator would not have humbly followed. None of you should despair of yourselves because you are disregarded and treated as of no account. Hold on to Christ, and your hope will not let you down.¹¹

As against such pride the apostle stays down in humility

3. What did Simon want, but to be admired for miracles, to be exalted in pride? It was pride, you see, that drove him to imagine that the gift of the Holy Spirit could be bought with money.¹² As against such pride the apostle stays down in humility, and fervent in spirit as the noonday sun, with dazzling prudence he says, *Neither the one who plants is anything, nor the one who waters; but the one who gives the growth, God;* because he had just said, *I planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the growth* (1 Cor 3:7.6). And again, *Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?* (1 Cor 1:13) Notice how he utterly refused to be worshiped instead of Christ, and would not parade as the bridegroom with a mind bent on fornication. Isn’t it a great thing, apparently, to plant and to water? But *neither the one who plants is anything, nor the one who waters.* How very anxious and concerned he was! He doesn’t claim to contribute anything to the salvation of those whom he was longing to build up in Christ.

Do not place any hopes in the apostle, but in truth

4. Nor did the apostle, either, want people to place any hopes in himself, but rather in the truth he was proclaiming. What was being said by means of him was something better than he was, by whose means it was being proclaimed. *Though if we,* he says. That’s nothing; listen to what follows: *or an angel, he says, from heaven proclaimed to you something else besides what you have received, let him be anathema* (Gal 1:8). He realized that the false mediator could transform himself into an angel of light,¹³ and preach something false. So then, just as proud human beings want themselves to be adored in the place of God,¹⁴ to arrogate to themselves whatever they can, to have their names on everybody’s lips, and if possible outstrip Christ himself in fame; so too do the devil and his angels. The Donatists put Donatus in the place of Christ; if they

heard some pagan disparaging Christ, they would probably put up with it more patiently than if they heard him disparaging Donatus.¹⁵

Love of the head for his body

5. . . . Because Christ himself speaks in his saints, as the apostle says: *Or are you seeking an experience of the one who is speaking in me, of Christ?* (2 Cor 13:3). And while he may say, *neither the one who plants is anything, nor the one who waters, but the one who gives the growth, God* (1 Cor 3:7), because he didn't want himself, but God in him, to be loved; still for all that he bears witness to some people with the words, *Because you accepted me like an angel of God, like Christ Jesus* (Gal 4:14). So in all his saints he is the one to be loved; the one who said, *I was hungry, and you gave me to eat* (Mt 25:35). You see, he didn't say "you gave them," but you *gave me*. Such is the love of the head for his body!

Do not be deceived

6. What is Juno? Juno, they say, is the air.¹⁶ Just now he was inviting us to worship the sea in the form of Neptune, to honor the earth in the idol of Tellus;¹⁷ now he's inviting us to worship the air.¹⁸ These are the elements of which the world consists. So the apostle Paul warns us about all this in advance, in his letter: *Take care, he says, that nobody deceives you through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the elements of this world* (Col 2:8). He was referring, you see, to the people who give an apparently sensible explanation of idols. That's why, after saying *through philosophy*, he said in the same passage, *according to the elements of this world*, warning us to beware, not of any old worshiper of idols, but of the apparently more learned interpreters of signs.

NOTES

1. The majority of scholars opt for this early date; one suggests before 420. But such dating is based in either case on the assumption, which the Maurist editors made, that the fragments come from one sermon. I suspect the source of the fragments in Bede and Florus requires a more critical look than that. Unfortunately this document is not contained in the volumes of Migne's *Patrologia Latina* devoted to the works of Bede, so I have not been able to look at it myself. From the purely internal content of these six fragments, numbers 1 and 6 deal with the topic of paganism, the others do not. The concerns are so different, that on the face of it the presumption would be that they are extracted from different sermons. Again, the same Maurist editors assume that this (?) sermon is referred to by Possidius in his index of Augustine's works. All his note says, however, is *De Kalendas Januarii contra quos supra*; On the Kalends of January against those mentioned above (the pagans). That this refers to Sermon 198 need not be doubted; there is no reason at all to suppose it also refers to this collection of miscellaneous fragments; or that even the two that deal with paganism were preached on 1 January.

2. See Rom 5:20.

3. See Rom 3:23.

4. There have traditionally been two approaches to “proving the existence of God”: one, indicated by Paul in this text and developed by Thomas Aquinas in his famous five ways, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.2, a.3, starts from the external visible world; the other, favored by Augustine and Newman, starts from the internal invisible world of the soul or consciousness. Augustine here characteristically tacks this on to what Paul says.

5. Of seeing the creator in and through the creature; though he uses language more appropriate to the seeing of God face to face, as in 1 Cor 13:12.

6. The devil.

7. *Per partes nescio quas superbiae*. I am tempted to emend *partes* to *artes*, because what he is thinking of are the magic arts practiced by Neoplatonists like Porphyry, and also the rituals of the mystery cults, such as those of Eleusis, Mithras, or Isis.

8. Nowhere, in this or the following fragments, is there an explicit reference to the pagan rites marking the New Year. It is possible, however, that they were chiefly concerned with the cult of Neptune. In Sermon 196, 4 he refers to Christians who took part in pagan rites at midsummer by going and “being baptized” in the sea, which could well have been an element in the cult of the sea-god. Perhaps he was also honored in a similar fashion at New Year—though it would have been a distinctly chilly act of worship.

9. Possibly an image of Hercules. See Sermon 24, notes 1 and 34 (volume III/2).

10. Orator in those days was almost equivalent to lawyer—barrister or counselor—because it was in the practice of the legal profession that the art of oratory found its main outlet. Augustine himself had been something of an exception, an academic orator/lawyer teaching the art, rather than one in legal practice. Not so Cyprian, who had been a lawyer before his conversion.

11. On the face of it, it seems unlikely that this fragment comes from the same sermon as section 1.

12. See Acts 8:18-19.

13. See 2 Cor 11:14. The false mediator is Satan.

14. Though he doesn't put this in the past tense, he may have had chiefly in mind the practice of emperor worship, which only Constantine's conversion to Christianity had put an end to.

15. Imagine Dr. Ian Paisley saying “If Catholics heard some unbeliever disparaging Christ, they would probably put up with it more patiently than if they heard him disparaging the Pope,” and you can see to what kind of unwarrantable slur Augustine here allowed himself to sink.

16. That is, this goddess represents the air as Neptune does the sea. I do not know who said this; it is not part of the common Juno mythology. She was the wife—very jealous as she had every reason to be—of Jupiter, and was also venerated as the goddess who presides over childbirth.

17. *Tellus* is a poetic word meaning earth; often used, though, as a name of the earth-goddess.

18. There is no telling who “he” was. He may be just the imaginary pagan interlocutor conjured up by the preacher in his sermon. Or he may have been some real pagan apologist, either a contemporary controversialist, or a literary figure of the past, like Varro, for example, whom Augustine quotes constantly in the early books of *The City of God*.

SERMON 198

ON 1 JANUARY, AGAINST THE PAGANS

Date: 420-425¹

The pagan celebration of New Year

1. I would urge your graces, brothers and sisters, since I observe that you have come together here today as if it were a feast, and have gathered for this particular day in greater numbers than usual, to remember what you sang just now. Don't let it be a case of noisy tongues and dumb minds; rather, what your voices have been shouting in one another's ears, let your feelings cry out in the ears of God. This, after all, is what you were saying: *Save us, Lord our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles,*² *that we may confess your holy name* (Ps 106:47).

And now, if the festival of the Gentiles which is taking place today in the joys of the world and the flesh,³ with the din of silly and disgraceful songs, with disgraceful junketing and dances, with the celebration of this false feast day⁴—if the things the Gentiles are doing today do not meet with your approval, you will be gathered from among the Gentiles.

Three sentiments of the soul: believing, hoping, loving

2. You certainly sang—and the sound of the divine song must still be echoing in your ears—*Save us, Lord our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles.* Can you be gathered from among the Gentiles without being saved, made safe and sound? So those who mix with the Gentiles are not safe and sound; while those who are gathered from among the Gentiles are made safe with the soundness of faith, the soundness of hope, the soundness of the most genuine charity, a spiritual soundness, the utterly reliable soundness of the promises of God.

So if you believe, hope, and love, it doesn't mean that you are immediately to be declared safe and sound and saved. It makes a difference, you see, what you believe, what you hope, what you love. Nobody in fact can live any style of life without those three sentiments of the soul; of believing, hoping, loving. If you don't believe what the Gentiles believe, don't hope what the Gentiles hope, don't love what the Gentiles love; then you are gathered from among the

Gentiles, you are segregated, set apart that is, from the Gentiles. And don't let your being physically mixed up with them alarm you, when there is such a wide separation of minds. What, after all, could be so widely separated as that they believe demons are gods, you on the other hand believe in him who is the one and only and true God? They hope for the vanities of this age, you hope for eternal life? They love the world, you love the world's architect?

So if you believe something else, hope for something else, love something else, you must prove it by your life, demonstrate it by your actions. Are you going to join in the celebrations of good luck presents⁵ like a pagan, going to play at dice—and get yourself drunk? How in that case can you really believe something else, hope for something else, love something else? How can you have the honest face to say *Save us, Lord our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles*? You're segregated from the Gentiles, you see, when you mix physically with the Gentiles, by a different style of life. And you can see how wide apart this segregation sets you, if only you act accordingly to prove it.

It's like this: our Lord Jesus Christ, who became man for us, has already paid the price for us. And so he's paid his price; the reason he paid it was to redeem us, to gather us from among the Gentiles. But if you get mixed up with the Gentiles, it means you don't want to follow the one who has redeemed you; instead you're mixing with the Gentiles in life-style, actions, mind, and heart, by believing such things, hoping for such things, loving such things; you are being ungrateful to your Redeemer, you are not acknowledging the price paid for you, the blood of the Lamb without blemish. So in order to follow your Redeemer, who redeemed you with his blood, don't mix with the Gentiles by the same kind of morals, habits, and actions. They give good luck presents; see to it you give alms. They are entertained by lascivious songs; see to it you are entertained by the words of the scriptures. They run off to the theater, you to church; they get drunk, see to it you fast. Or if you can't fast today, at least dine with sobriety. If you do this, you have well and truly and honestly sung *Save us, Lord our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles*.

Christians and Gentiles

3. And so it is that many people will be struggling in their consciences today with the words they've heard. I said, you see, "Don't give good luck presents, give to the poor." It's little enough that you should give that much; give even more.⁶ You don't want to give more? At least give that much. But you say to me, "When I give good luck presents, I too receive them for myself." So what then—when you give to the poor, don't you receive anything? Certainly, I trust, you wouldn't be believing what the Gentiles believe; you wouldn't be hoping, I trust, for what the Gentiles hope for. Look, if you say you get nothing when you give something to the poor, you've joined the Gentile party; you've had no reason to sing, *Save us, Lord our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles*.

Don't forget that rule, where it says, *Whoever gives to the poor will never be in want* (Prv 28:27). Have you already forgotten what the Lord is going to say

to those who have given to the poor; *Come, blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom?* And what will be said to those who haven't given; *Cast them into everlasting fire* (Mt 25:34-41)? Now, for the time being, those who are happy to hear what he said are of course standing all together with those who are not happy to hear it. I, now, am speaking to the true Christians. If you believe otherwise, hope otherwise, and love otherwise, then live otherwise, and prove how vastly different your faith, hope, and charity are by the vast difference of your morals. Listen to the apostle warning us: *Do not, he says, bear the yoke with unbelievers. For how can justice share with iniquity? Or what companionship can light have with darkness? How can a believer be party to an unbeliever? But what agreement can there be between the Lord's temple and idols?* (2 Cor 6:14-16). And elsewhere he says, *For what the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not wish you to become, he says, the associates of demons* (1 Cor 10:20).

So their morals give pleasure to their gods. But the man who said *I do not wish you to become the associates of demons*, wished them to set themselves apart in life and morals from those who served demons. Now those demons take pleasure, don't they, in idle songs, they take pleasure in the trifling spectacle, in the manifold indecencies of the theaters, in the mad frenzy of the chariot races,⁷ in the cruelties of the amphitheater, in the unrelenting rivalries of those who take up quarrels and disputes, to the point of open hostilities, on behalf of pestilential persons, on behalf of a comedian, an actor, a clown, a charioteer, a hunter. When they do these things, it's as if they were offering incense to demons from their hearts. These spirits, given to seduction you see, rejoice in the people they have seduced, and feed on the bad morals and shameful and shocking life-style of those they have seduced and deceived.

But you, as the apostle says, have not so learned Christ; provided, of course, you have heard him and been educated in him (Eph 4:20-21). *Do not, therefore, become their partners. For you were once darkness, but now light in the Lord; walk as children of light* (Eph 5:7-8); so that we too, who preach the word of the Lord to you, may be able to rejoice with you and over you in that perpetual light.

NOTES

1. The sermon was certainly preached in Hippo Regius. I date it between Sermons 196 and 196A. Sermon 196 bluntly warned the local Christians not to take part in the pagan celebration of New Year's Day. We saw reason for supposing it was preached as late as 420. Sermon 196A appears to have been preached on a day of *sollemnitatis*, probably 1 January since it concentrates on the circumcision of Christ. It was largely directed at the Jews (who were obliquely praised in Sermon 196 for not taking part in the pagan festivities); and it doesn't mention these goings-on at all. They would seem to have died out when Sermon 196A was preached.

This Sermon 198, on the other hand, is all about them, clearly preached on the day itself; which

is, however, *not* called a *sollemnitatis*, but the faithful are observed to have gathered *quasi sollemniter*. So the pagan festivities still need to be preached against, but many of the faithful are spontaneously turning the day into a kind of Christian celebration; and in a year or two the Church authorities—that is, Augustine and his clergy—will in Hippo at least have followed up this lay initiative, and made New Year's Day the feast of the Circumcision.

2. "Gentiles" is really *Gentes*, the nations. I normally prefer to translate it "nations"; but here the context calls for a word which is in contrast with the faithful themselves.

3. See 1 Jn 2:16.

4. Possibly celebrated, to judge from the more detailed description given later, in honor of the goddess Fortuna, or Luck; but perhaps on this occasion she was known as *Strena*, about which see note 5.

5. *Strenae*, described by Sextus Pomponius, a second century lawyer, as presents "given for the sake of a good omen"; *Strena* was also the name of the goddess who presided over the occasion. Perhaps the habit survives in the Christmas cracker, which you pull while making a wish, and in the bits and pieces hidden in the Christmas pudding.

6. More, presumably, than you would have spent on your good luck presents.

7. Literally, of the circus; which was the race track. The cruelty of the amphitheater had once, of course, included the throwing of criminals, especially Christians, to wild beasts and gladiatorial combats to the death. At the time Augustine was speaking, such things had been abolished by Christian emperors. The cruelty now consisted largely in the cruelty to the animals now "hunted" in the amphitheater by professional "hunters" about whom he goes on to speak, and in the serious risks these hunters ran.

SERMON 198A

ON 1 JANUARY, AGAINST THE PAGANS
FRAGMENTS

Date: 412¹

We are rightly called a royal and priestly race

1. The apostle Peter says to the Church, which is the body of Christ, *You are a holy people, a royal priesthood* (1 Pt 2:9). In those times, you see, only one high priest was anointed; now all Christians are anointed.² The king used to be anointed, the high priest used to be anointed, the rest were not anointed. The Lord played both roles, both of king and of priest, and not just figuratively, but in very truth. That is why the apostle says about the Lord, *whom he had of the seed of David, according to the flesh* (Rom 1:3). So there you have the royal line. And so Christ is said to have been of the seed of David because of Mary, since she was of the seed of David.³

But where does Mary's line lead back to?⁴ It is written in the gospel that the priest Zachary had a wife, Elizabeth, *from among the daughters of Aaron* (Lk 1:5); thus from the priestly line, because the whole tribe of Levi was such. But in the gospel Mary is told by the angel, *Your cousin Elizabeth* (Lk 1:36). So if Elizabeth, from among Aaron's daughters, was Mary's cousin, it cannot be doubted that Mary was of the priestly as well as of the royal blood.

As a result, there is in the Lord, as regards the man he assumed, each role or title, the royal and the priestly. So that is the reason why both in those times were anointed as a symbol, the king and the priest; and this has been fulfilled in that head of ours, whose body it is clear that we, the Church, are. That is why we are rightly called a royal and priestly race.⁵

Christ entered, and there he still is

2. In those old sacraments and symbols that one Lord of ours, Jesus Christ, was prefigured. The high priest alone used to enter the holy of holies, while all the people stood outside. Are you nowadays outside, and not inside, while the bishops stand at the altar? In those days the high priest alone used to enter the holy of holies once a year. The year represented the whole of time. So just once

in the whole course of time our one and only high priest entered the true, not the figurative, holy of holies, beyond the veils of heaven; our Lord Jesus Christ rising from the dead, offering himself for us.⁶

He entered, and there he still is. But the people still stand outside with us; we haven't yet risen to go to meet Christ,⁷ and to remain inside with him for ever, when he is going to say to the good servant, *Enter into the joy of your Lord* (Mt 25:21). So what was symbolized in those days by the one high priest alone entering the holy of holies and the people standing outside, has now been fulfilled through our Lord Jesus Christ alone entering the secret places of the heavens above, and the people still groaning and sighing outside, saved in hope, awaiting the redemption of their bodies, which is going to be achieved in the resurrection of the dead.⁸

The high priest offers up our prayers

3. It is the high priest himself, who offered himself as a holocaust for us, that offers up our prayers. He is the one who leads through to the end, intervening, not to block us off but to direct us; not to separate but to reconcile us, not to hinder us, but to break up all hindrance. He is the one and only pontiff, the one and only high priest, who was prefigured in the priests of old. That is why they used to look for a priest without bodily blemish, because he alone ever lived without the blemish of sin, even in his mortal flesh. For what was prefigured in their bodies pointed to what would be the reality of his life.

NOTES

1. These three fragments about the priesthood of Christ offer no internal evidence whatever for their being preached either on 1 January or against the pagans. On what the editor, Quinot, based the connection I do not know, nor on how he calculated the date. Personally, the fragments strike me as being quite un-Augustinian in style and tone, heavy and unimaginative; so I seriously question their authenticity. I would attribute them to a much later disciple, possibly of the sixth century; perhaps our old friend Caesarius of Arles.

2. In the sacrament of confirmation, which in those days always accompanied baptism.

3. See Lk 1:32. But Luke only says, in verse 27, that Joseph was of the house of David. Matthew also states Joseph's descent from David, not Mary's. So there is more justification from the New Testament for linking Mary, through Elizabeth her cousin, with the house of Aaron, as the preacher goes on to do, than with the house of David.

4. *Sed quo genus in Maria?*; a very difficult phrase to construe; literally, "but whither race (line) in Mary?"

5. Actually, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood," 1 Pt 2:9.

6. See Heb 9:24-28.

7. See 1 Thes 4:17.

8. See Rom 8:23-24.

SERMON 199

ON THE LORD'S EPIPHANY

Date: uncertain¹

Christ the cornerstone

1. Recently we celebrated the day on which the Lord was born of the Jews; today we are celebrating the one on which he was worshiped by the Gentiles; because *salvation is from the Jews* (Jn 4:22); but this *salvation reaches to the ends of the earth* (Is 49:6). On that day the shepherds worshiped him, on this one the Magi. To those the message was brought by angels, to these by a star. Both learned about him from heaven, when they saw the king of heaven on earth, so that there might be *glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will* (Lk 2:14).

For he is our peace, who made both into one (Eph 2:14). Already from this moment, by the way he was born and proclaimed, the infant is shown to be that cornerstone;² already from the first moments of his birth he appeared as such. He began at once to tie together in himself two walls coming from different directions, bringing the shepherds from Judea, the Magi from the East; *so that he might establish the two in himself as one new man, making peace; peace for those who were far off, and peace for those who were near* (Eph 2:15.17). Thus it is that those hurrying up from nearby on the very day, and these arriving today from far away, marked two days to be celebrated by posterity, and yet both saw the one light of the world.³

The Jews did not understand the time of Christ's coming

2. But today we must speak about these ones who were led to Christ by faith from far distant lands. They came, you see, and they asked for him, saying, *Where is the one who has been born as king of the Jews? For we saw his star in the East, and we have come to worship him* (Mt 2:2). They make an announcement and ask a question, they believe and they seek; representing, as it were, those who walk by faith and long for sight.⁴ Hadn't other kings of the Jews already been born so many times in Judea? How is it that this one is recognized by foreigners in the sky, sought by them on the earth; shines out on high, lies

low in lowliness? In the East the Magi see a star, and in Judea they perceive the new-born king. Who is this king, so small, so great; not yet talking on earth, already promulgating edicts in the heavens?

He had given the Magi such a brilliant sign in the sky, and revealed to their minds that he was born in Judea; and yet for our sakes, because he wanted to become known to us from his holy scriptures, he wished them too to believe his prophets about him. In their search, you see, for the city in which the one had been born whom they longed to see and worship, they were under the necessity of interrogating the leading Jews; so that these would have to answer them from holy scripture, which they had at their fingertips but not in their hearts; unbelievers answering believers about the grace of faith, liars in themselves, truthful against themselves. What, after all, would it have cost them to become their companions in their quest for the Christ, when they heard from them that they had seen his star and had come eagerly to do him homage; to guide them to Bethlehem of Judah, which they had pointed out from the divine books, together with them to see, together to understand, together to do homage?

Now, however, having pointed out to others the fountain of life,⁵ they themselves died of thirst. They became for the Magi just so many milestones; they pointed the way to travellers walking along the road, but themselves remained inert and unmoving. The Magi were seeking in order to find; Herod was seeking in order to destroy; the Jews read about the city of his birth, but did not understand the time of his coming. Between the loyal love of the Magi and the cruel fear of Herod, they just faded away. They pointed to Bethlehem, but did not then seek Christ who was born there. When they did see him later, they would deny him; not then when he was a speechless infant, but later when he spoke to them, they would slay him. Blessed rather was the ignorance of the infants whom Herod persecuted in his panic, than the learning of these men whom he consulted in his anxiety. They were able to suffer for Christ, though not yet able to confess him; these others failed to follow the truth of his teaching, though they were able to know the city of his birth.

The Magi from among the Gentiles, the shepherds from among the Jews

3. That star, certainly, led the Magi to the very place where God the Word was to be found as an infant. Here now the sacrilegious nonsense and a kind of unlearned learning, if I may so put it, should blush for shame, which assumes that Christ was born under the control of the stars, just because it's written in the gospel that when he was born, the Magi saw his star in the East.⁶ This wouldn't be true, even if people were generally born under that sort of control;⁷ because they are not born, like the Son of God, according to their own will, but according to the condition of their mortal nature. But now, in fact, so abhorrent to the truth is the idea of Christ having been born under a star-governed fate, that nobody who has the right faith in Christ will believe that any human being is so born.

But fine; let empty-headed men speak their foolish opinions about the beget-

tings of human beings, let them deny the free will by which they sin, let them fabricate the necessity by which they come to the defense of sins; let them strive to fix on the sky the blame for the abandoned morals they are detested for by people on earth, and stick to their lie that their depravity drips from the stars; then, however, let each one of them consider how he thinks, not his life but his household should be governed by any sort of authority. Because if he really has such ideas, he cannot allow himself to beat his slaves misbehaving in his house, without first blaspheming his gods shining so brightly in the sky.

Even so, they cannot suppose that Christ was born under the control of the stars, just because the Magi saw a star in the East when he was born, not even according to their own utterly groundless calculations and their books that certainly tell no fortunes but plainly tell falsehoods.⁸ What shows, you see, that Christ was not born under its control, but rather appeared as its controller, is the fact that it did not keep to the starry tracks in the heavens, but pointed out to the men who were looking for Christ the track to the very place where he had been born. So it wasn't the star that caused Christ wonderfully to live, but Christ that caused the star wonderfully to appear; nor was it the star that controlled Christ's miracles, but Christ that revealed the star as one of his miracles.⁹ He, you see, when born of his mother, presented the earth with a new star from the sky, just as when born of the Father he fashioned the earth and the sky.

When he was born a new light was revealed in the star, just as when he died the old light was veiled in the sun.¹⁰ When he was born the upper worlds were honored with a new brilliance, just as when he died the nether worlds trembled with a new fear, when he rose again the disciples were on fire with a new love, when he ascended the heavens were opened to a new form of homage.¹¹ So let us celebrate as devoutly and solemnly as we can this day too, on which the Magi from among the Gentiles recognized and worshiped the Christ, just as we celebrated that other day on which the shepherds from among the Jews saw the Christ when he was born. The Lord our God himself, after all, chose the apostles from Jewry as the shepherds, by whose efforts he would gather together to be saved even the sinful sheep from among the Gentiles.¹²

NOTES

1. The feast of the Epiphany started in the Eastern Churches, as a celebration of the baptism of Christ quite as much as of the visit of the Magi. It was introduced into the African Church and other Latin-speaking Churches some time in the fourth century; and there the emphasis was almost exclusively on the Magi, as this and the following sermons on the Epiphany clearly show. From the somewhat elaborate style of this sermon, I would be inclined to date it early, before 400, even perhaps before 396 and Augustine's ordination as bishop.

2. See Ps 118:22, and quotations of the verse in Mk 12:10; also in Acts 4:11; 1 Pt 2:7.

3. See Jn 8:12. The theme of light is peculiarly appropriate to the Epiphany; the word means "bringing to light."

4. See 2 Cor 5:7.

5. See Ps 36:9.

6. See Mt 2:2.

7. As the astrologers, of course, asserted, and still do. Augustine and the whole Catholic tradition vehemently deny this assertion of these “unlearned learned” men, whom he called *mathematici*— theirs being, doubtless, one of the busiest fields of applied mathematics. The theological objection was to the basic astrological notion that our lives are governed by a fate, or necessity, written in the stars, which leaves no room for freedom of will and personal responsibility for our actions; as Augustine goes on to say.

8. *Non sane fatidicos sed plane falsidicos libros*; their certainly not fate-telling but manifestly false-telling books; the Nostradamuses of those times.

9. So Augustine would have had no patience with those people who identify the star the Magi saw with Halley’s comet, or any other natural phenomenon of astronomy. For him it was a special divine creation; and that was fairly certainly the mind of the storyteller too.

10. See Mk 15:33.

11. This *novum obsequium*, new form of homage or obedience, would be that offered by angels to a human being: Christ in his divine glory, but still, and for ever, also a man.

12. See Jn 10:16.

SERMON 200

ON THE LORD'S EPIPHANY

Date: 393-405¹

Epiphany means manifestation

1. The Magi came from the East to worship the child born of the virgin. That's the day we are celebrating today, paying it the formal honor and the sermon that is its due. This day first dawned on them, but has returned with the turning year as a feast to us. They were the firstfruits of the Gentiles, we are the people of the Gentiles. To us this good news was brought by the mouth of the apostles, to them by the star as by the mouth of the heavens; and to us these same apostles, like the heavens, have *declared the glory of God* (Ps 19:1). After all, why should we not acknowledge that they are heavens, seeing that they have become the thrones of God? As it is written, *The soul of the just is the throne of wisdom.*² It was from these heavens, you see, that the constructor and inhabitant of the heavens thundered; thunder at which the earth trembled, and lo and behold it now believes.

A marvelous sacrament and symbol!³ There he was, lying in the manger, and leading the Magi from the east. There he was, tucked away in a stable, recognized in the sky, so that after being recognized in the sky he might be manifested in the stable, and this day might properly be called Epiphany, which in English could be called manifestation. It calls our attention simultaneously to his loftiness and his lowliness, since the one who was being revealed by starry signs in the open sky was also being looked for and found in a cramped and crowded lodging house; feeble in his infant limbs, folded round with an infant's wrappings, he was being worshiped by the wise men, feared by the wicked.

*The nobility of the one being born
lay in the virginity of the one giving birth*

2. King Herod, you see, was afraid, when the Magi told him about the child they were still looking for, having learned of his birth from the evidence of the heavens. How dread must be his judgment seat, when his infant's cradle could so terrify the pride of kings! How much more prudently do kings nowadays,⁴

not seek like Herod to kill, but rather delight like the Magi to worship him; now especially that the very death, which his enemy longed then to inflict, he has already undergone from his enemies, for his enemies, and has slain it in his own body by being slain! Let kings now have a pious and filial fear of him, seated at the right hand of his Father, whom that impious king feared while he was still nuzzling the breasts of his mother. Let them heed what is written, *And now, O kings, understand; be instructed, you that judge the earth; serve the Lord with fear, and tremble as you exult in his presence* (Ps 2:10-11).

That king, after all, who exacts vengeance from impious kings, and gives guidance to pious ones, was not born in the same way as kings are born in the world, because it was the one whose kingdom is not of this world that was then born.⁵ The nobility of the one being born lay in the virginity of the one giving birth; and the nobility of the one giving birth lay in the divinity of the one being born. Finally, while so many kings of the Jews had already been born and passed away, no wise men had ever come looking for any of them to worship him; because they had never learned about any of them from an eloquent sign in the sky.

The divine books and prophecy

3. There is a point, however, that must not be passed over: this enlightenment of the Magi stands out as a great indictment of the blindness of the Jews. They were seeking in the land of the Jews one whom the Jews would not acknowledge in their own land. They found him, a speechless infant, among those who denied him when he was teaching in their midst. These foreigners from a long way away worshiped Christ not yet uttering any words, in the very lands where his fellow citizens crucified him as a young man performing miracles. The Magi recognized God in his tiny limbs; the Jews didn't even spare him as man in his great deeds; as though it were more telling to see a new star shining at his birth, than to see the sun mourning at his death.

But now, the same star which led the Magi to the place where the infant God was to be found with his virgin mother, could of course have led them right to the very city; but it withdrew, and didn't appear at all to them again, until the Jews themselves had been questioned about the city where the Christ was to be born. This was to oblige them to name it themselves, on the evidence of divine scriptures, and to say themselves, *In Bethlehem of Judah. For so it is written: And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah; for from you shall come forth the leader who will rule my people Israel* (Mt 2:5-6; Mi 5:1). What else can divine providence have meant by this, but that among the Jews would remain only⁶ the divine scriptures by which the nations would be instructed, they themselves blinded; which they would carry about with them, not as an assistance to their own salvation but as evidence of ours? Because today it may happen, that when we bring forward prophecies about Christ, uttered long before and now made clear by the events that have fulfilled them, the pagans whom we wish to gain will say that they weren't foretold so

long ago, but have been composed by us after the event, so that what has occurred may be thought to have been prophesied. Then we can cite the volumes owned by the Jews, to clear the doubts of the pagans, who were already prefigured in those Magi, whom the Jews instructed from the divine books about the city in which Christ was born, without themselves either seeking or acknowledging him.

*Christ has been manifested to Jews
and Gentiles as the cornerstone*

4. So now, dearly beloved, children and heirs of grace, *consider your calling* (1 Cor 1:26), and with a staunchly persevering love cling to Christ, who has been manifested to Jews and Gentiles as the cornerstone.⁷ He was manifested, you see, in the very cradle of his infancy to those who were near and to those who were far off;⁸ to the Jews in the shepherds who were near, to the Gentiles in the Magi who were far off. The shepherds are supposed to have visited him on the day he was born, the Magi to have reached him today.

So he was manifested—but not to the shepherds as learned, nor to the Magi as just. Ignorance, after all prevails in the rustic life of shepherds, and impiety in the sacrilegious practices of magicians.⁹ That cornerstone attached both to himself, seeing that he came to *choose the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise* (1 Cor 1:27); and *not to call the just, but sinners* (Mt 9:13); so that none of the great might grow proud, nor the lowest of the low despair.

Now the scribes and Pharisees are in their own eyes exceedingly learned and exceedingly just; they could indicate the city of his birth by quoting the prophetic oracle, and they could still reject him as builders.¹⁰ But in fact he has become the chief cornerstone, and has fulfilled by his passion what he indicated by his birth;¹¹ so let us remain bonded into him with the other wall that contains the remnants of Israel which have been saved by the election of grace.¹² These, you see, were prefigured by those shepherds as ready to be joined up to the cornerstone from nearby, so that we too, whose calling from afar off was signified by the coming of the Magi, might remain *no longer foreigners and sojourners, but citizens of the saints and members of God's household, built up together on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone* (Eph 2:19-21). He it is that has *made both into one* (Eph 2:14), so that in the one we may love unity, and entertain a tireless charity for gathering in the other branches that were also grafted in from the wild olive, but have been broken off through pride and become heretics;¹³ because God is indeed powerful enough to graft them in again.¹⁴

NOTES

1. Preached in Hippo Regius, like most of these seasonal sermons. The style again suggests the early date, on which I am happy to be able to agree with Kunzelmann and Fischer.
2. Quite where it is written, it is not easy to say; it could be a paraphrase of two texts like Prv 8:12 & 20.
3. *Magnum sacramentum!*—a frequent exclamation on Augustine's lips; sacrament in the extended sense he gives the word, of a biblical reality, thing or event, symbolically signifying the great mysteries of salvation.
4. The joint emperors Arcadius, at Constantinople in the East, and Honorius, at Ravenna in the West.
5. See Jn 18:36.
6. The force of the "only," I think, is that besides the scriptures, the Jews (as long as they failed to believe in Christ) would be left with nothing of their inheritance as God's chosen people.
7. See Eph 2:20.
8. See Eph 2:17.
9. Which is what the Magi were, of course, much more obviously in Latin than in English. *Magus* is a Greek word, of Babylonian or Persian origin, meaning magician and/or astrologer.
10. See Ps 118:2, quoted in Mk 12:10.
11. Namely the joining of the two together, Jews and Gentiles.
12. See Rom 11:5.
13. He means the Donatists.
14. See Rom 11:23. Paul, of course, is talking about the Jews being grafted in again, as Augustine knew perfectly well. But I doubt if he was thinking about the Jews here; what Paul felt for his fellow Jews who rejected Christ, Augustine felt for his fellow Africans who rejected the Catholic Church.

SERMON 201

ON THE LORD'S EPIPHANY

Date: 411-415¹

Christ's manifestation to the Gentiles

1. A very few days ago we celebrated the Lord's birthday; while today we are celebrating with no less appropriate solemnity his manifestation, the beginning that is of his manifestation to the Gentiles. On the previous day Jewish shepherds saw him; today Magi coming from the East paid him homage. He was born, that is to say, as that cornerstone, the peace or pact joining two walls which come from the circumcision and the uncircumcision (from no small diversity, that is), so that they may be bonded together in him who has become our peace, and has made the two into one.² This was pre-enacted in the shepherds from the Jews and the Magi from the Gentiles. Something began there that would bear fruit and grow throughout the world.

And so let us hold both days, of the Lord's birth and his manifestation, in equal esteem as splendid occasions for spiritual rejoicing. The Jewish shepherds were led to him by an angel bringing them the news, the Gentile Magi by a star pointing the way. This star confounded the futile calculations and divinations of the astrologers, when it pointed out to star-worshippers the creator of heaven and earth as the proper object of worship. When he was born, you see, he brought to light a new star, just as when he was slain he obscured the sun.³ That light inaugurated the faith of the Gentiles; that darkness indicted the faithlessness of the Jews.⁴

What was that star, which had never appeared before among the constellations, and did not remain to be pointed to afterward? What was it, but a magnificent tongue of heaven to *declare the glory of God* (Ps 19:1), to cry aloud with unheard-of brilliance the unheard-of child-bearing of the virgin, to be succeeded after its disappearance by the gospel in the whole world? What, finally, did the Magi say when they came? *Where is he that is born the king of the Jews?* Now what is this? Hadn't there been a great many kings of the Jews born before? Why were they so uncommonly eager to find and pay homage to the king of a foreign nation? *For we saw, they said, his star in the East, and we have come to worship him* (Mt 2:2). Would they have inquired about this with

such devotion, desired it with such loyal and deep feeling, if they hadn't recognized as the king of the Jews the one who is also the king of the ages?

The Magi and Pilate

2. Thus it is that Pilate too was certainly breathed upon by some light air of truth, when during Christ's passion he wrote the title *The king of the Jews*, which the incorrigible Jews attempted to correct.⁵ He answered them, *What I have written, I have written* (Jn 19:19.22), because it had been foretold in the psalm, *Do not corrupt the inscription of the title*.⁶ And so let us pay the closest attention to this great and wonderful sacrament, or significant fact. The Magi were from the Gentiles, Pilate too was a Gentile. They saw a star in the sky, he wrote a title on the tree; both, however, were looking for, or acknowledging the king, not of the Gentiles, but of the Jews. Thus already there was a prefiguring of what the Lord himself spoke about later: *Many will come from the East and the West, and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom will go into outer darkness* (Mt 8:11-12). The Magi, you see, had come from the East, Pilate from the West. So they bore witness to the king of the Jews rising, that is to his being born; he to the king of the Jews setting, that is to his dying; so that they might take their seats in the kingdom of heaven⁷ with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, from whom the Jews derived their descent. They weren't descended from them, of course, in the flesh, but grafted into them by faith. Thus the wild olive the apostle talks about, that was to be grafted into the olive, was already being prefigured.

That's why it was the king of the Jews, not of the Gentiles, who was either being looked for or being acknowledged by these same Gentiles; because the wild olive was going to come to the olive tree, not the olive tree to the wild olive. And yet the branches that were due to be broken off, that is the unbelieving Jews, both answered the Magi's inquiry where the Christ would be born, *In Bethlehem of Judah* (Mt 2:5); and also with insistent savagery overbore Pilate when he remonstrated with them for wanting to crucify their king. And so the Magi worshiped him, when the Jews showed them the place where the Christ was born; because it's in the scriptures which the Jews had received that we get to know Christ. Pilate from among the Gentiles washed his hands when the Jews were demanding the death of the Christ; because it is with the blood of Christ, which the Jews shed, that we have washed away our sins. But there's another time and place for discussing Pilate's testimony by the title, in which he wrote that Christ is the king of the Jews, the time of the passion.

*The Jews carry around the divine testimonies,
not for their own, but for the Gentiles' salvation and acceptance*

3. But now, as regards the manifestation of Christ when he was born, let us say a few things that remain to be considered about the day of his manifestation, which is given the Greek name of Epiphany; the day on which he began to be

manifested to the Gentiles, when the Magi paid him homage. You see, it's a source of unfailing delight to reflect on how, when the Magi inquired where the Christ was to be born, the Jews replied *In Bethlehem of Judah* (Mt 2:5), and yet didn't go to him themselves; but when they had withdrawn, the same star led the Magi right through to the place where the child was. This shows that it was perfectly well able to point out the city too, but that it had held back a little so that the Jews might be questioned. Now the reason the Jews were questioned, was to show that they carry around the divine testimonies, not for their own, but for the Gentiles' salvation and acceptance. That, you see, is also why that nation has been driven from its own kingdom and dispersed through other countries, to compel them everywhere to be witnesses to the very faith whose enemies they are. The fact is, they have lost the temple, the sacrifices, the priesthood, and the very kingdom, and only preserve their name and race in a few of the old sacraments.⁸ Otherwise, being mixed up with the nations they might disappear without trace, and lose their value as evidence of the truth. It's like Cain receiving a sign to stop anyone killing him, though he had himself killed his righteous brother out of jealousy and pride.⁹

This can certainly and not unsuitably be understood to be the lesson of the fifty-eighth psalm, where Christ is speaking in the person of his body, and says, *My God has demonstrated to me in my enemies: Do not slay them, lest they should ever forget your law* (Ps 59:11). Among them, that is, enemies of the Christian faith, a demonstration is given the Gentiles of how Christ was prophesied. Otherwise, when they saw the prophecies so manifestly being fulfilled, they might suppose that these same scriptures had been fabricated by Christians, when things foretold about Christ are recited that they can observe have been fulfilled. So the sacred volumes are produced by the Jews, and in this way God "demonstrates to us in our enemies"; whom he didn't slay, that is totally eliminate from all countries, for this reason; that they should not forget his law. The reason they remember this by reading it, and observing some of its contents, though in a literal and material manner,¹⁰ is to take judgment on themselves, present testimony to us.

NOTES

1. See note 8 below, for reasons to date it roughly between 411 and 416. A somewhat disagreeable sermon.
2. See Eph 2:11-22.
3. See Lk 23:45.
4. It is regrettable, but not surprising, that having briefly named the shepherds as representatives of Jewish faith in Christ, Augustine forgets about them, and from now on concentrates on Jewish failure to believe in Christ.
5. An attempt to produce Augustine's word-play: *quem Judaei conati sunt mendosi emendare*; more literally, "which the faulty Jews attempted to unfault."
6. The psalm title of Psalm 57, in the Old Latin version.

7. If Augustine was suggesting that Pilate took his seat there along with the Magi, it was a very bold suggestion. Other Fathers may have made it too; which would account, possibly, for Pilate being honored as a saint, I believe, in the Ethiopian Church.

8. He means, above all, circumcision and the observance of the sabbath and the dietary laws. His attitude to the Jews in this sermon leaves rather a bad taste in the mouth; finding unending delight in contemplating their discomfiture, without giving a thought to texts he is constantly quoting himself in this context: Eph 2:2-22, and above all Rom 11. His attitude toward the Jews is distinctly less sour (though of course in no way ecumenically friendly) in Sermons 196 and 196A, which we saw reason to date as late as 420 to 425. So I am inclined to date this sermon considerably earlier. But as its style and syntax are somewhat rough and ready, I would not put it among the earliest; my guess would be between 411 and 415.

9. See Gn 4:1-16.

10. As distinct from the "spiritual" or "figurative" manner in which Christians observe them.

SERMON 202

ON THE LORD'S EPIPHANY

Date: 405-411¹

Magi, the firstfruits of the Gentiles

1. What cause for celebration does today's feast offer us, known as it is throughout the world, or what does its yearly recurrence commemorate? The season warns us that we must speak about this in the yearly sermon. Now "Epiphany," a Greek word, can be called "manifestation" in English. On this day, you see, the Magi are held to have worshiped the Lord, after being alerted, that is to say, by the appearance of a star, and led by its going ahead of them. On the day he was born they saw the star in the East; and they realized whose birth it indicated. And so from that day till this day they traveled to the meeting. They scared king Herod with their news, and from the answers the Jews gave them out of the prophetic scriptures, they found out about the city of Bethlehem, where the Lord had been born. Then with the same star leading them, they came to the Lord himself, worshiped him when he was pointed out to them, offered gold, frankincense, and myrrh, went home by another route.²

The Lord, of course, was also manifested on the very day of his birth to the shepherds, alerted by an angel. On the same day he was also announced to those men far away in the East; but it was on this day that he received their homage. So the universal Church of the Gentiles has enthusiastically undertaken to celebrate this day; because what, in fact, were those Magi but the firstfruits of the Gentiles? The shepherds were Israelites, the Magi Gentiles; the first were near, the latter far off; yet both converged on the cornerstone.³ *Coming, as the apostle says, he preached peace to us who were far off and peace to those who were near. For he himself is our peace, who made both into one, and established the two in himself as one new man, making peace, and reconciled both in one body to God, killing their enmities in himself* (Eph 2:17.14-16.20).

*He couldn't yet speak with his tongue on earth,
so he spoke from heaven with a star*

2. It's what you would expect, that the Donatist heretics have never been willing to celebrate this day with us;⁴ because they have no love for unity, and

are not in communion with the Eastern Church, where that star appeared. Let us, though, celebrate in the unity of the nations the manifestation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by which he picked the firstfruits of the nations.

It was then, you see, that the boy, before he knew how to say “father” or “mother,” as had been prophesied about him, received the strength of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria.⁵ That is, before he could utter human words through human lips, he received the strength of Damascus—the thing, that is to say, which Damascus presumptuously relied on. That city, you see, when it was flourishing in worldly terms, had presumptuously relied on riches. But among riches the palm is given to gold, which the Magi offered to Christ as suppliants. As for the spoils of Samaria, that is what the people were who inhabited the place. That’s because Samaria stands for idolatry. You see, that’s where the people of Israel turned away from the Lord, and turned to the worship of idols.⁶ Now Christ was going to outmaneuver and vanquish the devil’s empire throughout the whole world with a spiritual sword; and so as a child he extracted these first spoils from the dominion of idolatry, turning the Magi away from that pestilential superstition,⁷ and converting them to the worship of himself. He couldn’t yet speak with his tongue on earth, so he spoke from heaven with a star; and thus he demonstrated who he was, and where and for whose sake he had come, not with the voice of flesh, but by the power of the Word which had become flesh.⁸

This Word, you see, which in the beginning was God with God, and had already become flesh to dwell among us,⁹ had both come to us and yet was still remaining with the Father; while not deserting the angels up above, he was gathering humanity to himself, with the aid of angels, down below. He was both shining as Word with the unchangeable light of truth on the inhabitants of heaven, and lying in a manger because the lodging-house was crowded out. A star was pointed out by him in the sky,¹⁰ and in turn pointed him out to be worshiped on earth.

And yet this infant, so powerful, so great, as a tiny child fled to Egypt from the hostility of Herod in the arms of his parents. In this way, speaking to his members not yet by word of mouth but by deeds, he silently said, *If they persecute you in one city, flee to another* (Mt 10:23). He was wearing, after all, the mortal flesh in which he was representing us, in which in due course he was going to die for us. That is why he received from those Magi not only gold as a sign of honor, and frankincense as a sign of worship, but also myrrh as a sign of his future burial. In the tiny children whom Herod slew he also showed what sort of people were going to die for his name; how innocent they would be, and how humble. Why, he even indicated the number of precepts on which the whole law depends, and the prophets,¹¹ in their being up to two years old.¹²

*Don't the Jews show the Gentiles the Christ
whom they decline to worship with the Gentiles:*

3. But now then, can there be anybody who is not curious to know what the meaning can be of the fact that the Jews answered from scripture the inquiry of

the Magi about where the Christ would be born, and yet did not go with them to worship him themselves? Don't we see the same thing even now, when by the very rites and sacraments¹³ to which they are subjected for their hardness of heart, nothing else is indicated but the very Christ in whom they refuse to believe? Even when they kill the sheep and eat the passover, aren't they demonstrating to the Gentiles the very Christ whom they themselves don't worship along with them?

And isn't it the same sort of thing, when people have their doubts about the prophetic testimonies in which Christ was foretold, and wonder if they haven't perhaps been compiled by Christians after the event, not before; and we appeal to the codices in the possession of the Jews, to set the minds of doubters at rest? Don't the Jews on such occasions too show the Gentiles the Christ whom they decline to worship with the Gentiles?

*Spread the good news about Christ by pursuing a new way,
not returning by the way we came*

4. So, dearly beloved, we are the Gentiles of whom those Magi were the firstfruits; we are the inheritance of Christ to the ends of the earth,¹⁴ for whose sake blindness in part happened in Israel, that the fullness of the nations might come in.¹⁵ Having come to know, then, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who for our consolation was laid in a cramped and crowded lodging house, and now for our exaltation is seated in heaven; let us proclaim him in this land, in this region of our flesh, by not going back the way we came, nor seeking to follow in the footsteps of our former manner of life. That, after all, is the meaning of those Magi not going back the way they came.¹⁶ Change of way means change of life.

To us too *the heavens have declared the glory of God* (Ps 19:1); we too have been led to worship Christ by the truth blazing from the gospel, as by a star from the sky. We too have received with ears of faith a prophecy that was famous in the Jewish nation, like a standing indictment of the Jews for not accompanying us. We too, by acknowledging and praising Christ, as both king and priest and the one who died for us, have as it were honored him with gold and frankincense and myrrh. It only remains for us to spread the good news about him, by pursuing a new way, not returning by the way we came.

NOTES

1. I find no reason to dispute this date, proposed by Kunzelmann and Fischer, except that my inclination would be to date it before Sermon 201. Perhaps I should revise my estimated date of that sermon.

2. See Mt 2:1-12.

3. See Eph 2:20.

4. From this fact we can reasonably infer that the feast of the Epiphany was introduced into Africa after the Donatist schism had begun; most probably, in fact, some time after the conversion of Constantine, when pilgrimages from the Latin West to Jerusalem and the holy places became very frequent, and the liturgical influence of the Church of Jerusalem on the Churches of the West correspondingly increased. But to all that the Donatists, with their rigorist conservatism, would have been quite impervious.

5. See Is 8:4. Here the child is not called Emmanuel, the name taken up in Matthew's infancy narrative, 1:23, from Is 7:14, but Maher-shalal-hash-baz—which Matthew, wisely no doubt, refrained from transposing into the New Testament key.

6. See the two books of Kings, *passim*; more particularly 1 Kgs 12:26-33; 16:23—18:46; 2 Kgs 17:7-41.

7. Star worship, together with astrology.

8. The star, as a heavenly phenomenon, represented the Word rather than the man Christ Jesus. He goes on, to some extent, to explain.

9. See Jn 1:1.14.

10. He showed it to the Magi in the first place.

11. See Mt 22:37-40.

12. See Mt 2:16.

13. See Sermon 201, note 8. To the sacraments of the old law mentioned there, must of course be added the celebration of the passover, which he goes on to mention here specifically.

14. See Ps 2:8.

15. See Rom 11:25.

16. See Mt 2:12.

SERMON 203

ON THE LORD'S EPIPHANY

Date: 410-412¹

The world-renowned festival

1. "Epiphany," a word in the Greek language, can be put into English as "manifestation." Today, therefore, the Redeemer of all the nations was manifested, and thus he made a feast day for all nations. And so after celebrating his birth only a very few days ago, we celebrate today his manifestation. So our Lord Jesus Christ, born thirteen days ago,² is held to have been worshiped today by the Magi. That it happened is declared by the truth of the gospel; the day it happened on is everywhere established by the authority of this world-renowned festival.³

It seemed only just, after all, and it is indeed right and just, that the nations should gratefully acknowledge the day when salvation came to their firstfruits, and should dedicate this day to Christ the Lord with a solemn service of thanksgiving, because those Magi were indeed the first Gentiles to know Christ the Lord; and since they had not been stirred by any words of his, they had followed the star which appeared to them, and which, as though it were the tongue of heaven, spoke visibly on behalf of the infant, speechless Word.

The firstfruits of the Jews to come to faith in Christ and to receive his revelation were to be found in those shepherds, who came from nearby to see him on the day he was born. Angels had brought them the news, to the Magi it was brought by a star; those were told, *Glory to God in the highest* (Lk 2:14), for these was fulfilled *The heavens have declared the glory of God* (Ps 19:1). Both, clearly, like the beginnings of two walls coming from different directions, of the circumcision and the uncircumcision, ran up to the cornerstone, so that he might be their peace, making the two into one.⁴

The humility of the Gentiles

2. The shepherds, though, because they had seen the Christ, *praised God* (Lk 2:20), while the Magi, when they saw the Christ, also worshiped him. To those grace came first, in these humility was more evident. Well, perhaps those

shepherds are not really to be blamed; they were quicker and keener to rejoice over their salvation; while these Magi carried a heavy load of many sins, and were more submissively seeking pardon.

(This is the humility which divine scripture commends to us more in those who came from the Gentiles than in the Jews.⁵ That centurion, you see, was from the Gentiles, who after welcoming the Lord into his heart of hearts said all the same that he was not worthy to have him enter his house, and didn't want him to visit his sick servant, but simply to command his cure. Thus he kept him present inwardly in his heart, while doing him the honor of not admitting him under his roof. Finally, the Lord said, *I have not found such great faith in Israel* (Lk 7:2-9). There was also that Canaanite woman from among the Gentiles, who on hearing from the Lord that she was a dog and unworthy to be given the children's bread, requested, as a dog, the scraps; and precisely because she did not deny what she had been, she earned the right not to be it anymore.⁶ She too, you see, heard from the Lord, *O woman, great is your faith* (Mt 15:21-28). Her humility made her faith great, because she had made herself small.

The Magi, firstfruits of the Gentiles

3. So the shepherds came from nearby to see, and the Magi came from far away to worship. This is the humility for which the wild olive deserved to be grafted in to the olive tree,⁷ and against nature to produce olives; because it deserved to change nature through grace. They come, you see, from the uttermost bounds of the earth, saying according to Jeremiah *Truly our fathers worshiped lies* (Jer 16:19). And they come, not just from one part of the world, but as the gospel according to Luke says, *from East and West, from North and South* (Lk 13:29), *to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven* (Mt 8:11).

In this way the whole world is summoned to faith from its four corners by the grace of the Trinity. According to this number, that is four multiplied by three, the twelve-man team of the apostles was consecrated, as it were prefiguring the salvation of all four corners of the earth in the grace of the Trinity. This number, you see, was also signified by that dish which was shown to Peter, full of all kinds of animals, representing all nations; because it was suspended from four lines and let down from heaven three times before being taken up again;⁸ to make twelve out of the number four. That, perhaps, is why twelve days were added after the Lord's birthday, before the Magi, as firstfruits of the Gentiles, came to see and worship Christ, and were found worthy to receive not only their own salvation but also that of all the nations.

So let us celebrate this day with the greatest devotion; and let the Lord Jesus, who was worshiped by those firstfruits of ours lying in a lodging house, be worshiped by us lodged in heaven. They venerated in him what was going to happen, while we venerate it after it has been accomplished. The firstfruits of the nations worshiped him as he panted for the breasts of his mother; the nations worship him as he is seated at the right hand of God the Father.

NOTES

1. The date is suggested by Kunzelmann and Fischer; possibly because what he says in the last sections about the Gentiles "deserving" grace by their humility would not have been likely on his lips after the Pelagian controversy had gone into full swing. It is pleasant to note that Augustine gets through the sermon with only the mildest of digs at the Jews. This suggests to me that it was later than Sermon 201. But of course one has to admit that the presupposition of all such reasoning about dates, namely that the development of both his ideas and his attitudes was in a consistent direction throughout his ministry, lacks cast-iron certainty, and is perhaps psychologically unrealistic.

2. According to the Roman way of counting both ends.

3. Apparently in the ancient Egyptian calendar (which was wildly inaccurate from the astronomical point of view, being governed by the position of the Dog star, Sirius, in the signs of the Zodiac), 6 January was treated as the winter solstice, and celebrated accordingly as a pagan festival. So about the same time as 25 December was introduced in Rome and the West as the feast of Christ's birth, 6 January was instituted to celebrate the same event in the Church of Alexandria. Then it soon came to be associated with the baptism of Christ and the miracle at Cana (there was a folk belief in Alexandria that the waters of the Nile turned into wine on that night), and also with the visit of the Magi. With 25 December firmly established in the West as Christmas day, 6 January came to be allotted to the visit of the Magi, and it was assumed that their journey from the East took twelve days. This was made possible, according to Thomas Aquinas quoting various patristic sources, both by special divine assistance and *dromedariorum velocitate*, by the velocity of the dromedaries (*Summa Theologiae*, IIIa, 36, 6 ad 3).

4. See Eph 2:11-22.

5. And which, I think one may say with justice, has been rather conspicuously absent from the Christian as well as the post-Christian culture of Europe as it has expanded round the globe.

6. As he says in another sermon on the episode (Sermon 77, sections 10 and 11), she is, thanks to her reply, transformed in the Lord's estimation and by his words from being a dog into being a woman.

7. See Rom 11:17.

8. See Acts 10:11.16.

SERMON 204

ON THE LORD'S EPIPHANY

Date: uncertain¹

Christmas and Epiphany belong to the manifestation of Christ

1. A few days ago we celebrated the Lord's birthday; today we are celebrating the Epiphany, which is a Greek word meaning "manifestation," and refers to what the apostle said: *Without doubt, great is the mystery of piety, which was manifested in the flesh* (1 Tm 3:16). So both days really belong to the manifestation of Christ. On that day he was born as a human being from a human mother, though he was God without beginning with the Father. But he was manifested in flesh to flesh, because flesh was unable to see him as he was in spirit. And on that day indeed, which is called his birthday, the shepherds from among the Jews saw him; while today, which is properly called Epiphany, that is "manifestation," the Magi worshiped him from among the Gentiles. News of him was brought to the former by angels, to the latter by a star. The angels inhabit the heavens, and the stars adorn them; to both shepherds and Magi, therefore, *the heavens declared the glory of God* (Ps 19:1).

A great sacrament and mystery with a twin festivity

2. For both, you see, he was born as the cornerstone, so that, as the apostle says, *he might establish the two in himself into one new man, making peace, and might exchange² both in one body to God through the cross* (Eph 2:15-16). What, after all, is a corner, but the conjunction of two walls which come from different points, and there in a certain fashion achieve a kiss of peace? They had, of course, been hostile to each other, the circumcision and the uncircumcision, that is Jews and Gentiles, because of two differences and contradictions between them;³ the worship on that side of the one true God, on this of many false ones.

And so since those were nearby, while these were far off, he drew both to himself, and *exchanged both in one body to God*, as the same apostle goes on to add, *through the cross slaying the hostilities in himself. And coming he preached the good news of peace to you*, he says, *who were far off, and peace to those who were nearby; because through him we both have access in one*

spirit to the Father (Eph 2:16-18). Just see if he hasn't indicated both the two walls coming from two different and hostile points, and the Lord Jesus as the cornerstone, to which they each approached from different points, and in which they each reached agreement, that is both those from the Jews who believed in him and those from the Gentiles. It's as if they were told, "Both you from nearby and you from far off, *Approach him and be enlightened, and your faces will not be put to shame* (Ps 34:5). *For it is written, Behold I am placing in Zion a cornerstone, chosen, precious; and whoever believes in it will not be confounded* (1 Pt 2:6).⁴

Those who listened and obeyed came, both sorts, from this side and that, kept peace with each other, ended their hostilities; the firstfruits of each were the shepherds and the Magi. In them *the ox began to recognize its owner, and the donkey its master's manger* (Is 1:3). From the Jews an animal with horns, where the horns of the cross were being prepared for Christ; from the Gentiles an animal with ears, about which it had been foretold, *A people whom I did not know has served me; with the hearing of the ear it has obeyed me* (Ps 18:43-44). There, I mean to say, was the ox's owner and the donkey's master lying in a manger, and offering both of them a common fodder or nourishment.⁵

And so because peace had come to those who were far off and peace to those who were nearby, the shepherds, being found as Israelites nearby, came to Christ the day he was born, saw him and rejoiced; while the Magi, being found as Gentiles as it were a long way off, arrived today after the lapse of that number of days from the one he was born on; they found him, worshiped him. So it was absolutely right for us, that is the Church that is gathered from among the Gentiles, to join the celebration of this day, on which Christ was manifested to the firstfruits of the Gentiles, to the celebration of that day, on which Christ was born of the Jews, and right for us to preserve the memory of such a great sacrament and mystery with a twin festivity.

*Christ the cornerstone, once upon a time laid in a manger,
later lifted up to the summit of heaven*

3. When we think of these two walls, one from the Jews, the other from the Gentiles, preserving *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph 4:3) by adhering to the cornerstone, we mustn't let our minds be put off by the great number of reprobate Jews, among whom were the builders;⁶ those, that is, who *wished to be teachers of the law*, but as the apostle says about them, *do not understand either what they are saying or what they are making their assertions about* (1 Tm 1:7). It was as a result of this mental blindness, after all, that they rejected the stone which was put at the head of the corner. But it wouldn't be put at the head of the corner, unless it offered to the two peoples coming from different points a peaceful join, a coupling of grace.

So in the Israelite wall we shouldn't think about those who persecuted and killed Christ, building up the law, they thought, and pulling down the faith, rejecting the cornerstone and engineering ruin for the unfortunate city. Nor

should we think there in that wall of this great number of Jews dispersed throughout different countries, as a testimonial to the divine scriptures, which they ignorantly carry with them everywhere. In these, you see, Jacob limps, after the hollow of his thigh has been struck and shriveled up,⁷ which stands for the multitude of his race limping away from his paths. But in the holy wall which has acceded from them to the peace of the cornerstone, we should think of those in whom Jacob was blessed.⁸ It's the same person, after all, who was both blessed and lamed; blessed in the descendants who were sanctified, lamed in those who were rejected.

The ones we should think of in this wall are the crowd of them who went ahead and followed behind the Savior's donkey, crying out *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord* (Mk 11:9; Ps 118:26). We should think of those who were chosen from that crowd as disciples and made apostles. We should think of Stephen, called by a Greek name meaning "crown," the first after the Lord's resurrection to be crowned with martyrdom. We should think also of those persecutors who turned into so many thousands of believers when the Holy Spirit came.⁹ We should think of the Churches, about which the apostle says, *But I was unknown by sight to the Churches of Judea which were in Christ; but they were only hearing that the one who once used to persecute us is now preaching as good news the faith he once tried to lay waste; and in me they magnified God* (Gal 1:22-24). That is how the Israelite wall should be thought about, and joined to the wall coming from the Gentiles which is now so conspicuous. And in this way Christ the Lord will be found not for nothing to have been foretold as the cornerstone, once upon a time laid in a manger, later lifted up to the summit of heaven.

NOTES

1. All I would be prepared to guess about this sermon is that it is earlier than Sermon 201, but later than Sermons 203; this on the presupposition, which I do *not* regard as in any way certain (see Sermon 203, note 1), that Augustine's attitude toward the Jews grew consistently more benign the older he got.

2. *Commutaret*; a very literal, and indeed mistaken, translation in Augustine's version of the Greek *apokatallaxei*, which means "reconcile." He would, I am sure, interpret *commutaret* in that sense.

3. I suspect his saying *two* differences etc. was just a slip of the tongue, because he was thinking about two walls. He doesn't appear to have had two particular differences or causes of hostility specifically in mind.

4. Quoting Is 28:16; see also Rom 9:33.

5. He means the nourishment of the gospel, primarily, of Christ himself as the Truth; only secondarily is he thinking of Christ in the eucharist.

6. See Ps 118:22.

7. See Gn 32:25.

8. See Gn 32:26-29.

9. See Acts 2:41.

SERMON 204A

ON THE LORD'S EPIPHANY

Date: unknown¹

With *the heavens declaring the glory of God*, a star led the Magi² to Christ, in order to worship him. These Magi were the firstfruits of the nations. They urge and encourage us to do what they did. Today Christ received gifts; put your hands into your packs,³ bring out from there something that will be acceptable to Christ; you see, he wished to feel the pinch in his poor, and there was no room at the inn for the one for whom the whole world is not space enough, and he was placed, as you know, in a manger.⁴ He was sought in order to be worshiped, he was pointed out and remained hidden. The Jews are asked where the Christ is born, they say, *In Bethlehem* (Mt 2:2.6). They show the way to go, and don't go themselves. Milestones show the way, and stay fixed in one spot. A star appears, a kind of tongue for the heavens, it leads the Magi, shows them the place. Infancy is not ignored, and the little one is worshiped, because he is understood to be great.

The Word of God received gifts, the infant was still unable to speak, and yet was the subject of the angels' doctrine.⁵ He was still unable to speak, the one about whom the good news was to be fulfilled. The heavens, after all, were also going to declare his glory later on; the heavens are the apostles, flashing like lightning with miracles, thundering with precepts. It was about these, you see, that it said, *Their sound has gone forth to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world* (Ps 19:4). When the words which have come to the ends of the earth still escaped our notice, the apostles came to us, and found and changed us.

Christ's feebleness is our firmness, Christ's infant inability to talk is our eloquence, Christ's need is our abundance, because later on Christ's death also became our life. The bread of heaven was lying in a manger. You, the Lord's beasts, draw near if you are hungry; carry him in your hearts, and you are his beasts, while he is your rider and your fodder too.⁶ You know how he sat on a donkey, and rode that donkey into Jerusalem.⁷ Carry him, he knows where to ride you. Walk along without a worry in the world, you won't take any wrong turn under such a rider as that. There is a way which leads to the heavenly Jerusalem; it is faith. Walk along it in order to carry Christ and be able to attain to eternal bliss.

NOTES

1. Published in *Revue Benedictine* 98 (1988) 12; its editor, P. Verbraken, considers it to be, in spite of its brevity, a patchwork of authentic elements. On that supposition, it is presumably impossible to assign it a date.

2. "Magi" is for us a word that refers only to the chief characters of this particular story. But a *magus* in Latin was a fairly common kind of person in society: a soothsayer, astrologer, magician.

3. The suggestion is that your purse, your coffers, your bank balance are really a burden or load you are carrying through life; a suggestion which he frequently works out in much more detail. The people are, of course, being urged to give to Christ in the poor.

4. See Lk 22:7.

5. See Lk 2:11-14.

6. Because in the manger, the feeding trough.

7. See Mk 11:7-11.

SERMON 205

ON THE BEGINNING OF LENT

Date: uncertain¹

*If you don't want your footsteps to sink in the earthly quagmire,
don't come down from this cross*

1. Today² we enter upon the keeping of Lent, coming round again as it does every year; and every year too I owe you a solemn exhortation, so that the word of God, set before you by my service, may feed your minds as you set about fasting in the body; and in this way the inner self, nourished by its proper food, may undertake the chastisement of the outer, and sustain it all the more stoutly. It goes well with our devotion, after all, that as we are very soon going to celebrate the passion of the crucified Lord, we should also make a cross for ourselves out of the curbing of the pleasures of the flesh, as the apostle says: *But those who are Jesus Christ's have crucified their flesh with its passions and lusts* (Gal 5:24).

On this cross, indeed, the Christian ought to hang continually throughout the whole of this life, which is spent in the midst of trials and temptations. The time, you see, doesn't come in this life for pulling out the nails, of which it says in the psalm, *Let my flesh be transfixed with nails by the fear of you* (Ps 119:120). Flesh means the lusts of the flesh; the nails are the commandments of justice; with these the fear of the Lord transfixes those, and crucifies us as a sacrifice acceptable to him. That's why, again, the apostle says, *And so I beseech you, brothers, by the compassion of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God* (Rom 12:1).

So this cross, on which the servant of God³ is not only not put to confusion, but in fact glories in it, saying, *But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world* (Gal 6:14); this cross, I repeat, is not just meant for forty days, but for the whole of this life, which is signified by the mystical number of these forty days. This may be because, as several authorities assert,⁴ the human being destined to live this life takes shape in the womb in forty days; or else because the four gospels agree with the tenfold law, and four times ten marks up this number, and indicates that in this life we need both parts of scripture; or for any other more probable reason which a better and brighter intelligence can find.

So it is that both Moses and Elijah and the Lord himself all fasted for forty days, to suggest to us that we are being worked upon in Moses and in Elijah and in Christ himself, that is in the law and the prophets and in the gospel itself, to ensure that we aren't conformed to this world and don't cling to it, but that instead we crucify the old self,⁵ behaving *not in gluttony and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness; but let us put on the Lord Jesus, and take no care for the flesh in its lusts* (Rom 13:13-14).⁶ Live here like that always, Christian; if you don't want your footsteps to sink in the earthly quagmire, don't come down from this cross.

But now, if that is what has to be done throughout the whole of this life, how much more during these days of Lent, in which this life is not only being spent, but in addition is also being mystically signified?

Works of penance

2. So on other days your hearts should never be weighed down with drugs and drunkenness;⁷ during these days, though, you should also fast. During the other days of the year you mustn't so much as touch upon adultery, fornication, and any other forms of unlawful depravity; during these days, though, you should also abstain from your marriage partners. What you deprive yourselves of by fasting, add by being generous to the alms you give. Let the time that was taken up with the payment of the marriage debt be spent in supplications; let the body, which was relaxing in demonstrations of carnal affection, prostrate itself in the purity of prayer; let the arms which were twined in embraces be raised and extended in orisons.

As for those of you who also fast on other days,⁸ add during these days to what you normally do. Those of you who throughout the other days of the year crucify the body by perpetual continence, cleave to your God during these days by more frequent and more earnest prayer. All of you, be of one mind and heart, all of you faithfully faithful, all of you, in this time of exile and wandering, full of heartfelt sighs and fervent love for the one, common home country. See to it that none of you envies, none of you mocks in another the gift of God which you don't have in yourself. In the matter of spiritual goods, regard as your own what you love and admire in your brother or sister; let them regard as their own what they love and admire in you.

None of us, under the pretense of self-denial, should make a point of changing, rather than cutting back on, our pleasures; looking out for special delicacies because we aren't eating meat, and for strange liquors because we aren't drinking wine; that way, under the cloak of taming the flesh we are conducting the business of pleasure. All kinds of food are indeed pure to the pure;⁹ but self-indulgent luxury is pure to nobody.

Fast from quarrels

3. Before everything else, brothers and sisters, fast from quarrels and discord. Remember how the prophet upbraided some people and cried out, *Your own*

wills are found on the days of your fast, because you dig your spurs into all who are under your yoke, and beat them with your fists; your voices are heard in shouting; and more to that effect. After mentioning all this, he added, That is not the fast I have chosen, says the Lord (Is 58:3-5). If you want to shout, use the kind of shouting about which it says, With my voice I shouted to the Lord (Ps 142:1). That indeed is not a shout of quarreling, but of loving; not of the flesh, but the heart. Not such are those of whom it is said, I waited for them to do justice, but they worked iniquity; and not justice, but a shout (Is 5:7).

Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given you (Lk 6:37-38). These are the two wings of prayer, on which it flies to God;¹⁰ if you pardon the offender what has been committed, and give to the person in need.

NOTES

1. No date is suggested for any of these sermons on the theme of Lent, until we come to Sermon 211. My instinct would be to date this one fairly late, after 415. Unless there is any evidence to the contrary, they were almost certainly preached in Hippo itself, at least in the bishop's jurisdiction.

2. Presumably the first Sunday of Lent; Ash Wednesday had not yet been instituted.

3. "Servant of God" was, or could be, a technical expression for a monk, for someone under vows. It is clear, however, from section 2 below that Augustine was not just preaching to a select congregation of religious. But he may well have been directing his words mainly to that portion of the congregation.

4. Galen, at a guess; possibly also Aristotle.

5. See Rom 6:6.

6. This was the text Augustine read at random at the crisis of his conversion, when he heard the child singing *Tolle, lege, tolle, lege*; pick up and read, pick up and read (*Confessions* VIII,12).

7. *Crapula et ebrietas*—which simply means drunkenness and drunkenness. So I presume to vary the tautology, without, I think, departing from Augustine's meaning. Anyway, *crapula*, the dictionary informs me, could also mean a special resin put into wine to make it more intoxicating; so it can well stand for drugs.

8. The ascetics.

9. See Ti 1:15.

10. Elsewhere he will say the two wings of prayer are fasting and almsgiving; here, just two forms of the latter. It would give the prayer bird a better balance.

SERMON 206

ON THE BEGINNING OF LENT

Date: uncertain¹

Lent—these days of humbling ourselves

1. The season of Lent has come round again, the time when I owe you my annual exhortation; and when you also owe the Lord your good works as suited to the season; not of course that they can be any use to the Lord, but they are of use to you. Even at other times, to be sure, Christians ought to be fervent in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. However, this solemn season should not only stir up those who have been slack about these things at other times, but also encourage those who at other times are zealous in these matters to engage in them even more fervently. Life in this world is the time of our humility, and is signified by these days, when Christ the Lord, who suffered once by dying, is so to say going to suffer again for us as this solemnity comes round again every year. What happened once in the whole of time that our life might be renewed, is celebrated every year, in order to be kept fresh in our memories.

So if we ought to be humble of heart out of the sincerest devotion during the whole time of this wandering exile, in which we are living in the midst of trials and temptations; how much more should we be so during these days, when as well as spending this time of humility by living it, we are also signifying it by our liturgical celebration of it? The lowliness of Christ has taught us to be lowly, because by dying he yielded to the godless; Christ's highness makes us exalted, because by rising again he has led the way for the godly. *For if we have died together with him, says the apostle, we shall also live together with him; if we endure, we shall also reign with him (2 Tm 2:11-12).* We celebrate one of these things now, when his passion is, so to say, drawing near; the other after Easter with appropriate devotion, when his resurrection, so to say, has been accomplished. Then, you see, after these days of humbling ourselves, even though we are not yet free to enjoy the time of our exaltation by actually seeing it, it will still be a pleasure to signify it by contemplating it in advance. And so now we should be sighing and groaning more urgently in prayer; then we will enjoy the exhilaration of more copious praise.

Two sorts of almsgiving: giving and forgiving

2. But to our prayers we must add, by almsgiving and fasting, the wings of loving kindness, so that they may fly the more easily to God and reach him. From this the Christian mind can readily understand how far removed we should be from the fraudulent filching of other people's property; when it perceives how similar it is to fraud when you don't give to the needy what you don't need yourself. The Lord says, *Give, and it will be given to you; forgive, and you will be forgiven* (Lk 6:37-38). Let us practice these two sorts of almsgiving, namely giving and forgiving, gently and generously; since after all we pray to the Lord that good things may be given to us, and that evil things may not be repaid us.

Give, he says, *and it will be given you*. What could be fairer, what could be more appropriate, than that those who refuse to give should thereby defraud themselves, and not receive? If it's shameful of a farmer to look for a crop where he knows he hasn't sown any seed, how much more shameful must it be to look to God to be rich in giving, when you have declined to listen to a poor man asking? It's in the poor person, after all, that the one who is never hungry has wished to be fed. Let us not, then, spurn our God when he is needy in the poor, so that we in our need may be satisfied by him in his riches. We have needy people, and we are needy ourselves; so let us give, in order to receive.

But now, what is it that we do give? And in exchange for this paltry, visible, temporal and earthly whatever it is, what is it that we desire to receive? *What eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it come up into the heart of man* (1 Cor 2:9). Unless he had made the promise, it would be sheer impudence to give these things and wish to receive those. And as for being unwilling to give even these things . . .!—things that we wouldn't even have at all, unless the one had given them, who urges us to give.² So how can we have the nerve to hope he will give us both kinds of thing, if we ignore his commands in the least of them?

Forgive, and you will be forgiven (Lk 6:38); that is, pardon and you will be pardoned. Let fellow servant be reconciled with fellow servant; or else the servant will be justly punished by the Master.³ In this kind of almsgiving, nobody is poor. Even someone who in this time has nothing to live on, can do this, in order to live for ever. This kind of wealth is given free, is accumulated by being given, is not used up except when it is not being spent. So any of you whose quarrels have lasted until these days, be ashamed of yourselves and put an end to them. Put an end to them, and don't let them put an end to you. Don't hold on to them, or they'll hold on to you. Let them be eliminated by your redeemer, or they may eliminate their retainer.

Prayer flies beautifully when it's supported on wings of such virtues

3. Don't let your fasting be of the kind that the prophet might condemn, saying, *This is not the fast I have chosen, says the Lord* (Is 58:5). He's finding fault, you see, with the fasts of the quarrelsome; he's looking for the fasts of the kindhearted. He's finding fault with those who oppress others; he's looking for those who give relief. He's finding fault with those who stir up strife; he's

looking for those who set free. That's why, you see, during these days you restrain your desires for lawful things; it's in order not to commit unlawful things. If you refrain from your marriage rights during these days, then surely you shouldn't drown yourself in wine or adultery on any day.

In this way, in humility and charity, by fasting and giving, by restraining ourselves and pardoning, by paying out good deeds and not paying back bad ones, by turning away from evil and doing good, our prayer seeks peace and obtains it.⁴ Prayer, you see, flies beautifully when it's supported on wings of such virtues; and is in this way more readily wafted through to heaven, where Christ our peace has preceded us.⁵

NOTES

1. I would date this sermon to the same period as Sermon 205. Perhaps, since there is no reference to religious, it was preached in some village of the Hipponic diocese where there was no such community.

2. The Maurist editors consider that something must have dropped out of the Latin text, just about where I have put the exclamation mark. But that is not, in my opinion, a necessary inference. The half sentence makes his point very effectively.

3. See Mt 18:23-35; 5:25-26.

4. See Ps 34:14.

5. See Eph 2:14.

SERMON 207

ON THE BEGINNING OF LENT

Date: uncertain¹

*Fasting without kindness and mercy is worth
nothing to the one who's fasting*

1. With the help of the mercy of the Lord our God, the temptations of this age, the crafty traps of the devil, the toils of this world, the allurements of the flesh, the swirl of turbulent times, and all bodily and spiritual adversity, are to be overcome by almsgiving and fasting and prayer. Christians ought to be fervently engaged in these things throughout their lives; much more so then at the approach of the great festival of Easter, which rouses our minds as it comes round again each year, renewing in them the salutary memory of what mercy our Lord, the only Son of God, has bestowed on us, of how he fasted and prayed for us.²

“Alms,” of course, comes from a Greek word meaning “mercy.” What greater mercy, though, could there be toward the miserable,³ than that which pulled the creator down from heaven, and clothed the founder of the earth in an earthly body; which made the one who abides equal in eternity to the Father, equal to us in mortality, imposing the form of a servant⁴ on the Lord of the world; so that bread itself would be hungry,⁵ fullness be thirsty,⁶ strength become weak,⁷ health would be wounded, life would die?⁸ And all this to feed our hunger, water our drought, comfort our infirmity, extinguish our iniquity, kindle our charity. What greater mercy, than for the creator to be created, the master to serve,⁹ the redeemer to be sold,¹⁰ the one who exalts to be humbled,¹¹ the one who raises up¹² to be slain? We, in the matter of giving alms, are instructed to give bread to the hungry;¹³ he, in order to give himself to us in our hunger, first surrendered himself for us to his enemies’ anger. We are instructed to welcome the stranger; he, for our sakes, came to his own place, and his own people did not welcome him.¹⁴

Let our soul, in a word, *bless him who shows himself gracious to all its iniquities, who heals all its infirmities, who redeems its life from corruption, who crowns it with compassion and mercy, who satisfies its desire with good things* (Ps 103:2-5). And so let us perform our alms and deeds of kindness all

the more lavishly, all the more frequently, the nearer the day approaches on which is celebrated the alms, the kindness that has been done to us. Because fasting without kindness and mercy is worth nothing to the one who's fasting.

Let your fasting be accompanied by frugality

2. Let us also fast by humbling our souls, as the day approaches on which the master of humility humbled himself, *becoming obedient even to the death of the cross* (Phil 2:8). Let us imitate his cross, pacifying and nailing our lusts with the nails of abstinence. Let us chastise our bodies, and subject them to hard service; and to avoid slipping into unlawful pleasures because of the unruliness of the flesh, in breaking it in let us deprive it to some extent even of lawful ones. Drugs and drunkenness,¹⁵ of course, are to be avoided even at other times; but during these days even permissible meals should be cut. Adultery and fornication must always be abhorred and shunned; but during these days even marital relations should be moderated. The flesh will readily submit to you in not sticking to what belongs to others, if it has got used to being held back even from what is its own.

You must certainly beware of just revising, not reducing, your pleasures. I mean, you can see some people searching out unusual liquors as a substitute for the usual wine, and with the juices squeezed out of other fruits compensating themselves much more pleasantly for what they deny themselves from the grape; engaging in the quest for foods of the most delicious variety, other than meat; and concocting delicacies as suitable to this season, which at other times they are ashamed to bother with. The result is that the observance of Lent means, not the repression of old lusts, but the occasion for new enjoyments.

To avoid letting these persuasive suggestions creep up on you, brothers and sisters, be as watchful and prudent as you possibly can. Let your fasting be accompanied by frugality. Just as the cramming of the stomach is to be restrained, so the tickling of the palate is to be avoided. It isn't that some kinds of human food are to be regarded as unclean, but that the delights of the flesh are to be held in check. Esau wasn't rejected over Wiener schnitzel or pâté de foie gras,¹⁶ but for an inordinate longing for lentils.¹⁷ Holy David repented of having a greater desire for water than was just.¹⁸ So the body is to be refreshed, or rather supported in its fasting, not by elaborate and expensive dishes, but by any kind of cheaper food that is readily available.

Prayer must be chaste

3. During these days our prayer is lifted up to the heights with the support of kindhearted almsgiving and frugal fasting; because there is no impudence in asking for mercy from God, when it is not refused by one human being to another, and when the serene aim of the heart at prayer is not deflected by the cloudy, lowering images and fancies of the pleasures of the flesh. Prayer, though, must be chaste, so that we don't find ourselves expressing a wish for

what greed, not love, is looking for; or calling down some evil on our enemies; or showing a savagery in prayer against people which we are unable to vent on them in actual harm or revenge. Undoubtedly, just as we are made fitter for praying by almsgiving and fasting, so too our very prayer gives alms when it is directed to God and poured forth, not only for friends but also for enemies, and when it fasts from anger and hatred and all other such destructive vices. If we, after all, are fasting from food, how much more should our prayer be fasting from poison? Then again, we are sustained at the proper and convenient times by taking nourishment; let us never entice our prayer with such dishes as those. Let it undertake, rather, a perpetual fast; because it does have its proper food, which it is instructed to take without ceasing. So then, let it always fast from hatred, always feed on love.

NOTES

1. In style a somewhat more elaborate sermon than the previous two; so I would be inclined to date it ten to fifteen years earlier, say between 400 and 405. As he lingers in section 2 on the reprehensible habit some people had of making Lent a time for more fancy cookery than the rest of the year, we may perhaps infer that he was facing a mainly well-to-do congregation; what I heard one preacher many years ago call a fur coat congregation. But again, there is no reference to the ascetics or religious. So it was probably not preached in the main basilica of Hippo Regius, but perhaps in one of the more fashionable suburbs.

2. As he has just mentioned Easter, it is probable that the fasting and praying of Jesus, which he is referring to here, is the prayer of John 17, and the fasting alluded to in Lk 22:16-18, rather than the fast of forty days at the beginning of his ministry, Lk 4:2, which we have come to associate with the beginning of Lent.

3. *Misericordia super miseros.*

4. See Phil 2:7.

5. See Jn 6:35; Lk 4:2.

6. See Jn 19:28; 4:7.

7. See 2 Cor 12:9; 11:29; Lk 22:41-44.

8. See Jn 14:6.

9. See Jn 13:13-14.

10. See Mt 26:14-15; 27:9.

11. See Lk 18:14.

12. See Jn 6:54.

13. See Is 58:7.

14. See Jn 1:11.

15. *Crapula et ebrietas*; see Sermon 205, note 7.

16. *Pingui vitulo vel volatilibus saginatis.*

17. See Gn 25:29-34.

18. See 1 Chr 11:17-19.

SERMON 208

ON THE BEGINNING OF LENT

Date: uncertain¹

Lent, a time to be more alert than usual

1. The solemn time has come round again, at which I have to remind and exhort your graces in the Lord—though even if I were to say nothing, the time itself should be enough to remind and exhort you to be more fervent, more persistent, more alert than usual in fasting and prayer and almsgiving. But the service of a sermon from me is added, so that at the trumpet call of this voice² your spirits may gain extra strength, as you are on the point of engaging in the struggle against the flesh. So let your fasting be unaccompanied by quarrels, shouting matches, beatings, so that those too who are under the yoke³ may experience a considered and benevolent easing of pressure, through your holding the harshness of severity in check, not by your letting salutary discipline slide.

But now, when you abstain for the sake of chastising the body⁴ from various kinds of food that are in themselves quite permissible, remember that *to the pure all things are pure*; don't regard anything as impure except what unbelief has defiled;⁵ *for to the impure and unbelievers*, the apostle says, *nothing is pure* (Ti 1:15; Rom 14:20). But naturally, when the faithful are reducing their bodies to slavery, whatever is deducted from bodily pleasure is credited to spiritual health. And that's the reason why you must take care not to shop around for expensive kinds of food, or for one sort to replace another, or for even more expensive things as a substitute for butcher's meat. After all, when the body is being chastised and reduced to slavery, its delights have to be restricted, not varied.

After all, does it make any difference what kind of food is involved in the sin of unrestrained greed? It wasn't indeed just over meat, but also over various kinds of fruit and garden produce that the greed of the Israelites was condemned by the divine judgment.⁶ And Esau lost his birthright, not for a hunk of pork, but for some mashed lentils.⁷ I can pass over what the Lord, when he was hungry, answered the tempter even about bread; and he certainly wasn't having to break in his flesh as if it were being rebellious; rather, he was mercifully advising us how we ought to answer such temptations. So then, dearly beloved, whatever

sort of food you decide to give up, remember to keep your resolution with devoted self-restraint, and without making the sacrilegious mistake of condemning as impure any of God's creatures.⁸

Those of you, too, who are married, take care at this time especially not to ignore the apostle's advice; but abstain from each other for a time, in order to have more leisure for prayer.⁹ Since it is profitable, after all, to do this at other times, it would be too shameless of you not to do it now. I don't think married couples should find it too burdensome to do this during these solemn days as a yearly observance, seeing that widows have promised to do it for the rest of their lives, and that holy virgins have undertaken it for the whole of their lives.

*What self-restraint withdraws from pleasure,
mercy may deposit with charity*

2. Now again, it's really, in a sense, a duty to increase the amount of alms you give during these days of Lent. How, I mean to say, can you more justly spend what you save by denying yourselves this and that, than by showing kindness and generosity? And what could be more iniquitous than that what self-denial avoids spending should be hoarded by unabated avarice, or eaten up by spendthrift luxury? And so just think about to whom you owe what you deny to yourselves; so that what self-restraint withdraws from pleasure, mercy may deposit with charity.

What can I now say about that work of mercy, where nothing is doled out from your storerooms, nothing from your purses, but where something is let go from the heart, something which becomes more of a liability to you when it stays with you than when it leaves you? I'm talking about anger against somebody, stored up in the heart. Now what could be sillier than to avoid your enemy outwardly, and retain a much worse one in the depths of your heart? That's why the apostle says, *Do not let the sun go down upon your anger*, and immediately adds, *nor give the devil a foothold* (Eph 4:26-27). As much as to say that that is precisely what you do do, if you don't very quickly thrust anger out of your mind, because the devil can gain access through it, as through a door. So the very first thing to be done is to see that the sun does not go down upon your anger; otherwise *the sun of justice* (Mal 4:2) may abandon your mind.

But if anger has remained locked up in the breasts of any of you, at least let the approaching day of the Lord's passion thrust it out, because he, after all, was not angry with his killers, but as he hung on the cross poured out for them both his prayers and his blood.¹⁰ So if anger has boldly and shamelessly persisted in the breasts of any of you up to these holy days, at least now let it beat a retreat from there,¹¹ so that your prayer may proceed without any anxiety or worry, and not stumble or stammer or grow dumb under the prickings of conscience, when it comes to the place where it has to say *Forgive us our debts, as we too forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12). You are going to ask for something not to be paid back to you, and for something to be paid to you. So *forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you* (Lk 6:37-38).

These, brothers and sisters, are the things you ought to attend to by continuous reflection, even if I didn't remind you of them. So since my voice, put at the service of so many divine testimonies, is being assisted by the celebration of this particular day,¹² I don't think I need be afraid that any of you will ignore what I say, or rather what the Lord of us all says through me. But I can rather hope instead that his flock will recognize that what has been said comes from him, and will listen to him, in order effectively to be listened to.

NOTES

1. Definitely later, I would say, than Sermon 207, probably earlier than 205 and 206; sometime, then, around 410-412. Again, almost certainly delivered in his own church of Hippo Regius.

2. It is rather surprising to hear him refer to his own voice as a trumpet call. He frequently complains of being rather weak of voice. He must have been in unusually good health and vigor at the time.

3. Of slavery; there is an allusion to Is 58:4. Perhaps the sermon was being preached at the country estate or villa of some wealthy people, and the owner and his family and neighboring gentry were being principally addressed. I wonder if such remarks were ever included in sermons in the antebellum Southern States of America, or in European colonies in the Caribbean before emancipation.

4. See 1 Cor 9:27.

5. Possibly referring to animals sacrificed to idols.

6. See Nm 11:5.33-34.

7. See Gn 25:29-34.

8. They are being warned, I think, against a kind of Manichean rejection of meat in particular as intrinsically evil and unclean. It is interesting to note that precisely what kind of food they gave up for Lent was left to their personal decision, and not fixed by custom and Church law.

9. See 1 Cor 7:5.

10. See Lk 23:34.

11. See Eccl 11:10.

12. Presumably the first Sunday of Lent.

SERMON 209

ON THE BEGINNING OF LENT

Date: uncertain¹

Let charity be exercised by your living good lives

1. The solemn season has come round when I must remind your graces about giving more attentive thought to your souls, and chastising your bodies. These, you see, are the forty days held so sacred in all countries of the earth, that the whole world, which God reconciles to himself in Christ,² celebrates them together with remarkable devotion as Easter approaches. If there are any animosities which should never have been born, or should promptly have died, and yet have been able to persist between brothers or sisters up to this very moment, whether out of heedlessness or stubbornness, or a proud and certainly not modest kind of shame, then let them now at least be terminated, such as the sun ought not to have been allowed to set on,³ at least after so many sunrises and sunsets let them at last be extinguished by their own setting below the horizon, never further to be renewed by any rising.

The heedless person forgets to put an end to a quarrel; the stubborn one is loath to grant pardon when asked; the person who is proudly ashamed disdains to beg pardon. Animosity lives on in these three vices; but they kill the soul in which they don't die. Let a spirit of recollection keep watch against heedlessness, of compassion against vindictive stubbornness, of gentle good sense against proud shame. If you recall that you have neglected to make it up with someone, then wake up and shake off your torpor. If you are so keen to exact payment from your debtor, just think for a moment that you are God's debtor. If you are ashamed to ask your brother or sister to forgive you, overcome this bad sort of shame with a good sort of fear, so that with destructive animosities terminated, with them finally dead, you yourselves may live.

All this is the work of charity, which *does not act crookedly* (1 Cor 13:4). So let charity, my brothers and sisters, insofar as it is present among you, be exercised by your living good lives; while insofar as there is little of it there, let it be obtained by your praying for it.

We should add to alms what we subtract from ourselves by fasting and abstaining from our usual diet

2. But during these days our prayers should be more than usually fervent; so to help them with suitable supports, let us also be more fervent in distributing alms; we should add to them what we subtract from ourselves by fasting and abstaining from our usual diet. Though as a matter of fact, those of you who are prevented by some needs of your bodies or the requirements of a special diet from abstaining, and so adding to the poor person's dish what you subtract from your own, should be even more generous in your alms, and give more to the poor precisely because you don't take anything away from yourselves.⁴ At least in this way, since you are less able to give a boost to your prayers by chastising the body, you will ensure, by enclosing more abundant alms in the heart of the poor, that it can pray for you. That is the salutary advice of the holy scriptures, eminently well worth following: *Enclose your alms, it says, in the heart of a poor man, and there it will pray for you effectively* (Sir 29:12, Vulg).

Nobody should take such pleasure in the goodness of being generous, as to forfeit the goodness of being humble

3. I must also remind those of you who abstain from meat, not to shun the pots in which it has been cooked as though they were impure.⁵ The apostle, after all, speaking about this sort of thing, says, *To the pure all things are pure* (Ti 1:15). You see, the point of such observances, according to sound doctrine, is not to shun ritual impurities, but to curb our appetites. So it is too, that those people who refrain from eating meat in order to hunt up other kinds of food that are both more expensive and more difficult to prepare, have got the wrong end of the stick entirely. I mean, that isn't undertaking self-denial, but just changing your kind of self-indulgence. How am I going to tell these people to give to the poor what they deprive themselves of, when they give up their usual diet, only to spend more than ever on obtaining another sort? So during these days, please, be more regular in fasting, more sparing in what you spend on yourselves, more generous in what you bestow on the poor.

These days also require abstinence from marital relations. *For a time, says the apostle, so that you may have more leisure for prayer; and then come together again, in case Satan should tempt you on account of your lack of self-control* (1 Cor 7:5).⁶ This, surely, is not very taxing or difficult for faithful married couples just for a few days, seeing that widows have undertaken it from a certain point in their lives to the very end, and that the holy virgins manage it for the whole of life.

And in all these things be fervent and devoted, while suppressing every inclination to be proud of yourselves. Nobody should take such pleasure in the goodness of being generous, as to forfeit the goodness of being humble. None of God's other gifts make anything have the slightest value, unless they are tied together with the bond of love.

NOTES

1. Again, I think, to be dated after Sermon 207, but perhaps before 208. A tentative arrangement of these five short Lenten sermons in chronological order would then be: 207 about 400; 209 a year or two later; then 208 about 410–412; 205 about 415, and 206, about 416 or 417. That they were all preached within Augustine's own jurisdiction, whether in the city itself or in outlying parishes or villages, there can in my view be very little doubt.

2. See 2 Cor 5:19.

3. See Eph 4:26.

4. There must have been some rueful grins in the congregation at the shameless way in which the bishop caught them with a neat left and right to the jaw, so to speak—in the best of causes, to be sure.

5. It is clear that he is not here warning against scrupulosity, but against some kind of superstitious conception of Lenten abstinence—though I suppose scruples could be called a kind of superstition.

6. Tempt you, presumably, to commit adultery, because you lack the self-control to forgo sexual relations totally.

SERMON 210

ON THE BEGINNING OF LENT

Date: uncertain¹

The meaning of Lent

1. The solemn season has arrived, which should remind us to humble our souls and chastise our bodies with prayer and fasting more earnestly and intensely than at other periods of the year. But people are regularly puzzled about why this season should be celebrated as the solemnity of the Lord's passion is approaching, and why for this mystic number of forty days. So it is right that I should undertake to offer your graces what the Lord has been good enough to enable me to say on these points. I know that you are asking these questions because you want to know, and not just to start an argument, and so I am greatly assisted by your faith and piety in being instructed by God on what has to be said.

The time for fasting

2. You see, the problem usually raised is this: why was it that the Lord Jesus Christ, who by assuming a human body² became a human being and appeared to us human beings, precisely to provide us, surely, with the perfect example of how to live and die and rise again; why was it that he didn't fast before he was baptized, but after?³ That, after all, is what is written in the gospel: *But after being baptized, he came up straightaway from the water, and behold the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down upon him. And behold a voice from the heavens, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Then Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward he was hungry* (Mt 3:16—4:2).

We on the other hand fast with those who are going to be baptized before the day of their baptism, which coincides with Easter day, and after that day we relax the fast for fifty days. Now we would be quite right to be worried by this problem, if it were not permissible to baptize or be baptized except on the great feast of Easter day. As it is though, nobody is barred from baptism at any time

throughout the year, as people may either need or desire, this being granted them by the one who *gave them the right to become children of God* (Jn 1:12); while it is not permissible to celebrate the anniversary of the Lord's passion except on one particular day of the year, which is called Easter.⁴

The sacrament of baptism, therefore, is beyond all doubt to be distinguished from Easter. Baptism, you see, can be received on any day; Easter may lawfully be kept only on one particular day.⁵ Baptism is given so that life may be imparted anew; Easter is celebrated to keep the memory of our religion fresh in our minds. But the fact that far and away the greater number of those seeking baptism converge on this day only means that the greater joy of the feast attracts them, not that a richer grace of salvation is to be had then.

Christ's baptism and John's baptism

3. Then there is the point that the baptism of John, which Christ received at that time, is to be distinguished from the baptism of Christ himself, which his faithful now receive;⁶ nor is the one Christ was baptized with better than the one a Christian is baptized with, simply because Christ is better than the Christian; but on the contrary, this baptism is to be preferred to that one, precisely because it is Christ's. John, you see, baptized Christ, while admitting that he was less than Christ; Christ, on the other hand, baptizes the Christian,⁷ and shows himself to be greater than John as well.

It's the same with the circumcision of the flesh; although Christ received it then, and no Christian receives it now,⁸ still the sacrament of Christ's resurrection surpasses it, by which the Christian is circumcised for the stripping off of the old, flesh-bound life,⁹ in order to heed the apostle when he says, *As Christ has risen from the dead through the glory of the Father, so let us too walk in newness of life* (Rom 6:4). Again, take the old Passover, which they were commanded to celebrate by killing the lamb;¹⁰ just because Christ celebrated this with his disciples, it doesn't mean that it is better than our Passover, or Easter, in which Christ has been sacrificed.¹¹ You see, it was all part of his giving us an example of humility and devotion,¹² that when he came he should condescend to receive even those sacraments which symbolically foretold that he would come; thus showing us with what religious devotion we should receive these sacraments which proclaim that he has come.

So just because Christ fasted immediately after receiving the baptism of John, we don't have to believe that he was laying down a kind of rule to be observed, that it is obligatory to fast immediately after receiving Christ's baptism. Clearly, what he was teaching by that example is that we should fast whenever we happen to lock horns with the tempter in a more than usually fierce struggle. The reason, you see, why Christ, who was willing to be born as a human being, did not refuse to be tempted as a human being, was to enable Christians, trained under his direction, not to be defeated by the tempter. So whether immediately after baptism, or after any interval of time you like, whenever a similar war of temptation is waged against one, one should fast, so that the body by being

chastened may fulfill its military service, and the spirit by being humbled may obtain the victory. So then, in the case of the example set by the Lord, the cause of his fasting was not his having been dipped in the Jordan, but his being about to be tempted by the devil.

Why we fast before Easter

4. Now as to why we fast before the solemnity of the Lord's passion, and why that relaxation of the fast is completed on the fiftieth day after it, here's the reason. People who fast in the right way are either humbling their souls by groaning and sighing in prayer and chastening the body with *an unfeigned faith* (1 Tm 1:5); or else are withdrawing their intention from fleshly enticements by a kind of spiritual neediness yearning for the delights of truth and wisdom, and directing it downward to actually experiencing hunger and thirst.¹³ About each of these kinds of fasting the Lord gave an answer to those who asked him why his disciples didn't fast.

About the first, which has to do with the humbling of the soul, *The sons of the bridegroom*, he said, *cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them. But the time is coming when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.* About the other sort, which provides a feast for the mind, he went on to say this: *No one sews a piece of new cloth on an old garment, lest a greater rent should be made; nor do they pour new wine into old wineskins, lest the skins should burst, and the wine be spilled; but they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved* (Mt 9:15-17). Hence, because the bridegroom has now been taken away, we as sons of such a lovely bridegroom of course have to mourn. He, you see, though *handsome of figure above the sons of men, with grace poured out on his lips* (Ps 45:2), had neither beauty nor comeliness in the hands of his persecutors, and his life was taken away from the earth.¹⁴ And we are right to mourn, if we are on fire with desire for him.

Blessed were those who were privileged to have him present among them before his passion, to ask him whatever they liked, and to listen to him as they ought to listen. The fathers desired to see those days before his coming, and did not see them; because their lot was to belong to another dispensation, in which they were to foretell his future coming, not to listen to him when he came. He speaks about them to the disciples, you remember, when he says, *Many just men and prophets have wished to see the things that you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things you hear, and have not heard them* (Mt 13:17). In us, though, there has been fulfilled a similar thing he said: *The days are coming, when you will long to see one of these days, and will not be able to* (Lk 17:22).

Why we have to fast and pray

5. Who wouldn't be on fire with the flame of such a holy desire? Who wouldn't mourn here in this world? Who wouldn't groan and sigh and say, *My tears have become my bread night and day, while they say to me all day long,*

Where is your God (Ps 42:3)? Indeed, we believe in him as he is now seated at the right hand of the Father; and yet as long as we are in the body, we are wandering in exile away from him¹⁵; nor are we able to point him out to those who doubt or deny him and say, *Where is your God?* Rightly did his apostle long to be released and to be with him. But while he did not think that to remain in the flesh was the best thing for him, he thought it was necessary for us.¹⁶

Here *the thoughts of mortals are timid, and our plans are uncertain; because an earthly habitation weighs down upon the mind thinking many things (Wis 9:14-15)*. As a result, *human life on earth is a trial (Jb 7:1)*, and in the night of this age a lion prowls about, *seeking whom he may devour (1 Pt 5:8)*. Not the lion from the tribe of Judah, our king;¹⁷ but the lion which the devil is, our adversary. Christ, though, realizes in himself alone the characteristics of the four living creatures from the Revelation of John; born as a man, acting like a lion, sacrificed like a bull-calf, he flew like an eagle.¹⁸ *He flew upon the wings of the wind, and established the dark as his hiding place (Ps 18:11)*. He established the dark, and night was made, in which all the beasts of the forest pass by.¹⁹ Lion cubs roaring, tempters, that is, through whom the devil is seeking whom he may devour; not indeed that they have any power or authority, except over those whom they have received; because in that same psalm it continues like this: *seeking their food from God (Ps 104:21)*. In the night of this age, so full of dangers and temptations, are there any who wouldn't be afraid, who wouldn't be shaken to the marrow, in case they should be judged as only fit to be left to be devoured by the jaws of so cruel an enemy? That is why we have to fast and pray.²⁰

Special time for fasting

6. And when more properly, when more urgently than when the solemnity of the Lord's passion is drawing near? By this annual celebration of Lent the memory of this same night is somehow or other engrained in us afresh, in case it should be worn away by forgetfulness, in case that roaring devourer²¹ should find us asleep, not in body but in spirit. Because after all, what else does the Lord's passion itself present us with in our head Christ Jesus, but supremely the tests and trials of this life? That's why, as the time of his death drew near, he said to Peter, *Satan has asked for you all to sift you like wheat; and I have prayed, Peter, for you, that your faith should not fail; go and strengthen your brothers (Lk 22:31-32)*. And he certainly has strengthened us by his apostolate, his martyrdom, his letters. In them he too warned us to fear the night I'm speaking of, and instructed us to be warily vigilant, having the consolation of prophecy, as of a light in the night. *We have, he said, the more certain prophetic word, to which you do well to attend, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the morning star rises in your hearts (2 Pt 1:19)*.

The day of bringing forth

7. So, *let our loins be girt and our lamps alight, and we like men waiting for their Lord, when he comes from the wedding* (Lk 12:35-36). And don't let's start saying to one another, *Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die* (1 Cor 15:32). But the more uncertain the day of death is, and the more irksome the day of life, "let us fast and pray, for tomorrow we shall die." *A little while, he says, and you will not see me; and again a little while, and you shall see me* (Jn 16:16). This is the moment about which he said, *You will be sad, but the world will rejoice* (Jn 16:20); that is, this life, full of trials and temptations, in which we are wandering in exile away from him.²² *But I shall see you again, he says, and your hearts will rejoice, and your joy nobody shall take from you* (Jn 16:22).

Even now let us rejoice somehow or other in this hope derived from the promises of one most faithful, until that richest of all possible joys arrives, when *we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is* (1 Jn 3:2), and our joy nobody shall take from us. Of this hope, you see, we have also received already²³ the acceptable and freely given pledge which is the Holy Spirit, who produces in our hearts the unutterable groanings of holy desires.²⁴ *For we have conceived, as Isaiah says, and have brought forth the spirit of salvation* (Is 26:18).²⁵ And, *when a woman is in labor, the Lord says, she has sorrow, because her day has come; but when she has brought forth, there is great joy, because a human being has been born into the world* (Jn 16:21). This will be the joy that nobody will take away from us; on the day when we are brought forth into the eternal light from this conception of faith. So meanwhile let us fast and pray, while it is still the day of bringing forth.

The fast before the fifty days

8. This is what the whole body of Christ does, spread throughout the world, that is to say the Church, that unity which says in the psalm, *From the ends of the earth I have cried out to you, while my heart was distressed* (Ps 61:2). From this it should now be clear to us why the forty days of Lent were instituted as the way to solemnize this humbling of our souls. The Church which cries out from the ends of the earth while her heart is distressed, is crying out from the four corners of the earth which are also frequently mentioned in scripture, from East and West, North and South. Throughout this whole world the ten commandments of the law have been promulgated, no longer just to be feared in the letter, but now to be fulfilled by the grace of love. Thus with ten multiplied by four, we can see the number forty completed; but still with all the difficulties of temptation, with pardon needed for our failings. Who, after all, can perfectly fulfill, *You shall not covet* (Ex 20:17; Rom 7:7)? That's why we have to fast and pray, without ceasing to do good.

This toil and labor receives its wages at the end, which are given the name of a tenner,²⁶ which gets its name, of course, from ten; add this to the number forty, and it's like wages being paid for work done. The result is fifty, and this represents the time of that joy which nobody will take from us.²⁷ We don't, of

course, have the enjoyment of it in this life; but all the same, after the solemnity of the Lord's passion we celebrate this joy for fifty days after the day of his resurrection, during which we ease off the fast, and praise the Lord with the echoing sound of *Alleluia*.

The daily fast

9. And so now, my dearest friends, to save you from being outsmarted by Satan, I exhort you in the name of Christ to placate God with daily fasts, more generous alms, more fervent prayers. Now is the time when married men should abstain from their wives, and married women from their husbands, in order to have leisure for their prayers;²⁸ although they ought to do this on certain days throughout the year, and the more frequently, of course, the better; because when you have an immoderate appetite for things that are conceded you, you offend the one who made the concession. Prayer of course is something spiritual, and therefore all the more acceptable the more it lives up to its nature. But it is poured out with all the more spiritual power, the more the heart that is pouring it out is withdrawn from the pleasures of the flesh.

Moses the Lawgiver fasted for forty days, for forty days Elijah the greatest of the prophets, for forty days the Lord himself, to whom both law and prophets bore witness.²⁹ That's why he showed himself on the mountain with these two.³⁰ Now we, of course, are quite unable to keep up such a long fast, without taking any nourishment at all for so many days and nights, as they did; but at least we should do what we can, and try to please the Lord our God with either a daily or at least a frequent fast, except of course on the days when for various reasons Church custom doesn't allow fasting.³¹

But it isn't the case, is it, that just as it is impossible to abstain totally from food and drink for so many days, it is equally impossible to abstain totally from sexual relations? After all, we can see many persons of either sex in the name of Christ preserving their bodies entirely free from this sort of thing and dedicating them to God. I don't think it's asking too much to suggest that married chastity can do for the whole paschal solemnity³² what virginity can do for the whole of life.

Those who fast wrongly

10. Now there's another thing, which I ought not to have to admonish you about, seeing that to the best of my ability I have been commending this season to you as above all a time for humbling the soul; still, I cannot pass over it in silence, because of the mistaken notions of people, who never stop making us painfully anxious about you with their speciously seductive suggestions and their depraved habits. There are some people who have a way of keeping Lent that is more fastidious than religious, who investigate new flavors instead of castigating old appetites; who compete in trying to surpass the varied taste of entrées with plentiful and expensive preparations of fruit. They shrink away

from the pots in which flesh meat has been cooked as though they were defiled, and don't shrink from the luxury of belly and palate in their own flesh. They fast, not to diminish their usual appetite by restraint, but to increase their intemperate greed by delay; because when the time for the meal arrives, they rush to their lavishly laden tables like animals to their feeding troughs; they overload their hearts and distend their stomachs with more numerous dishes than ever; they tickle their gullets and palates with a whole variety of fancy and foreign condiments, in case they should be defeated by the sheer quantity of the food. Finally they take so much on board by eating, that they can't even digest it by fasting.

Those who seek new forms of self-indulgence

11. Then there are the people who give up drinking wine, only to search out other liquors for themselves from the juice of other fruits, for the sake not of their health but of their enjoyment; as though Lent did not impose an obligation to humble oneself with devout self-denial, but provided an occasion for gratifying oneself with new forms of self-indulgence. After all, how much more honest it would be, if the weakness of your stomach does not allow you to drink water,³³ to keep yourself going on your usual moderate glass of wine, rather than to seek out wines which know no vintage, and have experienced no wine-press; not by way of choosing a purer beverage, but of rejecting a more frugal one?

And what could be more ridiculous, than at a time when the flesh is meant to be treated more strictly, to procure the flesh such agreeable experiences, that the very appetite of the gullet doesn't want Lent to come to an end? What could be more unsuitable than in days of self-effacement, when everyone should be imitating the fare of the poor, to live in such style that if one lived like that all the time, the estates of the wealthy could scarcely bear the cost? Beware of these things, beloved; think about what's written, *Do not go after your lusts* (Sir 18:30). It's a most wholesome precept that should be observed all the time; how much more so in these days, when it is considered so disgraceful to give our greed free rein to pursue unaccustomed attractions, that we are rightly blamed if we don't refrain from our customary ones?

Alms and forgiveness

12. First and foremost, clearly, please remember the poor, so that what you withhold from yourselves by living more sparingly, you may deposit in the treasury of heaven.³⁴ Let the hungry Christ receive what the fasting Christian receives less of. Let the self-denial of one who undertakes it willingly become the support of the one who has nothing. Let the voluntary want of the person who has plenty become the needed plenty of the person in want.

Again, let there be in mild-mannered and humble spirits a compassionate ease in forgiving. Let the one who has done an injury ask pardon; let the one who has suffered an injury grant pardon; so that we may not be possessed by

Satan, whose triumph is the discord of Christians. And this, you see, is an almsdeed of great value and profit, to forgive your fellow servant a debt, so that you may be released from your debts by the Lord. The heavenly teacher recommended each sort of good work to his disciples, when he said, *Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you* (Lk 6:37-38). Remember that servant on whom his master piled back the whole debt he had forgiven, because the man didn't pay back to his fellow servant owing him a hundred dollars the same kindness as he had received over the ten billion which he had owed.³⁵

This kind of good work admits no excuses, because the means required consists solely of the will. Someone can say, "I can't fast, or my stomach will give me trouble." You can also say, "I would like to give to the poor, but I haven't got anything to spare"; or "I've only got so much, and I'm afraid of being left in want if I give anything away"—although even over these good works people often make false excuses for themselves, because they can't find genuine ones. Who, though, could possibly say, "The reason I didn't grant him pardon when he asked, is that my health prevented me, or because I didn't have a hand to hold it out to him with"? Forgive, in order to be forgiven yourself. Here the body isn't needed at all, no part of the body has to be brought to the assistance of the soul in order for what is being asked to be granted. It's all done by the will, completed by the will. Do it without worrying, give it without worrying; it won't give you a pain anywhere in the body, you won't find you have anything less in the house.

But now then, brothers and sisters, just see what kind of evil it must be not to forgive your repentant brother or sister, when you're commanded to go on loving your enemy.³⁶ That being so, since it is written, *Do not let the sun go down upon your anger* (Eph 4:26), just ask yourselves, dearly beloved, whether people should really be called Christians, who at least in these days are unwilling to put an end to animosities, which they should never have indulged in in the first place.

NOTES

1. This sermon, and to some extent the next, is obviously very different from the previous five, above all in its length. Just possibly it wasn't preached at Mass on the first Sunday of Lent, but the day before, perhaps at a sort of vigil service, which would allow the preacher more scope, scope to deal first with a question that in all likelihood only a more devout or interested elite among the faithful would ask. But all the same, it is the length of the sermon that inclines me to date it to the few years, 391 to 396, when Augustine was just a presbyter. The style, too, lacks that touch of episcopal authority that can be detected in the others. And the much more elaborate diatribe, in sections 10 and 11, against people who try out recherché Lenten recipes, smacks of the schools of rhetoric, which in those early years he had not quite grown out of.

2. A very loose theological expression, which he would probably not have been guilty of in his maturer years as a preacher. It could be taken to imply—which he certainly did not mean it to—that Christ assumed only a human body, and not a human soul; the error of Apollinaris.

3. The question really was: since he fasted after he was baptized, why do we require catechumens to fast before they are baptized, as a preparation for baptism?

4. It is quite certain that the North African Church did distinguish between Good Friday (on which, for example, Augustine preached Sermon 218, and also his discourse of Psalm 22) and Easter day as the day of Christ's resurrection. But the whole celebration of the paschal mystery, covering the three or four days up to and including Easter Sunday, was thought of in unitary terms, and could all be called the celebration of the Lord's passion—which included, supremely, its triumphant conclusion.

5. And the question of which particular day, had been, and would be, keenly, not to say bitterly, disputed between different Churches; first between the Churches of the province of Asia and other Churches in the second century: what is known as the quartodeciman controversy, because they kept Easter on the 14th day of the month (the day of Passover), whatever day of the week it was; and later, from the seventh century, between the Celtic Churches of the British Isles and the other Latin Churches; and nowadays between the Churches which follow the Gregorian calendar and those in the East which have retained the Julian.

6. See Acts 19:1-7; also 18:25; 1:5.

7. A constant point of his argument against the Donatists: that it is not really the minister of the sacrament, whoever he may be, saint or sinner, apostate or believer, that baptizes, but Christ, who uses the minister as his mere instrument.

8. Not, at least, as a religious sacrament.

9. See Col 2:11-12. By the sacrament of Christ's resurrection he probably means the sacrament of baptism, especially as he goes on to quote from a baptismal passage in Romans 6; though in his terminology he could quite easily call the resurrection a sacrament.

10. See Ex 12:1-14.

11. See 1 Cor 5:7.

12. Devotion in the strong Roman sense, which still survives faintly in our expression "devotion to duty." *Devotio* in pagan Rome was a religious act by which a leader devoted himself as a sacrifice to the *dii Manes*, the shades of the ancestors, in order to obtain victory in battle. The great examples of this were the consuls Decius Mus and another Decius, whose stories are told by Livy in his *History of Rome* book VIII, chapter 9, and book X, chapter 28. Saint Thomas Aquinas refers to these stories in his question on devotion in the *Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIae, 82,1.

13. A sentence almost impossible to construe or translate (in the Latin the subject is in the singular): *aut ab illecebra carnali inopia aliqua spiritali veritatis et sapientiae delectatione suspensa, ad famem sitimque sentiendam descendit ejus intentio*; clearly suffering from a surfeit of ablatives. Saint Thomas quotes it in his patristic anthology, the *Catena Aurea*, or *Golden Chain* in what is fairly evidently an abbreviated paraphrase. The best suggestion is to emend *inopia* to *in pla*. The sense would remain much the same as I have translated.

14. See Is 53:2,8.

15. See 2 Cor 5:6.

16. See Phil 1:23-24.

17. See Rv 5:5.

18. See Rv 4:7.

19. See Ps 104:20.

20. See Mk 9:29.

21. *Devorator*, a very unusual word, occurring in the Vulgate in Wis 12:5, and possibly in Augustine's version in Jgs 14:14, Samson's riddle about the lion he had killed.

22. See 2 Cor 5:6.

23. Reading *jam gratum* . . . instead of the *tam gratum* . . . of the text, which would mean "the so acceptable . . ."

24. See Rom 8:6.

25. Where in fact the prophet is saying something quite different, and much less gratifying: we have conceived and brought forth wind. The "of salvation" properly belongs, with a negative, to the next sentence.

26. A *denarius* in Latin. See the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, Mt 20:1-13. It will be clear in a moment why it has to be translated "tenner." I then leave out an explanatory sentence which it is impossible to put into English, and which he introduces just to remind his listeners that *denarius*, which just meant a coin of common currency (like a dime), really was connected with the number ten, just as we might need reminding that a dime is. The sentence omitted is: *Sicut autem ternarius a tribus, quaternarius a quattuor, ita denarius a decem nomen accepit*; just as ternarius comes from three, quaternarius from four, so denarius got its name from ten.

27. See Jn 16:22.

28. See 1 Cor 7:5.

29. See Ex 24:18; 1 Kgs 19:8; Lk 4:7.

30. See Mk 9:4.

31. Sundays, of course; perhaps also prominent saints' days.

32. This presumably means the whole of Lent, seen as a preparation for Easter. That no preacher nowadays, I imagine, would ever presume to suggest such a thing, and in such terms, to married couples, indicates that the official Christian mind has grown much more humane in its attitude to sexuality.

33. The town water supply in the ancient world was probably not always very hygienic.

34. See Lk 18:22.

35. See Mt 18:23-35.

36. See Mt 5:44.

SERMON 211

DURING LENT

Date: before 410¹

Anger is one thing, hatred quite another

1. These holy days which we are spending in the keeping of Lent prompt me to speak to you about fraternal concord; so that any of you who have complaints against others should settle them in order not to be settled once and for all yourselves. Don't treat these matters lightly, my dear brothers and sisters. This mortal and brittle life, you see, is in constant danger among so many earthly trials and temptations, and we have to pray to be saved from drowning in it, because it is impossible even for just persons to live it without all sorts of sins. There is in fact only one remedy which makes it possible for us to live it; that our teacher, God, taught us to say in prayer, *Forgive us our debts just as we too forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12). We have made a pact and agreement with God, and put our signature in the bond to a condition for the canceling of the debt. *Forgive us*, we ask, full of confidence if we too forgive; but if we don't forgive, we shouldn't imagine we are forgiven our sins. Don't let's deceive ourselves, people mustn't deceive themselves, God doesn't deceive anybody.

It's human to get angry—and if only we could avoid that too—it's human to get angry; but your anger, born as a tiny cutting, mustn't be watered by suspicion and grow into the beam of hatred. Anger is one thing, after all, hatred quite another. Even a father, I mean, is often angry with his son, but he doesn't hate his son; he's angry in order to correct him. If the reason he's angry is in order to correct him, it means he's angry because he loves him. The reason why it was said, *You see the speck in your brother's eye, but you don't see the beam in your own eye* (Mt 7:3), is that you blame anger in someone else, and hold on to hatred in yourself. Compared with hatred, anger is a speck; but if you cherish the speck, it will become a beam; if you pluck it out and throw it away,² it will be reduced to nothing.

Whoever hates his brother or sister is a murderer

2. If you noticed it—did you notice?—the statement of the blessed John, when his letter was read, ought to have terrified you. He said, you see, *The*

darkness has passed, the true light is already shining. Then he goes on to add, *Anyone who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness still* (1 Jn 2:8-9). But perhaps you think it's the sort of darkness that people endure when they are locked away in dungeons. If only it was that sort! And yet nobody wants to be in that sort of darkness. But in the darkness of dungeons even innocent people can be locked up. In that sort of darkness, after all, the martyrs were locked up. Darkness was swirling all round them, and light was blooming in their hearts; in those dark dungeons they couldn't see anything with their eyes, but with brotherly love they were able to see God.³

Do you want to know what this darkness is like, about which it says, *Whoever hates his brother is in darkness still?* In another place he says, *Whoever hates his brother is a murderer* (1 Jn 3:15). Whoever hates his brother walks about, goes out, comes in, travels, loaded with no chains, locked up in no dungeon, and yet he's bound hand and foot by guilt. Don't imagine he's without a dungeon; his dungeon is his own heart. When you hear, *Whoever hates his brother is in darkness still*, in case by any chance you should make light of mere darkness, he says in addition, *Whoever hates his brother is a murderer*. You hate your brother, and walk around without a care in the world, and are unwilling to make it up, even though that's why God is giving you a breathing space? Look, you're a murderer, and you're still alive; what if you had an angry God to deal with, and you were suddenly snatched away together with your hatred of your brother? God is sparing you; mind you spare yourself, and make things up with your brother. But perhaps you are willing to, and he isn't? That should be enough for you; you now have reason to feel sorry for him; you've paid your debt. Say, if you want to make it up with him and he won't, say without a qualm, *Forgive us our debts just as we too forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12).

Pardon your brother or sister

3. Perhaps you sinned against him, you want to make it up with him, you want to say to him, "Brother, forgive me, I've sinned against you." He, though, doesn't want to forgive, doesn't want to cancel the debt; he doesn't want to let you off what you owe him. He's got to think about the time when he has to pray. When he comes, this fellow who didn't want to forgive you the wrong you perhaps did him, when he comes to the prayer,⁴ what is he going to do? He can say, *Our Father who are in heaven*; he can say, further, *Hallowed be your name*. Yet again, say, *Your kingdom come*. Continue, *Your will be done, as in heaven also on earth*. Keep strolling along: *Give us today our daily bread*. You've had your say.

As for what comes next, just see if perhaps you would rather skip over it and say something else. There's no way you can get round it, you're caught there. So then say, or if there's no reason why you should say *Forgive us our debts*, don't say it. And then what about what the same apostle said, *If we say that we do not have any sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8)? If, however, your consciousness of frailty is biting you, and the abundance

of iniquity everywhere in this life, then say, *Forgive us our debts*. But notice what comes next. I mean, you were unwilling to forgive your brother a sin, and are you going to say *as we forgive our debtors*? Or aren't you going to say it? If you're not going to say it, you're not going to receive anything; if you are going to say it, you're going to say something false. So say it, and let what you say be true. How is what you say going to be true, if you have refused to let your brother off for the wrong he did you?

A friendly approach is a way of asking pardon

4. I've been giving him a talking to; now I've some comfort for you, whoever you are, if you are there at all, who said to your brother, "Forgive me the wrong I did you." If you said it from the bottom of your heart, if with genuine humility, not with a pretense of love, as God can see in your heart how you said it, but the other fellow refused to forgive you, don't be anxious. You're both servants, you have a Lord; you owe your fellow servant a debt, he refused to forgive you; appeal to the Lord of both of you. Let that servant exact, if he can, what the Lord has forgiven you.

I've something else to say. I've given the person a good talking to, who wouldn't forgive his brother when he asked to be forgiven, warning him to do what he wouldn't, in case when he prays he doesn't receive what he desires. I have also advised the one who asked pardon for his sin from his brother and didn't get it, that he can be sure of getting from his Lord what he didn't obtain from his brother. There's also something else I must advise you about. Your brother has sinned against you, and has refused to say to you, "Forgive me the wrong I've done you."⁵

There's plenty of that weed about; if only God would uproot it all from his field, that is from your hearts! How many people there are, I mean, who know they've sinned against their brothers or sisters, and won't say, "Forgive me." They weren't ashamed to sin, and they're ashamed to beg pardon; they weren't ashamed of iniquity, and they're ashamed of humility. So first of all I'm admonishing those of you who have a quarrel with your brothers or sisters, and then you send for yourselves and examine yourselves and pass a just judgment on yourselves, inside in your hearts, and find that you ought not to have done what you did, ought not to have said what you did; beg pardon, brothers and sisters, from your brothers or sisters, do what the apostle said: *Forgiving one another just as God too has forgiven you in Christ* (Eph 4:32); do it, don't be ashamed to beg pardon.

Yes, I'm saying this to everybody, to men and women, to young and old, laity and clergy, I'm saying it to myself as well; let us all listen, all fear, if we've sinned against our brothers and sisters. We've been granted a truce to live a little longer, that's no reason why we should die. We are still alive, you see, we haven't yet been condemned; as long as we live, let's do what we're told to by the Father who will be our judge, and beg pardon from the brothers or sisters, whom perhaps we've given some offense to, done some harm to by sinning against them.

There are persons of humble status in terms of this world's classes, who start putting on airs if you ask their pardon. This is what I mean: sometimes a master sins against his slave—because even though one's a master, the other a slave, still they are both the slaves of a third party, because both have been bought by the blood of Christ. Still, it seems hard that I should give this command, this injunction, that if a master happens to wrong his slave, by unjustly picking on him, unjustly beating him, he should say, "Forgive me, please grant me pardon." Not that he ought not to do it, but in case the other should start getting proud. So what then? In the presence of God he must be sorry, in God's eyes he must punish his heart, and if he can't say to his slave, because it isn't fitting, "Please grant me pardon," he must speak to him in a friendly way.⁶ A friendly approach is a way of asking pardon.

If you are ready to forgive, you have already forgiven

5. It remains for me to address those who have been wronged by others, and those who have done them wrong have refused to ask pardon. I mean, I've already spoken to those who have refused to grant pardon to the brothers or sisters who ask for it. So now, when I'm addressing all of you about not letting your quarrels continue, because these are holy days, I expect there are some of you who have been thinking to yourselves, that you know you have some quarrels with your brothers or sisters, and you are quite certain that it isn't you that have done them wrong, but they that have wronged you. Even if you aren't talking to me now, because it's my job to speak in this place, and yours to keep quiet and listen, still, perhaps you are talking in your thoughts, and saying to yourselves, "I want to make it up, but he did me harm, he sinned against me, and won't ask my pardon."

So what now? Am I going to say, "You go to him and ask pardon"? Certainly not. I don't want you to lie, I don't want you to say, "Please grant me pardon," when you know perfectly well you didn't sin against your brother. I mean, what good does it do you, when you accuse yourself like that? Why ask to be forgiven by someone you haven't done any harm to, or haven't sinned against? It doesn't do you any good, I don't want you to do it. You're well aware, are you, you've been over it all thoroughly, you're certain that he sinned against you, not you against him? "I'm certain," he says. Then let this certainty of yours be your decision; don't come to this brother of yours who sinned against you, and ask his pardon for nothing. There ought to be third party peace makers between you, who can scold him into first asking pardon from you. All you must do is be ready to forgive, totally ready to forgive him from the heart.

If you are ready to forgive, you have already forgiven. You still have something to pray for; pray for him that he may ask your pardon; because you know it is bad for him if he doesn't ask for it, pray for him that he may ask. Say to the Lord in your prayer, "Lord, you know I didn't sin against that brother of mine, but that he rather sinned against me, and that it does him no good that he sinned against me, if he doesn't ask my pardon; I am asking you, in all sincerity, to forgive him."

May we keep Easter without any anxiety

6. So there you are; I've told you what, especially during these days of your fasting, of your Lenten observances, of your continence, what you—and I too—ought to do, in order to be at peace with your brothers and sisters. Let me too rejoice over your peace, just as I am saddened by your quarrels, so that *all of you forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against someone else* (Col 3:13), we may keep Easter without any anxiety, without any anxiety celebrate the passion of the one who owed nobody anything, and paid the price for all debtors. I mean, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ, who sinned against nobody, and practically the whole world sinned against him, and yet he didn't exact any punishment but promised a reward.

So we have him as a witness in our hearts, that if we have sinned against anyone, we sincerely ask pardon; that if anyone has sinned against us, we are ready to grant pardon, and that we pray for our enemies. Don't let's expect to be avenged, brothers and sisters. What is being avenged, but feeding on somebody else's misfortune? I know that people come every day, kneel down, bang their foreheads on the ground, sometimes wash their faces with tears, and in all this humility and distress of soul, say: "Lord, avenge me, kill my enemy." By all means pray that he may kill your enemy, and save your brother; let him kill enmity, animosity, and save nature. Pray like this that God may avenge you: may the one who was persecuting you perish, but the one who can be restored to you remain.⁷

NOTES

1. So Kunzelmann and La Bonnardière; Fischer tentatively suggests 412-415. If pressed, I think I would cast my vote with him. I call this a sermon during Lent rather than at the beginning of Lent, because he sticks undeviatingly to one particular point, the putting of an end to quarrels and animosities, and doesn't enlarge at all on the general significance of the penitential season; and more concretely because of the way he phrases the first sentence. So it was probably preached on the second or third Sunday of Lent, or one of the Saturday evenings preceding them.

2. An oblique reference to Mt 5:29, and parallel passages, about plucking out your eye and throwing it away, if it causes you to stumble, or scandalizes you.

3. Because God is love—and love is God; 1 Jn 4:8.16.

4. The prayer *par excellence*, the Lord's prayer.

5. He doesn't start on this point, in fact, until section 5 below; he continues first to dot the i's and cross the t's of what he has just been saying.

6. He makes a similar provision in his *Rule*, about religious superiors not being required to beg their subjects' pardon, in case it should damage their authority. There could be two minds about that.

7. In other words, may he—or she—be converted, as Saul was, and turned into a new person, a friend, as Saul was turned into Paul.

SERMON 211A

DURING LENT: A FRAGMENT

Date: uncertain¹

Until the passion, penance; after the resurrection, praise

1. So our Lord Jesus Christ presented us in his passion with all the difficulties and the daily grind of this present age; while in his resurrection he presented us with the eternal and blessed life of the age to come. Let us endure the present, hope for the future. That's why during these days, we spend the days that signify the difficulties of the present age by grinding our souls, as it were, with fasting and discipline; while during the days to come, after Easter, we signify the days of the age to come. We aren't yet there; I said "we signify them," not "we possess them." Until the passion, you see, penance; after the resurrection, praise.

Here we do one thing and another; there one thing

2. That, you see, will be our business in that life, in the kingdom of God: to see him, to love him, to praise him. What, after all, are we going to do there? In this age there are works of necessity, others of iniquity. What are the works of necessity? Sowing, plowing, planting, sailing, milling, cooking, weaving, and any other similar works of necessity; and those good works of ours are also works of necessity: breaking your bread to the hungry² is not a necessity of yours, but it is one of the person you are breaking your bread to. Welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, redeeming the captive, visiting the sick, giving advice to the uncertain, freeing the oppressed, all these belong to almsgiving; they are works of necessity.

What are the works of iniquity? Stealing, robbing, getting drunk, gambling, exacting usury; and who can count all the acts of iniquity? Well, in that kingdom there won't be any works of necessity, because there won't be any neediness there; and there won't be any works of iniquity, because there won't be any troublemaking there. Where there's no neediness, there are no works of necessity; where there's no malice, there are no works of iniquity. What, after all, are you going to do in order to eat, when nobody's hungry? How are you going to

perform those works of mercy? Who can you break bread to, when nobody is in need? What sick people can you visit, where perpetual health is the rule? What dead persons can you bury, where immortality never dies? The works of necessity vanish; as for the works of iniquity, if you've done them here, you don't get there.

What are we going to do there? Tell me. Sleep? Yes, here people who have nothing to do just sleep. But there's no sleep there, because there's no weariness. So we aren't going to perform works of necessity, aren't going to sleep—what are we going to do? None of us must be afraid of boredom, none of us must imagine it's going to be so boring there. Do you find it boring now to be well? You can get tired of anything and everything in this age; can you get tired of being well? If you don't get tired of good health, will you get tired of immortality? So what activity are we going to engage in? *Amen* and *Alleluia*. Here, you see, we do one thing and another; there one thing,³ I don't say day and night, but day without end; what the powers of heaven, the Seraphim, say now without ever getting bored: *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth* (Is 6:3).

They say this without getting bored. Does your pulse, now, ever get tired? As long as you live, your pulse goes on beating. You do something, and you get as tired as tired can be, and you rest, and you go back to work, and your pulse never tires. Just as your pulse never grows tired in your condition of good health, so your tongue and heart never grow tired of the praises of God in your condition of immortality. Listen to a testimony of what your business is. What do I mean by "your business"? The business I mean is leisure.⁴ What can leisurely business be? Praising the Lord. Listen to this statement of it: *Blessed are those who dwell in your house*. That's what the psalm says: *Blessed are those who dwell in your house*. And as though we were to ask what makes them blessed: "Will they have a lot of gold?" Those who have a lot of gold have a lot of misery. Those who dwell in your house are blessed. What makes them blessed? This is what their blessedness consists of: *They will praise you for ever and ever* (Ps 84:4).

NOTES

1. One cannot really date fragments; the first section of this fragment appears in the Maurist edition of Sermon 217, which for the rest is only intermittently like Sermon 217 in this edition. There was clearly a big mix-up of manuscripts. But this "fragment" strikes me as being a complete sermon in itself, with only a sentence or two, perhaps, missing at the beginning. Augustine doesn't mention the Transfiguration here, and I do not know if that was then the prescribed gospel for the second Sunday in Lent; but this would certainly be a most suitable sermon for that day.

2. See Is 58:7.

3. I have emended the text, which seems defective. It runs, *Hic enim agimus aliud, ibi aliud, non dico . . .* "Here, you see, we do one thing, there another, I do not say . . ." I suggest that what he is more likely to have said is: *Hic enim agimus aliud et aliud, ibi unum, non dico . . .*

4. Not, of course, the leisure industry of modern times; he has a play on words to which English does not lend itself: *Hoc negotium otium est*; the Latin for business is "nonleisure." They didn't suffer from a work ethic in those times.

SERMON 212

AT THE HANDING OVER OF THE CREED

Date: 410-415¹

Brief exposition of the Symbol

1. It's time for you to receive the Symbol² in which is briefly contained everything that is believed for the sake of eternal salvation. It's called the Symbol because of a certain similarity; the word being transferred from commercial transactions, because merchants make agreements among themselves, called symbols, which guarantee their loyalty to the terms of their association. And your association is concerned with spiritual merchandise, so that you may be like *dealers looking for a good pearl* (Mt 13:45).³ This pearl is *the charity, which will be poured out in your hearts through the Holy Spirit, who will be given to you* (Rom 5:5).⁴

One arrives at this as a result of the faith which is contained in this Symbol, as a result of your believing *in God the Father almighty, invisible, immortal, king of the ages, creator of things visible and invisible,*⁵ and whatever else genuine reason or the authority of holy scripture can fittingly say about him. Nor must you separate the Son of God from this absolute perfection and superiority. These things, you see, are not said about the Father in such a way as to be inapplicable to the one who said, *I and the Father are one* (Jn 10:30), and about whom the apostle said *who, since he was in the form of God, did not think it robbery to be equal to God* (Phil 2:6). Robbery, of course, means the seizing of what belongs to someone else, while that equality is his very nature; and thus, how will the Son not be almighty, *through whom all things were made* (Jn 1:3), since he is also *the power and the wisdom of God* (1 Cor 1:24), the wisdom about which it is written that *while she is one, she can do all things* (Wis 7:27)?

But that nature is also invisible, in the very form in which it is equal to the Father. By nature, of course, the Word of God is invisible, which *was in the beginning with God, and the Word was God* (Jn 1:1); and in that nature he also remains altogether immortal, that is totally unchangeable. I mean, the human soul is also after a fashion said to be immortal; but it can't be true immortality in something so changeable, which can fall away and make progress; so that its death is to be *estranged from the life of God by the ignorance that is in it* (Eph

4:18), while its life is to run to *the fountain of life* in order in the light of God to see light (Ps 36:9). It is to this life that you too by the grace of Christ are being revived from a kind of death which you are renouncing.

The Word of God, however, which is what the only-begotten Son is, always lives unchangeably with the Father; it neither falls away, because permanence cannot diminish, nor makes progress, because perfection cannot increase. He too is king of the ages, creator of things visible and invisible, because as the apostle says, *In him all things were established in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether Thrones or Dominations or Principalities or Powers; all things were created in him and through him, and all hold together for him* (Col 1:16-17).

But since *he emptied himself*, not losing the form of God, but *taking the form of a servant* (Phil 2:7), through this form of a servant the invisible one was seen, because *he was born of the Holy Spirit and from Mary the virgin*. In this form of a servant the almighty became weak, because *he suffered under Pontius Pilate*; through this form of a servant the immortal one died, because *he was crucified and buried*; through this form of a servant the king of ages *on the third day rose again*; through this form of a servant the creator of things visible and invisible *ascended into heaven* from where he had never departed; through this form of a servant *he is seated at the right hand of the Father*, whose arm he is, of which the prophet says *And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?* (Is 53:1). In this form of a servant *he is going to come to judge the living and the dead*, the form which he chose to share with the dead, though he is the life of the living.

Through him the Holy Spirit was sent to us from the Father and from himself, the Spirit of the Father and the Son, sent by both, begotten by neither, the unity of both, equal to both. This Trinity is one God, almighty, invisible, immortal, king of the ages, creator of things visible and invisible. Nor, you see, do we say that there are three Gods, or three almighties or three creators or anything else that can likewise be said about God's absolute supremacy, because they are not three Gods, but one God. Although in this Trinity the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father, and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son; but the first is the Father of the Son, the second the Son of the Father, the third the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. Believe, in order to understand, because *unless you believe, you will not understand* (Is 7:9).

From this faith you must hope for the grace by which all your sins will be forgiven.⁶ By this grace, you see, *you will be saved—not of yourselves, but it is God's gift—not by works, lest perhaps any one should preen himself*. The fact is, you will be *his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in the good works which God has prepared, for you to walk in them* (Eph 2:8-10); so that laying aside all that is old and stale, and *putting on the new self* (Eph 4:24), you may be a *new creature* (1 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), singing *the new song* (Ps 144:9; Rv 5:9), ready to receive an eternal inheritance in terms of the new covenant. On the strength of this, you must also hope, after the death which has spread to all human beings, which was owed and actually paid to the stale old age of the first man, you must

hope at the end for the resurrection of your bodies;⁷ not to suffer pain and grief, which is what the wicked are going to rise again to, nor to enjoy what the flesh desires, as silly people think, but as the apostle says, *it is sown embodying the soul, it will rise again embodying the spirit* (1 Cor 15:44). Then the body will be so subordinate to the spirit enjoying the beatific vision, so adapted with a marvelous felicity to enjoying every facility,⁸ that no longer will it *weigh down the soul* (Wis 9:15), nor require any sustenance because it will experience no wear and tear. But it will abide in eternal life, where eternity itself will be life for our spirit together with the body.

Keep the Symbol in your memory

2. So now, I have paid my debt to you with this short sermon on the whole Symbol. When you hear the whole of this Symbol,⁹ you will recognize this sermon of mine briefly summed up in it. And in no way are you to write it down, in order to retain the same words; but you are to learn it thoroughly by hearing it, and not write it down either when you have it by heart, but keep it always and go over it in your memory.¹⁰ After all, everything you are going to hear in the Symbol is already contained in the divine documents of the holy scriptures, from which you regularly hear extracts as the need arises.¹¹

But the fact that the Symbol, put together and reduced to a certain form in this way, may not be written down, is a reminder of God's promise, where he foretold the new covenant through the prophet, and said, *This is the covenant which I will draw up for them after those days, says the Lord; putting my laws into their minds, I will write them also on their hearts* (Jer 31:33). It is to illustrate this truth that by the simple hearing of the Symbol it is written not on tables,¹² or on any other material, but on people's hearts. The God who has called you to his kingdom and his glory will ensure that it is also written on your hearts by the Holy Spirit, once you have been born again by his grace; so that you may love what you believe, and faith may work in you through love.¹³ In this way may you please the Lord God, the giver of all good things, not out of fear of punishment like slaves, but out of a love of justice like free people. So this is the Symbol which has already been imparted to you as catechumens through the scriptures and sermons in church, but which has to be confessed and practiced and made progress in by you as baptized believers.

NOTES

1. The Creed, or Symbol, was "handed over" to those to be baptized at Easter, in the African Churches probably on the fourth Sunday of Lent; to be "given back" the following Sunday, when the Lord's prayer was next "handed over."

2. I have to keep the term "symbol" here, because he goes on to explain it. I suppose it was the usual commercial word for any kind of contract.

3. Rather oddly, Augustine changes Matthew's single dealer into a company of them, and his plural pearls into a single one! The explanation of the latter change is that he has in mind the one pearl of great price of the next verse.

4. Again he modifies his text, from the past tense to the future, because the catechumens he is addressing, not yet having been baptized, have not yet received the Holy Spirit.

5. See 1 Tm 1:17; 6:15-16; Col 1:15.16.

6. Here the words of the creed are clearly being paraphrased, not quoted; they are being fitted to the case of the catechumens, whose sins have not yet been forgiven, but will be when they are baptized.

7. Again, presumably, a slight paraphrase of the words of the creed.

8. He is thinking, I suppose, of what the body of the risen Christ could do and did, such as suddenly appearing and disappearing; and he is saying that the bodies of the just will have the same facility in the resurrection.

9. He preached before the creed was formally "handed over"—recited, no doubt, by the catechists to their charges in groups or classes. In this sermon he has not in fact quoted the whole of it. He does so in Sermon 213, which was probably preached several years before.

10. This was an old discipline, possibly intended in bygone days to stop the creed coming to the knowledge of persecutors and scoffers. The only reason for it Augustine can now give is a purely symbolic one.

11. This last phrase reads rather oddly, especially in the Latin, and should perhaps be omitted, as it is by the Maurists.

12. Referring to the stone tablets of the law.

13. See Gal 5:6.

SERMON 213

AT THE HANDING OVER OF THE CREED

Date: before 410¹

We are now hoping for what we are to receive

1. The apostle says, *It shall come to pass, everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved* (Rom 10:13).² It is to this salvation that you are hastening, all of you that have given in your names for baptism; a salvation, a welfare, not for a short time but for eternity; a salvation, a welfare, which is not shared by us and the animals, nor by good people and bad. You can see, of course, and it is plain to all of us, that present welfare or health, which people work so hard to obtain or restore, is something not only human beings have, but also animals, great and small; from dragons³ and elephants down to flies and worms does this kind of health extend. Furthermore, human beings enjoy this kind of health or welfare, both those who call upon God and those who blaspheme God.

That's why the holy psalm says, *Men and beasts will you save, Lord, as your mercy has been multiplied, O God; but the sons of men shall hope under the shelter of your wings.* So this salvation or welfare, by the multiple mercy of God, reaches to the least of animals; *but the sons of men*, who belong to the Son of man, *shall hope under the shelter of your wings.* That's what we are doing in this life; we are now hoping for what we are to receive afterward. And what does this very psalm promise us? *They shall get drunk on the richness of your house, and from the torrent of your pleasure you will give them to drink, since with you is the fountain of life* (Ps 36:7-9). The fountain of life is Christ; so that we might have some taste of it now, he became man; but its richness is being kept for us, which now more than satisfies the angels and all the heavenly ministries.⁴

But this comes later; now though, so that we may be able to reach that, let us call upon God, so that we may be saved, according to the apostle who said, *Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved* (Rom 10:13). The prophet had said this before;⁵ but Paul the apostle was saying that the time had now passed for the fulfillment of what was written, *Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* I have already said with what kind of

salvation or welfare, in case you should now say, "Why have those who call upon the name of the Lord not been saved?"; it says "shall be saved."⁶

Then the apostle himself added, *But how shall they call upon one in whom they have not believed? Or how can they believe in one whom they have not heard of? Or how shall they hear without a preacher? Or how shall they preach if they are not sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those bringing the good news of peace, bringing good news* (Rom 10:14-15).⁷ So nobody can be saved who doesn't first call upon him; nobody can call upon him unless they first believe. So because that's the right order, that you should first believe, afterward call upon him, today you receive the Symbol of faith, in which to express your faith; while in eight days time it will be the Prayer, with which to call upon him.⁸

I believe in God the Father Almighty

2. So the Symbol is a briefly compiled rule of faith,⁹ intended to instruct the mind without overburdening the memory; to be said in a few words, from which much is to be gained. So it's called a Symbol, because it's something by which Christians can recognize each other; that is what I shall first briefly recite to you. Then, as far as the Lord is good enough to grant, I will open it up for you, so that you may be able to understand what I want you to retain. This is the Symbol.¹⁰

After the Symbol

It isn't very much, and it is very much; there's no need for you to count the words, but rather to weigh them. *I believe in God the Father almighty*. Notice how quickly it's said, and how much it's worth. He's God, and he's Father; God in power, Father in goodness. How lucky we are, to have discovered that our God is our Father! So let us believe in him, and promise ourselves everything from his kindness and mercy, because he is almighty. That's why we believe in God the Father almighty.

Nobody must say, "He can't forgive me my sins."

"How can't he, being almighty?"

"But," you say, "I've sinned so much."

And I say, "But he's almighty."

And you: "I've committed such sins as I can't possibly be cleansed and delivered from."

I reply, "But he's almighty."

Notice what you sing to him in the psalm: *Bless the Lord, my soul*, it says, *and do not forget all his recompenses, who shows himself gracious to all your iniquities, who heals all your weaknesses* (Ps 103:2-3). That's what we need him to be almighty for.

The whole of creation needs this, of course, in order to be created; he is almighty for making greater things and lesser things, almighty for making heavenly things and earthly things, almighty for making immortal things and mortal things, almighty for making spiritual things and material things, almighty

for making visible things and invisible things; great in the great things, and not small in the least things; in a word, he is almighty for making whatever he has wished to make.

I mean, let me tell you how many things he can't do. He can't die, he can't sin, he can't lie, he can't be deceived or mistaken; so many things he can't do, and if he could do them he wouldn't be almighty. So believe in him and confess him; *For with the heart one believes unto justice, but with the mouth one makes confession unto salvation* (Rom 10:10). That's why, once you have believed, you must confess, when you give back the Symbol.¹¹ So receive now what you are to retain, and afterward to give back, and never to forget.

Christ, the only Son of the Father, was made flesh

3. What's next? *And in Jesus Christ. I believe, you say, in God the Father almighty, and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord.* If the only Son, then equal to the Father; if the only Son, then of the same substance as the Father; if the only Son, then almighty with the Father; if the only Son, then co-eternal with the Father. All this in himself, and with himself, and with the Father.¹²

What for our sakes? What's in it for us? *Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary.* There you have how he came, and who, and to whom; by the virgin Mary, in whom not the man she was married to but the Holy Spirit acted; he made her fruitful while she remained chaste, and he preserved her intact. So that's the way in which the Lord Christ was clothed with flesh, the way the one who made man was made man; by taking on what he was not, not by losing what he was.

The Word, you see, was made flesh, and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14). Not "the Word was turned into flesh," but remaining the Word, by receiving flesh, though always invisible he became visible when he wished, *and dwelt among us.* What's "among us"? Among human beings; he became one of a number of human beings; one, and "only." "Only," for the Father; and for us, what? And for us the only savior; and for us the only redeemer; because nobody besides him is our redeemer; a redeemer, not with gold, not with silver, but with his own blood.

Crucified—buried in the flesh

4. So let us take a look at that commercial transaction of his by which we were bought. You see, after it says in the Symbol, *Born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,* what now did he suffer for us? It continues, *Under Pontius Pilate crucified and buried.* What? The only Son of God, our Lord, crucified? The only Son of God, our Lord, buried? The man was crucified, God wasn't changed, God wasn't killed; and yet, as man, God was killed. *For if they had known,* says the apostle, *they would never have crucified the Lord of glory* (1 Cor 2:8). He both showed that he was the Lord of glory, and confessed that he was crucified. Because if someone even tears your tunic without harming your skin, he does you an injury, and you don't shout on behalf of your clothes,

“You’ve torn my tunic,” but “You’ve torn me, you’ve ruined me, you’ve cut me to ribbons”.¹³ You are undamaged as you say that, and yet you’re telling the truth, and the one who injured you hasn’t taken any skin off you.

That’s the way, too, that the Lord Christ was crucified. He is the Lord, he is the only Son of the Father, he is our savior, he is the Lord of glory; yet he was crucified, but in the flesh, and buried in the flesh alone. I mean, where he was buried and when he was buried, then and there, there was no soul, but flesh alone was lying in the tomb; and yet you confess, *Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary*. Who was? Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, our Lord. *Under Pontius Pilate crucified*. Who was? Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, our Lord. *And buried*. Who was? Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, our Lord. “Flesh alone lies there, and you say ‘Our Lord’?” I do say it, certainly I do; because I observe the clothes, and I worship the one clothed. That flesh was his clothes, because *since he was in the form of God, he did not think it robbery to be equal to God; but he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, not losing the form of God, being made in the likeness of men, and found in habit as a man* (Phil 2:6-7).¹⁴

He rose, he ascended into heaven, he sits at the right hand of God

5. Let us not think lightly, though, of that flesh alone; when it lay there, that is when he bought us. How is it that he bought us? Because he didn’t lie there forever.¹⁵ *On the third day, you see, he rose again from the dead*. That’s what comes next in the creed; when we have confessed his passion, we also confess his resurrection. What did he do in his passion? Taught us what to endure. What did he do in his resurrection? Showed us what to hope for. Here the work, there the reward. The work in the passion, the reward in the resurrection.

Nor, because he rose again from the dead, did he stay here; but what comes next? *He ascended into heaven*. And where is he now? *He is seated at the right hand of the Father*. Understand the right hand properly, don’t go looking there for a left hand. God’s right hand means eternal felicity; God’s right hand means inexpressible, incalculable, incomprehensible blessedness and well-being. That’s the right hand of God, that’s where he’s seated. What does that mean, that’s where he’s seated? That’s where he lives; one talks, after all, about where someone lives as his seat.¹⁶ I mean, when Saint Stephen saw him, anyone who said *He is seated at the right hand of the Father* wouldn’t be lying. I mean, how did Stephen put it? *Behold, I see heaven opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God* (Acts 7:56). Because he saw him standing, perhaps anyone would be lying, who said at that time, *he is seated at the right hand of the Father*? He’s seated, so it means he stays, he lives there. How? The same way as you do. How does he stand?¹⁷ Who can say? Let us say what he taught, let us say what we know.

Christ, our judge and our advocate

6. And what's that? *From there to come to judge the living and the dead. Let us confess him as savior, in order not to fear him as judge. Whoever believes in him now, you see, and carries out his commands, and loves him, won't be afraid when he comes to judge the living and the dead; not only won't be afraid, but will wish he would come. After all, what could be more fortunate for us than the coming of the one we desire, the coming of the one we love?*

But we should be afraid, because he will be our judge. The one who will be our judge then is the one who is our advocate now. Listen to John: *If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, he said, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to purify us from all iniquity. I have written this to you, so that you should not sin; and if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the just one;¹⁸ and he is the appeasement for our sins (1 Jn 1:8-9; 2:1-2).* If you had a case, to be tried by some judge, and you instructed counsel, you would be defended by the counselor, who would conduct your case as best he could; and if he didn't complete it, and you heard he was going to come as the judge, just imagine how overjoyed you would be, because the one who a short while before had been your advocate could now himself be your judge.¹⁹ And now he is praying for us himself, he himself is interceding for us.²⁰ We have him as our advocate, and are we to fear him as judge? On the contrary, because we have sent him ahead as our advocate, we can hope without a qualm for his coming back as judge.

The Holy Spirit

7. That's the end in the creed of what concerns Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, our Lord. It goes on, *And in the Holy Spirit*, to complete the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.²¹ But about the Son many things are said, because the Son took on a man; the Son, the Word, became flesh; not the Father, not the Holy Spirit. But the whole Trinity made the flesh of the Son; the Trinity, you see, works inseparably. So take the Holy Spirit in such a way that you don't believe him to be less than the Son, to be less than the Father. The Father, you see, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the whole Trinity, are one God; there is no difference here, no variation, nothing defective, nothing contrary to another; eternal equality, invisibility, immutability of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. May the Trinity deliver us from the multitude of our sins.

The Church is like Mary because it is a virgin and gives birth

8. Now follows what concerns us: *In the holy Church.* The holy Church is what we are; but I don't mean "we" in the sense of just those of us who are here, you that are listening to me now; as many of us as are here by the grace of God Christian believers in this Church, that is in this city, as many as there are in this

region, as many as there are in this province, as many as there are also across the sea,²² as many as there are in the whole wide world, since *from the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the Lord is praised* (Ps 113:3). Such is the Catholic Church, our true mother, the true consort of that bridegroom.

Let us honor her, because she is the bride of so great a Lord. And what am I to say? Great and unheard of is the bridegroom's gracious generosity; he found her a whore, he made her a virgin. She mustn't deny that she was once a whore, or she may forget the kindness and mercy of her liberator. How can she not have been a whore, when she used to go fornicating after idols and demons?²³ Fornication of the heart was there in all her members, fornication of the flesh in some of them; of the heart in all. And he came, and made her a virgin; he made the Church a virgin. In faith she is a virgin; in the flesh she has a few virgins, the nuns; in faith she should have all of us virgins, both women and men. In that sphere, you see, there should be universal chastity and purity and sanctity.

Well, do you want to know how the Church is a virgin? Listen to the apostle Paul, listen to the friend of the bridegroom, jealous for the bridegroom, not for himself: *I have joined you*, he says, *to one husband*. He was speaking to the Church; and to which Church? Wherever his letter could reach. *I have joined you to one husband, to present you to Christ as a chaste virgin. But I am afraid*, he said, *that just as the serpent seduced Eve by his cunning, so your minds may be corrupted from the chastity which is in Christ* (2 Cor 11:2-3). If you are afraid of being corrupted, it means you are a virgin. *I am afraid*, he said, *that just as the serpent seduced Eve by his cunning*. Did that serpent lie with Eve physically? And yet he extinguished the virginity of her heart. *This is what I am afraid of*, he said, *that your minds may be corrupted from the chastity which is in Christ*.

So the Church is virgin; let her be virgin; let her beware of being seduced, or she will find herself corrupted. The Church is a virgin. You're going to say to me, perhaps, "If she is a virgin, how does she give birth to children? Or if she doesn't bear children, how is it we gave in our names²⁴ to be born of her womb?" I answer: she is both virgin, and she gives birth. She imitates Mary, who gave birth to the Lord. Didn't the virgin, Saint Mary, both give birth and remain a virgin? So too the Church both gives birth and is a virgin. And if you really think about it, she gives birth to Christ, because those who are baptized are his members, parts of his body. *You*, says the apostle, *are the body of Christ, and members of it* (1 Cor 12:27).

The forgiveness of sins by baptism and the Lord's prayer

9. *In the forgiveness of sins*. If this were not to be had in the Church, there would be no hope. If the forgiveness of sins were not to be had in the Church, there would be no hope of a future life and eternal liberation. We thank God, who gave his Church such a gift. Here you are; you are going to come to the holy font, you will be washed in saving baptism, you will be renewed in *the bath of rebirth* (Ti 3:5), you will be without any sin at all as you come up from that bath. All the things that were plaguing you in the past will there be blotted out.

Your sins will be like the Egyptians, hard on the heels of the Israelites; pursuing them, but only as far as the Red Sea. What does it mean, as far as the Red Sea? As far as the font, consecrated by the cross and blood of Christ.

What's red, after all, reddens. Can't you see how part of Christ²⁵ reddens? Ask the eye of your faith; if you can see the cross, observe the blood; if you can see what's hanging on it, observe what he shed. The side of Christ was pierced with a lance, and our price poured out.²⁶ That's why baptism is signed with the sign of Christ²⁷—I mean the water in which you are dipped, and as it were pass over in the Red Sea. Your sins are your enemies; they follow, but as far as the sea. When you yourselves enter the sea, you escape them, they will be blotted out as the water overwhelmed the Egyptians, while the Israelites escaped dryshod. And what does scripture say? *Not one of them remained* (Ps 106:11). You have sinned much, you have sinned little; you've committed great sins, you've committed little sins; it makes no difference; *not one of them remained*.

But since we are going to go on living in this world, where nobody can live without sin, for that reason the forgiveness of sins is not confined only to the washing clean of sacred baptism, but is also to be had in the Lord's prayer which is also a daily prayer, and which you are going to receive in eight days' time. In it you will find, as it were, your daily baptism.²⁸ So you must thank God for having granted his Church this gift, which we confess in the creed; so that when we say *in the holy Church*, we join onto it *in the forgiveness of sins*.

Resurrection of the flesh

10. After this, *the resurrection of the flesh*. That is now the end of it; but the resurrection of the flesh will be the end without end; but after it there will be no death of the flesh, no pain of the flesh, no distress of the flesh, no hunger and thirst of the flesh, no afflictions of the flesh, no old age and weariness of the flesh. So don't shudder at the prospect of the resurrection of the flesh; observe what's good about the flesh, forget its ills.²⁹ Certainly, certainly, whatever fleshly complaints there may be now, there won't be any then. We shall be eternal, *the equals of the angels of God* (Mt 22:30), we will share one city with the holy angels.

We shall be possessed by the Lord; we shall be his inheritance, and he will be our inheritance; as we say to him now, *Lord, the share of my inheritance* (Ps 16:5); and about us it says to the Son, *Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance* (Ps 2:8). We shall possess and be possessed, own and be owned. What am I to say? We worship and are worshiped; but we worship him as our God, we are worshiped, that is, cultivated, by him as his field.³⁰

To realize that we are cultivated, listen to the Lord: *I am the true vine, you are the branches, my Father the field worker* (Jn 15:1.5). If he is called the field worker, he works or cultivates the field. What field? He cultivates us. And the cultivator of this visible earth can plow, can dig, can plant, can irrigate, if he finds water—but can he rain? Cause growth, produce buds, cause trees to take root, push them up into the fresh air, put strength in their branches, load them

with fruit, clothe them with leaves—can the cultivator do all that? But our cultivator, God the Father, can do all these things in us. Why? Because we believe in *God the Father almighty*. So hold on to what I have put before you and what, as God has been good enough to grant me, I have explained.

In eight days the repetition of the Symbol

11. In eight days time you are going to give back what today you have received. Let your parents, who support you,³¹ start teaching you, so that you may be found ready; teaching you how you should wake up at cockcrow for the prayers which you celebrate here.³² Now we begin by giving you the Symbol here, so that you may diligently learn it by heart; but none of you must get into a state, and because of such agitation fail to give it back. Don't worry, we are your fathers,³³ we aren't carrying the canes and switches of schoolteachers. If any of you get the words wrong, at least don't get the faith wrong.

NOTES

1. This sermon was probably preached several years before Sermon 212. The preacher seems a little more scrupulous about the actual words of the creed, than we found him to be in that sermon. And indeed from this sermon we can reconstruct the actual form of the creed in the Church of Hippo Regius. It is in substance the same as the apostles' creed we have today, which is the old baptismal creed of the Roman Church. But there are minor variations in detail. And on this it is to be noted that Augustine doesn't always quote it in quite the same form. His other sermons on the same topic show variations; just as he didn't always quote the Lord's prayer in quite the same way in his sermons on that subject. These sermons on the creed were all, naturally, preached in Hippo Regius.

2. Augustine actually quotes the words straight from J1 3:5, which Paul was quoting; the opening formula, "it shall come to pass," is not there in Romans.

3. Lewis & Short's Latin Dictionary informs us that it was particularly the Epidaurian snake, which wealthy Romans often kept as pets, that was known as a *draco* or dragon. This was almost certainly a python, the emblem of the god Aesulapius at the shrine of Epidaurus, and a python is presumably what Augustine also had in mind.

4. That is, the Cherubim and Seraphim, Thrones, Dominations, Principalities and Powers; here distinguished from angels who are, strictly speaking, only messengers—the bellhops of the heavenly court.

5. J1 3:5.

6. His key word is "hope"; *they shall hope beneath the shelter of your wings*. We are now saved in hope, *spe*, not yet in fact, *re*.

7. Again, Augustine quotes the prophet, Is 52:7, more fully than Paul does.

8. The handing over of the Lord's prayer, a week later; in eight days' time, according to the Roman method of counting both ends: thus tomorrow is two days after today, counting both today and tomorrow.

9. Here he seems to be adverting to the root meaning of the Greek word *symbolon*, of something "put together." In Sermon 212 he referred to the word's use in common commercial language; here he goes on to allude to yet another common meaning, as a token or proof of identity, something like a passport, or password.

10. Here he recited the creed, which we can reconstruct from this sermon as follows:

I believe in God the Father almighty;
 and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord,
 who was born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary;
 under Pontius Pilate crucified and buried,
 on the third day he rose again from the dead;
 he ascended into heaven;
 he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
 from there to come to judge the living and the dead;
 and in the Holy Spirit;
 in the holy Church;
 in the forgiveness of sins;
 in the resurrection of the flesh.

11. In a week's time, before going on to have the "Prayer" handed over to them. Giving back the creed, of course, meant reciting it. Did all the catechumens have to do this one by one, or could and did they all recite it together, with the baptized faithful joining in too? If so, that is just possibly the origin of our present practice in the Latin Church of always reciting the creed at Mass on Sundays, at precisely the point where "the Mass of the catechumens" ends, and they are dismissed (*Ite, missa est*), and the "Mass of the faithful" begins with the "prayer of the faithful"; recently restored in the reformed liturgy.

12. This series of "if then's" must not be taken as meant to state logical consequences, which clearly they do not; but as stating the actual content of that word "only" in the faith of the Church; a content set out more expressly in the Symbol of Nicea and Constantinople, which has come to be the one recited at Sunday Mass, and which had originated, it seems, as the baptismal creed of some Eastern Churches, notably the Palestinian.

13. He is skating on rather thin theological ice here, comparing the flesh, or humanity, of Christ to clothes one puts on and takes off. It could be interpreted as Nestorianism, denying the union of Christ's two natures, human and divine, in one person. But at other times he will use language that could be interpreted as the opposite error of Eutychianism, as the Monophysite heresy. And he does go on to say that it was the divine person who was crucified and buried.

14. I translate *in habitu* literally as "in habit" (though elsewhere I have used some word like "condition") because I think he is using this word to justify his calling the flesh, that is the human nature of Christ, a garment, which "habit" can still mean in certain contexts. Some ladies, possibly, still wear riding habits when they go riding, and monks and nuns wear religious habits.

15. A very condensed piece of theology here. We usually talk of our being bought, or redeemed, by the blood of Christ. But his shedding of his blood means his death, and his death means his dead body in the tomb. But his death would have been ineffective, had he not been raised from the dead.

16. Only, nowadays in Britain as a rule, when talking of the landed aristocracy.

17. *Quo statu?* I interpret this as referring to Stephen having seen the Son of man standing—though it is a rather odd way of saying it. But it is a question he was bound, by his own turn of mind and technique, to ask, although he decided here not to answer it. The most likely answer is that Christ "sits" at the Father's right hand as judge, and "stands" as advocate. Augustine does indeed go on to talk of him as advocate and judge in the next section.

18. See Wis 2:12.

19. A situation which, I presume, would have been as highly irregular in Roman law then, as it would be, doubtless, in any system of law today!

20. See Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25.

21. The trinitarian structure of the creed, expressing faith in each of the divine persons in turn, goes with its being, basically, the original baptismal formula "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." One was baptized, by triple immersion, while answering in the affirmative the question, "Do you believe in God the Father . . . ? And in Jesus Christ . . . ? And in the Holy Spirit . . . ?"

22. On the European shores of the Mediterranean, especially in Italy.

23. He has in mind here just the Church of the Gentiles.

24. It is one of the catechumens supposedly speaking.

25. By part of Christ, *pars Christi*, he must mean the blood of Christ. It is a most peculiar expression.

26. See Jn 19:34.

27. He is referring, I imagine, to the blessing of the font before the baptisms are performed.

28. Catholic readers today will find it odd that he doesn't here mention the sacrament of penance. But in those days it took a very different form from what it does now, and was only for very grave sins, which he certainly was not going to tell the catechumens that they would be unable to avoid. In the Lord's prayer he is referring, of course, to the petition, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

29. He is speaking in an intellectual climate, which many Christians still perhaps inhabit, in which the concept of the immortality of the soul makes easy sense and the doctrine of the resurrection of the body does not; even less when it is phrased as the resurrection of the flesh. It was his own connatural intellectual climate, so to say; and here he is valiantly—to change the metaphor—swimming against the tide, as the official faith and doctrine of the Church has always done.

30. The two meanings of *colo*, impossible to reproduce in English.

31. Their sponsors or godparents, not their real parents. After baptism the newly baptized will be known for the whole Easter season as "infants."

32. What this means I do not know. Perhaps from this day until the Easter vigil those to be baptized had extra prayers and spiritual exercises.

33. We; all the clergy, I think he means.

SERMON 214

AT THE HANDING OVER OF THE CREED

Date: 391¹

The Symbol

1. Now that I am assisting as a minister at the altar, which you are soon going to approach, I must not cheat you out of the ministry or service of a sermon. I will do my best, for the love I have for you, to the extent that my age² and my inexperience allow, and the fact that I am only a new recruit in the office I have been entrusted with.

The apostle says: *Since if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that the Lord raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto justice, and with the mouth one makes confession unto salvation* (Rom 10:9-10). This is what the Symbol builds up in you, what you must both believe and confess, so that you may be saved. And indeed, the things you are going to receive in a short enough form, to be committed to memory and repeated by word of mouth, are not new things which you haven't heard before. I mean, you are quite used to hearing them in the holy scriptures and in sermons in church.³ But they have been compressed into a brief summary, and reduced to a definite, tightly knit order; and that is how they are to be handed over to you, to build up your faith and to prepare you to confess it, without burdening your memories. This then is what you are faithfully going to retain, and to give back from memory.⁴

After this introduction, the whole Symbol is to be recited without any exposition accompanying it: I believe in God the Father almighty, and the rest that follows in it. You know that it is not customary to write this Symbol down. That being said, the following exposition is to be added.

God created all from nothing

2. All that you have heard so briefly you must not only believe, but also commit to memory word for word and repeat by word of mouth. But it has to

be defended against people who think differently, having been taken prisoner by the devil; people who set traps for your faith in their opposition to your salvation. So remember that you believe that God is so almighty that there is absolutely no nature which he did not create.⁵ And that's why he punishes sin, which he didn't make, because it befouls nature, which he did make.

So all visible and invisible creatures, anything that having a rational mind can partake of unchangeable truth, like angels and human beings; anything that lives and senses, though it lacks intelligence, as are all animals on the land, in the waters, in the air, walking, crawling, swimming, flying; anything that without intelligence, without sensation, is said in any way to live, such as the things that are fixed in the earth with roots, and bud forth and break out and grow up into the fresh air; anything that just occupies space by its mere bulk like a stone, and whatever elements of the world's mass can be perceived or even touched;⁶ all these things the Almighty has made, joining the highest and the lowest by the ones in the middle,⁷ and arranging all that he has created in appropriate places and times.

But he didn't make them out of some material which he hadn't made himself. He did not, you see, form something belonging to someone else, but himself set up what he would form. People, I mean, who say that he couldn't make anything out of nothing—well, how can they believe that the maker of it is almighty? They are undoubtedly denying he is almighty, if they say that God couldn't have made the world if he hadn't had something to make it out of. After all, what sort of omnipotence would it be, if he were so dependent, that like a craftsman he could not put his work into effect without the provision of some material he had not set up himself? These are the sorts of opinions and errors, then, from which you must purge your minds if you believe in an almighty God.

You see, what is called the formless matter of things, being receptive of forms and subject to the action of the creator, is convertible into all the things the creator may be pleased to make. God didn't find it, like something co-eternal with himself, out of which to construct the world; but he himself set it up from absolutely nothing, together with the things he made out of it; nor was it there before the things that appear to have been made out of it. And thus the Almighty made all things in the beginning out of nothing, and with them simultaneously made what they are made of. And so the material of heaven and earth, just as these were created *in the beginning* (Gn 1:1), was simultaneously co-created with them. And there wasn't anything there out of which could be made what God made in the beginning; and yet everything the Almighty made was made, and once made he put it all together, filled it all, furnished it all. You see, if he definitely made out of nothing what he made in the beginning, he is also capable of making whatever he wishes out of the things he has made, because he is almighty.⁸

God knows how to make good use of the bad

3. The wicked have no reason to believe that God is not almighty, just because they do many things that are against his will. Because even when they do what

he does not wish, he will himself do with them what he does wish. In no way, therefore, do they either change or defeat the will of the Almighty; because whether a person is justly damned or mercifully delivered, the will of the Almighty is fulfilled. So it is only what the Almighty does not will that he cannot do.⁹ So he makes use of bad people in accordance, not with their warped will, but with his straight and true will. Because just as bad people make bad use of their good nature,¹⁰ that is of his good work, so he being good makes good use even of their bad works, lest the will of the Almighty should be in any respect thwarted.

You see, if he being good had no means of making just and good use of bad people, he would in no way allow them either to be born or to live; he did not himself make them bad, because what he made them was human; because what he created was their natures, not their sins which are against nature.¹¹ However, with his foreknowledge he could not be unaware that they were going to turn out bad. But just as he knew the bad things they were going to do, so he also knew the good things he was going to do with them.

Who could find the words to explain, or the praises to do justice to the immeasurable good conferred on us by the passion of the savior, in which his blood was shed for the forgiveness of sins? And yet this stupendous good was achieved through the malice of the devil, through the malice of the Jews, through the malice of the traitor Judas. Nor does justice require that they should be rewarded for the good that God, not they, has conferred through them on the human race; rather it is just that punishment should be meted out to them, since their will was to do harm.

But just as we have been able to find a case which would be manifest even to us, of how God has made good use even of the bad works of the devil and the Jews and the traitor Judas for our redemption and salvation, so too in the hidden and secret recesses of the whole of creation, which neither our eyes nor our minds are sharp enough to penetrate, God knows how he makes good use of the bad, so that in everything that comes to be and is accomplished in the world the will of the Almighty may be fulfilled.

The Almighty cannot do what he does not will

4. But as I said that the only thing the Almighty cannot do is what he does not will, in case anybody should consider it was very rash of me to say that the Almighty cannot do something, the blessed apostle said it too: *If we do not believe, he remains faithful, he cannot deny himself* (2 Tm 2:13). But it is because he does not wish to that he cannot do it, because he cannot even have the will to. Justice, after all, cannot have the will to do what is unjust, or wisdom will what is foolish, or truth will what is false.

Thus we are advised that almighty God not only, as the apostle says, *cannot deny himself*, but cannot do many things as well. Here am I saying it, and it's by his truth I dare to say what I dare not deny: almighty God cannot die, cannot change, cannot be deceived or mistaken, cannot be miserable, cannot be de-

feated. Perish the thought that the Almighty should be able to do these and suchlike things. And so it is that truth not only shows he is almighty because he cannot do these things, but also requires anyone who can do them not to be almighty. God, you see, is willingly whatever he is; so he is willingly eternal and unchangeable and truthful and blessed and undefeatable. So if he can be what he does not wish, he is not almighty; but he is almighty, which is why he is capable of whatever he wishes. And therefore what he does not will he cannot be,¹² the reason he is called almighty being that he is capable of whatever he wishes. As the psalm says about him, *In heaven and on earth he has done whatever he has willed* (Ps 135:6).

Jesus Christ, the only Son of the Father

5. Almighty God, therefore, who has done all that ever he has willed, begot the one and only Word through which all things were made; but this not out of nothing, but from himself; that's why he didn't make him, but begot him. *In the beginning, you see, he made heaven and earth* (Gn 1:1), But he didn't make the Word in the beginning, because *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (Jn 1:1). This is God from God, while the Father is God, but not from God. This is the only Son of God, because no other son is of the Father's substance, co-eternal, equal to the Father. God the Word, not like a word whose sound can be thought of in the mind and uttered by the lips, but as it says, and it cannot be put better or more succinctly, *The Word was God*. Abiding unchangeably with the Father, and himself also unchangeable with the Father, about him the apostle says, *Who, since he was in the form of God, did not think it robbery to be equal to God* (Phil 2:6). It's his nature, after all, not robbery, to be equal to the Father. That's how we believe *in Jesus Christ the only Son of God the Father, our Lord*.

Born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary

6. He, though, who in the form of God did not think it robbery to be equal to God, and through whom we were created, in order to seek and to save that which was lost (Lk 19:10), *emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and found in condition as a man* (Phil 2:7). And thus we believe in him that *he was born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary*. Each birth of his, you see, must be considered wonderful,¹³ both that of his divinity and that of his humanity. The first is from the Father without mother, the second from mother without father; the first apart from all time, the second at the acceptable time (2 Cor 6:2); the first eternal, the second at the right moment; the first without a body *in the bosom of the Father* (Jn 1:18), the second with a body, which did not violate the virginity of his mother; the first without either sex, the second without a man's embrace.¹⁴

The reason, though, that we say *born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary*, is that when the holy virgin inquired of the angel, *How shall this come about?*

he answered, *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.* Then he added, *Therefore the holy one to be born of you shall be called the Son of God* (Lk 1:34-35). He didn't say, "The one to be born of you shall be called the Son of the Holy Spirit." The point is, the whole man, that is, rational soul and body, was assumed by the Word, so that the one Christ, the one Son of God, might be not only Word, but Word and man; and this whole, this totality, is the Son of God the Father because of the Word, and the Son of man because of the man. In that he is the Word he is equal to the Father; in that he is man the Father is the greater.¹⁵ And together with the man he is the Son of God, but because of the Word, by whom the man was assumed; and together with the Word he is the Son of man, but because of the man who was assumed by the Word.

It is because of his holy conception in the virgin's womb, brought about not by the burning lust of the flesh but by the glowing charity of faith, that it says *born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary*; the first mentioned as sanctifying, not as begetting; the second as conceiving and giving birth. *Therefore*, he said, *the holy one to be born of you shall be called the Son of God.* Because *holy*, that's why *of the Holy Spirit*; because *to be born of you*, that's why *of the virgin Mary*.¹⁶

Crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried

7. It was necessary though, that in the man assumed not only should the invisible one be seen, and the one co-eternal with the Father be born in time, but also that the untouchable one should be seized, the unconquerable one be hung on the tree, the inviolable one fixed there with nails, and that life and immortality should die on the cross, be buried in the tomb; all this the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. From this it follows that we must believe with the heart unto justice and confess with the mouth unto salvation,¹⁷ that this same only-begotten Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, not only was born a human being of a human being, but also suffered the human lot right up to death and burial.

For since the only Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, Word and man, or to put it more explicitly, Word, soul and flesh, is a single whole, to this whole is referred that in soul alone was he sorrowful unto death,¹⁸ because it was the only Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was sorrowful; to this whole is referred that only as man was he crucified, since it was the only Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was crucified; to this whole is referred that only in the flesh was he buried, since it was the only Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ who was buried. From the moment, you see, that we have begun to say that we believe in *Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord*, from that moment with reference to anything else we say about him we understand "Jesus Christ the only Son of God our Lord."

Nor should this surprise you; I mean, we say that the only Son of God Jesus Christ our Lord was buried, though only his flesh was buried, in the same way as, for example, we say that the apostle Peter today lies in his tomb, though we

may also, and very truly say that he is rejoicing with Christ in eternal rest. We mean the same apostle, of course; after all there aren't two Peters who are apostles, but only one. So we are saying about the same person, both that he's lying in the tomb in his body alone, and that in his spirit alone he is rejoicing with Christ.

It adds *under Pontius Pilate*; whether it's a detail to fix the true date, or to underline more definitely the humility of Christ, that he suffered such terrible things under a human judge, though he himself is going to come with such dread authority as judge of the living and the dead.

*Rose from the dead, ascended into heaven,
seated at the right hand of the Father*

8. But *on the third day he rose again*, in his true flesh, which however was certainly not going to die anymore. This his disciples proved with their eyes and hands, nor would such goodness deliberately mislead their faith, nor truth deceive it. But it's for the sake of brevity that it immediately adds that *he ascended into heaven*. Because he was with his disciples for forty days, in case if he were straightaway withdrawn from their sight, such a great miracle as his resurrection should be thought to be a mockery and an illusion.

Where is he now *seated at the right hand of the Father*? This is something we should look at carefully with the eyes of faith, or we may start thinking that he is immovably fixed in some seat, so that he isn't allowed to stand or walk. I mean, just because Saint Stephen said he saw him standing,¹⁹ it doesn't mean either that he saw something untrue or that he upset the words of this creed. Far be it from us to think such a thing, far be it from us to say it. But his dwelling in sublime and inexpressible bliss is signified in this way, by saying that he is seated there. Thus dwellings are also called seats, as when we ask where someone is, and the answer comes, "At his seat."²⁰ And especially about the servants of God it is very often said, "That person has sat in this or that monastery for so many years"; that is, has rested, settled, dwelt. Nor is holy scripture ignorant of this way of speaking; that man Shimei was ordered by king Solomon to live in Jerusalem city, with the added threat that if ever he dared to leave it, he would pay the penalty; and we are told he sat, or resided there for three years, which means he lived there.²¹

As for the right hand of the Father, it isn't meant in the manner of the structure of the human body, as though he is on the Son's left, if the Son in terms of bodily positions and relationships is placed on his right. But the right hand of God means the inexpressible peak of honor and good fortune, as we read it said about wisdom: *His left hand under my head, and his right hand embraces me* (Sg 2:6).²² If earthly convenience has been lying underneath, then eternal felicity is embracing from above.

He will come to judge the living and the dead

9. So from his sublime dwelling in heaven, where his body, already immortal, is now, our Lord Jesus Christ is going *to come to judge the living and the dead*, according to the plainest evidence of the angels, as it is written in the Acts of the Apostles. As his disciples, you see, were gazing at him ascending into heaven, and trying to bring him down again with their anxious looks,²³ they heard the angels say, *Men of Galilee, why are you standing here? This Jesus, who has been taken away from you, will come in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven* (Acts 1:11). This firmly puts down much human arrogance of all sorts.²⁴ Christ will judge in the same form as that in which he was judged.²⁵

That, you see, is how the apostles saw him ascending into heaven, when they heard that that was how he was going to come. That form will be plainly visible to the living and the dead, to the good and the bad; whether we understand the good to be indicated by the name of the living and the bad by the name of the dead; or whether we take those as the living whom his coming will find not yet to have ended this life, and the dead those whom his presence will raise, as he says himself in the gospel: *The hour will come when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice, and those who have done good will come forth to the resurrection of life, those who have done evil to the resurrection of the judgment* (Jn 5:28-29). Those ones will see him in the form of the man in whom they believed, and these of the man whom they despised. *For the godless will be taken away, as the prophet says, lest he should see the glory of the Lord* (Is 26:10 LXX). And *Blessed are the pure in heart, because they shall see God* (Mt 5:8). Let that be enough about Jesus Christ the only Son of God our Lord.

The Holy Spirit

10. We also believe *in the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father* (Jn 15:26), yet is not a son; who *abides upon the Son* (Jn 1:32), and is not the father of the Son; who *receives from what is the Son's* (Jn 16:14), and yet is not a son of the Son; but is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, the Holy Spirit and himself God. I mean, if he weren't God, he wouldn't have such a temple as the apostle mentions: *Do you not know that your bodies are the temple in you of the Holy Spirit, whom you have from God?* (1 Cor 6:19). Not the temple of a creature, but of the creator. I mean, far be it from us to be the temple of a creature, when the apostle says, *For the temple of God is holy, which is what you are* (1 Cor 3:17).

In this Trinity there is not one thing greater and another less, no division of operations, no dissimilarity of substance. The Father is the one God, the Son the one God, the Holy Spirit the one God.²⁶ And yet Father and Son and Holy Spirit are not three gods, but one God; in such a way that the one who is the Son is not the Father, nor the one who is the Father the Son, nor is the Holy Spirit either the Father or the Son; and each of these is one, and the Trinity itself one God. Let this faith impress itself on your hearts and guide your confession. On hearing this, believe so that you may understand; so that by making progress you may be able to understand what you believe.²⁷

The holy Church, the forgiveness of sins

11. Also *the holy Church*; honor, love, proclaim her as your mother, the Jerusalem which is above, the holy city of God.²⁸ She it is who, in this faith which you have heard, bears fruit and grows in the whole world, *the Church of the living God, the pillar and buttress of the truth* (1 Tm 3:15); who tolerates the wicked in the communion of the sacraments,²⁹ knowing that they are due to be separated from her at the end, and withdrawing from them meanwhile in the dissimilarity of her morals. This Church has received *the keys of the kingdom of heaven* (Mt 16:19) for the sake of her grains of corn now groaning among the chaff, but destined to be piled manifestly in the granaries at the final winnowing.³⁰ This is so that in her, through the blood of Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit, there may be had *the forgiveness of sins*. In this Church the soul which had been dead in its sins comes to life again, in order to be made alive with Christ, by whose grace we have been saved.³¹

The resurrection of the flesh

12. But we ought not to have any doubts either about this mortal flesh, which is going to rise again at the end of the world. *For this perishable thing must put on imperishability, and this mortal thing put on immortality* (1 Cor 15:53). *It is sown perishable, it will rise imperishable; it is sown in disgrace, it will rise in glory; it is sown embodying a soul, it will rise embodying a spirit* (1 Cor 15:42-44). This is the Christian, this the Catholic, this the apostolic faith.

Believe Christ when he says, *Not a hair of your head shall perish* (Lk 21:18), and thrusting out all unbelief, reflect upon it to the best of your ability. I mean, can anything of ours be ignored by the redeemer as valueless, when he cannot ignore even one of our hairs? Or how can we doubt that he is going to give life to our soul and our flesh, when for our sakes he both assumed soul and flesh in which to die, and laid them down when he died, and received them back so that death need no more be feared?

As required by my ministry, I have explained to your graces everything that is given in the Symbol. The reason it is called a symbol is that in it is contained the prescribed faith and pledge of our association, and it is by confessing it, as by giving a password, that the faithful Christian can be recognized.³²

NOTES

1. Nearly all the authorities date this sermon as early as this, even calling it the first among his sermons to have been preserved, preached shortly after his ordination as presbyter of Hippo Regius. Perler dates it more precisely to 15 March 391, the Saturday before the fourth Sunday in Lent. The reason for this early dating is clear: the reference to himself in the first sentence as a new recruit among the Church's ministers, and as being comparatively young (see next note).

However, one scholar, Verbraken, dates the sermon to a little over 20 years later. Though I do not have access to his argument, I think I can see at least one reason why he does so. In Sermon 213, note 13, I remarked that Augustine was skating on rather thin theological ice in what he was saying about the humanity of Jesus, comparing it to a tunic. Here on the contrary, in section 7, he is much more theologically sure-footed, more exact. Now I do not think it can be maintained that Augustine's theology grew more careless the older he got. I think we can take it as a kind of rule that a better theological statement from him, at least in christology, is a later theological statement.

Is it then possible to reconcile these two views? I do not know how Verbraken deals with that opening sentence of the sermon; but I think reconciliation is possible, and the clue lies, I suggest, in the paragraph of stage directions, so to say, at the end of section 1. This clearly indicates that Augustine wrote the sermon—or dictated it beforehand—rather than preaching it extempore, which became his usual practice in later life; or at the very least it indicates that he had it written down, for future use, after preaching it. That being so, he may have decided, some time after 412, to revise it and perhaps preach it again, in a way that he hardly ever did with most of his sermons; though when he wrote his *Revisions* at the end of his life, he clearly hoped he would be able to do so.

2. In the spring of 391 he was a few months over 36.

3. Nearly all those he was addressing would have been catechumens for perhaps two or three years, or more, and would have heard many sermons and scripture readings.

4. In a week's time, at the "giving back" of the creed.

5. He is briefly warning them against the Manichees, who denied that the good God and Father of Jesus Christ created matter. He goes on to say, without explaining, that God did not make sin; but that is because sin, and evil in general, is not "a nature," but just "a lack," a kind of moral black hole.

6. The four elements of ancient physics and chemistry, fire, air, water and earth.

7. The human being is seen as the main, if not the only central link, being both material and spiritual by nature.

8. He will discuss the whole topic of creation out of nothing in his book *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*.

9. A very questionable statement on the face of it, one he failed to revise, if my theory about the sermon, offered in note 1, is correct. But he goes on to explain himself in section 4, more or less as meaning that the Almighty cannot be anything he does not wish to be, and specifies such things as being unjust. The statement here still remains questionable.

10. That is, their human nature; not "good nature" in the sense in which we call some people good-natured.

11. All sins are against nature; he is not thinking of what is commonly called unnatural vice.

12. This is the right way of putting what he expressed much more dubiously in section 3. See note 9 above.

13. There seems to be a remote allusion here to Is 58:8: *Who will declare his generation?* in Augustine's version.

14. *Sine ullo sexu*: I translate *ullo* by "either," because if I put "without any sex," it would convey the sense of "without any sexual act." But *sexus* is never used in that sense; it means the male or female sex. In the first, eternal birth of the Son neither sex was involved—God the Father not being of the male sex; in the second birth in time of the Word made flesh, only the female sex.

15. See Jn 14:28.

16. The text continues: "because *Son of God*, that's why *the Word made flesh*." But this is quite out of context; he is explaining the words of the creed, and the phrase "the Word made flesh" does not occur in this article of the creed. I reject the sentence as the gloss of an over-enthusiastic and not over-bright owner or reader of a manuscript.

17. See Rom 10:10.

18. See Mk 14:34.

19. See Acts 7:51.

20. See Sermon 213, note 16. To the next example I can think of no equivalent in modern English. The word "reside," of course, comes from the Latin *resideo*, literally "I sit back."

21. See 1 Kgs 2:36-39.

22. It looks as if he takes wisdom to be the speaker, which means he identifies the bride of the Song of Songs as representing the divine wisdom. But wisdom is nearly always identified with Christ, which means with the bridegroom in the Song of Songs. But he may be thinking that the Son, wisdom, is saying this about the Father. His further comment is distinctly opaque.

23. *Et eum suspensis aspectibus deducentes*. I cannot think what else this could mean.

24. Another opaque sentence: *Repressa est multa et diversa continens humana presumptio*. I don't know how presumption can contain anything.

25. That is, in the form of a servant, Phil 2:7.

26. Another densely opaque statement: *Unus Pater Deus, unus Filius Deus, unus Spiritus Sanctus Deus*. Where to locate subject and predicate is anybody's guess.

27. An elaborate allusion to Augustine's favorite misquotation, from Is 7:9, which in his version ran "Unless you believe, you shall not understand."

28. See Gal 4:26; Rv 21:2.

29. Unlike the Donatists. He was pointing out to his catechumens the difference between the Catholic Church and its great rival in Africa.

30. See Lk 3:17.

31. See Eph 2:5.

32. See Sermon 213, note 9.

SERMON 215

AT THE GIVING BACK OF THE CREED

Date: uncertain¹

Always retain the Symbol in mind and heart

1. The Symbol of the most sacred mystery, which you received all together, and have given back today one by one,² contains the words in which the faith of mother Church is solidly based on the firm foundation which is Christ the Lord. *For no other foundation can anybody lay, besides the one that has been laid, which is Christ Jesus* (1 Cor 3:11). So you have received and given back what you must always retain in mind and heart, what you should recite in bed, think about in the streets, and not forget over your meals; in which even when your bodies are asleep your hearts should be awake.

On renouncing the devil, you see, and withdrawing your minds and hearts from his parades and his angels,³ you must forget the past, reject as worthless the staleness of the old life, and join the new man⁴ in renewing life itself in holy behavior; and as the apostle says, *forgetting what lies behind, and stretching out to what lies ahead, follow on toward the palm of God's summons up above* (Phil 3:13-14); and you must believe what you cannot yet see, so that you may deservedly attain to what you have believed. *For why should one hope for what one can see? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience* (Rom 8:24-25).

We believe in God the Father Almighty

2. So this faith is also a rule for salvation, to *believe in God the Father almighty, creator of all things, king of the ages, immortal and invisible* (1 Tm 1:17). He is indeed the almighty God who at the origin of the world made all things out of nothing, who is before the ages, and who made and governs the ages. He doesn't, after all, grow with time, or stretch out in space, nor is he shut in or bounded by any material; but he abides with and in himself as full and perfect eternity, which neither human thought can comprehend, nor tongue describe. I mean, *if neither eye has seen nor ear heard the gift which he promises his saints, nor has it come up into the heart of man* (1 Cor 2:9), how can either

the mind conceive, or the heart consider, or the tongue describe the one who made the promise?

What cannot be suitably spoken can be faithfully believed

3. We believe also in his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, true God from true God,⁵ God the Son of God the Father, but not two gods. He, after all, and the Father are one,⁶ and through Moses he instills the truth into the people, when he says, *Hear, Israel, the commandments of life; the Lord your God is one God* (Dt 6:4). But if you want to work out how the eternal Son was born of the eternal Father without time, the prophet Isaiah reproves you, when he says, *His birth who will explain?* (Is 53:8). And so you can neither work out nor explain the birth of God from God; all you are permitted to do is believe it, so that you may be saved, as the apostle says: *But it is necessary for the one who approaches God to believe that he is, and that he will be a rewarder of those who seek him* (Heb 11:6).

But if you desire to know about his birth according to the flesh, which he was pleased to take to himself for our salvation, listen, and believe that he was *born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary*. Although, this birth of his too, who will explain? Who, after all, can put a proper value on the fact that God was willing to be born a human being for the sake of human beings, that a virgin conceived without male seed, that she gave birth without loss of virginity, and that after giving birth she retained her integrity? Our Lord Jesus Christ, you see, was pleased to enter the womb of a virgin, undefiled to lodge in the body of a woman, to make his mother fruitful without her losing her virginity, to be formed by himself and come out, opening⁷ the undamaged womb of her that bore him; all this in order to shed upon her from whom he was pleased to be born both the honor of being a mother, and the holiness of being a virgin. Who can work this out, who can explain it? So this birth too, *who will explain?*

Whose mind, after all, would be sufficient to ponder, whose tongue to express, not only that *in the beginning was the Word* who had no beginning to his being born, but also that *the Word became flesh* (Jn 1:1.14), choosing a virgin to make a mother for himself, making himself a mother whom he would also preserve as a virgin? The Son of God with no mother conceiving him, the Son of man with no man begetting him; bringing fruitfulness to a woman by his coming, not depriving her of her integrity by his being born. What is this? Who can tell it? Who can keep quiet about it? And wonderful to relate, what we are not capable of expressing we are not permitted to pass over in silence. We proclaim out loud in words what we cannot comprehend in the silence of our thoughts. Indeed we are unable to express this stupendous gift of God, because we are too little to explain his greatness; and yet we are obliged to praise him, lest by keeping silent we should remain ungrateful. But thank God, that what cannot be suitably spoken can be faithfully believed.

*The blessed Mary conceived by believing
the one whom she bore by believing*

4. So let us believe in *Jesus Christ our Lord, born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary*. You see, the blessed Mary herself conceived by believing the one whom she bore by believing. When she was promised a son, you see, and inquired how this might be, since she did not know a man, there was of course only one way known to her of conceiving⁸ and giving birth, which she hadn't indeed experienced herself, but had learned about in the natural way of things from other women; namely that a person is born of a man and a woman. Well, she received this answer from the angel: *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; for that reason the holy one to be born of you will be called the Son of God*. When the angel said this, she was so full of faith that she conceived Christ in her mind before doing so in her womb, and said, *Behold the maidservant of the Lord; may it happen to me according to your word* (Lk 1:34-38).

"May there be," she said, "one conceived in a virgin without the seed of man; may he be born of the Holy Spirit and a woman untainted, he in whom the Church may be born again untainted of the Holy Spirit. Let the holy one that will be born of a human mother without a human father be called the Son of God; since it was necessary that the one who was marvelously born of God the Father without any mother should become a son of man; and that as a tiny baby he should when born come out of a closed womb in the same flesh, as that in which as a grown man risen from the dead he would come in through closed doors."⁹ These things are wonderful, because they are divine; they are beyond our powers of expression, because they defy investigation; human lips falter in explaining them, because so do human minds in examining them. Mary believed, and what she believed came about in her. Let us too believe, so that we too may benefit from what came about.

So then, although this birth is also wonderful, just reflect, O man, what your God undertook for you, your creator for a creature; that God abiding in God, the eternal living with the eternal, the Son equal to the Father, did not disdain for the sake of the guilty and for the sake of sinful servants to put on the form of a servant.¹⁰ Nor, you see, was this something presented to humanity because it deserved it; I mean, what we deserved rather for our iniquities was punishment. But if he had noted iniquities, who would have borne it?¹¹ For the ungodly, therefore and for sinful servants the Lord saw fit to be born a servant and a man *of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary*.

Christ died for us while we were still sinners

5. Perhaps this may seem little enough, that he should come, clothed with human flesh, God for human beings, the just one for sinners, the innocent one for the guilty, the king for prisoners, the Lord for slaves; that he should be seen on earth and converse with men.¹² So in addition *he was crucified, died and was buried*. Don't you believe it? You are saying perhaps, "When did this happen?"

Listen to when: *Under Pontius Pilate*. Even the name of the judge is put there to tell you something, so that you needn't have any doubts even about the date. So believe that the Son of God *was crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried*.

But *greater love has nobody than this, that one should lay down one's life for one's friends* (Jn 15:13). Nobody, do you think? Absolutely nobody.¹³ It's true; Christ said it. Let's question the apostle, and let him answer us: *Christ, he says, died for the ungodly*. And again he says, *While we were enemies, we were reconciled with God through the death of his Son* (Rom 5:6.10). So there you are; in Christ we do find greater love, seeing that he gave up his life not for his friends but his enemies. How great must be God's love for humanity, and what extraordinary affection, so to love even sinners that he would die for love of them! *For God emphasizes his love toward us*—they are the apostle's words—*because while we were still sinners Christ died for us* (Rom 5:8).

You too, therefore, see that you believe this, and for your salvation's sake don't be ashamed to confess it. *For with the heart one believes unto justice, but with the mouth one makes confession unto salvation* (Rom 10:10). In any case, to help you not to doubt, not to be ashamed, when you first believed you received the sign of Christ on your forehead, as on the house of shame.¹⁴ Just remember your own forehead, and don't be afraid of someone else's tongue. *For whoever, says the Lord himself, is ashamed of me before men, the Son of man will be ashamed of him before the angels of God* (Mk 8:38). So don't be ashamed of the disgrace of the cross, which God himself did not hesitate to undergo for your sake. Say together with the apostle, *Far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Gal 6:14). And the same apostle will answer you himself, *I did not consider myself to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified* (1 Cor 2:2). He, at that time crucified by one people, is now fixed in the hearts of all peoples.

*The resurrection of the dead distinguishes
our life of faith from the unbelieving dead*

6. You though, whoever you are, who prefer to boast about power rather than about humility, here's something to console you, here's something for you to exult about. The one, you see, who *was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried, on the third day rose again from the dead*. Perhaps you also have your doubts about this, perhaps you hesitate. When you were told, "Believe that he was born, suffered, was crucified, dead and buried," you found that easy enough to believe about a man. Now, because you are told *on the third day he rose again from the dead*, do you hesitate, O man? Just to offer you one example out of many, look at God, think about the Almighty, and stop hesitating. I mean, if he could make you out of nothing when you didn't exist, why could he not rouse from the dead his man¹⁵ whom he had already made?

So believe, brothers and sisters; where it's a matter of faith, there's no need for a long sermon. It is only this particular point of faith which distinguishes and separates Christians from all other people. I mean that he died and was

buried, both the pagans now believe and the Jews then saw; but that *on the third day he rose again from the dead*, neither pagan nor Jew will admit. So it is the resurrection of the dead that distinguishes our life of faith from the unbelieving dead.¹⁶ The apostle Paul too, you see, when writing to Timothy, said, *Remember that Christ Jesus has risen from the dead* (2 Tm 2:8). So let us believe, brothers and sisters; we believe this happened in the case of Christ; let us hope for it's happening with us in the future. It is God, after all, who promised it; he cannot disappoint us or let us down.

Christ ascended into heaven

7. So after he rose again from the dead, *he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father*. You still don't believe, perhaps? Listen to the apostle: *The one who descended, he says, is himself the one who also ascended above all the heavens, in order to fill all things* (Eph 4:10). You are unwilling to believe in his rising again; just see you don't have to experience his judgment, because *whoever does not believe has already been judged* (Jn 3:18). You see, the one who is now seated at the right hand of the Father acting as advocate for us, *is going to come from there to judge the living and the dead*. Let us believe then, so that *whether we live, whether we die, we may be the Lord's* (Rom 14:8).

The Trinity

8. So let us believe also *in the Holy Spirit*. He is God, you see, because it is written *God is spirit*¹⁷ (Jn 4:24). Through him we have received *the forgiveness of sins*, through him we believe in *the resurrection of the flesh*, through him we hope for *life everlasting*.¹⁸ But take care you don't fall into error by counting, and imagine that I have said there are three gods, because I have given the one God a third name. There is one substance of godhead in the Trinity, one power, one might, one majesty, one name of divinity; just as he himself said to his disciples when he had risen from the dead: *Go, baptize the nations*, not in several names, but *in the one name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit* (Mt 28:19). So believing then in the divine Trinity and the threefold unity, take care, dearly beloved, that no one seduces you from the faith and truth of the Catholic Church. Because, *Whoever preaches you another gospel, besides the one you have received, let him be anathema*. Listen to the apostle, not me, saying, *But even if we ourselves or an angel from heaven should preach you another gospel besides the one you have received, let him be anathema* (Gal 1:8-9).

Through the holy Church

9. You can certainly see, my dear friends, even in the very words of the holy Symbol, how at the conclusion of all the articles which belong to the sacrament of faith,¹⁹ a kind of supplement is added, which says, *through the holy Church*. So shun as best you can the many and various deceivers, the multitude of whose

sects and names it would take far too long to explain now. You see, we have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.²⁰ One thing only I urge you to take to heart, and that is by every means possible to turn your minds and your ears away from the person who is not a Catholic, so that you may be able to lay hold of *the forgiveness of sins* and *the resurrection of the flesh and life everlasting* through the one, true, and holy Catholic Church, in which we learn of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, to whom is honor and glory for ever and ever.

NOTES

1. The sermon was preached in Hippo Regius on the fifth Sunday of Lent (or the Saturday preceding it). My first inclination was to assign it to the early years of Augustine's ministry, between 391 and 395, for reasons of style; there is much professional rhetoric, but few of those homely touches that mark his preaching in his prime. But considerations set out in note 18 below I think oblige us to date the sermon late, about 425 or so. Old age, no doubt, can have the same sort of effect on a preacher's style as youthful inexperience.

2. This settles a question I raised in Sermon 213, note 11, about how the creed was given back. The opening phrase is strange; he means, I take it, the mystery of faith; in his final section 9 he refers to the sacrament of faith. The phrase has been introduced into the revised rite of the Mass as introduction to the acclamation after the consecration; doubtless retrieved from ancient patristic practice.

3. The parades, *pompae*, would be pagan festivities and all the public entertainments in amphitheater and circus (chariot races) and theater that were connected with them. The angels, I imagine, would be those addicts of these things who tried to seduce you to go along with them.

4. Christ within you. He here seems to treat "the new man" as being distinct from you and your renewed self.

5. He is clearly using the Nicene creed as a kind of commentary on the apostles' creed. But it probably did not feature in the regular liturgy, as it does today.

6. See Jn 10:30.

7. Reading *reseravit*, as suggested by the Maurists, instead of the *reservavit*, "preserved," of the text.

8. Reading *conciendi* instead of the *cognoscendi*, "knowing," of the text, which could be a very easy slip of stenographer or copyist, from the phrase *quoniam virum non cognosceret* only a few words before.

9. A somewhat artificial speech to attribute to Mary at the annunciation! But it is just drawing out, with rhetorical license, the implications of her act of faith.

10. See Phil 2:7.

11. See Ps 130:3.

12. See Bar 3:37, where the subject is the divine wisdom.

13. A very odd question to ask, and answer to give, about a general statement, such as the words of Jesus seem to be. Augustine though doesn't take them as a general statement, but as a particular one, referring to Jesus himself. He is the impersonal "one," *quis* in the Latin. There can be little doubt that this was also the thought at the back of the evangelist's mind.

14. This was probably when they were first enrolled as catechumens; the sign of the cross was marked on their foreheads. This little rite has been restored in the revised order of the Christian initiation of adults.

15. A very curious expression; we have to realize that the subject, just now called God, the Almighty, is precisely God the Son, the Word, and "his man" is the man he assumed, Jesus. The more usual way of putting it nowadays would be to say "his humanity" instead of "his man." But I think Augustine's concrete language is perhaps preferable.

16. He was not quite accurate here, because the Pharisaic Jews (all the Jews he knew in his day) believed in the resurrection of the dead, though they did not accept that Jesus had already risen from the dead.

17. Not a good proof text for the Holy Spirit being God, because it does not mean "God is the Spirit," though in Latin it could be read in that sense; but only if entirely isolated from its context.

18. This is the first time this article has appeared in his sermons on the creed. In Sermon 213,10, he says very definitely that *the resurrection of the flesh* is the last article. I think it is hardly likely that it was in the creed of the Church of Hippo when Augustine began his ministry, and was dropped later on. Much more probably it was lacking to begin with, and inserted later on to bring it into line with the practice of other Churches. See note 1 above.

19. Another way of saying "the mystery of faith." See note 2 above. The next phrase, *through the holy Church*, is also rather anomalous. In Sermon 213 it comes, where we have it in the apostles' creed, immediately after *in the Holy Spirit*, in the form *in the holy Church*.

20. See Jn 16:12.

SERMON 216

TO THE *COMPETENTES*

Date: 391¹

Who are the "competentes"?

1. The commencement of my ministry and of your conception, your beginning to be begotten by heavenly grace in the womb of faith, needs to be aided by prayer,² so that my sermon may contribute to your welfare and salvation, and your conception to my encouragement and consolation. We clergy instruct you with sermons; it is up to you to make progress in your conduct. We scatter the seed³ of the word; it is up to you to produce the crop of faith. Let us all run the course in the tracks of the Lord according to the vocation with which we have been called by him; none of us must look back. Truth, you see, who can neither be misled nor mislead, openly warns us: *Nobody putting hand to plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of heaven* (Lk 9:62).

That you indeed long for this kingdom and are aiming at it with all the energy of your minds, is shown by your very name, your being called *competentes*. What else, after all, are *competentes* but people asking together? I mean, just as *condocentes*, *concurrentes*, *considentes* simply mean people teaching together, running together, sitting together, so the word *competentes* is made up from asking together, and aiming at one and the same thing.⁴ And what is this one thing that you are asking and longing for, but what a certain person, casting aside all fleshly desires and trampling on the terrors of the world, fearlessly exclaims about: *If fortresses are arrayed against me, my heart will not fear; if war breaks out upon me, in this will I hope*. And to express what this thing might be, he went on to add: *One thing have I asked from the Lord, this will I seek; to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life*; and to explain what the blessedness of this region and dwelling consists in, he continues by declaring, *to contemplate the delight of the Lord, and to be protected by his temple* (Ps 27:3-4).

Overcome the world

2. Do you see, my fellow new boys and girls, to what delight of the Lord you will come, when you reject the delights of the world? If you despise the world,

you will have pure hearts, and you will see the one who made the world.⁵ And just as he has overcome the world, so will you too, by his grace, overcome the world.⁶ Assuredly you will overcome it and trample on it right away, if you do not presume to rely on your own strength, but on the help of the most merciful God.

Do not despise yourselves, though, just because it has not yet appeared to you what you shall be. You must know, however, that *when he appears, you will be like him*,⁷ since you will see him (1 Jn 3:2), not as he came to us *in the fullness of time* (Gal 4:4), but as, abiding forever, he was when he created us. Put off the old man, in order to put on the new.⁸ The Lord is entering into a bargain with you. You have been living for the world, giving yourselves over to flesh and blood, wearing the image of the earthly man. So just as you wore the image of the man who is from the earth, in the same way from now on wear the image of the man who is from heaven.⁹

It is a human word—because that is why the Word became flesh—that *just as you presented your bodies to sin as weapons of iniquity, so now you should present your members to God as weapons of justice* (Rom 6:19). Your attacker was armed against you for your destruction with your own missiles; against him for your salvation let your protector in turn be armed with your members. That one will do you no harm, if he doesn't possess the members you have taken away from him. This one will rightly forsake you, if your intentions and wills dissent from him.

*Do not let the seed of God's word in you
be trampled on the path or wither*

3. Look, in the auction and market of faith, the kingdom of heaven is being put up for sale to you. Take stock of the resources of your consciences and husband them; be of one mind in putting together the funds of your hearts. And yet you are buying for nothing, free, gratis, if only you can recognize the graceful grace that is being offered you. You are spending nothing, and yet what you are acquiring is just huge. Don't hold yourselves cheap, seeing that the creator of all things and of you estimates your value so high, so dear, that he pours out for you every day¹⁰ the most precious blood of his only-begotten Son.

Well, you won't be cheap in that way, if you distinguish what's precious or dear from what's cheap; if you devote yourselves to the service not of the creature but of the creator; if you do not let yourselves be dominated by your lower nature, so that free from all stain,¹¹ you may be cleansed from a grave capital sin;¹² if you do not let the seed of God's word in you, which even now the heavenly farmer is broadcasting in the field of your hearts, either be trampled on the path, as by the passing feet of the unworthy, or wither as soon as it sprouts on the solid, stony hardness of your consciences; or be stifled among the thorns and pernicious thistles of your greedy desires.

If you shun with shuddering horror the sterility of such doom-laden and damnable soil, then a rich and most fertile soil will assuredly receive you,¹³ and

to the great joy of your sower and waterer¹⁴ you will bring in a most rich return of a hundredfold; or if perhaps you are not quite equal to that, you will pay a dividend of sixtyfold interest; while if you are not even up to that standard, even a thirtyfold profit from you will not be unwelcome; because all of you will be taken up in the heavenly granaries, all of you stored away in eternal rest. That heavenly bread will be made from the produce of all, and every laborer working without guile¹⁵ in the Lord's vineyard will be abundantly and wholesomely fed upon it; while the glory of so great a sower, rainmaker, waterer, and giver of the very increase will be broadcast by the preaching of the gospel.

*You used to be conformed to the world's pattern;
now be reformed to God's*

4. Approach him, therefore, with contrite hearts, since he is near to all those who have crushed their hearts, and he himself will save you, the humble in spirit. Approach him eagerly, to be enlightened.¹⁶ You are still, you see, in the dark, and the dark in you. But you will soon be *light in the Lord* (Eph 5:8), who *enlightens every man coming into this world* (Jn 1:9). You used to be conformed to the world's pattern; now be reformed to God's. Now at last, please, grow tired of your Babylonian captivity. Here comes Jerusalem, that heavenly mother, coming to meet you on the way with a cheerful invitation, and imploring you to *choose life, and love to see good days* (Ps 34:12), which you never had and never will have in this world. Here, after all, your days were *fading away like smoke* (Ps 102:3); for them, augmentation has meant diminution, growing in length has meant becoming fewer, rising up has meant vanishing away.¹⁷

You that have lived many and bad years for sin, yearn now to live for God; not many years, to be finished some time or other, and hastening to destruction in the shadow of death; but good years, and ones that are near in the reality of genuine, lively life,¹⁸ where there will be no hunger, no thirst to wear you down, because your food will be faith and your drink wisdom. Now, you see, in the Church you bless the Lord by faith; but then, by sight you will be most copiously watered from the fountains of Israel.¹⁹

Put to death your members

5. But in the meantime, during this wandering exile, let your tears be your bread night and day, as long as to those who *say to you every day, Where is your God?* (Ps 42:10), you are unable, since they are such materialists, to demonstrate *what eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it come up into the heart of man* (1 Cor 2:9). Until you come and appear before the eyes of your God, do not give up. He too, you see, will come to pay what he has promised, since he has of his own accord declared himself a debtor. In fact, he has never been lent anything by anyone; yet he has been prepared to declare himself a debtor to his own promise. It is we who were in debt, and we were owing as much as we have sinned. He came without any debt, because without any sin; he found us op-

pressed by damaging and damnable usury, and by paying back what he had not grabbed,²⁰ he mercifully delivered us from an everlasting debt. We had pleaded guilty, were awaiting punishment; he, without becoming our companion in guilt, but becoming our companion in punishment, decided to waive simultaneously both our guilt and our punishment.

He it is, you see, who will rescue from usury and iniquity the souls of those who believe and say, each from the heart, *I believe I will see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living* (Ps 27:13). This land we have to long for, with a kind of heavenly and living heart, not a dead and earthbound one. It is the land, you see, about which someone on fire with love of it eagerly sings in another psalm, *My hope are you, my share in the land of the living* (Ps 142:5). It is the land to which those are reaching out who put to a lively death their members on earth; not the members or limbs which constitute the body we have in this world; but those members which miserably weaken the manliness of the soul. That chosen vessel,²¹ the apostle Paul, clearly designates a whole list of them, when he says, *Put to death your members which are on earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil lust, and avarice, which is the service of idols* (Col 3:5). There you have what you should put to death in this land of the dying, since you long to live in that land of the living.

So then, may you be turned into members of Christ in such a way that you don't take them and make them members of a harlot.²² What viler harlot, after all, could there be, what more dishonorable whore than the first one on his list, fornication, and the last one, avarice? This he very truthfully called the service of idols; because it is not only in philandering with the body but also in pandering to the soul that you should recognize the harlot and avoid her, in case you incur that destruction threatened by the chaste bridegroom and just judge, to whom the psalmist says, *You have destroyed everyone who goes fornicating away from you*. How much more justly, how much more profitably will each and every one of you cry out to him in purity of heart, *For me to adhere to God is good* (Ps 73:17-28)? This adhesion is produced by the kind of love, about which it is likewise said, *Let love be without pretense, hating what is evil, adhering to what is good* (Rom 12:9).

*Empty out all the poisons from your hearts
by calling on the name of the Savior*

6. There you are, that's where your stadium is, that's where the wrestling matches are, that's where the races are run, that's where the prizefighting takes place. If you want to throw that foulest of wrestlers with the brawny arms of faith, then lay low all that is evil, embrace all that is good. If you want *so to run that you may obtain the prize*, flee from everything iniquitous, go after everything that is just. If you want *so to box that you don't beat the air*, but hit the enemy squarely on the jaw, *chastise your body and reduce it to slavery*, so that *abstaining from all things* (1 Cor 9:24-27) and *competing according to the rules* (2 Tm 2:5), you may triumph and share in the heavenly prize and *the unfading crown* (1 Cor 9:25).

What we are doing for you by invoking the name of your redeemer,²³ you must complete by thoroughly scrutinizing and crushing your hearts. We block the wiles of the ancient and obstinate enemy with prayers to God and with stern rebukes; you must stand up to him with your earnest prayers and contrition of heart, in order to be snatched from the power of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of his glory.²⁴ This is now your task, and this your toil. We heap curses on him, appropriate to his vile wickedness; it is for you, rather, to join glorious battle with him by turning away from him and devoutly renouncing him.²⁵ He has to be crushed, bound, shut out, this enemy of God and of you, and above all of himself. His fury, you see, is shown up as being impudent against God, abominable against you, and ruinous against himself. Let him breathe out slaughter all round, let him set his traps and snares, let him sharpen his multiple and deceitful tongues. Empty out all his poisons from your hearts by calling on the name of the savior.

Strive to be brought forth in health, not fatally aborted

7. Whatever he used to let loose against you in the way of utterly criminal suggestions, whatever in the way of infamous enticements, shall now be drained away,²⁶ shall now be made public. Now shall his slave state be devastated, under whose tyrannical regime he kept you in his possession. The yoke with which he brutally oppressed you shall be lifted, and set upon his own neck instead; all you have to do for your liberation is give your consent to your redeemer.

Hope in him, you whole assembly of the new commons, you, a people being born, which the Lord has made. Strive to be brought forth in health, not fatally aborted. Look, mother Church is in labor, see, she is groaning in travail to give birth to you, to bring you forth into the light of faith. Do not agitate her maternal womb with your impatience,²⁷ and thus constrict the passage to your delivery. You, a people now being created, praise your God; praise him, you that are now being created, praise your Lord. Because you are being suckled, praise him; because you are being nourished, praise him; because you are being reared, advance in wisdom and age.²⁸

He too accepted this slow business of coming to birth in time, though he neither fails for lack of time nor progresses by length of time, but has excluded all limitations and measures of time from the days of his eternity. *Do not here, as a certain kindly nurse admonishes a child, become children in mind, but in malice be babes; in mind you should be perfect* (1 Cor 14:20). *As competentes* or suitors, grow up suitably²⁹ in Christ, so that you may be joined in the prime of youth *to the perfect Man* (Eph 4:13). Gladden your father, as it is written, by your progress in wisdom, and do not sadden your mother by your want of it.³⁰

There immortality is serene; there serenity is immortal

8. Love what you will be. What you will be, you see, is children of God, and sons by adoption.³¹ This will be given you free, conferred on you for nothing,

at his pleasure. In this you will be the more abundantly and richly and plentifully endowed, the more pleasing you are to the one from whom you have received all this. Solicit the favor of the one *who knows who are his*; and he will not disdain to know you among those who are his, if *naming the name of the Lord, you withdraw from injustice* (2 Tm 2:19).

You have, or had, parents of your flesh in the world, who bore you to toil and pain and death. But each one of you, more happily bereaved, can say about them *My father and my mother have forsaken me* (Ps 27:10);³² therefore, Christian, acknowledge that Father who, when they forsook you, took you up from your mother's womb, the Father to whom a faithful man trustingly says, *From my mother's womb you are my protector* (Ps 22:10). God is Father, the Church mother. You will be born of these parents very, very differently from the way you were born of those. The birth of offspring here will not be accompanied by labor, by woe, by weeping, by death; but by easiness, by happiness, by joy, and by life. Being born of those is something to be mourned, being born of these is something to be desired. Those parents, in giving us birth, bear us to eternal death, because of the ancient fault; these in giving us new birth, cause both fault and punishment to disappear. This is the rebirth of *those who seek him, seek the face of the God of Jacob* (Ps 24:6). Be lowly in your search, because when you find what you seek, you will come to the security of the heights.

There your infancy will be innocence, your childhood reverence, your adolescence patience, your youth virtue, your middle age merit, your old age nothing less than the white hairs of wisdom and understanding. These are not stages of life through which you will be successively developed, but ages in which you will be permanently renewed. For it will not be the case that as the first falls away the second succeeds it, nor that the rising of the third means the setting of the second, nor that the fourth is born so that the third may die; the fifth will not grudge the fourth remaining, nor will the sixth give the fifth its funeral.³³ While these ages may not come simultaneously, still in the devoted and justified soul they persist together and in harmony. They will carry you through to the seventh age of perennial quiet and peace. When you have been delivered six times from the stern necessities of death-dealing age, as we read, *now in the seventh evils will not touch you* (Jb 5:19). They won't take you on, because they won't be there, nor will they prevail, because they won't dare.³⁴ There immortality is serene, there serenity is immortal.

Growing together and growing apart

9. And where does all this come from, but from the change of the right hand of the Most High,³⁵ who *blesses his children within you, and sets as your boundaries peace* (Ps 147:13-14)? So bestir yourselves and set your hearts on these good things, by growing together and growing apart; growing together with the good, growing apart from the bad; chosen, beloved, foreknown, called, to be justified, to be glorified.³⁶ Grow, become young people, get old in faith and the maturity of your powers, not in the break-up of your bodies, *in a fruitful*

old age (Ps 92:14), and thus peacefully proclaim the works of the Lord, as he, *being mighty, has done great things for you* (Lk 1:49), because *great is his name, and his wisdom has no limits* (Ps 147:5).

Seek life; run to him who is *the fountain of life*; and then, dispelling the darkness of your reeking, smoking lusts, *you will see light in the light* (Ps 36:9) of his only-begotten Son and your most kindly redeemer, who also enlightens you with his brilliance. If you are seeking salvation, hope in him who *saves those who hope in him* (Ps 17:7). If you are dead set on drunkenness and delights, he will not even refuse you these; only come and worship and *fall down and weep before the one who made you* (Ps 95:6), and he will make you *drunk on the richness of his house, and give you to drink from the torrent of his delights* (Ps 36:8).

Humility is rewarded with what pride has been denied

10. But beware of *the foot of pride coming to you*, and watch out for *the hands of the wicked moving you* (Ps 36:11). To prevent the first happening, pray that he may *cleanse you from your hidden sins*, while to stop the second rushing you and throwing you down, beg that he may *spare you from the sins of others* (Ps 19:12-13). When you are down, get up; when you get up, stand up straight; when you stand up straight, make a stand; when you make a stand, stick to it. Do not bear the yoke any longer; rather, burst their chains, and cast off their yoke from you,³⁷ and *do not ever again let yourselves be held under the yoke of slavery* (Gal 5:1).

The Lord is near; do not be anxious about anything (Phil 4:5-6). Eat now, for the time being, *the bread of sorrow*; the time will come when after the bread of sadness you will be served with the bread of happiness. But you deserve this by putting up with that. Your turning away from God, your running away from him, earned you the bread of mourning; turn back, be converted and be sorry, and come back to your Lord. He is prepared, as you come back sorry, to hand out to you the bread of joy, provided you do not make excuses, and put off praying in grief and tears over your running away.

So amid all these gangs of people vexing and troubling you, put on sackcloth,³⁸ and humble your soul with fasting. Humility is rewarded with what pride has been denied. And you indeed, while you were being scrutinized, and that persuader of flight and desertion was being properly rebuked by the terrifying omnipotence of the Trinity, were not actually clothed in sackcloth, but yet your feet were symbolically standing on it.³⁹

Be converted

11. The vices and the fleeces of the she-goats must be trampled on; the ragged garments of the he-goats on the left hand side must be torn.⁴⁰ Your compassionate Father is coming of his own accord to meet you with the first robe, not having hesitated for a moment to kill the fatted calf as well, in order to appease your

mortal hunger.⁴¹ You will feed on his flesh, you will be given his blood to drink; by the shedding of it sins are forgiven, debts waived, stains wiped away. Eat like poor people, and then you will be satisfied, and you will be among those of whom it is said, *The poor shall eat and shall have their fill* (Ps 22:26); and having had your fill, give a healthy belch in honor of his bread and his glory.

Hasten to him and be converted; he, you see, is the one who converts those who have turned away, goes in pursuit of those who have run away, finds those who have got lost, humbles the proud, feeds the starving, releases those in fetters, gives light to the blind, purges the unclean, gives refreshment to the weary, raises the dead, and snatches the possessed from the grip of *the spirits of wickedness* (Eph 6:12). From these we have just now found you to be free; we congratulate you, and exhort you to preserve in your hearts the health that is apparent in your bodies.⁴²

NOTES

1. The *competentes* were those catechumens who at the beginning of Lent gave in their names, and were accepted for baptism at Easter. They were “the askers.” At first I thought of translating them as “co-seekers,” or as “fellow petitioners”; but I finally decided to keep the Latin, because it is a technical term which no longer has any equivalent in modern Church practice, and therefore no real equivalent in English.

From a number of references to the ceremonies involved, including what was called a scrutiny, and exorcisms, I conclude that the sermon was preached when the *competentes* were enrolled, that is at the beginning of Lent. If I am right, it means that the sermon, which almost all scholars agree was preached in 391, very soon after Augustine’s ordination as a presbyter, was preached shortly before, and not after Sermon 214. So we may well have here the first sermon he ever preached. Two scholars date it in 397, and would make it Augustine’s first sermon as bishop.

2. Reading *oratione*, as suggested by the Maurists, instead of the *ore*, “by the mouth,” of the text. This really doesn’t make sense. It could indeed be a scribal abbreviation for *oratione*.

3. Reading *sermen* instead of the text’s *sermonem*. *Sermonem verbi* is a meaningless tautology, “the speech of the word.”

4. It is this additional connotation of the word—which he rather seems to impose on it—that really interests him.

5. See Mt 5:8. He is punning on *mundus*, “world” and *mundus*, “pure.”

6. See Jn 16:33.

7. Here I leave out several words, which strike me as reduplicated by copyist error; they are *dum apparuerit quod eritis. Scitote autem*. If they were left in the text, we would have the following, from the beginning of the sentence: “Know however that *when he appears you will be like him*, when it appears what you shall be. Know however that *you will see him . . .*”

8. See Col 3:9-10. I have to keep “man” here, where normally I would translate “self,” because he goes on to link this text with one that talks of the old man, Adam, and the new man, Christ, in 1 Cor 15:46-49.

9. 1 Cor 15:46-49.

10. A clear reference to the eucharist. Incidentally the expression “the precious blood of Christ” is so familiar to Catholic devotion, such a pious cliché, that we forget its earthy commercial connotations. The Latin *pretiosus* obviously—to Latin ears—means “pricy,” expensive.

11. After baptism.

12. See Ps 19:12-13.

13. His hearers now replace the word of God as the seed. The same ambiguity is to be found in the interpretation of the parable of the sower given in the gospel itself. See Mt 13:3-9 and 19-23.

14. He could mean himself and his colleagues here rather than God; but at the end of the section it is certainly God who is sower, rainmaker, irrigator, and giver of increase.

15. See Jn 1:47; also 6:33. That the blessed also form the substance of the heavenly eucharist, as well as feasting on it, is a most original idea. See also Mt 20:11-16.

16. See Ps 34:5-6.19.

17. In a nutshell, the longer you live, the closer you are to death, the fewer days remain to you. He presses the smoke image very effectively: it billows up thickly at its source, but as it rises it thins out and fades away.

18. A phrase being contrasted with "in the shadow of death." He means that their years as Christians, though of course ending eventually in death, will by grace partake of eternal life; in the first stage, in the Church they will be fed on faith; in the next, in the kingdom they will be given wisdom to drink.

19. See Ps 68:26.

20. See Ps 69:4.

21. See Acts 9:15.

22. See 1 Cor 6:15.

23. In the exorcisms which were the main element in the scrutinies of the candidates, and which were performed probably by teams of clergy, including those in minor orders, especially the exorcists.

24. See Col 1:13. He alters the last phrase of the text because of the liturgical, or ritual context. See next note.

25. A renunciation of Satan and all his works was a rite that inaugurated the last stage of the catechuminate, the stage of the *competentes*. It included a ceremony of "aversion" in which the candidates, first facing the West, the region of darkness (sunset), then turned round to the East, the region of light (sunrise). They did this standing on goatskins or sackcloth. See sections 10 and 11 below.

26. An allusion, probably, to Rv 12:15-16.

27. See Gn 15:22.

28. See Lk 2:52. Augustine evidently now realizes that he has let them out of the Church's womb rather too soon, by talking of their being suckled and reared and advancing in wisdom and age, like the twelve-year-old Jesus. So he immediately goes on to remind them that Jesus too put up with being nine months in the womb.

29. *Ut competentes, competenter adolescite in Christo*. He is also sketching a rapid progress through adolescence to young manhood which I find it impossible to indicate in English.

30. See Prv 10:1.

31. See Gal 4:4-5. I keep "sons" here instead of "children," because it is a matter of a share (by both sexes of course) in the divine sonship of the Son.

32. It is a more happy bereavement (than the literal one), because of the next phrase, which he alludes to, but allows to be overridden by a similar text in another psalm.

33. From the beginning of the paragraph to this point is a passage of quite extraordinary rhetorical skill, that must have been carefully prepared. This may not be very obvious in my English translation, but it leaps to the eye in the Latin. It is interesting to compare it with another piece on the theme of the ages of man, or "All the world's a stage," in his explanation of Psalm 128, preached many years later. Here are the two passages, for readers to judge for themselves:

Sermon 216, 8—*Infantia vestra innocentia erit, pueritia reverentia, adolescentia patientia, juvenis virtus, senium meritum, senectus nihil aliud quam canus sapiensque intellectus. Per hos articulos vel gradus aetatis non tu evolveris, sed permanens innovaris. Non enim ut decidat prior secunda succedet, aut tertiae ortus secundae erit interitus, aut quarta jam nascitur ut tertia moriatur; non quinta quartae invidebit ut maneat, nec quintam sexta sepeliet.*

Expositions of the Psalms 127, 15—Optas ut crescant [filii], ut accedat aetas optas. Sed vide quia veniente pueritia moritur infantia, veniente adolescentia moritur pueritia, veniente juventute moritur adolescentia, veniente senectute moritur juventus, veniente morte moritur omnis aetas . . . Nati pueri tamquam hoc dicunt parentibus: "Eja, cogitate ire hinc; agamus et nos mimum nostrum." Mimus est generis humani tota vita tentationis. (English translation: You want your children to grow, to come of age. But notice that when boyhood comes infancy dies, when adolescence comes boyhood dies, when youth comes adolescence dies, when old age comes youth dies, when death comes every age dies . . . It's as if what children say to their parents when born is this: "Hey, think about moving on; we too must perform our farce." The human race's whole life of trial is just a farce.)

I compared the two texts in an article on "St. Augustine as a Preacher" in *Blackfriars*, November 1954, a number devoted to commemorating the centenary of his birth.

34. This almost meaningless sentence would have been far better left out.

35. See Ps 77:10, Vulg.

36. See Col 3:12; Rom 8:30.

37. See Ps 2:3. He rather slips up here in this endless daisy chain of psalm texts, because this is what the kings of the earth are saying against the Lord and his anointed. I have the feeling that this plethora of quotations is the fruit of his study leave of absence, which he had asked Bishop Valerius for when he was ordained presbyter (Letter 21); and that this is the first sermon he ever preached.

38. See Ps 69:11.10.

39. See note 25 above.

40. See Mt 25:33.

41. See Lk 15:11-14. The first robe is interpreted as meaning the robe of innocence and grace in which Adam was created, and which is restored in Christ.

42. The meaning, I imagine, is that their bodies betrayed no signs of possession by evil spirits.

SERMON 217

ON THE WORDS OF THE LORD IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN:
THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE, THAT THEY SHOULD KNOW YOU,
THE ONLY TRUE GOD, AND JESUS CHRIST WHOM YOU HAVE SENT:
AND ON THE TRINITY

Date: 418¹

Christ prays as man; he gives what he prays for as God

1. The Lord Jesus Christ, who listens to us with the Father, was also quite ready to pray for us to the Father. Could anything be more certain than our good fortune, when the one who prays for us is the very one who gives us what he prays for? Christ, you see, is man and God; he prays as man, he gives what he prays for as God. Now what you have to grasp is that he assigns everything to the Father for the simple reason that the Father is not from him, but he is from the Father. He gives everything to the fount from which he is derived. But he too is the fount born of the Father; he is himself *the fountain of life* (Ps 36:9). So the Father as fount begot the fountain; fountain indeed begot fountain; but begetting fountain and begotten fountain are one fountain. Just as God begetting and God begotten, namely the Son born of the Father, are one God.² The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father; the Father is not from the Son, the Son is from the Father; but still Father and Son are one thing³ because of their one substance, and they are one God because of their inseparable divinity.

Accordingly, as regards what you heard him say, *This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent* (Jn 17:3), see that you don't take it in such a way that you suppose the Father alone is true God, while the Son is not true God. We have, after all, divine testimony on this point, with John himself saying in his letter, *That we may be in his true Son Jesus Christ; for he is true God and life everlasting* (1 Jn 5:20). Hold onto that, that Christ is true God and life everlasting. So when you hear, *that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*, you should supply the words "the only true God"; that is, "that they may know you, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent, the only true God."

The Holy Spirit is true God

2. We've extricated ourselves completely from that problem. But what are we to make of the Holy Spirit? You see, if what's said about the Father and Christ, *that they may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*, means "that they may know you and Jesus Christ as the one true God," we have the hard task of showing that the Holy Spirit too is true God. Well, just because he wasn't mentioned, it doesn't mean the Holy Spirit was overlooked. He is not the Spirit only of the Father, or only of the Son, but he is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. So when he's not mentioned, and they are both named, he is understood in them, because he is both of theirs.

I am going to tell you about a particular scriptural manner of speaking, which will help you to understand what we are saying. The apostle says, *Nobody knows the things of a person, except the spirit of the person which is in him*. What are the things of a person? What a person thinks as a person; that, you see, is where the person properly is, in his thoughts. Does your spirit know my thoughts, or my spirit know your thoughts? *Nobody knows the things of a person, except the spirit of the person which is in him*, said the apostle; and he added, *In the same way, the things that are God's, nobody knows except the Spirit of God* (1 Cor 2:11). How are we to take that? It is a very precise statement. So if the things that are God's nobody knows except the Spirit of God, then the things that are God's the Son of God doesn't know? A way with such a diabolical idea, we must banish it far away. So does the Word of God not know the things of God? So does the only Son of God not know the things of God? Does the one through whom all things were made⁴ not know the things of God? He knows them; and who knows them like that, but the Spirit of God? So then, just as when you hear *Nobody knows the things that are God's except the Spirit of God*, you don't exclude the Son from that; in the same way, when you hear *that they may know you, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent, the only true God*, don't exclude the Holy Spirit.

Father and Son are one God

3. "If he is the only true God," says heresy,⁵ "I don't know what it is that you people know; because none but the Father is the only true God, to whom Christ said, *that they may know you, the only true God*."

"Add, *and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*."

"I refuse," he says, "to add it."

"But he added it himself."

"But I," says he, "refuse to add it."

And I refuse to listen to you. And anyway, as by your definition only the Father is true God, what are you going to say about the letter of John, where we read about Christ, *He is true God and life everlasting* (1 Jn 5:20)? Lastly, to whom, or about whom was it said *who alone works wonders* (Ps 72:18)? About the Father, or about the Son, or about both? If about the Father, then the Son doesn't work wonders. And then where do you fit in what he said himself, *Just*

as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so too the Son gives life to whom he will (Jn 5:21)? An act of the same power, the same divinity. So if the Son also works wonders, how does the Father alone work them? But if it was said about both of them, then Father and Son are one God. Add the Holy Spirit; add him, don't exclude him, or you may be excluded yourselves.

It's the body of Christ that is God's temple

4. Let us worship God, whose temples we are;⁶ because, brothers and sisters, if we were making a temple of timber and stones, we could only make it for God. If we were pagans, we would make temples for the gods; because we would be making temples for false gods, as the unbelieving nations made them, who were estranged from God. Solomon though, insofar as he was a prophet of God, made a temple of timber and stones, but at least for God; for God, not an idol; for God, not an angel; for God, not for the sun, not for the moon; for God who made heaven and earth; for the living God who made heaven and earth, and who stays in the heavens, he made a temple from the earth, and God did not disdain it, on the contrary, he ordered it to be made.

Why did God order a temple to be made for him? Didn't he have anywhere to live? Listen to Saint Stephen, when he suffered: *Solomon*, he said, *built him a house; but the Most High does not live in temples made with hands (Acts 7:47-48)*. So why did he want to make a temple, or have a temple made? To be a figure of the body of Christ. That temple was a shadow; the light came, and put the shadow to flight. Look now for the temple which Solomon made, and you will find a ruin. Why is that temple a ruin? Because what it signified has already come to pass.

Even the very temple which is the body of the Lord fell into ruin; but it rose again, and rose again in such a way that now it can certainly never fall into ruin anymore. Anyway, when the Jews said to him, *What sign are you making, that we should believe you?* he said to them, *Pull down this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*. Now he was speaking to them in the temple built by Solomon,⁷ and he said, *Pull down this temple*. But they didn't hear what he really meant by *this*, they didn't understand what *this* meant, they thought he was talking about that temple. Anyway, they answered him, *Forty-six years this temple took to build, and will you raise it up in three days?* About that the evangelist immediately remarks, *But he said this about the temple of his body (Jn 2:18-21)*.

So it's the body of Christ that is God's temple. What are our bodies? Members of Christ. Listen to the apostle: *Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?* (1 Cor 6:15). What was he showing us by saying *your bodies are members of Christ*, but that our bodies and our head, which is Christ, together are the one temple of God? Let us trust the body of Christ and our bodies to be the temple of God, and we will be; because if we don't believe, we certainly won't be. So since our bodies are members of Christ, listen to something else the apostle said: *Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit in you, whom you have from God?* (1 Cor 6:19).⁸

There you are then; he has a temple, and isn't he God? If he had one of timber and stones, he would be God; if he had a temple made with hands, he would be God; and isn't he God when he has a temple made of the members of God? So join on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God. There is one God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father, the Spirit of them both is neither Father nor Son; but Father and Son and Holy Spirit are one God. Be built up in unity, in order not to fall into division.⁹

Do good in a bad place

5. You have heard what he asked for on our behalf;¹⁰ indeed he said what his wishes were: *Father, those whom you have given me, it is my wish.* It is my wish, Father; what I wish, I do; please do what I wish. *It is my wish.* What is? *That where I am, they too may be with me* (Jn 17:24). O blessed, blessed home! O mother country, so safe and secure! It fears no foe, is plagued by no pestilence. We shall live there in security, we shall never seek to emigrate, we will not find any safer place. Whatever you choose here on earth, you choose in anxiety, not in security. Choose yourself a place, while you are in a bad place, that is in this world, in this life full of trials, in this mortality full of groans and fears; while you are in a bad place, choose yourself a place where you can move to from the bad place.

You won't be able to move to the good place from the bad place unless you do good in the bad place. What sort of place is that other? One where nobody goes hungry. So if you want to live in the good place where nobody goes hungry, in this world *break your bread to the hungry* (Is 58:7). Because in that blessed place nobody is a foreigner, and all are living in their own native land; then if you wish to be in the good place, whenever in this bad place you find a foreigner who has nowhere to go, welcome him into your home. Show hospitality in the bad place, in order to get to the place where you cannot be a "guest worker." In the good place nobody is in need of clothes; there is no cold weather there, no hot weather. What need of shelter, what need of clothing? There will be no shelters there, but there will be protection;¹¹ so in fact even there we find shelter: *under the shadow of your wings will I hope* (Ps 57:1). So in this bad place provide shelter for the person who has none, so that you may find yourself in the good place, where you can enjoy such shelter that you need never want to patch your thatch. After all, there are no showers of rain there, but instead a perennial fountain of truth. But the shower from this makes you glad, not wet; this shower is the fountain of life itself. What's the meaning of *Lord, with you is the fountain of life* (Ps 36:9)? It means, *And the Word was with God* (Jn 1:1).¹²

Christ is day

6. So then, brothers and sisters, do good in the bad place, in order to get to the good place, about which the one who is preparing it for us¹³ says, *It is my wish that where I am, they too may be with me* (Jn 17:24). The Lord Christ

ascended to prepare the place, so that we might come safe and sound to what had been prepared.¹⁴ What he prepared was himself; stay in him. Is Christ too small a house for you? Now you needn't even be afraid of his passion; he rose from the dead, *and he dies no more, and death can no longer lord it over him* (Rom 6:9). The bad place, the bad days are what this world is; but let us do good in the bad place, and lead good lives in the bad days, and the good eternal place will come our way, the good eternal days; and those good days will all be one day.

I mean, why are the days here bad? Because one day passes for another to come; today passes for tomorrow to come; yesterday passed for today to come. Where nothing passes, there is one day; and that day is Christ. The Father too is day; but the Father is day from no day, while the Son is day from day.¹⁵ *Sing to the Lord a new song, sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord and bless his name; proclaim the good news of day from day, his salvation* (Ps 96:1-2). Christ is day. If you don't recognize him here, listen to a wise old man; if you still lack understanding, young man, whoever you may be, listen to the white hairs of truth. That old man Simeon observed the infant Lord Christ who was being carried by his mother, and was holding heaven together. He observed how tiny he was, he knew how great he was, and he took him in his arms, *because he had received a reply from God that he would not see death unless he had seen the Christ of the Lord. He took him in his arms and said, Now you will let your servant, Lord, go in peace according to your word, because my eyes have seen your salvation* (Lk 2:25-30). So, *proclaim the good news of day from day, his salvation*. This, you see, is what Simeon was saying: "The one I was waiting for has come; what am I doing here any longer?" He took him, being on the point of being taken by him. He was carrying Christ the human being, he was being carried by Christ the divine being.

The one God begot is the same as what God is himself

7. So hold firmly to this: I'll give you a rule, so that you needn't panic when the Son says something which seems to suggest that the Father is greater: he either says it as man, because God is greater than man; or else he says it as the one who is begotten, to honor the one by whom he was begotten. You shouldn't ask for more; because God begot God, in his greatness he begot his equal. If God did not beget true God, and in his greatness did not beget his equal, then he begot a monster, not a true Son.¹⁶ But because he did beget a true Son, the one he begot is the same as what he is himself.

NOTES

1. This sermon is really out of place here. In the Maurist edition it is much shorter, but has an ending which we have already seen in this edition as part of Sermon 211A; and it is that ending that persuaded the Maurists that Sermon 217 is a Lenten sermon. Without it, there is no reason at all to suppose that. One scholar puts it at the end of paschal time, others put it around Christmas. The most appropriate place for it would be among the sermons on the gospel of John.

2. From about this point the Maurist edition has a different text for the rest of section 1, which in fact provides the last two sentences of our section 4. Then Maurist section 2 becomes our section 5.

3. See Jn 10:30; one thing, *unum* in the neuter, not *unus* in the masculine. That is why he says “because of their one substance.” He may have felt that to leave it at that would leave God sounding too impersonal, a divine thing or substance; so he goes on to say that it means the same as *unus Deus*, one God, in the masculine gender. What he cannot say, of course, in making God more personal, is that Father and Son are one person.

4. See Jn 1:3.

5. Arianism.

6. See 2 Cor 6:16; 1 Cor 3:16.

7. Actually built by Herod the Great, as Augustine knew perfectly well—at least I suppose he did. He certainly knew that the temple built by Solomon had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 589 BC.

8. In the first text Paul says “your bodies,” in the plural; but in the second “your body,” in the singular, though he is still addressing the Corinthians in the plural—he says “the body of you all,” not “thy body.” This must be because he has just started to warn them against fornication; so he is stressing that each of them must remember that his own body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.

9. With these last two sentences the Maurists have joined us again.

10. Well, in the sermon as it is in this text, we haven't. Though in the very first sentence Augustine did tell us how lucky we are that Christ was prepared to pray for us, being himself the one who gives us what he prays for on our behalf. But in this text that opening is now almost immediately sidetracked by the long reflection on Jn 17:3, which is not a prayer of Christ's, but a statement. All this is missing from the Maurist text, which is thus, at least in this respect, the more coherent.

11. *Non erit tectum, sed protectio.*

12. This is an interpretation based solely on the word “with,” *apud* in the Latin: the Word *with* God is the fountain of life *with* the Lord.

13. See Jn 14:2-3.

14. See Lk 14:17.

15. On the analogy of God from God, light from light. Here we finally part company with the Maurist version of Sermon 217. They provide a shorter ending, which we have already seen in Sermon 211A. See note 1 above.

16. Because it would mean he begot something of a different nature from himself—as if human parents were to produce some non-human offspring.

SERMON 218

ON THE LORD'S PASSION: ON GOOD FRIDAY

Date: before 420¹

The meaning of the passion

1. The passion of him by whose blood our delinquencies have been blotted out is solemnly read, solemnly celebrated every year, so that our memories may be the more happily refreshed by this annual devotion, and our faith rendered more brilliantly illustrious by the faithful people assembling in great numbers. So this solemn occasion requires of me that I should deliver you a sermon, such as the Lord himself grants me, on his passion. And indeed in the things that our Lord suffered from his enemies, he was pleased to give us an example of patience for our salvation and also for our advantage in the way we lead our lives, so that we ourselves should not refuse to suffer the same sort of things, if that should be his will, for the honor of the gospel.

The fact is, however, that not even in his mortal flesh did he suffer anything out of necessity, but everything of his own free will. And so it may rightly be assumed that by every single deed that was carried out and recorded about his passion, he also wished to signify something.²

Christ carries the cross

2. And first, that when he was handed over to be crucified, he himself carried his cross:³ by this he gave us a sign of self-restraint, and by going ahead like that showed what should be done by anyone who wishes to follow him. He also impressed this upon us by word, when he said, *Let anyone who loves me take up his cross and follow me* (Mk 8:34). You see, you take up your cross after a fashion, when you control your mortality.⁴

Calvary

3. That he was crucified at the place of the skull,⁵ Calvary, signified the forgiveness of all sins through his passion, about which it says in the psalm, *My iniquities are multiplied above the hairs of my head* (Ps 40:12).⁶

The two crucified with Jesus

4. That two others were crucified with him on either side,⁷ indicated that some are going to suffer on his right hand, others on his left: on his right, those of whom it says, *Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice* (Mt 5:10); on his left, those of whom it is said, *And if I hand over my body so that I am burned, but do not have charity, it profits me nothing* (1 Cor 13:3).

The king of the Jews

5. That a title was placed over his cross, on which was written *The king of the Jews* (Jn 19:19); that showed that not even by killing him could they manage not to have him as the king who is going by his supreme authority to repay them, in the most public way imaginable, according to their works.

Written in three languages

6. That the title was written in three languages, *Hebrew, Greek, and Latin* (Jn 19:20) amounted to a declaration that he was going to reign over the nations as well as the Jews. To the same effect, in one and the same psalm it says *But I have been established as king on Zion his holy mountain*, where he reigned, that is to say, in the Hebrew language; and then it adds straightaway, as though in Greek and Latin, *The Lord said to me, You are my Son, I today have begotten you: ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and as your possession the ends of the earth* (Ps 2:6-8).

Not that Greek and Latin are the only languages of the nations; but that they are the most notable ones, Greek because of the classics of its literature, Latin because of the imperial power of the Romans. Although in these three languages the subjection of the totality of the nations to Christ was being suggested, it still wasn't written there "and king of the nations," but only *king of the Jews*, to remind us of our roots in the people there named. *The law*, as it says, after all, *will go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem* (Is 2:3). I mean, who are the people who say in the psalm, *He has subjected peoples to us, and nations under our feet* (Ps 47:3), but those of whom the apostle says, *If the nations have shared in their spiritual goods, they ought at least to attend to their needs with material goods* (Rom 15:27)?

King of the Jews and the Gentiles

7. That the leaders of the Jews urged Pilate not to write without qualification that he is the king of the Jews, but that he himself said he was the king of the Jews:⁸ this had Pilate representing the wild olive to be grafted on in place of the broken branches,⁹ because he was a man from the nations, writing for the nations their confession of faith, so that the Lord himself rightly said about them, *The kingdom shall be taken away from you, and given to a nation that does justice*

(Mt 21:43). That does not mean, however, that he is not the king of the Jews. The root, after all, carries the wild olive, not the wild olive the root.¹⁰ And although those branches were broken off for unbelief, that does not mean that God has repudiated his people, whom he foreknew; *I too*, he says, *am an Israelite* (Rom 11:1). And although the sons of the kingdom, who did not wish the Son of God to reign over them,¹¹ go off into the outer darkness; all the same, many shall come from East and West, and sit down, not with Plato and Cicero, but *with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven* (Mt 8:11-12).

Pilate, certainly, wrote *king of the Jews*, not “king of the Greeks or the Latins”; although he is going to reign over the nations. And what he has written, he has written,¹² and he didn’t change it at the urging of unbelievers. He had been told not to do this such a long time before in the psalms: *Do not corrupt the inscription of the title*.¹³ All the nations believe in the king of the Jews, he reigns over all the nations, but he is still the king of the Jews. Such was the worth and potency of that root, that it could change the engrafted wild olive into itself, while the wild olive could not eliminate the name of the olive.¹⁴

The garments divided

8. That the soldiers took away his garments and divided them into four parts,¹⁵ signified that his sacraments were going to traverse the four corners of the world.

The tunic without seam

9. That they cast lots for his tunic alone, *woven from the top without seam* (Jn 19:23-24), rather than dividing it, demonstrated clearly enough that the visible sacraments, even though they too are the garments of Christ, can still be had by anybody, good or bad; but that sincere and genuine faith, which *works through love* (Gal 5:6) to achieve the integrity of unity—*because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5)—that this faith does not belong to anybody at all, but is given by God’s hidden grace as by lot. Thus to Simon, who had baptism, and didn’t have this, Peter could say, *You have no lot or part in this faith* (Acts 8:21).

Mary entrusted to the beloved disciple

10. That on the cross he knew his mother, and entrusted her to the beloved disciple,¹⁶ aptly indicated his human affection at the time when he was dying as a man. This hour had not yet arrived when, as he was about to turn water into wine, he had said to this same mother, *What have I to do with you, woman? My hour has not yet come* (Jn 2:4). You see, he had not received from Mary the power he had in his divinity, as he had received from Mary what was hanging on the cross.¹⁷

Vinegar on a sponge

11. As for what he said, *I thirst* (Jn 19:28), he was looking for faith from his own people; but because *he came to his own possessions, but his own people did not receive him* (Jn 1:11), instead of the sweetness of faith, they gave him the vinegar of faithlessness, and that in a sponge. They are indeed comparable to a sponge, a thing not solid but swollen; not open with the straight access of confession, but hollow with the tortuous twists and turns of treachery.¹⁸ It's true that that drink also contained hyssop,¹⁹ which is a lowly herb, said to have an extremely strong root with which to cling to the rock. There were some, that is to say, among that people, for whom this dark deed was kept as a means of humbling their souls by their repudiation of it later on, and their repentance. The one who accepted the hyssop with the vinegar knew who they were. After all, as the other evangelist bears witness, he even prayed for them, when hanging on the cross he said, *Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing* (Lk 23:34).

Death with a bowed head

12. That he said, *it is accomplished: and bowing his head, he gave up the spirit* (Jn 19:30), showed how he died not by necessity but by his own power and authority, waiting until all that had been prophesied for him was accomplished — because this too had been written: *And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink* (Ps 69:22); as one who had the authority to lay down his life, as he himself had declared.²⁰

And he gave up the spirit in humility, that is with a bowed head; he would receive it back again by rising again, with a raised head.²¹ That this death and bowing of the head were acts of great power, was shown by that ancestor Jacob, when he blessed Judah, and said, *You have gone up lying down, you have slept like a lion* (Gn 49:9); by “going up” he signified his death; by “like a lion” his power.

The broken legs of the two thieves

13. Now next, that the legs of those two were broken, while his were not, because he was already dead: why this happened was stated in the gospel itself.²² It was fitting, you see, to demonstrate by this sign as well, that the true point and purpose of the Jewish passover, which contained this instruction, not to break the lamb's bones,²³ was to be a prophetic pre-enactment of his death.

Blood and water from the side of Jesus

14. That his side, struck by a lance, poured out blood and water on the ground:²⁴ without a shadow of doubt these are the sacraments by which the Church is formed, as Eve was fashioned from the side of the sleeping Adam,²⁵ who was the model of the one to come.

Burial

15. That Joseph and Nicodemus buried him: as some people have explained their names, Joseph means "Increased"; while Nicodemus, being a Greek name, many will know that it is a compound of "victory" and "people"; because *nikos* means victory and *demos* means people. So, who was increased by dying, if not the one who said, *If the grain of wheat does not die, it remains alone; but if it dies, it is multiplied* (Jn 12:24)? And who by his very dying won a victory over the people which was persecuting him, if not the one who by his rising will sit in judgment upon them?

NOTES

1. This hardly reads like a sermon, except for the first section. It looks more like notes for a sermon. Perhaps he was unable to preach at the last moment, and dictated some rapid notes for the unfortunate cleric who had to stand in for him. Or perhaps there was a breakdown in the usually very efficient stenographic service, and one of the congregation, or a substitute stenographer, just took notes of the sermon, without recording it completely. La Bonnardière is undecided on whether it was preached on the Wednesday or Friday of Holy Week; this may be because there is some evidence that the passion according to John, which is here being commented on, was at least sometimes read on the Wednesday; or just possibly this was no more than a brief advance lecture or "briefing" to a group of the more devout faithful, in preparation for Good Friday.

2. Typically, he wants to go beyond the literal sense even of Christ's passion; or perhaps it would be fairer to say that he wants to see more deeply into its meaning by examining the figurative significance of its details.

3. See Jn 19:17.

4. Mortality, signified by the cross, instrument of death; and experienced by us in the passions that are part and parcel of our mortal nature.

5. See Jn 19:17-18.

6. And all the hairs have been removed from a skull!

7. See Jn 19:18.

8. See Jn 19:21.

9. See Rom 11:17.

10. See Rom 11:18.

11. See Lk 19:14.

12. See Jn 19:22.

13. See the titles of Psalms 57 and 58 in the Septuagint version.

14. Augustine is anticipating the famous words of Pius XI, repudiating fascist anti-semitism: "We are all spiritually Semites."

15. See Jn 19:23. The sacraments, baptism and eucharist above all, are represented by his clothes, because they unite the faithful to the body of Christ.

16. See Jn 19:26-27.

17. He is clearly right, and truly discerns the evangelist's intentions, in linking the two episodes, in both of which Jesus addresses his mother as "Woman." But the use he makes here of the link is really pretty feeble. There is a third text that lies behind these two together, and that is Gn 2:23: *She shall be called woman. Mary is the new Eve. But in Cana Jesus addresses her precisely as his mother,*

whom he is about to leave in order to cleave to his wife—his bride, the Church—and so he keeps her at arm's length. In Jn 19:26, he addresses her as representing that bride.

18. He is forgetting that it was a Roman soldier, not the Jews, who gave Jesus the vinegar to drink. It's true that John does not actually say who it was.

19. The other evangelists say the sponge was put on a reed, or stick. It is impossible to make a stick out of hyssop, a small herb, as Augustine realized. John probably brings it in, though literally it makes little sense, in an allusion to Ex 12:22, the sprinkling of the blood of the passover lamb on the doorposts of the Israelite houses with a bunch of hyssop.

20. See Jn 10:18.

21. See Ps 3:3.

22. See Jn 19:33.36.

23. See Ex 12:46; Nm 9:12.

24. See Jn 19:34.

25. See Gn 2:21-22. The blood and water represent the sacraments of eucharist and baptism. Adam was the model of Christ, the last Adam; see Rom 5:14.

SERMON 218A

FRAGMENTS FROM A SERMON ON THE LORD'S PASSION

Date: 400-410¹

Christ brought us life

1. *For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, after being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (Rom 5:10). So, Christ died for the godless; and Christ is God. How can you possibly not reign, when you have been found to be just by the life of God,² when while you were godless you were sought by the death of God, to save you from perishing? But when we hear of both the life of God and the death of God, we must distinguish what each is and where it comes from. He brought us life, then, while he received death from us; not, though, because of his merits, but because of our needs.*

The mercy of God toward the Gentiles

2. So Christ is the king of the Jews, and under his easy yoke³ the Gentiles too have been placed for their salvation, because this has been conceded them out of an even greater mercy. The apostle himself makes this clearer, where he says, *For I say that Christ was minister to the circumcision because God is true, in order to confirm the promises made to the fathers; but that it is because he is merciful that the Gentiles glorify God (Rom 15:8-9).*⁴

Nor, I mean to say, would it have been right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs, unless the dogs, by being humble enough to pick up the scraps which they saw falling from the table of their masters, were raised up by that humility and turned into human beings, and so deserved to come to the table.⁵

The interior person

3. Nor, as some people suppose, does the old self mean the body and the new self mean the soul. But the body is the outer self, the soul the inner.⁶ So this

matter of the old and the new is played out in the inner self. When the apostle said, after all, *Strip yourselves of the old self and put on the new*, he wasn't ordering them to lay aside the body, but to change their way of life for the better. In fact he went on next to teach this lesson clearly; wishing, I mean, to explain what he had said: *Therefore, he continued, putting aside lying, speak the truth, each of you, with your neighbor* (Eph 4:22-25).⁷

NOTES

1. The fragments come from a selection of texts made by Bede. Two of the fragments in that collection are not included here, since they reappear as section 4 of Sermon 218C below. This inevitably puts a question mark against these remaining three fragments all coming from one sermon; though presumably Bede collected them, if not from one sermon, then at least from sermons on the passion.

2. Because justified through his resurrection; see Rom 4:25.

3. See Mt 11:30.

4. God's "truth" and "mercy," here contrasted by Paul, are the basic divine attributes of *hesed* and *emeth* in Hebrew, which always go together; are almost always translated by "mercy" and "truth" in the Latin translation and English ones influenced by it; by words like "loving-kindness" and "fidelity" in most contemporary translations. They represent the ideal attitudes of parents to their children of being both kind, loving, affectionate, compassionate; and also at the same time reliable, trustworthy: a "you-know-where-you-are-with-them-and-no-nonsense" quality.

5. See Mk 7:27-29.

6. See Rom 7:22; Eph 3:16. Paul does not talk of the outer self or man, only of the inner.

7. See also Col 3:9-10.

SERMON 218B

ON THE LORD'S PASSION

Date: 397¹

*Christ crucified is to unbelievers a scandal and a folly,
but to us the power of God and the wisdom of God*

1. Today we are solemnly celebrating the great and inexpressible mystery² of the Lord's passion. On other days too, of course, it is never absent either from the altar at which we assist, or from our lips and foreheads;³ so that what our bodily senses constantly remind us of may always be kept in our hearts. This annual solemnity, though, leads the mind much more impressively to the remembrance of such a great matter; so that something committed so many years ago in one place by the godless wickedness of the Jews, and observed by their cruel eyes, is now presented throughout the whole world to the gaze of faith as though it were happening today. If they were then only too pleased to look at what they did so cruelly, how much more pleased should we be to call to mind and live over again in memory what we so lovingly believe? If they could behold with pleasure the effect of their wickedness, how much more should we remember with joy the cause of our salvation?

That one single event, indeed, was the mark of the misdeeds they were presently committing, but the destruction of the ones we would commit in the future. Finally, while we are horrified by their crimes being committed there, we are delighted at our crimes being remitted there. They were perpetrating a great impiety, we are celebrating a great solemnity; they swarmed together in savage violence, we in loving obedience; they were lost, we have been found; they were sold,⁴ we have been redeemed; they looked on insultingly, we adore reverently.

That is why Christ crucified is to unbelievers a scandal and a folly, but to us the power of God and the wisdom of God; this, you see, is that weakness of God which is stronger than human strength, and that folly of God which is wiser than human wisdom.⁵ The events that followed have taught this lesson more clearly than ever. What, I mean, did the rabid hatred of his enemies have in mind at that time, but to erase all memory of him from the earth? He, though, while crucified by one people, has been inscribed in the hearts of so many peoples; slain then

by one nation, he is now worshiped by all the nations. And yet, not only then but even now they⁶ still read, as though blind, still sing as though deaf what had been foretold so long ago by the prophetic voice of the psalmist: *They dug my hands and my feet, they counted all my bones; they, however, looked me up and down, they divided up my clothes, and over my garment they cast lots* (Ps 22:17-19). In the gospel we can read about these things being fulfilled just as they were foretold in the psalm. But then the hands of the Jews carried out the things their ears heard in vain; and the less they understood that this was a prophecy of the Lord's passion, the more effectively they fulfilled it. Now, though, they can both read how it was foretold and recognize how it was fulfilled; and still they choose to deny Christ, because they cannot kill him anymore.

No one can tear or divide the charity of Christ

2. Worse, though, than the Jews are the heretics; those deny Christ whom they cannot observe; these attack the Church which they can see perfectly well. And the heretics are more miserably crazy not only than the Jews who deny Christ now, but also than those who killed him then. They, after all, did not delete the title of the one who was hanging on the cross, while these blow out the baptism of the one who is seated in heaven.⁷

And so from this psalm before us we can reply to both adversaries; to those who deny the head, and those who deny the body. The head, you see, is Christ, the body is the Church. Against the Jews we read, *They dug my hands and my feet, they counted all my bones* (Ps 22:17-18), and the rest that follows. Against the heretics we read, *All the ends of the earth will remember, and will turn back to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship in his sight; for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he will lord it over the nations* (Ps 22:28-29).

But let us grasp the meaning of that garment, woven from the top, which not even those who killed Christ divided, but which those who could attain to it did attain to it by lot.⁸ So while the sacraments of Christ can be divided up among many heretical bodies, none of the faithful tear or divide up the charity of Christ; but those who belong to *the lot of the saints in light* (Col 1:12) hold on to it as their own, because they have a spiritual love for unity.

And so, dearly beloved, let us celebrate this day with the devotion the anniversary calls for; *let us glory, though, in the cross of Christ* (Gal 6:14), not just once a year, but with constant and holy dedication.⁹

NOTES

1. At last we have a real sermon on the subject, instead of just jottings and scraps. It was clearly preached on Good Friday. Sermon 218 did not mention "today," which is why it is reasonable to

suppose that the sermon of which it gives us the bare bones may have been preached on the Wednesday of Holy Week. But here he plainly says, "Today we are celebrating . . ."

The scholars refuse to commit themselves about where it was preached. But why there should be any doubt that it was preached in Hippo Regius I cannot imagine. Since the bishop was always there for Easter, he is hardly likely to have been anywhere else—at least outside his diocese—on Good Friday; though he may have been preaching in one of his parishes.

2. *Sacramentum*.

3. When we celebrate the eucharist, and when we make the sign of the cross on the lips and on the forehead.

4. Understand "under sin"; see Rom 7:14.

5. See 1 Cor 1:23-25.

6. The Jews.

7. The heretics he has in mind are the Donatists. By "blowing out" baptism he is alluding to the rite of exorcism, in which evil spirits were "blown out" of the catechumens about to be baptized. Now the Donatists rebaptized Catholics who crossed over to them; so in their exorcisms they were in fact, so Augustine is saying, "blowing out" Christ's baptism, which means they were blowing out or exorcising the Holy Spirit of Christ received in baptism.

8. See Jn 19:23-24; also Ps 22:18.

9. While it is vain, as we have often observed, to expect any signs of ecumenical spirit in Augustine—and historically unfair to him to do so—we can still rightly regret, I think, that he should consider it suitable to preach on Good Friday *against* the Jews and the Donatists in this way. It seems he did so fairly regularly. His *Expositions on Psalm 22* is another case in point. That was particularly directed against the Donatists. Still, as I think we have also remarked, Augustine was temperamentally a fighter, and fighters fight enemies; and we must credit him with sincerely, if to our minds oddly, loving these particular enemies, Jews and Donatists—not as Jews and Donatists, of course, but as potential Catholic Christians. To defeat them would be to convert them. It is doubtful, though, whether sermons like this one succeeded in instilling such noble but difficult sentiments into the hearts of his hearers.

SERMON 218C

ON THE LORD'S PASSION

Date: about 412¹

Ours was what Christ died by; his was what we might live by

1. The passion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ constitutes a guarantee of glory and a lesson in patience. What, after all, can the hearts of the faithful not promise themselves from God's grace, seeing that it was not enough for the only Son of God, co-eternal with the Father, to be born for them as a human being from a human being, without his also dying at the hands of the human beings he created? It's a great thing that the Lord promises us for the future; but it's a much greater thing which we recall he has already done for us. When Christ died for the ungodly, where were they, or what were they? Who can doubt that he is going to endow his holy ones with his life, when he has already endowed them, while they were still ungodly,² with his death? Why should human frailty hesitate to believe that it is going to happen sometime or other that human beings will live with God? Something much more incredible has already happened, that God has died for the sake of human beings.

Who, after all, is Christ, but that Word which was in the beginning, *and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (Jn 1:1)? This Word of God *became flesh, and dwelt among us* (Jn 1:14). You see, he would not have in himself the wherewithal to die for us, unless he had taken mortal flesh from us. That was how the immortal one was able to die, that was how he wished to bestow life on mortals; aiming later on to give us shares in himself, having first of all himself taken shares in us. I mean, we had nothing of our very own by which we could really live, and he had nothing of his very own by which he could really die. Accordingly, he struck a wonderful bargain with us, a mutual give and take: ours was what he died by; his was what we might live by.

All the same, he too gave even the flesh which he took from us in order to die in it, because he is its creator; while on the other hand he in no way received from us the life by which we are going to live in him and with him. And thus, as regards our nature, by which we are human beings, he died from what is ours, not his, since in his own nature by which he is God, he is quite unable to die.

But insofar as it is his creation, which he made as God, then he did die from what is his; since he himself also made the flesh in which he died.

To take pride in the cross of Christ

2. So not only should we not be ashamed of the death of the Lord our God, we should even have maximum trust in it, and maximum pride in it; because in fact, by catching from us and undergoing the death he found in us, he most faithfully engaged himself to give us life in himself, which we are quite unable to get from ourselves. I mean, seeing that he loved us so much, that without sin himself he suffered for us sinners what we deserved for our sins, how can he, who thereby justifies us, possibly not give us what we have earned by that justice? How can he not pay the saints their reward, which he promised in truth, seeing that without wickedness himself he endured their punishment for the wicked?

Let us then, brothers and sisters, unhesitatingly confess Christ crucified for us, and indeed publicly and boldly proclaim him. Let us declare it, not fearfully but joyfully, not ashamed of it but proud of it. The apostle Paul saw him thus, and claimed it as a title of pride. He had so many great and divine things to remind us of about Christ; and yet he did not say he took pride or gloried in Christ's miracles, or in his creating the world as God with the Father, or in his giving orders to the world even as a man like us;³ but, *far be it from me*, he says, *to take pride in anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Gal 6:14). He could see who had hung on what for whom; and it was on that humility of God, that abasement of the divine majesty,⁴ that the apostle had the presumption to rely.

Christ's divinity didn't die in the man

3. These people, though, taunt us with worshiping a crucified Lord, and the cleverer they appear to be in their own eyes, the more incurably and desperately stupid they really are, failing totally to understand what we believe or what we say. I mean, we don't say that what died in Christ is what was God, but what was man. After all, when any man dies, that which is supremely human in him, which distinguishes him from an animal, that is, which has understanding, which can tell the difference between divine and human, temporal and eternal, true and false, that is to say the rational soul, doesn't suffer death with its body, but when the body dies, it withdraws still alive; and yet one still says, "The man has died." So why may we not say in the same way "God has died," not meaning that that which is God can have died, but that mortal element which God had assumed for the sake of mortals? Because just as when a man dies, his soul doesn't die in the flesh, so too when Christ died, his divinity didn't die in the man.

"But God," they say, "couldn't be mixed with a man, and with him become one Christ." Well, according to that crass and empty way of thinking, and such human opinions, we would suppose it to be much more difficult for spirit to be

mixed with flesh than God with man; and yet no human being would be human unless a human spirit were mixed with a human body. Yet to produce a human being, a human spirit, though it isn't body, and a human body, though it isn't spirit, have been mixed together. So how much easier must it have been for God, who is spirit, in order to produce one Christ from both, to be mixed in a spiritual partnership, not with a body apart from spirit, but with a man who had a spirit?⁵

Go along with a humble God

4. So let us too take pride in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world may be crucified to us and we to the world.⁶ It was to save us from being ashamed of that cross that we placed it right on our foreheads, that is, on the dwelling place of shame.⁷

But now, if we were to attempt to explain what lesson in patience is to be found in this cross, or how salutary it is, what words could do justice to the subject, what time suffice for the words?⁸ Could anyone, I mean, who genuinely and seriously believes in Christ, have the audacity to be proud, when God teaches humility not only by word but by example? How useful this lesson is, though, the following sentence from holy scripture briefly assures us: *Before ruin the heart is lifted up, and before glory it is humbled* (Prv 18:12);⁹ which accords with that other text, *God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (1 Pt 5:5; Jas 4:6; Prv 3:34 LXX); and that other one, *Any who exalt themselves shall be humbled, and any who humble themselves shall be exalted* (Lk 14:11; 18:14).

Accordingly, since the apostle urges us not to have big ideas, but to go along with humble folk,¹⁰ we should consider, as far as we can, over what precipice of pride we human beings may tumble if we don't go along with a humble God; and how pernicious it must be for us human beings to be impatient in bearing what a just God wills, when God was so patient in enduring what an unjust enemy willed.

NOTES

1. This sermon, urging the congregation not to be ashamed of the cross, seems to presuppose a kind of wave of mocking criticism of Christians for worshipping a God who could die. These attacks would come from pagans of some education and philosophical pretensions; and such pagans were most volubly inclined to attack Christianity after the sack of Rome by the Goths in 410, when many refugees from the city fled, incidentally, to North Africa. So it is more than possible that this sermon was preached round about then, about the same time as Augustine was beginning to write *The City of God* in defense of Christianity precisely against this sort of attack. But some scholars prefer to date this sermon before 410.

2. I supply the word "ungodly," which is missing at least from my text; I think it must be a misprint. It reads, *qui eisdem donavit adhuc mortem*. The *adhuc*, still, just hangs in the air, not governing anything: still what? The only possible answer is *adhuc impiis*.

3. For example, by calming the storm, casting out demons, and so on.

4. Emending *divina celsitudine* to *divinae celsitudinis*. The reading of the text puts *celsitudine* in opposition to *humilitate*, and so has the apostle relying both on God's humility and his majesty. My emendation puts *celsitudinis* in apposition to *Dei*, and simply has him giving two names to God.

5. Superficially a good knock-down argument against the kind of persons he was dealing with, who would have had in common with him a Neoplatonist, dualist intellectual background. But the language, treating "spirit" as meaning quite simply non-material being, and thus including "soul" under spirit as well as God, is totally unbiblical and foreign, for example, to Paul, for whom "soul" is more readily identified with "flesh," and together with "flesh" is always starkly contrasted with "spirit."

And in any case, the inference that God becoming man, the incarnation of the Word, was something less wonderful than you or me becoming you or me, seems hardly acceptable to a Christian understanding of things.

6. See Gal 6:14.

7. Either when we were confirmed, being "sealed" with chrism in the sign of the cross; or when as catechumens enrolling for baptism at the beginning of Lent, we were signed with the sign of the cross; or finally when we crossed ourselves on entering the church.

8. In his first sentence he called Christ's passion two things: a guarantee of glory and a lesson in patience. He has so far, he thinks, been confining himself to the first, and so has little time left for the second. By the first he has, it seems, really meant "an occasion for boasting," something to be proud of, rather than a guarantee of future glory in the kingdom.

9. That is, pride comes before a fall.

10. See Rom 12:16.

SERMON 219

AT THE EASTER VIGIL

Date: uncertain¹

The mother of all holy vigils

When the blessed apostle Paul is urging us to imitate him, among the many marks of his virtue he also mentions *in vigils very often* (2 Cor 11:27).² How much more eagerly, then, ought we to keep awake on this vigil which is, as it were, the mother of all holy vigils, and on which the whole world is awake and watchful? Not the world of which it is written, *If anybody loves the world, love of the Father is not in him; since all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and worldly ambition, which does not come from the Father* (1 Jn 2:15-16). That sort of world, of course, that is, the children of iniquity, is ruled by the devil and his angels, against whom the same apostle tells us we have to struggle, where he says, *There is no struggle for us against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers, and the rulers of the world of this darkness* (Eph 6:12); which is what we too were, once upon a time, *but now light in the Lord* (Eph 5:8).

So it is not that world that keeps awake and watching during this solemnity, but the one of which it says, *God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not putting their sins down to their account* (2 Cor 5:19). Although as a matter of fact, this vigil is so famous and celebrated throughout the whole world, that it obliges to stay awake in the body even those who in the heart, I don't say are asleep, but are buried in infernal godlessness. They too keep watch this night, about which what was promised so long before has visibly come true: *And the night will be lit up like the day* (Ps 139:12).³ This happens in the hearts of the godly, who have been told, *You were once darkness, but now light in the Lord* (Eph 5:8). It also happens in the rivals of the sheep; so, both in those who can see in the Lord, and those who are envious of the Lord.⁴

So on this night both the hostile world and the world that has been reconciled is keeping vigil. This one keeps awake to praise the doctor by whom it has been delivered; that one keeps awake to blaspheme the judge by whom it has been condemned. This one keeps watch, godly minds aglow with fervor; that one keeps watch, gnashing its teeth and green with envy. In a word, it is charity that

does not permit this one to sleep, iniquity that one; Christian vitality this one, diabolical jealousy that one.

So our very enemies are unwittingly reminding us how we ought to keep watch for our own sake, if even those who are envious of us can keep watch on our account. The fact is, of those who have never in any way been sealed with the name of Christ, many give up sleep this night out of annoyance, many out of shame; some even, who are getting close to the faith, already out of the fear of God. They are excited by this solemnity for a variety of reasons. With what joy then ought the friends of Christ to keep awake, when their enemies are keeping awake out of sheer bad temper? How eager, how ardent to keep watch on this glorious triumph of Christ should the Christian be, when even the pagan is ashamed to sleep? How right and proper it is that those who have already entered this great household⁵ should keep vigil on this greatest of its feasts, when those who are just thinking of entering are already keeping vigil?

Let us then watch and pray,⁶ and thus celebrate this vigil both outwardly and inwardly. Let God speak to us in the readings, let us speak to God in our prayers. If we listen obediently to his words, then the one we pray to is dwelling in us.

NOTES

1. Clearly preached in his own church at Hippo Regius; clearly also, from the concluding words, before the main vigil service really began; it is a kind of introduction to the liturgy—a somewhat polemical one, we might think, urging his team to put on a good performance against the rivals. To introduce a service like this seems to me to be the sort of thing a presbyter would do, rather than the bishop; so I would tentatively put this short exhortation before 396.

2. In this passage Paul is not in fact urging us to imitate him; he does that in 1 Cor 4:16 and 11:1. Here he is, reluctantly, “boasting.” And one of the things he boasts about is, not celebrating liturgical vigils, but often having to spend sleepless nights, either because his anxieties for the churches robbed him of sleep, or because he kept working late into the night.

3. With all the churches (Donatist ones too) in the city ablaze with light, and the singing and the bustle going on, it seems the poor wicked pagans couldn't sleep, and so made the best of it and had their parties too—like poor benighted Sassenachs stranded in Aberdeen, say, on New Year's Eve.

4. *Et qui vident in Domino, et qui invident Domino*, a play on words not reproducible in English. Clearly he doesn't mean that those who are rivals of the sheep and envious of the Lord (here I think he does also have the Donatists in mind) are now light in the Lord. But for them too the night is lit up like the day.

5. *Hanc domum magnam*, meaning primarily the Catholic Church, the household of faith; but secondarily the church building, the great basilica in which the vigil was being celebrated.

6. See Mk 14:38. The watching and praying called for in Gethsemane is being transferred to the Easter vigil.

SERMON 220

AT THE EASTER VIGIL

Date: uncertain¹

The solemnity renews the event by celebrating it regularly

We know, brothers and sisters, that Christ died once for us;² the Just One for sinners,³ the Lord for slaves, the free man for captives, the doctor for the sick, the blessed for the wretched, the wealthy for the needy, the seeker for the lost, the redeemer for those that had been sold, the shepherd for the flock, and what is more astonishing than all that, the creator for the creature; preserving, all the same, what he always is, handing over to death what he has become; God unnoticed, man manifest; giving life by his strength, dying in his weakness; unchanging in god-head, subject to suffering in the flesh; as the apostle puts it, *who was handed over for our misdeeds, and rose again for our justification* (Rom 4:25).

That this happened once, you know very well. And yet this solemnity repeats it as the years go round, as though it happened more often, though the truth cries out with so many voices from scripture that it happened only once. You see, the truth shows that in actual fact it happened once, but the solemnity renews it for loving hearts by celebrating it regularly. The truth opens up to us what happened, as it happened; while the solemnity, by celebrating past events, not by enacting them, does not permit them to pass away.

In a word, *Christ, our passover, has been sacrificed* (1 Cor 5:7). He, of course, was slain once, and *does not die any more, death no longer lords it over him* (Rom 6:9). Accordingly, in the language of literal truth we say that Easter, that passover, happened once, and won't come round again; but in the language of the solemnity we say that Easter, that passover, is going to come round every year. I reckon that that is how we have to understand what is written in the psalm, *The thought of man will confess to you, and the residue of thought will celebrate a solemn day to you* (Ps 76:10). Unless, you see, thought committed to memory what is said about things taking place in time, it wouldn't find any residue after the time had passed. That's why the thought of man, contemplating the actual reality, confesses to the Lord; while the residue of thought which is in the memory, knowing about past times, does not cease to celebrate solemn anniversaries, in case thought should be condemned as ungrateful.

That's where the splendid and famous solemnity of this night fits in, when by keeping vigil it's as though we were re-enacting the Lord's resurrection by the residue of thought, while by thinking more literally and realistically we confess that it happened only once.⁴ So the proclamation of the historical truth has made us well instructed; far be it from us to drop the solemnity and thus become irreligious. This solemn celebration has made this night justly famous throughout the world; it displays the Christian peoples in all their serried ranks; it confounds the darkness of the Jews; it throws down the idols of the pagans.

NOTES

1. Like the last sermon, this looks like an introduction to the solemn vigil of Easter night; so again perhaps delivered while Augustine was still only a presbyter; but I would guess a year or two after Sermon 219.

2. See Heb 7:27; 9:12.

3. See Acts 3:14; 22:14.

4. The historical uniqueness of the Christ event is central to the Christian religion; if it is not in that sense a historical religion, it is nothing. So Augustine is instinctively guarding against Christian liturgical celebrations being thought of as pagan ones possibly were; that is, as being quite independent of history, and re-enacting some myth, like the death and resurrection of Adonis, or of Horus/Osiris, that "happens" every year.

And yet at the same time he is insisting on the essentially sacramental nature of Christian religion, which in its liturgy makes the once-and-for-all Christ event perennially present to the faithful, who are here and now in Christ.

SERMON 221

ON THE HOLY NIGHT

Date: about 400¹

The joy and splendor of this holy night

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ made glorious by rising again the day which he had made grief-laden by dying; so let us call each time solemnly to mind, remembering his death by keeping awake, and greeting his resurrection by rejoicing. This is our great annual festival, and our passover; not one celebrated in figure by the killing of an animal, as it was for the old people of God, but one fulfilled in reality by the sacrifice of the savior, as for God's new people. Because *Christ our passover has been sacrificed* (1 Cor 5:7), and *the old things have passed away, and behold they have become new* (2 Cor 5:17). We should neither grieve, in fact, except as being weighed down by our misdeeds, nor really rejoice except as being justified by his grace, since *he was handed over on account of our misdeeds, and rose again on account of our justification* (Rom 4:25). We are happy to grieve over that, rejoice over this; and we are not so ungrateful as to skip over in forgetfulness the sad deed committed and the glad event deposited² on our account and for our sakes; rather, we remember them gratefully by celebrating them.

So let us keep watch then, dearly beloved, because Christ's burial lasted as far as this night; so that there might occur during this very night the resurrection of that flesh which had then been mocked on the cross, and is now worshiped both in heaven and on earth. This night, of course, is understood to belong to the day that follows it, which we call the Lord's; and obviously he had to rise again at night, because by his resurrection he also lighted up our darkness; nor was it for nothing that a short while ago³ we were singing to him, *You will light my lamp, Lord; my God, you will light up my darkness* (Ps 18:28).

Thus even our devotion underlines the grandeur of this mystery; and just as our faith, made strong by his resurrection, now keeps vigil, so also this night, illuminated by our vigil, shines as brightly as a beacon; so that together with the Church spread throughout the world we may fittingly consider it to be day,⁴ and not be found to be in the night. On so many and such great peoples, who have everywhere assembled for this most solemn anniversary, the sun has sunk down,

but day has not ended since a shining earth has taken the place of the shining sky.

*In comparison with this vigil,
others are scarcely to be regarded as vigils*

2. But if any of you are curious about the reasons for this great vigil of ours, it is possible with a little application to find a reliable answer. I mean, the one who has endowed us with the glory of his name, has himself lit up this night; and the one to whom we say *You will light up my darkness* (Ps 18:28), bestows light on our hearts. So just as our eyes rejoice to gaze upon this brilliant display of lights, in the same way our minds may be enlightened to see the reason for the splendor of this night.

Why is it, then, that Christians keep vigil today on this annual feast? Now, you see, is the supreme occasion when we keep watch; and when in our desire to know the reason we inquire, and say, "When do we keep a vigil? On such and such days we keep vigil"; we don't really think of any other solemnity but this one. In comparison with it, others are scarcely to be regarded as vigils.⁵

The apostle, indeed, urged the Church to be assiduous with vigils as with fasts, and gave himself as an example, when he said, *in fasting very often, in vigils very often* (2 Cor 11:27).⁶ But the vigil of this night is such that it alone among all the others can claim the common name for its own proper name, and be known simply as "The Vigil." So first I will say a few things, as the Lord may grant me, about vigils in general, and afterward about today's in particular.

The reason for vigils

3. In that life, which we are now toiling away to earn our rest in, which Truth promises to give us after the death of this body, or even after the end of this world, we are never going to sleep, just as we are never, of course, going to die. After all, what else is sleep but a daily death, which doesn't definitively remove us from here, and doesn't hold a person in its grip all that long? And what else is death but a long-lasting and very deep sleep, from which God can wake a person up? So then, where no death can come, neither can its reflection, sleep, intervene. Finally, sleep only affects mortal creatures. It doesn't constitute the resting of the angels; because they are always alive, they don't restore their tissues with sleep. Just as life there is without end, so too is wakefulness; there to be alive is simply to keep awake, to keep awake is simply to be alive.

We, though, in this body, which *being perishable weighs down the soul* (Wis 9:15), can only keep alive if we restore our strength sometimes by sleeping; and so we interrupt our lives with the semblance of death, in order to be able to live at least during the intervals. And thus people who regularly make a practice of chastely and innocently keeping awake at nights⁷ are without any doubt practicing how to live like the angels (to the extent, you see, that the weakness of this flesh is an earthly burden, it restricts heavenly desires); by longer vigils they

are exercising their spiritual muscles against this deadly dead weight, in order to gain themselves merit in life everlasting. On the other hand, you see, those people are not being consistent with themselves, who want to live forever, and don't like slightly longer drawn-out vigils. They want death not to exist at all, and don't want to cut down on its image.⁸ So that's the reason, that's the explanation why Christians should frequently exercise their minds by keeping awake in vigils.

The particular vigil

4. And now, brothers and sisters, while I remind you of a few other things, turn your minds particularly to the vigil we are keeping this night. We have been saying, you see, why we ought more often to deprive ourselves of sleep and increase the number of our vigils; but now we have to say⁹ why we keep watch with such a tremendous kind of celebration as we do on this particular night. That the Lord Christ rose again from the dead on the third day no Christian has the slightest doubt about. Now that that happened on this night is something for which we have the evidence of the holy gospel. It's undoubtedly the case, you see, that the whole day is reckoned from the preceding night,¹⁰ and not according to the order of the days mentioned in Genesis—though even there darkness came first, because *there was darkness on the face of the deep* when God said, *Let there be light, and there was light*; but because that darkness wasn't yet night, there weren't yet any days. God, in fact, *divided between the light and the darkness*, and first called the light day, and only next called the darkness night, and from the making of light until the next morning mention was made of one day.¹¹ It's quite clear that those days began with the light, and that each ended after the night was spent, with the next morning.

But after the human race was created, and deviated from the light of justice into the darkness of sin, from which the grace of Christ delivered them, it came about that we now reckon the days from the nights, because we are striving, and with the Lord's help hoping, to proceed not from light to darkness, but from darkness to light. That's also how the apostle puts it: *The night is far gone, while the day has drawn near; and so let us throw away the works of darkness, and don the weapons of light* (Rom 13:12). Thus the day of the Lord's passion, on which he was crucified, followed its own night that was already spent; and that's why it came to a close and ended with the *Parasceve*, which the Jews also call the *Cena pura*,¹² with the observance of the sabbath starting from the onset of that night. Next the sabbath day, which began with its own night, ended with the evening, as the night began that belongs to the beginning of the Lord's day—so called because the Lord has consecrated it by the glory of his resurrection.

And so now we are celebrating in this solemn manner the memory of that night, which belongs to the beginning of the Lord's day. We spend the whole night awake, in which the Lord rose again, and inaugurated for us in his own flesh that life which we were talking about a few moments ago, in which there

is neither any death nor any sleep; a life which he so conjured up from the dead that it does not now die again, nor does death lord it over it anymore.¹³ But now those who loved him and came to the tomb at daybreak, looking for his body, did not find it, but were told by angels that he had already risen; so it's obvious that he rose during that night which ended with that daybreak. Accordingly, the one whose rising again we serenade by keeping watch a little longer, will surely grant us the privilege of reigning with him by living forever. But if by any chance, during these hours which we are passing in this vigil, his body was still in the tomb, and hadn't yet risen again, even in this case our keeping watch is not out of place; because he slept so that we might keep awake, just as he died so that we might live. Amen.

NOTES

1. The style here makes me think that this is a fairly early sermon; but the matter suggests to me that Augustine is already a bishop. So I accept, while making more precise, the date suggested by Kunzelmann of 393-405. Fischer suggests 412-415, possibly because of references to the grace of Christ which he may think would have been less likely before the Pelagian controversy broke. But I think by that time Augustine had become a little less academic, a little more down to earth in his preaching.

2. *Quod triste commissum est, laetumque praemissum est*; the *triste commissum* is the crucifixion, the *laetum praemissum* is the resurrection; "deposited," or advanced, as a foretaste or first installment of our resurrection.

3. *Paulo ante*, in the course of the vigil. But some texts read *tanto ante*, "so long before," referring back to the time of the psalmist. This looks very like a copyist's correction; I somehow don't think Augustine was capable of uttering the ugly and slightly ridiculous sound of *tanto ante*.

4. *Cogitare hodie*; literally "think today." It's possible he really said *cogitare hoc diem esse*, and *hoc diem* got changed into *hodie* (it would sound almost exactly the same), and then *esse* got left out. The next sentence bears out my interpretation, with a word play I cannot match: . . . *sol abscessit, dies non recessit, cum lucenti caelo lucens terra successit*.

5. Other great feasts were celebrated with vigils, the only one that survives to our day being Christmas. In this section he is expressing himself rather clumsily, and it is hard in some places to tell what he means.

6. See Sermon 219, note 2.

7. Thieves and fornicators also make a habit of keeping awake at night.

8. As belonging to this party myself, I don't entirely accept the comparison of sleep with death. Sleep has its own dream life; and even if we forget our dreams the moment we wake, which is certainly the case with me, we have a sense of sleep not being a kind of death, but a whole alternative, if usually fantastic, kind of life. It makes such a nice change!

9. This is where the sermon begins in the Maurist edition, which was made from manuscripts that evidently originated with extracts from sermons.

10. Did he mean our present way of reckoning the day from midnight, and did this rather odd procedure originate with the Romans, who likewise had the curious custom of beginning the year at midwinter; or was he thinking of the Jewish method of beginning the new day with sunset? In the next paragraph that is clearly what he has in mind.

11. See Gn 1:2-5. It is not in fact clear, as he goes on to assume, that the days of Gn 1 began

with the light, since the refrain is regularly repeated, “there was evening and there was morning, the nth day”; evening including, presumably, the whole night, and morning all the daylight hours—in fact the current Jewish way of reckoning the day.

12. *Parasceve* is a Greek word meaning “preparation,” applied to the day before the sabbath, especially a sabbath which coincided with a feast like the passover, as it did in that year according to the calendar presupposed by the gospel of John; see Jn 19:31. Now it seems that the Latin speaking Jews of North Africa latinized this rather unpronounceable Greek word *parasceve* into *pura cena*, and then gave it—or Augustine gave it for them—the more correct sounding form, noun before adjective, of *cena pura*, literally “the pure supper.” He refers to this again in his *Homilies on the Gospel of John* 120, 5.

13. See Rom 6:9.

SERMON 222

AT THE EASTER VIGIL

Date: about 405¹

Dispelling the darkness

While the solemn celebration of this holy night is urging you, dearly beloved, to keep awake and pray, my customary annual address is also owed to you, so that the voice of the shepherd² too may alert the Lord's flock against the opposing and envious powers and rulers of darkness, as against the wild beasts of the night. *For there is no struggle for us against flesh and blood*, as the apostle says; that is, against human beings weakened by their mortal bodies; *but against principalities and powers, and the rulers of the world of this darkness, against spiritual things of wickedness in the heavenly places* (Eph 6:12). That, certainly, is no reason why you should suppose that the devil and his angels, whom the apostle indicates by these words, are the rulers of this world about which it is written, *And the world was made through him* (Jn 1:10). Yes, he called them *rulers of the world*; but in case anyone should understand by this the world, which in several places in the scriptures is called by the name of heaven and earth, he immediately added, as if explaining what he meant, *of this darkness*, that is, of unbelievers. That's why he has already said to the faithful, *You were once upon a time darkness, but now light in the Lord* (Eph 5:8).

So there are these spiritual things of wickedness in the heavenly places; not where the stars shine in their courses, and the holy angels have their abode; but in the foggy dwelling of this lowest atmosphere where the clouds are condensed—and yet it is written, *who covers heaven with clouds* (Ps 147:8); where also the birds fly about, and yet they are called *the birds of heaven* (Ps 50:11). So it's in these heavenly places, not in that loftier tranquillity of the heavens,³ that these most wicked spirits lurk, against whom we are booked to struggle; in order that after beating the bad angels, we may enjoy that prize which will make us the companions of the good angels for an imperishable eternity. Thus in another place the same apostle designates the devil's dark and dingy principedom, where he says, *According to the spirit of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, who is now at work in the children of unbelief* (Eph 2:2). So *the spirit of this world* here is the same as *the rulers of the world* in that other

text. And just as here he explained which world he meant by *in the children of unbelief*, so he also did there, when he added *of this darkness*. And what he calls here *the prince of the power of the air* is the same as *in the heavenly places* in that text.

And so heartfelt thanks to the Lord our God, who *has snatched us from the power of darkness, and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of his love* (Col 1:12-13). So then, being distinguished from that darkness by the light of the gospel, and redeemed from those powers by the precious blood, *watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation* (Mk 14:38). Because those of you who have *the faith that works through love* (Gal 5:6), well, the prince of this world has been thrown out of your hearts outside;⁴ but from outside *he prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour* (1 Pt 5:8). So, *do not give the devil a foothold* (Eph 4:27), as he tries to penetrate your defenses from any side at all; but let the one who threw him outside dwell inside you against him. When that one was lording it over you, *you were once upon a time darkness; but now light in the Lord; walk as children of the light* (Eph 5:8). Against the darkness and its rulers keep awake in your mother the light, and pray to *the Father of lights* (Jas 1:17) from the bosom of your mother the light.⁵

NOTES

1. Nobody proposes a date for this sermon; but from the opening sentence it seems clear that Augustine was already the bishop of Hippo Regius, and had been for some time, long enough at least to establish a custom. So I would date it about 405. It appears, like Sermons 219 and 220, to be a kind of introduction to the Easter vigil, and yet to have been preached by him as bishop. So I have to qualify what I said in Sermon 219, note 1, about this being a job for a presbyter rather than for a bishop. I still think that and the next sermon were preached while he was still only a presbyter; but just as Augustine collaborated with Bishop Aurelius of Carthage in getting presbyters in North Africa to do what was regarded as strictly the bishop's job, namely to preach; so he may well have decided that the bishop could also do the presbyter's job, namely introduce important services like the Easter vigil.

2. That is, of the bishop. A presbyter in those days could hardly talk of his *vox pastoralis*.

3. Scripture knows of three heavens; see 2 Cor 12:2. This is calculated from the expression found here and there in the Old Testament, "the heaven of heavens": = 1 heaven + 2 heavens. See Ps 115:16.

4. See Jn 12:31.

5. "Your mother the light" is presumably the Church, symbolized by all the lights blazing in the basilica, which had been lit perhaps, then as now, from the paschal candle, symbol of Christ.

SERMON 223

AT THE EASTER VIGIL

Date: after 412¹

The day which the Lord has made is the newly baptized

1. In the book called *Genesis* scripture says, *And God saw the light that it was good. And God divided between the light and the darkness; and God called the light day, and the darkness he called night* (Gn 1:4-5). So if God called the light day, then without a shadow of doubt those to whom the apostle Paul says, *You were once darkness, but now light in the Lord* (Eph 5:8), were day; since the one who *commanded light to shine out of the darkness* (2 Cor 4:6) had enlightened them.

These infants,² whom you behold outwardly clothed in white, inwardly cleansed and purified, the brilliance of their garments representing the splendor of their minds, were once darkness, when the night of their sins was covering them. But now that they have been washed clean in the bath of amnesty, that they have been watered from the fountain of wisdom, that they have been bedewed with the light of justice, *this is the day which the Lord has made; let us exult and rejoice in it* (Ps 118:24). Let the day of the Lord listen to us; let the day made by the Lord listen to us; let it listen and obey, so that we may rejoice and exult in it; because, as the apostle says, this is our joy and our crown, if you stand fast in the Lord.³

So listen to me, O you freshly born children of a chaste mother; or rather, listen to me, you children of a virgin mother. Because *you were once darkness, but now light in the Lord*, stick close to the children of light; and let me put it quite plainly: stick close to those of the faithful who are good. Because there are, you see, and this is a sad and sorry fact, a number of the faithful who are bad. They are the faithful who are called so, and are not really so. They are the faithful by whom the sacraments of Christ are misused; who live in such a way that they both perish themselves and ruin others. They perish themselves by living bad lives; while they ruin others by setting them the example of living bad lives. So you, then, dearly beloved, see you don't join such people. Seek out the good ones, stick close to the good ones, be good ones yourselves.

There are bad Christians in the Church of this present age

2. Don't be surprised, either, at how many bad Christians there are, who fill the church, who communicate at the altar, who loudly praise the bishop or the priest when he preaches about good morals; who fulfill what the one who gathers us together foretold in the psalm: *I announced, and I spoke; they have multiplied above number* (Ps 40:5).⁴ They can be with us in the Church of this time; but in that Church which will come into being after the resurrection, they will be unable to be gathered in with the saints.

The Church of this time, you see, is compared to a threshing-floor, having on it grain mixed with chaff, having bad members mixed with good; after the judgment it will have all the good members, without any bad ones. This threshing-floor holds the harvest sown by the apostles, watered by the teachers who followed them up till the present time, subjected to no little threshing under persecution by its enemies; but, the only stage remaining, not yet cleansed by the winnowing from above. However, the one is coming, about whom you have given back the article of the creed, *From there he is going to come to judge the living and the dead*; and, as the gospel states, *He will have a winnowing fan in his hand, and will cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat together into the granary, while the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire* (Lk 3:17).

You older faithful, you listen too to what I'm saying. Any of you who are grain, rejoice with trembling,⁵ and stay where you are, and don't leave the threshing-floor. Don't attempt, on your own judgment, to shake yourselves free, as it were, from the chaff; because if you want to separate yourself now from the chaff, you won't be able to stay on the threshing-floor.⁶ And when that one comes who distinguishes infallibly between grain and chaff, he won't carry up to the granary anything he doesn't find on the threshing-floor. So it will be no good at that time for grains to boast about the ears of wheat they come from, if they have left the threshing-floor. That granary will be filled and closed. Anything left outside will be gutted by fire.

So then, dearly beloved, if you are good, you must put up with the bad; if you are bad, you must imitate the good. The fact is, on this threshing-floor grains can degenerate into chaff, and again grains can be resurrected from chaff. This sort of thing happens every day, my dear brothers and sisters; this life is full of both painful and pleasant surprises. Every day people who seemed to be good fall away and perish; and again, ones who seemed to be bad are converted and live. *God, you see, does not desire the death of the wicked, but only that they may turn back and live* (Ez 18:23).

Listen to me, grains; listen to me, those of you who are what I desire you to be. Don't let the mixture of husks depress you; they won't be with you forever. How much, anyway, is this pile of husks that is covering us? Thank God, it's very light. We only have to be grains, and however big it is, it won't crush us. *God, after all, is faithful, and he will not permit us to be tempted or tried beyond our capacity, but with the trial will also provide a way out, so that we can endure* (1 Cor 10:13).

Let the husks listen to me too; wherever they are, let them listen. I hope there aren't any here; but let me address them all the same, in case perhaps there are some here. So listen to me, you husks; though if you do listen, you won't be husks anymore. So listen. Let God's patience stand you in good stead. Let your association with the grains, and their advice and admonitions, make you too into grains. You are not denied the showers of God's word; don't let God's field in you be barren. So, grow green again, grow grain again, grow ripe again. The one who sowed you, after all, wishes to find full ears of corn, not empty husks.⁷

NOTES

1. The straightforward, simple style persuades me to cast my vote with the scholar, Poque, who suggests this date, against those who put the sermon ten years earlier, 400-405. But I agree with the Maurists against all these scholars in seeing it as an Easter vigil sermon, instead of one preached on Low Sunday, or even later in paschal time. It was clearly preached at the end of the vigil, after the new Christians had been baptized and had come from the baptistry, dressed in their white baptismal robes, to join the faithful in the main basilica.

2. The newly baptized were always known as the *infantes*; see 1 Pt 2:2.

3. See Phil 4:1.

4. Why he should suppose the psalm is here talking about Christ's enemies is by no means clear.

5. See Ps 2:11.

6. It was his constant complaint that this is what the Donatists had done. He is warning his congregation not to give in to this Donatist temptation. This could be a point in favor of the earlier date for the sermon. The Donatist temptation was much less of a real threat to Catholic congregations after the great colloquy between Catholic and Donatist bishops in 411, when judgment was given in favor of the Catholics, and the Donatists were subjected to very severe financial penalties.

7. *Spicas vult invenire, non spinas.*

SERMON 223A

ON THE BEGINNING OF GENESIS AT THE EASTER VIGIL

Date: 399¹

God created heaven and earth in the beginning through the Word

1. We have heard many divinely inspired readings, and I don't have the stamina to give you a sermon to equal them in length, and you couldn't take it, even if I did.² So to the extent that the Lord allows, I wish to speak to your graces about the very beginning of the scriptures, where we heard when it was read, that *in the beginning God made heaven and earth* (Gn 1:1). Concentrate for a moment, and think of the one who did the making. But I know that you are unable to think of the one who did the making;³ so think instead of what he made, and praise the one who made it.

In the beginning God made heaven and earth. Just look, the things that have been made are to hand, they can be looked at, they give pleasure. The work is plain to see, the workman is hidden; because what one can see with is also plain, and what one loves with is hidden. So when we see the world and love God, what we love with is obviously better than what we see with. We see with our eyes, we love with our minds.

So let us inquire, if you are agreeable, when God made such an enormous mass as the universe, what machines he made it with. The machine he makes with is the word he commands with. Why be surprised? It's the work of the Almighty.⁴ So if you inquire who made it, God made it. If you inquire what he made, he made heaven and earth. If you inquire by what means he made it, he made it through the Word, which he did not make.

This Word, through which heaven and earth were made, this Word was not itself made. I mean, if it was made, through what was it made? *All things were made through it* (Jn 1:3). So if whatever has been made was made through the Word, the Word itself, clearly, through which all things were made, was not made. One more point: the narrator of the works of creation, God's servant Moses, says *In the beginning God made heaven and earth.* He made heaven and earth in the beginning. By what means did he make it? Through the Word. Did he also make the Word? No; well what, then? *In the beginning was the Word*

(Jn 1:1); that, through which he made things, already was; that's how he made what as yet was not. We can understand it, and rightly understand it, in the sense that heaven and earth were made in the only-begotten Word itself. They were made in, you see, that through which they were made. This can be, and be understood as, the beginning in which God made heaven and earth. This Word, after all, is also the wisdom of God,⁵ about which it is said, *You have made all things in wisdom* (Ps 104:24). If God made all things in wisdom, and his only-begotten Son is without a shadow of doubt the wisdom of God,⁶ let us not doubt that whatever we have learned was made through the Son, was also made in the Son. The Son himself, after all, is certainly the beginning. When the Jews were questioning him and saying, *Who are you? he answered, The beginning* (Jn 8:25). There you have, *In the beginning God made heaven and earth* (Gn 1:1).

*The Word was hidden with the Father.
In order to come to us he took flesh*

2. As for all the rest, though, whether when they are being sorted out and arranged, or whether when they are being furnished, or whether when what had not been made in heaven and on earth is created⁷—God speaks, and they happen. *And God said, Let there be . . . and there was . . .* (Gn 1:3.6.9.11.14.20.24), and so on through every single work; he spoke and it happened. *He spoke, and they were made* (Ps 148:5). What language did he speak in? For what audience did he speak? Well, we mustn't always let ourselves be fed on milk. Lift up your minds with me to the solid food.⁸ None of you must think of God as a body, none of you must think of God as a human being, none of you must think of God as an angel; although he was prepared to appear in that sort of way to the Fathers, not in his own very substance, but by means of some created thing subject to his command. The invisible one could not otherwise, after all, have appeared to human eyes.

Let us inquire what is the better element in ourselves, and from there attempt to reach up to what is better than everything. What is the better element in us is the mind; what is better than everything is God. Why look for the better thing in the inferior thing? In you, the body is inferior to the mind; in things, there is nothing better than God. Lift up what is the better element in you to reach, if you can, the one who is better than everything.

I too, after all, as I speak, am speaking to minds. Yes, there are visible faces which I, also visible in body, can see; but through what I can see I am addressing what I cannot see. Inside me I am carrying a word conceived in my heart, and I wish to bring forth in your ears what I have conceived in my heart. I want to tell you what's inside me, to bring out into the open what's hidden; I look around for some means by which it can reach your mind. First of all, I accost your ears, as being the door of your mind; and since the word I have conceived in my heart is invisible, and I can't present it to you directly, I provide a kind of vehicle for it—sound. I place what's hidden on what's manifest, and I arrive at your hearing;

and in this way the word goes out from me, comes to you, and doesn't depart from me.

So then, if we may be permitted to compare tiny things with great ones, the lowest with the highest, the human with the divine, God too has done that. The Word was hidden with the Father. In order to come to us, he commandeered a kind of vehicle, he took flesh to himself. He came forth to us, and did not depart from the Father. But before his incarnation, before Adam himself, the father of the human race, before heaven and earth and everything that is in them, *in the beginning was the Word* (Jn 1:1), and *in the beginning God made heaven and earth* (Gn 1:1).

*To know God we must rise above and go beyond
our time-bound experience of our own minds*

3. God made the earth, though, before it was yet furnished, before its form and appearance was laid bare. *It was invisible and without arrangement, and there was darkness on the deep.* There was darkness where there was no light; light, you see, had not yet been made. *The Spirit of God was skimming over the waters* (Gn 1:2). He too is a maker, not separated, either, from the Father and the only-begotten Word. And here, you see, if we pay careful attention, the Trinity is being suggested to us. Where it says *In the beginning God made*, the *ousia*⁹ of Father and Son is to be understood: *in the beginning*, the Son; *God*, the Father. There remains the Spirit, to complete the Trinity: *The Spirit of God was skimming over the waters.*

And God said (Gn 1:3). To whom did God say? Before any creature was made, was there anyone to hear?

“There was,” he says.¹⁰

My question is: who?

“The Son himself.”

So God said to the Son. What word did he speak to the Word with? I mean if the Son was already there, as no Christian can doubt, then of course he was also the Word. The Son was the Word, and the Father said to the Word; so words, I take it, ran to and fro between God and the Word? Not at all; get rid of the excess baggage of materialist thinking, brothers and sisters; think about invisible realities in an invisible way;¹¹ don't parade bodily likenesses before the eyes of your minds. Go beyond whatever you can observe in yourself; go beyond even what you cannot observe in yourself; you can observe the body, I mean; you can't observe the soul, and yet it is changeable. Now it wishes, now it doesn't; now it knows, now it's ignorant; now it remembers, now it forgets; now it makes advances, now it regresses. That isn't God, such a nature isn't God, the soul is not a portion derived from the substance of God.¹² Whatever God is, after all, he is the unchangeable good, the imperishable good. Even though God is invisible and the soul is invisible, the soul is changeable, God is unchangeable. So rise above, then, not only what you can observe in yourself, but also above whatever is changeable in yourself. Rise above everything, rise above yourself.

Who is my God?

4. A certain lover of invisible goodness, a certain lover of invisible eternity, said in between his sighs and the groans of his love, *My tears have become bread for me day and night, while they say to me every day: Where is your God? (Ps 42:3)*. How, indeed, could the groans of a lover avoid becoming his bread tears, so that he feeds on them as on the enjoyment of food, and finds relief in weeping as long as he cannot see what he loves, while they say to him every day, *Where is your God?*

If I say to a pagan, "Where is your god?" he will show me idols. If I break the idol, he will show me a mountain, show me a tree, show me some worthless stone from a stream; something, you see, he has taken from among many stones, and set in a more honorable place and bowed down and worshiped, that is his God.¹³ "There you are," he says, pointing with his finger, "there you have my god." When I jeer at the stone, when I take it away, when I smash it, when I throw it away, when I show my contempt for it, he points his finger at the sun, at the moon, he points at any star you like; one he calls Saturn, another Mercury, another Jupiter, another Venus. Whatever he likes, wherever he points his finger, he will give me the answer, "There you have my god." And because I can see the sun and can't smash it, can't pull down the stars, can't overturn the sky, he considers himself rather superior in showing me visible things, and pointing with his finger at whatever he likes, and saying, "There you have my god."

And then he turns to me, and says, "And *where is your God?*" When I hear *Where is your God?* I have nothing to show his eyes, I find nothing but blind, barking, jeering minds; I've nothing to show the only eyes he has to see with. The one I do have that I can show him, well, he doesn't have the eyes to see him with. It's a relief to weep, like feeding on bread in one's tears. My God, after all, is invisible; the person talking to me is demanding visible things when he says, *Where is your God?* I, however, in order to come to my God, as it says in the same psalm, *meditated on these things, and poured out my soul over myself (Ps 42:4)*. My God is not below my soul, but is above my soul. How can I reach something that is above my soul, unless I pour out my soul above myself?

And yet to this bold brash fellow, demanding visible things, pointing to visible things, exulting in visible things, I will and must attempt, with my God helping me in any way he likes, to offer an answer.

O.K., fine; you're saying to me, *Where is your God?* My answer to you is: "Where are you yourself?" That's my answer, I repeat, and I don't think it's an unfair one. You asked where God is, while I ask where my questioner himself is.

He's going to say, "Here is where I am; you can see me, I'm talking to you."

And I say to him, "I'm inquiring about my questioner; I can see his face, see his body, hear his voice, take a look at his tongue; I'm inquiring about the one who turns his eyes to me, who wags his tongue, who utters his voice, who asks questions because he wants to know the answers. The sum total of what I'm talking about is the soul."

So I'm not going to waste any more time on you. You say, "Show me your

God”; I say, “Show me your spirit.”¹⁴ You sweat, you get tired, you’re in a fix, when I say, “Show me your spirit.” I know you can’t do it. Why can’t you? Because your spirit is invisible. And yet it is, in you, better than your body; while my God is better than your spirit. So how am I to show you my God, when you can’t show me your spirit, and I can show you that my God is better than your spirit?

Look, if you say to me, “You can tell my spirit from its work; because I turn my eyes to see, my ears to hear, move my tongue to speak, produce my voice to make a sound, from all this you can understand and know my spirit”; it means you yourself realize you can’t show it to me in itself, but you tell me to know it from its works. So there you are, I too will show you my God from his works. And I won’t go off far away, I won’t send your unbelief to remote things you cannot, perhaps, grasp. I won’t run through the works of my God in this sort of way: “He made things invisible, he made things visible; that is, *heaven and earth, the sea and all the things that are in them* (Ps 146:6).” I’m not dispatching you through many things; I’m going back to you yourself. You’re certainly alive; you have a body, you have a spirit. The body’s visible, the spirit’s invisible. The body’s the habitation, the spirit the inhabitant; the body’s the vehicle, the spirit the user of the vehicle; the body’s like a vehicle which has to be driven, the spirit the driver of your body. Look at the senses of your body; they’re plainly like doors in your body, through which messages may be brought to your spirit living inside; eyes, ears, sense of smell, taste, touch, the arrangement of limbs. What’s that inside, that you think with, that you give life to all these other things with? The whole of that, which you marvel at in yourself — the one who made that, that’s who my God is.

The divine name, “I am who I am”

5. So then, my dear brothers and sisters, if I’ve managed, as best I could, to make contact with your minds, with your inner selves by some sort of suitable conversation, if by talking I’ve reached *those who stay in mud houses* (Jb 4:19), that is, your spirits dwelling in your bodies, don’t try to work out divine realities from the things you know. God surpasses everything, heaven and earth. Don’t set before your eyes a kind of great big burly blacksmith,¹⁵ putting something together, fitting it out, tooling it, turning it, twisting it; or even a kind of emperor, seated on a royal throne of splendid, ornate workmanship, and creating by giving orders. Smash the idols in your minds, pay attention to what Moses was told when he asked God what his name was: *I am who am* (Ex 3:14). Whatever else there is, in comparison with him it is not. That which truly is, is incapable of being changed in any respect whatever.

Everything that changes and fluctuates, and does not cease at any time at all to alter, was and will be; you can never catch hold of *is* in it. But God doesn’t have any *was* and *will be*. What was, no longer is; what will be, isn’t yet; and what is coming in such a way that it will pass, will be in such a way that it never is. Contemplate, if you can, *I am who am*. Don’t roll around and revolve like

wheels, don't be driven by revolving, temporal thoughts.¹⁶ Stand still at *is*, stand still at just *is*. Where are you going? Stand still, so that you too may be able just to be.

But when do we catch hold of fleeting thought, and nail it to what abides? When can we ever do this? And so God took pity; and the one *who is*, and the one who said, *This is what you shall say to the children of Israel: He who is has sent me to you* (Ex 3:14), having spoken the name of his substance, goes on next to speak the name of his mercy. What is the name of his substance? *I am who am; you shall say to the children of Israel: He who is has sent me to you*. But Moses was a man, and was up to his neck in things that in comparison with that other one are not; he was on earth, he was in the flesh; and in that flesh he was a soul, he was a changeable nature, he was carrying the load of human frailty. I mean, when was he ever going to grasp what was said to him, *I am who am*? After all, the one who could not be seen was speaking to him by means of what his eyes could see, and the hidden God was using what could be seen as his instrument. (I mean, none of what Moses could see was God; because even the sound that proceeds from me, a mere human being, isn't the whole of my word; I've a word in my mind which makes no sound; the sound passes, the word remains.)¹⁷

So when God said,¹⁸ *I am who am*, and *You shall say to the children of Israel: He who is has sent me to you*; as though he was incapable of understanding what *I am who am* could mean, not to mention *He who is has sent me to you* (or perhaps, if he himself could understand it, it would still have to be read to us, who wouldn't be able to understand it), immediately after the name of substance, he told him his name of mercy. It's as though he said to Moses, "You can't grasp what I said, *I am who am*. Your mind doesn't stand still, you are not unchangeable together with me, nor is your mind unchangeable. You have heard what I am; now hear what you can grasp, hear what you can hope in." *God said again to Moses, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob* (Ex 3:15).¹⁹ "You cannot grasp the name of my substance; grasp the name of my mercy. *I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.*"

But what I am is eternal; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, indeed, are eternal; or rather I shouldn't say eternal, but made eternal by him.²⁰ At any rate, this was how the Lord himself refuted the misrepresentations of the Sadducees; as they denied the resurrection, he gave them the testimony of scripture from this passage: *Read what the Lord said to Moses in the bush: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all are alive for him* (Lk 20:37-38). Accordingly here too God did not add *This is my name for ever* after saying *I am who am*; about this, I mean, nobody doubts that that which is *is*, precisely because it is eternal. But it was when he said *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*, that he added *This is my name for ever*. As though to say, "Why be afraid because of the mortality of the human race? Is what you're dreading, perhaps, that when you've died, you won't exist anymore? *This is my*

name forever. The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob couldn't be a name for ever, unless Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived for ever."

Turning to the Lord, etc., and prayer

May the power of his mercy confirm our hearts in truth, confirm and set our souls at rest; may his grace come abundantly upon us, and may he have mercy on us, and remove all stumbling blocks from our path, and from his Church, and from all our dear ones; and may he make us pleasing to himself by his power and the abundance of his mercy upon us for ever: through Jesus Christ his Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with him and with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.²¹

NOTES

1. There is general agreement among the scholars about this date. It was only Augustine's third or fourth Easter as bishop. I wonder if he ever again preached such a long sermon at the end of the Easter vigil. But in note 9 below I suggest a possible reason for dating the sermon some years later, say 405-410.

2. Well, he certainly does his best! Not that this is a particularly long sermon by his standards; but coming after all the readings of the vigil, and the singing, it would certainly leave a modern congregation feeling stunned; and there is evidence toward the end that at times the preacher was so tired he was losing his thread.

3. Because no one can. *No one has ever seen God* (Jn 1:18). We cannot know what God is, but only what he is not (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.3, prol.).

4. *Machina facientis verbum est jubentis. Quid miraris? Opus est Omnipotentis.*

5. Augustine's identification of Word with Wisdom is not just arbitrary; it is in accord with the mind of the evangelist John himself. The inspiration for his prologue about the Word, the Logos, was the Old Testament figure of Wisdom in such passages as Prv 8:22-36, and Sir 24:1-23. But Wisdom, *Sophia*, is feminine, and John needed a masculine word to apply to Jesus; *Logos* filled the bill exactly, God's creative word of Genesis 1 corresponding to the creative wisdom of Proverbs 8, and God's lawgiving word (ten words, the decalogue) corresponding to the wisdom identified with the law of Sirach 24.

6. See 1 Cor 1:24.

7. The works of creation were traditionally analyzed into the work of creation in the strict sense (Gn 1:1-2); the works of distinction or division, what is here called sorting out and arranging (Gn 1:3-10); the works of furnishing or adorning (Gn 1:11-19).

8. See 1 Cor 3:1-2; though Augustine does not have in mind quite the same thing as Paul does.

9. The substance. Why he chooses to employ the Greek word, it is hard to say; unless he happened to be engaged at the time in writing Books V-VII of his *The Trinity*, where among other things he discusses the ambiguity of the Latin *substantia* as a rendering of the Greek *ousia*, since it also corresponds to the Greek *hypostasis*. If that were the case, the sermon would have to be put several years later, say 405-410.

10. That is, I think, the naive Christian, still feeding on milk.

11. Whatever that might be! In his more considered moments, he admits one cannot think without material images, and is content to warn us not to identify the images with the realities they so inadequately represent.

12. As Stoic doctrine, a rather crude pantheism, would have it. He does seem to be wandering away from the Trinity and the right way of thinking about it.

13. Examples, these, of a no doubt humbler rural paganism than that of the great city temples. Was he perhaps preaching in a country parish?

14. *Animus*, as distinct from *anima*, soul, which he has just mentioned. They are synonyms with a subtle difference.

15. Like Woden (or is it Thor?), the Germanic smith deity, corresponding to the Roman Vulcan and the Greek Hephaestus.

16. Reading, in the first part of the sentence, *Nolite volutaribus volvi*, instead of . . . *voluntatibus* . . . ; and in the second *volutariis* . . . *cogitationibus* instead of *voluntariis* . . . ; two very uncommon words unthinkingly replaced with common ones by a copyist. But "will" and "voluntary thoughts" have nothing to do with his point. His image is one of rolling, going round and round, *volvi*, as opposed to standing still.

17. If he wasn't confusing his audience, and getting their thoughts going round and round like wheels, he is certainly confusing his translator! How this helps him get from *I am who am to the God of Abraham* etc., I cannot fathom.

18. Here I leave out a whole clause, in which the text seems rather corrupt; or else Augustine was being quite extraordinarily careless with his grammar. As the distinguished Loeb edition of the classics used to leave passages untranslated which the editor judged indecent, so I leave this one out. And just as that was an infallible inducement to schoolboys to study the text with extra care and attention, so here I hope it will encourage readers to see how they could manage the translation. Here then is the whole sentence:

Ergo cum diceret Deus ad hominem, invisibilis per id quod apparere dignatus est visibilibus loqueretur, aeternus temporalia, incommutabilis fragilia, cum diceret . . .

So when God said to a man, the invisible one by that which he deigned to appear visible spoke, the eternal one temporal things, the unchangeable one frail things, when he said . . .

Sheer gobbledegook, and quite beside the point.

19. God had already declared himself as the God of the ancestors before Moses asked him what his name was. Here he in fact tells Moses to tell the people that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had sent him.

20. He is already reflecting on the second half of verse 15, which he hasn't yet quoted. And as he—or his version, but I suspect it is himself (after all, he had been up all night, and was getting as dog-tired as his congregation must have been)—had somewhat misquoted the text, he missed the point that the name God was talking about here was "the Lord," YHWH.

21. This is not the usual "Turning to the Lord" prayer, the text of which can be found in Note 22 to Sermon 15A, volume 1 of these sermons. There it is mistakenly asserted that the text is also given at the end of Sermon 34. I think it will be found at the end of Sermon 63, in volume 3.

SERMON 223B

DISCOURSE ON THE HOLY NIGHT

Date: uncertain¹

This vigil as a reminder of Christ's death and resurrection

1. As our Lord Jesus Christ was about to suffer in the fullness of time for our eternal salvation, he gave his disciples some advice, and said, *Watch and pray, lest you should enter into temptation* (Mk 14:38). Although this is something Christians should take care to do regularly, and not let sleep swallow up every single night, having before them the example of the apostle, who said *in vigils very often* (2 Cor 11:27); still, as on this night the whole world is keeping awake for Christ, it has been established as a holier and more sacred vigil. The intention is that human devotion should celebrate with an annual solemnity what divine compassion achieved once and for all, and not let the memory of it be buried in oblivion. *Christ, you see, died once, the just for the unjust* (1 Pt 3:18). *But rising from the dead, he does not die again, death no longer lords it over him. For in that he died to sin, he died once; while in that he lives, he lives for God. Thus we too should reckon ourselves to be dead to sin, but alive for God in Christ Jesus* (Rom 6:9.11).

In order that such a great mystery as this should be retained in the memory, the day of the year on which it happened could obviously not be allowed to slip by like any other night, but is brought to the attention of religious people with the most solemn possible celebration. Now the purpose of the Jews in killing Christ was to obliterate his memory from the earth. This, quite apart from eternal punishment, is how they are paid back in the meantime, that while his memory is gloriously celebrated, the world does not forget their crime. Everyone, after all, who anywhere in the world marvels at this night's splendid light, simultaneously denounces the darkness of the Jews. But while we must detest their misdeed, let us faithfully hold on to the tremendous good that the Lord wrought for us out of their evil, and celebrate it with proper solemnity.²

We keep watch at the same time as Christ slept in the tomb

2. Because we are celebrating a vigil, my dearest brothers and sisters, on this night when we recall that the Lord was buried, let us keep awake during the time

in which he slept for our sakes. He, as a matter of fact, announced his passion a long, long time before through the prophet, when he said, *I myself slept, and I rose up, because the Lord upheld me* (Ps 3:5). He called the Father Lord. Thus we keep awake on the night in which he slept, in order to live by the death which he suffered; we celebrate a vigil over his temporal slumber, so that as he watches for our sake, we may rise again to an eternal vigil and remain tirelessly awake forever.

However, he also rose again on this night, and it is in expectation of that resurrection that we are keeping watch. *He was handed over for our sins, and he slept. He rose again for our justification* (Rom 4:25). That's why we, on this one night in which he slept, all throng to this vigil of ours, so that safe in his watchful keeping we may some time or other be quit of that sort of sleep; and by keeping awake we await the hour of his awakening, in case at the very point of our justification, for which he rose again, carelessness should creep in, and our hearts, not our bodies, should fall asleep. So let us watch, my dearest friends, and pray, lest we enter into temptation.

NOTES

1. Preached, presumably, like Sermon 219 and others we have seen, at the beginning of the Easter vigil. That could be a reason, as was suggested there (see Sermon 19, note 1), for dating it to one of the years before he was ordained bishop, that is to 391-396. But for qualification of this admittedly tenuous inference, see Sermon 222, note 1.

2. Another such reason, I would like to think, is this whiff of anti-Judaism, which I want to believe Augustine to some extent grew out of in his later years. See Sermon 218B, note 9; and in slight extenuation Sermon 218, note 13.

SERMON 223C

ON THE HOLY NIGHT

Date: uncertain¹

*Christ slept the sleep of death voluntarily,
not out of necessity, for our redemption*

As our Lord Jesus Christ approached his passion, in which for debts he paid out what he did not owe,² in order to cancel with his blood the bond by which we were held liable,³ he said to his disciples, *Watch and pray, lest you should enter into temptation* (Mt 26:41). It was as a result of this recommendation of his that this solemnity was instituted,⁴ so that we should all keep watch, as the anniversary comes round of the day on which his resurrection was awaited. May he pay heed to us as we keep awake on his solemnity, seeing that he fell asleep for our salvation. As a matter of fact, it had been said in prophecy of his case, and in his name, *I myself fell asleep and slumbered; and I rose up, since the Lord will uphold me* (Ps 3:5); as though to say, "The Jews mustn't imagine they have prevailed; I myself went to sleep; it was a matter of will, not of necessity." It was he, for sure, he who went to sleep, as consenting to it, not conquered by it; inasmuch, after all, as he had power to lay down his life and to take it up again.⁵

That, however, does not mean that the Jews were guiltless of crime, just because it was by his own power and authority that he fell asleep; to prove their criminal responsibility, you see, he said in another psalm, *I fell asleep troubled* (Ps 57:4). He referred this, I mean, to those who supposed he had been troubled by them, who mocked him as if he had been beaten by them; and yet while they had demanded his death with impious voices, they attempted to distance themselves from responsibility for his execution, so that it would appear not to be their doing, but Pilate's, who handed him over to the soldiers to be crucified. That's why that very psalm continues, *The sons of men, their teeth are weapons and arrows, and their tongue a sharpened sword* (Ps 57:4); as though to say, "Even if not with your own hands, all the same with your own mouth you have destroyed the one whose death you clamored for."⁶

But what does it say in another psalm? *Shall he that sleeps not furthermore arise?* (Ps 41:8). There you are, he has risen, the one who had fallen asleep; he

has woken up, and become *like a sparrow alone above the roof* (Ps 102:7), that is, above the sky, where *he intercedes for us* (Rom 8:34), where *he dies no more, nor does death lord it over him any further* (Rom 6:9); because *he that guards us will neither sleep nor slumber* (Ps 121:4). Look, there they are; they thought they had done him harm, and they have been uprooted from the very kingdom⁷ where they did not wish him to reign over them,⁸ and have vanished from it; so that what he said in the same psalm, as he was about to fall asleep, *Raise me up, and I will pay them back* (Ps 41:10), would even be visibly fulfilled.

Let us therefore humble our souls as we celebrate the vigil, so that with watchful hearts we may hope for and await the coming of him, whose voice will arouse all that are sleeping even from their graves; *those who have done good, to the resurrection of life; those who have done evil, to the resurrection of the judgment* (Jn 5:29). He, after all, is the one about whose sleep, as he was lifted up on the cross, Jacob had so long before foretold, *You have gone up lying down, you have slept like a lion* (Gn 49:9). He, *the lion, has conquered, from the tribe of Judah* (Rv 5:5); because Jacob too said that when he was blessing Judah. So since the lion slept, he was reckoned among the dead;⁹ but because the lion has conquered, he will come to judge the living and the dead.

NOTES

1. See Sermon 223B, note 1.

2. See Ps 69:4.

3. See Col 2:14.

4. Extremely unlikely; it was a different night. There is no evidence, however (as far as I know), of any such custom in Augustine's time as watching at the altar of repose during the night of Maundy Thursday. So as the Easter vigil stood alone, the transfer of the Gethsemane vigil of Jesus to this night was natural enough for a preacher.

5. See Jn 10:18.

6. As usual, Augustine is harsher on the Jews even than John, who represents them only as charging Jesus before Pilate because *it is not lawful for us to put anyone to death* (Jn 18:31). In this sermon, he is indeed more than usually vindictive against the Jews.

7. Reading *ex regno ipso* instead of the text's *etiam regnum ipsum*. This accusative does not fit grammatically into the sentence. I am supposing that the stenographer heard my proposed reading as the text's reading. With the nasalization of the Latin final m, the two would sound practically the same.

8. See Lk 19:14.

9. See Ps 88:5.

SERMON 223D

AT THE EASTER VIGIL

Date: after 396¹

The preferred vigil

1. It's well known to you, my dearest brothers and sisters—you aren't unaware, after all, of what you are doing—that this vigil has been dedicated to the Lord, and is preferred above all the vigils devoted to the worship of God, for the purpose of renewing in it by means of such an annual solemnity the memory of the Savior, who *was handed over on account of our transgressions and rose again on account of our justification* (Rom 4:25); so that his whole Church, which is his body, might sing, *I, though, will exult in the Lord, and will rejoice in God my savior* (Hb 3:18).

Christ rose again during the night, as light shining out of the darkness

2. For us too, you see, once the night of this age is done, there will be a resurrection of the flesh for the kingdom; it's the model or sample of this that has already occurred in our head. That, indeed, is why the Lord wished to rise again at night; because, in the apostle's words, *God, who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness, has shone in our hearts* (2 Cor 4:6).

So the Lord represented light shining out of darkness by being born at night, and also by rising at night. Light out of darkness, in fact, is Christ out of the Jews, to whom it was said, *I have likened your mother to night* (Hos 4:5 LXX).² But in that nation, as it were in that night, the virgin Mary was not night, but somehow or other a star of the night; which is why a star also signaled her child-bearing, guiding a far distant night, that is the Magi from the East, to worship the light. Thus in them too would be realized the command to *the light to shine out of darkness*.

Another harmony between the resurrection and the birth of Christ: just as in this new tomb no other dead person was laid before him and none after; so in that virginal womb no other mortal was conceived before him, and none after.

*By celebrating this past event of Christ's resurrection,
we anticipate the future even of our own*

3. Although, then, at this vigil of ours the Lord is not being awaited as though he was still going to rise again, but the memory of his resurrection is being renewed in this annual solemnity, all the same by celebrating it we recall past events in such a way, that we symbolize in this same vigil what we are about in living by faith. During the whole of this time, you see, in which this age, representing night, is running its course, the Church is keeping vigil, the eyes of her faith fixed upon the holy scriptures as upon lamps lit at night, until the Lord comes. So you have what the apostle Peter says: *We have the more certain prophetic word, to which you do well to pay attention, as to a lamp in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the morning star rises in your hearts* (2 Pt 1:19). That's why the Savior himself also enjoins upon us a spiritual vigil, when he is speaking of the suddenness of his coming: *Watch, he says, because you do not know the day or the hour* (Mt 25:13).³

So just as now, when I came to you in the name of the Lord,⁴ I found you awake and watching in his name, so too the Lord himself, in whose honor this solemnity is being celebrated, will find his Church awake and watching with mind alight and alert, when he comes to rouse her even from her bodily sleep in the tombs.

NOTES

1. He was certainly a bishop when he preached this little sermon, as is clear, I think, from section 3; see note 4 below. The general tone also strikes me as being somehow more mature, more relaxed than in some of the other little sermons of the same sort which we have seen. So my inclination would be to date it quite a bit later; not earlier than 405.

From the same passage I infer he was visiting one of the other churches in Hippo Regius, either in the city or in the countryside round about, and not speaking in his cathedral basilica; see the same note 4 below.

2. His usual little piece of anti-Judaism. But this time it is balanced by what he goes on to say about the Magi, calling them too, like the Jews, "far distant night"; and is altogether less virulent than what we encountered in Sermon 223C.

3. No longer appealing to the Gethsemane "Watch and pray" as authority for the vigil, but to this rather more suitable text; another indication, as it seems to me, of a rather more mature judgment.

4. Here, surely, he is speaking as bishop. His "coming" to them suggests to me that he is speaking to a congregation which he is visiting; not, then, in the main basilica of Hippo Regius. But another explanation of his words, based on the evidence of *Egeria's Pilgrimage*, a pious diary of pilgrimages to the Holy Land kept by a lady from the South of France in mid-fourth century, is that the bishop and clergy frequently came into the basilica at the Easter vigil some time after the laity had begun it, presumably by singing psalms and hymns.

SERMON 223E

AT THE EASTER VIGIL

*Date: uncertain*¹

Watch and pray lest we enter into temptation

1. All the splendor and solemnity of this vigil, brothers and sisters, which with its annual recurrence renews and refurbishes the memory of the Lord's resurrection, is a reminder to us to recall and act upon what he said himself to the disciples as his passion loomed up ahead of him: *Watch and pray, lest you should enter into temptation* (Mk 14:38). Let us watch, therefore, and pray lest we should enter into temptation, not on this night only, but for the whole time of this life, which is a temptation and a trial on earth. That, you see, is what's written: *Is not human life on earth a temptation?* (Jb 7:1). So if entering into temptation simply means being led or carried into temptation, that is, being deceived and caught, or in any way, to put the whole thing in a nutshell, being overcome by temptation, what else is to be done during the whole night of this life, in which we, through the light of faith, ought to be day, but what the Lord urged upon his disciples: *Watch and pray, lest you should enter into temptation?*

The mind keeps watch lest faith should go to sleep, hope wither away, and charity grow cold.² But with faith awake, hope in full bloom, charity glowing hot, let us pray assiduously throughout the whole time we spend in the night of this age, and say, *Lead us not into temptation* (Mt 6:13). That's how, with his help, we do what the Lord says, *Watch and pray, lest you should enter into temptation.*

If, however, we really shouldn't be afraid of entering into temptation, when we can also come out of it, according to what the apostle James says: *Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into various temptations* (Jas 1:2),³ it remains for us to put our hope in what the apostle Paul said: *God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted above what you can cope with; but he will also with the temptation make a way out, so that you can endure* (1 Cor 10:13). We can take it, without absurdity, that the holy canticle reminds us of this way out, where we read, *May the Lord guard your going in and your coming out* (Ps 121:8). That is, may he allow us not only, like well-made earthenware jars, to enter the furnace, but also to come out of it whole and entire, just as it is written:

The furnace tests the potter's jars, and the temptation of tribulation just men (Sir 27:5).

But if that's how things really are, then obviously, when the Lord said to the disciples, *Watch and pray, lest you should enter into temptation*, it was because he perceived how huge the weight was of his impending passion, and so he didn't want them to enter into that temptation, because he perceived that they were not yet of a caliber which would let them come out of it. That's why he had already said to the blessed apostle Peter, *You cannot follow me now, but you shall follow afterward*. Peter thought he could not merely follow, but even at this stage go ahead, and so he said, *I will lay down my life for you (Jn 13:26-38)*; and yet, while the strong winds of the Lord's passion were getting up, and violently whipping up huge waves in the sea they were sailing over, he was swamped by one question from a serving maid, and would have drowned if he had not been rescued by the Lord's right hand and immediately obtained mercy by his tears.⁴

So let us watch, brothers and sisters, and pray, lest we enter into any temptation which we cannot endure; and that whatever temptation we do enter into, we may be able either to endure when given a way out, or to make our way out when given endurance; that we may not enter into any temptation without a way out, and be inserted like feet into fetters, like wild beasts into nets, like birds into snares.

In baptism all our past sins have been destroyed, like Pharaoh's horsemen drowned in the Red Sea

2. That we do not suffer such a fate will be ensured by the Lord to whom we have been singing, *For he has been gloriously extolled*, who has already granted us in the bath of regeneration what we have been singing about: *horse and rider he has cast into the sea (Ex 15:1)*.⁵ All our past sins, you see, which have been pressing on us, as it were, from behind, he has drowned and obliterated in baptism. These dark things of ours were being ridden by unclean spirits as their mounts,⁶ and like horsemen they were riding them wherever they liked; and that's why the apostle calls them *rulers of this darkness (Eph 6:12)*. Since we have been rid of all this through baptism, as through the Red Sea, so called because sanctified by the blood of the crucified Lord, let us not turn back to Egypt in our hearts, but with him as our protector and guide let us wend our way through the other trials and temptations of the desert toward the kingdom.

NOTES

1. The sermon, as is clear from section 2 (see note 5 below), was preached at the climax of the vigil service, just before the Easter eucharist was celebrated, and not at the beginning as a kind of

introduction, like some of the other short sermons we have just seen. The topic he chooses to preach about is rather curious for the occasion. My feeling is that he would not have been so idiosyncratic in his younger years; and so I would be quite ready to date this sermon as late as 420.

2. See Mt 24:12.

3. Here "temptations" really do have to be understood as "trials"; but with what has already been said, it has still to be rendered "temptations."

4. See Lk 22:56-62; also Mt 14:22-31.

5. In the present vigil liturgy this canticle is sung after the reading of the story of the Exodus. Doubtless it had the same context in Augustine's North African liturgy; but it also seems from what he goes on to say, that it was sung after the neophytes had been baptized, and had entered the congregation of the faithful for the Easter eucharist. So this sermon is not an introduction to the vigil, but was preached as it was about to reach its climax.

6. *Velut sua jumenta*, to which he adds in a pun quite untranslatable into English, *hoc est adjumenta*, that is, their aids. Augustine thought, wrongly, that *jumentum*, a beast of burden, derives from *juvo*, I help, just as *adjumentum* derives from its strengthened form *adjuvo* (*Questions on the Heptateuch* 5, 38). In fact *jumentum* derives from *jugum*, a yoke.

SERMON 223F

AT THE EASTER VIGIL

Date: 400¹

*The sermon, like the vigil itself,
a reminder of what you already know*

1. What we are celebrating in this vigil, dearest brothers and sisters, is the solemn anniversary of that night in which the Lord Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. I'm not now teaching you this, because you know it; I'm just reminding you, in case you forget it. The celebration itself, after all, coming round at its appointed time every year, doesn't have the effect of making us know something strange to us, but of preventing us from effacing by forgetfulness what is perfectly familiar to us; I mean, it renews our memory, it doesn't add to our knowledge. In a similar way my sermon, while not being addressed to ignorant listeners, still requires listeners who are attentive; because even though it doesn't have the effect of your hearing something you didn't know, I would still like it to have the effect of your recalling joyfully what you do know.

Two very different lions—Christ and the devil

2. So let us watch and pray, lest we should enter into temptation,² because *our adversary the devil is prowling round like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour* (1 Pt 5:8). But that lion of the tribe of Judah, about whom it was foretold so long ago, *You have gone up; lying down you have slept like a lion; who will rouse him?* (Gn 49:9), went up on the cross, when he suffered, because he was hung up there out of his own free merciful will, not out of sinful necessity. Lying down he slept, when *bowing his head, he gave up the spirit* (Jn 19:30). Like a lion, though, because even in his very weakness he was strong; after all, *what is weak of God is stronger than men* (1 Cor 1:27). Who was it roused him, but the invisible God? The reason it asks who, is that it was not apparent to human eyes, just as the only-begotten Word of God himself is also invisible with the Father.

So he roused him from the dead, *and bestowed on him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend* (Phil 2:9-10), and

that the lion seeking whom he may devour should be overcome by the lion seeking to set free.

Why we should keep vigil and pray

3. So let us watch and pray, lest we should enter into temptation. Let us keep watch for him, seeing that he slept of his own accord for us. He went to sleep, you see, and slumbered; and he arose, because the Lord upheld him,³ to whom he had said, *And rouse me, and I will repay them* (Ps 41:10). To his enemies raging against him, and jeering at him as he was dying, he had said in prophecy, *Shall not the one who sleeps make sure he rises again?* (Ps 41:8). So while he went to sleep, he also awoke, and he has consecrated this vigil of ours to his awakening. So let us keep awake and pray, lest we should enter into temptation, since he too kept awake, and became *like a sparrow by itself on a roof* (Ps 102:7); that means he rose again, and flew up on high, and intercedes for us, the only Son, in heaven.

Let us give our prayers into the hands of this great intercessor. With the Father he grants what he has requested from the Father, because he is both mediator and creator; mediator to ask, creator to bestow; mediator as made in the world, creator as the one through whom the world was made. So with feelings of the utmost fidelity and confidence let us keep vigil in his honor in all sobriety of mind; and let us dispatch to him the prayer he taught us,⁴ so that we may have the strength, with his help, to do what he commanded; may we take, as his gift, what he promised we would receive.⁵

NOTES

1. The date is proposed by Kunzelmann and Fischer; it is as likely as any. For a suggestion about what point in the whole vigil the sermon was preached at, prompted by the closing sentence, see note 5 below.

2. See Mk 14:38.

3. See Ps 3:6.

4. The Lord's prayer. We "dispatch" it to him (*allegemus*), so that he, the mediator, may present it to the Father. We say the Lord's prayer in the Son and with the Son, addressing it to our common Father.

5. A distinct reference, surely, to communion. So perhaps the sermon was delivered at the end of the great eucharistic prayer, just before the recitation of the Lord's prayer, as a kind of invitation to communion. But through any such allusion to the receiving of the sacrament, he would also be pointing to receiving the reward of eternal life, the reward for keeping the Lord's commandments, to love one another as he has loved us, in this life.

SERMON 223G

AT THE EASTER VIGIL

Date: uncertain¹

The blissful state that will be ours without time for eternity

1. This holy celebration, brothers and sisters, which has removed night from the night, putting darkness to flight with all these lights, and making our faith bright and cheerful as if it were the daytime of our hearts, is taking place, as you know, in memory of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. What, after all, could be more suitable, than to live over again in our vigil his awakening from the dead; than for the members, though they are still going to fall asleep eventually, to accord for the time being with their head who has now awoken forever? They too, you see, are finally going to wake up in the same way, and going to reign with him without any sleep in an everlasting vigil. It is indeed right and fitting at fixed times to represent, by this wonderful festivity, the blissful state that will be ours without time for eternity.

Let us keep watch, therefore, for Christ as he awakes, and abstain from sleep for a little while as best we can, in honor of him over whom sleep has no hold. Let us be, in his keeping, the true Israel according to the spirit, since *he will neither sleep nor be somnolent, the one who keeps Israel* (Ps 121:4). As we keep watch on this annual solemnity for this most watchful and vigilant of keepers, let us bind up our hearts once more in his hands with the bands of faith, so that secured by such bands of religion² to one who cannot fall asleep, they may never fall away; until finally rid of mortality and decay, we all come whole and entire to be bound up together in his company, in his very person,³ where we too will be quite unable either to sleep or be somnolent.

The end we have in view has no end

2. This is the fruit of our watching and waking, this the goal on which the eyes of our hearts, not of flesh, are fixed, this the just and holy purpose of restricting and quelling sleep, this the imperishable reward of toil endured and love aroused; that the one, for whom we are keeping vigil for a little while by struggling against earthly drowsiness, should give us that life which knows wakefulness without toil, day without night, rest without sleep.

So there's nothing praiseworthy about just keeping awake, because burglars too keep awake; but with the intention of taking advantage of sleeping husbands, and getting at their wives under the pimping cover of night.⁴ The practitioners of magic arts also keep awake; but with the intention of serving demons, and committing abominations with their help. It would take too long, and be quite unnecessary to run through all the reasons vicious people have for keeping awake. But let me also refer you to a number of perfectly innocent reasons for doing so; craftsmen keep awake, so do farmers, sailors, fishermen, travelers, merchants, managers of all sorts of businesses, judges, counselors, buyers and sellers of literary learning, persons in authority, persons under authority, people engaged in any kind of trade or industry in which human life can be spent; but all with the intention of ensuring that the earth is inhabited more conveniently and decently by inhabitants who are going to pass on with the speed of light.⁵

In any case, the end of all these wakeful watchers, if it is unlawful means being damned to eternal death, and if it is lawful means being consumed by temporal death. *The end of the law, however, is Christ for the justice of every believer* (Rom 19:4), and the end which we have in view as we keep vigil is the end of perfection, which emancipates us from the end either of damnation or of consumption. And so all those others who keep awake, whether wrongfully or innocently, have in view and seek an end that is going to come to an end; the end we have in view, however, has no end. In a word, they keep watch, though they will have no permanent residence in whatever it is they desire to get to; we, on the other hand, watch and pray lest we should enter into temptation;⁶ because that is the way for us to overcome the one who tries to waylay us on our journey; that is the way for us to lay hold of the savior with whom we will reside forever.

NOTES

1. My reaction to the style is to infer an early date, before Augustine became bishop, say about 395. In content it is one of his more profound Easter vigil sermons.

2. He is playing on the etymology of *religio*, derived as he thinks from *religare*, to bind up; a view in which he is supported, against Cicero, by most modern etymologists. Religion is what binds us to God.

3. In *ejus compagine*, literally, in his compact structure. He is carrying through the image and the doctrine of the Church as the body of Christ, and of us as his members, to its ultimate, heavenly conclusion, where, risen from the dead, we will be—somehow—absorbed into the risen body or person of Christ, without however losing our own identities.

4. *Lenocinante nocte*, a telling phrase. It is very odd that he should ascribe this aim to burglars, *latrones*. I think he must have inadvertently left out a phrase or two, having perhaps first learned his sermon by heart—this would support my hunch of an early date. He must surely have originally intended to say that burglars keep awake with the intention of burgling, and adulterers—or perhaps pimps, *lenones*—with the intention of seducing other men's wives. But, no doubt being himself rather sleepy, he jumped from the first "with the intention of," *eo fine ut*, to the second. Or it could be that the eye of a copyist jumped from *latrones; sed eo fine ut . . . to lenones; sed eo fine ut . . .* See Sermon 223J, note 2, below.

5. He actually says *celeritate vaporea*. But “with the speed of steam” would sound ridiculous in English—even though “with the speed of light” is perhaps just a little too quick for what Augustine had in mind.

6. See Mk 14:38.

SERMON 223H

AT THE EASTER VIGIL

Date: uncertain¹

*The apostles, mountains of God cast into the sea,
have consecrated this vigil as a means for us to humble our souls*

We are celebrating in this solemn festival the humility of the Lord, who *humbled himself, becoming obedient to the death, death indeed on the cross* (Phil 2:8). That is why we too are humbling our souls on this holy night by fasting, by watching, and by praying; nor is this glowing fervor of yours at odds with such humility. What else, after all, is a grain of mustard seed but the fervor of humility?² It is by this grain that *mountains were carried into the heart of the sea* (Ps 46:2); that is, the great preachers of the gospel, the holy apostles, were carried from Judea to the nations, and the very heart of the world, that is, the secular thoughts of this age were captured by the mountains of which it is said, *Your justice like the mountains of God* (Ps 36:6); by the mountains of which it is said, *Shedding wonderful light are you from the everlasting mountains* (Ps 76:4).

These very mountains, you see, had light shed on them, so that their summits glowed with fervor, and thus they carried the light which sheds light on every person,³ the mountain of mountains so to say, the king of kings and the holy of holy ones,⁴ both this and themselves into the faith of the nations; thus fulfilling what the prophet had foretold: *There will be manifest in the last times the mountain of the Lord, prepared on the summit of the mountains* (Is 2:2); and also what he had said himself: *If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Pick yourself up and throw yourself into the sea, and it will happen* (Mt 17:20).

It is these mountains that consecrated for us this night,⁵ on which the Lord rose again after being buried, the grain of mustard seed humbling itself by being covered up so as not to be seen, and then sprouting and growing and spreading its branches in all directions, so as to overtop everything else and invite the proud-hearted to take refuge and find rest in them like birds building their nests.⁶ May this mountain also dwell in your hearts; it will not, you see, be cramped for space wherever charity provides it with the broadest, most ample place.

Turning to the Lord . . .

NOTES

1. The style, and above all the excessively complex and mixed imagery, incline me to ascribe an early date to this sermon. Such elaborate contortions are, to be sure, characteristic of his mind, and never ceased to be so; but I think that as he grew more experienced in preaching he refrained from inflicting them on his hearers in such concentrated form. Let us guess a date about 400.

2. Because it is both tiny and hot.

3. See Jn 1:9.

4. See Rv 19:16; Dn 9:24. This latter text refers in fact to the Holy of Holies, the innermost shrine of the temple. But it was read by the early Church, in its Greek and Latin versions, as referring to a person, Christ.

5. The Fathers all assumed that the Church's major liturgical customs were inaugurated personally by the apostles.

6. See Mt 13:32.

SERMON 223I

AT THE EASTER VIGIL

Date: uncertain¹

By our own humility let us call back to remembrance the humility of Christ

I, my dearest friends, am strictly required by this great and holy solemnity to exhort you to watch and pray. Our faith, you see, is engaged in conflict with the night of this age, to save our interior eyes from falling fast asleep and lapsing into the night of the heart. In order not to tumble into such an evil condition, let us pray in the words we have read, and say to the Lord, *Enlighten my eyes, lest I should ever fall fast asleep in death, lest my enemy should ever be able to say, I have prevailed against him* (Ps 13:3-4). This enemy is the one who stirred up the Jews in their madness against our Lord Jesus Christ, using them as his own instruments and weapons; but he did not prevail against him. His enemies of flesh and blood, indeed, reckoned they had prevailed, but his spiritual enemy was defeated in them. The impure spirit, you see, was conquered by the pure flesh of the victim; and by the very act of inflaming men to do openly what they wished, he himself underwent secretly something he certainly did not wish. By killing Christ, that is, he shed the blood which would restore to life all the others he had killed. Why, he doesn't even possess him among the dead. He wanted to see him associated with them in death, and he had the pain of seeing them associated with him in his resurrection.

In this life we celebrate his death, because after this death we hope to share his life. So by our own humility let us call back to remembrance the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us watch in humility, pray in humility, and with the most devoted faith, the firmest hope, the most fervent charity, reflecting what sort of day will be ours in glory, if we turn night into day by our humility. And so may God, *who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness, shine in our hearts* (2 Cor 4:6), so that within ourselves we may do something similar to what we have done in this house of prayer by lighting all these lamps.² Let us adorn God's true dwelling place, our consciences, with the lights of justice. Or rather not us, but God's grace with us, of which we have the promise in the words of the prophet: *He will bring forth your justice like the light* (Ps 37:6). And keeping watch in this way, we shall not be afraid of *the fear by night, and the busy thing*

prowling in the dark (Ps 91:5-6). And when the beasts of the forest pass by, seeking their prey from God,³ he will not hand us over as prey to any such wretched thing, seeing that he did hand over for our sakes his only Son.

Turning to the Lord . . .

NOTES

1. A much more satisfactory sermon than the last. See next note for the possibility that, while being preached in Hippo Regius, it was delivered not in the main basilica, but in some suburban church or chapel.

2. See Mk 11:17; Is 56:7. Presumably Augustine was alluding to this text; but the thought has occurred to me that the expression "house of prayer" may have come to mean something like a small neighborhood chapel, and that the bishop may have been visiting one of these this year for the Easter vigil. The expression is used in Lesotho for such places, away from the main mission church; and also to translate "synagogue" in the New Testament.

3. See Ps 104:20-21; he interprets the beasts of the forest, who are also lions' whelps, to mean the demons.

SERMON 223J

AT THE EASTER VIGIL

Date: uncertain¹

*Let us watch and pray in this vigil,
in order to come to where we will never need to sleep anymore*

When the blessed apostle was reminding us of the importance of prayer, he also reminded us at the same time about being watchful: *Be persistent at prayer*, he said, *being watchful in it* (Col 4:2). Impure love, brothers and sisters, compels those who are possessed by it to keep awake; the shameless person watches, in order to seduce; the evildoer, in order to harm; the drunkard, to drink; the bandit, to slay; the self-indulgent, to spend; the miser, to hoard; the thief, to steal; the robber, to smash and grab.² How much more, therefore, ought charity to keep awake in holy and harmless people, if iniquity can extort wakefulness from the criminal and the corrupt?

They, however, are weighed down by a deep sleep of the heart, and it is that that forces them to keep awake in the flesh. It is against that sort of sleep that the cry is raised, *Awake, you sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shed his light upon you* (Eph 5:14). In us, on the other hand, that call has shattered the sleep of this world, provided we have heard it and risen from the dead, about whom it says, *Let the dead bury their dead* (Lk 9:60).

Meanwhile, let us pay this solemnity its due of the wakefulness of the flesh; but enlightened by Christ, let us keep that of the heart perpetual and unceasing. Let us keep watch in the flesh, as best we can, in order to pray; and let us pray, so that we may come to where we can keep watch also in the flesh without ceasing. The angels don't sleep, after all, and we have been promised equality with them on the day of the resurrection,³ if charity keeps awake in us now.

NOTES

1. The matchless brevity of this little sermon inclines me to place it in the years of Augustine's maturity as a preacher; say, about 415.

2. This is the kind of list of wicked vigil keepers, though not necessarily so exhaustive, one expected in Sermon 223G, where instead one got bandits, or burglars, *latrones*, keeping awake in order to seduce. See Sermon 223G above, note 4.

3. See Mk 12:25.

SERMON 223K

AT THE EASTER VIGIL

Date: uncertain¹

*Two kinds of sleep, two kinds of wakefulness,
corresponding to two sorts of day and night*

The blessed apostle Paul said, *You are all children of the light and children of the day; we do not belong to the night or the darkness. And so let us not sleep like the rest do, but let us keep awake and be sober. Because those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. Let us, however, who are of the day, be sober²* (1 Thes 5:5-8). What sort of night is this, brothers and sisters, which Truth does not wish us to be in, which it says those are in who sleep? And what sort of sleep is this, from which it sets us apart as children of the light and the day, and what sleep is it that we are being exhorted not to doze off into?

Undoubtedly it is not this night which begins with the setting of the sun, but the one which begins with the setting³ of mankind; not the one ended by the first glimmer of dawn, but the one ended by the renewal of the soul. Bad people are asleep in this night, even when they are awake; good people are not in this night, even when they are asleep. This ordinary night brings the day to an end when it comes; that damnable night removed us from the day who made this day. This sleep, which we are now fighting against as we try to keep awake, takes the form, when the senses are lulled, of a guiltless death; that sleep into which unbelievers sink in their hearts, thrusts their inner eyes down into the death of sin.⁴ Against the first kind let us heed the injunction, *Watch and pray* (Mk 14:38); against the second let us say, *Enlighten my eyes, lest I should ever fall asleep in death* (Ps 13:3).

And so, with the aid of all these lamps shining during this night, let us stave off the sleep of the body in this solemn vigil; but against that sleep of the heart, we ourselves ought to be lamps shining in this age of the world as in the night.

NOTES

1. As with the previous little sermon, I am inclined to date this one to the middle years; say about 412.
2. Reading *sobrii simus* instead of the text's *sobrii sumus*, which simply states that we are sober. This indeed may well be just a misprint; or else a copyist's similar kind of oversight.
3. *Occasus*, the Latin word, is much stronger than the English "setting"; it carries the suggestion of falling down; and he is of course referring to the fall of the human race in Adam.
4. The words "of sin" are not in the text. But some such adjective or phrase seems to be required, in order to balance the *inculpabilem mortem* of the first part of the sentence.

SERMON 224

ON THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

Date: 414¹

*Choose for yourselves those in the people of God
whom you would imitate*

1. Today those who have been baptized in Christ and born again are to be mixed in with the people of God, now that the sacraments have been solemnly celebrated.² Let me address my remarks to them, and also to you in them and them in you. Here you are, you have become members of Christ.³ If you stop to think about what you have become, *all your bones will say, "Lord who is like you?"* (Ps 35:10). It is not, in fact, possible to think in a fitting way about what God has here seen fit to do to us. Doesn't all talk and perception quite fail to grasp or express how gratuitous grace has come your way, without any merits of yours preceding it? And that's why it's grace, because it has been given gratis, gratuitously, freely. What grace? That you should be the members of Christ the Son of God, that you too should be brothers and sisters of the only Son. If he is the only Son, how can you be his brothers and sisters, except that he is the only Son by nature, you are his brothers and sisters by grace?

So because you are members of Christ, I have some advice and suggestions for you. Those you are to be mixed in with should listen too. I really fear for you today, not so much from the pagans, not so much from the Jews, not so much from the heretics, as from bad Catholics. Choose for yourselves those in the people of God whom you would imitate. Because if you decide to imitate the majority, you will not find yourselves among the few who walk along the narrow road.⁴ Refrain from robbery, from fraud, from perjury. Turn your backs on the whirlpool of drunkenness. Dread all forms of fornication like death;⁵ not the death which releases the soul from the body, but the one in which the soul will burn for ever with the body.

*Against the whispered suggestions of the devil,
we ought to employ the enchantments of Christ*

2. My brothers, my sons, my daughters, my sisters,⁶ I'm well aware that the devil forms his own parties, and never stops talking in the hearts of those whom

he seduces into joining his party.⁷ I know that the devil says to fornicating adulterers, who are not content with their own wives, that he says in their hearts, "Sins of the flesh aren't all that serious." Against this, against the whispered suggestions of the devil, we ought to employ the enchantments of Christ.⁸ Because the enemy is just deceiving Christians through the allurements of the flesh, when he makes what is a grave matter into a light one for them; but he does this by lying, not by really making it light.⁹ What's the good to you of Satan making light of what Christ has shown to be grave? What's the good to you of the colossal weight of infelicity¹⁰ weighing light in the scales of falsity? What good does it do you, the devil telling you it's only a light matter, when God tells you it's a grave one? Aren't you going to discover how grave indeed is what God told you, and how far away from you the devil will be with his promises?

Is the devil doing anything new, in telling the Christian faithful, "What you're doing is nothing, really; you're sinning in the flesh; after all, you're not sinning spiritually. It's something that's easily wiped off the slate, easily pardoned." What's so terrific about what he's doing? It's the same old ruse as he employed in paradise, when he said, "Eat, and you will be like gods; you certainly won't die." God had said, *The day you eat, you shall die the death* (Gn 2:17). Along comes the enemy and says, *You will not die, but your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods* (Gn 3:4-5). God's injunction was slighted, and the devil's persuasion heeded. And then God's injunction was discovered to be true, and the devil's deception to be false. Did it do her any good, I ask you, that the woman said, *The serpent seduced me* (Gn 3:13)? Did the excuse carry any weight? If the excuse carried weight, why did the condemnation follow?¹¹

*While God has promised forgiveness
he hasn't anywhere promised tomorrow*

3. That's why I've got this to say to you, my brothers, my sons,¹² those of you that have wives, don't go looking for anything else; those of you who haven't, and wish to marry, keep yourselves chaste for them, just as you want them to come chaste to you; those of you who have made a promise of continence, don't look back.¹³ There, I've had my say, I've absolved myself of guilt.¹⁴ God has placed me here to pay out, not to call in debts.¹⁵ And yet, where we can, where we are given the chance, when an opportunity occurs, when we know the facts, we correct, we reprove, we hurl anathemas, we excommunicate.¹⁶

And yet it isn't we, really, who correct, because *neither the one who plants is anything, nor the one who waters, but only the one who gives the growth, God* (1 Cor 3:7). And now, the fact of my talking, of my warning you—what's the use of it, unless God listens to me on your behalf, and does something in you, that is in your hearts?¹⁷ I'll put it briefly, and draw this in particular to your attention; I am both scaring the faithful and building you up.¹⁸ You are members of Christ; listen, not to me, but to the apostle, *So shall I take the members of Christ, and make them members of a whore?* (1 Cor 6:15).

Someone or other's got to say, of course, "But she isn't a whore, she's my concubine."

Have you got a wife, you that said that?

“I have.”

So she, whether you like it or not, is a whore. Go and tell her, “The bishop has insulted you.” If you have a wife and another woman sleeps with you, whoever that one is, she’s a whore. But perhaps she’s faithful to you, and knows no other man but you alone, and is not disposed to know any other. So while she is chaste, why are you fornicating? If she does with one, why must you have two? You’re not allowed to, not allowed to, not allowed to. At least from this place let me enjoy freedom of speech.¹⁹ At least from this place allow me to speak out. At least from this place allow me to say what is true.²⁰

People of this sort must put themselves right while they are still alive. Death only has to come suddenly, and there’s no one there to be corrected. And we just don’t know when the last hour may come, and yet you say, “I will put things right.” When are you putting things right, when are you turning over a new leaf? “Tomorrow,” you say.

Look, as often as you say “Tomorrow, tomorrow, *Cras, cras*,” you have become a crow.²¹ Look, I’m telling you, when you croak like a crow, ruin is staring you in the face. Because that crow, whose croaking you are imitating, went out from the ark, and *didn’t come back* (Gn 8:7). As for you, though, brother, come back into the Church, which that ark then represented.

But you at least, you newly baptized, listen to me; listen to me, you that have been born again through the blood of Christ. I beg you, by the name that has been invoked over you, by that altar which you have approached, by the sacraments you have received,²² by the judgment that is to come of the living and the dead; I beg you, I bind you by the name of Christ, not to imitate those you know to be such, but to ensure that the sacrament abides in you²³ of the one who did not wish to come down from the cross, but did wish to rise again from the grave.²⁴

NOTES

1. The scholars suggest, less precisely, 412-416. That is all that 414 here represents.

The sermon comes down to us in two distinct recensions, the Maurist (*M*), and that of the *Revue Bénédictine* (*RB*) 179 (1969), which sometimes differ widely. The only fully satisfactory explanation I can think of is that they each go back either to different stenographers, or to some very early editing of what the stenographers took down in their shorthand. But there does appear to be some influence on copyists of similar passages from other sermons.

The text printed in the volume being translated is that of *RB*. But I have felt free to choose whichever I think more likely to have been what Augustine actually said, though each is very characteristic of him. The alternative version, wherever the difference is significant, is given in the notes.

Both editions give as title “On Easter Day.” But the first sentence saying that “today” the newly baptized “are to be mixed in with the people of God,” points unmistakably to the Sunday after Easter, *Dominica in albis*.

2. The sacraments, baptism, confirmation, and eucharist, celebrated during the vigil of the preceding week; but he also probably included under "the sacraments," the special daily services and sermons for the *infantes* of Easter week.

3. "You" referring now to the newly baptized, whereas in the previous sentence it referred to the rest of the faithful.

4. See Mt 7:14.

5. From "Refrain" M reads: "Refrain from fornication, from robbery, from fraud, from perjury, from unlawful business, from disputes. Turn your backs on drunkenness. Dread adultery like death."

The word for disputes, *jurgitis*, is very like the word for whirlpool, *gurgis*.

6. Thus M. RB leaves out this unusual mode of address.

7. M reads: "... of those whom he holds bound by his chains."

8. For "enchantments," *incantationem*, M reads *incarnationem*.

9. M leaves out this last half of the sentence, and substitutes, "the rough into the smooth, the bitter into the sweet."

10. He means the pains of eternal damnation.

11. So M, from "... when he said, Eat." RB reads: "... when he said, *You will not die the death*. God had said, *The day you eat you shall die the death*. Along comes the enemy and says, 'What's this that God said to you, You shall die the death? *You will not die the death, but when you eat, your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods.*' God's threat was slighted, the devil's promise heeded. God's threat was discovered to be true, the devil's promise to be false. But what good did it do, I ask you, what good did it do her that the woman said, *The serpent led me on*, and the man himself said, *The woman you gave me as a companion gave it me, and I ate?* Did the excuse carry weight and condemnation not follow?"

12. "My brothers," seasoned Christians, perhaps; "my sons," the newly baptized? He is addressing the men only, of course. He never seems to have felt the need to speak plainly to women on the subject of chastity.

13. See Lk 9:62.

14. M reads: "There, I'm telling you; there, I'm shouting at you, I am acquitting myself of guilt."

15. See Mt 22:45; as distinct from 25:19.

16. "We" being bishops in general. Although these actions look like "calling in debts," they are really "paying out," being performed for the benefit of those who were being corrected, etc., to prod them into changing their ways.

17. So M. RB reads: "And now, because I'm talking to you, scaring you, warning you, there is a need for God to listen to me, and do something silently in your hearts."

18. The newly baptized.

19. So RB from "I have," in the little conversation. M reads: "I have," you say.

"Fine; whether you like it or not, the one who sleeps with you, besides your wife, I've already said it, is a whore. There you are, go and tell her, 'The bishop has insulted you.' You have your lawful wife, and another woman who sleeps with you. Whoever she is, I've said it already, she's a whore. But your wife is faithful to you, and she knows no other man but you alone, and is not disposed to know any other. If she's content with only one, you, why must you have two?"

"But you say, 'My maid is my concubine. Am I going to another man's wife? Am I going off to a common prostitute? Or am I not allowed to do what I like in my own house?' I tell you, you are not allowed to. They go to hell, people who do this sort of thing, they will burn for ever."

Both texts are very Augustinian. But the first, in which Augustine switches inconsistently from calling the concubine a whore to supposing her to be chaste, strikes me as the more so. No doubt he recalled the unnamed woman of his youth, whose faithfulness to him he puts on record in the *Confessions* VII, 25, 25.

20. The bishop's *cathedra*, or throne.

21. Crows only speak Latin, I regret to say.

22. Baptism, confirmation, eucharist; all received during the vigil the previous night.

23. That is, the grace above all of baptism; but also of confirmation and first communion.

24. For you, the equivalent of coming down from the cross would be giving in to such tempta-

tions, taking the easy way out, while rising from the grave was living the new life of grace, having died in baptism to the old life of sin. From "And we just don't know when the last hour may come" to the end, I have followed the text of M.

RB reads: "And we just don't know when the last hour may come. When he says 'Tomorrow, tomorrow, *Cras, cras,*' he becomes a crow, he goes and does not come back. But you now, listen to me, you newly baptized; listen to me, infants; listen to me, you that have been born again through Christ. I beg you, by the altar you have approached, by the sacraments you have received, by the name that has been invoked over you, by the judgment that is to come of the living and the dead; I beg you, I adjure you, I bind you by the name of Christ, only imitate those whom you know to be really faithful. Amen."

SERMON 225

ON EASTER DAY; TO THE *INFANTES*

Date: 400-405¹

Who was Christ before becoming man?

1. The Son of God, born timelessly of the Father, impresses upon us the infinite depths of the divine graciousness toward us. What, after all, was he before he was in a man? Consider yourselves to have asked the question and answered it. I mean, are we to suppose, brothers and sisters, that Christ existed before he was born of the virgin Mary, or that he didn't? Just suppose we ask the question, though we are not permitted to have any doubts about the answer. And so the Lord answered such thoughts as these, when they said to him, *You are not yet fifty, and you have seen Abraham?*; he answered, *you see, and said, Amen, amen, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am* (Jn 8:57-58). So he was, but he wasn't yet man. In case someone should say, "He was an angel," the holy gospel told you that he was Christ.² And you ask what he was? *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God* (Jn 1:1). There you are, that's what he was, *In the beginning was the Word*; not, "In the beginning the Word was made," but "the Word was."

And what does scripture say about this world? *In the beginning God made heaven and earth* (Gn 1:1). You ask what means he made it by? *In the beginning was the Word*, through which heaven and earth were made. The Word wasn't made, it just was. Now it remains to ask what sort of word, because we talk about our words too. Our words, indeed, are conceived by thought, and brought forth by our voices; and yet once thought and uttered, they pass away and are gone. But what about that one? *And the Word was with God.*

"Tell us where it was, tell us what it was."

I've already told you; the holy gospel has told you: *In the beginning was the Word.*

"Tell us where it was, tell us what it was."

And the Word was with God.

"But I asked you what sort of Word."

Do you want to hear what it was? *And the Word was God.* Oh, Word! What sort of Word? Who can explain the word, *And the Word was God?* But perhaps

it was made by God? Certainly not. Listen to what the holy gospel says: *All things were made through it* (Jn 1:1-3). What's "all things"? Whatever was made by God, was made through it. And how could he have been made if he made all things? He didn't make himself, did he? In any case, if he made himself, he was already there, to make himself. So if he was already there to make himself, he never was not.³

The Holy Spirit brought about the flesh of Christ

2. How came the Word, being such as that, to be in the virgin? *All things were made through him*. What's *all things*? Whatever was made by God was made through him. And don't, brother, separate the Holy Spirit from such a great work as that. From which great work? No small work, indeed a great work, are the angels; the angels worship the flesh of Christ, seated at the right hand of the Father. So such a work as that was supremely the achievement of the Holy Spirit.⁴ He was named in that work, when the angel brought the holy virgin the message of her son to be.

She had decided upon virginity, which her husband was to preserve, not to take away (or rather, not to preserve it, because God was going to do that; but her husband was the witness of her virginal chastity, in case she should be thought to be pregnant in consequence of adultery); so when the angel brought her the message, she said, *How will this happen, since I do not know a man?* If she had had it in mind to know one, she would not have been astonished. That astonishment of hers testifies to her purpose: *How will this happen, since I do not know a man?* How will it happen?⁵ And the angel answered: *The Holy Spirit will come upon you*. There you have the answer to your question: *and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. And that is why the Holy One who is to be born of you shall be called the Son of God* (Lk 1:34-35). And he made a nice choice of words: "*will overshadow you*; to preserve your virginity from feeling the heat of lust." And when she was pregnant, it was said of her, *Mary was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit* (Mt 1:18). So the Holy Spirit brought about the flesh of Christ. The only-begotten Son of God himself also brought about his own flesh. How do we prove that? Because scripture says about it, *Wisdom has built herself a house* (Prv 9:1).

*Just as my word assumed sound, in order to be heard,
so the Word of God assumed flesh, in order to be seen*

3. So now pay close attention. Such a great God, God with God, the Word of God through which all things were made, how could he be enclosed in the womb? First of all, in order to be there, did the Word abandon heaven? In order to be in the virgin's womb, did the Word abandon heaven? But it was in order that human beings might eat the bread of angels, that the Lord of angels became a human being. Let human thought still go on wandering through its cloudy spheres, let it falter, seek, speak, in order to find out how the Word of God in

the virgin's womb, the Word through which all things were made, did not abandon the angels, did not abandon the Father. How could he be enclosed in that womb? He could be there, he could not be enclosed there. How could he even be there, you say, one so great in a place so small? So the womb held what the universe does not hold. Nor was he made less, in order to be in the womb. He was in the womb, and he was as great as ever.

"How great was he? Tell us how great he was, tell us what he was."

And the Word was with God.

"Tell us what he was."

And the Word was God.

And I know, I'm telling you, that not even I who am speaking to you, not even I understand.⁶ But thinking about these things makes us stretch ourselves, stretching ourselves expands us, expansion increases our capacity. Not even with increased capacity will we be able to understand the whole of it. But now let me deal with you about my word. Look; what I'm saying, what I'm going to say, listen to that, understand that, my word, that is, a human word. But if you can't even understand this one, just consider how far you must be from understanding that one.

Certainly, we wonder how Christ could take flesh, be born of the virgin, and not depart from the Father; but look, here am I, now speaking to you; before I came to you here, I gave some thought beforehand to what I was going to say to you. When I was thinking about what I was going to say to you, there was already a word in my mind. I mean, I wouldn't be saying it to you unless I had thought of it first. I found you were Latin speaking, so a Latin word had to be offered you; while if you had been Greek, I would have had to speak to you in Greek, and present you with a Greek word. That word in my mind is neither Latin nor Greek; what's in my mind altogether precedes these languages. I look for a sound for it, I look around, so to say, for a vehicle. I look for a means of its reaching you, when it doesn't depart from me. There you are, you've heard what's in my mind, now it's also in yours. It's in mine, and it's in yours; you, on the one hand, have begun to have it, while I, on the other, haven't lost it. Just as my word assumed sound, in order to be heard, so the Word of God assumed flesh, in order to be seen.

I've said my say, as best I could. And what have I said? Because who am I that have said it? A mere man, I have wished to speak about God. He is so great, so wonderful, that we have neither the ability to express him, nor the right to keep quiet about him.

Don't get drunk on wine; get drunk on the Holy Spirit instead

4. I give you thanks, Lord, because you know what I am saying, or what I have wanted to say; still, from the crumbs of your table I have managed to feed my fellow servants; feed them yourself as well, and nourish inwardly those whom you have brought to new birth.

Just look at this crowd; what was it? *Darkness; but now light in the Lord.* It

is to such as these, after all, that the apostle says, *You were once darkness; but now light in the Lord* (Eph 5:8). All of you that have been baptized, *you were once darkness, but now light in the Lord*. If light, then of course day, since *God called the light day* (Gn 1:5). You were darkness, he has made you into light, he has made you into day; it's about you that we have sung, *This is the day which the Lord has made, let us exult and be joyful in it* (Ps 118:24).

Shun darkness. Drunkenness belongs to the dark. Don't leave here sober and come back drunk; we'll be seeing you again this afternoon. The Holy Spirit has just begun to live in you; don't let him quit, don't shut him out of your hearts. He's a good guest, he found you empty, he fills you; found you hungry, he feeds you; and finally, he found you thirsty, he makes you drunk. Let him make you drunk, because the apostle says, *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to all kinds of debauchery*. And as though wishing to teach us what we should get drunk on, *but be filled*, he says, *with the Holy Spirit, singing together in hymns and psalms and spiritual songs, singing in your hearts to the Lord* (Eph 5:18-19). Isn't the person who rejoices in the Lord and sings the Lord's praises with tremendous gusto rather like a drunkard? Let me offer you proof of this kind of drunkenness: *Since with you, O God, is the the fountain of life, and from the torrent of your pleasure you will give them to drink*. Where from? *Because with you, O God, is the fountain of life, and in your light shall we see light* (Ps 36:8-9).⁷

The Spirit of God is both drink and light. If you came across a fountain in the dark, you would light a lamp, in order to get to it. Don't light a lamp for the fountain of light. It lights your way itself, and leads you to itself.⁸ When you come there to drink, approach and be enlightened. *Approach him and be enlightened* (Ps 34:5); don't withdraw, or you will be darkened.

Lord God, call them, and let them approach you; strengthen them, so that they don't withdraw from you. Make these new children of yours into old people from babies⁹—but not into dead people from old ones. It is, after all, right to grow old in this wisdom, but not right to die in it.

NOTES

1. The *infantes* are the newly baptized. I keep the Latin term, because we are no longer familiar with the usage, and if it was translated "to the infants," readers might wonder what Augustine was doing, preaching to babies.

One of the older editions of the sermons, before that of the Maurists, entitled this one "On the Lord's Nativity"; and one of the manuscripts gives it the title, "On the Trinity." But section 4 makes it clear that it was indeed preached to the *infantes*, and that means on Easter day. The Maurist editors inform us, I am sure correctly, that the gospel read on Easter day, at least at one Mass, was the prologue of John, which would explain the theme. They refer us to Sermons 119, 120, and 121, all on that text, and all preached on Easter Day. See in this series Sermon 119, notes 1 and 5; Sermon 120, notes 8 and 10, and Sermon 121, note 5.

2. I think he means the gospel in the text he has just quoted: Christ was talking as a man, not an angel. But this hardly meets the possibility that before becoming man he had been an angel. So his implicit assumption in this reasoning may be that the name "Christ" says divinity. That is indeed his usual assumption; an incorrect one in fact.

3. He is here directly contradicting the Arian slogan about the Word, the Son: "There was a time when he was not."

4. He is not making himself very clear; but he is working up, it seems, to naming the incarnation as the great work, equal in greatness to the creation, from which the Holy Spirit must not be separated, in which indeed he is supremely involved. The angels are introduced in the middle, to indicate how great a work the incarnation is.

5. Luke's account nowhere mentions Mary being astonished. Augustine reads it into her question.

6. A little burlesque irony at his own expense: not even he, the great, learned, famous bishop, speaking to these raw, newly baptized, largely illiterate Christians—not even he understands.

7. It's really rather odd that in offering this "proof text" of spiritual intoxication, he leaves out the first line of verse 8, which actually says in his version *they will be intoxicated by/get drunk on the richness of your house*.

8. A rhyming jingle in the Latin: *ipse tibi lucet, et ad se te ducet*.

9. Alluding to their present title of *infantes*—but very definitely telling them and us that spiritual or religious babyhood is *not* a state to remain in.

SERMON 226

ON EASTER DAY TO THE PEOPLE AND THE *INFANTES*

Date: 416-417¹

The infantes are the day which the Lord has made, in which we are to rejoice

You have heard the Lord Christ proclaimed in such a way, that *in the beginning he was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (Jn 1:1).² That, you see, is the Lord Christ, and if he had not humbled himself, but had decided always to remain like that, mankind would have perished. We recognize him as the Word of God with God, we recognize him as the only-begotten Son equal to the Father, we recognize him as light from light, day from day. He is the day who made the day; himself not made, but begotten by the day. So if he is day from day, not made but begotten, what is *the day which the Lord has made?* Why day in any case? Because it is light: *And God called the light day.* Let us look for *the day which the Lord has made, and let us exult and be joyful in it* (Ps 118:24).

In the original foundation of the world we read that *darkness was upon the deep, and the Spirit of God was skimming over the water. And God said, Let light be made; and light was made. And God divided between the light and the darkness; and he called the light day, and the darkness he called night* (Gn 1:2-5). There you have the day which the Lord has made. But that's not the one, is it, in which we should exult and be joyful? There's another day which the Lord has made, which we ought rather to acknowledge as the one in which to exult and be joyful; since the faithful who believe in Christ have been told, *You are the light of the world* (Mt 5:14). If light, then of course also day, because he called the light day.

Yesterday here too the Spirit of God was skimming over the water, and darkness was upon the deep, when these *infantes* were still carrying their sins. So when their sins were forgiven them through the Spirit of God,³ that's when God said, *Let light be made; and light was made.* There they are, *the day which the Lord has made; let us exult and be joyful in it.*⁴ Let me address this day in the words of the apostle: You there, day which the Lord has made, *You were once darkness; but now light in the Lord.* You were once, he says, darkness.

Were you, or weren't you? Recall your past deeds, if you don't think you were. Take a look at your consciences, and the things you have renounced. So then, because you were once darkness, but now light, not in yourselves, but in the Lord; *walk as children of the light* (Eph 5:8).

These few words must be enough for you, because we also have more work later on, and have to explain to the *infantes* today about the sacraments of the altar.⁵

NOTES

1. The date suggested by Fischer and Kunzelmann.

2. About the reading of the prologue of John's gospel on Easter Day, see Sermon 225, note 1.

3. He has in mind, of course, the text of Jn 3:5, about being born again of water and the Spirit.

4. At this point, I am sure, loud applause.

5. An extraordinarily packed timetable on Easter Day! First the vigil, then this service in the morning, presumably a eucharist; then, as we learn from Sermon 225, 4, they are all going to reassemble in the afternoon. Is that when he is going to explain about the eucharist? But he does this in Sermon 227, clearly within the context of a Mass. So did they have two Masses on Easter Day, both to be attended by the *infantes*, not to mention the bishop, as well as the vigil, and an afternoon service? Or was this little homily preached at the beginning of the Easter morning Mass, introduced by Jn 1:1-18, with an explanation of the eucharist to follow later in the same service? Questions—but from me, I fear, no answers.

"We also have more work later on": *et post laboraturi sumus*. A modern editor suggests *laborem* for *laboraturi*, "we have a lot of hard work behind us"; which indeed they did. But the only reason I can think of for such an emendation, unless it has manuscript support, which does not appear to be the case, is that this editor is unhappy about *post* being used as an adverb, when it is really a preposition. I don't think that would have worried Augustine.

SERMON 227

PREACHED ON THE HOLY DAY OF EASTER
TO THE *INFANTES*, ON THE SACRAMENTS

Date: 414-415¹

You are yourselves what you receive

I haven't forgotten my promise. I had promised those of you who have just been baptized a sermon to explain the sacrament of the Lord's table, which you can see right now, and which you shared in last night. You ought to know what you have received, what you are about to receive, what you ought to receive every day. That bread which you can see on the altar, sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ.² That cup, or rather what the cup contains, sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ. It was by means of these things that the Lord Christ wished to present us with his body and blood, which he shed for our sake for the forgiveness of sins. If you receive them well, you are yourselves what you receive. You see, the apostle says, *We, being many, are one loaf, one body* (1 Cor 10:17). That's how he explained the sacrament of the Lord's table; one loaf, one body, is what we all are, many though we be.

In this loaf of bread you are given clearly to understand how much you should love unity. I mean, was that loaf made from one grain? Weren't there many grains of wheat? But before they came into the loaf they were all separate; they were joined together by means of water after a certain amount of pounding and crushing. Unless wheat is ground, after all, and moistened with water, it can't possibly get into this shape which is called bread. In the same way you too were being ground and pounded, as it were, by the humiliation of fasting and the sacrament of exorcism. Then came baptism, and you were, in a manner of speaking, moistened with water in order to be shaped into bread. But it's not yet bread without fire to bake it. So what does fire represent? That's the chrism, the anointing. Oil, the fire-feeder, you see, is the sacrament of the Holy Spirit.

Notice it, when the Acts of the Apostles are read; the reading of that book begins now, you see. Today begins the book which is called the Acts of the Apostles. Anybody who wishes to make progress has the means of doing so. When you assemble in church, put aside silly stories³ and concentrate on the scriptures. We here are your books.⁴ So pay attention, and see how the Holy

Spirit is going to come at Pentecost. And this is how he will come; he will show himself in tongues of fire. You see, he breathes into us the charity which should set us on fire for God, and have us think lightly of the world, and burn up our straw, and purge and refine our hearts like gold. So the Holy Spirit comes, fire after water, and you are baked into the bread which is the body of Christ. And that's how unity is signified.

Now you have the sacraments in the order they occur.⁵ First, after the prayer,⁶ you are urged to lift up your hearts; that's only right for the members of Christ. After all, if you have become members of Christ, where is your head?⁷ Members have a head. If the head hadn't gone ahead before, the members would never follow. Where has our head gone? What did you give back in the creed? *On the third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father.* So our head is in heaven. That's why, after the words *Lift up your hearts*, you reply, *We have lifted them up to the Lord.*

And you mustn't attribute it to your own powers, your own merits, your own efforts, this lifting up of your hearts to the Lord, because it's God's gift that you should have your heart up above. That's why the bishop, or the presbyter who's offering, goes on to say, when the people have answered *We have lifted them up to the Lord*, why he goes on to say, *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God*, because we have lifted up our hearts. Let us give thanks, because unless he had enabled us to lift them up, we would still have our hearts down here on earth. And you signify your agreement by saying, *It is right and just* to give thanks to the one who caused us to lift up our hearts to our head.

Then, after the consecration of the sacrifice of God, because he wanted us to be ourselves his sacrifice, which is indicated by where that sacrifice was first put, that is the sign of the thing that we are;⁸ why, then after the consecration is accomplished, we say the Lord's prayer, which you have received and given back. After that comes the greeting, *Peace be with you*, and Christians kiss one another with a holy kiss. It's a sign of peace; what is indicated by the lips should happen in the conscience; that is, just as your lips approach the lips of your brothers or sisters, so your heart should not be withdrawn from theirs.

So they are great sacraments and signs, really serious and important sacraments. Do you want to know how their seriousness is impressed on us? The apostle says, *Whoever eats the body of Christ or drinks the blood of the Lord unworthily is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord* (1 Cor 11:27). What is receiving unworthily? Receiving with contempt, receiving with derision. Don't let yourselves think that what you can see is of no account. What you can see passes away, but the invisible reality signified does not pass away, but remains. Look, it's received, it's eaten, it's consumed. Is the body of Christ consumed, is the Church of Christ consumed, are the members of Christ consumed?⁹ Perish the thought! Here they are being purified, there they will be crowned with the victor's laurels. So what is signified will remain eternally, although the thing that signifies it seems to pass away. So receive the sacrament in such a way that you think about yourselves, that you retain unity in your hearts, that you always fix your hearts up above. Don't let your hope be placed on earth, but in heaven.

Let your faith be firm in God, let it be acceptable to God. Because what you don't see now, but believe, you are going to see there, where you will have joy without end.

NOTES

1. This date is my compromise between those proposed by two authorities who are usually in perfect accord: Fischer, who suggests 412-413, and Kunzelmann who favors 416-417. The sermon, though primarily on the eucharist, explains all three "sacraments of initiation": baptism, confirmation, and eucharist.

2. Evidently the sermon was preached just before communion, after the great eucharistic prayer, or canon of the Mass.

3. Presumably he means pagan myths; but possibly also various popular superstitions or naive misconceptions about the sacraments or the Holy Spirit.

4. When we read the scriptures aloud, the books of the illiterate?

5. He is going on to talk about the Mass, from the preface onward. So here by "sacraments" he seems to mean the successive stages of the eucharistic prayer, beginning with the exchange between celebrant and people which opens the preface; here each utterance appears to be a "sacrament."

6. What we now call the intercessions, or prayers of the faithful.

7. We have to remember that *membrum* in Latin still meant primarily a limb or organ of the body, whereas in English it is the metaphorical sense of "member" that has become the ordinary meaning: member of an organization, institute, or society.

8. The text is overloaded and corrupt here. As far as "because he wanted us to be ourselves his sacrifice" all is plain. Then it continues—I leave out variously suggested punctuations—*quod demonstratum est ubi impostum est primum illud sacrificium Dei et nos id est signum rei quod sumus*. I have simply omitted *Dei et nos* after the second *sacrificium*. I am guessing that "where the sacrifice was first put" refers to the offertory, and that this somehow indicated that the offerings represented the people's offering of themselves.

For the same doctrine that we are also the sacrifice or victim being offered in the Mass, see *The City of God*, X,6.

9. Notice how his thought does not linger on the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements, but passes straight to the ultimate meaning of the eucharist, the ultimate grace signified by Christ's body and blood in the sacrament, namely the unity of the body of Christ which is the Church, and our living incorporation into it. He doesn't deny the real presence, as was later thought by, for example, some of the Protestant reformers. But he knows that it is only, so to say, the middle stage of the sacrament, what Saint Thomas Aquinas calls the *res et sacramentum*, the thing signified by the visible celebration, which is itself also the sacrament, that is the sign, of a further thing. It is this further thing, what Saint Thomas calls the *res tantum*, the ultimate thing or grace signified, that always interests Augustine. And the grace of the eucharist is the unity of the body of Christ and our participation in it. The real presence of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine has the same place in this sacrament as the baptismal character has in baptism: a kind of half-way stage, or middle level, in the sacramental mystery of grace.

SERMON 228

ON EASTER DAY TO THE PEOPLE AND THE *INFANTES*

*Date: uncertain*¹

*The older faithful exhorted to give a good example
to the newly baptized "infantes"*

1. After all the hard work of last night, I mustn't detain you with a long sermon, because even if the spirit is willing, still the flesh is weak;² all the same, though, I do owe you a sermon. All these days after the passion of our Lord, during which we sing to God with *alleluia*, we keep in joy as feast days until Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was sent from heaven as promised.³ And of these days, the seven or eight we are in at the moment are earmarked for telling the *infantes* about the sacraments they have received.⁴ A short while ago they were called "Askers"; now they're called "Infants." They were called askers, because they were agitating their mother's womb, asking to be born. They are called infants because they have just now been born to Christ, having previously been born to the world.

What ought to be growing strongly in you has been started afresh in them; and you that are already the faithful must set them good examples which can help them to make progress, not bad ones that may cause their ruin. Being newly born, you see, they look to you to observe how you live, who were born a long time ago. That's what we all do, when born of Adam's line; first we are babies, and then, once we've begun to notice the habits of grown-ups, we watch out for things to imitate. And since the younger follows where the elder leads, it is to be hoped that the elder will proceed along a good road, or else by following along a bad one younger and elder may perish together.

And so you, brothers and sisters, who are after a fashion, in virtue of your age, parents of rebirth, I am addressing you and urging you so to live, that you may rejoice with those who imitate you and not perish with them. A person newly born observes one or other of the faithful who's a drunkard; what I'm afraid of is that he may say to himself, "Why is that guy one of the faithful, and yet he drinks so much?" He observes one or other of the faithful who's a money-lender, a stingy giver, a harsh exactor of interest, and he says to himself,

“I’ll do that too.”⁵ He’s told, “But you’re a believer now, don’t do it; you’ve been baptized, been born again, your hopes have changed radically, your morals should change too.” And he answers, “Why are So-and-so and Such-and-such believers, then?”

I don’t want to say any more; I mean, who could run through the whole list? That’s why, my dear brothers and sisters, when you live bad lives, you that are already believers, you will have a bad account to give to God both about yourselves and about these new Christians.

The “infantes” exhorted to model themselves on good Catholics

2. I am now going to address them, telling them to be grain on the threshing-floor, not to follow the chaff which is whirled around by the wind, and with which they would be lost; but to stay put on the floor with the weight of charity,⁶ so that they may eventually reach the kingdom of immortality.

So you then, brothers and sisters, you, sons and daughters, you, the new offspring of mother Church, I beg you by what you have received to fix your eyes on the one who called you, who loved you, who went looking for you when you were lost, who enlightened you when you were found; and not to follow the ways of the lost, for whom the name of “faithful” is just a mistake; I mean, we’re not asking what they are called, but whether they fit their name. If they have been born, where is their new mode of life? If they are of the faithful, believers, where is their faith? I hear the name, let me also recognize the reality.

Choose for yourselves the ones to imitate; those who fear God, who enter the church⁷ of God with reverence, who listen carefully to the word of God, commit it to memory, chew over it in their thoughts, carry it out in their actions; choose them for your imitation. And don’t let a little voice say to you, “And where are we to find such people?” Be such people yourselves, and you will find such people. Like always sticks to like; if you live an abandoned sort of life, only abandoned people will attach themselves to you. Start living a good life, and you’ll see how many companions surround you, what a wonderful brotherhood you can rejoice in. Finally, you can’t find anyone to imitate? Be the sort of person someone else should imitate.

Sermon on the eucharist

3. We owe a sermon at the altar of God today to the “infants” about the sacrament of the altar.⁸ We have explained to them about the sacrament of the symbol, or creed, on what they ought to believe; we have explained about the sacrament of the Lord’s prayer, how they ought to make their petitions; and about the sacrament of the font and baptism.⁹ But about the sacrament of the sacred altar, which they have seen today, they have as yet heard nothing. Today they are owed a sermon on this subject. That’s why this sermon has to be short, both because of the hard work it is for me, and because of their edification.¹⁰

NOTES

1. No scholars suggest a date, though one suggests the Sunday after Easter, rather than Easter Sunday itself. I don't quite understand how he would explain the first sentence in that case. The general tone suggests to me a middle to late date; say about 420.

2. See Mt 26:41.

3. See Acts 2:33.

4. Literally, "for the sacraments of the Infants." But he cannot mean for giving the sacraments to the Infants. because that has already been done. Hence my longer paraphrase.

5. A sin that has rather dropped out of the official Christian list of "don'ts" in the last few centuries. And so we have the astonishing, the appalling situation of "third world debt"; and while everyone agrees it is a serious problem, nobody—at least among the creditors in the first world—seems to think there is any wickedness or moral obliquity involved. It's all a matter of finance and economics, sciences that are not considered to have anything to do with ethics, let alone with the gospel. In this matter of the sin of usury, the medieval Church, with all its blind spots, was streets ahead of our contemporary Church today.

6. It is a favorite idea of Augustine's that love (good or bad) on the moral and spiritual plane is what weight is on the material plane; it carries persons to their proper places. Commenting on one of his favorite texts, *You have disposed all things in measure and number and weight* (Wis 11:20), he says in the *Confessions* (XIII, 9, 10): *Pondus meum amor meus*: "my weight is my love/ my love is my weight."

7. Here I think he must mean the church building.

8. At the same service as this sermon was preached at? And does "at the altar of God" mean immediately before communion, as suggested in note 2 to Sermon 227? Again questions without answers, at least here.

9. Note the very wide use of the word "sacrament."

10. That is, if this sermon goes on any longer, there will be no time for the sermon on the sacrament of the altar, which they need for their edification.

SERMON 228A

FRAGMENT IN THE COLLECTION OF BEDE AND FLORUS ON ROMANS 6
FROM A SERMON ON THE LORD'S RESURRECTION

Date: 400-410¹

*Baptism is a dying and being buried with Christ,
and rising with him to newness of life*

*As for his dying, he died to sin once; while as for his living, he lives for God. So you also then, think of yourselves as dead indeed to sin, but living for God in Christ Jesus (Rom 6:10-11). This is the sacrament in which these here are being baptized,² and in which they experience the setting of the old life, and initiate their entry into the new. Which is why Paul also says, *We have been buried, therefore, together with him through baptism into death; so that just as Christ rose again from the dead, in the same way we too might walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4).**

Let us acknowledge that we too, through this sacrament, have died to sin with Christ, and are living in Christ to justice. On his cross there is the pain of those who have confessed their sins; in his burial the relief and rest of those who have been absolved; in his resurrection the life of those who have been justified.³

NOTES

1. Quite how a fragment like this can be dated, as it is by Suzanne Poque, I am not sure. The evidence, presumably must be external.
2. Taking the present tense of *baptizantur* seriously, I infer that the sermon was preached just before the baptism of the neophytes; probably at the Easter vigil, but possibly at Pentecost.
3. Literally "the life of the just." I think my expansion of the phrase is justified, to balance the other two sections of the sentence.

SERMON 228B

ABOUT THE SACRAMENTS ON EASTER DAY

Date: uncertain¹

The sacrament of our time is the body and blood of the priest himself

1. You have all just now been born again of water and the Spirit,² and can see that food and drink upon this table of the Lord's in a new light, and receive it with a fresh love and piety. So I am obliged by the duty I have of giving you a sermon, and by the anxious care with which I have given you birth, that Christ might be formed in you,³ to remind you infants⁴ of what the meaning is of such a great and divine sacrament, such a splendid and noble medicine, such a pure and simple sacrifice, which is not offered now just in the one earthly city of Jerusalem, nor in that tabernacle which was constructed by Moses, nor in the temple built by Solomon. These were just *shadows of things to come* (Col 2:17; Heb 10:1). But *from the rising of the sun to its setting* (Mal 1:11; Ps 113:3) it is offered as the prophets foretold, and as a sacrifice of praise to God, according to the grace of the New Testament.⁵

No longer is a victim sought from the flocks for a blood sacrifice, nor is a sheep or a goat any more led to the divine altars, but now the sacrifice of our time is the body and blood of the priest himself. About him, indeed, it was foretold so long ago in the psalms, *You are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek* (Ps 110:4). While that Melchizedek, priest of God Most High, offered bread and wine when he blessed our father Abraham, we gather from reading about it in the book of Genesis.⁶

*Recognize in the bread what hung on the cross;
in the cup what flowed from his side*

2. So Christ our Lord, who offered by suffering for us what by being born he had received from us, has become our high priest for ever, and has given us the order of sacrifice which you can see, of his body that is to say, and his blood. When his body, remember, was pierced by the lance, it poured forth the water and the blood by which he cancelled our sins. Be mindful of this grace as you work out your salvation, since it is God who is at work in you, and approach

with fear and trembling⁷ to partake of this altar. Recognize in the bread what hung on the cross, and in the cup what flowed from his side.

You see, those old sacrifices of the people of God also represented in a variety of ways this single one that was to come. Christ himself, I mean, was both a sheep, because of his innocence and simplicity of soul, and a goat because of *the likeness of the flesh of sin* (Rom 8:3). And whatever else was foretold *in many and diverse ways* (Heb 1:1) in the sacrifices of the old covenant refers to this single one which has been revealed in the new covenant.⁸

By the eucharist we are changed into the body of Christ

3. And therefore receive and eat the body of Christ, yes, you that have become members of Christ in the body of Christ; receive and drink the blood of Christ. In order not to be scattered and separated, eat what binds you together; in order not to seem cheap in your own estimation, drink the price that was paid for you. Just as this turns into you when you eat and drink it,⁹ so you for your part turn into the body of Christ when you live devout and obedient lives. He himself, you see, as his passion drew near, while he was keeping the passover with his disciples, took bread and blessed it, and said, *This is my body which will be handed over for you* (1 Cor 11:24). Likewise he gave them the cup he had blessed and said, *This is my blood of the new covenant, which will be shed for many for the forgiveness of sins* (Mt 26:28).¹⁰

You were able to read or to hear this in the gospel before, but you were unaware that this eucharist is the Son. But now, your hearts sprinkled with a pure conscience, and your bodies washed with pure water,¹¹ *approach him and be enlightened, and your faces will not blush for shame* (Ps 34:5). Because if you receive this worthily, which means belonging to the new covenant by which you hope for an eternal inheritance, and if you keep the new commandment to love one another, then you have life in yourselves. You are then, after all, receiving that flesh about which Life itself says, *The bread which I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world; and Unless people eat my flesh and drink my blood, they will not have life in themselves* (Jn 6:51. 53).

*You are beginning to receive what you have begun to be,
provided you do not receive unworthily*

4. So then, having life in him, you will be in one flesh with him. This sacrament, after all, doesn't present you with the body of Christ in such a way as to divide you from it.¹² This, as the apostle reminds us, was foretold in holy scripture: *They shall be two in one flesh* (Gn 2:24). *This, he says, is a great sacrament; but I mean in Christ and in the Church* (Eph 5:31-32). And in another place he says about this eucharist itself, *We, though many, are one loaf, one body* (1 Cor 10:17). So you are beginning to receive what you have also begun to be, provided you do not receive unworthily; else you would be eating and drinking judgment upon yourselves. That, you see, is what he says: *Any who eat*

the bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But people should examine themselves, and in this way eat of the bread and drink of the cup; for those who eat and drink unworthily are eating and drinking judgment upon themselves (1 Cor 11:27-29).

You receive worthily, if you keep the leaven of charity

5. You receive worthily, however, if you avoid the yeast of bad doctrine, in order to be *unleavened loaves of sincerity and truth* (1 Cor 5:8); or if you keep hold of that yeast of charity, which the woman hid in three measures of flour until the whole of it was leavened.¹³ This woman, you see, is the Wisdom of God, who came through the virgin in mortal flesh, and who, having repaired the wide world after the flood through the three sons of Noah, disseminated her gospel throughout it, as in three measures until the whole should be leavened. This "whole" is what is called *holon* in Greek where, if you keep the bond of peace,¹⁴ you will be "in accord with the whole," which in Greek is *catholon*, from which the Church is called "Catholic."

NOTES

1. In note 14 below I suggest that we have a possible indication for a date before 411. Some scholars question the sermon's authenticity. There is nothing obviously un-Augustinian about the content; if the preacher was someone else, then he was clearly a devoted disciple. There is, perhaps, a certain lack of that spontaneity, that sparkle and occasional flash of brilliance which one has come to associate with Augustine; but not even he could be at the very top of his form all the time. I think it must be regarded as genuine until the contrary is much more convincingly proved.

2. See Jn 3:5.

3. See Gal 4:19.

4. He actually says "your infancies," *infantiam vestram*, as a kind of title. In this case I cannot think of a suitable English equivalent.

5. This passage does rather suggest that the newly baptized "infants" already knew a considerable amount about the eucharist, and that the so-called "discipline of the secret" was scarcely more than a pious fiction.

6. See Gn 14:18-21.

7. See Phil 2:12-13.

8. So far he is talking indistinguishably about the sacrifice of the cross and the eucharistic sacrifice—which is as it should be.

9. He usually says, when discussing the reception of the eucharist, that it differs from ordinary food in that it doesn't turn into those who eat it, but on the contrary, they become what they eat. But here, by "this" he evidently means only what nowadays would be called the eucharistic elements, or the species or appearances of bread and wine. As for turning into the body of Christ when you live good lives, in the context of talking about the eucharist I think he means that living good lives is a condition of receiving the sacrament fruitfully; or as he would put it, of really receiving the body of Christ in order to turn into the body of Christ.

10. In all likelihood this, from the words "while he was keeping passover," was the formula of

consecration in the African Church, as it was in the Spanish Church of the time—and perhaps still is in what is called the Mozarabic rite.

11. See Heb 10:22.

12. He is linking, rather cursorily and without much clarity, the two basic images of the Church as the body of Christ and the bride of Christ.

13. See Lk 13:21. Notice how happy he is with a double symbolism for yeast, as indeed for practically anything. For the same interpretation of the woman putting yeast in three measures of flour, see Sermon 111, 2, last paragraph.

14. See Eph 4:3. By the bond of peace he means very precisely communion with the Catholic Church, not breaking away in schismatic movements, like the Donatists. This may possibly indicate a date before 411, because after that date there was less, if any, temptation to Catholics to join the Donatists.

SERMON 229

ON HOLY EASTER SUNDAY ABOUT THE SACRAMENTS OF THE FAITHFUL

Date: 405-411¹

*The bread and wine on the altar become the body and blood
of the Word, which he made us into as well*

1. What you can see here, dearly beloved, on the table of the Lord, is bread and wine; but this bread and wine, when the word is applied to it, becomes the body and blood of the Word. That Lord, you see, who *in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (Jn 1:1), was so compassionate that he did not despise what he had created in his own image;² and therefore *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us* (Jn 1:14), as you know. Because, yes, the very Word took to himself a man, that is the soul and flesh of a man, and became man, while remaining God. For that reason, because he also suffered for us, he also presented us in this sacrament with his body and blood, and this is what he even made us ourselves into as well.³

Call to mind what this created object was, not so long ago, in the fields; how the earth produced it, the rain nourished it, ripened it into the full ear; then human labor carried it to the threshing floor, threshed it, winnowed it, stored it, brought it out, ground it, mixed it into dough, baked it, and hardly any time ago at all produced it finally as bread. Now call yourselves also to mind: you didn't exist, and you were created, you were carried to the Lord's threshing floor, you were threshed by the labor of oxen, that is of the preachers of the gospel.⁴ When, as catechumens, you were being held back, you were being stored in the barn. You gave in your names; then you began to be ground by fasts and exorcisms. Afterward you came to the water, and you were moistened into dough, and made into one lump. With the application of the heat of the Holy Spirit you were baked, and made into the Lord's loaf of bread.⁵

*Be one yourselves, in the same way as you can see
the bread and wine have been made one*

2. There you have what you have received. So just as you can see that what has been made is one,⁶ mind you are one yourselves too in the same way, by

loving each other, by holding one and the same faith, one and the same hope, an undivided charity. When the heretics⁷ receive this sacrament, they receive what is a testimony against themselves; because they insist on division, while this bread is a sign of unity. So too the wine was there in many grapes, and has now been concentrated into a unity; it is one in the pleasant taste of the cup, but only after the pressure of the wine-press. And you, after those fasts, after the hard labors, after the humiliation and the contrition,⁸ have now at last come, in the name of Christ, into the Lord's cup, so to say; and there you are on the table, and there you are in the cup. You are this together with us; we all take this together, all drink together, because we all live together.⁹

Explanation of the rite of the Mass from the preface onward

3. You are about to hear what you also heard yesterday; but today what you heard is being explained to you and also what you answered—or perhaps you kept quiet when the answers were given, but you learned yesterday what you should answer today. After the greeting that you know, that is, *The Lord be with you*, you heard, *Lift up the heart*.¹⁰ That's the whole life of real Christians, *Up with the heart*; not of Christians in name only, but of Christians in reality and truth; their whole life is a matter of *Up with the heart*. What does *Up with the heart* mean? Hoping in God, not in yourself; you, after all, are down below, God is up above; if you put your hope in yourself, your heart is down below, it isn't up above. That's why, when you hear *Lift up the heart* from the high priest,¹¹ you answer, *We have it lifted up to the Lord*. Try very hard to make your answer a true one, because you are making it in the course of the activity of God;¹² let it be just as you say; don't let the tongue declare it, while the conscience denies it.

And because this very thing of your having the heart up above is something that God, not your own capability, bestows on you, when you have said that you have your heart up above, the high priest continues and says, *To the Lord our God let us give thanks*. What should we give thanks for? Because we have our heart up above, and unless he had lifted it up, we would be lying on the ground.

And from there we come now to what is done in the holy prayers which you are going to hear, that with the application of the word we may have the body and blood of Christ. Take away the word, I mean, it's just bread and wine; add the word, and it's now something else. And what is that something else? The body of Christ, and the blood of Christ. So take away the word, it's bread and wine; add the word and it will become the sacrament. To this you say, *Amen*. To say *Amen* is to add your signature. *Amen* means "True" in English. Then comes the Lord's prayer, which you have already received and given back. Why is it said before we receive the body and blood of Christ? Because if, as is the case with human frailty, our thoughts have turned perhaps to something that they shouldn't have done, if our tongues have poured out something they ought not to have done, if our eyes have looked at something they shouldn't have, if our ears have listened with more pleasure than was proper to something they

shouldn't have; if by any chance we have contracted any of that sort of thing from this world's temptations and the frailty of human life, it's all wiped clean by the Lord's prayer, where it says, *Forgive us our debts* (Mt 6:12), so that we may approach without any anxiety; otherwise we may eat and drink what we receive to our own condemnation.¹³

After that comes *Peace be with you*; a great sacrament, the kiss of peace. So kiss in such a way as really meaning that you love. Don't be Judas; Judas the traitor kissed Christ with his mouth, while setting a trap for him in his heart. But perhaps somebody has unfriendly feelings toward you, and you are unable to win him round, to show him he's wrong; you're obliged to tolerate him. Don't pay him back evil for evil in your heart. He hates; just you love, and you can kiss him without anxiety.

It's only a few things that you've heard, but they are important ones. Don't treat them as cheap because they are few, but as dear because they are weighty. Also it would be wrong to overload you, or you wouldn't remember what's been said.

NOTES

1. The Maurists only have this sermon as a short fragment, preserved by Bede and Florus; in fact as a chain of scattered fragments—every other sentence, as it were, from sections 1 and 2. The sermon's authenticity has been questioned; the only solid reason I can surmise for this from the sermon itself is the fact that in section 3 below the preacher refers to the celebrant of the eucharist (himself, presumably) as the *sacerdos*, the high priest: a usage I have never come across before in Augustine's writings. In a similar context in Sermon 227 he speaks of the *episcopus vel presbyter qui offert*, the priest or presbyter who offers. For less tangible reasons of style and tone, I am hesitantly inclined to share the doubts about the sermon being genuinely one of Augustine's. If it is not, though, then it is one of a very faithful disciple of the master, someone like Caesarius of Arles.

2. See Gn 1:26-27.

3. This text illustrates very well how Augustine in his eucharistic theology is unequivocally "realist" in stating the reality of Christ's presence in the sacrament—"this bread and wine becomes the body and blood of the Lord"; and yet he never lingers, as later theology and devotion have done, on that real presence, but goes on immediately to reflect on what the real presence itself means or signifies: namely our unity with him, and in him with each other, in being ourselves the body of Christ. This is the ultimate grace of the eucharist, the ultimate thing signified; what scholastic theology calls the *res tantum* of the eucharist. The real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated species of bread and wine is what that same terminology calls the *res et sacramentum*: the reality signified by the sacramental sign of bread and wine, which is itself the sacrament, that is the sign, of the ultimate reality, the *res tantum*, namely our communion in the body of Christ, and thus the unity of the body of Christ, which is his Church. It is the fundamental, definitive concept of the sacraments being essentially *signis*, or if you prefer the word, symbols, rather than merely things, that has faded away almost to nothing in the Catholic consciousness, so strong, in a one-sided way, has been the stress on sacramental realism. And so we can get, in a Lesotho hymn in honor of the blessed sacrament, the following erroneous and deeply misguided statement: "Truly 'tis a matter of reality, / It is not a sign and memorial; / No, it is he himself / Who has come to me out of love" (*Lifela tsa Bakriste*, 32, verse 4). To which one can only say, "Accentuate the positive, but eliminate the negative, and your statement will be not only pious but correct."

4. See 1 Cor 9:9. Corn was threshed by oxen dragging a heavy sledge, with iron teeth in it, a *tribulum*, round and round over the sheaves on the threshing-floor; it still is in communities where combine harvesters are not available, or feasible. See Sermon 111, note 17.

5. His brief explanation of the sacraments of initiation in these terms, like that of all the Fathers, both Latin and Greek, presupposes the order baptism, confirmation, first communion. This is indeed the theologically correct sacramental order. Is it not time that the Latin Churches started taking it more seriously, and putting confirmation back in its proper place before first communion, as the most suitable preparation for first communion?

6. Was there just one loaf of bread on the altar, even at this stage of the Church's history? Or was unity signified by all the small loaves the faithful had brought being piled in one heap on one dish? This seems more likely. The Latin Churches were not yet using unleavened bread for the eucharist.

7. He means primarily the Donatists.

8. The exercises through which the catechumens and the *competentes* were put, especially perhaps the exorcisms, but also their always being sent out of church before the Mass of the faithful began, and finally, no doubt, their having to strip naked in order to be baptized, must have been very humbling, if not exactly humiliating in the harsh sense of that word. Augustine records somewhere in the *Confessions* his astonished admiration of what he considered the humility of the distinguished rhetorician Victorinus Afer publicly confessing his faith, in the "giving back" of the symbol by the *competentes*, when he became a Christian in Rome (*Confessions* VIII, 2, 5).

9. "We" being, presumably, both clergy and older faithful.

10. Augustine's liturgy has it in the singular, *Sursum cor*, instead of the plural of the Roman formula, *Sursum corda*.

11. *A sacerdote*. In Patristic times the word *sacerdos*, priest, was almost invariably applied only to bishops, never—or hardly ever—to the presbyters whom we now call priests (the English word "priest" deriving from "presbyter"). So to avoid the reader thinking that it refers to priests in the sense in which we now use the word, it has to be translated "high priest."

This usage, to the best of my knowledge, is so untypical of Saint Augustine that it does provide a ground for questioning the authenticity of this sermon.

12. *Apud acta Dei*—a very strong way of describing the eucharist; it refers above all, one assumes, to the divine act of changing the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

13. See 1 Cor 11:29.

SERMON 229A

PREACHED ON HOLY EASTER SUNDAY

Date: 410-412¹

*What you receive is what you are;
what you see on the altar is the sacrament of unity*

1. You that have been born again to new life, which is why you are called “Infants”; you above all that are seeing this only now,² listen to what it all means, as I had promised you. Listen also, you the faithful, who are used to seeing it; it’s good to be reminded, or forgetfulness may creep up on you. What you can see on the Lord’s table, as far as the appearance of the things goes, you are also used to seeing on your own tables; they have the same aspect, but not the same value. I mean, you yourselves are the same people as you used to be; you haven’t brought us along new faces, after all. And yet you’re new; the same old people in bodily appearance, completely new ones by the grace of holiness—just as this too is new.³

It’s still, indeed, as you can see, bread and wine; come the consecration,⁴ and that bread will be the body of Christ, and that wine will be the blood of Christ. This is brought about by the name of Christ, brought about by the grace of Christ, that it should continue to look exactly like what it used to look like, and yet should not have the same value as it used to. You see, if it was eaten before, it would fill the belly; but now when it’s eaten it nourishes the spirit. Now when you were baptized, or rather just before you were baptized, I spoke to you on Saturday about the sacrament of the font in which you were to be plunged; and I told you, what I don’t think you have forgotten, that baptism had, or has, the same value as being buried with Christ, as the apostle says: *For we have been buried with Christ through baptism into death, so that just as he has risen from the dead, so we too may walk in newness of life* (Rom 6:4). Well, in the same way I must now put to you and impress upon you what it is that you have received or are going to receive, and this not from my own ideas, or my own presumption, or any human arguments, but again on the authority of the apostle.

Here you are then; listen very briefly to the apostle, or rather to Christ speaking through the apostle, to what he says about the sacrament of the Lord’s table: *One loaf, one body, is what we, being many, are* (1 Cor 10:17). There you

have it all; I said it in a moment. But you must weigh the words, don't count them. If you count the words, it's short enough; if you weigh them, it's tremendous. *One loaf*, he said. However many loaves may be placed there, it's *one loaf*; however many loaves there may be on Christ's altars throughout the world, it's *one loaf*. But what does it mean, *one loaf*? He explained very briefly: *one body is what we, being many, are*. This is the body of Christ,⁵ about which the apostle says, while addressing the Church, *But you are the body of Christ and his members* (1 Cor 12:27). What you receive is what you yourselves are, thanks to the grace by which you have been redeemed; you add your signature to this, when you answer *Amen*. What you see here is the sacrament of unity.

The body of Christ is made one by the harmony of charity

2. So now, because the apostle suggested very briefly to us what this is, let's look at it a little more carefully, and see how it comes about. How does bread come about? It's threshed, ground, goes from the mixing of the dough to the baking; in the mixing it's purified, in the baking it's made firm.⁶ This is what you have become. Where or when was your threshing?⁷ It consisted in the fasts, the Lenten observances, the vigils, the exorcisms. You were being ground when you were being exorcised. Dough isn't mixed without water; you were baptized. Baking is troublesome, but useful. What is your baking, after all? The fire of trials and temptations, without which this life cannot be lived. But how is it useful? *The oven tests the potter's jar, and the trial of tribulation just men* (Sir 27:5).

But just as one loaf is made from single grains collected together and somehow mixed in with each other into dough, so in the same way the body of Christ is made one by the harmony of charity. And what grains are for the body of Christ, grapes are for his blood; because wine too comes out from the press, and what was separated one by one in many grapes flows together into a unity, and becomes wine. Thus both in the bread and in the cup there is the mystery, the sacrament, of unity.

The words of the preface of the Mass explained

3. As for what you heard at the Lord's table: *The Lord be with you* is what we say both when we greet you from the apse,⁸ and as often as we pray; because this is what we need, that the Lord should always be with us, because without him we are nothing. As for what sounded in your ears, notice what you say at God's altar. You see, we are somehow or other questioning you and admonishing you, and we say, *Up with the heart*. Don't put it down below; the heart rots in the earth; lift it up to heaven. But *up with the heart*, where to? What's your answer? *Up with the heart*, where to? *We have it lifted up to the Lord*. You see, this business of *up with the heart* is sometimes good, sometimes bad. How can it be bad? It's bad in those people of whom it is said, *You cast them down, while they were exalting themselves* (Ps 73:18). *Up with the heart*, if it isn't to the

Lord, is an act not of justice, but of pride. And that's why, when we say *Up with the heart*, because *up with the heart* can still be a matter of pride, you answer, *We have it lifted up to the Lord*.

So it's a matter of condescension, not elation; and because it's a matter of condescension that we should have the heart lifted up to the Lord, does that mean we have done it? That we have been able to manage it all on our own? That we have lifted up the earth which we were right up to heaven? Perish the thought! He did it, he condescended, he put out his hand, he stretched out his grace, he caused what was down below to be up above. That's why when we said *Up with the heart*, and you replied *We have it lifted up to the Lord*; to stop you claiming the credit for having the heart lifted up, I added, *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God*.

These are brief mysteries, but great ones. I call them brief, but they are great in their meaning and effect.⁹ After all, you say these things very quickly, and without a book, and without a reading, and without long discussion. Remind yourselves what you are, and in whom you ought to persevere, so that you may attain to God's promises.

NOTES

1. Compared with Sermon 229, this one displays an *extempore*, off-the-cuff quality entirely characteristic of Augustine. Does this very authenticity here strengthen the doubt about authenticity there?

2. They had seen it, or most of them had, the previous night, after being baptized and confirmed at the Easter vigil. But perhaps there were several of the newly baptized who for reasons of poor health, or old age, or extreme youth, had not stayed on for the rest of the all-night vigil, but had gone home immediately after being baptized and confirmed.

3. Baptismal transformation, which makes us new creatures, a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), compared very boldly and significantly to eucharistic transubstantiation (a word Augustine didn't know), thus giving the eucharistic mystery an even more profound significance.

4. His word is *sanctificatio*.

5. The Latin reads *Hoc panis corpus Christi*; but *hoc panis* is a fearful solecism, *hoc* being neuter and *panis* masculine; which one could ascribe to a copyist's carelessness, but not, I think, to Augustine's Latin. So one can either emend *Hoc* to *Hic*, which would give the sense, "This loaf is the body of Christ"; or leave out *panis*, as I prefer to do. He is amplifying the meaning of the "one body" he has just mentioned. A copyist or reader can easily have been a little puzzled and have added *panis* as a comment in the margin, from where it could be brought by another copyist into the text.

6. These last two processes are analogous to baptism and confirmation; the flour is "purified" when mixed into dough, because water is added—which is more evident in the Latin word *consparsura* with its basic sense of sprinkling. His saying that by being baked the bread is made firm, *firmatur*, is the only allusion we have in this sermon to "confirmation." A little lower down he will give the baking the moral sense of "testing in the fire of tribulation." In Sermon 229 he (or his impersonator) interpreted it as being baked by the fire of the Holy Spirit.

7. In the Latin these two sentences occur in the reverse order. So the first interrupts, with no

obvious sense, the answer to the question. It could perhaps be regarded as a marginal gloss on the immediately preceding account of bread-making, which a copyist then inserted in the wrong place.

8. Where the bishop's throne was.

9. Reading *magna effectu* (which I have "double translated" as "meaning and effect"), instead of the text's *magna affectu*, which would mean something like "great in feeling," which would hardly be to the point.

SERMON 229B

PREACHED ON HOLY EASTER SUNDAY

Date: uncertain¹

Live good lives, and you are the day which the Lord has made

1. The Lord has indeed made every day—and not only has made, but also continues to make; I mean, he makes every day as follows: *he makes his sun rise on the good and the bad, and sends rain on the just and the unjust* (Mt 5:45).² So we are not to imagine that this ordinary kind of day, which is common to good and bad alike, is meant in this place, where we heard, *This is the day which the Lord has made*. A particular sort of day is being proclaimed more formally, and our attention is being drawn to a particular sort of day by its saying, *This is the day which the Lord has made*. What sort of day can it be, when it says, *Let us exult and be joyful in it* (Ps 118:24)? What sort, but a good one? What sort but a very choice, lovable, desirable one, the sort about which Saint Jeremiah said, *And the day of men I have not yearned for, you know it well*³ (Jer 17:16)?

So what is this day which the Lord has made? Live good lives, and you will be this day yourselves.⁴ The apostle, you see, was not talking about the day which begins with sunrise and ends with sunset, when he said *Let us walk honorably, as in the day* (Rom 13:13); where he also said, *For those who get drunk are drunk at night* (1 Thes 5:7).⁵ Nobody sees people getting drunk at the midday meal;⁶ but when this does happen, it is a matter of the night, not of the day which the Lord has made. You see, just as that day is realized in those who live godly, holy, and religious lives, marked by moderation, justice, sobriety; so too on the contrary, for those who live in an ungodly, loose-living, proud, and irreligious manner—for that sort of night, the night will undoubtedly be a thief: *The day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night* (1 Thes 5:2)—that's what's written, after all.⁷

But after reminding us of this testimony,⁸ the apostle turned to those to whom he had elsewhere said *You were once darkness, but now light in the Lord* (Eph 5:8)—that is where the day was made which the Lord has made. He turned to them, after saying, *You know, brothers, that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night*, and he said to them, *You, however, are not in darkness, that that day should catch you out like a thief. For you are all children of the*

light and children of the day; we are not of the night nor of the darkness (1 Thes 5:4-5).

So this song we sing over and over again⁹ is a constant reminder to us to live good lives. When we all say together with harmonious voices, joyful spirits, hearts beating together, *This is the day which the Lord has made*, let us fit ourselves to the sound we make, or else our tongues may be giving evidence against us. You're going to drink yourself silly today, and you still say *This is the day which the Lord has made*? Aren't you afraid he may answer you, "This is certainly not the day which the Lord has made"? And can it be called a good day, when by self-indulgence and loose living it has made it into the worst possible day for itself?¹⁰

*The everlasting joy of the kingdom will not generate boredom,
any more than good health does in this present life*

2. Here we have such joy, my brothers and sisters, joy in your coming together, joy in the psalms and hymns, joy in the memory of Christ's passion and resurrection, joy in the hope of future life. If what we are still hoping for fills us with such tremendous joy, what will it be like when we actually possess it? Just look how these days, when "Alleluia" is ringing in our ears, our spirits soar! Isn't it as though we were getting I don't know what little taste of that city beyond the stars? If these days fill us with such tremendous joy, what will that day be like when we are told, *Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom* (Mt 25:34); when all the saints are gathered together there in unity; where in that great reunion those who hadn't met before now see each other; where those who had known each other now recognize one another; where they will all be together in such a way that a friend is never lost, an enemy never to be feared?

I mean, here we are, saying *Alleluia*; it's good, it's enjoyable, it's full of happiness, delight, pleasure. And yet, if we said it all the time, we would get bored. But when it recurs at a fixed season of the year, with what delight its return is greeted, with what wistfulness its departure! Will enjoyment be like that there, and will there be boredom then? There won't be.

Someone says, perhaps, "And how can it happen, that this goes on all the time, and never gets boring?" If I can show you something in this life that can never get boring, will you believe that there everything will be like that? Yes, food can get boring, drink can get boring, entertainment can get boring, this, that and the other can get boring; good health, though, has never been found boring.¹¹ So just as in this time of the mortality of the flesh, this time of frailty, this time of the weariness of the burden of the body, it has never been possible to get bored with good health; so there, in the same way, there will never be any boredom with charity, with immortality, with eternity.

NOTES

1. Preached either during Easter day, or at the vigil of Easter night; the day is perhaps the more likely time, in view of the theme, *This is the day which the Lord has made*. It gives us an Augustine less than usually coherent, an indication, perhaps, of sheer exhaustion.

2. As the little poem has it:

God sends his rain upon the just,
And also on the unjust feller;
But more upon the just, because
The unjust has the just's umbrella.

3. A very peculiar quotation to make his point. The reference is, presumably, to the sort of day Jeremiah didn't mention; the opposite of the one he did. This is the first incoherence.

4. He is addressing himself primarily to the newly baptized *infantes*.

5. The second incoherence: the two texts are quite unconnected.

6. Really? What a comparatively virtuous society it must have been! But I think he immediately qualifies the statement; even if they do, they belong symbolically to the night.

7. The third, complex incoherence. He quotes the day of judgment coming like a thief in the night, to support his statement that to people who are night, in contrast to those who are the day which the Lord has made, *night* will be like a thief.

8. What is said in this text is just an echo of a common New Testament image, with its source in a saying of our Lord's, Mt 24:42-44. That is why it is called a "testimony" which we are here reminded of. A testimony in this context seems to be what one might almost call an axiom.

9. The verse *This is the day which the Lord has made* is the theme song of the Easter liturgy, throughout Easter week.

10. The day, we must remember, being here the new Christian who has gone and got drunk.

11. No; but preoccupation with health produces one of the most virulent species of bore.

SERMON 229C

ON THE HOLY DAY OF EASTER

Date: uncertain¹

The Jews, celebrating the passover, do not acknowledge what it signifies

1. While we, as whose *Passover Christ has been sacrificed* (1 Cor 5:7), are celebrating these paschal days, the Jews, as opponents of this splendid manifestation of light, are still carrying on with various nocturnal foreshadowings of theirs, and still dreaming as the day nears its end.² They too, you see, claim to be celebrating the Pasch,³ and while they continue perversely to chase the shadows of the truth, they are blinded by the night of error. Every year they kill the sheep according to the ritual of the ancient solemnity, and fail to acknowledge what that sheep signified, even after Christ had been killed by their ancestors. They read the story that is told without understanding that something is being foretold; so they hear when what has been told is chanted, but they fail to notice when what was foretold is fulfilled. *They have the law and the prophets* (Lk 16:29), and they refuse to recognize through the prophets what the law was prefiguring with the Passover. As the law commanded, the people fed themselves by slaughtering a sheep; as the prophet foretold, *Christ like a sheep was led to the slaughter* (Is 53:7).

What the earlier Israelites, set free from Egypt, prefigured in their festivity, the later Israelites, taken captive by the devil, accomplished in their iniquity. They were even carrying out the rites of the Passover itself at the very moment Christ was slain by them; the truth was at variance with their impiety, and the same truth was in harmony with their solemnity; the sheep was being slaughtered for their food at the very moment that Christ was being killed by their tongues and teeth; what their custom signified, their crime accomplished.

Thus it is that Christ himself, prefigured in the animal, fully expressed in the man,⁴ kills them as they feast, feeds us as he is killed.⁵ And still their descendants, belching out the old leaven of their ancestors in futile indigestion,⁶ go on priding themselves on their feast of unleavened bread; not realizing that by that food, kneaded without the old leaven, the new kind of life is signified, and that while this was prefigured in the type, it is only fully revealed in Christ.

The Christian passover fulfills that of the Old Testament

2. So let us then, as whose *Passover Christ has been sacrificed*, celebrate the feast, as the apostle says, *not in the old leaven and that of wickedness, but in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth* (1 Cor 5:7-8); and let Christianity in its celebrations show to be fulfilled what the law in antiquity foretold would come. In this way let us observe that they have remained in the shadows, and rejoice that we have attached ourselves to the light.

NOTES

1. We have had Augustine preaching against the errors of the Jews several times, in connection especially with the passion of Jesus Christ. But that he should devote the whole of a very brief sermon on Easter Sunday to the subject is surely bizarre. The only explanation I can think of is that in the year when he preached it the Christian Easter coincided exactly with the Jewish Passover. The style, elaborate even in so short a sermon, inclines me firmly to posit an early date, between 391 and 400. So if the experts in calendar calculations can find a year in or about that period when Easter and Passover did exactly coincide, that will give us, I suggest, the exact date of this sermon.

2. The day is, I think, the Christian era, which is nearing its end, *declinato*, because the end of the world is not far off. The *nocturnas quasdam figuras* of the Jews are their rituals and feasts, such as Passover, whose whole *raison d'être* was to prefigure the Christ event. The Jews are still dreaming—meaning that they have slept throughout the day, the times of Christ and the Church; dreaming of a Messiah, a Christ, still to come.

3. The Latin and Greek *pascha* means both Jewish Passover and Christian Easter. English, having separated the two by importing the wholly pagan term “Easter” for the Christian Pasch, makes the translator’s task here almost impossible.

4. As usual he is treating “Christ” as a divine name. It would have been more accurate if he had said, “Thus the Word, prefigured in the animal, fully expressed in the man,” etc. His use, indeed, of the word *expressus* indicates that he was thinking of the Word.

5. A very strange and harsh statement, that Christ kills them as they feast, *illos occidit epulatos*. I suppose he means that in eating the Passover while killing Christ they are, in Paul’s words, *eating and drinking judgment on themselves* (1 Cor 11:29). The Passover is no longer in any way a means of grace for them.

The savage way he puts it may be echoing the story of Num 11:31-35, when the people were struck by a plague from the Lord in the very act of gorging themselves on the quails.

6. He puts it the other way round: “in undigested futility,” *indigesta vanitate*. Whichever way it is put, it is the result of, and means, their failure to interpret the Passover as prefiguring the sacrifice of Christ, their failure to digest its meaning. Undigested in that way, it is a vain and futile and meaningless ritual.

SERMON 229D

ON THE HOLY DAY OF EASTER

Date: before 410¹

Christ suffered, let us die to sin; Christ rose again, let us live for God

1. You should never forget, of course, brothers and sisters, that Christ *was handed over for our transgressions, and rose again for our justification* (Rom 4:25). More particularly, though, are we reminded of this by these days of such marvelous grace, in which by celebrating solemnly every year what happened once and for all, we are not allowed to forget it. So then, informed by faith, confirmed by hope, on fire with charity, let us solemnly celebrate these temporal festivities, while unceasingly longing for the eternal ones. If God, after all, *did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for us all, how can he not also have bestowed on us all things together with him?* (Rom 8:32).

Christ suffered, let us die to sin; Christ rose again, let us live for God. Christ passed over from this world to the Father; don't let our hearts stick here below, but rather follow to the realms above. Our head hung on the tree, let us crucify the lust of the flesh. He lay in the tomb; buried with him, let us forget the past. He is seated in heaven, let us transfer our desires to sublime realities. He is going to come as judge, let us not bear the yoke with unbelievers.² He is also going to resuscitate the corpses of the dead; let us deserve this transfiguration of the body by a transformation of our minds. He is going to set the bad on his left, the good on his right; let us choose our place with good works. His kingdom will have no end; let us fear the end of this life not a whit. *All the instruction of our peace is in him, by whose bruises we have been healed* (Is 53:5).

Keep this passing feast joyfully, and think about the coming kingdom that will last for ever

2. Therefore, dearly beloved, let us make constant reflection on all these things our daily celebration of the Pasch, of Easter. What I mean is that we shouldn't treat these days as extra specially important, in such a way that we neglect the memory of the Lord's passion and resurrection at other times, while we have his body and blood as our daily banquet; this festival, rather, is intended

to remind us more vividly of them, to stir us up to greater fervor, to renew our faith more joyfully, since in the course of the annual round of the seasons, it somehow or other sets the memory of what happened before our very eyes. Keep the passing feast in this way, and think about the coming kingdom that will abide for ever.

After all, if we find these passing days, in which we recall Christ's passion and resurrection with special devotion and solemnity, so exhilarating, how blessed and blissful will that eternal day make us, when we shall actually see him, and stay with him, the one we now rejoice in merely by desiring and hoping for him! What exultant joy God will give to his Church, from which as it is born again through Christ he has after a fashion removed the foreskin of its fleshly nature, that is, the reproach of its natural birth!³ That's why it says, *And you, while you were dead in transgressions and the foreskin of your flesh, he made alive in him, forgiving us all our debts* (Col 2:13). *For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be made alive* (1 Cor 15:22). Thus it is that what was covered up in the shadow of circumcision is made plain in Christ's baptism; and this nevertheless pertains to the same *circumcision not made with hands* (Col 2:11), when the cover of fleshly ignorance is removed. *When you pass over to Christ, he says, the veil is taken away* (2 Cor 3:16).⁴

NOTES

1. There is a strong party among the scholars in favor of placing this sermon during the vigil rather than on Easter day.

2 See 2 Cor 6:14.

3. See Jos 5:2-9, where the nation is circumcised after its entry into Canaan, "to remove from them the reproach of Egypt." Here, by the *opprobrium natiuitatis*, Augustine is evidently referring first and foremost to original sin.

4. Whether this excessively ingenious weaving together of texts about circumcision and veils helps us to appreciate the newness of life in Christ at Easter, and whets our appetite for the bliss of the eternal day, readers must decide for themselves. I don't think I can honestly say that it has removed the cover of my fleshly ignorance. It was all, very possibly, prompted by the reading of the passage from Joshua 5 during the vigil. So this may be a point in favor of the sermon's having been preached at the vigil.

SERMON 229E

PREACHED ON THE MONDAY AFTER EASTER

Date: after 411

*Christ has exchanged the good things of the region he came from
for the bad things of this region of ours he came to*

1. The Lord's passion and resurrection show us two kinds of life; one which we bear with, the other which we desire. He is, after all, quite powerful enough to give us that one, since he was willing for our sakes to bear with this one. By this, you see, he showed us how much he loves us, and wanted us to trust him to give us his own good things, seeing that he was willing to share our bad things in common with us. We were born, and he was born; because we are going to die, he died. These two things we had experience of in this life of ours, the beginning and the end, being born and dying; being born to commence our troubles, dying to move on to an uncertain future. These two things we had experience of, being born and dying. There is plenty of this in our region. Our region is the earth; the region of the angels is heaven.

So our Lord came to this region from the other region; to the region of death from the region of life; to the region of trouble from the region of bliss. He came, bringing along to us his good things, and he patiently endured our bad things. He was carrying his good things secretly, bearing with our bad things openly. The man was apparent, the God was hidden; weakness was apparent, sovereignty hidden; the flesh apparent, the Word hidden. The flesh suffered; where was the Word when the flesh was suffering? The Word wasn't keeping quiet, because he was teaching us patience.

But look, Christ the Lord rose again on the third day; where now is the jeering of the Jews? Where now is the jeering of the Jewish leaders, growling and raging and prowling around, and killing the healer? Recall, dearly beloved, what you heard when his passion was being read: *If he is the Son of God, let him come down from the cross, and we can believe in him. If he is the Son of God, he will save him* (Mt 27:40-43). He heard all that, and he kept quiet; he was pleading for those who were saying this, and not showing himself openly. Indeed, it's written in another gospel that he cried out for them and said, *Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing* (Lk 23:34). He could see

there ones who would be his own, he could see ones who would very soon believe in him, he wanted them to be pardoned. Our head was hanging on the cross, but he could recognize his members on the ground.

Absolutely all sins are forgiven in baptism, even the sin of killing Christ

2. When the book of the Acts of the Apostles was read, you heard how the crowd that had assembled was astonished at the apostles and those who were with them speaking the languages of all nations, which they hadn't learned, under the inspiration and instruction of the Holy Spirit they had received; and how Peter addressed them, still thunderstruck at the miracle, and explained to them that they had indeed committed this evil of killing the Lord in ignorance, but that God had thereby carried out his intention that innocent blood should be shed for the whole world to blot out the sins of all who believed,¹ because the one who died was one in whom no sin could be found. The bill for our sins was still outstanding, the devil was holding a bond against us;² he had taken possession of those he had deceived, he was the owner of those he had defeated. We were all debtors, since all are born with the hereditary debt; sinless blood was shed, and canceled the bill for sin.

So those who had come to believe as Peter spoke, in the Acts of the Apostles, were disturbed, and said, *What shall we do, brothers? Tell us.* They hardly dared hope, you see, that such a monstrous sin could be forgiven them. And they were told, *Repent, and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and your sins are forgiven* (Acts 2:37-38).

What sins?

All of them.

How much, all of them?

Even such a great one as this, that you killed Christ. Could you have done anything more wicked, after all, than to kill your creator, who was created for your sakes?

Could a frantic man do anything more grave than that his doctor should be killed by him? Yet even this is forgiven; they are told, "All is forgiven; you raged and shed innocent blood; believe, and drink what you shed."

So they had been there,³ those who now said, rather desperately, *What shall we do?*; and they heard that by believing in the one whom they had killed, they could obtain pardon for such a dreadful crime. They had been there, he could see them. He saw them standing in front of his cross, having foreseen them before the foundation of the world.⁴ It was for them that he said, *Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing* (Lk 23:34). They were killing the healer; the healer was making a medicine for his killers out of his blood.

What wonderful mercy and glory! What wasn't forgiven them, when they were forgiven for killing Christ? That's why, dearly beloved, nobody should ever doubt that *in the washing of rebirth* (Ti 3:5) absolutely all sins, from the least to the greatest, are altogether forgiven. Here, after all, we have an example

of it, and a perfect instance. There can be no graver sin than to kill Christ; when even this has been forgiven, what guilt will remain in one who believes and is baptized?

The resurrection is the sacrament, the model, of the new life

3. But let us consider Christ's resurrection, dearly beloved; since just as his passion signified our old life,⁵ so his resurrection is the sacrament, the model, of the new life. That's why the apostle says, *We have been buried together with Christ through baptism into death, so that just as Christ rose from the dead, in the same way we too may walk in newness of life* (Rom 6:4). You believed, you were baptized, your old life died, slain on the cross, buried in baptism. The old, which you lived so badly, has been buried; let the new life arise. Live a good life; live in such a way that you may live; live in such a way that when you die, you don't die.

Consider, dearly beloved, what the Lord said in the gospel to the man he cured: *Look, you have been made well; do not sin any more, in case something worse should happen to you* (Jn 5:14). We would have been trapped by this pronouncement and reduced to great straits—but his mercy did not abandon us there. He gave the baptized a prayer (because here one cannot live without sin), that we should say every day, *Forgive us our debts* (Mt 6:12). There are debts; that's a general statement, and we never stop getting into debt. We admit what we need to be forgiven for every day; but we ought not, for that reason, to relax comfortably in shameful behavior, in misdeeds and crimes, as though we had nothing to worry about. Sins mustn't be our friends; we have vomited them out, we have expressed our hatred for them; don't let's return to our vomit, the way dogs do.⁶ And if they do creep up on us, let them creep up against our wills, without our welcoming them or deliberately seeking them. You see, anyone who wants to be friends with sins will be the enemy of the one who came to do away with sins, since he himself had no sin.

My brothers and sisters, consider what I'm saying; be the disease's friend, and you're the doctor's enemy. If you were ill with a bodily ailment, and the doctor came to see you in his professional capacity, just let me know what he would mean by coming to see you; what else would he mean, but to make you better? So since he would be a friend to you, he's bound to be an enemy to the fever; I mean, if he was fond of your fever, he wouldn't be fond of you. So he hates your fever; it's against it that he entered your house, against it that he went upstairs to your bedroom, against it that he approached your bed, against it that he felt your pulse, against it that he gave you instructions, against it that he mixed and applied medicines; all this against the fever, all this for you. So if he does everything against the fever, everything for you, then you by loving the fever will be alone against yourself.

You'll answer me, yes I know, you'll answer me and say, "Who was ever fond of a fever?" Yes, I know too that sick people aren't fond of their fevers; but they're fond of what the fever is asking for. What is it the doctor said, when

he came to see you, armed with his medical skill against your fever? He tells you, for example, "Don't drink cool drinks." You are not to drink cool drinks, you heard it from the doctor, the enemy of your fever. When the doctor's gone, the fever says, "Drink cool drinks." When the fever says this to you, what you've got to say is, "This fierce longing is the fever." A silent argument is being addressed to you; it dries up your mouth, the thought of a cool drink delights you; but remember what the doctor said: "Don't drink." But the doctor's gone, the fever's right there. What did the doctor say? Do you want to beat the fever? Don't give in to it. If you make an alliance with the doctor against the fever, there will be two of you; if you consent to the fever, the doctor loses—but the loss is the sick person's, not the doctor's.

Perish the thought, however, that Dr. Christ should lose in those *whom he foreknew and predestined*; because *they are the ones he also called*; and *those he called are the ones he also justified*; while *those he justified are the ones he also glorified*. Curb your vices, quench your lusts, let the devil and his angels be tormented with frustration; *if God is for us, who can be against us?* (Rom 8:29-31).

Christ is both food and wages to those who work in his vineyard

4. Begin, though, by living good lives to practice in a spiritual way what Christ illustrated by the resurrection of the body. That actual thing itself, however, that is to say, the incorruptibility of the flesh in its own proper reality, that you must not hope for now; it's the wages of faith, and wages are paid at the end of the day. Now, for the time being, let us work hard in the vineyard, looking forward to the end of the day;⁷ the one who hired us to work, you see, doesn't abandon us, doesn't let us faint. The one who is preparing to give the laborer his wages at the end of the day provides him with food while he's working. So too the Lord is now providing us with food as we work in this world; not only food for the stomach, but also food for the mind. If he wasn't feeding us, I wouldn't be speaking; because he feeds us with his word, though, I am; I'm preaching him not to your stomachs but to your minds. You receive him hungrily, in feasting on him you praise him; what's the meaning of your shouts, if no food has reached your minds?

We here, though, what are we?⁸ His ministers, his servants. What we are setting before you is not being produced from our pantry and cellar, but from his. We too live off it, because we are your fellow servants. And what, precisely, are we serving you with: his bread, or him as bread? Any human being⁹ who hired a worker for his vineyard could give him bread to eat, but not himself. Christ gives himself to his workers, he provides himself as daily bread, he saves himself up as wages. We've no grounds for saying, "If we eat him now, what will we get at the end of the day?" We indeed eat, but he isn't finished; he fills the hungry, but he doesn't fail himself.¹⁰ The laborers receive as food now what is waiting for them undiminished as wages. What is there, after all, better than himself, that we could possibly be going to receive? If he had anything better

than himself, he would give it to us; but there isn't anything better than God, and Christ is God.

Listen: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; this was in the beginning with God* (Jn 1:1-2). Who can grasp that? Who can work it out? Who can observe it, who contemplate it, who think fitting thoughts about it? Nobody. *The Word became flesh, and dwelt amongst us* (Jn 1:14). What he's calling you to is to work as a laborer. *The Word became flesh*. He's calling you himself; the Word will be your praise, the Lord will be your wages.

NOTES

1. See Acts 3:17-18.
2. See Col 2:14.
3. At Golgotha, witnessing the crucifixion.
4. See Eph 1:4.
5. At the beginning of the sermon he said it signified our present life, with all its pains and troubles. Here he is shifting his ground, and referring it to the "old life" of sin; and I take him really to mean that the passion signified our death to the old life, in line, for example, with Gal 2:19; 6:14; Col 2:14.
6. See 2 Pt 2:22.
7. See Mt 20:1-16.
8. Not only himself, but the clergy with him in the apse.
9. Reading *Quisquis hominum* instead of . . . *hominem*; "Anyone who hires a man as a worker."
10. A familiar little jingle: *Esurientes reficit, sed ipse non deficit*.

SERMON 229F

PREACHED ON THE MONDAY AFTER EASTER

Date: after 418¹

We have believed in the resurrection of Christ, though we never saw it, on hearing the writings of those who didn't believe, even when they saw

1. Some people saw the resurrection of the Lord,² others did not believe it when told about it; and they were chided by the Lord, now present among them, because they had not believed those who saw it and brought them the news.³ What a stupendous favor done to the nations, and to those born long afterward! What has God granted those who now fill the churches of Christ? The holy apostles had gone round with the Lord, heard the word of truth from his mouth, seen him raise the dead; and they didn't believe that the Lord had risen. We though, born long afterward, have never seen his bodily presence, never heard a word from the mouth of his flesh, never observed with these eyes any miracle performed by him; and yet we have come to believe, on hearing what was written by those who at the time refused to believe. They didn't believe a most recent event when news of it was brought them; they wrote something for us to read, we heard it, and we believe.

That the Lord Jesus, though, declined to appear to the Jews is because he did not judge them worthy to see the Lord Christ after the resurrection; he showed himself to his own people, not to strangers. And while his own people were preaching, strangers came to believe;⁴ and those who had been strangers became his own. I mean, many of those, as you can read in the Acts of the Apostles; many of those who crucified the Lord, who defiled themselves by shedding his blood; many of those who said, *His blood be upon us and upon our children* (Mt 27:25), later on came to believe the apostles bringing them the good news of the resurrection. His blood was indeed upon them, but it was to wash them, not to destroy them; well, upon some to destroy them, upon others to cleanse them; upon those to be destroyed, in justice; upon those to be cleansed, in mercy.

And now too, do all have faith?⁵ Just as at that time some of the Jews themselves believed, others did not, so too now with the nations; some have come to believe, others don't believe. *Not everyone has faith* (2 Thes 3:2). Those who do have faith, though, believe by God's grace; they mustn't pride them-

selves on it. It's a gift from God. Is the reason God chose us, do you suppose, that we were good? He didn't choose good people, but people he wished to make good. We were all in the shadow of death,⁶ we were all being held, bundled together in the lump of sin coming from Adam. With the root infected, what sort of fruit could be born of the tree of the human race? But the one who would heal the infection came without infection, and the one who came to clean up sins came without sin.

How Jacob, in his wrestling with the angel, prefigured both the Jews who believed in Christ and those who rejected him

2. Don't concentrate on the Jews who are now chaff, that is, who derive from the threshing floor that was threshed then. I mean, if we were to think a bit, my brothers and sisters, from the Jews came the prophets, from the Jews the patriarchs, from the Jews the apostles, from the Jews the virgin Mary who gave birth to Christ, from the Jews later on came Paul as a believer, and so many thousands baptized on one day,⁷ from the Jews innumerable Churches of Christians. But all that grain is now stored in the granary; with the chaff the devil will be having his fun.

Believing Jews and unbelieving Jews. Where were they first condemned? In the first of them, in the father of all of them, Jacob himself, who was also called Israel.⁸ Jacob: "Supplanter" or "Heel";⁹ Israel: "Seeing God."¹⁰ When he returned from Mesopotamia with his children, an angel wrestled with him, representing Christ; and while he wrestled, though he surpassed him in strength, he still seemed to succumb to him, and Jacob to prevail. In the same sort of way the Lord Christ too succumbed to the Jews; they prevailed when they killed him. He was overcome by superior strength; precisely when he was overcome, that was when he overcame for us. What's that—when he was overcome was when he overcame for us? Because when he suffered, he shed the blood with which he redeemed us.

So then, that's what's written: Jacob prevailed over him. And yet Jacob himself, who was wrestling, acknowledged the mystery involved. A man, wrestling with an angel, prevailed over him; and when he said, *Let me go*, the one who had prevailed said, *I am not letting you go, unless you bless me*. O grand and splendid mystery! Overcome, he blesses, just as having suffered, he sets free; that is when the blessing was completed. *What are you called? he said to him. He replied, Jacob. You shall not be called Jacob, he said, but you shall be called Israel* (Gn 32:25-29). The imposition of such a great name is a great blessing. "Israel," as I said, means "Seeing God"; one man's name, everyone's reward. Everyone's; but provided they believe and are blessed, both Jews and Greeks. Greeks, you see, is what the apostle calls all nationalities, the reason being that the Greek language has such prestige among the nations. *Glory*, he says, *and honor*—they are the apostle's words—*glory and honor and peace to everyone doing good, to Jew first and Greek; wrath and indignation, trouble and distress on every soul doing evil, to Jews first and Greeks* (Rom 2:10.9). Good for good Jews, bad for bad ones; good for good Gentiles, bad for bad ones.

*If you have come to believe in Christ, recognize yourself as blessed;
if you have denied Christ, recognize yourself as lame*

3. The Jews shouldn't pat themselves on the back, and say, "There you are, Jacob all the same is our father; he prevailed over the angel and was blessed by the angel."

We, though, reply, "People of Israel, look at yourself there. Israel isn't what you are, it's what you're called, but aren't; the name's all wrong in you, the crime remains in you."¹¹

But he says to me, "Look, my father is Jacob, my father is Israel. There's the name; where's the crime?"

"Read the story, discover yourself in it there. You see, it's written there, *And he touched Jacob on the breadth of his thigh, and it withered, and he began to limp* (Gn 32:26). Jacob, one man, both blessed and lame. Blessed in whom, and lame in whom? If you have come to believe in Christ, recognize yourself as blessed. If you have denied Christ, recognize yourself as lame; it means, you see, that you are one of those about whom the prophet says, *They have limped off from their paths* (Ps 18:45).

Where were the holy women from, to whom the Lord first showed himself as he rose again? From the Jews, weren't they? Where were the apostles from, who even if they didn't believe the women when they first brought them the news, nonetheless heard Jesus himself later on, and acknowledged his rebuke, and adhered to his teaching? From the Jews, weren't they? There's Israel for you, blessed. But limping in many, blessed only in few; that, you see, is the breadth of the thigh—the majority of his race. It didn't simply say, "He touched his thigh," but *the breadth of his thigh*. Where you have the breadth of the thigh, you undoubtedly have the majority of the race.¹² And what's so surprising about that? I acknowledge the few grains, and I'm astonished at the heap of chaff? But I see what is due for the granary, and what for the flames. And now, let them listen; they're still alive; let them correct their limping, let them come to the blessing.

NOTES

1. This is the date suggested by Fischer; Kunzelmann and Poque suggest any time from 412 to 418. It is instructive to compare this sermon with Sermon 229 C, also "aimed" at the Jews. But this one is much more generous in spirit.

2. If he means, "saw the Lord rising," he is clearly mistaken. The women did not see that; they were the first to see the Lord after he had risen.

3. See Lk 24:4-27.

4. The reference seems primarily to be to the conversion of Cornelius and his household, Acts 10:44.

5. See 2 Thes 3:2.

6. See Job 3:5; 12:22; Ps 23:4; 88:6.

7. See Acts 2:14; 4:4.

8. Is Augustine suggesting a kind of original Jewish sin, inherited from the founding ancestor—a tendency to unbelief? It rather looks like it. If so, he has a forerunner in Hosea, who is not at all proud of the nation's ancestor; see Hos 12:3-9.

9. In the slang sense of the expression; but it really conveys better than any other English word the play on Jacob's name—and an element in his character. The way he treated Esau shows he was a heel!

10. See Sermon 122, note 7, where I suggest that Augustine's memory was playing him tricks, because "Seeing God," more or less, is the meaning of the name Jacob goes on in the next verse or two to give the place: Peniel. The curious thing is that in a sermon preached on Jacob, Sermon 5, section 6, he quotes the text in full, where the "official" interpretation of the name Israel is given. So the transferring of the meaning of Peniel to Israel seems more like a bad habit he got into in his old age, rather than just a slip of memory. But someone with a smattering of Hebrew might have suggested to him that Israel is "Ish-ra-el": "Man-see-God."

11. *Errat in te nomen, manet in te crimen.*

12. More undoubtedly in the Latin than in the English: *Ubi femoris latitudo, procul dubio generis multitudo.*

SERMON 229G

ON THE TUESDAY AFTER EASTER

Date: 416-417¹

1. You have heard what the Lord said to his disciples after his resurrection, now that he was not going to die any more, to remove the fear of death from those who were going to die.

The one who said "Show us the Father, and that is enough for us" was unable to recognize the Father in the Son

2. That Christ is God is not denied even by those who refuse to confess that he is of one substance with the Father.² They confess that he's God, deny that he's equal; so they make two Gods. We, however, say that the Son is equal to the Father in such a way, that if we are asked about each in turn, whether the Father is God, we acknowledge that he is; whether the Son is God, we acknowledge that he is; whether these two, Father and Son, are Gods or God, we acknowledge they are God. This is something that weak and human minds cannot grasp; something so great and divine, whenever there is talk about God, that human weakness cannot think about it adequately; but it can believe, so that later on it may form suitable thoughts.

The Lord was asked, you see, *Show us the Father, and that is enough for us* (Jn 14:8). The person who said this wasn't able to recognize the Father in the Son. What he could see, after all, was what the Jews could crucify; he couldn't see the one who was the hidden stumbling block for the Jews. And he assumed that that was all Christ was, what he could look at with his eyes; and that's why he wasn't enough for him, because he couldn't see all of him. And because he thought there was nothing more in Christ, that's why he was asking for the Father as what would be enough for them. As though to say, "We know you, of course, we can indeed see you; but we are still longing for something more. *Show us the Father, and that is enough for us*; after all, there will be nothing further for us to look for, when we have learned all about the Father." And Jesus, wishing to show that he is equal to the Father, said, *Have I been with you all this time, and you do not know me?*

Whoever sees me also sees the Father

3. (4) *Philip, whoever has seen me has also seen the Father* (Jn 14:9). What can it mean, *Whoever has seen me has also seen the Father*, but “You, though, don’t see me, because you think the Father is greater than I am”? “*Whoever has seen me has also seen the Father. You have good reason to suppose that the Father is enough for you; but it’s only because you don’t yet see me. Show us the Father, and he is enough for us. Really see me, and I’m enough for you.*” And yet he said this to someone who could see him; who could see, and couldn’t see; could see the form of a servant, couldn’t see the form of God. I mean, if he’d been able to see the form of God, he would there have seen the Son as equal to the Father; because while he was in the form of God, he did not consider it robbery to be equal to God (Phil 2:6).

It wasn’t robbery, because it was his nature. And the one for whom it was robbery, fell;³ and as well as falling, he also pulled down. The devil, you see, wanted to share that robbery with the man whom he pulled down; he wanted to have him as his fellow in sin, in order to have him as a companion in punishment. What else can be the meaning of what he said to the human couple, *Taste, and your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods* (Gn 3:5)? There’s robbery for you. Such pride is robbery, it’s the act of a usurper, not of a lawful claimant.⁴ The fact is, if we don’t push ourselves forward like usurpers, we shall be by grace what we shall never be by pride; grace, you see, is what is involved in this text: *I said, You are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High* (Ps 82:6). But, *I said*; it’s he who does what “I said.”

But what sort of gods can men be? What sort of gods? Equal to the angels of God.⁵ We’ve been promised that, don’t let’s look for anything more; because we won’t be equal to God, ever. But raised up to be equal to the angels, we shall see the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, just as we believe in them here on earth. So because it was hard for Philip to see what the Lord meant—after all, he was still being weighed down by the perishable body;⁶ what the apostle says hadn’t yet come about: *We see now through a mirror in a riddle, but then it will be face to face* (1 Cor 13:12)—so because it was hard for him to fix his thoughts on what he heard from the Lord: *Whoever has seen me has also seen the Father. . . .*⁷ Notice, by the way, that it’s not for nothing it says *has also seen the Father*. He didn’t say, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,” or he would be giving an opening to the Sabellians, who are also called Patripassians,⁸ who say the Father is the same as the Son; but when he wishes he is the Father, and when he wishes he is the Son. In order not to give this alternative error⁹ an opening, he didn’t say, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,” but *has also seen the Father*: thus both the Father and the Son. Father, therefore, and Son are two. Two what? If you ask me that—Father and Son are two.¹⁰

*Steering between the Scylla and Charybdis
of the Sabellians and Arians*

4. (3) Whatever you go on saying, I will go on answering the same.

“Father and Son, what are they? Gods?”

“No.”

“What are they then?”

“The one God.”

“I don’t understand,” he says. “The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father; they are two. The Father is God, the Son is God; and they are not two Gods? I don’t understand.”

So what am I to say to you when you don’t understand? Listen to the prophet: *Unless you believe, you shall not understand* (Is 7:9). You don’t understand in order to believe; on the contrary, you believe in order to understand. Faith is the work, understanding the reward. *Unless you believe, you shall not understand.*

But listen to the Lord himself, to learn what you should believe. *If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, since the Father is greater than I* (Jn 14:28). Now he’s positively ecstatic, this fellow who would understand. “There, that’s it,” he says; “now I understand; *the Father is greater than I.*”

“It’s the form of a servant speaking; look for the form of God. So this is what he meant by, *If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I*: What you see me as now, you are seeing me in what I am less. So since you see me in what I am less, if you love me, let me go to where I am equal.”

Are you surprised that the Son is less than the Father in the form of a servant? I’m telling you that he’s even less than himself, because *he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant* (Phil 2:7). But if you can see that it’s about him that it said *He has been lessened to a little less than the angels* (Ps 8:5; Heb 2:7); so now, if you have attached yourself to the form of a servant, don’t stop there; go a step higher, confess that Christ is equal to the Father. Why are you pleased to hear, *The Father is greater than I*? You should be more pleased to hear, *The Father and I are one* (Jn 10:30).

There you have the Catholic faith, navigating as it were between Scylla and Charybdis, as one has to navigate in those straits between Sicily and Italy; on one side ship-wrecking rocks, on the other a ship-swallowing whirlpool. If it runs on the rocks, it’s wrecked; if it’s drawn into the whirlpool, it’s swallowed up. So too with Sabellius: “He’s one,” he says; “they aren’t two, the Father and the Son.” Watch the ship being wrecked. Then the Arian: “They are two, one greater, the other less, not of equal substance.” Watch the whirlpool at work. Navigate between the two of them, and keep a straight course. It’s not without reason, you see, that Catholics are called orthodox; *orthodoxon* in Greek is “straight” in English. So if you steer a straight course, you don’t run onto Scylla or into Charybdis. So you, then, see you hold onto *I and the Father are one*.

Explaining I and the Father are one

5. (6) *I and the Father*; let Sabellius hear *are*, and the Arian hear *one*. By hearing *are*, you will save yourself from Scylla; by hearing *one*, you will hold yourself back from Charybdis. Say *are one*, and you will be navigating a straight course. There you are, we have heard *we are one*; one, because of the same substance; one, because not of different and unequal natures; one, because there is complete equality, no discrepancy of any kind, no diversity of any kind. So that's why *one*. Why *we are*?¹¹ Because Father and Son is what the one God is. So why "is" what the one God is, and not "are"?¹² Because the one God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, is one God; they are three, and it's one God. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father, the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. And all this is one God. Why one God? Because there is such infinite love there, such peace, such concord, no disharmony of any sort.

Let me now tell you something, which will help you to believe what you cannot possibly understand unless you believe. Tell me, how many souls were there, in the Acts of the Apostles, who believed when they observed the miracles of the apostles? I mean those Jews who had crucified the Lord, who brought along blood-stained hands, who had sacrilegious ears,¹³ whose tongues were compared to a sword: *Their teeth are weapons and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword* (Ps 57:5). And yet, because it was not in vain that Christ had poured out a prayer for them, nor in vain that he had said, *Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing* (Lk 23:34), out of their number a very great many believed and, as we can read, *There believed on that day*, as it says, *three thousand souls* (Acts 2:41). There you have thousands of souls, and there you have so many thousand souls;¹⁴ and yet the Holy Spirit came upon them, through whom charity is poured out in our hearts.¹⁵ And what does it say about all that great number of souls? *They had one soul and one heart* (Acts 4:32). So many souls, one soul, one not by nature but by grace.

If so many souls became one soul through that grace coming down from above, does it surprise you that Father and Son and Holy Spirit are¹⁶ one God? And so, my brothers and sisters, hold on to the faith in all its strength and integrity and catholicity. Whenever you hear or read in the scriptures a place where the Father is shown to be greater, remember "the form of a servant"; while when you read that Father and Son are one, believe the divinity of Christ.

How did Christ die?

6. (5) And if you are not capable of real thought about these things, at least hold on to faith; it can lead you through to the end, it makes your good works acceptable to God. *For everything that does not come from faith is sin* (Rom 14:23).

Someone says to you, "Did Christ die?"

Admit that he died, but in the flesh.

"And who was it that died?"

The only Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

“So godhead dies?”

No, godhead doesn't die.

“So Christ didn't die?”

Christ, who is God, died.

“How did Christ, who is God, die, if godhead doesn't die?”

In the same way as the apostles too died, in the flesh, not in the soul. So in the part in which the apostle died, in the flesh, in the same way, then, Christ died in the flesh. And yet it was Christ who died, even if it was in the part in which he could die, while in his godhead he couldn't die.

In the beginning, after all, *was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (Jn 1:1). Where's the possibility of death? Nowhere. In the beginning the Word wasn't made, as *in the beginning God made heaven and earth* (Gn 1:1). That's what the Word made, which was in the beginning.¹⁷ So, *the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*. Look for death there, you can't find it. There isn't any place for it, any source for it, anyone for it. There isn't any place for it, because he is not in the hands of the Jews; any source for it, because he hasn't got flesh and blood; anyone for it—he's God, equal to the Father. So what made it possible for him to die? *The Word became flesh, and dwelt amongst us* (Jn 1:14).

NOTES

1. The scholars are not all agreed on the day; some think the sermon was preached on the Wednesday, some on the Thursday of Easter week. It survives as a series of fragments, which have been shrewdly stitched together by Dom Morin, but were in a different order in the manuscript he was editing. That manuscript order is indicated by the numbers in brackets after the section numbers.

It is an interesting sermon on a point of trinitarian doctrine; the approach is rather different from that in which it is discussed in *On the Trinity*. See notes 10 and 12 below.

2. The Arians. They would deny that they thereby make two Gods, as he goes on to assert, because they refused to accord the Son and Holy Spirit the title of “true God.” For them only the Father was God in the full sense; the other two persons, being in their view creatures, were only divine in a lesser or “honorary” sense. But Augustine is making a good debating point.

3. The devil, who aspired to be equal to God; the texts of Is 14:12-14 and Ez 28:11-19 were generally interpreted as depicting the fall of Satan. Culmann, in an exegesis of Phil 2:5-11 more satisfactory than the traditional patristic one proposed by Augustine (see the appropriate chapter of his *Christology of the New Testament*), suggests that in this hymn Christ is being contrasted not with Satan but with Adam. See Sermon 117, note 18.

4. *usurpatio est, non dignatio*. I am not at all sure of what he means by *dignatio* in this context.

5. See Lk 20:36.

6. See Wis 9:15.

7. The sentence, interrupted once, never gets finished.

8. That is, “Father-suffered-ites.”

9. Alternative, indeed opposite to Arianism.

10. I find it most instructive that he doesn't say "Father and Son are two persons." There is no doubt at all that the word was already part of the Latin trinitarian vocabulary, and had been so for two centuries or so, ever since Tertullian (it would seem) introduced it. Augustine discusses it, and the problems it raises, at length in *On the Trinity*, VII, 7-11. But he clearly did not think it was a very useful term for explaining the mystery. And no doubt he was also aware that it had been regarded as suspect, its Greek equivalent *prosopon* even more so, because savoring of Sabellianism. This was because the primary meaning of both words was "theatrical mask," the mask which indicated the actor's role. So just as one actor can play several roles, wear several masks or *personae*; so God, it might be thought if one says three *personae*, can do as he wishes, now the *persona* of Father, now that of Son, now that of Holy Spirit.

The lesson for contemporary theologians of the Trinity should, to my mind, be plain: don't waste ink and time on discussing the meaning and value of the word "person" in the statement of the trinitarian dogma; or at least don't imagine that it explains anything, or in any way is essential to the statement of the dogma. It tells us nothing about the mystery, and is of no use whatever in trying to explain the mystery to the faithful.

11. In what follows he does not seem to answer this question very satisfactorily, because he is still preoccupied with "one." But at least the passage will show up the difficulties of trinitarian grammar; and the attempt to translate brings home to me how different the problems of Latin trinitarian grammar are from those of English trinitarian grammar! It all shows, you might say, how the divine mystery runs rings round the grammar, the articulation of any human language at all.

12. Though he is claiming to expound "are," *sumus* ("we are"), he suddenly shies away from it and substitutes "is," *est*; it's as though he were more afraid of the Arian Charybdis than of the Sabellian Scylla. As for the "trinitarian grammar or syntax," the previous sentence could, perhaps should, have been translated "Because Father and Son is one God." But while that may be good Latin, it's bad English. I cannot quite fathom why Augustine felt averse to saying "Father and Son are (*sunt*) one God," seeing that he is claiming to explain Jesus saying "I and the Father are (*sumus*) one."

Then at the end of the paragraph he rather swings in the opposite direction, and gives an "explanation" of the divine unity that the Arians would have been perfectly happy with, in terms of the unifying power of the infinite divine love; a moral unity, that is to say, instead of a metaphysical or ontological one in terms of substance; though he has used that word, just once.

13. What can this be referring to, I wonder? To their refusing to hear the truth when Pilate said *Behold your king, and Shall I crucify your king?* (Jn 19:14-15)?

14. The only point of this repetition that I can think of is to explain the ungrammatical phrase of his text, which talks of *tria millia animae*; *millia* being a neuter plural noun, treated as an adjective qualifying *animae*, a feminine plural noun.

15. See Rom 5:5.

16. The Latin says *est*; but again, I cannot bring myself to say in English, "Father and Son and Holy Spirit is one God."

17. Reading, *hoc fecit Verbum, quod erat in principio*, instead of the text's *hoc fecit Verbum. Quid erat in principio?*: "that's what the Word made. What was in the beginning?"

SERMON 229H

PREACHED ON THE TUESDAY AFTER EASTER

Date: after 412

*All we know in this region is being born and dying;
Christ brought us from his region the new thing of resurrection*

1. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the distinctive mark¹ of the Christian faith. After all, that he was born as a human being of a human being at a particular time, while being God from God, God apart from any time; so, that he was born in mortal flesh, *in the likeness of the flesh of sin* (Rom 8:3); that he endured infancy,² passed through boyhood, reached young manhood and lived through this until his death—all this was at the service of the resurrection. I mean to say, he wouldn't rise again unless he had died, unless he had been born; and thus the fact that he was born and died led up to the resurrection. Many people, both alien to us and godless,³ have believed that the Lord Christ was born a human being, of a human being. Although they didn't know that he was born of a virgin, still both friends and enemies have believed that Christ was born a man; both friends and enemies have believed that Christ was crucified and died; that he rose again, only his friends have known.

Now what's the reason for this? Well, that the Lord Christ, in being willing to be born and willing to die, aimed at rising again; it was precisely at that point that he defined faith for us.⁴ You see, in our race, that is to say the human race, there are two things we had always been familiar with: being born and dying. To teach us also what we were not familiar with, he took upon himself what we were. It was the normal thing in the earthly region, in our condition of mortality, it was absolutely the normal thing for people to be born and to die; so normal that it couldn't happen in heaven, never ceases on earth. To rise again, though, and to live for ever, who was ever familiar with that? This is the new thing that the one who came from God brought to our region. For the sake of humanity he became human; a great act of pity, the maker of humanity becoming human. It wasn't a particularly great thing for Christ to be what he was; but he wanted there to be a great thing, his becoming what he had made. What's that, his becoming what he had made? His becoming man, having made man. That is his divine pity.

The one disease there is no recovery from for anyone is that of being born. It is invariably mortal

2. Everything done in this life, in which people wish to be happy and can't⁵—what they want so eagerly, you see, is good, but they don't look for what they long for in its own proper region. Every particular kind of thing, you see, grows in its own region. Even on earth gold doesn't grow everywhere, nor does silver, nor does lead; with crops themselves, different ones are produced in different places; as each region favors or rejects them, some kinds of fruit are to be found in this place, others in that or the other, different sorts in different places, and nothing everywhere in all places—except being born and dying.

And yet this very matter of being born and dying is not true of the whole universe, but only of this lowest part of it. In the heavens, you see, there is no being born or dying, from the moment when everything there was established. The chief of all the angels could indeed fall from there, together with his companions; but instead of those angels who fell, human beings are going to come there, and fill up the place of those who fell.⁶ So, because the devil saw that man was going to ascend to where he himself had fallen from, he looked, and he looked askance;⁷ he fell and he pulled down. But what does it amount to, that the devil fell? The whole affair was overcome and remedied by one who did not fall, but came down. Man fell; God came down and became man.

So where being born and dying are to be had in plenty is the region of misery. People seek to be happy in the region of misery, they look for eternity in the region of death. The Lord says to us, Truth says to us, "What you are looking for is not here, because it doesn't come from here. It's a good thing you're looking for, something everybody wants; it's a good thing you're looking for, because it's good to live." But what we are born for is to die.⁸ Don't just consider what you want, but take a look at the condition you have come to.⁹ We are born only in order to die. The life we desire is not obtainable, as we are destined to die, and are thus more wretchedly miserable than ever. Because if we were dying and wanted to live, we would not be particularly miserable; but the reason we are particularly miserable is that we want to live and are compelled to die.¹⁰

Don't you realize that nobody can keep awake all the time, but everybody also wants to sleep? It's not against your will that you sleep; you just can't keep awake all the time; on the contrary, you also want to sleep. It's impossible for a person to exist without both waking and sleeping. Come now to the matter of life, and everybody says, "I want to live," and nobody wants to die. And since nobody wants to die, dying is thrust upon us. We do whatever we can, by eating, drinking, providing ourselves with the means of life, sailing, walking, running, taking care—we want to live.¹¹

You frequently meet people, alive after surviving many dangers; but let them stay the age they are, if they can, and never arrive at old age. A person gets through dangerous days and says, "I have escaped death."

In what way have you escaped death?

"A dangerous day has been got through."

It only means you've been given an extra day; you have lived one day more,

you've got one less left, by my reckoning. I mean, if you were going to live, for example, 30 years, once this day is done, it is withdrawn from the total of those you are going to live, and added to the weight of those ensuring you are going to die.¹² And yet they say, "Years are added to a person's life." Well, what I say is that they are subtracted from it; what I look at, you see, is the total that's left, not the one that has passed. You say they are added; why?

"Because the person who had lived for 50 years is now 51."

Fifty-one years in which he's living, or which he's going to live? For example, he was going to live 80 years; of that he has had 50, 30 remain. He's lived one more; the total he's lived is 51; for what he's going to live, 29 remain. One has been taken from this total, one added to that. But when it has been added, you don't keep the total it has been taken from. Fearfully, he lives another; 28 are left. He even lives a third; 27 are left. By continuing to live, he is deprived of the time to live; and life, by being spent, dwindles—and is no more; because there is no means at all by which the last day can be avoided.

*The resurrection of Christ is the thing that defines the Christian faith;
and it assures us of eternal life*

3. But along came our Lord Jesus Christ, and addressed us, as it were, as follows: "What were you afraid of, you people whom I created, and whom I did not abandon? O humanity, ruin was your doing, creation mine. O humanity, why were you afraid of dying? Look, I die; look, I suffer; so there, you shouldn't fear what you were afraid of, because I am showing you what to hope for." There you are, that's exactly what he did; he gave us a demonstration of resurrection for eternity. The evangelists pinpointed it in their writings, the apostles proclaimed it throughout the world. It was because of their faith precisely in the resurrection that the holy martyrs were not afraid to die—and yet they were afraid to die. They would more truly die, you see, were they to fear dying, and out of fear of death to deny Christ. Anyway, what does denying Christ mean, but denying life? What could be crazier than denying life by loving life?

So the resurrection of Christ is what determines and pinpoints our faith. Thus it is also written, in the Old Testament as well as the New, that we should repent and receive forgiveness of sins *in the man in whom he defined faith for all, raising him from the dead* (Acts 17:31).¹³ This is what defines our faith, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. You can live, provided you live; that is, you can live for ever, provided you live a good life. Don't be afraid of dying a bad death; be afraid indeed, but of living a bad life. What astonishing perversity! You are all afraid of what none of you can escape, and you don't do what you certainly can do. To avoid dying, you can do nothing; to live a good life, this you can do. Do what you can do, and you will have no reason to fear what you can't do.

Nothing, after all, is so certain for anyone and everyone as death. Start at the beginning. People are conceived; perhaps they come to birth, perhaps they don't. They are born; perhaps they grow up, perhaps they don't. Perhaps they go to

school, perhaps they don't; perhaps they marry, perhaps they don't; perhaps they'll have children, perhaps they won't; perhaps they'll have good ones, perhaps they'll have bad ones; perhaps they'll have good wives or husbands, perhaps bad ones; perhaps they'll be rich, perhaps they'll be poor; perhaps they will be of no account, perhaps they will be highly honored. Among all the other things, can this be said about them: "Perhaps they'll die, perhaps they won't"? So, every single person born falls into a disease, from which nobody born can escape. They all die of it, in the way in which one is in the habit of saying, "He's got dropsy, he's bound to die, nobody gets over it; he's riddled with elephantiasis, he's bound to die, nobody gets over it." So: "He's riddled with birth, he's bound to die, nobody gets over it."¹⁴

So then, because you are bound to die some time, seeing that nobody's life is even allowed to last very long, not even the life any decrepit old soul you like to think of has lived from infancy, the only thing left to do is to take refuge in the one who died for us, and by rising again gave us hope. Because in this life which we are running through now we can only die, and are unable to make this life we love so much an eternal one, we must take refuge in the one who did promise us eternal life.

I mean, just notice, brothers and sisters, what the Lord has promised us: life that is both eternal and blissful. This life, certainly, is miserable enough. Can anyone be unaware of that, can there be anyone who doesn't admit it? How much we have to put up with, how much we undergo in this life that we don't want to! Quarrels, disagreements, trials, mistaken judgments about one another, so that sometimes, unawares, we embrace an enemy, go in fear of a friend; where there's hunger, there's nakedness, there's cold, there's heat, there's weariness, there's illness, there's jealousy. Certainly this life is miserable enough. And yet, if this miserable life could be made eternal for us, wouldn't we just congratulate ourselves? Wouldn't we just say, "I want to be exactly as I am now, only I don't want to die"? If you now want to keep a life that is bad,¹⁵ what kind of person must he be who will give us a life that is both everlasting and blissful? But if you want to attain to a life that is everlasting and blissful, have a temporal life that is good.¹⁶ It's good in its work, it'll be good in its reward. But if you refuse to do the work, how can you have the face to seek the reward? If you can't say to Christ, "I have done what you commanded," how will you have the nerve to say, "Pay me what you promised"?

NOTES

1. *forma*; apparently in a rather Aristotelian sense, as that which makes anything the specific kind of thing it is.

2. Augustine had an extremely poor opinion of infancy as an acceptable period of life; it was something to be got through—helplessness, total dependency, inability to communicate, a scarcely human condition—as quickly as possible. See *Confessions* I, vi, 7-8.

3. In concrete terms, both Jews and pagan philosophers.

4. He is basing himself on Acts 17:31, Paul at the Areopagus in Athens; he will quote the text explicitly (in his differently punctuated version of it) in section 3 below.

5. He goes off on another tack, and never completes this sentence.

6. A very common development of the "Lucifer legend"; first that he, Satan, the devil, Lucifer, star of the morning, was the greatest of the angels; secondly that the human race was created in order to fill the gap left in heaven by the fall of the angels that sinned. The account of creation in Genesis 1 knows nothing whatever of the whole legend; the author, I am convinced, would have disapproved of it vehemently. It probably crept into Israelite folklore and eventually doctrine from Babylonian and Canaanite sources, and is indirectly represented in the Bible in Is 14:3-15 and Ez 28:12-19; both taken up in the book of Revelation—that is to say, the first part of the legend, the fall of Lucifer. As for the second part, humanity created as a replacement for the fallen angels, I can think of no canonical biblical basis for that. It could, perhaps, have developed as a result of speculation about the predestined number of the elect, Rv 6:11.

7. *Vidit et invidit*, he saw, and he grudged.

8. Augustine has forgotten, I think, that he had introduced the Lord as speaker, and is carrying on in his own person.

9. Of fallen nature, infected by original sin, and subject, as he says, to death.

10. It is almost impossible to fathom what he is trying to say here; I wonder if he could do so himself. All I can think of is that he had two kinds of wish to live in mind. The first is simply to go on living this mortal life, knowing that it is going to end sooner or later. In that respect we are not unduly miserable when we find ourselves dying. The second is the wish to live for ever, and when that is denied us by our being obliged to die, it makes us particularly, inconsolably miserable. Our mistake, of course, is to seek that kind of life in this region of mortality.

11. Here he drops the comparison of living/dying with waking/sleeping, never reaching the conclusion he presumably intended to draw from it, because he goes off on another tack, the inevitability of death, as distinct from the "value" of death as leading to real, eternal life.

12. See Sermons 38, 5; 299E, 1; 339, 1.

13. Why does he mention the Old Testament here? Nestlé's Greek New Testament refers in the margin of Acts 17:31 to Psalms 9:8, 96:13, and 98:9—all statements of the coming judgment, because Paul is telling the Areopagites to repent, since God has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in a man, etc. But the texts make no reference to resurrection. Augustine may have been thinking of passages like Ps 16:8-11, quoted by Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:25-28), or Hos 6:2. His text's rendering of Acts 17:31 is punctuated to give a different sense from that of the generally received translation.

14. See Sermon 77, 4.

15. By this he usually means morally bad; but in the context here he presumably also means bad because miserable. The moral sense, though, is not excluded, as he shortly goes on to speak of the morally good life.

16. See Sermon 16, 1-2.

SERMON 229I

PREACHED ON THE WEDNESDAY AFTER EASTER

Date: 400-410¹

May God pardon those who still think the Lord's resurrection was only spiritual, as he pardoned his apostles

1. The gospel readings about the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ are formally recited every year in a regular order. Today we heard how the Lord Christ showed his disciples his true flesh in which he had suffered and in which he rose again. They could hear him speaking, see him right there; and yet they also needed to touch him, since he said to them, *Touch, feel, and see that a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you can see that I have* (Lk 24:39). This was because they still doubted when they saw him, and thought they were seeing a spirit, not a body. So if there are any people who still think that the Lord's resurrection was not bodily, but only spiritual,² may God pardon them, as he also pardoned his apostles; but provided they don't hang on to their error, and that they change their way of thinking, because the apostles also heard—and changed.

And what extraordinary consideration it was on his part, that after showing himself to them right there in the body, he was still ready to confirm it for them from the truth of holy scripture. *These*, he said, *are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you*. What's this? Wasn't he with them at that moment, talking to them? So what's the meaning of *while I was still with you*? Obviously, while I was still with you as a mortal, such as you are. *These are the words that I spoke to you, that it was necessary for everything to be fulfilled that was written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures* (Lk 24:44-45). It's he, the very one who died for us, that to this very day opens up for us the writings of life.

*The apostles saw the head, believed about the body;
we see the body, believe about the head*

2. But let's see what he said to them. *That thus*, he said, *it was necessary for the Christ to suffer, and rise again from the dead on the third day, and for*

*repentance and forgiveness of sins to be preached in his name throughout all nations, with you beginning*³ from Jerusalem (Lk 24:46-47). There we have the disciples both seeing Christ after the resurrection, and hearing the holy scriptures from his own mouth that this was what was going to happen. We here haven't seen Christ present in the flesh; but every day, when they are read, we hear the very scriptures by which they too were confirmed in their faith.

And what did he tell them from the scriptures? *For repentance and forgiveness of sins to be preached in his name throughout all nations, with you beginning from Jerusalem.* The disciples couldn't see this; what they could see was Christ talking about the Church that was to be. And so when Christ said something they couldn't see, they believed him. They could see the head, they couldn't yet see the body; we can see the body, we believe about the head. They are two, husband and wife,⁴ head and body, Christ and the Church. He showed himself to the disciples, and promised them the Church; he has shown us the Church, and ordered us to believe about himself. The apostles saw one thing, they didn't see the other; and we too see one thing and don't see the other. Just as they, having the head there with them, believed about the body, so we, from having the body here with us, should believe about the head.

Or are we going to deny it? But truth cries out loud, and won't let us deny it. I mean, we can see the Church of Christ *from the rising of the sun to its setting, praising the name of the Lord* (Ps 113:3). *With you beginning*, he said, *from Jerusalem.* That's how it happened; because he said to them, *Stay here in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high*,⁵ because *I am sending you from my Father what I have promised* (Lk 24:49).

*Jews who had killed Christ pricked to the heart at Pentecost, and repented on the spot.
So they came to drink in faith the blood they had shed in fury*

3. And so, as they were staying in the city, on the day of Pentecost there came the Holy Spirit, filling the disciples; they spoke with the tongues of all nations. One person was speaking with the tongues of all nations, because the unity of the Church was going to come about in all nations.⁶ They were pricked to the heart at this miracle. The Jews who were listening, you see, were stunned, and believed; after all, they saw such a tremendous miracle performed by Peter in the name of the Christ whom they had killed with their own hands, and being pricked to the heart they repented on the spot.⁷ All their sins were forgiven them, even to the extent of the very deed being forgiven by which Christ had been slain. They were converted, I'm saying, even the very Jews who had shaken their heads in disbelief in front of the cross;⁸ now by believing they won the right to have Christ as their head, so that from then on their head wouldn't be shaken, because he is seated at the Father's right hand, and *will not be moved for ever* (Ps 112:6). He will never return to this life's miseries, never return to the cross, never return to death, but will continue in that state of real, true blessedness.

So they, who had killed Christ, heard and grieved; and the blood which they

had shed in their savage fury—and so had died—they now drank by believing—and so came to life again.⁹ The faithful understand what I have just said, and these neophytes, because they have already drunk it. So those of you who have not yet drunk should hurry up and drink, so that your minds may be opened; at the moment, you see, they are closed.¹⁰ And so, as it is written in the book called the Acts of the Apostles, which is read during these days, *They were pricked to the heart, and many thousands of people were added to Christ* (Acts 2:37.41).

The gospel spread, after Stephen's martyrdom, like fire spread from a bonfire

4. Then because of the needs of the ministry, the seven deacons were ordained, among whom Stephen stood out, full of the Holy Spirit. When they were ordained, Saint Stephen's spirit could not contain itself from preaching the truth.¹¹ He was bubbling over with fervor, sparkling, on fire, until the Jews, filled with jealousy in the hardness of their hearts, battered him to death with hard stones, and made a martyr for us, who set the standard for all martyrs.

And so, with Stephen killed, the Church which had been born in Jerusalem suffered persecution. So according to the Lord's promise, the foundation stones of the Church¹² started to be shifted from Jerusalem. A persecution broke out, and the brethren were scattered; because from the pile of wood on fire, burning sticks were scattered over the earth, and wherever they landed, they set it ablaze.¹³ In this way Judea was filled with the gospel, filled too was Samaria; and it went out to the nations, and reached the ends of the world. It was not by being plucked up by the roots, but by growing and spreading through the world, that we observe the gospel fulfilled.

So there you are, we can observe it; look, we hold to a faith that has spread throughout all nations, *with them beginning from Jerusalem* (Lk 24:47). Let them deny it who dare; it isn't my words striking their ears, but truth itself hitting the deniers in the eye, shutting their mouths; and so is fulfilled what is written: *That the mouths of those who speak iniquity have been stopped* (Ps 63:11).

NOTES

1. Both day and date are disputed; Poque thinks it was preached on the Monday of Easter week, between 400 and 410; Kunzelmann and Fischer agree with the manuscript title that it was preached on the Wednesday of Easter week, and assign it to 393-405. About the day I remain entirely neutral; but the lack of any attempt at stylistic elaboration leads me to agree, possibly, with Poque about the date. I say "possibly," because in note 11 below I give a reason for supposing an even later date, about 420.

2. A very common view today among very many Christians who find a bodily resurrection impossible to swallow. Augustine is at the very least reminding them that this puts them at odds with the mind of Luke; in fact he would very probably say that it calls in question their right to call themselves Christians.

3. This attempts to render a strange peculiarity of the Latin, which closely follows the Greek: "beginning," *incipientes* being the nominative plural of the participle, not a gerund.

4. *Sponsus et sponsa*, normally translated bridegroom and bride. But it is my guess that already in the Latin of Augustine's time the words could mean husband and wife, as their derivatives do in modern Romance languages, and as "spouse" does (when used) in English.

5. A free summary of Acts 1:4.8.

6. See Acts 2:1-13. Augustine seems to be assuming that Peter's speech, which followed the miracle of speaking with tongues, 2:14-36, was also spoken in tongues, or at least heard in all the languages of the nations.

7. See Acts 2:37.

8. See Mk 15:29.

9. While the next sentence shows that there is a reference here to their joining in the eucharist, he primarily means that their believing in Christ was a kind of drinking of his blood; see Jn 6:35.

10. These are the catechumens and the hearers; some of them, perhaps, being discreetly urged to give in their names for baptism at Pentecost.

11. See Acts 6:1-8. Augustine is alluding to the apostles saying that the seven were to be ordained to "serve tables" (6:2). Stephen, however, was so full of the Holy Spirit that he could not limit himself to that function, but joined in the ministry of the word. His dwelling like this on Stephen here, which is not really required of him by his text, may indicate an even later date for the sermon, after Stephen's relics had been discovered, and distributed all over North Africa; so, a date about 420.

12. The apostles.

13. See Sermon 116, 6.

SERMON 229J

PREACHED ON THE WEDNESDAY AFTER EASTER

Date: 417-418¹

*The error of the apostles in thinking the risen Christ was a spirit
is the central doctrine of the Manichees*

1. The Lord Christ was prepared to convince us of the certain truth of his resurrection by many and various² proofs, in order to build up faith and trust, and drive mistrust and faithlessness from our hearts, to remove in fact every possible doubt about his resurrection. It would have been insufficient to present himself to the eyes for seeing, if he hadn't also offered himself to the hands for touching. What many godless and heretical Manichees surmise and believe about Christ, that he wasn't real flesh, but a spirit having the appearance of flesh, not for instructing faith but for playing tricks on the eyes; so that he wasn't actually a man, but was thought to be one; wasn't actually flesh, but seemed to be so; so what the Manichees believe (and they have made a dogma out of it, and confirmed it as their error) was the first thought that came up into the minds of the apostles.

And those Manichees, indeed, believe Jesus never was a man; they are afraid of endowing the Word with flesh, and they are not afraid of blocking the truth with falsehood. He has true flesh, with which truth is to show up falsehood, and build up the truth in the hearts of us all. So they believed that the Lord Jesus Christ never was a man; the disciples, on the other hand, knew him as a man, with whom they had spent so much time. They had seen him walking, sitting, sleeping, eating, drinking; they knew all about him, they knew he had sat down, tired out, beside a well.³ From this long familiarity they knew he really and truly was a man; but after he had died, when were they ever to believe that what they had known could be resuscitated, as it had certainly been able to die? So he appeared to their eyes just as they had known him; and as they didn't believe that true flesh could rise from the tomb on the third day, they thought they were seeing a spirit. This mistake of the apostles is the particular doctrine of the Manichees.

*Christ has lost the whole fruit of his passion
if there's no truth in his resurrection*

2. When faced with these objections, though, they usually reply like this: "What's wrong with our belief, when we believe that Christ, who is God, was a spirit? We believe he was spirit, we don't believe he was flesh; spirit is better than flesh; we believe what's better, we decline to believe what's inferior about him. What are we doing wrong?" If there's nothing wrong with this little speech, let Jesus leave his disciples in this mistake. What's wrong with what they believed?⁴ Even the disciples believed Christ was a spirit; that is to say, they didn't think it was him, but a spirit. Let the Lord leave them alone, confirm that they did well to believe it. Finding them with a false opinion, let him refrain from teaching them the truth.

Listen to what's wrong with believing like that. Listen to the Lord. You think you're risking just a minor disease? Hear the doctor's judgment. The disciples thought they were seeing a spirit, and that's what you think too, my dear Manichee. The doctor visited the disciples then, and he discovered that they believed what you believe now. If he left them uncured, then by all means have no qualms about going astray; if, however, he was good enough to heal them, why do you so enjoy being ill? Listen to the Lord: *Why are you troubled, and why are thoughts coming up into your hearts?* (Lk 24:38). What sort of thoughts, clearly, but false ones, morbid, pernicious ones? Christ, you see, has lost the fruit, the whole return on his passion, if there's no truth in his resurrection.

Why are you troubled, and why are thoughts coming up into your hearts? As though he were saying, like a good farmer, "Let me find what I planted there, not thistles which I didn't plant. Faith came down into your hearts, because it comes from above; these thoughts, though, haven't come down from above, but have come up into your hearts like bad weeds." But he doesn't leave them there, he pulls out the misbegotten weeds, he cleans the field, sows good seed. After all, what does he mean by *Why are you troubled?* That they're troubled, not all in good order. *Why are thoughts coming up into your hearts? See my hands and my feet.* If "see" is not enough, *feel*; you don't believe your eyes, trust your hands. *Feel, and see that a spirit does not have bones and flesh, as you can see that I have* (Lk 24:39).

*Christ proved the reality of his bodily resurrection
by eating some baked fish—which represents the faith of the martyrs*

3. *And while they were still flustered for joy.* They were both rejoicing and doubting at the same time; both seeing and touching, and scarcely believing. What a tremendous favor grace has done us! We have neither seen nor touched, and we have believed. *But while they were still flustered for joy he said, Have you got here anything to eat?* Surely you can believe that I'm alive and well, if I join you in a meal.⁵ *They offered him what they had, a portion of grilled fish* (Lk 24:41-42). Grilled fish means martyrdoms, faith proved by fire. So why a portion? Because *if I hand over my body*, he says, so that I burn, but have no

charity, it is no use to me (1 Cor 13:3). So imagine a complete body, as it were, of martyrs; some suffer out of charity, others suffer out of boastfulness.⁶ Remove the boastfulness portion, offer⁷ the charity portion. That's the food for Christ, give Christ his portion. Christ loves the martyrs who suffered out of charity.

He ate, and it was he himself, the same who had been seen and hanged on the cross, the same who was being seen and touched then; it was to him the food was offered, he that was taking and eating it before his disciples' eyes; and still all this was not enough. Pardon me, my dear apostles, still hard to convince after all this. But their correction is our instruction; I want you to notice what the Lord did next, how he removed all possible ambiguities. He was seen, he was touched, he ate; it was certainly him.

It was necessary for everything to be fulfilled that was written in the law and the prophets and the psalms about me

4. And yet, in case he should seem in any way at all to have been playing little games with the human senses, he reached his hand out to the scriptures. Let the pagans say whatever they like:⁸ "He was a magician, he was able to make himself appear." Was a magician able, even before he was born, eh, to prophesy himself from the scriptures? Notice that what you are seeing was foreseen long beforehand, and what you now observe was previously foretold. *Listen, daughter, and see* (Ps 45:10). O holy Church, listen and see; listen to things foretold, see things fulfilled. It was your head who was trying to convince you, the Lord Christ; it was the head of the Church who was trying to convince you he was alive, real, whole, undeniable, and was leading you to the faith of believers. So what did he say to you from the scriptures? *Do you not know that it was necessary for everything written about me in the law and the prophets and the psalms to be fulfilled? Then he opened their minds, to understand the scriptures. And he said to them, that thus it was written, and that thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day* (Lk 24:44-46).

Look, it's happened, what was written; look, it's been fulfilled, what was foretold; look, it's been displayed, what was read. Listen to the words, look at the facts. The truth is complete, the faith sure; now at long last let heretical unbelief be done away with. Look, *Thus it was written, thus it was necessary*; what was? *For the Christ to suffer*—it was foretold; *to rise again from the dead on the third day*—it was foretold. The Jews had read these things; they continued to read, and didn't see them; and that there might be something for others to believe, they stumbled over the stone lying in front of them.⁹ *For if they had known, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory* (1 Cor 2:8); if they had never crucified the Lord of glory, the nations would not have believed in him, his birth and his passion.

So that is why these disciples, to distinguish them from the Jews, whose minds were closed so that they wouldn't understand the scriptures—the grace of the Lord made the distinction.¹⁰ Dear apostle, dear Peter, dear Matthew, dear

Thomas, all the rest of you, *who, after all, distinguishes you?* Perhaps you'll say, "It's my faith." I rather think, if he didn't give it to you, you wouldn't have any. It's your faith that distinguishes you; *but what have you got that you did not receive? But if you received it, why boast as though you had not received it?* (1 Cor 4:7). There you are, it's grace; there you are, he rose again; there you are, he showed himself to the eyes of the apostles, while he did not see fit to show himself to the eyes of the Jews. There you are, he offers himself to eyes to see, he offers himself to hands to handle. Even that's not enough. Read; he reminds you of the scriptures. Even that's not enough; he opens your mind, so that you may understand what you read.

The Church among all nations also foretold in the scriptures

5. The head convinced them about himself. What about us? What about the body? The head is Christ, the body is the Church. The apostles could see the head, but couldn't see the Church that was to be. Attend closely: they could see the head, touch the head, embrace the head, talk with the head; they couldn't see the Church that was to be. So what about us? He ought somehow or other to have named and expressed the bride as well as the bridegroom in that marriage contract. But because he has already indicated the bridegroom and kept quiet about the bride, there's only half a wedding. Let the heavenly vows be completed; the bridegroom has appeared, let the bride appear too; he present there and then, she still to come;¹¹ he in the resurrection, she in the preaching; let him be seen, her believed.

How was he seen? *See, that a spirit does not have bones and flesh, as you can see that I have* (Lk 24:39). Then he opened their minds: *it was necessary for the Christ to suffer, and to rise again on the third day* (Lk 24:45-46). Now we can see the Lord, now we know the Lord, we can touch, hear, believe him; what about the Church?

For repentance and forgiveness of sins to be preached in his name. Where? How far? Don't let a strange woman creep out here from a corner,¹² and substitute herself for your own true one. Where? How far?

Throughout all nations, with you beginning from Jerusalem (Lk 24:47).

There you are, you've heard the Church defined. When the disciples heard this, they couldn't see the Church throughout all the nations; they saw one thing, believed another; saw the head, believed about the body. We can see the body; let us believe about the head.

NOTES

1. Poque thinks it was preached on Easter Monday, and dates it 400-410. This later date is proposed by Fischer and Kunzelmann, and is to be preferred, above all for the reasons suggested in notes 4 and 12 below.

2. See Heb 1:1.

3. See Jn 4:6.

4. This change to past tense suggests that he and his congregation are not confronted with actual Manichees and their arguments there and then. The Manichees continued to exist, of course, throughout Augustine's life; but it was only during the early years of his ministry that they preoccupied him as an actual challenge and threat to the faith of his flock. They are brought into this sermon because of the text itself, since people knew about them, naturally. His dealing with their opinions does not militate against the later date suggested for this sermon.

5. A word play that cannot be reproduced in English: *Vel creditis quia vivo, si vobiscum convivo.*

6. He has the Donatist martyrs in mind, in particular fanatical Circumcellions (their strong-arm "fundamentalists"), who not only courted martyrdom, but also, if it failed to respond to their advances, inflicted it on themselves by jumping over cliffs.

7. Supplying a word like *porrige*. The Latin is evidently defective, reading merely *Jactantiae partem tolle, partem caritatis*: Remove the boastfulness portion, the charity portion. A copyist's eye, if he were copying from another manuscript and not from dictation—or the dictating reader's eye in the other case—could easily have jumped from the *p* of *porrige* to the *p* of *partem*.

8. He has dealt with Manichee ways of eliminating the resurrection. Now he deals with pagan ways; and he will conclude by dealing with Donatist ways, not of eliminating the resurrection, which they believed in, but of ignoring what Augustine saw as the inescapable consequence of it—the world-wide Catholic Church.

9. See Is 8:14.

10. An incoherent sentence in the Latin too.

11. The bride's privilege to be late has very august authority.

12. He is getting at the Donatists, of course, but so briefly, in the same sort of detached way as that in which he has dealt with Manichees and pagans, that it seems unlikely the sermon was preached when the conflict with the Donatists was in full swing; which is my main reason for siding with the later date suggested for the sermon, rather than the earlier 400-410.

SERMON 229K

PREACHED ON THE THURSDAY AFTER EASTER

Date: after 412

It is better to touch Christ by faith than in the flesh

1. It's right that you should be reminded of what you hear regularly every year. Just as it's not enough, you see, for what is written to be read only once, it's not enough either for what is not understood to be explained only once.¹ Those of you therefore who have kept in mind what you heard and understood, and remember it well, must listen patiently, while others too who have perhaps forgotten are being instructed, or those who possibly haven't heard are hearing it for the first time.

What's puzzling, you see, is why the Lord Jesus Christ said to the faithful woman, who was trying to get at the body of her Lord, which she hadn't been able to find in the tomb, *Stop touching me; for I have not yet ascended to my Father* (Jn 20:17). I mean, if he didn't want to be touched before he had ascended to the Father, he certainly hadn't ascended to the Father when he said to the disciples, *See my hands and my feet; feel and see* (Lk 24:39). He didn't want to be touched, but was willing to be felt. That's what raises the question that clearly needs to be solved. I mean, no one has had the nerve² to say, "He was willing to be touched by men before he ascended to the Father; but he was keeping himself to be touched by women after he had ascended to the Father." After all, when he ascended to the Father, or rather after he had ascended to the Father, has anyone ever touched him? So he kept himself to be touched by women, at a time when he couldn't even have been touched by men?

And yet because of his charity³ Saul the persecutor was not only touching but also ravaging him on earth, when he said from heaven, *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?* (Acts 9:4). The Lord Christ, you see, is both there at the Father's right hand, and toiling away here on earth. He's there, but his members are here. Up there he is the one who is going to judge the living and the dead, and he's the same one here in his own people, about whom he says, *When you did it for one of the least of mine, you did it for me* (Mt 25:40). So what's the meaning of *Stop touching me; for I have not yet ascended to the Father?* Christ is better touched in faith than in the flesh; touching Christ in faith, that really is touching him.

There was, in a word, that woman who was suffering from an issue of blood; she approached him with faith, and touched his garment with her hand, his divine greatness with her faith. And notice what touching really is; the Lord was then being jostled by the crowds, being touched by just one woman. You see, he said *Who touched me?* The disciples were astonished, because so many people were jostling him on all sides, and they answered, *The crowds are jostling you, and you say, Who touched me? And he said, Someone touched me* (Lk 8:43-48). Which means, if the crowds are jostling you, they aren't touching you? How did she touch you, apart from the fact that she believed?

*“Stop touching me; for I have not yet ascended to my Father” means
“Why look for my flesh, when you cannot yet grasp my divinity?”*

2. And right now, my dear brothers and sisters, Jesus is in heaven. When he was in the presence of his disciples, in his visible flesh, in his bodily bulk that could be handled and touched, he was in fact both seen and touched; but now, when he is seated at the Father's right hand, which of us is able to touch him? And yet woe to us, unless we do touch him by faith. We all touch him, all of us who believe. Certainly he's in heaven, certainly he's far away, certainly it's impossible to estimate what immensities of space separate him from us. Believe, and you touch him. What am I saying, you touch him? Because you believe, you have right with you the one about whom you believe it.

So if believing is touching, or rather if touching is believing, what's the meaning of *Stop touching me; for I have not yet ascended to my Father* (Jn 20:17)? What does this mean? “Why are you looking for my flesh, when you don't yet understand my divinity?” Do you want to know in what way this woman wanted to touch him? She was looking for him as if he were dead, not believing that he was to rise again; *They have taken my Lord from the tomb*, and she mourns for him as for a mere man. Oh, what touching that is! So because he could see that she was entirely preoccupied with the form of a servant, knew that she had no idea of the form of God in which he is equal to the Father,⁴ and neither believed nor understood it, he puts off her touching him in order to perfect her touching him. *Stop touching me*, he said; *for I have not yet ascended to my Father*. You're touching me before I ascend to the Father, and you believe in me only as a man; what use to you is what you believe? So let me ascend to the Father. I'm ascending for you to where I never left, if you believe I am equal to the Father. The Lord Jesus Christ, after all, did not descend from the Father in such a way as to leave the Father behind; because on the other hand his ascending from us does not mean he withdrew from us. As he was about to ascend, you see, and take his seat at the right hand of the Father such a long, long way away, he said to the disciples, *Behold, I am with you right up to the completion of the age* (Mt 28:20).

NOTES

1. See Sermons 243; 246, 3; also Discourses on John 121, 3. This is hardly one of his best treatments of this point. It is not notable for clarity, and those who hadn't heard him on the theme before would not have come away very much the wiser.

2. *audivit*; presumably a form of the perfect of *audeo*, I dare, not mentioned by Lewis & Short. The correct form is the deponent *ausus est*. It is possible that popular Latin had produced a "regular" form, *audui, audivit*, and that the copyist unthinkingly changed this into the more familiar *audivit*, which is, of course, the ordinary perfect of *audio*, I hear.

3. The Latin just says *propter caritatem*, and this should, from the purely grammatical point of view, be the charity of the subject of the sentence, Saul. But that hardly makes sense; so it has to be Christ's charity. The charity he means, presumably, is that which makes Christ identify himself with his members.

4. See Phil 2:6-7.

SERMON 229L

PREACHED ON THE THURSDAY AFTER EASTER

Date: after 412

*Look how the angels didn't show themselves to Peter and John,
and showed themselves to a woman*

1. From today's reading of the gospel we were given the account of the Lord's resurrection according to John, and we heard how the Lord was looked for by the disciples, and not found in the tomb, though it was the women who told them about this, not believing that he had risen, but that he had been stolen from the tomb. But that two of the disciples came, John the evangelist himself (he's meant, you see, by the one whom Jesus loved) and with him Peter, and that they went in, and saw the grave clothes only, but not the body—well, what does it say about John himself? If you noticed, *He entered*, it says, *and saw, and believed*. This *believed* that you hear isn't the praiseworthy sort of faith; after all, both true and false things can be believed. I mean if his faith had been the praiseworthy sort, or recommended to us where it's written, *he saw, and believed*, scripture wouldn't go on to say, *For he did not yet know the scriptures, that it was necessary for Jesus to rise again from the dead* (Jn 20:8-9).

So he saw and believed; so what did he believe? What did he believe, but what the woman had said, that the Lord had been taken away from the tomb? She had said, you see, *They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and I do not know where they have put him* (Jn 20:2). Those two ran, they went in, they saw the grave clothes alone, no corpse; and they believed that he had vanished, not that he had risen again. They saw he wasn't in the tomb.¹ The men believed he had been taken away, and went away; the woman stayed, and began to seek the body of Jesus with tears, began to weep at the sepulchre; they cared less, being the stronger sex, but having less affection. Woman was looking more for Jesus, because she had been the first to lose Jesus in paradise;² because it was through her that death had entered, she was looking for life more seriously than they were.

And yet for all that, how was she looking? As for the body of a dead man, not for the imperishability of the living God; because not even she believed that the reason the body wasn't in the tomb was that the Lord had risen. She went in

and saw the angels. Fancy that, the angels hadn't shown themselves to Peter and John, and they showed themselves to the woman! Undoubtedly, my dearest friends, what is being impressed on us here is that the weaker sex was more persistent in seeking him because it had been the first, as I said, to lose him. The angels see her, and say, *He is not here, he has risen* (Mt 28:6). She still stays there and goes on crying, still doesn't believe; she was assuming the Lord had vanished from the tomb. She also saw Jesus; she doesn't think it's Jesus, she thought it was the gardener, she's still demanding the body of a dead man. *If you, she says, have taken him, tell me where you have put him, and I will take him away* (Jn 20:15). What use to you is something you don't love? Let him be given to me, she says. If she was looking for a dead man like that, how can she have believed he was alive? After that the Lord calls her by her name. Mary recognized the voice, looked up at the Savior; and answered him as really now himself, *Rabboni, which means Lord* (Jn 20:16). The proper way to touch Christ is to touch by faith, like the woman with the issue of blood. Believe like that, and you have touched him

There's something greater which you don't realize

2. What's the meaning of what comes next: *Stop touching me; for I have not yet ascended to my Father? As for Go and tell my disciples, I am ascending to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God* (Jn 20:17), this surely raises no problem. *I am ascending to my Father*, because I am the only-begotten Son;³ *and to your Father*, because you have been adopted, and you all say together, *Our Father, who art in heaven* (Mt 6:9). *And to my God and to your God*. Not mine in the same way as yours; *my God*, you see, because I have become man; *your God*, because you are always men. It is in this respect, you see, that the Father is Christ's God, because he has become man; by the same token he is his own God, God of the creation of the only-begotten Word. Inquire of the psalm: *You, from my mother's womb, are my God* (Ps 22:10); before my mother's womb, my Father; from my mother's womb, my God. So there's no problem here.

That other thing does worry one a little, because of those whose understanding of it is less than perfect; what can it mean, *Stop touching me; for I have not yet ascended to the Father?* Recall, when he appeared to his disciples, and they thought he was a spirit, what he said to them. It was read yesterday. *Why are you troubled, and why are thoughts coming up into your hearts? See my hands and my feet; touch and see* (Lk 24:38-39). To men he said *Touch*, before he ascended to the Father; and a woman was not to touch, except when he had ascended to the Father? So what are we to understand? Far be it from us to understand it like this:⁴ Mary was looking for a body to see; we, in order to understand, should be desiring his spirit. *Stop touching me; for I have not yet ascended to the Father*. What does *Stop touching me* mean? Don't simply believe this far; don't get stuck at the man. There's something greater, which you don't realize. You see me, humble on earth; you touch me, and you remain

on earth. Touch me at a higher level, believe in me at a higher level, believe in the only-begotten Son equal to the Father. You see, when you have realized that I am equal to him, that is when, for you, I have ascended to the Father.

Now to touch with the heart means to believe; because that other woman, who touched the hem of his garment, touched with the heart, because she believed. Well anyway, he felt her touching him, and he didn't feel the crowd jostling him. *Someone touched me*, said the Lord: *touched me*, believed in me. And his disciples, not understanding what *touched me* really meant, said, *The crowd is jostling you, and you say, Who touched me?* (Lk 8:45-46). "Don't I know what I mean, when I say *Who touched me?* The crowd is jostling, faith is touching."

So may Christ ascend for us, and may we touch him, which we will do if we believe in him, that he is the Son of God, eternal, co-eternal, not from the time he was born of the virgin, but eternal. Us too, after all, he is going to make eternal, not that we always have been, but that we always shall be. He, though, is co-eternal, equal to the Father, without time, before all times, all times being made through him; before the day,⁵ day from day, having established the day. Believe like that, and you have touched. Touch like that, in order to cling to him. Cling like that, so as never to be separated, but to continue with him in the greatness of his divine being, who died for us in the weakness of his human being.

NOTES

1. Reading *Viderunt absentem de sepulcro* instead of . . . *ablatum de sepulcro*. He goes on to say that they believed he had been *ablatum*, taken away, something they inferred from his simply not being there. So I infer that the first *ablatum* is just a scribal error for *absentem*—or possibly for *absens*, if Augustine was thinking of it, the body, neuter, and not of him, masculine, being the object of the sentence.

2. See Gen 3:1-6.

3. I propose a slightly different, and I like to think a rather more nuanced, interpretation of *my Father and your Father*; that Christ is speaking here as man, just as he is in the next phrase; but he is speaking precisely as *the Christ*, the Messiah, the son of David, who while very definitely a human being, is also Son of God in a special way that distinguishes him from all other Israelites, members of God's people, who are also sons (and daughters) of God. In a word, I suggest that here Christ is calling God his Father from his messianic (and thus human) sonship, not his divine sonship, in line with Pss 2:7, 89:26-27, which derive from the master messianic text, 2 Sam 7:8-16, especially verse 14. See my translation of Augustine's *The Trinity*, Introduction, section 39.

4. The Latin text rather absurdly punctuates with a full stop here: "Far be it from us to understand." Can you imagine Augustine, of all people, ever saying such a thing? This naturally upsets the Italian translator, who surmises that a "not" has fallen out. But in fact the next sentence shows the kind of understanding he wishes us to avoid, one that would land us in the mistake of the disciples in the Lucan passage, the mistake of the Manichees pilloried in Sermon 229J, 1. If any word has fallen out, I suggest it is *sic: Absit a nobis, ut sic intelligamus*, which is what I have in fact translated, to make his meaning absolutely clear. But he need not actually have spoken it; his phrasing could have indicated he was pointing to the next sentence.

5. See Ps 110:3.

SERMON 229M

PREACHED ON THE FRIDAY AFTER EASTER

Date: 412¹

The difference between the two catches of fish recounted in the gospels

1. Your graces are aware that these readings from the holy gospel are solemnly recited at this time every year, as witnesses to the resurrection of the Lord. So just as the reading refreshes the memory, in the same way the explanation of the reading can refresh the memory. So what I am going to say, with the Lord's help, is what you are used to hearing every year. But if you have to brush up on the reading in your memory, though it can be read any other time in the gospel, how much more should you do it with the sermon, which you only hear once a year?²

The Lord appeared to his disciples after his resurrection by the sea of Tiberias, and found them fishing, though they had caught nothing.³ While fishing at night, they caught nothing; day dawned, and they made a catch; because they saw Christ the day, and at a word from the Lord they cast their nets, and made a catch. Now we find two catches of fish made by Christ's disciples, at a word from Christ; the first one when he chose them, and made them apostles;⁴ the second one now, after he had risen from the dead. Let's compare them, if you agree, and take careful note of the differences between them; it's got a lot to do, after all, with the consolidation of our faith.

On the first occasion then, when the Lord came across the fishermen whom he hadn't found previously, they had also caught nothing all night, worked hard without result. He ordered them to pay out the nets. He didn't say, on the right, he didn't say, on the left, but simply said, *Pay out the nets* (Lk 5:4). They paid them out—with the result that they loaded two boats, so that they were practically sinking with the vast number of fish; so vast a number of fish, what's more, that the nets were breaking. That's how that catch of fish went; so how about this one? *Cast the nets*, he said, *on the right hand side* (Jn 21:6). Before the resurrection the nets were let out all over the place; after the resurrection the right side is chosen. Next, in the first catch of fish, the boats are overloaded, the nets are breaking; in this last one after the resurrection, there is no overloading of the boat, nor breaking of the seine. When they fished the first time, the number

of fish caught isn't mentioned; this time after the resurrection a definite number of fish is mentioned.

So let us carry on with the first, in order to arrive at the last. What's that I said, "Let us carry on with the first"? Why, here are the nets, the nets of the word, the nets of preaching, here are the nets. Let the psalm tell us: *I proclaimed and I spoke; they were multiplied beyond counting* (Ps 40:6). It's plain as a pikestaff that it's happening now; the gospel is being proclaimed, Christians are multiplying beyond counting. If they all lived good lives, they wouldn't be overloading the boat; if they weren't divided by heresies and schisms,⁵ the net wouldn't be breaking. Why, though, were there two boats in the first catch of fish? Think, brothers and sisters; they are those two walls, the circumcision and the uncircumcision, which converge on the cornerstone, and achieve the kiss of peace.⁶ But with the last catch of fish there is perfect unity; it's all on the right side, you see, there's nothing on the left, nothing sinister about it.⁷

That is the holy Church, which exists now in the few, toiling away among the evil many; which will be realized in that certain, definite number, in which there is now no sinner to be found; it's on the right, you see, with nothing of the left, nothing sinister about it. And they will be big fish, because they will all be immortal, all destined to live without end. What can be bigger than what has no end? And the evangelist made it his business to give your memory a flash-back to the first catch of fish. Why else did he add, after all, *And though they were such big fish, the nets were not torn* (Jn 21:11)? As though to say, "Remember that first catch of fish, when the nets were torn." This will be the kingdom of heaven, no heretics will be barking, no schismatics setting themselves apart. All will be inside, will be in the peace.⁸

*The number 17, the key to the number 153,
means the fulfillment of the law by the gifts of the Holy Spirit*

2. And those "all," how many will they be? Will there only be 153 of them? God forbid, God preserve us! That I should say that even in this congregation, standing in front of me now, there should be as few as that who will get into the kingdom of heaven, where there will in fact be thousands,⁹ countless thousands, whom John saw, clothed in white robes. This is what he said: *From every tribe and tongue they were coming, a number which nobody can count* (Rv 7:9). So what's the meaning of this number? I'm teaching some of you, reminding others; let those who haven't heard it before learn it; those who have heard it and have forgotten recall it; while those who retain what they have heard in their memory can have it confirmed by my reminder.¹⁰

To work this number out, we begin at 17, 10 and 7; it's the mark of all the saints, all the faithful, all the just who will be in the kingdom of heaven. 10 and 7; 10 because of the law, 7 because of the Spirit of grace. Impose the law: nobody carries it out, nobody fulfills it. Add the assistance of the Spirit; what is commanded is done, because God is assisting. What does the law say? *You shall not covet* (Ex 20:17). *Sin, seizing its opportunity, deceived me through the com-*

mandment, he says, and through it slew me (Rom 7:7.11); and, Law crept in, that transgression might abound (Rom 5:20). Add the Spirit: The fullness of the law is love (Rom 13:10). But where does love come from? The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom 5:5).

That the Holy Spirit is suggested by the number 7 anybody knows who can read. But listen anyway, those of you who read carelessly, or perhaps can't read. This is how God presents the Holy Spirit through the prophet Isaiah: *The Spirit, he says, of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and fortitude, of knowledge and piety, the Spirit of the fear of God (Is 11:2-3).* This is the sevenfold Spirit who is also called down upon the newly baptized.¹¹ The law is the decalogue; the ten commandments, you see, were written on tablets, but stone ones still, because of the stubborn hardness of the Jews. After the Spirit came, what does the apostle say? *You yourselves are our letter, not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not on tablets of stone, but on the fleshly tablets of the heart (2 Cor 3:2-3).* Take away the Spirit, the letter kills, because it finds the sinner guilty, doesn't set him free. That's why the apostle says, *For we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as coming from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of the new covenant, not in the letter, but in the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit brings to life (2 Cor 3:5-6).* So add seven to ten, if you wish to fulfill all justice.¹² When you are commanded by the law to do something, ask the Spirit to help you.

How the number 17 is related to the number 153 of the fish caught

3. We have been drawing your attention to ten and seven, 17; but what a long way that is from 153! Many of you, however, know what I am going to say; those who do must put up with the delay. When two people are walking along the road, one quick and one slow, it's in the power of the quick one for them to walk along together, if he waits for the other. So the one who knows what I am going to say is the quick walker; but he should wait for his slower companion, until he too is informed about the 17. You get 153 if you count the 17 in such a way, that you begin with 1 and add all the other numbers, until you reach 17. Well, if you just start saying "One, two three, four" you reach ten—and you won't find on your fingers any more than ten. But if you count like this: 1 and 2, that's now 3; and 3, it's now 6; and 4, it's now 10; and 5, it's now 15; and 6, it's now 21; and 7, it's now 28; and 8, it's now 36; and 9, now makes 45; and 10, it's now 55. There you are, we're now getting closer, and we've some hope of getting there, because we have got so far. So add 11, it makes 66; add 12, it makes 78; add 13, it makes 91; add 14 as well, it makes 105. Now the slow ones are hard on the heels of the quicker ones. So add 15 too, it makes 120; add 16, it makes 136; add 17, it makes 153. So that's where all of them will be who run at the rate of 17, who carry out the law of God with the help of the Holy Spirit.¹³

NOTES

1. All are agreed upon this being roughly the date of the sermon; Kunzelmann makes it very precisely 19 April 412. Whether that was the Friday after Easter that year, I do not know. If it was, then presumably he is right; it is unlikely to have been so again in the three or four years before and after that date.

2. A nice little introduction to a sermon whose content most of them must have known almost by heart. Compare Sermons 248-252.

3. See Jn 21:1-14.

4. See Lk 5:4-11.

5. An incoherent clause in the Latin: *si haereses et schismata non dividerentur*. One expects *non dividerent* in the active voice—if heresies and schisms did not divide them. But then he makes (presumably) the Christians the subject of the passive *non dividerentur*. One could, at a pinch, regard *haereses et schismata* as accusatives of respect; which in effect I have done in my translation.

6. See Eph 2:14-17; Mk 12:10.

7. Now he is really mixing his symbolisms! There was nothing sinister, “left-handed,” about Christ making of the two peoples, Jews and Gentiles, one; nothing to detract from unity in their having been two before they were united. The corresponding point, in any case, in the second story is that there was only one boat, representing unity.

He goes on, of course, in the next few sentences to elaborate on the meaning of right and left. His left-handed translator simply wishes to enter a mild protest in the name of Left-handers Lib. At least, in English, we keep the Latin for the pejorative overtones of lefthandedness; and so are not constantly bugged by the thought of the left (which we drive on, anyway) being sinister.

8. “Peace,” like “unity,” being one of his names for the Catholic Church.

9. We would say “millions.” But thousands was the biggest round number in the Latin language of number. Greek went up to ten thousand, myriads.

10. I have emended the text of this last clause slightly, especially the punctuation. As it stands, it runs, *qui tenent, in memoriam, quod audierunt, me commemorante firmentur*; which literally translated is: “let those who retain, into memory, what they have heard, me reminding be confirmed”; rearrange as you please. I simply emend *in memoriam* to *in memoria*, and delete all the commas but one, reading: *qui tenent in memoria quod audierunt, me commemorante firmentur*.

11. In the rite of confirmation, presumably.

12. See Mt 3:15.

13. Augustine has recognized in 153 what is known as the “triangle” of 17—triangle, I imagine, because roughly half the square, bisected on its diagonal. The triangle of any number can be ascertained by this formula:

$$\frac{x^2 + x}{2} = \text{triangle of } x$$

I understand it is mathematically very uninteresting. But in Augustine’s symbolic arithmetic it was very interesting indeed. And to support him in this particular exegesis, and lend weight to the idea that it may well be true to the mind of the evangelist, Austin Farrer, in his book on the Apocalypse *A Rebirth of Images*, suggests convincingly that the river of life, Rev 21:1, seen issuing from the throne of God, should be envisaged as starting from the top corner of the four-square heavenly

Jerusalem (thought of as diamond shaped, and therefore standing on its point), and flowing along its diagonal. Now the city is 12 square; and the diagonal, or hypotenuse, of 12 is, as near as makes no difference, 17.

SERMON 229N

PREACHED ON THE SATURDAY OF THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: after 410

Christ's questions to Peter about whether he loved him are addressed to us as well

1. Here is the Lord, again appearing to the disciples after the resurrection, and questioning the apostle Peter; and he obliges him three times to confess his love, because three times he had denied him through fear. Christ rose again in the flesh, and Peter in the spirit; because when Christ died in his passion, Peter died by his denial. Christ the Lord was raised from the dead; out of his love he raised Peter. He questioned him about the love he was confessing,¹ and entrusted him with his sheep. After all, what benefit could Peter confer on Christ, by the mere fact of his loving Christ? If Christ loves you, it's to your advantage, not Christ's; and if you love Christ, it's to your advantage, not Christ's. And yet Christ the Lord wanted to indicate in what way people ought to indicate that they love Christ, and he made it plain enough by entrusting him with his sheep. *Do you love me? I do. Feed my sheep* (Jn 21:15-17). All this once, all this a second time, all this a third time. Peter made no other reply than that he loved him; the Lord asked no other question but whether he loved him; when he answered, he did nothing else but entrust his sheep to him.

Let us love each other, and we love Christ. Christ, you see, while always God, was born a man in time. As a human being born of a human being, he appeared as a man to men; he performed many miracles, as God in man; he suffered many evils, as man from men; he rose again after death, as God in man. He conversed for forty days on earth as man with men; before their very eyes he ascended into heaven, as God in man, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. All this we believe, we can't see; and we are commanded to love Christ the Lord, whom we can't see; and we all shout and say, "I love Christ." *If you do not love the brother whom you can see, how can you love the God whom you cannot see?* (1 Jn 4:20). By loving the sheep, show the love you have for the shepherd; because the very sheep themselves are members of the shepherd. In order that the sheep might be his members, he was prepared to be a sheep; that the sheep might be his members, *like a sheep he was led to the slaughter* (Is

53:7); that the sheep might be his members, it was said of him, *Behold the lamb of God, behold the one who takes away the sins of the world* (Jn 1:29). But there's tremendous courage in this lamb. Do you want to know how much courage this lamb showed? The lamb was crucified, and the lion was conquered. Just observe and consider with what power Christ must govern the world, seeing that by his death he conquered the devil.

*The keys entrusted to Peter are also held
by all bishops, and even by all the faithful*

2. So let us love him, let there be nothing dearer to us than he. So do you imagine that the Lord is not questioning us? Was Peter the only one who qualified to be questioned, and didn't we? When that reading is read, every single Christian is being questioned in his heart. So when you hear the Lord saying *Peter, do you love me?* think of it as a mirror, and observe yourself there. I mean, what else was Peter doing but standing for the Church? So when the Lord was questioning Peter, he was questioning us, he was questioning the Church.

I mean, to show you that Peter stood for the Church, call to mind that place in the gospel, *You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the underworld shall not conquer her; to you will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven* (Mt 16:18-19). One man receives them; you see, he explained himself what the keys of the kingdom mean: *What you all bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what you all loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven* (Mt 18:18).² If it was said to Peter alone, Peter alone did this; he passed away, and went away;³ so who binds, who looses? I make bold to say, we too have these keys. And what am I to say? That it is only we who bind, only we who loose? No, you also bind, you also loose.⁴ Anybody who's bound, you see, is barred from your society; and when he's barred from your society, he's bound by you; and when he's reconciled he's loosed by you, because you too plead with God for him.

May Christ's love lead us all to where there are no more tears

3. We all love Christ, you see, we are his members; and when he entrusts the sheep to the shepherds, the whole number of shepherds is reduced to the body of the one shepherd. Just to show you that the whole number of shepherds is reduced to the one body of the one shepherd, certainly Peter's a shepherd, undoubtedly a pastor; Paul's a shepherd, yes, clearly a pastor; John's a shepherd, James a shepherd, Andrew a shepherd, and the other apostles are shepherds. All holy bishops are shepherds, pastors, yes, clearly so. And how can this be true: *And there will be one flock and one shepherd* (Jn 10:16)? Then if *there will be one flock and one shepherd* is true, the innumerable number of shepherds or pastors must be reduced to the body of the one shepherd or pastor.

But that's where you are too; you are his members. These members, when

the head cried out for his members, were being trampled on by that Saul who was previously a persecutor, afterward a preacher, breathing out slaughter, putting off faith. The whole force of his attack crumbled at a single utterance. What utterance? *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?* (Acts 9:4) Could Saul so much as throw a stone at heaven, where Jesus is seated? Granted, for the sake of argument, that Saul was in the crowd when Jesus was hanging on the cross; granted that Saul too said with the crowd, *Crucify him, crucify him* (Lk 23:21); and that he was among those who were shaking their heads in mockery, and saying, *If he is the Son of God, let him come down from the cross* (Mt 27:40). But what could he do to him when he was seated in heaven? What harm could words do him, what harm yelling, what harm the cross, what harm the spear? Nothing could be done to him now, and yet he cried out “You are persecuting me.”

When he cried out “You are persecuting me,” he was indicating that we are his members. And so may the love of Christ, whom we love in you, the love of Christ, whom you love in us, lead us all, among our trials, our temptations, our toils, our sweat, our anxieties, our misfortunes, to where there’s no toil, no misfortune, no groans, no sighs, no vexations; where nobody’s born, nobody dies, nobody has to fear the wrath of the mighty man, all being protected by the countenance of the Almighty God.

NOTES

1. I think this is what it must mean: *Interrogavit confitentis amorem*—a very condensed phrase, literally, “he questioned the love of him confessing”; though *amorem* could also be the object of *confitentis*: “he questioned -? of him confessing love.”

2. The “you” of this second quotation is in the plural, and comes from two chapters later, where Jesus is addressing all the disciples. Augustine’s interpretation of the Petrine text in the light of this more general one, and his idea of Peter here standing for all Christians and all pastors (an idea he inherited from Cyprian), is an interesting variation on the conventional Catholic interpretation of Peter as, to put it crudely but simply, the first pope, and the use of these texts in support, exclusively, of papal authority.

3. *Obiit et abiit.*

4. “We” and “you” in this passage mean “we clergy”—possibly “we bishops,” though it is unlikely any other bishops were present—and “you laity.” But the value of the whole passage lies in showing how Augustine, while making no bones about the hierarchical organization of the Church and his own authority as a bishop, still acknowledges a real authority in all the faithful. He is certainly no patron of clericalism, of the monopoly of authority in the Church by the clergy. We have seen this in other sermons; see, in particular, Sermon 23, notes 5 and 7.

SERMON 2290

PREACHED ON THE SATURDAY OF THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: 422¹

Peter's threefold confession of love makes up for his threefold denial

1. You have heard Peter's confession when the Lord questioned him, just as you heard his denial when the maid frightened him. When he was too full of himself, you see, he was told, *You will deny me* (Mk 14:30); when he was full of affection, he was asked *Do you love me?* (Jn 21:16). What made the apostle Peter stagger, after all, was his being too sure of the strength of his own spirit. The psalm, though, had long ago said, *Those who trust in their own strength . . .*² (Ps 49:6). So Peter had turned out rather like that man of whom we sing in the psalm, *I said in my abundance, I shall not be shaken for ever* (Ps 30:6). In his abundance he had said to Christ, *I am with you to the death* (Lk 22:33). The Lord, though, like an experienced doctor, knew better what was going on in the sick man than the sick man did himself. Doctors do for the indispositions of bodies what the Lord can also do for the indispositions of souls. After all, let me ask you why you think that a sick person should expect to hear from the doctor what's going on inside him. I mean, he's quite capable himself of knowing what pains he's suffering; but whether they are dangerous, and what's causing them, whether he can or cannot get over them—well, the doctor feels his pulse, and himself tells the patient what's going on in the patient.

So when the Lord said to blessed Peter, *Three times you will deny me* (Mk 14:30), he was taking the pulse of his heart. Lo and behold, what the doctor foretold came about, and what the sick man was so sure of turned out to be untrue. There in the same psalm, you see, the Holy Spirit continues: *I said in my abundance, I shall not be shaken for ever*, as though too sure of the strength of his own spirit; he added straightaway: *Lord, in your good will you granted strength to my rank; you turned your face away, and I became dismayed* (Ps 30:7). What has he said? "Whatever I had, I had from you, and I thought it was from myself. You turned your face away, you took back what you had given me, and I became dismayed. I discovered who I really was, because you had withdrawn."

So the Lord, to make Peter healthily humble, abandoned him for a time; and

yet, when he looked round at him, that's when he burst into tears. That, at any rate, is what you have in the gospel. After he had made his three denials, and what the Lord had foretold came true, what does the text say? *The Lord looked round at him, and Peter remembered.* If the Lord had not looked round, Peter would have totally forgotten. *The Lord looked round at him, and Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, Before the cock crows, three times will you deny me. And going outside, he wept bitterly* (Lk 22:61-62). So to wash away the sin of denial, Peter needed the baptism of tears; but where would he get this from, unless the Lord gave him this too? That's why the apostle Paul gave this advice to his people about those with deviant opinions, and about how they should deal with them: he said, *With gentleness correcting those who have deviant opinions, in case perhaps the Lord may give them repentance*³ (2 Tm 2:25). So even repentance is a gift from God. The heart of the proud is hard ground; it is only softened for repentance if it is rained on by God's grace.

Let us congratulate the apostle Peter

2. So now it's already after the Lord's resurrection, and Peter is being questioned. His confession is being elicited, his passion predicted; his charity is being ascertained, his courage assured. Now after the resurrection the Lord says to him, *"Peter, do you love me more than these? You, the one who denied me, do you love me? You have now been reassured; you see me alive, having seen me dying, when you were afraid of dying. Look, I'm alive, look, here I am; why were you afraid of dying? When you denied me, you certainly didn't lose me. So, do you love me? Because here I am."*

And he answered, *"Lord, yes, you know that I love you (Jn 21:15). Why ask me what you know? You knew, when you told me beforehand I was going to deny you; you knew about me what I didn't know myself; and don't you know what I do know? I mean, I can see in my heart that I love you, but you can see it too. After all, you can't fail to see love in the present, when you were able to see fear in the future."*

And again the Lord knows, and questions him; and again, as he asks the same question, Peter makes the same reply. And the Lord asks the question a third time, so that the threefold denial may be wiped out by a threefold confession. Let us congratulate the apostle: *He was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found* (Lk 15:24.32).

Feed my sheep, but remember they are mine, not yours

3. He is being armed for weightier and greater matters; he is told *Feed my sheep*; a task which was certainly going to mean danger for the flesh, glory for the spirit. How much, I mean, he was going to suffer for the name of Christ, by feeding the sheep of Christ! *Feed, my sheep, feed my lambs* (Jn 21:17.15). I mean, if you love me, what present are you going to give me? The prince of pastors made him a pastor, so that Peter would feed Christ's sheep, not his own.

There were some people, you see, who wanted to be the apostles' scholars, and they are recalled by the apostles themselves to a sounder state of mind. They were Christ's sheep, and they wanted to be men's; and some were saying, *I belong to Paul; I though belong to Apollos; while I belong to Cephas*; there were sheep among them who did acknowledge the Lord: *I though belong to Christ* (1 Cor 1:12). But Paul knew very well that Christ had entrusted the apostles with his own sheep, and that they didn't belong to himself, and he repudiated this kind of ownership for himself; he confesses he is not the owner, not the lord, so that he might remain with the Lord. *Was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul?* (1 Cor 1:13). You're his sheep, you don't know whose sheep you are. Read the stamp you were sealed with.⁴

Feed my sheep. Why? Because you love me, because you are devoted to me, I am committing my sheep to you. Feed them, but remember they're mine. Heretical leaders, though, wish to make their own the sheep that are really Christ's; all the same they are forced, willy-nilly, to set the stamp of Christ on them; to make them their own private flock, and yet to register them in the Lord's name. But what does divine scripture say to such people in the Song of Songs? You see, the bridegroom is addressing the bride, Christ the Church, and saying, *Unless you recognize yourself, O beautiful among women.* What's *beautiful among women*? Catholic among heresies. Notice what a stern warning he's giving. Unless you recognize yourself, whose you are, what you believe, who you belong to, how far and wide you have spread, I'm throwing you out: *Go out, you.* What's *Go out, you*? What John says in his letter: *They went out from us, but they were not of us* (1 Jn 2:19). *Go out, you, in the tracks of the flocks*; not in the tracks of the shepherd, but in the tracks of the flocks; following in the footsteps of men, not of Christ. *And feed your goats*; not, like Peter, my sheep. And feed your goats where? *In the tents of the shepherds* (Sg 1:8); divided, in the tents of the shepherds, not in the tent of the shepherd. *I have other sheep, which are not from this sheepfold; I must bring them along, and they will hear my voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd* (Jn 10:16).

Augustine announces to his people the conversion of one out of four Eunomian heretics, whom he had previously warned them to avoid

4. I've some news for your graces; our severity yesterday was not in vain; we made a profit from the sharpness of our discipline. One of those four men has repudiated and anathematized the heresy of the Arians and Eunomians, and Arius and Eunomius themselves; he has become a Catholic. And so, while I pointed him out to you yesterday as someone to be shunned, I'm pointing him out to you today as someone to be cherished. So I recommend him to you, to look on him with joy, not with suspicion. I also urge you to pray for the others.⁵

NOTES

1. There is much disagreement about the date. Kunzelmann suggests about 415, Poque after 410, Fischer after 420, Berrouard a little before 421, la Bonnardière between 421 and 423; I follow her. The little concluding notice about the four Arians suggests this latest date; and so do a lot of small points of style, or lack of it.

2. It seems he starts quoting this psalm before realizing that it doesn't quite suit his purposes. So he switches quickly to another.

3. He will conclude the sermon by remarking how effective in producing this result his own severity had been. I wonder if he was aware of the irony—or perhaps the “sharp discipline” had been administered gently!

4. The stamp, the sacramental character—he uses the word *caracterem*. They were sealed with the stamp or character of Christ when they were baptized and confirmed. Confirmation especially is the sacrament that sets the seal, or stamp, or mark of Christ on the baptized.

5. From the disagreement among the scholars about the date, it is evident that this little incident is unrecorded elsewhere.

SERMON 229P

ON PETER'S LOVE

Date: after 412¹

The Church is built upon the rock of Peter's confession of faith

1. The events that occurred after the Lord's resurrection are being read according to the evangelist John. Among them we had today's reading of how the Lord questioned the apostle Peter on whether he loved him more than the rest.² Remember, in this man Peter, the rock.³ He's the one, you see, who on being questioned by the Lord about who the disciples said he was, replied, *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*. On hearing this, Jesus said to him, *Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jona, because flesh and blood did not reveal it to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you—as though to say, “You have told me, I'm telling you”*; what?—*You are Peter, Rocky, and on this rock I shall build my Church, and the gates of the underworld will not conquer her. To you shall I give the keys of the kingdom. Whatever you bind on earth shall also be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall also be loosed in heaven* (Mt 16:15-19). In Peter, Rocky, we see our attention drawn to the rock. Now the apostle Paul says about the former people, *They drank from the spiritual rock that was following them*;⁴ but *the rock was Christ* (1 Cor 10:4). So this disciple is called Rocky from the rock, like Christian from Christ.

Why have I wanted to make this little introduction? In order to suggest to you that in Peter the Church is to be recognized. Christ, you see, built his Church not on a man but on Peter's confession. What is Peter's confession? *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*. There's the rock for you, there's the foundation, there's where the Church has been built, which the gates of the underworld cannot conquer. What can the gates of the underworld be, but the pride of the heretics?

Peter three times confesses his love of the one whom he had three times denied

2. So this Peter, playing the great part I have suggested to you, is questioned by the Lord after the resurrection, as we had it read to us, and he said to him,

Simon of John—you see, he was called Simon when he was born; he was the son of John—*Simon of John, do you love me more than these?* Who's doing the questioning? The one who knew everything. Is he like someone who doesn't know, this one *who has passed on knowledge* (Ps 94:10)? It wasn't that the Lord wanted to be informed, but that he wanted Peter to confess.

He questions him once, and he answers, *You know, Lord, that I love you.* And he says, *Feed my lambs.* And again he questions him, as if once wasn't enough: *Simon of John, do you love me?* "I'm devoted to you, Lord, I love you, Lord"; again this answer. And again that same thing: *Feed my lambs.* And a third time—who doesn't find once enough? It's enough for the person who doesn't know; how much more so for the one who foreknows!—he questions him a third time, *Do you love me?* *Peter was hurt*, as though the reason for this persistent questioning was that he was doubted, and he said, *Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.* If there was anything that escaped you, you would be right to question me. If you know everything, what you are questioning me about is included in the everything you know. And he said, *Feed my sheep* (Jn 21:15-17). Love three times confessed the one whom fear had three times denied. That's why the Lord questioned him three times, so that a threefold confession might cancel the threefold denial.

Peter had learned the truth about his own weakness when he denied Christ

3. Such is that Peter, denier and lover; denier out of human weakness, lover by divine grace. When Peter made his denials, you see, he was being shown up to himself. He had, after all, been so cocksure, and had after a fashion given his own strength a puff with his proud boast, *Lord, I am with you to the death* (Lk 22:33), relying presumptuously on his own strength. And then, indeed, he heard who and what he really was. The sick man, you see, was so cocksure of himself, and the doctor was taking the pulse of his heart. He found him sick in his innermost self, and like a true and truthful doctor, he predicted what was going to happen, as though to say, "Yes, you think you're better. You don't realize the fever's still there, but it will reveal itself to you in no time. You will be dismayed when the crisis comes."

So when he was questioned by the serving maid, and what the doctor had predicted, not what the patient had self-confidently presumed, came true, that before the cock crowed, three times would such a fine servant deny his Lord; what's written in the gospel after he has made his three denials? *The Lord looked round at him, and he wept bitterly* (Lk 22:61-62). He would never have wept if the Lord hadn't looked round. Finally, to help you understand in what sense it says *he looked round at him*, examine the gospel, and notice that when Peter denied him, the Lord was in a place where he couldn't look round at him with his bodily eyes; his case was being tried, you see, by the leaders of the Jews in the interior of the house, while Peter denied him in the courtyard.⁵ But where can he not look round to, the one who is everywhere?

*Christ the shepherd, who entrusts his sheep to Peter,
is also himself the sheep and the lamb*

4. That's the reason why he was questioned about love, and Christ's sheep were entrusted to him. He was told, *Feed my lambs, feed my sheep* (Jn 21:15.17). That lamb was entrusting his lambs to him; the one who made lambs for himself was entrusting his lambs to him. How did the lamb make himself lambs? *Behold the lamb of God*; it was about him that it was said: *Behold the lamb of God*. And how did he make himself lambs? *Behold him who takes away the sin of the world* (Jn 1:29). That's how he also made these ones, whom we now see clothed in white.⁶ If only the wolves don't gobble them up! You, Lord, please guard those you have entrusted to Peter. Guard them, please, as you also guard Peter.

Again, he is also the sheep, about which it is written, *Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter* (Is 53:7). He is always a lamb, because always without sin. And don't be surprised that he's without sin; *In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God* (Jn 1:1). Where could any sin come from in that? Take a look at his human birth. Clearly he wished to be without sin, since a virgin conceived him, no fleshly lust desired him. The conception of the son was the faith of the mother. *Born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary*, not contracting original sin from Adam, neither contracting sin nor adding it. Born in innocence, living in innocence, dying in innocence. *Behold the lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sin of the world*.

When he was entrusting Peter with his sheep, he was entrusting him with us. When he was entrusting Peter with us, he was entrusting the Church with his members. So, Lord, entrust your Church to your Church, let your Church entrust itself to you. After all, we say, *Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name give the glory* (Ps 115:1). I mean, what are we without you? Only Peter when he denied you three times. To show up Peter to himself, that is to show up Peter to Peter, the Lord turned his face away from him for a while—and he denied him. He turned his face toward him when he looked round—and he wept. He washed away his fault with his tears, he poured water from his eyes, and baptized his conscience.⁷

Let's take a look at him in one of the psalms, where it's written, *I myself said in my abundance: I shall not be shaken for ever* (Ps 30:6). What's that, if not Peter saying, *I am with you to the death* (Lk 22:33), and *if I have to die for you, I will not desert you* (Mt 26:36)? He says it in his abundance. What is he saying? *I shall not be shaken for ever*. But after he had been questioned, and had denied three times, and had wept, notice what he adds—they are his own words, you see, now repenting: *I myself said in my abundance: I shall not be shaken for ever. Lord, in your good will you granted strength to my rank. You turned your face away from me, and I became dismayed* (Ps 30:7). You turned your face away, and you showed me my face: *I don't know what you're saying; I don't know the man* (Mt 26:70.72). There you have Peter in himself; there you have the meaning of *You turned your face away, and I became dismayed*. So the Lord gave back his face, by looking round, and he became encouraged.

NOTES

1. I presume a date after 412 is suggested, because of the very clear statement in the sermon about original sin, contracted from Adam, which probably presupposes the controversy with the Pelagians. But there is no polemic in the sermon against these last of Augustine's great adversaries, as I think there would have been when they seemed to be strong in Africa, and he was really alarmed about their influence; that is to say from about 412 to about 420. So while he continued to write against them to the end of his life, largely because their doughty champion Julian of Eclanum was writing against him, I don't think he was worrying so much about them after 420 as far as his flock was concerned. So I would, with some confidence, date this sermon even later, to after 420. It has a number of "old man" touches about it.

2. See Jn 21:15-17.

3. *In Petro petram*. In the next few sentences I will sometimes have to translate Peter as Rocky.

4. According to a rabbinic legend the rock, which Moses struck to provide water for the people, Ex 17:6, followed them as a permanent water supply throughout their forty years' wandering in the desert.

5. Augustine is thinking in terms of a harmony of the gospels. But in Luke's account there is no trial by the Jewish leaders at that moment at night; when day came, they took Jesus from the high priest's house to the council chamber for the trial, Lk 22:66-71. So it was perfectly possible for Jesus to look round at Peter in the ordinary sense; he was being held, and mocked, in another part of the courtyard, the *atrium*.

6. The newly baptized, the *infantes*, who had been wearing their white baptismal robes, their *albs*, at all the services throughout Easter week.

7. Does this expression indicate that baptism was sometimes performed by "infusion," as the official term has it, that is by pouring water over the head, and not by immersion, by dipping the whole person in the baptismal pool? But the two methods were perhaps combined, baptizer and baptized standing together in the pool, and the former pouring water from it three times over the latter's head, the way old mosaics represent John the Baptist baptizing Jesus.

SERMON 229R

FRAGMENT FROM A SERMON PREACHED DURING THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: 400-410¹

The allegorical meaning of light and firmament

We understand the name "light" to be given allegorically to all the just and the faithful, as the apostle says: *You were once upon a time darkness, but now light in the Lord* (Eph 5:8). But this light has been made. *That, however, was the true light, which enlightens every person coming into this world* (Jn 1:9), and it was not made, but born of God. That light was not made, and through the light that was not made the other light was made. It's the same too with the firmament; just as light was made by God who is light, so the firmament was made by God who is firm.² And we find that the firmament in the Church has to be understood as the authority of the divine scriptures; and that's why light came first, and after it the firmament; because scripture was produced through the work of just men, and unless they had been justified, in order to be made light, scripture could not have been set up and spread out, to make a firmament between waters and waters, in the middle between the lower peoples of mankind and the higher angelic peoples. Why? Because the angels have no need to make progress through the scriptures; that's why they are not under the firmament, under the authority of the scriptures; because they directly contemplate the beauty of the godhead and of wisdom.³ We though are not improperly under the firmament, because the will of God is opened up to us through the authority of the scriptures.⁴

NOTES

1. This and the following four fragments are taken from a collection of texts on Genesis made by John the Deacon in the ninth century. He, I presume, is the authority for saying that the sermons they come from were preached during the Easter octave. Modern scholars have refined on this; Lambot suggests Easter Monday as the day, Poque says Easter day in the afternoon. In note 4 below

I express a certain skepticism about the fragment's authenticity; at the very least about whether it comes from a sermon at all.

The number 229Q has been given to a sermon that has been lost; lost, I imagine, "within living memory," since otherwise how would it have been known about, in order to be given a number in this series, as an Easter octave sermon? The *Revue Bénédictine*, 1969, may have an explanation of this little mystery.

2. See Gn 1:3-7.

3. Which means, of the Father and of the Son.

4. The authenticity of this fragment strikes me as rather dubious. The ideas are indeed Augustinian, but somehow not the language; at least it is not the language of Augustine the preacher.

SERMON 229S

FRAGMENT FROM A SERMON PREACHED DURING THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: 400-410¹

The allegorical meaning of the sea and the dry land

We can see the land, we can see the sea; they are works of God. These lie open to the sight of our eyes, while those other things² lie open to the gaze of our intellects; these are known to our flesh, those are known to our minds. What, in the Church, is the dry land? Every soul thirsting for God is called dry land. The waters were segregated, you see, and the dry land appeared.³ The sea is this world, and the wicked are the salt waters; they have been segregated, and congregated in one congregation, that is, predestined to one end, to which God directs all those whom he separates from the saints.⁴ But it's God who does the separating, because man cannot separate these things. And as a result of the separation, the dry land appears.

Put two men together; one wants to go to the show, the other to church. They are joined in body, separated by their desires. The first belongs to the salt water, the second appears as dry land. How can we prove that this land is dry, which signifies people desiring good things? The psalm says to God, *My soul is like land without water to you* (Ps 143:6). My soul has thirsted for you; it's thirsty, it's dry, it's been segregated from the waters of the sea. It mustn't bother about not yet being segregated in the body; its desire has already made the separation. Some desire God, others desire the world.

So what does the dry land thirst for? Showers from heaven, showers from the clouds, showers from the scriptures, showers from the firmament. But when it desires showers, it is desiring fresh water, separated from salt water. Only God, though, knows what⁵ the dry land desires; it's hidden, you see, it's secret. The desires of the sea, that is secular desires, are plain to see. If anyone desires money, he's drawn toward money, he wants to acquire it; because money is something visible, the desire for it is apparent. But the one who desires God, well his desire is hidden, because God, whom he desires, is hidden; it's inside, it's something secret. He's thirsty indeed, he's dry land; but this is apparent only to God's eyes.

And he⁶ did not leave out the fruit; he immediately went on to say, *Let the*

land sprout grass for fodder (Gn 1:11). Let the land bud forth on the very day it has become dry. That dry land could not stay long without fruit. Let us too listen to the word of God, and let our land sprout grass for fodder, that is the good works of mercy, about which Isaiah says, *Break your bread to the hungry, and bring into your house the needy person without a roof* (Is 58:7), and so on. So the firmament is the scripture of God; the lights in the firmament, the comprehension of the scriptures, while the lights in heaven are understanding in the scriptures.⁷ Do you want to reach the heavenly light? First let there be land bearing fruit, that is, let works of mercy come first; after the works of mercy, you see, comes the illumination of that light, which you desire.

NOTES

1. This time Lambot ascribes the sermon to Easter Tuesday, while Poque puts it on Easter Monday. Evidently they both consider that the fragments come from a series of sermons Augustine preached one year, during the Easter octave, on the creation narrative of Gn 1, treated allegorically. It must follow that if I am skeptical about the authenticity of the first of them, 229R, I have to be skeptical about this and the next three also.

2. Whatever he had just been talking about; probably the invisible creation of angels and souls.

3. See Gn 1:9.

4. Augustine—or his disciple “Augustinaster, Augustinarius” (Caesarius of Arles?), is careless with his language of predestination; suggesting here that the wicked are “predestined” to damnation. This is a way of talking the Church came to avoid; so that now predestination is a term only to be applied to the saints, or the elect. And this indeed is embedded in the very logic of the word, so to say. To talk about predestining people to be damned amounts to talking about predestining them to miss their destination; like sending a letter with the intention of its never reaching its destination. Those who are damned, or lost, fail to reach their proper destination, their destiny; but they can scarcely be directed to miss their destination.

So, God predestines the elect to reach their destiny, their destination—and therefore they do so. As for those who fail to reach their destiny, their destination, God knows this is going to happen, but he cannot be said directly to destine them to miss their destiny. Whether in fact there are any such, and who they may be, we do not know, and should not speculate.

I am surprised, if Poque is right about the date, to find Augustine talking about predestination in a sermon quite so early, quite so precisely, before the Pelagian controversy arose. If, however, it is not Augustine but “Augustinarius, Augustinaster,” there is nothing surprising about it—but it was preached (or written) many decades later.

5. Reading *quae* instead of *quia*, which would give the doubtful sense: only God knows that the dry land desires.

6. Moses, the writer, as was universally assumed, of Genesis.

7. What the difference is between *luminaria in firmamento* and *lumina in caelo*; and between *intelligentia scripturarum* and *intellectus in scripturis*, who can say? Augustine was quite capable, as we have sometimes seen, of a thumping tautology; but not, I think, of one so crude and unnecessary as this. I have no difficulty in opining this fragment to be as inauthentic as the previous one.

SERMON 229T

FRAGMENT OF A SERMON PREACHED DURING THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: 400-410¹

The allegorical interpretation of the lights in the firmament

The evangelists are the lights, the scripture of God the firmament. Though it's the gospel, receiving its testimonials from the law and the prophets, that is the lights in the firmament of heaven. Now the little ones in the Church are not yet able to take solid food, but are content with milk, and this is signified by the lesser light and the stars. And that's why *the greater light for authority over the day, the lesser light for authority over the night* (Gn 1:16; Ps 136:8-9). As long as human beings are flesh-bound, and unable to contemplate that wisdom through which all things were made, they are in the night. But he did not abandon the night; he granted them faith.

After all, God did not abandon the night; he gave it its own lights. The day requires the sun, the sun is enough for it; the moon and the stars have been given to the night, they illuminate it; and when the moon is not shining on the earth, the light in the atmosphere comes from the stars. This makes it possible for us to go outside at night and see the trees; and if we can't distinguish them, at least we can see some sort of starlight. And thus, when there are thick clouds, even the starlight is removed, and so a person is as invisible to himself under the open sky as he is in his own bedroom.

So then the night too has its own sort of light. Let's see what the apostle says among those endowments, those spiritual gifts: *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for a useful purpose*. How is it given? *To one is given through the Spirit a word of wisdom, to another a word of knowledge* (1 Cor 12:7-8). If you can understand the difference between a word of wisdom and a word of knowledge, you can understand the difference between the greater light and the lesser light. Let us listen to a word of wisdom: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; this was in the beginning*, and so on (Jn 1:1-2). Those who understand are day, the sun is shining on them; but unless they had started from night, they wouldn't have come to the light; *There was darkness over the deep, and God said, Let there be light* (Gn 1:2.3).

Let none of us say that we began from light; we are all justified, you see,

from being sinners. So let those grasp it who can, what I quoted from the gospel. But they say to me, "We didn't understand what it means, *In the beginning was the Word.*" So if it's still night, observe that he took flesh, and made you a kind of night light: *The Word, you see, became flesh, and dwelt among us* (Jn 1:14). And in the bush God speaks to Moses through the angel. Listen to where there's a word of wisdom here. "What are you called?" said Moses. "How am I to announce you to the people? If I'm asked, 'Who sent you?' what am I to say?" Listen to the word of wisdom: *You shall say to the children of Israel, "He who is" has sent me to you* (Ex 3:13-14). Who can grasp "He who is"? Other things are not, really. Who really is? The one who doesn't pass away, who remains unchanged, unchangeable. But this is the solid food of adults, this is the sun for the day. And as though Moses had said to him, "I'm still night; illuminate the night, let me say something which little ones can make sense of": *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob* (Ex 3:15).

So then: *I am who I am* belongs to authority over the day, *I am the God of Abraham* to authority over the night. Faith, dispensed in time, shines for the night, wisdom, abiding always, shines for the day. He nurses us along during the night, so that we may proceed to the day. So the stars are the other endowments; because after saying *To one is given a word of wisdom*, like the sun, for authority over the day; *to another is given a word of knowledge*, like the moon, for authority over the night; he also gives stars: *to another the gift of healing, to another prophecy*, etc. (1 Cor 12:8.10).

NOTES

1. Assigned to the Wednesday after Easter by Lambot, to the Tuesday by Poque. My conviction about inauthenticity grows apace. The ideas are the ideas of Augustine, but the clumsy handling of them is that of a less intellectually supple disciple.

SERMON 229U

FRAGMENT OF A SERMON PREACHED DURING THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: 400-410¹

Allegorical explanation of "reptiles of living souls"

So let us see what the scriptures say. Light through light means the just through the Word. The firmament of heaven, that's the solid reliability of the scriptures. The waters under the firmament, the earthly population; the waters above the firmament, the heavenly population. The dry land separated from the waters of the sea, that's souls thirsting for God separated from the multitudinous crimes of the world. The earth sprouts grass for fodder and fruit-bearing trees—the works of mercy. Lights in the firmament of heaven—preachers of the word, evangelists and apostles, spiritual gifts.

So as we observe the lights going round the whole world, just notice how the waters produce reptiles of living souls.² The evangelists run round the world, people are evangelized. So the reptiles of living souls are to be understood as the sacraments. Why? Because what the sacraments are needed for is that the nations³ should be evangelized, and human beings separated from the nations, that is, that those salt waters should produce, and fresh fish should result. This, you see, is a great matter. Nobody can stomach sea water, everybody can⁴ eat fish, which are born and reared in the saltiness. These are the fresh-tasting sacraments, which are dispatched throughout the whole world.⁵

But they are called reptiles of living souls, not yet living souls. Why? This little obscurity does take some understanding. You heard just now, when that reading was read, that Simon Magus was baptized, and did not lay aside his evil mind; he had the form of the sacrament, the power of the sacrament he did not have. Listen to what the apostle says about the godless: *Having, he says, the form of godliness, while refusing its power* (2 Tm 3:5). What is the form of godliness? The visible sacrament. What is the power of godliness? Invisible charity. Listen to the power of godliness: *If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have charity, I have become booming bronze*, and so on; and if I have this and that, *but do not have charity, I am nothing* (1 Cor 13:1-3). Yes, the sacraments are holy realities, great realities; but people are nothing if they do not have charity.

So the power of the sacrament is charity. This charity is something the heretics do not have, though I find the form of the sacrament with them. And so, when heretics come to me, I bow to the form of the sacrament, and do not rebaptize them; but I restore the power of the sacrament, and insert the root of charity.⁶ So that will be the living souls which the land produces, so that the soul may now be alive, having at last the power of the sacrament. So that's all about the text, *Let the waters produce reptiles of living souls*, and so on.

NOTES

1. Lambot ascribes this sermon to the Thursday after Easter, Poque to the Wednesday.

2. See Gn 1:20. This is a very literal translation of *reptilia animarum vivarum*, which in turn is a literal translation of the Greek of the Septuagint. I have to keep it literal, because he is going on to expound it as it stands.

3. Reading *gentes* instead of the text's *gentibus*. Though if *gentibus* is correct, it must mean that the sacraments are necessary so that they, the sacraments, may be evangelized to the nations—a kind of muddle typical of this Pseudo-Augustine, Augustinaster, or Augustinarius. I am beginning to wonder if he was not perhaps the priest Heraclius, Augustine's right hand man, and successor as bishop; a very worthy and devoted disciple, but with nothing of the master's genius.

4. Supplying "everybody can," which is not in the Latin; something has presumably slipped out.

5. So the fish are being identified very clumsily with the reptiles of living souls. The sacraments he has in mind are really just baptism, with confirmation and eucharist perhaps included, since they followed immediately on baptism.

6. By a canonical, and indeed sacramental, absolution.

SERMON 229V

FRAGMENT OF A SERMON PREACHED DURING THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: 400-410¹

All God's works contained in man, the microcosm

On the sixth day God said, *Let the land produce living soul* (Gn 1:24); not reptiles of living souls, but living soul. And the land produced all cattle and wild beasts and serpents and everything that crawls on the land. *And God saw that it was good. And God said*, on that same sixth day when land threw up living soul, *Let us make man to our image and likeness* (Gn 1:25-26), and the rest that follows.

We have said that God made the light, that is all the faithful; he made the firmament in the world, the sky or heaven between the waters and waters; he made the firmament in the Church, the authority of the scriptures between the angelic population for whom this is not needed, and the human population, for them to seek God there. God made a separation in the world of sea and land; God made a separation in the Church of the nations from his servants.² The dry land thirsts for the showers; in the Church Christians thirst for heavenly showers. The dry land produced grass for fodder, and fruit-bearing trees; in the Church Christians too produce works of mercy. Lights are made in heaven; the greater light a word of wisdom, the lesser light a word of knowledge, the stars gifts of healing, of prophecy, faith, and so on; all these in the firmament of heaven.

So when they³ had begun to run their courses and to traverse the whole world, the waters teemed, that is, from the nations there sprang up reptiles of living souls, the holy sacraments and human beings having their form. The form of the sacrament, you see, is in the human person,⁴ and sometimes the power of the sacrament follows upon it immediately; but this now happens in the land which has been separated, and that's why the land produces living soul. And indeed, brothers and sisters, living soul is what there should and must be. Our brothers and sisters here⁵ have received baptism; let its power follow upon its form. Don't let your baptism be unto judgment, but unto salvation. It was unto judgment for Simon Magus, unto salvation for Peter.⁶

So let us see what is meant by living soul, which the land produced. Consider a human being; he has a body, has a soul. The soul itself has many activities like

those of animals; and it has a certain I don't know what in addition, which animals haven't got. What activities does it have like those of animals? Eating and drinking, sleeping and waking, and reproducing. Aren't these common to us and to animals? Anyone who carries these activities to the point of gross self-indulgence has a dead soul, not a living soul. How do we prove that? Listen to the apostle: *While the one who is preoccupied with pleasures is dead even while she lives* (1 Tm 5:6). What is being preoccupied with pleasures, but letting ourselves go in those activities we have in common with cattle, in uncontrolled pleasures and lusts, with gluttony, drunkenness, fornication, the sloth of the slug-a-bed? Those who live like that are preoccupied with pleasures; but they are dead, while living.

But if all these desires and feelings are restrained, and these activities are tied to chastity, to self-control, the land produces soul; and because this was dead in pleasures, it remains for it to be curbed in its pleasures, and to begin to live and have the power of godliness. And what is the power of godliness? Love of God and neighbor. But anyone who has such love or charity curbs all lusts through faith, all longings, all movements of the spirit which we have in common with cattle, and so will become living soul. And it follows that now man may be formed to the image and likeness of God. But he is so formed when all these things that have been mentioned are directed toward that man as their conclusion. Because God also made light—it's said of man in the Church; and he made the firmament, the authority of the scriptures for man's sake; and he separated the waters from the land, the nations from believers; and the land sprouted grass for fodder, the works of mercy; and the lights in heaven, the holy evangelists in man;⁷ and the land produced the reptile of living souls, the sacraments; this too among men. Afterward it produced living soul, the curbing of all lusts, this too in man. Join all these things to intelligence, and man has been made to the image and likeness of God.

Notice how we can prove that. That's why it said about each work in turn, *God saw that it was good* (Gn 1:4.8.10.12.18.21.25).⁸ But when he made the better thing, he didn't just see that it was better;⁹ but he included everything that had been made in man himself, and so it says, *God saw everything he had made, and behold it was very good* (Gn 1:31). He had already said about each one of them that they were good; once man was made, he named all of them together. We are to understand that each and every one of them is to be found in man. Are you looking for light in man? You find faith. Are you looking for the firmament? You find the authority of the scriptures. Are you looking for the segregation of the waters? You find the believer segregated from the nations. Are you looking for the burgeoning of the grass and fruit-bearing trees? You find good works, the works of mercy. Are you looking for the lights of heaven? You find the evangelists. Are you looking for the reptiles of living souls? You find the sacraments. Are you looking for living soul? You find self-control. Are you looking for man in man? You find the image and likeness of God.

NOTES

1. Lambot ascribes this sermon to the Friday of Easter week, Poque to the Thursday. The Italian edition adds to it two fragments which were published in the *Revue Bénédictine*, 79 (1969) as 229W and 229Z. That they are fragments of the same sermon as this one seems to me to be extremely doubtful; one of them at least sounds much more authentically like Augustine. So I revert here to that numbering, and give them next as fragments of distinct sermons.

This one is the last of the fragments culled from the collection of John the Deacon on Genesis. The Maurists consider all these fragments, from 229R to 229V to be from one sermon, preached therefore on one day. They do not doubt their authenticity.

2. This strikes me as a thoroughly un-Augustinian expression, of separation of the nations (or Gentiles) from his servants—and in the Church. It's the beginning of the medieval style of talking, as in St Thomas Aquinas' work, the *Summa Contra Gentes*, meaning non-Christians.

3. The heavenly bodies, now representing not the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit, but preachers of the gospel.

4. What is now called the sacramental character of baptism and confirmation; while the power of the sacrament is now usually referred to as the grace of the sacrament.

5. The newly baptized.

6. For Simon Magus, see Acts 8:13-20. As for St Peter, he is nowhere recorded in the New Testament as having been baptized. There could possibly be an allusion to his weeping bitterly when the cock crew, Lk 22:62, and thus "baptizing his conscience," as in Sermons 229O, 1 and 229P, 4 above. That would presuppose, of course, that the preacher, or writer of this sermon was thoroughly familiar with Augustine's treatment in that way of Peter's weeping, which is probable enough, especially if he was Heraclius.

7. An even more muddled phrase than the rest—hardly the genuine Augustine.

8. The old Latin text followed the Greek Septuagint, which has the refrain *God saw that it was good* repeated much more regularly than does the Hebrew.

9. Reading *non vidit quia melior est*, instead of the text's . . . *quia melior facta est*.

SERMON 229W

FRAGMENT ON THE RESTORATION OF THE IMAGE

*Date: unknown*¹

*God seeks his own image and likeness in man,
just as Caesar looks for his in the coinage*

And now pay attention;² there's man, set down firmly in his punishment—and the vestiges of the image of God which have remained in him, how much are they worth now? He has worn down that image by sin, and it is refashioned by grace, after being ruined by lust. Just as a coin, you see, if it's rubbed with earth, loses the emperor's image, so the human mind, if it's rubbed with earthy lusts, loses God's image. However, along comes Christ the master of the mint, to strike the coins afresh. And how does he strike the coins afresh? By pardoning sins with grace; and he will show you that God is looking for his image.

Because when he was asked about taxes for Caesar, *Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?*—they were trying to catch him out, you see, so that if he said they shouldn't be paid, they could tell tales about him through the tax collectors: "Look at the man who's teaching that we don't owe taxes!" While if he said they should be paid: "Look at the one who has cursed Jerusalem, and put her under tribute!"³ So what did he say, and what advice did he give? *Why are you trying to catch me out, you hypocrites? Bring me a coin. And they offered him one. Whose image and inscription has it got? They answered: Caesar's. So pay back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's (Mk 12:14-17).* That is, "If Caesar can look for his image in a coin, is God not to look for his image in man?"

NOTES

1. See Sermon 229V, note 1. It is easy to see why, perhaps in an edition called *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Ep 5, 25.39-40, it was thought right to attach this fragment to the preceding one. But I am convinced this was a mistake. The style is so totally different, this one having the

authentic Augustinian ring about it, which is notably absent from 229R-V. The source of the fragment may possibly be discovered by consulting that work, or the *Revue Bénédictine* 79 (1969) 211-214.

2. This, in the Italian edition, is section 2 of Sermon 229V.
3. See Lam 1:1.

SERMON 229Z

FRAGMENT ON GENESIS 1:11

*Date: unknown*¹

The earth² produced grass for fodder and fruit-bearing trees; people in the Church also produce works of mercy, after those works which were even done for the Lord himself, when he was in the flesh; not only done by men, such as Zacchaeus was,³ but also by women, *who were looking after him out of their own pockets* (Lk 8:3).

NOTES

1. See Sermons 229V, note 1, and 229W, note 1.
2. In the Italian edition this is section 3 of Sermon 229V.
3. See Lk 19:2-10.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Abbreviations of Names

(B)	Anne Marie La Bonnardière	(M)	Christine Mohrmann
(Ba)	Tarcisius van Bavel	(Maur)	Maurists
(Be)	Bonifatius Fischer (Beuron)	(Me)	Frits van der Meer
(D)	Michel Denis	(Mo)	Paul Monceau
(DB)	Donatien De Bruyne	(Mor)	Germain Morin
(Ét)	Raymond Étaix	(P)	Othmar Perler
(F)	Georges Folliet	(Po)	Suzanne Poque
(K)	Adalbert Kunzelmann	(V)	Pierre-Patrick Verbraken
(L)	Cyrille Lambot	(W)	André Wilmart

Abbreviations of Works

CCL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina (Turnhout-Paris, 1953ff.)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna, 1866ff.)
MA	<i>Miscellanea Agostiniana</i> (2 vols.; Rome, 1930-31). The first volume is <i>Sermones post Maurinos reperti</i> , ed. G. Morin
NBA	Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana (Rome: Città Nuova Editrice)
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1878-90)
PLS	<i>Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum</i> , ed. A. Hamann (Paris, 1957ff.)
PW	<i>Paulys Realencyklopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , new ed. by G. Wissowa et al. (Stuttgart, 1893ff.)
RB	<i>Revue Bénédictine</i> (Maredsous, 1884ff.).
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
SPM	<i>Stromata Patristica et Mediaevalia 1</i> (= C. Lambot, <i>S. Aurelii Augustini Sermones selecti duodeviginti</i>) (Utrecht, 1950).

Short Titles of Frequently Cited Works

Borgomeo	<i>L'Eglise P. Borgomeo, L'Eglise de ce temps dans la prédication de saint Augustin</i> (Paris, 1972)
Mohrmann	<i>Etudes C. Mohrmann, Etudes sur le latin des chrétiens I</i> (Rome, 1958); II (Rome, 1961)
Mohrmann	<i>Sondersprache C. Mohrmann, Die altchristliche Sondersprache in den Sermones des hl. Augustinus I. Einführung, Lexikologie, Wortbildung</i> (Latinitas Christianorum Primaeva 3; Nijmegen, 1932)
Pontet	<i>L'exégèse M. Pontet, L'exégèse de saint Augustin prédicateur</i> (Théologie 7; Paris, 1946)
Poque	<i>Augustin d'Hippone</i> S. Poque (ed.), <i>Augustin d'Hippone. Sermons pour la Paque</i> (SC 116; Paris, 1966)
Verbraken	<i>Etudes P.-P. Verbraken, Etudes critiques sur les sermons authentiques de saint Augustin</i> (Instrumenta Patristica 12; Steenbrugge-The Hague, 1976)

Nr.	Theme	Date	Edition
184	Christmas	December 25 after 411-412 (K, Be)	PL 38:995-997 SPM 1:74-76
185	Christmas	December 25, 412-416 (K, Be)	PL 38:997-999
186	Christmas	December 25, 411-412 (K, Be) after 400 (Ba)	PL 38:999-1000
187	Christmas	December 25, before 411-412 (K, Be)	PL 38:1001-1003
188	Christmas	December 25	PL 38:1003-1005
189	Christmas	December 25 before 410 (K, Be)	Frangipane 4 MA 1:209-211 PL 38:1005-1007
190	Christmas	December 25, 391-400 (K, Be)	PL 38:1007-1009 <i>Corona Gratiarum I</i> , Steenbrugge (1975) 343-350
191	Christmas	December 25, 411-412 (K, Be)	PL 38:1009-1011
192	Christmas	December 25, after 411-412 (K, Be)	PL 38:1011-1013
193	Christmas	December 25, 410 (B, K, Be)	PL 38:1013-1015
194	Christmas	December 25, before 411-412 (K, Be)	PL 38:1015-1017
195	Christmas	December 25, after 411-412 (K, Be)	PL 38:1017-1019
196	Christmas	December 25, after 396 (K, Be)	PL 38:1019-1021
196/A	Octave of Christmas	January 1	Étaix 2 REA 26 (1980) 70-72
197	Circumcision	January 1 before 400 (K, B, Be) before 420 (Mo)	PL 38:1021-1024 RB 84 (1974) 256-258; 258-259.
198	Circumcision	January 1	PL 38:1024-1026
198/A	Circumcision	January 1	PL 39:1734-1736
199	Epiphany	January 6	PL 38:1026-1028
200	Epiphany	January 6 393-405 (K, Be)	PL 38:1028-1031
201	Epiphany	January 6	PL 38:1031-1033
202	Epiphany	January 6, 405-411 (K, Be)	PL 38:1033-1035
203	Epiphany	January 6, 410-412 (K, Be)	PL 38:1035-1037
204	Epiphany	January 6	PL 38:1037-1039 <i>S. Augustin et la Bible</i> , Paris (1986) 77-79
204/A	Ephipany	January 6	Étaix 4, RB 98 (1988) 12
205	Lent	beginning of Lent	PL 38:1039-1040
206	Lent	beginning of Lent	PL 38:1041-1042
207	Lent	beginning of Lent	PL 38:1042-1044
208	Lent	beginning of Lent	PL 38:1044-1046
209	Lent	beginning of Lent	PL 38:1046-1047
210	Lent	beginning of Lent	PL 38:1047-1054
211	Lent	Lent	PL 38:1054-1058

Nr.	Theme	Date	Edition
211/A	Lent	before 410 (K, Be) 412-415? (Be)	SC 116:154-172 Casinen. I, 161-162 See PL 38:1084
212	Presentation of the Creed	two, three weeks before Easter 410-412 (K) 412-415 (Be)	PL 38:1058-1060 SC 116:174-184
213	Presentation of the Creed	before 410	Guelfer. 1 MA 1:441-450 PL 38:1060-1065
214	Presentation of the Creed	391 (Maur)	PL 38:1065-1072
215	Recitation of the Creed	after 412 (V)	RB 72 (1962) 14-21
216	To the <i>competendes</i>	one week before Easter (K, Po, V) 390-391 (W)	PL 38:1072-1076 RB 68 (1958) 18-25
217	Jn 17:3-24	two weeks before Easter 391 (K) Priestly year (Po) March 391 (P) just before Easter (W, Maur) Christmas 417-418 (K) after 418 (Be)	PL 38:1076-1082
218	Passion	Good Friday (Maur) before 420 (K, B, Be)	Morin 3 MA 1:596-601 PL 38:1083-1084
218/A	Passion	Good Friday	PL 39:1723-1724
218/B	Passion	c. 397 (K, Be)	Guelfer. 2 MA 1, 450-452 PLS 2:543-545
218/C	Passion	Good Friday before 410 (K, B) 412-415? (Be)	Guelfer. 3 MA 1:452-455 SC 116:200-208 RB 87 (1977) 223-225
219	Easter	Easter vigil	PL 38:1087-1088
220	Easter	Easter vigil	PL 38:1089
221	Easter	Easter vigil	Guelfer. 5 MA 1:457-460 PL 38:1089-1090 SC 116:210-220
222	Easter	Easter vigil	PL 38:1090-1091
223	Easter	Easter vigil 400-405	PL 38:1092-1093
223/A	Easter	Easter vigil c. 399	Denis 2 MA 1:11-17
223/B	Easter	Easter vigil	Guelfer. 4 MA 1:455-456 PLS 2:548-549
223/C	Easter	Easter vigil	Guelfer. 6 MA 1:460-462 PLS 2:552-554
223/D	Easter	Easter vigil	Wilmart 4 MA 1:684-685 PLS 2:717-718

Nr.	Theme	Date	Edition
223/E	Easter	Easter vigil	Wilmart 5 MA 1:685-687 PLS 2:719-720
223/F	Easter	Easter vigil	Wilmart 6 MA 1:688-689 PLS 2:720-722
223/G	Easter	Easter vigil	Wilmart 7 MA 1:689-691 PLS 2:722-723
223/H	Easter	Easter vigil	Wilmart 14 MA 1:716-717 PLS 2:739
223/I	Easter	Easter vigil	Wilmart 15 MA 1:717-718 PLS 2:740
223/J	Easter	Easter vigil	Wilmart 16 MA 1:718 PLS 2:741
223/K	Easter	Easter vigil	Wilmart 17 MA 1:718-719 PLS 2:741-742
224	Easter	Easter 412-416	PL 38:1093-1095 RB 79 (1969) 200-205
225	Easter	Easter 400-405 (M)	PL 38:1095-1098
226	Easter	Easter 416-417 (K, Be)	PL 38:1098-1099
227	Easter	Easter morning 412-413 (Be) 416-417 (K)	PL 38:1099-1101 SC 116:234-243
228	Easter	Easter	PL 38:1101-1102
228/A	Easter	Easter 400-410 (Po)	PL 39:1724
228/B	Easter	Easter 405-411 (B, K)	Denis 3 MA 1:18-20
229	Easter	Easter	Denis 6 MA 1:29-32 PL 38:1103
229/A	Easter	Easter 410-412	Guelfer. 7 MA 1:462-464 PLS 2:554-556
229/B	Easter	Easter	Guelfer. 8 MA 1:464-466 PLS 2:556-558
229/C	Easter	Easter	Wilmart 8 MA 1:691-692 PLS 2:723-724
229/D	Easter	Easter before 410 (K, Be)	Wilmart 9 MA 1:693-694 PLS 2:724-725
229/E	Easter Season	Monday after Easter after 412 (Po)	Guelfer. 9 MA 1:466-471 PLS 2:558-562
229/F	Easter Season	Monday after Easter, c. 418	Guelfer. 10 MA 1:471-473

Nr.	Theme	Date	Edition
229/G	Easter Season	(K, Be) Tuesday after Easter 416-417	PLS 2:562-564 Guelfer. 11 MA 1:474-478
229/H	Easter Season	(K, B, Be) Friday after Easter, after 412 (Po)	PLS 2:564-568 Guelfer. 12 MA 1:479-483 PLS 2:568-572
229/I	Easter Season Lk 24:36-53	Wednesday after Easter 393-405 (K, Be) 400-410 (Po)	Mai 86 MA 1:324-327 PLS 2:475-478
229/J	Easter Season Lk 24:36-53	Wednesday after Easter 417-418 (K, Be) 400-410 (Po)	Guelfer. [app.] 7 MA 1:581-585 PLS 2:653-657
229/K	Easter Season Jn 20:11-18	Thursday after Easter from 412 (Po)	Guelfer. 13 MA 1:483-485 PLS 2:572-574
229/L	Easter Season Jn 20:1-18	Thursday after Easter from 412 (Po)	Guelfer. 14 MA 1:485-488 PLS 2:574-576
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