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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

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

SERMONS

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(230-272B)
on the Liturgical Seasons

translation and notes

Edmund Hill, O.P.

editor

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SERMON 230

PREACHED DURING THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: uncertain¹

If you want to be "the day which the Lord has made," live good lives

Just as we have been singing to our Lord,² so, with his help, let us behave accordingly. Every day, after all, has been made by the Lord, but it is not without reason that it is written about one day in particular, This is the day which the Lord has made (Ps 118:24). We read that when God was creating heaven and earth, he said, *Let there be light; and light was made. And God called the light day, and the darkness, night* (Gn 1:3.5). But for us there is another special day, one to be particularly brought to our attention, about which the apostle says, *Let us walk honorably, as in the day* (Rom 13:13). This ordinary, daily day is completed between the rising and the setting of the sun. There is another day, on which the word of God shines in the hearts of the faithful, and drives out the darkness, not of the eyes, but of bad habits. So that's the one we should recognize, the one we should rejoice in.

Let us listen to the apostle saying, *For we are children of the light, and children of the day; we are not of the night, or of the dark* (1 Thes 5:5). *Let us walk honorably, as in the day; not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lechery and shamelessness, not in wrangling and rivalry; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts* (Rom 13:13-14).³ If you follow that advice, you can sing with your whole heart, *This is the day which the Lord has made*. What you are singing, you see, is what you are, if you are living good lives.

How many people there are who get drunk during these days! How many who during these days, not content with getting drunk, engage in disgraceful and savage quarrels! Such people can't really sing, *This is the day which the Lord has made*. The Lord answers them, "You're darkness; it's not I that made you." If you want to be the day which the Lord has made, live good lives, and you will have in your hearts the light of truth which will never set.

NOTES

1. The shortness of this sermon and its subject, especially its conclusion, make it practically certain that it was preached on Easter day; that is also the opinion of Kunzelmann, La Bonnardière, and Poque. Lambot, however, just assigns it vaguely to paschal time, while the Maurists put it in the Easter octave. For practically the same sermon, on a slightly larger scale, see Sermon 229B.
2. We have been singing, as a frequently repeated refrain, Ps 118:24.
3. This is the text that finally clinched Augustine's conversion in the famous garden scene in Milan; the text he read at the command of the child singing *Tolle, lege; tolle, lege*—Pick up and read, pick up and read: *Confessions* VIII, 12.

SERMON 231

PREACHED DURING THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: 412-413¹

We believe their words, they didn't even believe their own eyes

1. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is read by custom during these days from all the books of the holy gospel. In this reading we noticed how he himself, the Lord Jesus, chided his disciples, his first members, who were always at his side, because while they were grieving at his being slain, they didn't believe he was alive.² The fathers of the faith not yet faithful, the masters destined to bring the whole world to believe what they were going to preach and what they were going to die for, not yet believers themselves. They had seen him raise the dead, and they didn't believe he had risen. So they certainly deserved to be rebuked.

They were being shown to themselves, so that they might really be aware of who they were in themselves, and who they were going to be through him. Just as Peter too was shown up to himself, when on the brink of the Lord's passion he was so sure of himself, and when as the passion commenced, he tottered and fell. He saw himself in himself, he was shocked at himself in himself, he wept at himself in himself; he turned back to the one who had made him.³ And here we have these disciples not yet believing, in this reading they didn't yet believe, when they could already see him. What courteous consideration on his part, to have granted us the power to believe what we cannot yet see! We believe their words, they didn't even believe their own eyes.

Christ's resurrection is our renewal

2. Now the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the new life of those who believe in Jesus. And this is the mysterious meaning of his passion and resurrection, which you certainly ought to know about and live up to. It was not, after all, without reason that life came to death, not without reason that *the fountain of life* (Ps 36:9), from which one drinks to live, drank here the cup which was not his due.⁴ Dying, I mean, was not Christ's due. Where death came from—if we look for its origin, the father of death is sin. You see, if there had never been

any sin, nobody would ever have died. The first man received God's law, that is God's commandment, with the condition that if he kept it he would live, if he broke it he would die. He didn't believe he would die, and so he did the thing he would die from, and discovered that what the one who had given the law had said was true.⁵ The result of that was death, the result was his being mortal, the result was drudgery, the result was misery, the result was that even after the first death comes *the second death* (Rv 20:6.14), that is to say, everlasting death after death in time.

So it is as bound to this condition of death, to these laws of hell, that every human being is born; with the exception, though, of that human being who became man in order that mankind might not perish. He, you see, did not come bound to the laws of death, and that's why he is called in the psalm, *Free among the dead* (Ps 88:5). The one whom the virgin conceived without lust, whom she bore as a virgin and remained a virgin,⁶ the one who lived without fault, who did not die for any fault, but shared the punishment with us and did not share the fault—the punishment of the fault is death⁷—the Lord Jesus Christ came to die, he did not come to sin. By sharing with us the punishment without any fault, he released us from both fault and punishment. What punishment did he release us from? The one that was our due after this life.

So he was crucified in order to demonstrate on the cross the downfall of our old self, and he rose again in order to demonstrate in his own life the newness of our life. That, certainly, is what the apostle's doctrine teaches: *He was delivered*, he says, *on account of our sins, and he rose again on account of our justification* (Rom 4:25). It was as a sign of this truth that circumcision was given to the fathers, with the proviso that every male was to be circumcised on the eighth day.⁸ Circumcision was carried out with *knives of flint rock* (Jos 5:2), because *the rock was Christ* (1 Cor 10:4). This circumcision signified the stripping away of the fleshly life by Christ's resurrection on the eighth day. The seventh day of the week, you see, is completed on the sabbath; on the sabbath the Lord lay in the tomb, on the seventh day of the week; on the eighth day he rose again. So on the eighth day he circumcised us. His resurrection is our renewal.⁹ That is the hope in which we live.

If we live good lives, we have both died and risen again

3. Let us listen to the apostle saying, *If you have risen with Christ*—when shall we rise again, seeing we haven't yet died? So what is it the apostle meant to say, *If you have risen with Christ*? Would he himself have risen again, unless he had first died? The apostle was speaking to living people, who weren't yet dying and were already rising again. So what does it mean? Notice what he's saying: *If you have risen with Christ, savor the things that are above where Christ is, seated at God's right hand; seek the things that are above, not those that are on earth. For you are dead* (Col 3:1-3). He's the one who says it, not me; and yet what he says is true and that's why I say it too. Why do I say it too? *I have believed, therefore have I spoken* (Ps 116:10).

If we live good lives, we have died and risen again; but any who have not died and risen again are still living bad lives; if they are living bad lives, they are not in fact alive; let them die in order not to die. What's that, let them die in order not to die? Let them change their ways in order not to be damned. *If you have risen with Christ*, I'm repeating the words of the apostle, *savor the things that are above where Christ is, seated at God's right hand; seek the things that are above, not those that are on earth. For you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory* (Col 3:1-4). Those are the words of the apostle. Any who have not yet died, I'm telling them to die; any who are still living bad lives, I'm telling them to change their ways. You see, if any were living bad lives and are not doing so any longer, they have died; if they are living good lives, they have risen again.

Living a good life means not loving futility and seeking after lies

4. But what is living a good life? *Savor the things that are above, not those that are on earth* (Col 3:2). As long as *you are earth, it is into earth that you shall go* (Gn 3:19); as long as you go on licking the dust of the earth—it is by loving earth, of course, that you lick the dust of the earth—you are also turned into the enemy of the one about whom the psalm says, *And his enemies shall lick the dust* (Ps 72:9). What were you? Children of men. What are you? Children of God. *Children of men, how long with a heavy heart? Why do you love futility, and seek after lies?* (Ps 4:2).

What are the lies you are seeking? I'll tell you right away. You all want to be happy, I know. Find me a man, let him be a robber, a villain, a fornicator, a sorcerer, sacrilegious, defiled by every imaginable vice, up to his neck in misdeeds and crimes of all sorts, who doesn't want to live a happy life. I know you all want to live happy lives. But what is it that makes a person's life happy? That is something you are not all seeking after. You are seeking gold, because you imagine you will be happy with gold; but gold doesn't make one happy. Why seek after lies? Why do you want to get to the top in this world? Because you imagine you will be happy with honor from men and worldly triumphs; but worldly triumphs don't make one happy. Why seek after lies? And whatever else you may seek after here, when you seek it in a worldly way, when you seek it by loving earth, when you seek it by licking the dust of the earth, the reason you are seeking it is in order to be happy; but nothing at all that is of the earth will make you happy. Why not give up seeking after lies?

So what is it that will really make you happy? *Children of men, how long with a heavy heart?* You don't want to have a heavy heart, and you load your hearts with earth? How long have men been with heavy hearts? Before Christ came, before Christ rose again, men went about with heavy hearts. *How long with a heavy heart? Why do you love futility, and seek after lies?* While wanting to be happy, you seek those things which only make you miserable. What you're seeking is deceptive; what you're seeking is lies.

I'm inviting you to my life; as a pledge, keep hold of my death

5. Do you want to be happy? If you like, I'll show you what will put it in your power to be happy. Continue with that text: *How long with a heavy heart? Why do you love futility, and seek after lies? Know. Know what? That the Lord has magnified his holy one* (Ps 4:3). Christ has come to our miseries; he was hungry, he was thirsty, he was tired, he slept, he performed wonders, he suffered evils, he was scourged, crowned with thorns, smeared with spittle, slapped around and beaten, nailed to a tree, wounded with a lance, laid in a tomb; but on the third day he rose again, all toil at an end, death dead. There you are, fix your eyes on his resurrection. Because hasn't¹⁰ the Lord magnified his holy one, to the extent of raising him from the dead and giving him the honor of sitting at his right hand in heaven? He has shown you what you should savor, if you really wish to be happy. Here, you see, you simply can't be. In this life you cannot be happy.¹¹ Nobody can. You're seeking a good thing, but this earth just isn't the region for the good thing you're seeking. What are you seeking? A happy life. Well, it isn't to be found here.

If you were looking for gold in a place where it isn't to be found, someone who knows it's not to be found there would tell you, "What are you digging for? What are you messing up the ground for? You're making a hole you can go down, not one where you can find anything." What are you going to answer the person giving you this warning?

"I'm looking for gold."

"I'm not telling you," he says, "that what you're looking for is nothing. It's a good thing you're looking for, but it isn't to be found where you're looking."

So also, when you say, "I want to be happy," it's a good thing you're looking for, but it's not to be found here. If Christ had it here, you will have it here too. In the region of your death, what did he find? Consider this: coming from another region, what did he find here but what there's plenty of here: toils, pains, death? There you are, that's what you've got here, that's what there's plenty of here. He ate with you what there was plenty of in your miserable hovel. He drank vinegar here, he drank gall here. That's the sort of thing he found in your hovel. And he invited you to his splendid table, the table of heaven, the table of the angels, where he himself is the bread.

So he came down and he found all these nasty things in your hovel, and he didn't disdain to share your table, nasty though it was, and he promised you his own. What does he tell us? "Believe, believe that you are going to come to the good things of my table, seeing that I did not turn up my nose at the nasty things of yours." So he took your bad things, and will give you his good things? Yes, of course he will. He promised us his life, but what he actually did is even more unbelievable; he paid us his death in advance. As though to say, "I'm inviting you to my life, where nobody dies, where life is truly happy, where food doesn't go bad, where it provides nourishment and undergoes no diminishment. There you are, that's where I'm inviting you, to the region of the angels, to the friendship of the Father and the Holy Spirit, to the everlasting supper, to be my brothers and sisters, to be, in a word, myself. I'm inviting you to my life. Are

you reluctant to believe that I will give you my life? As a pledge, keep hold of my death.”

So now, while we are living in this perishable flesh, by a change of habits let us die with Christ, by a love of being just let us live with Christ. We are only going to receive the happy, blessed life, when we come to him who came to us, and when we begin to be with him who died for us.

NOTES

1. This is the date suggested by Fischer and Poque; Kunzelmann and Mohrmann suggest, more vaguely, after 400. It was presumably preached on the same day of the Easter octave, though in another year of course, as Sermon 229I; that, according to Poque, was Easter Monday, but according to Kunzelmann, Morin, and Zwinggi was the Wednesday of the octave. Since the gospel reading was Lk 24:36-48 (at least), Wednesday seems the more likely, since the resurrection narratives were presumably read in the order of the gospels. So if Matthew 28 was read on Easter Sunday, it would be Mark 16 on the Monday, and Luke 24, two distinct stories, on the Tuesday and Wednesday.

2. So the reading must have been from Lk 24, the only gospel narrative (apart from Mk 16:14, which is hardly a narrative) that has Jesus chiding the disciples for being slow to believe (24:25). As Augustine, though, goes on to talk of the disciples not believing their eyes, he cannot have the Emmaus episode primarily in mind, but rather its sequel, as is explicitly the case in Sermon 229I.

3. See Ps 100:3; also Lk 22:53,62.

4. See Mk 10:38; Lk 22:42.

5. See Gn 2:17; 3:6,19.

6. For Augustine, this is the explanation of how Christ avoided inheriting the taint of original sin.

7. See Rom 6:23—though he can hardly be said to be quoting it.

8. See Gn 17:12.

9. In the Latin text this and the previous sentence are in the reverse order. I am supposing a copyist got them the wrong way round by mistake; that reverse order certainly makes for an odd sequence of thought.

10. Reading *nonne* with the Maurists, instead of *enim* with the *Sources Chrétiennes* edition. This turns the question into a statement: Because, you see, the Lord has magnified, etc.

11. “Happy” is an inadequate translation of *beatus*, which is also traditionally translated “blessed.” But it sounds unreal to say—the basic premise of his argument—that everybody wants to be blessed. On the other hand, it sounds unrealistically exaggerated to say here that it’s impossible to be happy in this life. So we must always interpret him as meaning fully, perfectly, definitively happy.

SERMON 232

PREACHED DURING THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: 412-413¹

*The Lord's resurrection recounted from all the gospels,
his passion only from Matthew*

1. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ was recounted today as well, but from a different book of the gospel, the one according to Luke. It was first read, you see, according to Matthew, while yesterday it was according to Mark, today according to Luke, the order of the evangelists as we have them; and his passion too was written up by all of them. But these seven or eight days give us space for the resurrection of the Lord to be recounted according to all the evangelists; while his passion, being read on one day only, is customarily read just according to Matthew.² Once upon a time I wanted the passion too to be read according to all the evangelists on successive years. It happened; people didn't hear what they were used to, and were upset. Those, however, who love the divine literature, and are not willing always to remain uneducated, know all of them and diligently study them all. But, *as God has allotted each the measure of faith* (Rom 2:3), so each makes progress.³

*The women telling the truth about Christ's resurrection are not believed,
while Eve passing on the devil's lies had been believed*

2. Now let us attend to what we heard today, when it was read. Today, you see, we heard more explicitly about what I also drew your graces' attention to yesterday, the unbelief of the disciples, to help us appreciate how much his goodness has bestowed on us, by enabling us to believe what we have not seen. He called them, he taught them, he lived with them on earth, he performed such stupendous miracles before their very eyes, to the very raising of the dead;⁴ he even raised the dead, and they didn't believe he could raise his own flesh.

The women came to the tomb; they didn't find the body in the tomb; they were told by angels that Christ had risen; women reported this to men. And what's written? What did you hear? *These things seemed in their eyes like stuff and nonsense* (Lk 24:11). How hugely unhappy is the human condition! When

Eve reported what the serpent had said, she was listened to straightaway.⁵ A lying woman was believed, and so we all died; they didn't believe women telling the truth so that we might live. If women are not to be trusted, why did Adam trust Eve? If women are to be trusted, why did the disciples not trust the holy women?

And thus it is that in this fact we have to reflect on the goodness of the Lord's arrangements. Because this of course was the doing of the Lord Jesus Christ, that it should be the female sex which would be the first to report that he had risen again. Because mankind fell through the female sex, mankind was restored through the female sex; because a virgin gave birth to Christ, a woman proclaimed that he had risen again. Through a woman death, through a woman life. But the disciples didn't believe what the women had said; they thought they were raving, when in fact they were reporting the truth.

The two disciples going to Emmaus thought of Christ only as a prophet, forgetting Peter's confession of him as the Christ, the Son of God

3. Here we are with two others, walking along the road, and talking to each other about the things that had been happening in Jerusalem, about the iniquity of the Jews, about the death of Christ. They were walking along, talking the matter over, grieving for him as if he were dead, not knowing he had risen again. He appeared and joined them as a third traveler, and entered into friendly conversation with them. Their eyes were held from recognizing him; their hearts, you see, needed more thorough instruction. Recognition is deferred; he inquires what they were talking about, so that they might confess what he already knew. And as you heard,⁶ they began by being astonished at being asked about a matter of such public knowledge by someone seemingly ignorant of it. *Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem and you do not know what has been done there? And he said, What? About Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet powerful in deeds and words (Lk 24:16-19).*

Is that it, you disciples? A prophet, was he, Christ the Lord of the prophets?⁷ You're giving your judge the title of herald. They had come down to what other people had said. What do I mean by what other people had said? Recall that when Jesus himself had said to his disciples, *Who do people say that the Son of man is?* they told him what other thought: *Some say, they said, that you are Elijah, others that you are John the Baptist, others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.* These were the words of other people, not of the disciples. And here we are, these disciples have come down to the same words. *But you, now, who do you say that I am?* You have told me other people's opinions, I want to hear your faith. Then Peter said, one for all of them because unity among all of them, *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Not just any one of the prophets, but the Son of the living God, the fulfiller of the prophets, the creator even of the angels.

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Peter then heard what it was fitting for him to hear after such words as these: *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 say to you, You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the underworld will not conquer her. To you will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven (Mt 6:13-19). It was faith that deserved to hear this, not the man; what was the man himself, after all, but what the psalm says: *Every man a liar (Ps 116:11)?*

How Peter was both blessed and Satan

4. Then immediately after these words he informed them about his passion and death. Peter was horrified, and said, *Far be it from you, Lord; this shall not happen. Then the Lord said, Get behind me, Satan.* Peter, Satan? Where now are those words, *Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona?* Surely Satan can't be blessed, can he? Well, blessed because of what is of God, Satan because of what is of man. In fact the Lord himself explained why he called him Satan: *For you do not savor of the things of God, but of the things of man (Mt 16:21-23).* What made you blessed just now? *Because flesh and blood did not reveal it to you, but my Father who is in heaven.* Why Satan so soon afterward? *You do not savor of the things of God*—when you did smack of them you were blessed—but *you smack of the things of man.*

Look how the souls of the disciples switched back and forth, as though from sunrise to sunset; one moment on their feet, the next flat on their backs; one moment enlightened, the next darkened. Enlightened how? *Approach him and be enlightened (Ps 34:5).* Darkened how? *The one who speaks a lie, speaks from what is his own (Jn 8:44).*⁸ The Son of God had said it, life had said it, and they were afraid that life might die, though it was absolutely impossible for life to die, and the Son of God had come precisely in order to die; if he hadn't come in order to die, what would ever have enabled us to live?

How we brought death to the Word, and he brought life to us

5. From where do we get life, from where does he get death? Just look at him: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (Jn 1:1).* Look for death there. Where? Where from? What sort of Word? The Word with God, the Word that was God. If you can find flesh and blood there, you can find death. So where did death come from for that Word? On the other hand, where did life come from for us human beings, stuck on the earth, mortal, perishable, sinners? He had nothing where he could get death from; we had nothing where we could get life from. He accepted death from what was ours, in order to give us life from what was his. How did he get death from what was ours? *The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14).* He accepted from us here what he would offer for us. And where did life come from for us? *And the life was the light of men (Jn 1:4).* He was life for us, we were death for him.⁹

But what sort of death? One due to his consideration, not his condition. Because he was courteously considerate, because he so willed it, because he took pity on us, he chose of his own authority to die. *I have the authority to lay down my life, and I have the authority to take it up again* (Jn 10:18). This was something Peter didn't know, when he was so horrified on hearing how the Lord would die.

But look now, the Lord had already said he was going to die and rise again on the third day. What he foretold had happened, and these two wouldn't believe what they had heard. *Why, it is now three days since these things happened, and we were thinking that he was the one who would redeem Israel* (Lk 24:21). You were hoping, now you're despairing? You have fallen from hope. The one who's walking along with you picks you up. They were disciples, they had heard him, they had lived with him, they had known him as their teacher, they had been instructed by him, and they couldn't even imitate and share the faith of the robber hanging on the cross.

Where the good thief found hope, the disciples lost it

6. But perhaps some of you don't understand what I have just said about the robber, as a result of not hearing the passion according to all the evangelists. It's this evangelist Luke, you see, who recounted what I am talking about. That two robbers were crucified with Christ Matthew also said; but that one of those robbers railed at the Lord, and that the other one believed in Christ, Matthew did not say, Luke said it. Let us bear in mind the faith of the robber, a faith Christ did not find after his resurrection in his disciples. Christ was hanging on the cross, and so was the robber; Christ in the middle, they on either side. One rails, the other believes, the one in the middle judges. The one who was railing at him, you see, said this: *If you are the Son of God, deliver yourself. And the other answered him: Do you not fear God? If we are deservedly suffering because of our deeds, what has this man done? And turning to him, he said: Remember me, Lord, when you come into your kingdom* (Lk 23:39-42). Great faith indeed; what could possibly be added to such faith, I really do not know. The ones who had seen Christ waking the dead wavered; the one who could see him then and there hanging on the tree with him, believed him. When they wavered is precisely when he believed.

What wonderful fruit Christ picked from the dry wood!¹⁰ I mean, what did Christ say to him? Let's hear it: *Amen I tell you, today you shall be with me in paradise* (Lk 23:43). You are putting off what you are asking for;¹¹ I am acknowledging you here and now. When would a robber ever hope to go from robbery to the judge, from the judge to the cross, from the cross straight to paradise? Anyway, he was paying attention to his deserts, and he didn't say, *"Remember me so as to deliver me today";* but *"When you come into your kingdom, then keep me in mind; so that if torments are my due, at least only until you come into your kingdom."*¹² But Jesus said, "Not so; you have invaded the kingdom of heaven, you have used force, you have believed, you have taken

it by storm.¹³ *Today you shall be with me in paradise.* I am not putting you off for a single moment; I'm paying today, on the dot, what I owe to such great faith." The robber says, *Remember me when you come into your kingdom;* he not only believed he would rise again, but also that he would reign; to a man hanging there, crucified, covered in blood, stuck there, *when you come,* he says, *into your kingdom.* And these two—*We were hoping* (Lk 24:21); where the robber found hope, the disciple lost it.

It is worth much more having Christ in one's heart than in one's house

7. And now then, my dearest friends, we have recognized the great sacrament.¹⁴ Listen. He was walking with them, he is hospitably entertained, he breaks bread, and he's recognized. And we too must not say that we have not known Christ. We have known him if we believe. It's too little to say we have known him if we believe; we have him with us if we believe. They had Christ with them at a meal together; we have him inside in our spirits. It's a greater thing to have Christ in your heart than in your house. Our hearts, after all, are more inwardly attached to us than our houses. So now then, where ought the faithful to recognize him? The faithful know where; the catechumens, though, don't know; but nobody is shutting the door in their faces, to stop them knowing.¹⁵

My riches are nothing else than your hope in Christ

8. Yesterday I warned you, and I'm warning¹⁶ your graces again that the resurrection of Christ is only in us if we live good lives; if our old bad life dies, and the new one makes progress every day. There are a great many penitents here; when hands are laid on them, there is an extremely long line. "Pray, penitents—and the penitents go out to pray."¹⁷ I examine the penitents, and I find people living bad lives. How can you be sorry for what you go on doing? If you're sorry, don't do it. If you go on doing it, though, the name's wrong, the crime remains.¹⁸ Some people have asked for a place among the penitents themselves; some have been excommunicated by me and reduced to the penitents' place. And those who asked for it themselves want to go on doing what they were doing, and those who have been excommunicated by me and reduced to the penitents' corner don't want to rise from there, as though penitents' corner were a really choice spot. It ought to be a place for humility, and it becomes a place for iniquity.

It's you I'm talking to, you that are called penitents and are not so, it's you I'm talking to. *What am I to say to you? Can I praise you? On this point I cannot praise you* (1 Cor 11:22), I can only groan and moan. And what am I to do, having become a cheap song?¹⁹ Change your ways, I beg you, change your ways. The end of life is totally uncertain. Everyone of us is riding for a fall.²⁰ You are all putting off living good lives, thinking that life will be long. You're thinking of a long life, and not afraid of a sudden death? But all right, let it be a long one;

and I look for one real penitent, and I can't find one.²¹ How much better a long, good life will be, than a long, bad one! Nobody wants to put up with a long, bad dinner, practically everybody wants to have a long, bad life.

Surely, surely, if it's a great thing that we should be alive, this great thing should be a good one. I mean, is there anything that you want to be bad, tell me, in all your actions, thoughts, longings? On your land you don't want a bad crop—of course you don't want a bad one, but a good one, a good tree, good horse, good servant, good friend, good son, good wife. And why should I mention these important things, since you don't even want to have bad clothes? Finally, down to your very boots, you only want good ones. Or grant me that you want anything that's bad, and don't want anything good. I imagine you don't want a bad country place, but a good one. Your soul is the only thing you want to have bad. How have you offended yourself? How have you deserved so badly of yourself? Among all your good things, the only one you want to be bad is yourself.²²

I suppose I'm only saying what I'm in the habit of saying, and some people, perhaps, are only doing what they are in the habit of doing. I didn't say "certainly," but "perhaps." No one should accuse me of speaking fearfully rather than strongly.²³ In the presence of God *I shake out my garments*. What I'm afraid of is being charged with being afraid. What do you want? I am carrying out my office, I am looking for profit from you.²⁴ What I want to get from your good works is joy, not money. After all, your living a good life doesn't make me rich. And yet all the same, live a good life, and you do make me rich. My riches are nothing else than your hope in Christ. My joy, my consolation, and the breathing space from my dangers amid all these trials is purely and simply your good lives. I beg you, brothers and sisters, even if you forget yourselves, take pity on me.

NOTES

1. See Sermon 231, note 1, for alternative suggestions about the date. The day of the octave in this case would seem to be Tuesday. The Maurist text differs frequently, and sometimes widely from the one mainly followed here, which is that of *Sources Chrétiennes*.

2. The one day only for the passion must have been Good Friday. So the custom was different in the Church of North Africa from that of the Roman Church, in which then as now (I imagine) it was always John's passion that was read on Good Friday. Evidently, also, there was no reading of Matthew's passion, in Hippo Regius, on Palm Sunday.

3. So the bishop gave in to the die-hard conservatives, and withdrew his sensible liturgical experiment—one entirely in line with Vatican II's idea of good liturgical reform. But he wasn't going to miss the chance of telling the reactionaries, mildly but unmistakably, what he thought of them.

4. Reading *usque ad mortuos suscitandos* with the Maurists, instead of *usque*. with the *Sources Chrétiennes* edition. Augustine cannot conceivably have ended a sentence with "as far as." It's true, *usque* can sometimes be put after the noun it governs, in idiomatic Latin; but here that would be "such stupendous miracles," and that would leave the verb without its object.

5. See Gn 3:6; we are readily familiar with the comparison and contrast of Eve with Mary. That of the holy women at the resurrection reversing the work of Eve is not so familiar, perhaps, but equally authentic.

6. Reading *et quod audistis* with the Maurists, instead of *Et quid audistis?*—And what did you hear?—with *Sources Chrétiennes*.

7. It is, in my view, one of the weaknesses of Augustine's "high" christology, focused so firmly on the divinity of Christ (while never in the least denying his humanity, of course), that he was indifferent to his "lower" titles, almost to the point of disparaging them; in particular this title of "prophet." Christ was a prophet—prophet, priest, and king. But when these two, or the man born blind (Jn 9:17), say that Jesus was a prophet, Augustine invariably takes it as a sign of their as yet undispelled ignorance. See Sermons 136B,1 and 136C,3. And the central title "Christ," which is precisely a human designation, the anointed king, he persistently treats as designating divinity.

8. Augustine here misquotes slightly; John is not making a general statement, but speaking specifically of the devil.

9. The resurrection of Christ from the dead, as the source and model of our new life, seems to have receded into the background, overshadowed by the tremendous mystery of the incarnation, precisely in virtue of that "high" christology remarked on above in note 7. So now it is Christ's *divine* life that we are being given in exchange for his human death, rather than his risen (but still human) life as a result of his human death—and as a result of our sharing in his redemptive death by faith. It is true, the preacher is shortly going to come back to the resurrection. But after all, this *is* an Easter sermon; and his high christology is rather tending to minimize the great paschal mystery. The Christ event is to some extent being pushed to one side by the mystery of Christ's being or person—Easter taking second place to Christmas.

10. See Lk 23:31. There is also, I think, a kind of reference to the story of the fig tree Jesus looked for fruit on, without finding any, Mk 11:13-14. 20-14.

11. Until the final coming of the kingdom at the end of the world.

12. A kind of doctrine of purgatory—or perhaps of hell from which rescue for some was possible—being attributed to the good thief.

13. See Lk 16:16.

14. Here, I think, he does quite simply mean the eucharist.

15. Reading with the Maurists *ut noverit*—the Latin has the catechumens in the singular—instead of *ut non intret* with the *Sources Chrétiennes* text, which would mean "to stop them entering"; see Mt 7:8.

The allusion is to the faithful, that is the baptized, knowing about the mystery of the eucharist, and Christ present in it, and the catechumens, according to the threadbare convention of "the secret," not knowing. He is telling these that there is nothing to stop them giving their names to become *competentes*, and so get in line for baptism next Easter, or even this coming Pentecost.

16. Reading with the Maurists *et admonero*, instead of *et admonui* with *Sources Chrétiennes*, which would mean "I warned you and warned you again."

17. Quoting the deacon's words, when the penitents, as being excommunicated, were dismissed with the catechumens before the eucharist proper began at the offertory. Hands were laid on them regularly as a kind of blessing. It was up to them to seek readmission to the ranks of the faithful, after demonstrating that they had turned over a new leaf—and this readmission was also enacted by a laying on of hands.

18. *Nomen errat, crimen manet*.

19. See Lam 3:14.

20. *Omnis homo cum suo casu ambulat*, which I take to be a proverbial saying. Perhaps it would be more prudent to translate it, "We all take our chances as we walk along."

21. Instead of this last sentence, from "I look," some manuscripts read "see to it that it's a good one." I am here following the Maurists; *Sources Chrétiennes* combines both readings, which is generally regarded as not being in accord with the best canons of textual criticism.

22. For this whole section, compare Sermons 72, 5 and 82, 14.

23. By saying "perhaps" instead of "certainly"? It is all very obscure. The contrast between

“fearfully” and “strongly” is not so plain in the Latin, where it is between *timendo* and *confirmando*, that is between an intransitive and a transitive verb, the latter implying an object—confirming you. So one might be tempted to emend *timendo* into *terrendo*, frightening you. All in all, I am sorely tempted to prefer the Maurist version, for which see next note.

24. From “I suppose” to this point the Maurists—that is to say, the manuscripts which they follow—tidy up this section as follows:

Think, if you like, that I’m only saying what I’m in the habit of saying, and you are only doing what you are in the habit of doing. I, in the presence of God, *am shaking my garments*. What I’m afraid of is being charged with saying nothing. I am carrying out my office, I am looking for profit from you.

SERMON 233

PREACHED DURING THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: 418¹

Now is the time for the work; then will be the time for the reward

1. You have heard the reading of the holy gospel about Christ's resurrection. The resurrection of Christ is what our faith is firmly based on. Both pagans and godless people² and Jews have believed about the passion of Christ; about his resurrection, only Christians. The passion of Christ signifies the miseries of this life; the resurrection of Christ shows us the blessedness, the bliss, of the future life. In the present one, let us toil away; in the future one, let us have hope. Now it's time for work; then for wages. If you're slack about engaging in the work, it's shameless of you to demand the wages.

You heard what he said to his disciples after the resurrection; he sent them to preach the gospel, and it happened; the gospel was preached, it came as far as us. And lo and behold, *their sound went out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world* (Ps 19:4). Steadily, step by step the gospel came as far as us, and to the ends of the earth.³ Very briefly, talking to his disciples, he laid down for us what we should be doing, what we should be hoping for. He said, you see, as you heard when he was talking, *Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved* (Mk 16:16). What is required of us is faith, what is offered us is salvation. *Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved*. What is promised us is so precious, and what we are commanded to do can be done for nothing.

The salvation or health promised us is very different from temporal health or safety

2. *Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved*. Well, how's that? Weren't the people who heard them already safe and sound?⁴ Don't many people who are already safe and sound believe; safe and sound, faring well even before they believe? Safe and sound, certainly; but *vain is the safety of men* (Ps 60:11). What is this welfare, this safety which you have in common with your beast of burden? And yet where do even they get it from, but the one of whom it is written, *Men and beasts you will save, Lord?* And he added, *according to the*

*multiplicity of your mercy, O God (Ps 36:6-7).*⁵ Such indeed is the multiplicity of your mercy, that safety and soundness comes from you to this mortal flesh of men, it even comes to the flesh of cattle. That is the multiplicity of your mercy. What is there for your children? Look, *men and beasts you will save, Lord*. Is there nothing more particular for us? What's granted to any sort of men at all, and to cattle, is that all that's granted also to us? No, it's certainly not all.

But what else? Listen. *But the sons of men will hope beneath the shelter of your wings, they will get drunk on the richness of your house, and from the torrent of your pleasure you will give them to drink. For with you is the fountain of life (Ps 36:7-9)*. Christ is the fountain of life. We used to have a kind of safety or welfare in common with beasts, until the fountain of life came to us; the fountain of life came to us, and the fountain of life died for our sakes. Will he deny us his life, after spending his death for us? This is the safety, the soundness that is not vain. Why not? Because it doesn't pass away.

*The difference between "men" and "sons of men"
is the difference between Adam and Christ*

3. This distinction is to be noted carefully: Men and beasts you will save, Lord. Men, belonging to the man. But the sons of men, belonging to the Son of man, *will hope beneath the shelter of your wings*. Set before your eyes two men; shake up your faith, let your minds be alert. Recall the man in whom we were all deceived; recall the man by whom we were all redeemed. Was that first man a son of man? Adam was a man, he wasn't a son of man. That's why the Lord Christ assiduously calls himself the Son of man, to make us remember the man who was not a son of man; remember death by that one, life by this one; by that one sin, by this one forgiveness of sins; by that one chains, by this one freedom; by that one condemnation, by this one absolution.

So these two men are indicated in these words: *Men and beasts you will save, Lord*; men, belonging to the man, and beasts; you will save them together with the beasts. Because man, you see, set up in honor, did not understand, as it is written: *Man, set up in honor, did not understand; he was compared to irrational beasts, and became like them (Ps 49:12.20)*. That's why *men and beasts*, which men have become like, because they did not understand, and to which they have been compared, though they were created to be their masters, *men and beasts you will save*.

*Christ, "in the likeness of the flesh of sin," knows death because he's
in the likeness, but does not know sin, because he is not "in the flesh of sin"*

4. That, surely, is not the safety, the salvation, about which it says, *Everyone who believes and is baptized shall be saved (Mk 16:16)*, is it? That's a different, a very different salvation and welfare and health. It's one the angels have; don't look for it on earth. It's great, but it's not to be found here. This isn't a thing of this region, such health or salvation is not to be found here. Up with your hearts;

why look for this sort of health and welfare here on earth? This sort of health and welfare came here, and found our death here. Did our Lord Jesus Christ, when he came to us in the flesh, find this health and welfare, this salvation, here in our region? This merchant brought along something tremendous when he came from his own region; this merchant found in our region what there is plenty of here. What is there plenty of here? Being born and dying. Earth is full of this merchandise, being born and dying; he was born, and he died.

But in what way was he born? He came to this region, but he did not come in the same way as we do. You see, he came down from heaven, from the Father. And yet he was born a mortal. He was born of the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary. That's not how we were born of Adam and Eve, is it? We were born by means of the lust of the flesh, while he was not. Mary, after all, conceived him as a virgin without a man's embrace, without the heat of lust; because it was to preserve her from experiencing this heat that she was told, *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you* (Lk 1:35). So the Virgin Mary did not sleep with someone and conceive; she believed and conceived.

Yes, he was born a mortal, for the sake of mortals. Why mortal? Because *in the likeness of the flesh of sin* (Rom 8:3); not in the flesh of sin, but in the likeness of the flesh of sin. What has the flesh of sin got? Death and sin. What did the likeness of the flesh of sin have? Death without sin. If it had had sin, it would have been the flesh of sin; if it hadn't had death, it wouldn't have been the likeness of the flesh of sin. That's how he came, came as savior. He died, but he slew death; he put an end in himself to what we were afraid of. He embraced it, and killed it. Like the greatest of hunters, he caught hold of the lion, and killed it.

Death will eventually be swallowed up in victory

5. Where is death now? Look for it in Christ, it's no longer there; it was there, however, and it died there. Oh, what life, the death of death! Be of good heart, it will also die in us. What has first occurred in the head will also be given to the members; death will also die in us. But when? At the end of the world, in the resurrection of the dead, which we believe, about which we have no doubts. *Whoever believes, after all, and is baptized shall be saved.* Carry on —what you should be afraid of: *But whoever does not believe shall be condemned* (Mk 16:16). So death will die in us, while it will go on living in the damned. Where death doesn't experience death, there will be everlasting death, because there will be eternal torments.

In us it will die, and be no more. Do you want to be sure of it? Let me say to you a few words of triumphant conquerors, so that you may have something to meditate on, to sing in your hearts, to hope for with all your heart, to join the quest for with faith and good works. Listen to the words of the triumphant conquerors when death shall be no more, when in us too, as also in our head, death shall be dead. Paul the apostle says, *It is necessary for this perishable*

thing to put on imperishability, and this mortal thing to put on immortality. Then will come true the word which is written: Death has been swallowed up in victory. I told you that death will die in us: death has been swallowed up in victory. Let the conquerors rejoice in triumph; let them rejoice and say what follows: Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your sting? (1 Cor 15:53-55). Didn't my Lord blunt and break it in pieces? O death, when you clung to my Lord, that's when you perished for me.

That's the health, the welfare, the safe and sound salvation with which whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved. But whoever does not believe shall be condemned (Mk 16:16). Avoid that condemnation; love, desire, and hope for eternal salvation.

NOTES

1. So Lambot; Poque suggests after 412, Fischer and Kunzelmann after 400. The direct simplicity of his words inclines me to favor the latest date. As the gospel reading was evidently from Mark 16, we may infer that the sermon was preached on Easter Monday.

2. *Impii*. This passage makes one wonder if this wasn't perhaps an almost technical term for people with no religion at all, whom we would call agnostics and atheists, and who would perhaps call themselves humanists.

3. The ends of the earth being very specifically the Atlantic seaboard of Africa and Europe.

4. He is going to play on the wide range of reference of the words *salvus* and *salus* in Latin; a range that extends from salvation, being saved, to safety, being safe and sound, welfare, health.

5. My guess is that he is getting his lines crossed a little, with Ps 51:1. Here verse 7 does not say, even in his Latin text, "according to," etc., but starts a new sentence: "How you have multiplied your mercy, Lord." But see Sermon 23, 11, where he quotes these verses in the same way.

SERMON 234

PREACHED DURING THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: 418¹

The evangelists tell different stories about the appearances of Christ after his resurrection

1. During these days we have the accounts read of the Lord's resurrection according to all four evangelists. The reason it's necessary for all of them to be read, is that they didn't each say everything, but one said what another passed over; and after a fashion they all made way for each other, so that all of them would be needed. The evangelist Mark, whose gospel was chanted yesterday, said very briefly what Luke followed up more fully, about a couple of disciples, who were not indeed of the number of the twelve, but still were disciples, to whom the Lord appeared while they were on a journey, and walked along with them. Mark, you see, just said that he appeared to two who were on a journey,² while this evangelist Luke has told us what he said to them, and what answer he gave them, and how far he walked with them, and how they knew him in the breaking of bread; he said all that, as we heard just now.³

The good thief confessing Christ could have taught a lesson to the disciples whose faith wavered

2. So what, brothers and sisters, what have we got here to discuss? We are being reassured about believing that Christ the Lord has risen again. We already believed it when we heard the gospel, and we entered this church today believing it; and yet I don't know how it is, but it is such a joy to hear what is being renewed in our memories. Don't you like that heart-warming feeling, when we seem to be better than these two who were walking along the road, and to whom the Lord appeared? We, after all, believe what they didn't yet believe. They had lost hope, and we have no doubts about what they did have doubts about. They had lost hope when the Lord was crucified; this is clear from their words, when he said to them, *What is this conversation you are having with each other, and why are you so sad? And they said, Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem, and you do not know the things that have been happening there? And he answered,*

What things? Though he knew it all, he was asking about himself, because of his desire that he himself should be in them. *What things?* he said. And they told him, *About Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet, great in words and deeds.* There you are; we're better than they were; they were calling Christ a prophet; we know him to be the Lord of the prophets.⁴

He was, they said, a prophet great in deeds and words; and how the chief priests crucified him; and here, it is now three days since all these things happened. We, though, were hoping. You were hoping; now you're no longer hoping? Is this the sum total of your discipleship? The robber on the cross beat you to it. You have forgotten the one who used to teach you; he recognized the one he was hanging with there. *We were hoping.* What were you hoping? *That it was he who would redeem Israel* (Lk 24:17-21). What you were hoping, the hope you lost when he was crucified, is what the crucified robber recognized. He said to the Lord, you see, *Lord, remember me, when you come into your kingdom* (Lk 23:42). There you are, he was indeed the one who would redeem Israel. That cross was a classroom; that's where the Master taught the robber; the tree he was hanging on became the chair he was teaching from.

But since he has given himself back to you, let him call you back to hope. And indeed that's just what happened. Remember, though, dearly beloved, how the Lord Jesus wished himself to be recognized in the breaking of bread, by those whose eyes had been kept till then from recognizing him. The faithful know what I'm talking about; they know Christ in the breaking of bread. It isn't every loaf of bread, you see, but the one receiving Christ's blessing, that becomes the body of Christ.⁵ That's where they recognized him, they were overjoyed, they went straight to the others; they found they already knew; by telling what they had seen, they added to the gospel.⁶ It was all said, all done, all written down; it reached us.

*Faith in the resurrection distinguishes us from pagans and Jews;
faith working through love must distinguish us from the demons*

3. Let us believe in Christ crucified; but in him as the one who rose again on the third day. That's the faith that distinguishes us from them, distinguishes us from the pagans, distinguishes us from the Jews; the faith by which we believe that Christ has risen from the dead. The apostle says to Timothy, *Remember that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel* (2 Tm 2:8); and again the same apostle: *Because if you believe in your heart, he says, that Jesus is Lord, and confess with your lips that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved* (Rom 10:9). That is the salvation, the well-being, the safety and the soundness, which I discussed yesterday.⁷ *Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved* (Mk 16:16). I know that you believe; you will be saved. Hold firmly in your hearts, profess it with your lips, that Christ has risen from the dead.

But have the faith of Christians, not of demons. Here, you see, are the distinctions I'm making for you; they are my distinctions I'm making, but I'm

making them for you according to the grace of God that has been given me. When I've made them, take your choice, stick to it with love.⁸ Here you are, I've said that this faith, by which we believe that Christ Jesus has risen from the dead, is what distinguishes us from the pagans. Ask a pagan whether Christ was crucified, and he exclaims, "Oh, sure"; whether he has risen again: he denies it. Ask a Jew whether Christ was crucified, he confesses the crime of his ancestors; he confesses the crime in which he also has a share. You see, he drinks what his ancestors poured out for him: *His blood be upon us and upon our children* (Mt 27:25).⁹ But ask him whether he rose again from the dead—he will deny it, will ridicule the idea, make accusations.¹⁰ We've distinguished ourselves from them; we, after all, do believe that Christ, of the seed of David according to the flesh, rose again from the dead.

Were the demons ignorant of all this, or did the demons not believe these things, which they also saw? Already, before he had risen, they cried out and said, *We know who you are, the Son of God* (Mk 1:25). We were distinguishing ourselves from the pagans by believing that Christ has risen again. If we possibly can, let's differentiate ourselves from the demons. What is it, I ask you, what is it that the demons said? *We know who you are, the Son of God*. And they are told, *Be quiet* (Mk 1:25). Didn't they say exactly what Peter also said, when Jesus was inquiring of them, and said, *Who do people say I am?* And when they had answered about other people's opinions, he questioned them once more and said, *You, though, who do you say I am?* Peter answered, *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*. Thus the demons, thus Peter; thus evil-minded spirits, thus the apostle. And the demons are told, *Be quiet*; Peter is told, *Blessed are you* (Mt 16:13-17).

What made the difference for them, also makes the difference for us. What made the demons cry out like this? Fear. What made Peter? Love. Take your choice, stick to it with love. That's the faith which differentiates Christians from demons; not any old faith, because the apostle James says, *You believe—the letter of the apostle James has this in it: You believe that God is one; you do well. The demons too believe, and tremble* (Jas 2:19). Yes, he said this, having also written in the same letter, *If someone has faith, but does not have works, can faith save him?* (Jas 2:14). And the apostle Paul makes the same distinction when he says, *Neither circumcision is of any avail, nor uncircumcision; but faith which works through love* (Gal 5:6).

We've established the difference, made the distinction; or rather we have discovered the thing distinguished, read the thing distinguished, learned the thing distinguished.¹¹ Just as we are distinguished from others by faith, so let us also be distinguished by morals, be distinguished by works, on fire with charity, which the demons never had. It's the fire those two also were burning with on the road. When Christ, you see, had been recognized and had left them, they said to each other, *Were our hearts not burning within us on the road, when he opened the scriptures to us?* (Lk 24:32). Burn, then; in order not to burn with the fire the demons are going to burn with.

Be on fire with the ardor of charity, in order to differentiate yourselves from

demons. This ardor whirls you upward, takes you upward, lifts you up to heaven. Whatever vexations you suffer on earth, however much the enemy may humiliate Christian hearts and press them downward, the ardor of love seeks the heights. Here's a comparison for you. If you're holding a burning torch,¹² holding it upright with its head on top, the flame, like hair, surges up toward the sky; lower the torch, the flame goes up to the sky; turn the torch upside down, do you also push the flame down to the earth? Wherever the burning brand is turned, the flame knows no other road, but to seek the sky. *Fervent in spirit* (Rom 12:11), set yourselves alight with the fire of charity; get yourselves white-hot with the praises of God and the excellence of your morals. One person's warm, another cold; let the warm person kindle the cold; and let the one who is lacking in ardor desire an increase, pray for assistance. The Lord is always ready to give; let us choose to receive with open, expansive hearts.

Turning to the Lord, etc.

NOTES

1. For other suggestions, see Sermon 233, note 1. From the opening section we may infer that this sermon was preached on the Tuesday of Easter week, the day after Sermon 233.

2. See Mk 16:12.

3. See Lk 24:13-32.

4. See Sermon 232, note 7.

5. This illustrates very well how threadbare the so-called "discipline of the secret" had become; he gives the secret away almost immediately after referring to it.

6. See Lk 24:30-35.

7. See Sermon 233.

8. *Eligite, diligite*; choose, love.

9. Elsewhere, when he talks about Jews drinking the blood they had shed, he means by it their conversion to Christ, and their drinking his blood in faith, in the eucharist. See, for example, Sermon 229F, 1. His using the image here in a negative, anti-Jewish sense without any qualification, may possibly mean that this sermon was much earlier than I propose in note 1; that is, if my thesis set out in Sermon 223C, note 2, that Augustine grew progressively more benign toward the Jews the older he got, is correct.

10. As in Mt 28:11-15.

11. That is, charity or love.

12. The torch was a piece of wood, usually resinous like pine, perhaps with the top of it soaked in pitch. In our electrical days we have rather forgotten what these simple conveniences were like.

SERMON 235

PREACHED DURING THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: before 417¹

Do not worry about some evangelists leaving out what others mention; it is one and the same Spirit speaking the truth through each and every one of them

1. Yesterday² the story of the Savior's resurrection was read from the gospel, but it was read from the gospel according to Mark.³ Today, however, as you heard the lector⁴ proclaiming it, the Lord's resurrection was chanted as the evangelist Luke wrote about it. What you often need reminding of, and you really mustn't forget this, is that you shouldn't be worried because one evangelist says something that another leaves out; because the one who leaves out what the first says, also says something that the first had left out. There are some things, though, that only one of them says, the other three don't say; some things that two of them say, the others don't; some things that three say, and one doesn't. But such is the authority of the holy gospel, that because one and the same Spirit was speaking in them, even what only one of them says is true.

So what you heard just now, that the Lord Jesus, after rising from the dead, found two of his disciples on the road, talking to each other about all that had happened, and said to them *What is this conversation you are having with each other, and you are so sad?* (Lk 24:17), and so on; this is something only the evangelist Luke said. Mark touched on it briefly, that he appeared to two of them on the road;⁵ but what they said to the Lord, or what the Lord said to them, he left out.

The disciples were so shattered by the crucifixion that they forgot all Christ's teaching and promises

2. So what benefit has this reading bestowed on us? A very considerable one, if we understand it rightly. Jesus appeared. He was seen with their eyes, and wasn't recognized. The Master was walking with them along the way, and he himself was the way.⁶ And they weren't yet walking along the way; he found, you see, that they had wandered off the way. After all, when he had been with them before the passion, he had foretold everything; that he was going to suffer,

to die, to rise again on the third day.⁷ He had foretold it all, but his death had erased it from their memories. They were so shattered when they saw him hanging on the tree, that they forgot about him teaching, they were not expecting him to be rising, nor holding on to what he had been promising.

We, they said, *were hoping that it was he that would redeem Israel* (Lk 24:21). O my dear disciples, you were hoping! So now you're no longer hoping? Look, Christ is alive; is hope dead in you? Certainly, certainly, Christ is alive. Christ, being alive, found the hearts of his disciples dead, appearing to their eyes, and not appearing. He was at one and the same time seen, and concealed. I mean, if he wasn't seen, how could they have heard him questioning them, and answered his questions? He was walking with them along the road like a companion, and was himself the leader. Of course he was seen, but he wasn't recognized. *For their eyes were held*, as we heard, *so that they wouldn't recognize him* (Lk 24:16). They weren't held so that they wouldn't see him, but they were held so that they wouldn't recognize him.

We break bread, and we recognize the Lord

3. Ah yes, brothers and sisters, but where did the Lord wish to be recognized? In the breaking of bread. We're all right, nothing to worry about; we break bread, and we recognize the Lord. It was for our sakes that he didn't want to be recognized anywhere but there, because we weren't going to see him in the flesh, and yet we were going to eat his flesh.⁸ So if you're a believer, any of you, if you're not called a Christian for nothing, if you don't come to church pointlessly, if you listen to the word of God in fear and hope, you may take comfort in the breaking of bread. The Lord's absence is not an absence. Have faith, and the one you cannot see is with you. Those two, even when the Lord was talking to them, did not have faith, because they didn't believe he had risen, nor had they any hope that he could rise again. They had lost faith, lost hope. They were walking along, dead, with Christ alive, they were walking along, dead, with life itself. Life was walking along with them, but in their hearts life had not yet been restored.⁹

You too, then, if you want to have life, do what they did in order to recognize the Lord. They showed him hospitality. The Lord, you see, was like someone who still had a long way to go, but they held him back. When they reached the place they were making for, they said, *Stay with us now, the day has faded toward evening* (Lk 24:29). Constrain the stranger, if you want to recognize the Savior. What had been lost through infidelity was restored through hospitality. So the Lord made himself present in the breaking of bread. Learn where to look for the Lord, learn where to have him, learn where to recognize him. It's when you eat him. The faithful, you see, know something which they can understand better in this reading than those who don't know it.

*Faith is built up by the Lord's absence; sight when he comes again
will be the reward of faith now*

4. The Lord Jesus¹⁰ was made known, and after being made known he appeared no more. He withdrew from them in the body, since he was held by them in faith. That indeed is why the¹¹ Lord absented himself in the body from the whole Church, and ascended into heaven, for the building up of faith. After all, if you only know what you can see, where does faith come in? But if you also believe what you cannot see, when you do see it you will rejoice. Let faith be built up,¹² because it will be paid back with sight. It will come, what we cannot see, it will come, brothers and sisters, it will come. Mind how it finds you.¹³

Because it will come, what people are referring to when they say, "Where is it, when is it, how is it? When will it be, when is he going to come?" You may be quite sure, he will come. Not only will he come, but he will come even if you don't want him to. Woe to those who haven't believed, and great joy to those who have believed! Believers will rejoice, unbelievers will be confounded. Believers are going to say, "Thank you, Lord; what we heard is true, what we believed is true, what we hoped is true, what we now see is true." Unbelievers, though, are going to say, "Where has the fact of our not believing got us to, where the fact that we used to think that what was read was all lies?"¹⁴ That's how it will happen, and confusion will be paid with punishment, while joyful thankfulness will receive its reward; because *those will go into eternal burning, and the just into eternal life* (Mt 25:46).

Turning to the Lord, etc.

NOTES

1. So Lambot; Fischer says before 400, Kunzelmann after 400, Poque 400–412. The *Revue Bénédictine* edition says it was preached on Easter Monday. I prefer to follow the Maurists, because I infer, from its subject being the reading about the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, that it was preached on the Tuesday. The evidence of the manuscripts is conflicting; see note 3 below.

2. Most manuscripts add, "that is, during the night."

3. The same manuscripts here read "Matthew." One copyist somewhere along the line was clearly correcting his text. I think, against both Maurists and the *Revue Bénédictine*, that he added *id est nocte* (note 2 above), which bears all the marks of a gloss based on a faulty historical understanding of earlier liturgical practice, and changed "Mark" to "Matthew" here. I very much doubt if Augustine would have said *id est nocte*—referring presumably to the vigil—because when the gospel came to be read at that service, it was no longer night, but already dawn on Easter Sunday morning; though I find he does say that quite clearly in Sermon 236A, 2. Still from Sermons 233 and 234 it is clear that Mark's resurrection narrative was read the day before Luke's.

4. One of the old minor orders. Lectors were often boys being brought up with the clergy and educated with a view to future ordination as deacons and presbyters themselves. So the reading of the gospel was not yet considered the prerogative of deacons.

5. See Mk 16:14.

6. See Jn 14:6.

7. See Mk 8:31-32.

8. See Jn 6:53-54.

9. So the Maurists. The *Revue Bénédictine* text omits “restored,” *renovata*, and reads simply “but in their hearts there was no life yet.”

10. So the Maurists. The *Revue Bénédictine* text, instead of *Dominus Jesus cognitus est*, reads *Dominus his cognitus est*; the Lord was made known to these men. How could such an alternative between *Jesus* and *his* arise? Either, if the RB text is right, *his* was written *ihs* by mistake, and that is the traditional abbreviation for *Jesus*; or else this abbreviation was written carelessly as *hs*, and then corrected into *his*.

11. *Revue Bénédictine* has “our Lord.”

12. Reading *aedificetur* with the Maurists instead of *aedificatur*, “Faith is being built up,” with *Revue Bénédictine*.

13. *Quomodo te inveniat*—playing on the repeated *veniet*, “it will come,” of the preceding sentence. One might perhaps translate, “Mind how it comes upon you.”

14. Here the Maurists add, in parentheses, a few sentences which an older edition had included in this sermon; a fragment from another sermon, which may have been, they suggest, on the creed. It will be included in a subsequent volume of this series, with all other authentic fragments of lost sermons.

SERMON 236

PREACHED DURING THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: 410-412¹

Christ died for our sins, rose again for our justification

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as the apostle says, *died on account of our misdeeds, and rose again on account of our justification* (Rom 4:25). Just as we are sown with his death, so we germinate with his resurrection. In fact his death signifies the death of our life. On this point listen to the apostle: *We have been buried, he says, together with Christ 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). He didn't have anything to correct on the cross, because he ascended the cross without sin. We are the ones to be corrected on his cross, and there let us lay aside the evil we have contracted, so that we may be justified by his resurrection.

You see, we must make the distinction like this: *He was handed over on account of our misdeeds, and rose again on account of our justification*; he didn't say, "He was handed over on account of our justification, and rose again on account of our misdeeds." The idea of misdeed echoes in his being handed over, that of justice echoes in his rising again. So, let misdeed die, and justice rise again.

*The disciples had lost faith and hope;
we as believers are better than they were then*

2. This hope, this gift, this promise, this tremendous grace, well when Christ died his disciples proceeded to lose it from their spirits, and on his death they fell away from hope. Here we have them being brought the news of his resurrection, and the words of the messengers *seemed to them like stuff and nonsense* (Lk 24:11). Truth had become like stuff and nonsense. If ever the resurrection is proclaimed nowadays, and someone thinks it's stuff and nonsense, doesn't everybody say he's all twisted up?² Doesn't everybody loathe and detest what he says, turn away, close their ears, refuse to listen? There you are, that's what the disciples were when Christ died; what we abhor is what they were. The leading rams had the disease which the lambs shudder at.

Then as for these two, to whom he appeared on the road, and their eyes were held so that they wouldn't recognize him, their very words reveal where their hearts were; and the voice bears witness to what is going on in the spirit—but to us; because to him even the heart was an open book. They were talking to each other about his death. He joined them like a third traveler; and the Way³ began to converse on the way, to join in their conversation. He asks what they were talking about together, while knowing everything already; it was in order, however, like someone who didn't know, to prod them into confession. And they say to him, *Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem, and you do not know what has been done in it these days, about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a great prophet?* (Lk 24:18-19).

No longer the Lord, but a prophet. That, you see, is what they thought he had been, now that he was dead. They still revered him as a prophet, they didn't yet acknowledge him as the Lord, not only of prophets but of angels. *How*, they went on, *our elders and chief priests handed him over to be condemned to death. And here we are, it is now the third day since these things were done. We, however, were hoping that it was he who would redeem Israel* (Lk 24:20-21). Is that the sum total of his labor? You were hoping, now you are despairing? You can see that they had completely lost hope.

So he began to expound the scriptures to them, to help them recognize Christ precisely in the point on which they had forsaken Christ. The reason, you see, that they had despaired of Christ was that they had seen him dead. He, however, opened the scriptures to them, so that they would realize that if he hadn't died, he couldn't be the Christ. He taught them from Moses, he taught them from the following scriptures, he taught them from the prophets, what he had told them: *that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer, and so enter into his glory* (Lk 24:26). They listened, they were filled with joy, they breathed again, and as they declared themselves, they were on fire;⁴ and still they didn't recognize the presence of the light.

*When one Christian shows hospitality to another who is a stranger,
it is Christ himself who is being made welcome*

3. But what a mystery, my brothers and sisters! He goes in with them, he becomes their guest; and while he hadn't been recognized all along the way, he is now recognized in the breaking of bread. Learn to take in strangers as guests, where Christ can be recognized. Or didn't you know that if you take in any Christian, you are taking in him? Didn't he say himself, *I was a stranger, and you took me in?* And when he's asked, *Lord, when did we see you a stranger?* he answers, *When you did it to one of the least of mine, you did it to me* (Mt 25:35.38.40). So when a Christian takes in a Christian, members are serving members; and the head rejoices, and reckons as given to himself whatever has been lavished on a member of his.

So here let Christ be fed when he's hungry, be given a drink when he's thirsty, clothed when he's naked, taken in when he's a stranger, visited when he's sick.

Such are the needs of the journey; that's how we have to live in this wandering exile, in which Christ is in want. He's in want in his people, he's replete in himself. But being in want in his people, replete in himself, he brings those who are in want to himself. In that place there will be no hunger, there will be no thirst, there will be no nakedness, there will be no sickness, there will be no exile, there will be no toil, there will be no sorrow. I know that none of these things will be found there, and I don't know what will be found there.

After all, I'm acquainted by experience with these things that won't be found there; but as for what we are going to find there, *neither has eye seen, nor ear heard, nor has it come up into the heart of man* (1 Cor 2:9). We can love, we can desire, in this exile we can sigh for such a great good; think worthy thoughts about it and explain it in suitable words, that we cannot do. I certainly can't. So, my dear brothers and sisters, look for someone who can. If you can find such a person, drag me along with you as a disciple.

What I do know, is that *the one who is able*, as the apostle says, *to do far beyond what we ask or understand* (Eph 3:20), will take us through to where what is written will come true: *Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they will praise you for ever and ever* (Ps 84:4). There, our whole business will be the praise of God. What will we praise, if we haven't loved it? And what we have loved⁵ is what we shall see. I mean, we shall see the truth, and God, whom we shall be praising, will be that truth. There we shall find what today we have sung: *Amen*, it is true; *alleluia*, praise the Lord.

NOTES

1. This time this is the only date suggested, by Poque. Again, the sermon being on the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, it was probably preached on the Tuesday of Easter week.

2. *Habere illum grande tormentum*, literally, "he has great torment." If he had said, "he will have great torment," the meaning would have been clear. But as he puts it in the present, not the future, I think he must be using *tormentum* in a sense closer to its primary meaning of a twister or twisting instrument; here, the result of being twisted.

3. See Jn 14:6.

4. See Lk 24:32.

5. "Have loved," *amavimus*, in these two sentences is the reading of older editors, no doubt with some manuscript support. The Maurists changed it in both cases to the future, *amabimus*, on the strength of what they evidently regarded as the best manuscript. To my mind this makes much less sense. As we have noted before, to someone copying from dictation, or taking down Augustine's sermon in shorthand, b and v would have been almost indistinguishable, as in contemporary Spanish.

SERMON 236A

PREACHED DURING THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: uncertain¹

*The resurrection accounts of all the evangelists
read during Easter week are true*

1. During these holy days of Easter, as your graces know well, brothers and sisters, the resurrection of the Lord is solemnly recited according to all the evangelists. They wrote up their accounts, you see, in such a way that some things they all said together, while some would be passed over by one or other of them, but none of them sounded a discordant note that clashed with the harmony of truth. All of them said that the Lord, after being crucified and buried, rose again on the third day; but on how he appeared to the disciples, seeing that he appeared in many ways, some said some things which others passed over; all of them, however, consigned the truth to writing.

*The disciples, not yet being believers,
were even inferior to us, who do believe*

2. For example, the other night during the vigil,² if you remember, we had the reading of how the Lord appeared after the resurrection to the women, who were the first ones he greeted, saying, *Hail! But they came up, and clung to his feet, and besought him* (Mt 28:9). Again today we had the reading of how he appeared to two of his disciples walking along the road; *For they were walking with him and did not know him; for their eyes were held, so that they would not recognize him* (Lk 24:15-16); recognition was kept back for the breaking of bread. He went with them, you see; he was hospitably welcomed by them as a guest; he blessed the bread, broke it, and they recognized him.³

That's how you recognize Christ, those of you who believe he is the Christ. But your graces should consider what all the disciples were like before the Lord's resurrection. I beg their pardon for saying so, but they weren't yet believers; they became great believers later on, but before that they were even inferior to us. We, I mean to say, believe that Christ has risen again, which they didn't yet believe. But afterward they saw, they touched, they went over him

with eyes and hands, and in that way they believed, and their hearts were given strength from the holy scriptures. So they drank, they burst forth,⁴ and they filled us up too.

They think of Christ only as a prophet, forgetting how Peter had confessed him to be the Son of God

3. So they were talking together about these things, grieving over the death of Christ, as of a mere man, and Jesus appeared to them, and joined them as their companion, making three, and inquired what they were talking about together. They answered him, *Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem; you don't know what has been happening there these days, how the chief priests handed Jesus over to death, he being a great prophet?* (Lk 24:18-20). O you disciples, what has the Lord come to, now just a prophet? Isn't he the one who filled all the prophets? You can see, brothers and sisters, how these disciples did believe, but out of despair at the Lord's death had gone back to the words which strangers used to employ about Christ.

You remember, dearest friends, that on one occasion the Lord said to his disciples, *Who do people say that the Son of man is?* And they told him in reply the words and opinions of other people, not their own faith, and they said, *Some say you are John the Baptist, others Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the prophets* (Mt 16:13-14). So that's what these two disciples had gone back to; they had lost their own faith, they had begun to hold other people's. *He being a prophet*, they said. That's what other people were saying about Christ. But what did the disciples say? When Christ said, *Who do you say that I am? Peter answered, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And the Lord said to him: Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, as it has to those who call me a prophet, but my Father, who is in heaven; and I say to you, you are Peter* (Mt 16:15-18). You have said to me, let me say to you; you have made your confession of faith, now hear my blessing.

You see, the Lord had said about himself what was less important, and Peter had told him what was more important. In the Lord Jesus Christ, after all, what was less important was his being the Son of man; what was more important was his being the Son of God.⁵ He mentioned the less important thing, because he humbled himself; the one whom he exalted mentioned the more important one.⁶ *Upon this rock*, said the Lord, *I will build my Church. Upon this confession, upon this that you said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not conquer her* (Mt 16:18). Well, the gates of hell had conquered these two; they had moved away from the rock,⁷ they had failed in the arena. Come to the aid of the disciples, Lord; break bread, so that you can be recognized. If you don't gather them in, they're lost for good. How you have sought them! Look, they are disciples, and they call you a prophet!⁸

The good thief was invited to teach the disciples a lesson in faith

4. That, though, was when Jesus opened up the scriptures for them, because they had given up hope and said, *But we were hoping that it was he who would redeem Israel* (Lk 24:21). O my dear disciples, you were hoping, now you're not hoping? Come here, robber, give the disciples a lesson. Why have you given up hope, just because you have seen him crucified, because you've looked at him hanging there, because you have thought him weak? He was like that for the robber too, hanging on the cross beside him; he was sharing in his punishment and he believed straightaway and acknowledged him, while you on the other hand have forgotten he is *the author of life* (Acts 3:15). Cry out, robber, from the cross; you, a criminal, win over the saints. What did they say? *We were hoping that it was he who would redeem Israel*. What did this man say? *Lord, remember me, when you come in⁹ your kingdom* (Lk 23:42). So you were hoping, were you, that it was he who would redeem Israel? O my dear disciples, if he was the one that was going to redeem Israel, it means you have defected. But he has reinstated you, he didn't abandon you.¹⁰ By becoming your companion on the way, he himself became for you the way.

But that Peter who had said, *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God* (Mt 16:16), wasn't there at the time; he wasn't with them. He was thinking about Christ wherever he was; because he was with them before the Lord died, that's when he denied him, but wept when Jesus looked back at him. Now, though, when the Lord had been crucified and was dead . . .¹¹ Perhaps, you see, he was thinking that the Jews had been mocking when they said, *If he is the Son of God, let him come down from the cross, and we can believe in him* (Mt 27:42; Lk 23:35), when perhaps the disciples too had been saying it, not in mockery, but urging him to come down from the cross. But after he failed to do so, and gave up the spirit, and was seen to be dead on the tree, just as all other men die, then wrapped in a shroud and buried, when they too gave up hope, and among those who lost hope was Peter too; after the resurrection, as the evangelist Mark says, *he appeared to the women; he said, Go tell my disciples, and Peter, that I have risen from the dead* (Mk 16:7).

Because the Lord had already appeared to the faithful women; and they went back and brought the good news to the disciples, that they had seen a vision of angels, who told them, *Why seek the one who lives with the dead? He is not here, he has risen again* (Lk 24:5-6); and that they had not found his body in the tomb. That's what the women said, and the men didn't believe them. They announced these things to the apostles—announced to the announcers who he really was. I mean, when he had been casting erring spirits out of the bodies of possessed people, these spirits in their contortions, and afflicted with torments, had said, *What is there between us and you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Why have you come before the time to torment us?* (Mt 8:29).¹²

NOTES

1. The edition from which the text translated here comes, Caillou and Saint Yves II, 60, also published in PLS 2, 1074-1075, gives as the title "On the Monday of Easter." But as it is clearly on the Emmaus text of Lk 24, I am sticking to my previously explained opinion that it is more likely to have been preached on the Tuesday of Easter week.

Caillou and Saint Yves don't end the sermon with section 4, as we do here, but add four more sections. Their authenticity, however, has been seriously questioned, and they have been plausibly attributed to John Chrysostom—in a Latin translation from his Greek, of course. If this is the case, it means that the conclusion of Augustine's sermon is missing, as it clearly does not end at the end of section 4. But see notes 11 and 12 below for doubting even the authenticity of the concluding portion of that section.

2. *In nocte praeterita vigiliarum*. Does *nocte praeterita* mean "last night"? In that case, at least to our way of reckoning, he would have been speaking on Easter Sunday. Can you refer on Monday to the night between Saturday and Sunday as "last night"? I have taken the phrase to be a less precise reference to the past.

3. See Lk 24:29-31.

4. *Ructaverunt*; literally, our old friend, "they belched." The image he has in mind, though, I imagine is that of a fountain suddenly leaping up—or in modern, urban terms, of a water main bursting.

5. In common with all the Fathers, I think, Augustine is interpreting the two titles, Son of man and Son of God, as signifying the two natures of Christ, the human and divine. That this was not the sense in which the evangelists used the titles we have remarked on before. See O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*.

6. An allusion here to Lk 14:11, etc.

7. Reading *a petra*, instead of the text's *a Petro*, from Peter; which I take as a scribal "correction," after what came to be the conventional papalist exegesis had come to identify the rock with Peter. But this is something Augustine never did; at this very moment he has identified it with Peter's confession, at other times with Peter's faith, which amounts to the same thing.

8. It is only as exclamations that I can make sense of these last two sentences; the Latin printed text treats the first as a question and the second as a plain statement.

9. *In regno tuo*. The text when previously quoted has read *in regnum tuum*, into your kingdom; Sermons 232, 6 and 234, 2. But that is the Vulgate reading, so this one is likely to be correct.

10. Reading *deseruit*, instead of *deserit*, the present tense.

11. A gap in the text is indicated here. From this paragraph onward, the text of this section is increasingly incoherent. Perhaps one may legitimately question the authenticity of the sermon from this point on.

12. This is where the Italian edition ends this sermon, remarking that the authenticity of the following four sections is dubious, and that some scholars attribute them to John Chrysostom. The incoherences, however, of the last two paragraphs of section 4 are so marked, that if the passage is authentic Augustine, one can only say that it must be a very garbled or scrambled version of what he actually said.

SERMON 237

SERMON PREACHED ON THE WEDNESDAY OF EASTER WEEK

Date: 412-413¹

The disciples, thinking the risen Christ was a spirit, shared the pernicious error of the Manichees

1. Today we have come to the end of what followed in the gospel according to Luke about the Lord's resurrection; we have heard how the Lord appeared in the midst of his disciples, as they were discussing his resurrection, and failing to believe it.² So unexpected, however, and incredible was it in their view, that they couldn't see him even when they saw him. I mean, they could see the body was alive which they had been mourning as dead, they could see standing among them the one they had grieved to see hanging on the cross; so they could see, and because they couldn't believe their eyes, that what they were seeing was true, they thought they must be mistaken. *They reckoned*, you see, as you heard, *that they were seeing a spirit* (Lk 24:37).

What the worst of heretics later on came to believe about Christ is what had first been believed by the wavering apostles. There are those today, you see, who don't believe that Christ had real flesh, because they even eliminate the virgin's child-bearing, and refuse to believe that he was born of a woman.³ *The Word became flesh* (Jn 1:14)—that they totally banish from their faith, or rather their infidelity. This whole scheme of our salvation, by which the one who as God had made man, himself became man for the sake of finding lost man; the whole matter of Christ shedding for the forgiveness of our sins true, not false, blood, and with his blood *obliterating the bond of our sins* (Col 2:14); all this these damnable heretics strive to drain of all meaning. All this, so the Manichees believe, as it appeared to human eyes, was spirit, wasn't flesh.⁴

If the risen Christ had just been a spirit, he would have allowed his disciples to remain in that belief, instead of correcting them

2. Here we are, the gospel is speaking. The Lord was standing among his disciples, who couldn't yet believe that he had risen. They could see him, and they thought they were seeing a spirit. If there's nothing wrong in believing that

Christ was a spirit, not flesh; if there's nothing wrong in that, let the disciples be left in their opinion. Pay attention, so that you can understand what I'm trying to say; may God for his part grant that I may say it, say it, that is, in such a way as you can profitably hear.

Look, I'll repeat it.⁵ Sometimes these detestable people, who detest the flesh and live according to the flesh,⁶ sometimes they say this sort of thing and thereby deceive themselves: "Who have the better belief about Christ, those who say he had flesh, or we who say that he was God, that he was spirit, and that it was not a body but God who appeared to human eyes? Which is better, flesh or spirit?"

What can we answer, except that spirit is better than flesh?

"If then," he says, "you admit that spirit is better than flesh, I have the better idea of Christ in saying that he was spirit, not flesh."

Oh calamitous error! Why do I say that Christ was flesh? You say spirit; I say spirit and flesh; you're not saying something better, just something less. So listen to the whole of what I'm saying, that is, what the Catholic faith is saying, what truth is saying in all its solidly based serenity.

By saying that Christ was only a spirit, you are in fact saying that Christ was only what our spirit is too, that is, our soul. Listen to what you're saying; I'm telling you what you're saying. He was indeed spirit of the very same nature and substance as our spirit too. Just notice how much less you are saying. The Word was there, flesh was there too; what you say is: only a human spirit. I say: Word, spirit, body; God and man. If I want to say two, if I want to say two things,⁷ I make use of this sort of package, God and man; both true God and true man; nothing false about his humanity, nothing false about his divinity; God and man. But if you ask me about the man part, I again say two things, a human soul and human flesh. You are a human being because of soul and flesh; he is Christ because of God and man. There you have what I say.

A spirit doesn't have flesh and bones, as you can see that I have

3. But you think that you're saying something better, because you say, "He was a spirit, it was a spirit that appeared, a spirit that was seen, a spirit that conversed among men." That's what you say; as I have already said, that's what the disciples also thought. If there's nothing wrong with what you say, if what you say is right, then what the disciples thought was also right. If the Lord allowed them to go on thinking that, then you too must be allowed to as well. What you believe is what they believed. Is what you believe right? Then what they believed was right.

But it wasn't right. The Lord said to them, *Why are you disturbed?* It was a disturbed state of mind that believed what you believe; which is what? *They believed they were seeing a spirit.* And to this the Lord said, *Why are you disturbed, and thoughts coming up into your hearts?* (Lk 24:37-38). These thoughts are earthly. After all, if they were heavenly, they would be coming down into your hearts, not coming up. Why, I mean to say, are we told, *Up with*

*your hearts, if not to ensure that our hearts, which we have placed up above, don't find earthly thoughts confronting them?*⁸ So, *Why are you disturbed, and thoughts coming up into your hearts? See my hands and my feet, feel and see.* It's not enough for you to look; stretch out your hands. If looking is not enough, touching is also insufficient; feel. He didn't only say, "Touch," but also, "Feel and handle." Let your hands prove it for themselves, if your eyes are lying; *Feel and see*; have eyes in your hands. Feel and see what? Why? *That a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you can see that I have* (Lk 24:39).

You were mistaken with the disciples; let yourself be corrected with the disciples. It's a human mistake, I grant you; you thought Christ was a spirit; so did Peter, so did the others. *They thought they were seeing a spirit*, but they didn't remain in that mistake. To show you that it was an absolutely false idea they had, the doctor did not leave them with it. He approached, he applied a remedy, he saw the wounds in their minds, and what would cure their wounded minds, he brought along the scars in his body.

*The power of human words is almost impossible to explain;
how much more so with the divine Word*

4. So let that be what we believe. I know it's what you believe; but in case there are some bad weeds in the Lord's field, I'm also addressing those whom I cannot see. Nobody should believe anything about Christ, except what he wanted to be believed about himself. And let us also believe what an advantage it is for us to believe what he wanted to be believed about himself, seeing that it was he who redeemed us, who sought our salvation, who shed his blood for us, who bore for our sakes what was not his due, who brought to us what was not our due.

Christ then, what is he? The Son of God, the Word of God. What is the Word of God? Something the word of man cannot express, that's what the Word of God is. Are you asking me what the Word of God is? If I wanted to tell you what the word of man is, I can't explain it, I get tired, I get stuck, I give up; I can't even explain the power of a human word.⁹ Look here; before I say to you what I want to say to you, the word is already in my heart. It hasn't yet been spoken by me, and it's with me. Then it's spoken by me, and it reaches you, and it doesn't depart from me. You're all intending to hear a word from me; I'm feeding your minds when I speak. If I were bringing you food for your stomachs, you would divide it up among yourselves, and it wouldn't all get to each of you; but you would divide up what I set before you into the more portions, the more of you there were; and the greater the number of those receiving it, the less each would get.

Now, though, I've brought food along for your minds: I say, "Accept it, take it, eat it." You've accepted it, eaten it, and not divided it up. Whatever I speak, it's all there for all of you, and all there for each of you. There you are, that's how it's impossible to explain satisfactorily the enormous power a human word has, and you ask me what the Word of God is? The Word of God is feeding all

those millions of angels. It's their minds being fed, their minds being filled. It fills the angels, fills the world, fills the virgin's womb; it isn't spaced out there, it isn't squeezed tight here. What is the Word of God? Let him tell us himself, the only-begotten, the only Son, let him tell us himself what the Word of God is. He puts it very briefly, but what he says is something tremendous: *I and the Father are one* (Jn 10:30). I don't want you to count the words; weigh them. More words won't help to explain the one Word.¹⁰

So *the Word* which cannot be explained *became flesh and dwelt among us* (Jn 1:14); it took up the whole, the full man as it were, the soul and body of a man. And if you want to hear it put even more precisely, because an animal too has a soul and flesh, when I say human soul and human flesh, he received a complete human soul. There have been people, you see, who made a heresy about this, and said that the soul of Christ didn't have a mind, didn't have intelligence, didn't have reason, but that the Word of God took the place for him of mind, intelligence, and reason.¹¹ I don't want you to believe like that. As he created the whole human person, so he redeemed the whole; the Word took on the whole person, he set the whole person free. In him there is human mind and intelligence, in him a soul giving life to the flesh, in him true and complete flesh; the only thing not in him is sin.

NOTES

1. So Fischer and Poque; Kunzelmann and van Bavel place it ten years earlier, 402-409.

2. Thus, Lk 24:36-53, but possibly omitting the final brief notice of the Ascension.

3. See Gal 4:4.

4. With this last sentence I follow the Maurist text. That of *Sources Chrétiennes* gives the following sense: "All this, as Manichees, they fail to believe; what appeared to the eyes of men as the Lord was spirit, it wasn't flesh"; certainly more difficult readings, but also in the context less satisfactory. I would attribute it to myopic "corrections" by some copyist who paid no attention to the whole drift of the passage, but tried to make piecemeal "correct" sense of piecemeal phrases.

5. He doesn't in fact do so until the next section.

6. They detest the flesh because they identify matter with evil; they live according to the flesh, not, I think, because their morals were carnal (though he may also have had in mind their doctrine that marriage is much worse than fornication or concubinage, because it is legitimating something intrinsically bad), but because they couldn't rise above the imagination; their whole religion was just a vast mythology taken literally.

7. So the *Sources Chrétiennes* text. Instead of "I want," *volo*, in both parts of the sentence, the Maurists have "I don't want," *nolo*—an emendation, I suspect, by a scribe to save Augustine from what looked to him like a Nestorian statement.

8. So the Maurists; the *Sources Chrétiennes* text, by reading *inveniant* instead of *inveniat*—"our hearts" is singular in the Latin, *cor nostrum*—gives the rather back to front sense, "to ensure that earthly thoughts do not find our hearts, which have been placed up above, confronting them." Both texts, however, have "earthly thoughts" in the nominative. So my following the Maurists also involves my emending their *terrenae cogitationes* to *terrenas* . . .

9. The *Sources Chrétiennes* text adds, "how much more of the Word of God," meaning in fact "how much less"—a typical rather hasty marginal comment.

10. So the Maurists, from "I don't want . . ." *Sources Chrétiennes* read, "I don't want you to count words about the one Word. All the human words there could be are not, of course, enough to explain by explaining about the one Word of God."

11. The heresy of Apollinarianism, about 360 AD. He was a staunch supporter of Athanasius, and an extreme representative of the Alexandrian school of christology, which emphasized above all that Christ, the Word incarnate, is one person, not two. Theirs was a "Word/flesh" christology, as against the "Word/man" christology of the school of Antioch; and they tended to Apollinarianism, which in fact denies the full real humanity of Christ, just as the Antiochene extremists tended to Nestorianism, which regarded Christ as two persons, a divine and a human, joined inseparably together by grace.

SERMON 238

PREACHED DURING THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: 400¹

1. That's how the sacred reading of the gospel, year after year, points out to us the true Christ and the true Church, to make sure we are not mistaken in either of them, by introducing the wrong bride to the holy bridegroom,² or by presenting the holy bride with someone other than her true husband. So, to be sure we make no mistake about either of them, let us listen, as it were, to their marriage lines³ in the gospel.

The false ideas of the Manichees and Priscillianists about Christ are disproved by his showing that he had flesh and bones

2. People have not been, and are not, lacking who have deceived themselves about the Lord Christ, to the extent of not believing that he had true, real flesh. Let them hear what we heard just now. He's in heaven, but he can be heard here; he's sitting at the Father's right, but he's talking among us. Let him be the one who points himself out, him the one who makes himself known. What's the point of looking for any other witness about him? Let's rather listen to him in person. He appeared to his disciples, and suddenly stood there among them.⁴ You heard all about it when it was being read. They, however, were shaken; you see, they thought they were seeing a spirit. That's what the people think who don't believe that he has true, real flesh; people like the Manichees, like the Priscillianists,⁵ and any other such pests not worth naming. You see, they don't think Christ is just nothing; that's not what they think, but they think he's a spirit, that he didn't have flesh.

What about you, Catholic Church, what do you think, you the bride, not an adulteress? So what do you think, if not what you have learned from him? You couldn't, after all, find any better witness about him than himself. So what about you? You have learned that Christ is both Word and human spirit and human flesh. What have you learned about his being Word? *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)*. What have you learned about his being human spirit? *And bowing his head, he gave up the spirit (Jn 19:30)*. What have you

learned about his being flesh? Listen now. Pardon those who think the same as the disciples before them mistakenly thought. But then they didn't persist in their mistake.

Because the disciples then thought what the Manichees think today, what the Priscillianists think today, that there wasn't true flesh in the Lord Christ, but only spirit. Let's see if he allowed them to go on being mistaken. Consider how bad the error must be, which the doctor hastened to cure, refusing to let it take root. So they thought they were seeing a spirit. And he, being well aware of these wrong ideas, uprooted them from their hearts by saying, *Why are you troubled? Why are you troubled, and thoughts coming up into your hearts? See my hands and my feet; touch, and see that a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you can see that I have* (Lk 24:37-39).

Hold on to what you have received, hold on to it against all the crazy ideas of all these people; otherwise, you have perished. Christ is the true Word, only-begotten, equal to the Father, true human spirit, true flesh without sin. It was this flesh that died, this that rose again, this that hung on the tree, this that lay in the tomb, this that is seated in heaven. The Lord Christ wanted to convince the disciples that what they were seeing was flesh and bones, but you, apparently, deny this. So he's lying, and you're telling the truth? You're building up solid faith, and he's pulling it to pieces?⁶ Why did Christ want to convince me of this, if not because he knew what it's good for me to believe, and what it's bad for me not to believe? So believe like that yourselves. That's the bridegroom.

Hold on to the head; now hear about the body, which is also the bride

3. Let's hear about the bride; because there are some folk or other, goodness knows who,⁷ again showing favor to adulterers, who are keen to push away the true bride, and substitute a false one. So when they had touched feet, hands, flesh, bones, the Lord went on to say, *Do you have anything here that is to eat?* to prove himself true man by also sharing food. He took it, he ate it, he gave it.⁸ And while they were still trembling for joy, he said to them, *Did I not tell you these things, while I was still with you?* Why wasn't he with them now? What's the meaning of *while I was still with you?* While I was still mortal, which is what you are too. So what did I tell you? *That it was necessary for all to be fulfilled that was written in the law and in the prophets and in the psalms about me. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures; and he said to them that thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead on the third day* (Lk 24:44-46). Take away true flesh, there won't be true suffering, there won't be true resurrection. There you have the bridegroom; *it was necessary for the Christ to suffer, and to rise again on the third day.*

Hold on to the head; now hear about the body. I mean, what have we got to demonstrate now? We've heard the bridegroom, let us also recognize the bride. *And for repentance and forgiveness of sins to be preached in his name.* Where, where from, how far? *Throughout all nations, with you beginning from Jerusa-*

lem (Lk 24:47). There you have the bride. Don't let anybody sell you stories; ignore the rabid barking of the heretics from their corner.⁹ The Church is spread throughout the whole world; all nations have the Church. Don't let anybody take you in; that's the true, that's the Catholic Church. We can't see Christ, we can see this Church; about him we have to believe. The apostles, on the contrary, could see him, could only believe about this Church. They could see one thing, believe the other; and we on the contrary can see one thing, must believe the other. They could see Christ, could only believe about the Church, which they couldn't see. We too can see the Church, must believe in Christ, whom we cannot see; and by holding on to what we can see, we shall finally reach him whom we cannot yet see. And thus, recognizing the bridegroom and the bride, let us acknowledge them in their marriage lines, and not spoil so holy a wedding with our quarrels.

NOTES

1. The scholars say, variously, 395-405, or before 405, or between 400 and 412. I choose 400, a little arbitrarily perhaps, because the sermon displays all the vigor of Augustine in his prime, entirely sure of his authority, perhaps just a little rougher than he would be in later years as he mellowed. Given the gospel reading, the last section of Luke's resurrection narrative, I infer that the sermon was preached on the Wednesday of Easter week.

2. A possible allusion to the way in which Jacob was cheated of his "true" bride, Rachel, by Laban, Gn 29:21-25.

3. *Matrimoniales eorum tabulas*.

4. See Lk 24:36 and the following.

5. Priscillian was a Spanish cleric, a charismatic figure with a very considerable following, who was elected bishop of Avila to the dismay of many other bishops, and eventually gained the distinction of being the first ever heretic to be executed for heresy—by an imperial usurper, as a matter of fact—in 386, about the time that Augustine was becoming a Christian. It is very difficult to ascertain what Priscillianists really believed, since the orthodox tended to ascribe to them practically any error they thought sufficiently detestable. But as their main line was a very austere asceticism, it is quite likely they shared the Manichees' totally negative evaluation of the body, the flesh.

6. *Tu aedificas, et ille decipit?* As *decipit*, which normally means "deceives," is being contrasted with *aedificas*, I take the liberty of translating it, according to its derivation, as meaning "take apart."

7. The Donatists, of course.

8. Here he is harking back to the Emmaus episode. There is no mention of Christ's giving the food in Lk 24:41-43.

9. Literally, "Don't let the rabid heretics bark from their corner"; but of course, neither he nor his congregation could stop them. So a freer rendering is, I think, called for.

SERMON 239

PREACHED DURING THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: before 417¹

Mark and Luke were chosen to be evangelists, though they were not apostles, to signify that the task of evangelization continues in the Church to the end

1. Today we have heard for yet a third time from the gospel about our Lord's resurrection. As you will remember that I've told you, this is the custom, for the Lord's resurrection to be recounted according to all the evangelists.² It's Mark's gospel which we heard just now, when it was read. Mark, though, won this privilege, as did Luke too, though he had not been in the number of those twelve. While there are four evangelists, you see, Matthew, John, Mark, and Luke, only two of them come from those twelve, namely Matthew and John. Their precedence, however, was not so sterile that they couldn't have any companions to follow them. Mark and Luke were not the equals of the apostles, but their "sub-equals."

The reason, you see, why the Holy Spirit wished also to choose two men who were not among the twelve to write down a gospel, was to prevent people imagining that the grace of evangelizing got as far as the apostles, and that the fountain of grace then dried up with them. The Lord, after all, says about his Spirit and about his word, that if anybody receives and keeps it worthily, *it will become in him a fountain of water leaping up to eternal life* (Jn 4:14); a fountain, of course, reveals itself by welling up, not by remaining stagnant;³ through the apostles grace reached other people, and they too were sent to preach the gospel. Because the one who called the first preachers was the same one who also called the next ones; he went on calling them right up to the latest times of the body of his only-begotten Son, that is, the Church spread throughout the world.

*At the breaking of bread the eyes of the disciples were opened,
not to see, but to know Christ*

2. So what did we hear Mark saying? That the Lord appeared to two of them on the road, as Luke also said, whose gospel we heard yesterday: *He appeared, he says, to two of them on the road in another guise* (Mk 16:12). Luke, though,

said the same thing in other words, but didn't deviate from the same meaning. Well, what did Luke say? *Their eyes were held, so that they would not recognize him* (Lk 24:16). And what did Mark say? *He appeared to them in another guise.* What the former said, *Their eyes were held, so that they would not recognize him*, is the same as what this one says, *in another guise.* Another guise was seen, I mean, because their eyes were held, weren't open.

So, brothers and sisters, what about the thing Luke said, as I imagine you remember from yesterday's reading, recent enough; that when he blessed the bread their eyes were opened? What are we to suppose: that if their eyes were opened then, it means they had been accompanying him on the road with closed eyes, and could still know where to put their feet, even if they had their eyes closed? So they were opened for purposes of recognition, not of straight sight. And so our Lord Jesus Christ is speaking with people, all unbeknown before the breaking of bread, he becomes known in the breaking of bread; because there, precisely, is he perceived, where eternal life is received.⁴ He is welcomed as guest, while himself preparing a home in heaven. He says, you remember, according to the evangelist John, *There are many lodgings at my Father's; otherwise I would have told you. I will go to prepare a place for you. But if I go and prepare it, I will come again and take you along* (Jn 14:2-3). The Lord of heaven chose to be a guest on earth, a stranger in the world though the world was made through him. He was prepared to be a guest, so that you might have the blessing of giving him welcome; not because he was in any need, when he came in as a guest.

Elijah is supported by the widow woman, for her good rather than for his

3. In a time of famine the Lord fed Saint Elijah through the services of a crow; persecuted by men, he was waited on by birds. The crow would bring the servant of God bread in the morning, meat in the evening.⁵ So he wasn't in any need, since God was feeding him by the ministrations of birds. And yet, although Elijah was not in any need, he is sent to a widow in Zarephath, and told, *Go to that widow, she will feed you.* Had God run out of resources, for Elijah to be sent to the widow? But if God were always to provide his servant with bread without human ministrations, where would the widow get her reward from? So, being in no need himself, he is sent to a woman in need; not starving himself, he is sent to a starving woman, and he says to her, *Go, and fetch me a little to eat.* She had a small amount, which she was going to eat, and die. She answered, she hinted to the prophet just how much she had; and the prophet said to her, *Go, first bring some to me.* She didn't hesitate, but brought it. She offered refreshment, and earned a blessing. Saint Elijah blessed the jar of flour, and the flask of oil. That bit of flour was set there in the house, ready to be eaten up, and that oil was hanging from its peg, ready to be finished off; the blessing was attached,⁶ and those vessels became warehouses. The oil bottle became an oil well, the little bit of flour surpassed the most abundant crops.

*The one welcomed is often better than the one who welcomes;
the one receiving richer than the one handing out*

4. If Elijah was not in any need, can Christ have been? The reason, my brothers and sisters, so holy scripture is reminding us, the reason why God often makes his servants beggars of food, though he is perfectly capable of feeding them, is in order to find doers of good. Don't ever be proud because you give something to the poor; Christ was poor. Don't ever be proud because you welcome a stranger; Christ was a stranger. The one welcomed is better than the one providing the welcome; the one receiving is richer than the one handing out. The one who was receiving was the owner of everything; the one who was giving had received what he was giving from the one he was giving it to. So don't ever be proud, my brothers and sisters, when you give something to a poor person. Don't ever say in your heart, "I'm giving, he's receiving; I'm giving him a welcome, he's in need of shelter." Perhaps what you're in need of is rather more than that. Perhaps the one you are giving a welcome to is a just man; he's in need of bread, you of truth; he's in need of shelter, you of heaven; he's in need of money, you of justice.

Lend at extortionate rates of interest to God, not to another human being

5. Be a financier,⁷ lay out what you may get back with interest. Don't be afraid that God may judge you as a financier, and convict you of usury. Certainly, certainly, be a financier. But God says to you, "What do you want? To be a financier? What's being a financier? Giving less, and getting back more. Here then, give to me," God says to you; "I accept less and I give back more. How much? A hundredfold, and eternal life."⁸ The one you're looking for, to give something to, so that your capital may grow, the man you're looking for, rejoices when he receives it, weeps when he gives it back; comes bowing and scraping in order to receive it, blackens your name in order to avoid giving it back.

Yes, give to people too, and *do not turn away from the one who asks for a loan* (Mt 5:42). But only take back as much as you've given. Don't make the person you've given it to cry, because then you've lost all benefit from it. And if what was given, or what he received, is demanded, perhaps he hasn't yet got it to hand; you put up with him when he asked for it; wait for him when he hasn't got it. When he does have it, he'll pay you back. Don't make difficulties for one whose difficulties you relieved earlier on. All right, you gave the money, and you're demanding it back; but he hasn't got the means of paying back; he'll pay you back when he does have it. Don't start shouting and saying, "Am I requiring interest? All I'm asking for is what I gave; what I gave, that's what I'll accept."

You're doing good, but he hasn't got it yet. You aren't a financier or banker, and you want the person you favored with a loan to seek out a banker, in order to pay you back? If the reason you aren't demanding interest, is to spare him experiencing you as a financier, why do you want him, for your sake, to experience someone else as a financier? You're squeezing him, choking him,

even if you are only demanding as much as you gave. Yet by choking him and making things hard for him, you haven't conferred any benefit on him at all, but rather have made things harder, more difficult for him than ever.

But perhaps you say, "He's got the means to pay; he's got a house, let him sell it; he's got a plot, let him sell it." When he asked you for a loan, the reason he asked for it was in order not to have to sell; don't make him do it because of you, since you came to his assistance to save him from doing it. Let that be how things are done between human beings; that's what God commands, that's what God wants.

God made his own Son poor for our sake

6. But you're grasping, are you? God says to you, "Be grasping, be as grasping as you can; but you must issue a summons against me to satisfy your grasping greed." God says to you, "Issue a summons against me; I made my rich Son poor for your sake." It was *because of us*, you see, that *Christ became poor, though he was rich* (2 Cor 8:9). Are you looking for gold? He made it. Looking for silver? He made it. Looking for a retinue? He made it. Looking for cattle? He made them. Looking for lands? He made them. Why look only for what he made? Accept the one himself who made them. Just think how much he loved you. *All things were made through him, and without him was made nothing* (Jn 1:3). All things through him, and himself among all things; having made all things, he was himself made among all things. Having made man, he himself was made man, became man; he became what he made, in case the one he made should perish. Having made all things, he himself was made among all things.

Consider his wealth; what could be wealthier than the one through whom all things were made? And yet he, though being rich, took flesh in the virgin's womb. He was born as a baby, wrapped up in baby clothes, laid in a manger; patiently he awaited the successive ages of life; patiently he endured the succession of times, the one through whom all times were made. He sucked the breast, he cried, he was manifestly a baby. But he lay there, and reigned; he was in the manger, and held the universe together; he was nursed by his mother, and worshiped by the nations; nursed by his mother, and announced by angels; nursed by his mother, and proclaimed by a shining star. Such his wealth, such his poverty; wealth, to get you created; poverty, to get you restored. So that poor man's being hospitably welcomed as a poor man, was doing the benefactor a favor, not relieving an unfortunate person's needs.

Christ is in need in his members

7. Perhaps you'll say to me, "Oh, how lucky they were, who were found worthy to welcome Christ! Oh, if only I had lived at that time! Oh, if only I had been one of those two, whom he found on the road!" You just be on the road, there will be no lack of Christ to be your guest. Do you really think, I mean, that you aren't now permitted to welcome Christ?

“How,” you say, “am I permitted to do so? He had already risen when he appeared to his disciples, he ascended into heaven, that’s where he is, at the right hand of the Father; he isn’t going to come till the last age, to judge the living and the dead; but he will be coming in splendor, not in weakness; he will be giving a kingdom, not seeking hospitality.”

Has it escaped you what he will be saying, when he gives out a kingdom? *When you did it to one of the least of mine, you did it to me* (Mt 25:40)? That rich man is in dire need until the end of the world. Without the slightest doubt he’s in dire need, not in the head, but in his members. Where is he in need? In those in whom he suffered pain, when he said, *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?* (Acts 9:4).

So let us take care of Christ. He’s with us in those who are his, he’s with us in ourselves; nor was it to no purpose that he said, *Behold, I am with you until the consummation of the world* (Mt 28:20). By doing this sort of thing, we recognize Christ in good works, with the heart, not the body; not with the eyes of the body, but with the eyes of faith. *Because you have seen, you have believed*, he said to a certain incredulous disciple of his, who had said, *I will not believe, unless I touch*. And the Lord said, *Come, touch, and stop being incredulous*. He touched, and he exclaimed, *My Lord and my God!* And the Lord said, *Because you have seen me, you have believed*; that’s the whole of your faith, that you believe what you can see. I praise *those who do not see, and believe* (Jn 20:25-29); because when they see, they will rejoice.

NOTES

1. This date is Lambot’s suggestion; Kunzelmann and La Bonnardière propose before 400, Poque reverts to her favorite date of 410-412. The later date, from the roughness of the style, seems to me altogether the most likely. As for the day of Easter week on which it was preached, see the next note for the peculiar problem raised by this sermon.

2. See Sermons 231, 232, 234, 235, 236A. A problem arises, though, when we hear him saying, at the beginning of section 2, that they had heard Luke’s resurrection narrative, or rather the first part of it, the Emmaus episode, read on the previous day—Luke before Mark, and in all probability only half of Luke before Mark. In Sermon 232, 1, he says that the order of reading the various gospels was what we would expect, Matthew, Mark, Luke. Sermon 235, however, possibly implies that Luke was read first after Matthew. So we must conclude, it seems, that there was no fixed order, and that which gospel should be read when was left to the discretion of the bishop, provided all the resurrection narratives were read during Easter week. This year, with Mark being read after Luke’s first episode, it would seem that this sermon was preached on the Tuesday of Easter week.

It is to be noted that although they have just heard Mark’s resurrection narrative, the sermon is devoted almost entirely to a topic, hospitality, provided by Luke’s Emmaus story.

3. A play on words: *manando se indicat, non remanendo*.

4. In the Latin “perceived” and “received” are the same word, *percipitur*. An epigram with several possible meanings—underlying all of them, of course, the identification of Jesus Christ with eternal life. The question is: where is eternal life received, or perceived? It can mean, precisely in

the eucharist, in the breaking of bread. But it can also mean, especially in this context, in showing hospitality to eternal life, to Christ, either in person, or in any of his other selves, down to the least of those who are his own.

5. See 1 Kgs 17:6. Augustine chooses not to notice that the more mundane reason for Elijah to change from crows to the widow for support was that the brook Cherith dried up; God did not propose to have the crows bring him water as well as bread and meat.

6. *Accessit benedictio*. The expression recalls his phrase, *Accedit verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum*; a word is attached to an element, and you have a sacrament. So he was probably thinking here of the eucharistic parallel. For the whole story, see 1 Kgs 17:8-16.

7. *Faenerator*, usually translated “usurer.” But “usury” and “usurer” are words hardly spoken or heard nowadays, though they are as real and vigorous as ever. I think “financier” is a fair enough contemporary equivalent.

8. See Mt 19:29.

SERMON 240

DURING THE EASTER SEASON ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY,
AGAINST THE PAGANS

Date: after 411¹

The gospel accounts of the resurrection do not contradict each other

1. During these days, as your graces are well aware, the gospel readings concerning the Lord's resurrection are regularly read every year. All four evangelists, you see, were unable to keep quiet either about his passion or about his resurrection. The Lord Jesus did many things, I mean, and they didn't all write an account of all of them; but one dealt with this, another with that, all however in perfect harmony with the truth. The evangelist John also reminds us that many things were done by the Lord Jesus Christ which weren't written down by any of them.² As many things were done by him as needed to be done at that time; as many things were written down as need to be read now.

But to show that all four evangelists never contradicted each other on points which they all talk about and don't leave out, that is on either the passion or the resurrection of Christ, is an extremely laborious task. Some people, you see, have supposed they do go against each other, while in fact they are themselves going against their own souls.³ And that's why the job has been given to those who have been capable of it, to show with the Lord's help that the evangelists do not contradict each other. But as I said, if I were to show you how this is, and wanted to discuss these questions with the whole congregation, the majority of listeners would be overwhelmed with boredom long before they could be brought relief⁴ by knowledge of the truth.

But I know your faith, that is the faith of this whole congregation, and of those who aren't here today and yet are believers; I know their faith is so sure about the truthfulness of the evangelists that they don't need me to explain it. Those who know how to defend this case are more learned than the rest, not more faithful. They have faith, they have the ability to defend the faith. Others lack this ability and the resources and learning to defend the faith, but have the faith itself. But those who know how to defend the faith are needed by the waverers, not the believers. By the defense of the faith, after all, the wounds of doubt and unbelief are cured. So the one who defends the faith is a good doctor;

but you haven't got the disease of unbelief. When is he going to cure what you haven't got? He knows how to apply the remedy, but you haven't got the fault that requires it. *It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but those who are sick* (Mk 2:17).

God Almighty raises the dead

2. All the same, it is not a good idea to keep totally quiet to you about what can conveniently be said in the time and comfortably listened to. About the resurrection itself, of which the Lord gave a first example in his own person, so that we might know what we should hope for at the end of the age even for our own bodies, many people make many suggestions; some from the standpoint of faith, others from that of unbelief. Those who make suggestions in accordance with faith, are keen to know more effectively what answer they can give to the unbelievers, while those who make suggestions from the standpoint of unbelief are arguing against their own souls, by arguing against the power of the Almighty, and saying, "How can it possibly happen that a dead person should rise again?"

I say, "It's God who does it," and you say, "It can't be done"? I don't say, give me a Christian, give me a Jew; but give me a pagan, a worshiper of idols, a servant of demons, who will deny that God is almighty. He can deny Christ, he can't deny that God is almighty. So the one whom you believe—I'm speaking as though to a pagan—the one whom you believe to be God Almighty, that's the one who I say raises the dead. If you say, "It can't happen," you are detracting from the Almighty. But if you believe he really is almighty, why do you brush me aside when I say this?

*The flesh that is now an embarrassment
will at the resurrection be an embellishment*

3. If we were saying that the flesh is going to rise again in order to be hungry, thirsty, sick, to be in difficulties and subject to decay, then you would be absolutely right not to believe. It is here and now, after all, that the flesh is under these necessities, or calamities. And why is that? The reason is sin. In one man we all sinned,⁵ and so were all born just to decay and perish. The cause of all our evils is sin. It's not without reason, after all, that humanity suffers these things. God is just, God is all-powerful; in no way would we suffer such things, if we didn't deserve to.

But when we were experiencing the penalties to which we came from our sins, our Lord Jesus Christ decided to share our penalties without any sins of his own. By enduring the penalty without the fault, he undid both fault and penalty. He undid the fault by forgiving sins; he undid the penalty by rising from the dead. This is what he promised us, and wished us to carry on living in hopes of. Let us simply persevere, and we shall arrive at the reality. The flesh will rise imperishable, the flesh will rise without blemish, without deformity, without

mortality, without being a burden or a weight.⁶ The flesh that is now your embarrassment will afterward be your embellishment.⁷ So if it is a good thing to have an imperishable body, why should we wish to despair of God ever making it so?

The opinions of the philosophers about the future state of souls after death

4. There have been great and learned philosophers of this world,⁸ better than the rest, who have realized that the human soul is immortal. In fact they not only realized it, they argued in its favor with the best arguments they could, and left their proofs in writing for the benefit of subsequent generations. There are books on the subject, people read them. The reason I said these philosophers were better in comparison with worse ones, is that there have been philosophers who maintained that when human beings die, no further life remains for them later on.⁹ Those others are of course to be preferred to such as these. And insofar as those were better, though deviating from the truth in many respects, still insofar as they were better, they were getting closer to the truth.

So those who realized and said that human souls are immortal, looked for the causes of the griefs and errors of mortals to the extent that mere men were able to; and they said, as convincingly as they could, that heaven knows what sins had occurred in another previous life, sins for which souls deserved these bodies as a kind of prison. Next they were asked what will happen later on, when people die. And here they cudgelled their brains; and they made great efforts to give people, themselves or others, a reasonable account; and they said that the souls of people who have lived bad lives, rendered unclean by the most depraved habits, after leaving their bodies are immediately shunted back to other bodies, and here pay the penalties we are familiar with; while the souls which have lived good lives go, on leaving their bodies, to the highest heavens, there to rest among the stars and these lights we can all see, or else in whatever other kinds of hidden and secret heavenly places; and that they forget all the evils of the past, and are again delighted to return to bodies and come once more to undergo all these things. This then was the difference they maintained between the souls of sinners and the souls of the just: that they say the souls of sinners straightaway, immediately they have left their bodies, are shunted back to other bodies, while the souls of the just spend a long time at rest; not for ever, though, but once again they take delight in bodies, and after all that justice of theirs tumble down from the highest heavens to these evils here.

The wisdom of the world is folly in God's eyes

5. This is what some very great philosophers have said; the philosophers of this world have not been able to find anything better than this. About them our scriptures say, *God has made a fool of the wisdom of this world*. If of its wisdom, how much more of its folly? Yet there is a kind of folly of this world which reaches up to God, and about which the apostle says, *Since in God's wisdom the*

world did not come to know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of the preaching to save those who believe. And he goes on, Since Jews ask for signs and Greeks are looking for wisdom; while we preach Christ crucified; to the Jews indeed something shocking, to the Greeks something silly; but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:20-24).

The Lord Christ has come, the Wisdom of God; the sky thunders, let the frogs stop croaking. What Truth has said, that's what's true. What he said, that the human race is in evil straits because of sin, is obvious. But those who believe in the mediator, who is set in the middle between God and men¹⁰—a just man between the just God and unjust men, having humanity from the bottom, justice from the top, and thus being in the middle; one element from here, one from there; because if each were from there, he would be there; while if each were from here, he would be laid low here with us, and would not be in the middle—so those who believe in the mediator, and live good lives in accordance with their faith, will indeed depart from the body and be at rest; but later on they will receive their bodies back, not as an embarrassment but as an embellishment, and they will live with God for ever. There will be nothing to delight them here to come back to, because they will have their bodies with them.

So, dearly beloved, I have set before you today what even the philosophers of this world have to say, those whose wisdom God has turned down as really being folly; tomorrow then, with the Lord's help, I will be able to explain it.¹¹

NOTES

1. So Poque; other scholars suggest slightly earlier dates. This one would fit Augustine's particular preoccupation with the philosophers after the sack of Rome by the Goths in 410. This and the next two sermons were preached on three consecutive days. The opening sentences of this sermon seem to indicate that it was preached during Easter week; and therefore the next two as well. And yet they don't sound in the least like sermons preached to the people, including the newly baptized in a prominent position. Both theme and treatment, on the resurrection of the body (not specifically the resurrection of Christ), and refuting a number of pagan philosophical errors—though admittedly in a rather simple way—suggest a rather more specialized, moderately well-educated audience. Could he have preached to such an audience in the afternoons, after the regular sermons at Mass to the people at large, after the exhausting routines of Holy Week and Easter? It's possible, of course; but it seems to me more likely, in spite of this sermon's opening sentences, that this little series was preached rather later during the paschal season, perhaps in the following week.

2. See Jn 20:30; 21:25.

3. See Ps 11:5 (Vulg).

4. Reading *relevetur* with some manuscripts instead of *reveletur*, "before knowledge of the truth could be revealed," with the Maurist text.

5. In Adam; see Rom 5:12.

6. He simply says, "without burden, without weight." But I am pretty sure he has at the back of his mind the Wisdom text, *a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthly tent burdens*

the thoughtful mind (Wis 9:15). So he is thinking of the flesh being a burden and a weight to the soul, not of its carrying its own weight and burden.

7. *Quae nunc tibi facit tormentum, postea tibi erit ornamentum*. "Embarrassment" is no doubt a little weak for *tormentum*; but then *tormentum* represents a pretty sizable exaggeration, though a characteristically Augustinian one.

8. As distinct from the philosophers of the kingdom. Augustine was fully in the tradition going back to Justin Martyr in the second century, which regarded Christianity as the one true philosophy, and the various philosophies of the ancient world as so many defective, not to say false, theologies. The philosophers he is thinking of here are Plato and his successors the Neoplatonists, whose chief luminary in the third century had been Plotinus; and also the Stoics.

9. These were above all the Epicureans.

10. See 1 Tm 2:5.

11. Sermon 241.

SERMON 241

DURING THE EASTER SEASON ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY,
AGAINST THE PAGANS

Date: 411¹

Belief in the resurrection is peculiar to Christians

1. The resurrection of the dead is the special belief of Christians. This is what Christ our head demonstrated in himself, that is the resurrection of the dead, thus providing us with a model of faith, so that the members might hope for themselves what first occurred in the head. Yesterday I suggested to you that the wise men of the Gentiles, whom they call philosophers, at least the most outstanding among them, had investigated nature, and from the works had come to know the craftsman. They never heard the prophets, they hadn't received the law of God, but God was somehow speaking to them silently through the works of the world, and the beauty of the world was inviting them to seek out the maker of things; nor could they persuade themselves that heaven and earth can remain in being without a prime cause.

About these the blessed apostle Paul has this to say: *The wrath of God*, he said, *is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness*. What's *against all ungodliness*? Not only against the Jews, who had received the law of God and offended the lawgiver; but also against all the ungodliness of the Gentiles is the wrath of God being revealed from heaven. And in case anyone should say, "Why, seeing that they didn't receive the law?" he went on to add, *and the injustice of those who hold down the truth in iniquity*.

Now it's your turn: answer, "What truth? After all, they didn't receive the law, they didn't hear any prophet."

Because what is known of God, he says, *has been plainly shown to them*. How is it plain? Go on listening: *For God plainly showed it to them*.

If you're still asking, "How did he show it to people whom he didn't give the law to?" here's how; listen:

For his invisible things, from the foundation of the world, can be observed, being understood through the things that have been made. For his invisible things, that is, God's invisible things, *from the foundation of the world*, that is, from the moment he founded the world, *can be observed, being understood*

through the things that have been made; those things can be observed, being understood through these.² Also his everlasting—I'm using the apostle's words, I'm joining them all together—Also his everlasting power and divinity—you must understand "can be observed being understood"—so that they are inexcusable. Why inexcusable? Because knowing God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks (Rom 1:18-21). He didn't say, "Not knowing God," but knowing him.

The beauty of the unchangeable creator is to be inferred from the beauty of the changeable creation

2. Knowing him how? From the things he made. Question the beauty of the earth, question the beauty of the sea, question the beauty of the air, amply spread around everywhere, question the beauty of the sky, question the serried ranks of the stars, question the sun making the day glorious with its bright beams, question the moon tempering the darkness of the following night with its shining rays, question the animals that move in the waters, that amble about on dry land, that fly in the air; their souls hidden, their bodies evident; the visible bodies needing to be controlled, the invisible souls controlling them; question all these things. They all answer you, "Here we are, look; we're beautiful."

Their beauty is their confession.³ Who made these beautiful changeable things, if not one who is beautiful and unchangeable? Finally in man himself, in order to be able to understand and know God, the creator of the universe; in man himself, I repeat, they⁴ questioned these two elements, body and soul. They questioned the very thing they themselves carried around with them; they could see their bodies, they couldn't see their souls. But they could only see the body from the soul. I mean, they saw with their eyes, but inside there was someone looking out through these windows. Finally, when the occupant departs, the house lies still; when the controller departs, what was being controlled falls down; and because it falls down, it's called a cadaver,⁵ a corpse. Aren't the eyes complete in it? Even if they're open, they see nothing. There are ears there, but the hearer has moved on; the instrument of the tongue remains, but the musician who used to play it has withdrawn.

So they questioned these two things, the body which can be seen, the soul which cannot be seen, and they found that what cannot be seen is better than what can be seen; that the hidden soul is better, the evident flesh of less worth. They saw these two things, they observed them, carefully examined each one, and they found that each, in man himself, is changeable. The body is changeable by the processes of age, of decay, of nourishment, of health improving and deteriorating, of life, of death. They passed on to the soul, which they certainly grasped as being better, and also admired as invisible. And they found that it too is changeable; now willing, now not willing; now knowing, now not knowing; now remembering, now forgetting; now frightened, now brave; now advancing toward wisdom, now falling back into folly. They saw that it too is changeable. They passed on beyond even the soul; they were looking, you see, for something unchangeable.

What falls from a height sinks all the deeper

3. So in this way they arrived at a knowledge of the God who made things, through the things which he made. *But they did not honor him as God, or give thanks*; the apostle himself says so. *But their thoughts turned to futility, and their senseless hearts were darkened. Calling themselves wise, they became foolish.* By claiming the credit themselves for what they had received, they lost what they had. By calling themselves, so to say, great men, they became fools. And where did they end up? *And they changed*, he says, *the glory of the imperishable God into the likeness of the image of perishable man.* He's talking about idols. And that's nothing, making an idol of human appearance, and reducing the craftsman to the likeness of his work; that's nothing. But what more, over and above that? *And of flying things, and four-footed things, and crawling things* (Rom 1:21-23). Just fancy, all these dumb and irrational animals those ever so great wise men made into gods for themselves! I was criticizing you when you were worshiping the image of a man; what am I to do with you, when you worship the image of a dog, the image of a snake, the image of a crocodile? Yes, they ended up with that sort of thing.⁶ The higher they were carried up to the heights in their search, the deeper they were plunged into the depths in their fall. What falls from a height, after all, sinks all the deeper.

Let nothing remain which can call you back

4. So these people, as I reminded you yesterday, inquired about what comes afterward, that is, what comes after this life. They inquired as men, by human means; but when would they ever discover the truth, since they were merely human? They didn't have God's teaching, they didn't hear the prophets; they couldn't discover—so they guessed. I drew your attention yesterday to their guesses. Bad souls go out, they say; and because they are impure, they are immediately shunted back into other bodies. The souls of the wise and the just go out; and because they have lived good lives, they fly up to heaven. And what happens there? They will be there, they say, and take their rest with the gods; their abode will be the stars. It's not at all a bad dwelling you've found for them; at least leave them there, don't throw them out. But, they say, after long periods of time, when they have totally forgotten ancient woes, they start wanting to be returned to bodies; and they will enjoy coming, and they come again to endure all these things, to putting up with them, to forgetting God, to blaspheming God, to the pursuit of bodily pleasures, to the fight against lust.⁷

They come to these woes—where from, and where to? Tell me. Why? Because they forget. If they forget all evils, let them also forget the delights of the flesh. This alone, to their harm, do they remember, the very thing that has led to their ruin. Back they come; why? Because it pleases them to live once again in bodies. How can it please them, if not because they remember that they lived there once before? Rub out every single memory, and perhaps you will be left with a residue of wisdom. Let nothing remain which can call you back.

May Truth set us free

5. One of their authors⁸ was horrified at the idea, when it was pointed out to him, or rather when he led onto the stage a father in the underworld pointing it out to his son. Yes, nearly all of you know about this;⁹ and I'd much rather only a few of you did. But only a few of you know about it from books, many of you from the theater,¹⁰ that Aeneas went down to the underworld, and his father¹¹ showed him the souls of the great Romans who were going to come into bodies. Aeneas himself was dismayed, and said:

"Must we think, Father, that some noble souls
Go hence to heaven and turn back once more
To sluggish bodies?"

Can we really believe, he is saying, that they go to heaven, and come back again?

"What dire longing for the light of day affects these wretches!"¹²

The son's understanding was better than the father's explanation. He criticized the longing of souls wishing to come back into bodies. He called it a dire longing, he called them wretches; and yet he wasn't ashamed of them.¹³

This is the pass, philosophers, that you have brought us to; that souls are purged, they attain to the highest purity, and as a result of that purity they forget everything, and as a result of forgetting their woes, they return to the woes of their bodies. Tell me, please, even if all this rubbish were true, wouldn't it be better not to know it? Even if it were true, I say, though it's most certainly false, wouldn't it be better, because it's all so vile, not to know it? Or perhaps you're going to say to me, "You won't be wise if you don't know all this"? Why should I know it? Can I be better now than I will be then in heaven? If in heaven, when I'm better and more perfect, I forget everything I learned here, and there, where I'm better, I'm going to be ignorant of all this, permit me to be ignorant of it now. You say those living in heaven forget all this; then permit those on earth to be ignorant of all this.

Next, I want to know, do these souls in heaven know they are going to endure the woes of this life all over again, or don't they? Choose whichever you like. If they know they are going to endure such dreadful woes, how can they be happy, thinking about their future woes? How can they be happy, where they are not without anxiety? But I see which you're going to choose; you're going to say, "They don't know." So you applaud this ignorance there, which you won't allow me to enjoy here, since you teach me on earth what you say I'm not going to know in heaven. "They don't know," you say. If they don't know, and don't think they are going to endure them, it's being mistaken that allows them to be happy. After all, they think they are not going to endure what in fact they are; thinking something that's false—what else is that but being mistaken? So it's by being mistaken that they will be content; they will be happy, not with eternity but with falsity.

May Truth set us free, so that we can be truly happy; since it is no empty word of our Redeemer, *If the Son sets you free, then you shall be free indeed* (Jn 8:36). You see, he said himself, *If you remain in my word, you will truly be*

my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free (Jn 8:31-32).

Hopes of a blessed life

6. Next, just listen to something even worse, something to make you weep—or rather laugh. Here, Mr. Wise man, here, Mr. Philosopher—Pythagoras, for example, Plato, Porphyry,¹⁴ or heaven knows who else among them—that is to say, on earth, why do you philosophize?

“For the sake,” he says, “of the blessed or happy life.”

When will you have this blessed or happy life?

“When I have left this body,” he says, “in the earth.”

So now a life is being lived full of woes, but with hopes of a blessed life; then, and there, a blessed life is lived, but with hopes of a life full of woes. So our hope in unhappy times is a happy one, and our hope in happy times an unhappy one.

Let’s reject this nonsense, and either laugh at it because it’s untrue, or weep over it because it’s considered to be so momentous. You see, brothers and sisters, these are the momentous ravings of momentarily learned men. How much better for us to hold by the momentous mysteries¹⁵ of momentarily holy saints! They say that purified souls return out of a love of bodies—cleansed, wise, purified souls return to bodies out of a love of bodies. So that’s how the purified soul loves, is it? Isn’t such love in fact a notable defilement?

Porphyry’s view that every sort of body is to be shunned

7. “But every kind of body is to be shunned.”¹⁶ A great philosopher of theirs of more recent times, Porphyry, a very fierce enemy of the Christian faith, who lived in what were already Christian times, and yet being rather ashamed of their ravings, was in some matters corrected by Christians;¹⁷ Porphyry said, wrote, “Every kind of body is to be shunned.” “Every kind,” he said, as though every kind of body were a painful drag on the soul. And certainly, if any and every sort of body is to be shunned, you have no grounds at all for praising the body to him, and telling him how our faith, instructed by God, praises the body; because even the body which we have now, although we get punished through it for sin, and *the body which is decaying weighs down the soul* (Wis 9:15); even so this body has its own beauty and advantages, in the arrangement of its limbs, the distinction of the senses, its upright posture, and many other things which amaze those who consider it carefully. That other body, though,¹⁸ will be altogether imperishable, altogether immortal, altogether agile and easy and free in its movements.

But Porphyry says, “You have no grounds to praise the body to me; whatever sort of body it might be, if the soul wishes to be happy, every kind of body is to be shunned.” That’s what the philosophers say; but they’re wrong, they’re raving. I can prove it very quickly, I don’t want to go on arguing; because a

thing that is preferred or predicated must have a subject.¹⁹ The two things, you see, are connected with each other, predicate and subject. God is preferred above all things; to him all things are subject. And if the soul is given any honor by God, it must have something subject to it.

But I don't want to argue any longer about this; I can read your books. You people say that this world is an animated entity, that is, sky, earth, seas, all the vast bodies there are, the immense elements everywhere; all this, the whole body which consists of all these elements, you say is a great animated entity or animal; that is that it has its own animating principle or soul,²⁰ but lacks the senses of the body, because there is nothing outside it that can be sensed; that it has intelligence, however, with which to cleave to God; and that this world-soul is called Jupiter, or is called Hecate; that is, it is like a soul controlling the whole universe, and making it one living, animated entity, one animal. This very same universe, you say, is eternal, will always exist, will have no end.

So if the universe is eternal, and the universe abides without end, and the universe is an animated, ensouled entity, that animating soul is always tied to the universe: are you sure that every sort of body is to be shunned? Isn't that what you were saying: "Every sort of body is to be shunned"? What I say is that blessed souls are always going to inhabit imperishable bodies. You, because you say "Every sort of body is to be shunned," must kill the universe. You tell me I must run away from and shun my flesh; let your Jupiter run away from and shun heaven and earth.²¹

*Plato's doctrine of God as the creator of the celestial gods
is contrary to Porphyry's axiom*

8. What about the fact that we find this same Plato,²² the teacher of them all, in a book of his which he wrote about the establishment of the universe, introducing God as the fashioner of the gods, that is to say making the celestial gods, all the stars, the sun and the moon? So he says God is the constructor of the celestial gods; he says the very stars have intellectual souls which understand God, and visible bodies which can be observed.²³ I'll put it like this, to help you understand: This sun that you can see would not be seen unless it were a body; that's true. Neither the moon nor any star would be seen unless it were a body; what he says is true. That's why the apostle also says, *There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies*. And he proceeds, *The glory of the heavenly bodies is one thing, that of the earthly ones another*. And again, talking of the glory of the heavenly bodies, the apostle went on to say, *The sun has one glory, the moon another glory, the stars another glory. For star differs from star in glory; so too with the resurrection of the dead* (1 Cor 15:40-42). You can see that a shining glory was promised to the bodies of the saints, and different kinds of glory, as earned by different kinds of charity.

But what do they say? These stars which you can see are indeed bodies, but they have their own intellectual souls, and are gods. Well, about bodies, that they are bodies, what they say is true; but whether or not they have souls, why

should I argue about that? Let's now come to the nub of the matter. God is introduced by Plato himself as addressing the gods, whom he has made from both material and immaterial substance, and as saying to them, among other things, "Since you have originated, you cannot be immortal and indissoluble." They could certainly have started to tremble at these words. Why? Because they were longing to be immortal, and didn't want to die. So to assuage their fears, he went on to say some more: "You shall not, however, be dissolved, nor shall any fated destiny of death destroy you, nor shall it prevail more strongly than my plan, which binds you more surely to perpetual existence than those bonds which now hold you in their grip."²⁴ There you are; God gives an assurance to the gods made by him; he gives them an assurance of immortality; he gives them an assurance that they will not have to leave their bodily globes. Is every sort of body really to be shunned?

I rather think they have been answered, in a way you can understand; in the way too, that I have been able to put it, to the extent that sermon time permits, to the extent that your stamina can take, they have been answered. In addition, though, they have things to say about the resurrection of bodies so clever, as they suppose, that not even I can answer them;²⁵ but it would be too much for me to tell you about that today. But I did once promise you that this question of the resurrection of the flesh would be dealt with during these days; so for what remains to be considered make ready your ears and your hearts, with the Lord's help, for tomorrow.

NOTES

1. Preached the day after Sermon 240; see note 1 there.
2. Surely one of his least inspired explanations of a difficult text!
3. Their confession of praise and of faith.
4. He gets back now to the philosophers.
5. From *cado*, I fall.
6. It was Egyptian paganism, above all, that he had in mind—and so did Paul too, I presume.
7. Augustine finds it very easy to make fun of this form of the doctrine of reincarnation. But perhaps, just possibly, there was a sound instinct behind these fancies; that being fully human involves being a living body, being in a body; the same instinct as is satisfied by the biblical revelation of the resurrection of the flesh. The difference is that for these reincarnationists souls come back down to bodies, while for Christian believers bodies go on up to rejoin souls; or at least, if in the Christian eschatological scene there is a coming down from heaven, it is to a new earth from a new heaven.
8. Virgil. One of the pagan authors; he doesn't mean one of the philosophers. With the whole ancient Christian tradition, right up to Dante, he rates Virgil much higher than any mere philosopher.
9. There had no doubt been appreciative murmurs, indicating that they had got the reference.
10. Which, as good Christians, he is implying, they ought not.
11. Anchises.
12. *Aeneid*, VI, 719-721. The pagan religious cosmos, of course, did not have heaven above for

the good and hell beneath for the wicked; all the dead went down below to the underworld, Hades, the Israelite Sheol, the more fortunate ones, the heroes, to the isles of the blessed; and then, according to the theory Augustine is attacking, returned *upward* to live again in this world of the light of day.

13. Meaning, presumably, that he accepted the theory as true.

14. Porphyry was a Neoplatonist of the late third century A.D., who was above all distinguished for combining his philosophy with magical rites and theories, the whole being typical of the fashionable pagan religiosity of the time.

15. *Sacramenta*. He chiefly has in mind, of course, the doctrine of the resurrection. But as he is also criticizing Porphyry, who was a propagandist for what they called "theurgy"—literally "working the gods"—or salvation by magical rites, I think Augustine also has the Christian mysteries, or sacraments of initiation, in mind; they are indeed ordered to the resurrection as to their ultimate end.

16. This is a quotation from Porphyry's lost work, *On the Return of the Soul*, which Augustine discusses at length in *The City of God* X, 29; XXII, 26.

17. Augustine may possibly be referring to Origen, who was a contemporary of Porphyry's master, Plotinus.

18. In the resurrection of the dead.

19. *Quia illa quae praedicata est debet habere subditum*. It has all the appearance of a grammatical, or logical, axiom—every predicate must have a subject; and the next sentence seems to confirm this. As he is talking to philosophers, about proof, it seems clear he is toying with—well, it's hardly a grammatical analogy, more like a simple equivocation, impossible to reproduce in English, since predicate now only has its grammatical or logical meaning.

20. *Anima*, which animates *animal*.

21. By simply lumping all the philosophers together (except for the Epicureans, who were regarded by everyone else as quite beyond the pale), he is being unfair to all of them. The idea of a world soul was, I believe, a specifically Stoic doctrine, and it is doubtful if Porphyry would have subscribed to it.

22. "The same Plato," either because he was named above in section 6, or because he is being credited with the world-soul theory. But then we go on to hear of a rather different theory, from the *Timaeus*.

23. *Timaeus*, 38c-40b.

24. *Timaeus*, 41b. See also Augustine's *City of God* XIII, 16 and XXII, 26.

25. An ironic brag, I take it.

SERMON 242

DURING THE EASTER SEASON ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY,
AGAINST THE PAGANS

Date: 411

Christ really did rise from the dead in the flesh

1. During these holy days, dedicated to the Lord's resurrection, let us discuss, as best we can with his help, the resurrection of the flesh. This, you see, is our faith, this is the gift that has been promised us in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, a sample of which has come first in his own person. You see, he wanted not only to foretell what he promised us at the end, but also to demonstrate it. Now the people who were there with him at the time actually saw this; and after being thunderstruck, and believing they were seeing a spirit, they grasped the solid reality of his body. After all, he didn't only speak in words to their ears, but also in appearance to their eyes; and not content with presenting himself to their sight, he also offered himself to be handled and felt. You see, he said, *Why are you troubled, and thoughts coming up into your hearts?* They thought they were seeing a spirit, I mean. *Why are you troubled, he said, and thoughts coming up into your hearts? See my hands and my feet; feel, and see that a spirit does not have bones and flesh, as you can see that I have* (Lk 24:36-39).

People argue against this evident truth. What else, after all, could you expect from mere men, who savor the things of men,¹ but to argue about God against God? I mean, he's God, they are mere men. But *God knows the thoughts of men, that they are vain* (Ps 94:11). With worldly, materialistic people, what they are in the habit of observing entirely governs their manner of understanding. What they are accustomed to see, they can believe; what they aren't they can't. God performs miracles that go beyond what we are accustomed to, because he is God. It is in fact a greater miracle, so many people being born every day who didn't previously exist, than a few having risen again, who did exist; and yet this kind of miracle is not seriously considered and appreciated, but being so common is disregarded as uninteresting. Christ rose again; the case is complete and closed. He was body, he was flesh, which hung on the cross, gave up the soul, was placed in the tomb. He presented it alive, seeing he lived in it. Why

are we astonished, why don't we believe? It's God who did it. Reflect on the one who brought it about, and you eliminate all possibility of doubt.

Why did the Lord eat after his resurrection?

2. So people inquire whether this liability of the body to decay, which they experience in their own flesh, is going to be found in the resurrection of the dead. We say it won't be. They reply to us, "If there won't be any liability to decay, why will there be any eating? Or if there won't be any eating, why did the Lord eat after his resurrection?" Just now when the gospel was read, we heard that when he presented himself alive to the eyes and hands of his disciples, he didn't think that was enough for demonstrating his bodily reality; but he added, *Have you got anything here to eat? And they offered him a portion of baked fish, and a honeycomb; and he ate, and gave them what was left over* (Lk 24:41-43).²

So we are asked, "If the body's liability to decay is not going to rise again, why did the Lord Christ eat?" Well, you can read that he ate; can you read that he was hungry? That he ate was a matter of his power, not of his need. If he had had a craving to eat, he would have been in need. Again, if he hadn't been able to eat, it would have meant he had less capability. Did even angels fail to eat, when they were given hospitality by our ancestors,³ and yet they were not liable to decay?

Why did the Lord rise again with the scars of his wounds?

3. Again they say, "Will the defects that were to be found in the human body, with which a person dies, share in the resurrection?" We answer, "No, the defects won't share in it." And we're asked, "So why did the Lord rise again with the scars of his wounds?" What are we to say to this, but that this too was a matter of power, not of need? He wished to rise like that, he wished to present himself like that to some people who had doubts. The scars of the wounds in that flesh healed the wounds of unbelief.

What about the resurrection of babies?

4. They carry on arguing, and inquire of us. "About babies who die, are they going to rise again as babies? Or when they come to life again, will their age, which was so brief when they died, be that of adults?" I admit, we find no definite answer to this in the scriptures. What is promised there is that bodies are going to rise again imperishable and immortal. But if they are given the age of infants, if their tiny stature is called back to life, does that mean their weakness is called back too? If they are tiny, does that mean they will just lie there, and be unable to walk? However, it is more credible and probable and reasonable to take it that they will rise again with the age of adults, receiving as a gift what would have come to them with time. After all, we are not going to believe that old age

is going to rise again, wheezing and bent. In a word, eliminate all defects and distortions, and add what you like.

How will an earthy body exist in heaven?

5. “But,” you will say, “how will an earthy body exist in heaven?” Those very notable philosophers of the nations, you see, whose crazy—well anyway, human—opinions I have already outlined for you (I mean they inquired about these things by making human hypotheses, not by God’s inspiration); those philosophers make great play with this subject,⁴ and treat in a very subtle way of the momentum of weights and the order of the elements; and they say, what we can see for ourselves, that the universe is so arranged that at the bottom of it is earth, like its foundation, secondly water is poured over earth, thirdly comes air, and fourthly everything is topped off with ether.⁵ That topmost element which they call ether is, they say, a liquid and pure form of fire, and the stars are formed from it, and nothing earthy can be found up there, because the order of the elements’ weights does not allow it.⁶

If we tell them that our bodies are going to live in a new earth, and not going to be in heaven, we will be speaking daringly and rashly, not to say unfaithfully. You see, we are bound to believe that we are going to have bodies of such a kind that we can be wherever we like when we like. I mean, if we answer, to meet this problem of the proper order of weights, that we are going to live on earth, we will be faced ourselves with the problem of the Lord’s body, with which he ascended into heaven.⁷

Reflections on the ascension of Christ into heaven

6. You heard what came to our ears just now from the gospel: *Lifting up his hands, he blessed them. And it happened, while he was blessing them he withdrew from them, and was carried up to heaven* (Lk 24:50-51). Who was carried up to heaven? The Lord Christ. Who is the Lord Christ? The Lord Jesus. What’s this, I mean? Are you going to separate the human from the divine, and make one person of God, another of the man, so that there is no longer a trinity of three, but a quaternity of four? Just as you, a human being, are soul and body, so the Lord Christ is Word, soul, and body. But the Word did not depart from the Father; he both came to us, and did not forsake the Father. He both took flesh in the womb, and continued to govern the universe. So what was lifted up into heaven, if not what had been taken from earth? That is to say, the very flesh, the very body, about which he was speaking when he said to the disciples, *Feel, and see that a spirit does not have bones and flesh, as you can see that I have* (Lk 24:39). Let us believe this, brothers and sisters, and if we have difficulty in meeting the arguments of the philosophers, let us hold on to what was demonstrated in the Lord’s case without any difficulty of faith. Let them chatter, let us believe.

God is able, if God so wishes, to suspend the laws of nature

7. "But it's impossible," they say, "for an earthy body to be in heaven." What if God so wishes? Answer against God, and say, "God can't do it." Don't you too, pagan though you are, say that God is all-powerful? Don't we read, in that book of Plato's which I referred to yesterday,⁸ that the God who was not made said to the gods made by him, "Since you have originated, you cannot be immortal and indissoluble. You shall not, however, be dissolved, nor shall any fated destiny of death destroy you; nor shall it prevail more strongly than my plan, which binds you more surely to perpetual existence than those bonds which now hold you in their grip."⁹ God, who can even do what is impossible, brought everything back to his will. I mean what else does "You cannot be immortal, but I will insure that you never die" amount to, but "I can even do what cannot possibly be done"?

Wood, though made of earth, floats on water

8. However, I would like to do a little arguing myself about this diversity of weights. I'm asking you something, please tell me: Earth is earth, water is water, air is air, ether, that is the sky and that liquid fire, is heaven. These four have step by step, as it were, constructed and built up the universe; that is, the universe is built up out of these four. Inquire which is at the bottom, it's earth; which is above that, it's water; which is above water, it's air; which is above air, it's the sky, heaven, it's ether. What about bodies which can be held and worked? I don't mean wet ones that slither around and flow; I mean workable bodies, what are they composed of? Are they to be assigned to earth, or to water, or to air, or to ether? You're going to answer, "To earth."

So is wood an earthy body?

Obviously earthy. It's born in earth, it's reared in earth, it grows in earth. It's workable, not fluid.

Come back with me now to that order of weights. Earth is in the basement; follow the order; what's on top of earth? Water. Why does wood float on top of water? It's an earthy body; if you haul it back to that order of weights, it ought to be under water, not on top of it. We find water in the middle between earth and wood; earth underneath, water on top of it, and on top of water earth again, in the shape of wood. You've wrecked that order, hold onto faith. So earthy bodies are to be found which are above the element which is second in the order of elements, when wooden things float, and don't sink.

Vessels of lead that float

9. Look at another instance, which may surprise you even more. There are extremely heavy bodies, earthy ones though, which immediately sink as soon as they are placed on top of water, and go right down to the deepest bottom, such as iron, and the most extreme instance such as lead. What's heavier than lead, I mean? And yet the craftsman's hand is applied to lead, makes a hollow vessel out of it, and the lead floats on top of the water.

So will God not give to my body what a craftsman gives to lead? And then, where do you place water itself? Go back to the order of the elements. You will answer, of course, that water is above earth. So why, before they flow in the earth, do the streams of water hang from the clouds?¹⁰

Some heavy bodies are swifter than light ones

10. Call your attention and your thoughts back from there to what I am about to say, if I am able to, with the Lord's help. Which moves more easily, which can be driven with a higher velocity, a heavier body or a lighter one? Wouldn't everybody answer, "A lighter one"? I mean lighter bodies can be moved more easily, driven more swiftly. You have fixed a definite rule, you have definitely considered, looked round at everything, and answered that lighter bodies can be moved more easily and driven more swiftly than heavier ones. That's how it is, you say.

So tell me: why does that lightest of creatures, the spider, move so slowly, and the much heavier horse run so fast? Let me speak about human beings; a big man's body is heavier; a shorter man's body, having less mass, is lighter. That's how it is, but only, though, if someone else is carrying them. But if the man is carrying his own body, the big strong one can run, the thin one wasted with sickness can scarcely walk. Weigh the thin man and the hefty one; the one wasted with disease scarcely weighs a few pounds, the one whose body is in good health carries a lot of weight in his flesh; you just try to lift them both; the strong one is heavy, the lean one light. Now let the carrier step back, the walker step forward. Leave them both to themselves, let them get their own bodies moving; I see the wasted, thin fellow scarcely moving a yard; I see the strong, healthy one running. If that's what good health can do, what will immortality be capable of?

What it means to call bodies spiritual after the resurrection

11. So God will give us a wonderful ease, a wonderful lightness. It's not without reason that those bodies are said to be spiritual.¹¹ The reason they are called spiritual is not because they will be spirits, not bodies; after all, the bodies we now have are said to be animated (soulful, if you like), and yet they aren't *animae*, or souls, but bodies. So just as these are now called "soulful," and aren't souls, so those are called spiritual, but aren't spirits, because they will still be bodies. Why, my dear friends, would a body be called spiritual, if not because it will serve the spirit at its beck and call? There will be nothing coming from you to contradict you, nothing in you rebelling against you. There will be nothing there about which the apostle groans, *The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh* (Gal 5:17). There will be nothing there of *I can see another law in my members fighting back against the law of my mind* (Rom 7:23). There won't be any of these wars there; there it will be peace, it will be perfect peace there. You will be wherever you like; but you will not draw away

from God. You will be wherever you like; but wherever you go, you will have your God. You will always be with him, from whom you will draw your happiness, your bliss.

We can be absolutely certain that what God has promised will come about

12. So don't let anyone deceive you, anyone be argumentative about it, anyone indulge in his own crazy guesses; we can be absolutely certain that what God has promised will come about. When Christ was seen, my brothers and sisters, when he was thought to be a spirit, in order to persuade them that he was a body, he didn't offer himself only to their eyes to be seen, but also to their hands to be touched and felt. To demonstrate to them that faith in the reality of his body was true, he was even willing, as a matter not of need but of power, to take some food.

All the same, as they were still trembling and hesitating for joy, he provided confirmation for their hearts and minds from the holy scriptures, and he said to them: *These are the words I spoke to you while I was still with you; that it is necessary for everything to be fulfilled that was written in the law of Moses, and the prophets and the psalms about me. Then he opened their minds, as the gospel puts it, which was read just now, to understand the scriptures. And he said to them, that so it is written, and so it was proper for the Christ to suffer, and to 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 from Jerusalem (Lk 24:44-47).*

We didn't see that, but we do see this. When these things were promised, they weren't yet to be seen. The apostles could see Christ present, but they couldn't see the Church spread throughout the whole world; they could see the head, they could only believe about the body. We have our turn, we have the grace of the times allotted to us by God's dispensation; in the unity of faith our times have been allotted to us, in which to believe this absolutely certain documentary evidence. They could see the head, and could only believe about the body; we can see the body; let us believe about the head.

NOTES

1. See Mk 8:33.

2. This curious final addition to the text is found in some New Testament manuscripts—carried here, it seems, from the miracles of the loaves and fishes; perhaps also inserted under a kind of eucharistic impulse.

3. See Gn 18:1-9.

4. It was in particular the ancient physicists, culminating in Aristotle, their tradition being carried on up to the third century A.D. by Alexandrian astronomers and physicians like Ptolemy and Galen,

who dealt with such matters; the scientists of those days, not philosophers like Porphyry, whom he was discussing in the previous sermon.

5. The four elements of ancient chemistry, except that the fourth was usually fire; and ether, a very refined kind of fire as he goes on to say, was a “fifth element,” or “quintessence,” postulated to account for the movements of the heavenly bodies. But here, in the teeth of my previous note, he is summarizing Plato’s *Timaeus*, 52d-63e.

6. Earth, being the heaviest element, finds its natural place at the bottom of the cosmic structure, or at its center when it is conceived as a sphere.

7. Augustine is not denying that in the resurrection there will be a new earth where we can live with our risen bodies; he is reminding his hearers that there will also be a new heaven (Rv 21:1), and saying that we will enjoy free access there as well. In fact, John’s picture in the Apocalypse is of a new heaven and a new earth that are fused into an one entity in the shape of the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven, presumably to earth (Rv 21:2).

8. Sermon 241, 8.

9. *Timaeus*, 41b.

10. He hasn’t phrased his conundrum very well. He should have said, in this instance, that the proper place for water is under air. In the clouds they are above it.

11. See 1 Cor 15:44-46, where in the Greek *pneumatikon* is being contrasted with *psychikon*, and in the Latin *spiritalis* with *animale*, and where English simply falters and fails to cope, since it lacks any real adjective from “soul,” and has reduced this word itself to one with almost no non-religious connotations at all. The Revised Standard Version contrasts “spiritual” with “physical” here; but that won’t do. Other versions try “natural,” and even “living”—equally unsatisfactory. The New English Bible bravely contrasts “spiritual” with “animal”; the latest revision of this, the Revised English Bible, timidly reverts to physical. In my view it is the old Jerusalem Bible (the New Jerusalem Bible is here, as in other places, regressive) that best gets the proper contrast: “When it is sown, it embodies the soul, when it is raised, it embodies the spirit. If the soul has its own embodiment, so does the spirit have its own embodiment. The first *man*, Adam, as scripture says, *became a living soul* (Gn 2:7), but the last Adam has become a life-giving spirit.”

SERMON 242A

DURING THE EASTER SEASON,
ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

Date: 411¹

Having raised up his own flesh, God will also raise up yours

1. That our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day is the testimony of the holy gospels, and the whole wide world now confesses this faith in the holy symbol or creed. The prophets didn't see such things, but they said they would happen; no, they didn't see them, but in the spirit they foresaw them. And I'm thinking now of some other people,² and how ashamed they ought to be because, while they dare not deny the resurrection of Christ, they deny that ours is going to happen. They say, you see, "He rose again, as being the only one who had the right to rise again with the very flesh, which he so graciously took to himself. It doesn't follow from that though, does it, that our flesh too can rise again, just because his did? Clearly, his power and capacity is far and away above ours."

To which the answer is: "The divinity of Christ is far and away above you, but the infirmity of Christ has drawn close to you. In himself he's God, for your sake human; from what is properly his he made you,³ from what is properly yours he suffered for you. So if he made you from what is his own, he rose again from what is yours." The Word, certainly, had no flesh; *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; this was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him* (Jn 1:1-3). Man too was made through him; but afterward he was made man himself, he through whom man was made; and so that man might not perish, Christ died.

But Christ rose again. What, in him, rose again? *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us* (Jn 1:14). The Word took to himself what he was not, but never lost what he was. So he remained the Word. What rose again? The Word. Why did he fall? In order to rise again. Why did the Word die? In order to come to life again. But we are saying that he died in the flesh which he took, not in the divinity in which he remained. So in the element in which Christ rose again, he did himself wrong, while providing a model for you; for him to rise again, you see, was a humiliation, it was a wrong. Go back to the Word, go back to *In*

the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and consider what it means for that one to rise again; because having raised up his own flesh, he will also raise up yours. The reason, you see, he wished his own to rise again, was to preserve you from failing to believe that yours would rise again.⁴

Bringing you alive from the tomb

2. But the people who are arguing against us say, “The flesh of Christ rose again because it was only three days in the tomb, and didn’t *see corruption* (Ps 16:10; Acts 2:27), and neither decayed nor rotted nor crumbled to dust. Ours, on the other hand, whenever graves happen to be opened, well you can scarcely even find bones there, what’s found is dust. Whatever was flesh is totally rotted away, totally crumbled into dust. So will it be able to rise again, seeing it hasn’t been able to preserve its integrity?”

Just consider, friend, when you argue like that, just consider, I say, that there are bones in the grave; if nothing else, at least there are bones; in the grave there is also the dust of the body, in the place where it was received by the bosom of the earth. Go back now to your own origin, and inquire what you were, when you were begotten or seeded. He⁵ poured out our beginnings in the womb; think about it; compare a human being as buried, with a human being as seeded.

Of course we all know that we are mortal. So in the same way as we reflect on the womb of the earth, in which the body lies, seeded in order to rise again, let us also reflect on ourselves seeded in the wombs of our mothers, from which this complexity of limbs and organs arose. Where were these five senses of the body hiding? Where in that drop of moisture were eyes and tongue and ears and hands? Where did these various functions of different organs proceed from? Who created it all, who shaped it all? Wasn’t it God? Very well then, the God who was able to thrust you out in proper shape from the womb, himself wishes you to judge what can be done from what has been done, and to believe that he can also bring you alive from the tomb.

That people are seeded here, that here,⁶ I repeat, human beings take shape in their mothers’ wombs, is a daily miracle; but it’s so excessively common it has lost its power to strike wonder, and by its very frequency has become commonplace. But the thing that is only going to happen once, that is, the resurrection that is going to happen only once, is rehearsed over and over again by daily evidences. Nature cries it aloud, scripture insists on it; let us believe this thing is going to happen; let us believe, brothers and sisters, that this body of ours will rise again, to glory for the good, to pain and punishment for the wicked.

What you like comes to life again, what you don’t like perishes

3. What, I mean to say, what, I ask you, is bothering you, unwilling as you are to believe that there will be a resurrection of the flesh? What is it about the body that you don’t like? *Who ever hated his own flesh?* says the apostle (Eph

5:29). What is it about the body that you don't like? If the whole coordinated structure of the body is described, doesn't the one who hears it feel overwhelmed, and the one who describes it cannot do it justice? What is it about the body that you don't like? I will tell you; it's the body's liability to decay, its mortality. But the things you like will be there, the things you don't like won't. Listen to the apostle: *It is seeded as an embodiment of soul, it will rise as an embodiment of spirit; it is seeded in reproach, it will rise in glory; it is seeded in weakness, it will rise in strength.* Listen to a fuller statement: *This perishable thing must put on imperishability, and this mortal thing must put on immortality* (1 Cor 15:44.43.53). What you like comes to life again, what you don't like perishes.

So don't be ungrateful to your Redeemer, by not believing what he promised; but do what he commands, in order to receive what he promised. Your Redeemer, after all, can do everything, because he is God. If you don't like the body being resuscitated, then stop liking the body now. Why take such care of what you don't like? Why look after what you don't like? Why feed what you don't like? What do you prefer it to be safe and sound for? Or do you like it, in fact? Then be grateful, and believe in the resurrection.

So bodies will rise again, because Christ rose again; but they have no needs or wants, because Christ too, when he rose again, ate some food because he was able to, not because he needed to. There will be no hunger there; we shall not stand there anxiously, and say, *Give us this day our daily bread* (Lk 11:3); we will always have eternal bread. But it's always to hand; we won't be hoping for rain because of it, we won't dread the cloudless skies of drought; because our bread will be the one who made the skies. And there will be no fear there, no toil, no sorrow, no decay, no poverty, no infirmity, no weariness, no clumsiness. None of these things will be there; and the body will be.

All these evils, you see, which we are aware of in the body, have been brought on by sin, they didn't come about through our natural condition. From the very beginning, after all, through the man who sinned, we have received this evil inheritance from our father the sinner. But there came to us another inheritance, that of the man who took on our inheritance and promised us his own. We were in possession of death through blame; he took death to himself without blame; though he wasn't a debtor, he was put to death, and so tore up the debtors' bills. So, all of you, let your minds be full of faith in the resurrection. What Christians are promised is not only everything that the scriptures proclaim has been done in Christ, but also what is going to be done in him.

NOTES

1. Fischer and Kunzelmann both suggest the Wednesday of Easter week for this sermon. In Sermon 240, note 1, I gave my reasons for doubting whether that series, Sermons 240—242, was

preached during that week, and suggested a later time during the Easter season. This sermon, though not part of that series, is on the same topic, and the same considerations possibly apply.

2. Did he have a particular sect or school in mind, or just skeptically minded Christians in general, who then, as now, found the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh extremely difficult to swallow? Most probably the latter.

3. Not, of course, meaning that he made you out of his divine substance, which a Gnostic might have said; but he made you out of nothing by his divine power.

4. He is using very bold language in saying that Christ's resurrection was a humiliation for the Word. What he is in fact saying is that the resurrection is the last stage of the total mystery of the incarnation, the mystery of the Word's *kenosis* or emptying of himself (Phil 2:7); none of which, to put it crudely, did the Word any good, and so did in fact, in Augustine's equally crude language, do him wrong. It was all for our sakes, and therefore for the sake of our resurrection, which is the ultimate good that the Word could do for us.

It is a majestic perspective—but it hardly accords with the full theology of Philippians 2:5-11. But then that theology has a very different starting point from the one adumbrated in the prologue of John's gospel, which is always the foundation and starting point of Augustine's christology.

5. Presumably God.

6. Reading *hic* in both cases instead of *his*. The only noun *his* could really be referring to is *visceribus*, wombs; and it is hard to see why he should be so emphasizing them.

7. Emending the *nonne sufficit* of the text to *non sufficit*. Augustine clearly did not intend to say "and doesn't the one who describes it always do it justice?"

SERMON 243

DURING EASTER WEEK
ON THE LORD'S RESURRECTION ACCORDING TO JOHN

Date: after 411¹

The problem of why Mary was told not to touch Jesus

1. The account of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the evangelist John began to be read today. As you know, of course, and as I had earlier reminded you,² the Lord's resurrection is chanted during these days according to all four evangelists. So in the account we have just heard, the one thing that usually bothers people is why the Lord Jesus said to the woman who was seeking his body, and now recognized him as being alive, *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to my Father* (Jn 20:17). But I've told you, and you certainly ought to remember, that they don't all say everything; but things are said by some which are passed over by others. Not, however, in such a way that they must be thought to clash with each other—if there is no desire to pick holes, but a devout desire to understand.

You see, as you can read in the evangelist Matthew, after he had risen he met two women, one of them this one, and said to them, *Hail. But they approached, and took hold of his feet, and worshiped him* (Mt 28:9). And of course he hadn't yet ascended to the Father. So how can he now say to this one, *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to my Father?* I mean, these words seem to be saying, rather, that Mary would be able to touch him when he had ascended into heaven. If she can't touch him when he's located on earth, what mortal can touch him when he's seated in heaven?

Touching Christ means believing in him

2. But this touching signifies faith; you touch Christ if you believe in Christ. I mean, even that woman who was suffering from an issue of blood said to herself, *If I touch the hem of his garment, I shall be healed*. She touched with faith, and the health she was so sure of resulted. Then, to show us what true touching really is, the Lord immediately said to his disciples, *Who touched me? And the disciples said, The crowds are crushing you, and you can say, Who*

touched me? And he said, Someone touched me (Mk 5:28-31; Lk 8:46). As though to say, The crowd jostles, faith touches.

So it seems that this Mary, to whom the Lord said, *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to my Father (Jn 20:17)*, represents the Church, which precisely then came to believe in Christ when he had ascended into heaven. Look, I question all of you when you came to believe; I question the Church spread throughout the whole world, which is represented by this one woman, and with one voice it answers me, “The time I came to believe was when Jesus had ascended to the Father.” What else is “the time I came to believe” but “the time I touched”? Many worldly minded, materialistic people thought Christ was only a man, they had no idea of the divinity hidden in him. They didn’t touch him well, because they didn’t believe well. Do you want to touch well? Understand Christ where he is co-eternal with the Father, and you’ve touched him. But if you just think he’s a man, and think nothing further, then for you he has not yet ascended to the Father.

The functions of the various parts of the risen body

3. So the Lord Jesus presented the sight of his body to human senses, in order to confirm the resurrection of the flesh. The one thing he wished to teach us, by showing himself alive in the body after his resurrection, was that we should believe in the resurrection of the dead. So since all bodies are to be restored whole and entire, a difficult question about the use of their parts is often asked by people who are eager to know, and put as a challenge by people who are eager to pick a quarrel.

They say, you see, that our bodies have all their parts, and that it is apparent which parts are necessary for which functions. Who, I mean, wouldn’t know, who can’t see, that we have eyes for seeing, ears for hearing, tongues for talking, noses for smelling, teeth for chewing, hands for working, feet for walking; also those parts which are called private, or *pudenda*, for reproducing? Further, though, there are the bowels inside, which God wished to be covered up, in case their appearance should disgust us; for what functions our inner parts, and what are called intestines, are of use, many people, and doctors most of all, know very well.

So they argue and say to us, “If we’ll have ears to hear with, eyes to see with, tongues to talk with; why will we have teeth, if we aren’t going to eat, jaws, lungs, stomachs, intestines, through which food passes and is digested for the regulation of our health? Lastly, “why,” they say, “will we have those parts that are called private, or shameful, where there will be no reproduction, no excretion?”

On the beauty of the interconnection between the different parts of the human body, and their functional design

4. What are we to answer them? Can we possibly say to them that we will rise again without intestines, just like statues? I mean, about the teeth there is

an easy answer. You see, teeth aren't only a help in chewing, but also in speaking; striking our tongues, like a plectrum the strings of a lyre, to produce syllables. So some other parts of our bodies will be for show, not for use; for the display of beauty, not the service of necessity. Just because they will be at leisure, does it mean they will be unsightly?

And indeed now, because we are ill-informed and ignorant of the causes of things, if our insides are ever seen, they inspire disgust rather than admiration. Which of us, after all, knows how these parts are linked with each other, and in what proportions they are fitted together? That's what harmony means, a word taken from music; where we can certainly see the sinews, the strings, stretched on the guitar. If all the strings make the same note, there is no tune; varied tension in the strings produces a variety of notes. But a variety of notes combined with intelligent art produces, not beauty for spectators, but sweetness for listeners. Anybody who has learned the intelligent art of this kind that is to be found in the parts of the human body is so amazed, so delighted, that this art, this harmony, this proportion³ is preferred by those who understand it to all visible beauty. Now we don't know about it; but then we shall. Not because our insides will be laid bare, but because even though covered up, they will not be able to remain hidden.

If the thoughts of our hearts will not be hidden, why should our entrails be?

5. Someone is going to answer me and say, "How will they be unable to remain hidden, if they are covered up?" Our hearts⁴ will not remain hidden, and will our entrails remain so? Those thoughts, my brothers and sisters, those thoughts which now only God sees, will all be visible to one another in that company of the saints. Nobody there wishes what they are thinking to be covered up, because nobody there is thinking bad thoughts. Which is why the apostle says, *Do not pass any judgment before the time*; that is, "Don't judge rashly, because you can't see with what sort of mind someone acts." If something is done which can be done even with a good intention, don't find fault; don't take to yourself any more right of judgment than humanity requires.⁵ To see the heart is God's privilege; human beings only have the right to pass judgment on what is out in the open. *So do not*, he says, *pass any judgment before the time*. What's *before the time*? He goes on to say: *until the Lord comes, and lights up the hidden things of darkness*. What darkness he means, he shows plainly in the following words. *And lights up*, he says, *the hidden things of darkness*. What does that mean? Listen to what follows: *And he will show up the thoughts of the heart* (1 Cor 4:5). Lighting up the hidden things of darkness is the same as showing up the thoughts of the heart.

So now our thoughts are in the light to each one of us, because we know our own. But they are in darkness to our neighbors, because they can't see them. Then, however, what you know you are thinking, the other person is going to know too. Why be afraid? Now you want to conceal your thoughts, now you are afraid to publish them; perhaps, I mean, you are sometimes thinking some-

thing bad, something dirty maybe, maybe something silly. Then, however, when you get there, you will think nothing but what is good, nothing but what is honorable, nothing but what is true, nothing but what is pure, nothing but what is sincere.⁶ Just as now you wish your face to be seen, so then you will want your conscience to be seen too.

After all, there's the matter of recognition, my dearest friends; won't we all recognize everybody else? Do you think you are going to recognize me, just because you have known me now, and are not going to recognize my father, whom you haven't known, or heaven knows what bishop who was over this Church many years ago? You will know them all. Those who are there won't recognize each other just because they see faces; mutual recognition will come from a greater kind of knowledge. They will all see each other, but much more perfectly, in the same way as prophets are accustomed to see things here.⁷ They will see in a divine manner, since they will be full of God. And there will be nothing to give offense, nothing to be hidden from people's knowledge.

Some parts of the body are for use, others for elegance

6. So then, there the parts will be entire that here are private or shameful, but won't be shameful or private there. There will be no concern for their complete seemliness, when there is no unseemliness of lust.⁸ And look, even here, where necessity is after a fashion the mother of all our activities—a necessity that won't exist then; we can still find some things that God has placed in our bodies, not for any use, but simply and solely to look nice.

I was running through the different parts a moment ago, and now let's unpick them a little more carefully. We've eyes for seeing, ears for hearing, nostrils for smelling, mouth and tongue for talking, teeth for chewing, throat for swallowing, stomach for receiving and cooking,⁹ intestines for passing the food down the line to the bottom, and the parts that are called private or shameful either for excretion or for reproduction; for working we've got hands, for walking, feet. Beards—what are they any use for, but beauty alone?¹⁰ Why did God create the beard in man? I see the look of it, I don't look for its use. It's obvious why women have breasts—to suckle babies, of course; why do men have nipples? Question their use, there isn't any; question the look of them, a chest with nipples suits men too. Take away the nipples from the manly breast, and see how much beauty you have spoiled, how much ugliness you have introduced.

*If there's so much beauty in the human body now,
how much more so in the resurrection?*

7. So then, dearly beloved, believe that that's how, firmly maintain that that's how a great many parts of the body won't have any use there, but none of them will lack grace and elegance. There will be nothing graceless and inelegant there; there will be total peace, nothing discordant, nothing monstrous, nothing to offend the sight; God will be praised in everything. After all, if even now in

this feeble state of the flesh and delicate functioning of the body's parts, its beauty can be so apparent as to entice the lustful, and excite either the studious or the curious to further research; and if the mathematical proportions discovered in the body show that there is not one craftsman of these, another of the heavens, but that it's the same creator of the lowest and the highest;¹¹ how much more so there, where no lust, no corruption, no deformity or distortion, no painful necessity will be found, but only boundless eternity, true beauty,¹² supreme felicity?

What are we going to do in the resurrection? Sing alleluia

8. But you'll say to me, "What am I going to do? There will be no functions for the parts of my body to perform; what am I going to do?" Doesn't it strike you as doing anything, just standing, seeing, loving, praising? Look here, these holy days which are being celebrated after the Lord's resurrection,¹³ stand for the life that will be ours after our resurrection. You see, just as the forty days of Lent before Easter stood for the difficulties of this mortal life and its troubles, so these happy days stand for the future life, where we will be reigning with the Lord. The life which is represented by the forty days before Easter is the one we now have; the life which is represented by the fifty days after the Lord's resurrection is not now being lived, but hoped for, and in being hoped for is loved. And by that very love God who promised all these things is being praised, and such praises are what *alleluia* is. After all, what is *alleluia*? It's a Hebrew word, *alleluia*, "Praise God"; *Allellu*, "Praise"; *Ia*, "God." So with *alleluia* we say "Praise God," and urge one another to praise God; with hearts in harmony we sing praises to God better than on the strings of the guitar; we sing *alleluia*.

And when we've sung it, because of our weakness we go away, in order to restore our bodies. Why do we need restoring, if not because we are constantly fading?¹⁴ Finally, such is the weakness of the flesh, such the irksome nature of this life, that everything, however wonderful, ends in boredom. How we have longed for these days to come again next year, when they were just ended! And how eagerly we come to them after an interval of time! If we were told, though, "Say *alleluia* without ever stopping," we would excuse ourselves. Why would we excuse ourselves? Because growing tired we would be unable to keep it up, because we would grow weary and get bored even with that good thing. There no fading away, no boredom will occur. Stand up, praise, *you who stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God* (Ps 134:1). Why do you ask what you are going to do there? *Blessed, it says are those who dwell in your house, Lord; they will praise you for ever and ever* (Ps 84:4).

NOTES

1. So Poque; others suggest earlier dates. But I prefer the later one; the sermon somehow smacks of an older Augustine, occasionally inconsequential and rambling. I personally, with no other evidence to go on than the sermon itself, would happily date it ten years later.
2. On the previous days, no doubt. See the opening paragraphs of Sermons 235 and 239 for other examples of this annual reminder.
3. Three words for the single Latin *ratio*, I must confess. I have also just translated it “intelligent art.”
4. Meaning our thoughts, not our internal organ.
5. As, I believe, Cardinal Newman often said, we can and must frequently pass judgment on people’s actions, but we have no right to attribute motives and intentions to them, which we cannot know, unless they declare them.
6. See Phil 14:8.
7. As he puts it in the present tense, he may well be referring to contemporary visionaries and persons gifted with second sight, just as much as to the biblical prophets.
8. He may well have had 1 Cor 12:23 in mind.
9. Aristotle, at least, considered digestion as a kind of culinary process, nature’s cooking.
10. Many of us might not agree!
11. The connection between physiology and astronomy—or astrology, as it would appear to us—was a commonplace in the ancient world. Why else do we talk of jovial and mercurial temperaments, for example?
12. He actually says “beautiful truth,” *pulchra veritas*; but I have taken a liberty with him, in order to try to catch something of his euphony.
13. He means the whole Easter season, or paschal time, from Easter to Pentecost, not just Easter week.
14. *Quare reficimus, nisi quia deficimus?*

SERMON 244

DURING EASTER WEEK, ON THE THURSDAY

Date: 418¹

*What the disciples believed was simply what Mary had told them,
not that Christ had risen from the dead*

1. Today we began to chant the Lord's resurrection from the gospel according to John. We heard it, and with the eyes of faith we saw the devout woman's feelings for the Lord Jesus. She was looking for Jesus, but still, though, as one seeking the body of a dead man, and one who loved him as the good master.² She didn't understand that he had risen from the dead, she didn't believe; and on seeing that the stone had been moved from the tomb, she believed the body she was seeking had been taken away, and brought this as painful news to the disciples. Two of them ran there, one of them Peter, the other John. He's the one, you see, *whom Jesus loved* (Jn 20:2)—more than the others of course; because as their Lord he loved them all. They ran, in order to see whether what the woman said was true, that the body had been taken from the tomb. They came, they looked, they didn't find the body, and they believed.

But what did they believe? What they ought not to have believed. So when you heard *And they believed*, you thought, perhaps, that they believed what they should have believed, that is that the Lord had risen from the dead. No, they didn't believe that, but what the woman had told them. Well, to prove to you that that's what they believed, the evangelist added at once, *For they did not yet know the scriptures, that it was necessary for him to rise from the dead* (Jn 20:8-9). Where's their faith? Where's the truth so often witnessed to? Didn't the Lord Jesus himself tell them several times before the passion that he was to be handed over, to be put to death, and to rise again? He was talking to people who were still deaf.

Peter had already said to him, *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*. He had already heard, *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, that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the underworld shall not conquer her* (Mt 16:16-18). Such faith was drowned when the Lord was crucified. Peter, you see, only believed he was the Son of

God up to the time he saw him hanging on the tree, the time he saw him fixed there with nails, the time he saw him dead, the time he saw him buried. Then he lost what he had held. Where's the rock? Where's the immovable solidity of the rock? Christ himself was the rock,³ while Peter, Rocky, was only named from the rock. That's why the rock rose again, to make Peter solid and strong; because Peter would have perished, if the rock hadn't lived.

The problem of what "Do not touch me" can have meant

2. Afterward, though, when the Lord said to the woman Mary, she turned and recognized him, and called him Master, *Rabboni*. The resurrection was revealed to this woman. So what's the meaning of *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to my Father* (Jn 20:16-17)? It's a puzzling problem on several counts. First, because of the prohibition of touching him, as though touching could injure him. Next, because in giving the reason why he didn't want to be touched and forbade it, he said, *for I have not yet ascended to my Father*; as though to say, "It is then you will touch me, when I have ascended to my Father." She was forbidden to touch him standing on earth, and she would be able to touch him seated in heaven?

You see, I said a moment ago, "What's the meaning of *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to my Father*?" I've more to add; when he had risen, as he himself says,⁴ and the other evangelists, and we heard just now when the holy readings were being read, he appeared to his disciples; and since they thought he was a spirit, he said to them, *Why are you troubled, and why are thoughts coming up into your hearts? See my hands and my feet; feel and see* (Lk 24:37-39). He hadn't ascended already, had he? No, he had not yet ascended to his Father, and he said to his disciples, *Feel and see*. Where is *Do not touch me* now? Here perhaps somebody is going to say, "He was willing to be touched by men, not by women." If he shrank from women, he wouldn't have been born of a woman. However, whatever the case is, to make a nice little issue, by saying that the Lord was willing, before he ascended to the Father, to be touched by men, not by women; the evangelist Matthew disposes of it. He told the story, you see, of how the women met Jesus as he rose again, among them this Mary, and how they clung to his feet.⁵

The question is a pressing one on several counts, what the meaning can be of *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to my Father*. Everything I've said so far, I've said for this purpose, to magnify the difficulty of the question; you can see how tough it is, practically insoluble. May the Lord help me, so that it may be solved. May the one who was pleased to set the problem also be pleased to explain it. Pray with me for that result; give your ears to me, your hearts to him. What he is pleased to suggest to me, I will communicate to you. Let anybody who understands it better teach me; I'm the teacher, but in such a way that I'm not unteachable, I hope. As for those who don't understand it better, let them hear from me what they can understand.

Touching means believing

3. The disciples, as we have heard, as indeed is obvious, thought the Lord Jesus was a man, and that was the level at which they balanced their faith. They didn't raise their eyes any higher. They went about with Christ on earth. What he was made for us, that they knew; that he made us, they did not know. He himself is Christ, both maker and made. Observe the maker: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; this was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him.* Observe the one made: *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us* (Jn 1:1-3.14). So we ourselves can see Jesus, but only now that the faith of the apostles has been preached to us. What we know now, they didn't yet know then. I'm not doing them any wrong; I dare not call them ignorant; and yet I see them confessing their ignorance.⁶ They didn't know, they learned later on, what we know now. Christ both God and man, Christ both maker of things and made among things, Christ both creator of man and created man, we know, they didn't yet.

As God Christ is equal to the Father; he is as great as the Father is, has the same attributes as the Father, is what the Father is, is not who the Father is.⁷ He is what the Father is, because the one is God, the other is God; the one almighty, the other almighty; the one unchanging, the other unchanging; he is what the Father is. He is not who the Father is, because the one is the Father, the other the Son. If you know this, for you he has ascended to the Father; if you don't know it, Christ has not yet ascended to the Father for you; he is still a child with you, still on earth with you, not yet, for you, equal to the Almighty. He ascends for you as you advance in the faith, he ascends with you when you advance.

So what's the meaning of *Do not touch me*? Touch signifies faith; by touching, after all, one comes up to the person touched. Look at that woman who was suffering from an issue of blood. She said to herself, *I will be cured, if I touch the hem of his garment* (Mk 5:28). She came up and touched, she was cured. What does "She came up and touched" amount to? She drew near and believed. To show you that it was by believing that she touched, the Lord said, *Someone touched me*. What's "touched me," but "believed in me"? And to show you that "touched me" is the same as "believed in me," *the disciples answered and said to him, The crowds are crushing you, and you can say, Who touched me?* If you were walking by yourself, if the crowds had made room for you to walk along, if there was nobody next to you, you could rightly say, "Someone touched me." The crowd is jostling you, and you mention one person touching you? And he repeated, *Someone touched me*. First, you see, he had said, *Who touched me?* and afterward, *Someone touched me* (Lk 8:45-46). "You know what you're saying: The crowds are crushing you. Somebody, though, touched me. This crowd knows how to jostle, it doesn't know how to touch."

It's agreed then that that's what he wished to signify by saying *Who touched me? Somebody touched me*; so that we might believe that that touch was the faith of the person touching, or rather the approach of the person believing. So what's the meaning of *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to my Father* (Jn 20:17)? What you can see me as is what you think of me as; *I have not yet*

ascended to my Father. You can see me as a man, you think of me as a man. I am indeed a man; but don't let your faith stay at that level. *Do not touch me*, so as to believe that I am only a man. *For I have not yet ascended to my Father.* I am ascending to my Father, and then touch me; that is: Advance, understand me as being equal to the Father, and then touch, and you will be saved.

Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to my Father. You can see that I have descended; you do not yet see that I have ascended.⁸ *For I have not yet ascended to my Father.* I emptied myself, *taking the form of a servant, made in the likeness of men, and in condition found as a man.* This is what was crucified, what was buried, what was raised again. But as for *Since he was in the form of God, he did not think it robbery to be equal to God* (Phil 2:7.6), that you do not yet see. That I have ascended you do not yet see. Don't, by touching earth, lose heaven; don't, by remaining with me as man, fail to believe I am God. *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to my Father.*

The Photinians and Arians judged by this rule

4. Let the Arian step forward; first though let the Photinian step forward.⁹ We answer the Photinian thus: *Do not touch*; what's the meaning of "Do not touch"? Do not believe in that way; for you, Christ has not yet ascended to the Father. Let the Arian step forward. "I," he says, "believe that Christ is God, but God junior." Neither for you has he yet ascended to the Father. When he ascends to the Father, extend yourself, in order to touch him; stretch out, touch God. "I too," he says, "confess that he is God; but of another nature, and of another substance; created, not the one through whom all things were created; made, not the Word in the beginning without time." You're still down below; he hasn't yet ascended to the Father for you. Do you want him to ascend to the Father for you as well? Believe, *Since he was in the form of God, he did not think it robbery to be equal to God* (Phil 2:6). It wasn't robbery, because it was his nature. What is had by robbery is usurped; what is had by nature is simply recognized. *In the form of God he did not think it robbery to be equal to God.* That is how he was born, and always born; both born and always born, and born without beginning.¹⁰

You, though, Mr. Arian, what do you say? "There was a time when the Son was not." Can't you see that he has not yet ascended to the Father for you? Don't touch, don't believe like that. There is no time between the Father and the Son. The Father begot, the Son was born; the first begot without time, the second was born without time, he through whom times were made. Touch him like that, and he has ascended for you to the Father. The Word, but coeternal with God; the Wisdom of God, but without whom the Father never was. Your flesh has an answer for you; it's going to whisper with you, going to say to you in the dark, "How was this one born?" It's the darkness talking to you.

"I want it explained," you cry; "I'm crying out for an explanation."

What do you want explained to you?

"Was he born, or not born? I mean, he wouldn't be the Son if he wasn't born. So if he was born, there was a time when he was not."

That's untrue; you're speaking as earth, speaking from the earth.

"Explain to me then," he says, "how he was born, if he always was."

I won't explain, I won't explain; I can't. I won't explain. But I will put forward the prophet as my champion: *His begetting who shall expound?* (Is 53:8).

NOTES

1. So most of the scholars; with admirable consistency and determination, Poque sticks to her favorite date of after 411. That it was preached probably on the Thursday of Easter week is my suggestion, based on the presumption that John was read last, and that the readings from Luke's account ended on the Wednesday. See also Sermon 246 below, note 13.

2. See Jn 20:8.

3. See 1 Cor 10:4.

4. He must mean "as John himself says." But he goes on to quote only Luke, and later on to refer to Matthew. He forgot to bring in the doubting Thomas story, which he would have had in mind: Jn 2:24-29.

5. Mt 28:9.

6. By writing the gospel accounts of it.

7. Much neater in the Latin: *tantus est quantus ille; talis est qualis ille; hoc est quod ille; non hic est qui ille.*

8. Augustine is not only giving a symbolic interpretation of this text in terms of faith in the divinity of Christ; he is in fact interpreting the ascension itself as a theological symbol of this truth—though of course he would never have denied that it was a literal event. Christ, he is saying here, ascended even before the event of the ascension, or rather was eternally "ascended."

It is a rather piquant, and possibly significant, fact that we get the word "ascension" from John's gospel, in which the event is *not* described; whereas Luke, who gives us a picture of the event both in his gospel (Lk 24:51) and Acts (1:9), does not use the word. Instead he talks of Jesus being "separated" and "taken up," his Old Testament model clearly being the assumption of Elijah into heaven, 2 Kgs 2:11-12.

9. It is not absolutely certain what Photinus believed; he lived in the middle of the fourth century, a generation or so after Arius. He was very possibly a Unitarian, denying any real Trinity in God, like the Sabellians; in Augustine's understanding of his doctrine, he simply denied the divinity of Christ. On Arius we, and Augustine, are better informed. Augustine goes on to state the classic Arian formula and doctrine.

10. He is talking of the eternal generation of the Son, "born of the Father before all ages."

SERMON 245

DURING EASTER WEEK

Date: before 417¹

The apostles did not yet believe that Christ had risen

1. Today once again the Lord's resurrection has been chanted from the holy gospel. It was the gospel according to John, though, that was read. We heard things we hadn't heard in the other books of the gospel. The proclamation of the truth is indeed common to them all, and they all drank from the same source.² But in the proclamation of the gospel, as I have often reminded your graces, some things were set out by all of them, some by three, some by two, some by one each. So now, what we have heard according to the gospel of John, that Mary saw the Lord, and the Lord said to her, *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to the Father* (Jn 20:17), the evangelist John is alone in recording. So it's on this that I must talk to your graces.

Even though they had seen the grave clothes in the tomb, they hadn't believed that the Lord had risen, but that he had been taken away. John himself—he refers to himself, you see, as *the one whom Jesus loved* (Jn 20:2)—on hearing the news brought by the women, when they said *They have taken my Lord from the tomb* (Jn 20:2), ran with Peter and looked in the tomb, saw only the grave clothes, and believed. What did he believe? Not that he had risen, but only that he had disappeared from the tomb. The words that follow show this; that, after all, is how it's written, as we've just heard: *He looked, he saw and believed; for he did not yet know the scriptures, that it was necessary for him to rise from the dead* (Jn 20:8-9). So it's plain what he believed; it's what was no part of the faith that he believed; he believed, but he believed something untrue. The Lord appeared to him later, drove out the untruth, implanted the truth.

The problem of what "Do not touch me" can mean

2. However, what usually worries both reader and hearer, if they aren't altogether lacking in curiosity or interest, is how he could say, *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to the Father* (Jn 20:17); let's try and see, with the Lord's help, what it can have meant. This bothers one, you see, what's really

meant by *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to the Father*. After all, when did he ascend to the Father? As the Acts of the Apostles show, on the fortieth day after his resurrection, a day we are going in due course to celebrate in his name. That's when he ascended to the Father; that's when the disciples, who had touched him with their hands, followed him with their eyes. Then the voice of angels was heard: *Men of Galilee, why are you standing, looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you, will come again in the same way as you have seen him going up into heaven* (Acts 1:9-11).

So if that's when he ascended to the Father, what are we to say, my brothers and sisters? Mary couldn't touch him standing on earth, and could she touch him seated in heaven? If she couldn't do it here, how much less there? So what does it mean, *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to the Father*? I mean the impression the words give, is as though he said, "Touch me then, when I have ascended; before I ascend, don't touch me." "O Lord, you're here, and I can't touch; am I to touch you when you've ascended?" Then again, if he shrank from human contact before he ascended to the Father, how could he present himself to the disciples to be not only seen but also handled, when he said, *What are you thinking in your hearts? See my hands and my feet; feel, and see that a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you can see that I have* (Lk 24:38-39)? That unbelieving disciple Thomas also touched his pierced side, and exclaimed, *My Lord and my God* (Jn 20:28). When he touched him, Jesus had not yet ascended to the Father.

Or perhaps some foolish fellow will say, "Before he ascended to the Father men could touch him; women, though, couldn't, except when he had ascended to the Father." This is ridiculous thinking, and a perverse opinion. Without a shadow of doubt, what Mary heard, the Church is to hear too. Let everybody hear this, everybody understand it, everybody do it. So what's *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to the Father*? Because you can see me, you think I'm only a man, you don't yet know I am equal to the Father; don't touch me as just that, don't believe in me only as a man, but understand here the Word equal to its begetter. So what's *Do not touch me*? Don't believe. Don't believe what? That I am only what you can see. I will be ascending to the Father, and then touch me. I am ascending for you when you understand I am equal. You see, as long as you think I'm less, I am not yet ascending for you.

*Touching means believing, as shown in the case
of the woman with an issue of blood*

3. That touching means believing, though, I think we can easily gather from that woman, who touched the hem of Christ's garment, and was saved from her disease. You recall the gospel: the Lord Jesus was going to visit the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, who he was first told was sick, later that she was dead. On his way there, here comes a woman across his path, who had been afflicted with an issue of blood for twelve years, and had spent all she had for nothing on doctors treating her and not curing her; and she said to herself, *If I*

can touch the hem of his garment, I shall be saved (Mk 5:22-28). Just saying this was already touching. Finally, listen to the judgment. When she had been healed, and saved according to her faith, the Lord Jesus Christ said, *Someone touched me. And the disciples said, The crowds are crushing you, and you can say, Who touched me? And he said, Someone touched me; for I know that power has gone out of me* (Lk 8:45-46). Grace went forth to heal her, not to diminish him. So the disciples say, “The crowds are jostling you, and you felt one man or one woman?” And he says, “Somebody touched me; they are jostling, she touched.” What’s “they are jostling, she touched”? The Jews attack, the Church has believed.

The Church, represented by Mary, must hear what Mary heard, and act accordingly

4. So it’s in line with this way of understanding it, by which we can see that the woman’s touching was in fact her believing; it’s in line with this meaning that Mary was told, *Do not touch me*; let me ascend, and then touch. Touch me then, I mean, when you realize that *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (Jn 1:1). The Word indeed became flesh; the Word remains uncontaminated, undefiled, unchanging, and entire. But because you can only see the man, you don’t see the Word; I don’t want you to believe in the flesh, and leave the Word out. Let the whole Christ be seen by you, because he is equal to the Father in the Word. So I don’t want you, he is saying, to touch me now, because you can’t yet see who I am.

So let the Church, which was being represented by Mary, hear what Mary heard. Let us all touch, provided we believe. He has already ascended to the Father, he is seated at the Father’s right. *He ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father*; that’s what those who are being baptized hear; that’s what they believe before they are baptized. So when they believe, Mary is touching Christ.

This way of understanding the words is obscure, but sound; it’s closed to the unbelieving, open to those who are knocking at the door in faith.³ So the Lord Jesus Christ is both there, and here with us; both with the Father and among us; he has neither departed from him, nor does he forsake us; he both teaches us to pray, as the master, and listens to our prayers with the Father, as the Son.

NOTES

1. So Lambot; Poque as usual dates it about 411. Lambot says it was preached on the Wednesday of Easter week; on my calculation, indicated in note 1 to Sermon 244, it was more likely to have been preached on the Thursday. See also Sermon 246, note 13.

2. See 1 Cor 10:4.

3. See Lk 11:9-10.

SERMON 246

DISCOURSE PREACHED ON THE THURSDAY DURING EASTER WEEK

Date: 413¹

*The various gospel accounts of the resurrection are all true,
because all are inspired by the one Spirit*

1. In many ways did the Lord Jesus appear to his faithful followers; they had the material for all the evangelists to write, just as the Spirit furnished them with memories of the things they would write. One said one thing, another another. Any of them could leave out something true, but not say anything false. Reckon that just one person said all these things; and indeed one person did, because there was the one Spirit in all of them.

What did we hear today? All that about the disciples not believing that Jesus had risen, and not believing him when he had told them about it beforehand. The thing is as plain as a pikestaff, and written down precisely so that we may give God a big thank you, because we have believed in him, though we have not seen him on earth. Their eyes and hands could scarcely be persuaded of the truth which we believe.

*The disciples should have believed that he had risen,
not that he had been stolen*

2. You heard how his disciple entered the tomb, and *saw the grave clothes laid aside, and believed; for he did not yet know the scriptures, that it was necessary for Jesus to rise from the dead (Jn 20:8-9)*. That's what you heard, that's what was read: *he saw and believed*. So it ought to have said, "He saw and did not believe; for he did not yet know the scriptures." So what's *he saw the grave clothes and believed?* What did he believe? What the woman had said: *They have taken my Lord from the tomb (Jn 20:2)*. That, after all, if you heard, or rather because you heard, is what that woman had said: *They have taken my Lord from the tomb, and I do not know where they have put him*. When they heard this, they ran there. He went into the tomb, he saw the grave clothes, and he believed what the woman had said; that Christ had been taken from the tomb. Why did he believe Christ had been stolen and taken away from the tomb? Why?

For he did not yet know the scriptures, that it was necessary for Jesus to rise again from the dead. He had gone in, he hadn't found him. He should have believed that he had risen again, not that he had been stolen.

The risen Christ's conversation with Mary, leading up to "Do not touch me"

3. So what does it all mean? I am in the habit of speaking to you about it every year. But as this same reading is solemnly read every year, let the same sermon be solemnly preached every year. Why did the Lord say to the woman, who already recognized him. . . . You see, he had first said, *Who are you looking for? Why are you crying?* (Jn 20:15). But she thought he was the gardener. And in fact, if you think about it, if we are his garden herbs, Christ is the gardener. Isn't he the gardener, who *sows a grain of mustard seed* (Lk 13:19), the tiniest seed, that is, and also hot? And it grew and came up and produced such a big tree that even the birds of the sky roosted in its branches. He says himself, *If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed* (Lk 17:6; Mt 17:20). A grain of mustard seed looks small, nothing less noteworthy to the sight, but nothing stronger to the taste.² And what does that signify but the very great fervor and inner strength of faith in the Church?

So she thought he was the gardener, and said to him, *My lord*—to show him special respect, because she was asking a favor, that's why she said *My lord*³—*if you have taken him away, show me where you have put him, and I will take him away myself* (Jn 20:15); as though to say, "I need him, you don't." Dear woman, you think you need Christ dead; recognize him alive. You're looking for him dead; but he himself is talking to you, alive.⁴ His being dead, though, would have profited us nothing, if he hadn't risen again from the dead.⁵ And the one who was being looked for dead, showed himself alive. How very much alive! He called her name, *Mary*; and she, as soon as she heard her own name, said *Rabboni* (Jn 20:16). The gardener, you see, could have said *Who are you looking for? Why are you crying?* Only Christ could say *Mary*. The one who called her by name, was the very one who summoned her to the kingdom of heaven. He used the name which he himself had written in his own book:⁶ *Mary*. And she replied, *Rabboni*, that is, *Master*. Now she recognized the one, by whom she was being given the light to recognize him; the one who was previously thought to be the gardener was now seen to be the Christ. And the Lord said to her, *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to the Father* (Jn 20:17).

Touching represents believing

4. What does this mean, *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to the Father?* If she couldn't touch him as he was standing on earth, would she be able to touch him seated in heaven? As though he were saying, "Don't touch me now; touch me then, when I have ascended to the Father"? Your graces will recall yesterday's reading, when the Lord appeared to the disciples, and they thought they were seeing a spirit. But wishing to relieve them of this mistaken

idea, he offered himself to their touch. What did he say? It was read yesterday; there was a sermon about it. *Why are you troubled, and why are thoughts coming up into your hearts? See my hands and my feet; feel and see* (Lk 24:37-39). He hadn't already ascended to the Father, had he, when he said *Feel and see*, offering himself to his disciples to be touched, not just touched but felt, to produce faith in the real flesh of his real body, to present the solid reality of truth even to the human touch? So he offers himself to the hands of the disciples to be felt, and he says to the woman, *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to my Father*. What can it mean? Could men only touch him on earth, while women had to touch him in heaven; *for I have not yet ascended to my Father*?

So what can touching be, but believing? We touch Christ, you see, by faith, and it is better not to touch him with the hand and to touch him with faith, than to feel him with the hand and not touch him with faith. It wasn't a great matter to touch Christ; the Jews touched him when they seized him, they touched him when they bound him, touched him when they hung him up; they touched him, and by touching him in a bad way, they lost what they touched. Just you touch by faith, O Catholic Church, see you touch by faith.⁷ If you have thought of Christ only as a man, you have touched him on earth. If you have believed Christ is Lord, equal to the Father, then you have touched him when he has ascended to the Father.

So he ascended for us when we came to have a right understanding of him. He ascended just once, back at that time; but now he ascends every day. Oh how many there are for whom he hasn't even yet ascended, and how many for whom he is still lying on earth! How many who say, "He was a great man";⁸ how many who say, "He was a prophet!" How many antichrists⁹ have come along, to say like Photinus, "He was a man, he had nothing more. But he surpassed all other devout and holy men by excelling them in justice and wisdom, because he was not God!"¹⁰

My dear Photinus, you've touched him on earth, you've been in too much of a hurry to touch, you've rushed in with your opinion, you haven't arrived at the truth of his equality with the Father, nor therefore at the home country, because you have got lost on the way.

*Why Christ distinguishes between "My Father and your Father,
my God and your God"*

5. Let's listen next to those words of his, *I am ascending to my Father and your Father and my God and your God* (Jn 20:17). Why not, "to our Father and our God," but with the distinction made, *my Father and your Father and my God and your God*? *My Father*, because I am the only Son; *your Father* by grace, not by nature. *My Father*, because he always was this; *your Father*, because *I chose you* (Jn 15:16). *My God and your God*. How is the Father Christ's God? His Father because he begot him; how his God? Because he also created him. He begot him as the only-begotten Word; he created him, *of the seed of David according to the flesh* (Rom 1:3). So he is both the Father of Christ

and the God of Christ; the Father of Christ in his divinity, the God of Christ in his infirmity. Listen to how he's the God of Christ. Let's question the psalm; he said himself, through the prophet, *From my mother's womb, my God are you* (Ps 22:10). Before my mother's womb my Father, from my mother's womb my God.

So why a distinction here too, namely *My God and your God*?¹¹ There is a clear distinction between his being the Father of the only-begotten Son in one way, our Father in another; his Father by nature, ours by grace. So he should have said, "to my Father and your Father, and our God," because if he is the God of creatures, that's why he is also the God of Christ, since Christ is also a creature as man. The Father of Christ distinctly, yes. The God of Christ because the creator of Christ; so why distinctly, since Christ as man is a creature and we too are creatures? (As man, Christ is of course a servant—taking the form of a servant, the apostle says.)¹² So why the distinction here too, *my God and your God*? Certainly there's a distinction. God fashioned all of us, you see, from the stock of sin. He, though, was even made man differently, he was born of a virgin, a woman conceived him not by sexual desire, but by faith, he did not derive the stock of sin from Adam. We were all born through sin, he was born without sin, being the one who wiped out sins. So there's a distinction here too: *my God and your God*. You, after all, were created from seed, from male and female, you came from the lust of the flesh with the stock of sin. *For who is pure in your sight? Not even the infant whose life on the earth has lasted a single day* (Job 14:4). In any case, people hurry with their babies to get them released, not from what they have added by living, but from what they have contracted by being born. Not so with Christ. *My God and your God; my God*, because of *the likeness of the flesh of sin* (Rom 8:3); *your God* because of the flesh of sin.

6. That's as far as the gospel reading went relating to the Lord's resurrection, as written by the evangelist John, and that must now be enough for a sermon; for the good reason that there are other readings to be read from the same gospel of John about the Lord's resurrection. Nobody, you see, told more stories about his resurrection than John; which is why it can't all be read on one day, but is read on a second, read again on a third day,¹³ until whatever John too wrote down about the Lord's resurrection is finished.

NOTES

1. So Kunzelmann, who gives the precise date: Thursday, 10 April. Other scholars are less sure of the year.

2. Adding "to the taste" with the Maurists. The *Sources Chrétiennes* edition, which provides the text being translated here, omits it.

3. Normally, and rightly, one translates *Domine* here, *Kyrie* in the Greek, by "Sir." But that

would not require the little explanation that Augustine gives of the *Domine*. He has to give it because that, in Latin and Greek, and other languages with a shorter range of honorifics than English, is how we address Christ himself: Lord.

4. The last phrase again with the Maurists. *Sources Chrétiennes* has, "The Lord sees he is being looked for dead."

5. See 1 Cor 15:14-19.

6. The book of life. See Lk 10:20; Rv 3:5.

7. The Maurists, for this last sentence, have: "By touching with faith, O Catholic Church, faith saves you. Just you touch by faith only; that is, approach faithfully and firmly believe."

8. So the Maurists. The *Sources Chrétiennes* text, considerably longer, seems to show the hand of a copyist who wanted to complete Augustine's list of errors, by bringing in one that doesn't in fact quite fit here. It runs: "And how many there are for whom he hasn't ascended, how many for whom he is lying on the earth? How many who say, He wasn't a man (the Manichees)? How many who say, He was a great man?"

9. So the Maurists; *Sources Chrétiennes* has "How many Christians."

10. For Photinus and Photinians see Sermon 244, section 4, note 9.

11. My emendation of the text, which says *My Father and your Father*. But he has already discussed this. The text represents, I suggest, just a natural slip, or else is to be explained by the earnestness of a bone-headed copyist, because in the next sentence Augustine does, by way of a characteristic recapitulation, once again explain why *my Father and your Father*.

12. See Phil 2:7. It is hard to see how this little aside adds anything to the setting of the question. The punctuation of the Latin text from almost the beginning of this paragraph has been most peculiar; it is evident that copyists, and/or editors, had difficulty in understanding it. I suspect that some reader had added this aside in the margin as a little reflection, that it got copied into the text, and helped to sow the general confusion. Given all this, I am confident that my emendation, explained in the last note, is entirely justified.

13. Presumably the Friday and Saturday of Easter week; which proves fairly conclusively that Easter sermons on Christ's conversation here with Mary Magdalene were preached on the Thursday, not the Wednesday.

SERMON 247

DURING EASTER WEEK

Date: before 417¹

All the resurrection narratives are read during Easter week

1. The story of our Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection, according to the truth told by the four evangelists, was completed yesterday, it seems. On the first day, you see, the account was read of the resurrection according to Matthew, on the next day according to Luke, on the third day according to Mark, on the fourth, that is yesterday, according to John. But because John and Luke wrote a great deal about the resurrection itself and what happened after it, which can't all be chanted in one reading, we heard something according to John both yesterday and today, and there are still more readings to come.²

So what have we heard today? That on the very day on which he rose again, that is the Sunday, when it had got late, and *the disciples were in one place, and the doors were closed for fear of the Jews* (Jn 20:19), Jesus appeared among them. So on that very day, as the evangelist John bears witness, he appeared twice to his disciples, early in the morning, and late in the evening. The reading about his appearance in the morning has already been recited; that he appeared again late on the same day is what we heard when it was chanted just now. It wasn't really necessary for me to remind you of this, but it is necessary for you to take note of it. However, because some of you are less quick on the uptake, or more heedless, it was proper for me to remind you, so that you know not only what you heard, but also from what scripture the things you heard come from.

The problem of Christ's risen body appearing in a room through closed doors

2. So let's see what today's reading sets us to talk about. The reading itself, you see, makes its own suggestion to us, and tells us after a fashion to say something about how the Lord, who rose again in a body so solid that it could not only be seen by the disciples but also touched, could appear to them when the doors were closed. Some people, you see, are so uneasy about this point that their faith is in real danger, as they bring the prejudices and assumptions of their own reasoning to bear against divine miracles. This, I mean, is how they argue:

"If it was a body, if there were flesh and bones there, if it is what hung on the cross that rose again from the tomb, how could it enter through closed doors? If it couldn't," they say, "it didn't happen. If it could, how could it?"

If you can understand how, it isn't a miracle; and if it doesn't strike you as a miracle, you are on the verge of denying that he even rose from the tomb.³ Take a look back at the miracles of your Lord from the beginning, and give me a rational explanation of each of them. No man approached her, and the virgin conceived. Give a rational explanation of how a virgin conceived without male seed. Where reason falls down, that is where faith is being built up. There you have one miracle in the conception of the Lord; listen to one also in his birth. The virgin gave him birth, and a virgin she remained. Already at that time, before the Lord rose again, he was born through closed doors.

You put a question to me, and say, "If he entered through closed doors, where is the proper mode of a body?" And I answer, "If he walked on the sea, where is the proper weight of a body?" But the Lord did that as Lord.⁴ So did he cease, when he rose again, to be Lord? What about his also making Peter walk on the sea?⁵ What divinity could accomplish in the one, faith achieved in the other. But Christ did it because he had the power; Peter, because Christ helped him. So if you start looking for the rational explanation of miracles in human terms, I'm afraid you may lose your faith. Don't you know that nothing is impossible for God?⁶ So if anybody says to you, "If he entered through closed doors, he wasn't a body," answer him yourself with a counter argument: "On the other hand, if he was touched, he was a body; if he ate he was a body;⁷ and he did that miraculously, not naturally."

Isn't the daily course of nature itself a miracle, something to be wondered at? Everything is full of marvels and miracles, but they are so common that we regard them as cheap and of no account. Give me a rational explanation—I'm questioning you on something usual and everyday; give me an explanation of why the seed of such a big tree as the fig is so small that you can scarcely see it, while the humble pumpkin produces such an enormous seed. And yet in that tiny grain of seed, scarcely visible, there is, if you consider it with your mind, not your eyes; there is in that minuteness, in those infinitesimal limits, both a root hiding, and a trunk inserted, and the leaves to come are already tied on, and the fruit which is going to appear on the tree has already been programmed⁸ in the seed.

There's no need to run through many instances; nobody can give a rational explanation of everyday things, and you are demanding of me an explanation of miracles? So read the gospel then, and believe that the marvels there were really done. What God has done amounts to much more, and yet you don't marvel at what surpasses all his other works: there was nothing, and the universe is.⁹

*If God can thread a camel through the eye of a needle,
there's nothing to stop him putting a body through closed doors*

3. But a bulky body, you say, couldn't pass through the doors, because they were closed.

How big was that bulk, I ask you?

As big, of course, as it is in everyone.

Not as big, surely, as it is in a camel?

Of course not as big as that.

Read the gospel, listen to Christ himself; when he wanted to illustrate the difficulty for a rich man of getting into the kingdom of heaven, he said, *It is easier for a camel to get in through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of heaven.* When the disciples heard this, they reckoned that it is quite impossible for a camel to get in through the eye of a needle, and so they were disheartened, and said to each other, *If that's the case, who can ever save himself?* If it's easier for a camel to get in through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of heaven; in no way can a camel get in through the eye of a needle; so no rich man can be saved. The Lord answered, *Things that are impossible for men are easy for God* (Lk 18:25-27).

God can both thread a camel through the eye of a needle, and get a rich man into the kingdom of heaven. Why make difficulties with me about closed doors? Closed doors at least have chinks round the edges; compare the chink at the edge of a door with the eye of a needle, compare the bulk of a human body with the size of camels—and stop making difficulties about God working miracles.¹⁰

NOTES

1. So Lambot; Fischer and Kunzelmann date it about 400, Poque as usual about 410-412. It is not easy to tell which day it was preached on, but my guess is the Friday of Easter week, counting Easter Sunday as the day on which Matthew's account was read. See next note.

2. Luke's narrative also, one gathers from previous sermons (see Sermon 239, note 2 for a discussion of the evidence), was spread over at least two days. So that would bring us to Thursday for the first reading from John. And it is clear from that evidence that the order was sometimes Matthew, Mark, Luke.

3. Rather an inconsequential argument; spelled out in full it runs like this: If you can understand how he went through closed doors, you are on the verge of denying that he rose again from the tomb. But it doesn't follow; what you are on the verge of, presumably, is understanding how he rose again from the tomb.

4. He is giving the title "Lord" its full weight of "Lord God"; Lord as the rendering of the divine name YHWH.

5. See Mt 14:25-29.

6. See Mk 10:27.

7. See Lk 24:39.43.

8. *Praemissus*.

9. The creation of the whole cosmos out of nothing.

10. A deliberately frivolous conclusion, a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole rationalist approach.

SERMON 248

DURING EASTER WEEK

Date: before 417¹

The two catches of fish in the gospels signify the Church as it is now, and as it will be in the kingdom

1. Again today a reading has been chanted about the things that happened after the Lord's resurrection according to the evangelist John. Your graces heard along with me how the Lord Jesus Christ showed himself to his disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and how the one who had made them into fishers of men found them still fishers of fish. They had caught nothing all night; but on seeing the Lord, and casting the nets at his command, they caught the number you heard. The Lord would never have commanded this, unless he had wished to signify something which he knew would be to our advantage. Well, how could it matter in the least to Jesus Christ whether fish were caught or whether they weren't? But that taking of fish was a token of us.²

So let me recall with you those two catches of fish made by the disciples at the command of the Lord Jesus Christ, one before his passion, the other after his resurrection.³ So these two catches of fish stand for the whole Church, both as it is now, and as it will be in the resurrection of the dead. Now, you see, it contains countless numbers, both good and bad; while after the resurrection it will contain only the good, and a definite number of them.

The meaning of the first catch of fish in Luke's gospel

2. So call to mind that first catch, where we may see the Church as it is in this present time. The Lord Jesus found his disciples fishing, when he first called them to follow him. Then they had caught nothing all night. But when they saw him,⁴ they heard him telling them, *Cast the nets. Lord, they said, we have caught nothing all night; but fine, at your word we will cast the nets* (Lk 5:5). They cast them at the command of the Almighty. What else could happen, but what he wished? But all the same, with that same happening he was pleased, as I said, to indicate something to us that he knew would be to our advantage.

The nets were cast. The Lord had not yet suffered, not yet risen again. The

nets were cast; they caught so many fish that two boats were filled, and the very nets were torn by that vast quantity of fish. Then he said to them, *Come, and I will make you fishers of men* (Lk 5:6-7.10). They received from him the nets of the word of God, they cast them into the world as into a deep sea; they caught the vast multitude of Christians that we can see and marvel at. Those two boats, though, stood for the two peoples, Jews and Gentiles, Synagogue and Church, circumcision and uncircumcision. Of those two boats, you see, as of two walls coming from different directions, Christ is the cornerstone.⁵ But what did we hear?⁶ On that occasion the boats were being swamped by the huge catch. That's what's happening now; the many Christians who live bad lives are swamping the Church. They aren't just swamping it; they are also tearing the nets; I mean, if the nets weren't torn, schisms wouldn't be born.⁷

The meaning of the second catch in John

3. So let's pass on from this catch of fish, which we are now putting up with, and come to that other one which we are eagerly hoping for and faithfully longing for. Here we are then; the Lord has died, but has risen again. He has appeared to his disciples at the sea; he orders them to cast the nets, but not any old how.⁸ Notice this point; you see, in that first catch of fish he didn't say to them, "Cast your nets to the right, or to the left," because if he had said "to the left," only the bad would have been indicated, while if he had said "to the right," it would have meant only the good. The reason he didn't say either "to the right" or "to the left" is that the good were to be caught all mixed up with the bad.

But now after the resurrection, hear, discern, rejoice, hope, understand what the Church will be like. *Cast the nets*, he says, *on the right-hand side* (Jn 21:6). Now the right ones are being caught, no bad ones to be feared. You know, I mean to say, how he said he was going to separate the sheep from the goats, to place the sheep on the right, the goats on the left; to say to the ones on the left *Go into everlasting fire*; to say to the ones on the right, *Receive the kingdom* (Mt 25:41.34). There you have where *Cast the nets on the right-hand side* comes from. They cast, they caught; the number caught was definite; there's nobody there *beyond number* (Ps 40:5). Now, however, how many *beyond number* approach the altar, are to be seen in the people of God, and are not inscribed in *the book of life* (Rv 3:5; Phil 4:3)! So there the number is definite and certain. You too must exert yourselves to be among those fish; not merely by hearing and applauding, but by understanding and living good lives.

So the nets are cast, big fish are caught;⁹ who, after all, is going to be small there, where they will all be the equals of the angels of God?¹⁰ So then, big fish are caught, a hundred and fifty-three of them. Someone's going to say to me, "And is that all the saints there will be?" Far be it from us to suppose that there is going to be such a scarcity of saints in that kingdom, even from this one Church alone.¹¹ The number will be definite; but there will be thousands of thousands from the people of Israel. Saint John says in the Apocalypse there are going to be twelve times twelve thousand from the people of Israel alone *who*

have not defiled themselves with women; for they have remained virgins (Rv 14:1.4). As for the other nations, though, he says there are so many thousands of people coming from them in white robes, that nobody could count them.¹²

The meaning of the number 153, first part

4. So this number is meant to be some sort of sign, and on the annual occasion of this sermon it's my duty to remind you of what you are used to hearing every year. The hundred and fifty-three fish are a number standing for the thousands of thousands of the saints and the faithful. But why was it with this number that the Lord was pleased to signify all the thousands there are going to be in the kingdom of heaven? Listen to the reason why. You know the law was given to the people of God through Moses, and that the chief thing mentioned in the law is the decalogue, that is, the ten commandments of the law. Of these the first is the commandment about worshipping one God; the second commandment: *Do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain*; the third commandment about the observation of the sabbath, which Christians observe spiritually, and Jews violate materially and literally.¹³ These three commandments refer to God, the other seven to human beings, on account of those two principal commandments, *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depends the whole law, and the prophets (Mt 22:37-40).*

So because these commandments are two, three commandments in that decalogue refer to the love of God, and seven to the love of neighbor. Which are the seven referring to man? *Honor your father and mother. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not kill. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods (Ex 20:1-17).*

The meaning of the number 153, second part

5. Nobody fulfills these ten commandments by his own strength of character, unless helped by the grace of God. So if nobody fulfills the law by their own strength of character, unless God helps with his Spirit; now call to mind how the Holy Spirit is presented to us under the number seven; as the holy prophet says that a man is to be filled with *the Spirit of God, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and courage, of knowledge and piety, with the Spirit of the fear of the Lord (Is 11:2-3)*. These seven activities present the Holy Spirit under the number seven; he, coming down on us as it were from above, begins from wisdom and ends with fear. We, however, going up from below, begin from fear and are perfected in wisdom. *The beginning of wisdom, after all, is the fear of the Lord (Ps 111:10).*

So if the Spirit is needed for the law to be fulfilled, let seven be added to ten, it makes the number seventeen. If you count up from one to seventeen, you make a hundred and fifty-three. There's no need now to count them all, count it for

yourselves. Count like this: one plus two plus three plus four make ten. Just as ten is the sum of one plus two plus three plus four, add the other numbers in the same way up to seventeen; and you will find the sacred number of all the faithful and the saints who are going to be with the Lord *in the heavenly places* (Eph 3:10).

NOTES

1. Again following Lambot. On this reckoning, this sermon could well have been preached the day after Sermon 247, on the Saturday of Easter week, considering its opening words. Fischer and Kunzelmann date this sermon to between 412 and 416, while Poque sticks staunchly to 410-412.

2. *Sed illa piscatio nostra erat significatio.*

3. See Lk 5:4-11; Jn 21:1-11.

4. He is not recalling the episode entirely accurately himself. Jesus had been sitting for some time in Peter's boat, teaching the crowds on the shore.

5. See Eph 2:20.

6. Nothing, actually—because it wasn't this reading that had just been read! We have been asked to call it to mind.

7. *Si retia non essent scissa, schismata non essent commissa.*

8. See Jn 21:6.

9. See Jn 21:11.

10. See Mk 12:25.

11. The Church of Hippo Regius.

12. See Rv 7:4-9. He could have got the 144,000 from Israel out of the same passage.

13. *Carnaliter*; a rather gratuitous insult, surely? But in other sermons he has mentioned the Jews of Hippo Regius or Carthage celebrating the sabbath by enjoying themselves with dancing on their balconies (the women) and going to the theaters and amphitheaters (the men)—much as Catholics have been accustomed to celebrate Sunday, to the scandal of stricter sabbatarians. Augustine too was Puritan enough to be offended by this sort of thing; but in particular by the Jewish men flocking to theaters and amphitheaters on the sabbath, since these pastimes, as we have frequently seen, were forbidden to Christians at all times by the Church authorities of those days.

SERMON 249

DURING EASTER WEEK

Date: before 405¹

Two catches of fish described in the gospels

1. We have heard the gospel, how the Lord Jesus after the resurrection appeared at the sea of Tiberias to his disciples as they were fishing there. When he had called them the first time, he had said to them, *Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men* (Mk 1:17). And at that time indeed, when they were called, they cast their nets at his word, and caught a huge quantity of fish; but the number isn't mentioned. Then too, at that first catch of fish he hadn't said to them, "Cast the net on the right side," but he had just said *Cast*. He didn't say either "on the right," or "on the left." But such a great number of fish was caught that it was numberless, and their boats were overloaded. And to what extent overloaded? This is what the gospel says: *so that they were almost sinking* (Lk 5:4.7). That's when he said to them what I reminded you of, *Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*. We belong to those nets, we have indeed been caught with those nets; but we don't remain captives. People shouldn't be afraid of being caught; if you can be caught, you can't be caught out.²

But what's the meaning of this last catch of fish, about which the gospel was read today? The Lord appeared to them as they were fishing and he was standing on the shore, and he inquired of them whether they had any victuals. They said they hadn't; after all, they hadn't caught anything the whole night. And he said to them, *Cast on the right side*—which he hadn't said on the previous occasion. And they did so, and they couldn't haul the nets for the quantity of fish. Now there were found to be a hundred and fifty-three of them. And since in that first catch of fish it was said that the nets were breaking for the quantity of fish, the evangelist took care to say about this catch of fish, *And while they were so big, the net wasn't torn* (Jn 21:6.8.11).

The distinction between the two catches

2. Let us distinguish between these two catches, one before the resurrection, the other after the resurrection. In the first the nets are cast anywhere; it doesn't

mention the right side, so we can't understand only the good; it doesn't mention the left side, so we can't understand only the bad. So it's good and bad mixed up together. And the nets were breaking with the amount caught. Broken nets stand for schisms. We can see it, that's how it is, that's what's happening. It's two boats that are filled, because of the two peoples, from the circumcision and the uncircumcision; and they are filled to such an extent that they are overloaded and almost sinking. What this signifies is something to sigh and groan about. The turbulent masses have troubled the Church.³ What a great number they constitute, those who live bad lives, overloading and cramming the Church!⁴ But because of the good fish, the boats haven't actually been sunk.

Let's now dissect that latest catch of fish after the resurrection. Nobody bad there, wonderful freedom from care—but provided you are good. Be good now, all of you, among the bad, and you will be good without the bad. In this catch you have reason to be upset; you're among the bad. O those of you who are listening to me faithfully, O those of you for whom what I say doesn't just vanish, those of you for whom the word doesn't go in at one ear and out at the other, but sinks down into the heart, those of you who are more afraid of living bad lives than of dying bad deaths—because if you live a good life, you can't die a bad death; those of you, then, who are listening to me in such a way that you not only believe, but also live good lives; go on living good lives, and live good lives among the bad; don't dream of breaking the nets.⁵ Those people who were very pleased with themselves, and refused to put up with the so-called bad, broke the nets, perished in the sea. Live good lives among the bad, don't let bad Christians persuade you to live bad lives.

Don't let your heart say, "I am the only good one." If you have begun to be good, believe that there are others also, if someone like you has been able to be good. Don't commit adultery, don't fornicate, don't cheat, don't steal, don't bear false witness, don't swear to a falsehood, don't get drunk, don't deny a loan you have received, don't fail to give back something that belongs to someone else which you've found in the street. Do all this and things like it without anxiety among the bad. You're swimming inside the same nets, but you will come to the shore after the resurrection, you will be found on the right-hand side. There, there's nobody bad. That you know the law, that you are well aware of God's commandments, that you understand what's good and what's bad; so what, when all's said and done? What good does it do you, if you don't do it? Isn't your conscience punished by the very knowledge you have? Learn in such a way that you put it into practice.

Working up to the explanation of the number 153

3. It is because of a great mystery of perfection that God's commandments are contained in the decalogue. The ten commandments of the law were written on tables of stone by the finger of God, that is by the Holy Spirit;⁶ on one table the commandments referring to God, on the other the ones referring to our fellow human beings. Why was that? Because on the love of God and neighbor *depends*

the whole law and the prophets (Mt 22:40). But of what avail are those ten? The law was given, but *if a law had been given which could bring to life, justice would certainly have come by the law* (Gal 3:21). You know the law, and you don't carry out the law. *The letter kills*; but in order that you may carry out what you know, *the Spirit brings to life* (2 Cor 3:6).

Let seven be added to ten. Just as the law, you see, is signified by the decalogue, so the Holy Spirit is shown to be sevenfold. He is invoked over the newly baptized, that God may give them, according to the prophet,⁷ the Spirit of wisdom and understanding; there you have two. The Spirit of counsel and courage; there's four for you. The Spirit of knowledge and piety; there's six. The Spirit of the fear of the Lord; there you are, that's seven. When these seven are added, they make ten. What's that I've said? It sounds ridiculous: when seven are added to ten, they make ten; as though I'd forgotten how to count. So I ought to have said, "When seven are added to ten, they make seventeen." Everybody knows that; I mean, when I said, "When seven are added to ten, they make ten," didn't these boys here⁸ start laughing at me?

And yet I do say it, and I repeat it, and I'm not ashamed of it. When you understand, you won't find fault with my arithmetic, instead you will love my logic. Ten is the sum of those commandments of the law; but I also counted seven ways the Holy Spirit cooperates. When these seven are added, they make ten; when the Holy Spirit is added, the law is fulfilled. But if these seven aren't added, those ten aren't made. They will remain in the letter, but the letter kills; knowledge makes you a transgressor. Let the Spirit be added, and the law is fulfilled—by God's help, not by your strength of character. So look; don't let's be particularly keen on belonging to those ten. *For if justice were from the law, then Christ died for nothing* (Gal 2:21). But what are we to belong to? To those seven? That's as if we could perform, but didn't know what to perform.⁹ So let us belong to the seventeen; the law commands, the Spirit helps. The law acts with you, so that you know what to do; the Spirit acts, so that you do it.

So let's belong to the seventeen, and let us count up the seventeen, and we will find ourselves in the hundred and fifty-three. You know it now, I've often told you, often shown you. From one up to four make ten; but only if you add them all up. Let two follow one; add the two as well, they are now three. After two let three come along, they're now six. After three, let four come along, they're now ten. Why am I busting myself? I'm telling you what you know. Add all the other numbers, and you will get there. When you've got to seventeen, you will get to a hundred and fifty-three by growing. What does that mean, by growing? By making progress, you will step by step arrive at the right-hand side. Do what I tell you, do the counting yourselves.¹⁰

NOTES

1. So Monceaux; Fischer and Kunzelmann now join Poque in preferring 410-412, while she herself, to be precise, actually says after 411. Lambot dates it to perhaps 418. But a clear reference to the Donatists toward the end of section 2 (see note 5 below) inclines me to prefer the earliest date suggested; also something about the style, more energetic and lively than the last two sermons. In Sermon 248 he was clearly just a trifle bored with explaining why 153 represents the final count of the saints in the kingdom. Here he pretends to be, but in fact does it with much more gusto. The day would again have been Saturday in Easter week.

2. *Si capi potest, decipi non potest.*

3. *Turba turbavit ecclesia.*

4. *Prementes et gementes.* I translate *prementes*, as just above, by “overloading.” But *gementes* is problematic, as it means “groaning”; and it isn’t the bad Christians who are doing the groaning, but Augustine and the good ones. The Maurists suggest emending to *pene mergentes*, “almost sinking,” and that may be the answer. But then it occurred to me that *gemo* is also a Greek word, meaning to be full—and possibly in the low Greek spoken on the wharves of Hippo Regius meaning to cram. So I am guessing that it had been adopted into the local Latin of the city from the Greek sailors who frequented the port, and that Augustine was using it in that sense.

5. An allusion to what the Donatists did—going off into schism because they weren’t prepared to live in the same Church as bad Christians. They are indicated in the next sentence; the “so-called bad,” whom they refused to put up with, were the Catholics, guilty in their eyes of condoning the sin of the *traditores*, the handers-over of the sacred books at the time of the great persecution a hundred years previously.

6. See Dt 9:10. That the finger of God represents the Holy Spirit can be proved by putting together two gospel texts, Lk 11:20 and Mt 12:28.

7. See Is 11:2-3.

8. The institution of altar boys goes back a very long way, it seems.

9. Reading *quid faciamus* instead of the text’s *quid facimus*—or at least translating the latter as if it were the former. Strictly speaking, it means “know what we are doing.”

10. A more telling conclusion in the Latin: *Obedite nobis, computate vobis.*

SERMON 250

DURING EASTER WEEK

Date: 416¹

*God chose the weak things of the world to confound the strong,
fishermen in preference to emperors and senators*

1. The Lord Jesus *chose the weak things of the world to confound the strong* (1 Cor 1:27), and so in gathering his Church together from the whole wide world, he didn't begin with emperors or senators, but with fishermen. Had any persons of rank been the first to be chosen, they would have brazenly attributed the fact to their own worth, not to God's grace. This secret plan of God, this plan of our savior is explained by the apostle, where he says, *For observe your calling, brothers—they're the apostle's words—observe your calling, that not many of you are wise according to the flesh, not many powerful, not many noble; but it was the weak things of the world that God chose, to confound the strong, and the common and contemptible things of the world that God chose, and the things that are not, as though they were,*² in order that the things that are might be made void, so that no flesh might boast in his presence (1 Cor 1:26-29).

The prophet also says the same thing: *Every valley shall be filled in, and every mountain and hill shall be humbled, an equal level of the ground shall be established* (Is 40:4). Finally, at the present day there is equal access to the grace of God³ for nobles and commoners, for the educated and the illiterate, for the poor and the rich. For receiving this grace pride does't push itself ahead of the humility of the person who knows nothing, has nothing, is worth nothing.

But what did he say to them? *Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men* (Mk 1:17). If those fishermen hadn't come first, who would have caught us? Nowadays a person is considered a great preacher man, if he can give a good explanation of what was written by a fisherman.

The significance of the first catch of fish

2. So then, since the Lord Jesus Christ chose fishers of fish, and made them into fishers of men, he clearly wished, in these catches of theirs, to suggest things to us about the calling of the peoples. Notice, there were two catches of fish,

distinguished from each other by important differences; one when the Lord chose them from being fishermen and made them into his disciples; the other which we heard just now when the holy gospel was read, after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ;⁴ that one before the resurrection, this one after it. We ought to pay very careful attention to the difference between these two catches of fish.

The new preaching of the gospel is the boat from which we are being taught;⁵ and in it he also found the men fishing, to whom he said, *Cast the nets. They said to him, We have caught nothing all night, toiling away in vain. Here you are though, in your name we will cast the nets* (Lk 5:45). They cast them and caught so much that they filled two boats, which were so overloaded with fish that they were on the point of sinking. And then the nets were broken by the very quantity of fish. That was when he said to them, *Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men* (Lk 5:6-7; Mk 1:17). Then and there they left nets and boats, and followed Christ.

Now, after the resurrection, the Lord Christ has presented us with another catch of fish, quite different from that earlier one. On that occasion, you see, he said *Cast the nets*; neither "to the left," nor "to the right side," but simply *Cast the nets*. If he'd said "to the left," you see, he would have indicated only the bad, if "to the right," only the good. So because he didn't say either "to the right" or "to the left," both good and bad are indicated, about whom the gospel talks in another place, saying that the householder, having prepared his dinner, sent out his servants, and *they brought along all they could find, good and bad, and the wedding party was filled with guests* (Mt 22:10). That's what the Church is like now, full of good and bad.

Vast crowds fill the Church, but these crowds sometimes overload it, and almost manage to get it shipwrecked. The mob of those living bad lives troubles those who live good ones, troubles them so deeply that a person leading a good life may think he's being a fool, when he observes others leading bad lives; especially because in terms of the good things of this world many evil-doers turn out to be fortunate, many harmless people unfortunate. And what a fearful risk he runs of being driven onto the rocks and sinking! What a fearful risk there is, dearly beloved, of the person who leads a good life saying, "What good does it do me, leading a good life? I mean to say, look at that fellow leading a bad life, and he's much more respected than I am. What use is it to me, leading a good life?" He's in grave danger, I'm really afraid he may be sunk. Let me have a word with him, to save the person leading a good life from being sunk without trace.

You're leading a good life; don't get tired of it and look back.⁶ Your Lord's promise is true, *The one who perseveres to the end will be saved* (Mt 24:13).

"I notice," you say, "that somebody else leads a bad life, and is happy."

You're mistaken. He's unhappy, and all the unhappier, the happier and more fortunate he thinks he is. It's a madness that doesn't acknowledge its miserable condition. If you saw someone with a high fever laughing, you would weep over his loss of his wits. What's been promised you hasn't come yet. That person

who strikes you as being happier is being fed on visible and temporal things, they are what he is enjoying. He didn't bring them with him, he won't take them away with him; naked he came on stage, naked he will make his exit;⁸ from false joys he is going to come to real sorrows. What's been promised to you, though, hasn't come yet. Endure, in order to get there; persevere in case you should cheat yourself out of it by failing on the road, because God cannot fail you.

So there you are, I've said a few words to prevent the boats from sinking. Something much more dreadful happened at that catch of fish, and that is that the nets were broken. The nets were broken, heresies arose. What else, after all, are schisms, but rents of the fabric? The first catch of fish has to be endured and tolerated in such a way that nobody grows weary, even though it is written: *Weariness has taken hold of me because of sinners who forsake your law* (Ps 119:53). It's the boat crying out that it is being overloaded by the mob, as though the boat itself is giving voice to these words, *Weariness has taken hold of me, for sinners who forsake your law*. Even if you're being overloaded, always see to it that you don't sink. Bad people are to be put up with now, not to be separated and cut off.⁹ *Mercy and judgment we shall sing to the Lord* (Ps 101:1). First of all mercy is extended, and later on judgment is exercised; separation will happen at the judgment. Now may the good person listen to me, and become better; may the bad person too listen and become good, while it's the time for repentance, not for sentence.

Let's pass on from this catch of fish which has joys mixed up with tears; joys because the good are being gathered together, mixed with tears because it's so hard to put up with the bad.

The meaning of the second catch of fish

3. Let's turn our thoughts to that latest catch of fish, there to be refreshed, there to be consoled. And the reason it occurred after the Lord's resurrection is that it represented the Church as it's going to be after the resurrection. Here we have the disciples fishing and being told, the Lord tells them, as he told them before;¹⁰ but previously what to cast, now where to cast, that is *on the right side of the boat* (Jn 21:6). So this time the ones who are caught are the ones who will stand on the right-hand side, the ones who are caught are the ones who will be told, *Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom* (Mt 25:34). They cast and they catch.

There in that first catch the number wasn't mentioned, it only mentioned a vast quantity, a definite number wasn't precisely stated. There are many now, you see, beyond number that is, they come, they enter, they fill the churches; they also fill the theaters, the same ones as fill the churches, they fill them *beyond number*. They don't belong to that number which is going to be found in eternal life—unless they change their ways while they are still alive. And do they all change their ways? How should they? Not even all those good ones persevere. That's why they are told, *Whoever perseveres to the end, that is the one who will be saved* (Mt 24:13). And those who are still bad are told, *I do not wish the death of the sinner, but that he should be converted and live* (Ez 33:11).

So on that occasion no number was mentioned, because many turned out to be *beyond number*, whom¹¹ the psalm mentioned: *I declared and spoke; they were multiplied beyond number* (Ps 40:5). Now they are on the right, and not beyond number; there are a hundred and fifty-three fish, but big ones. That, after all, is what it says: *And though they were big, the net was not torn* (Jn 21:11). Then, you see, it will be the gathering together of the saints, there will be no divisions and rents caused by heretics, there will be peace and there will be perfect unity, nobody will be less, nobody will be more, the number will be complete.

But very, very few of them, if there are just a hundred and fifty-three! Far be it from us to suppose that that should be the total in this congregation and Church, let alone in the universal Church of God. The Apocalypse of this same blessed John the evangelist shows that he saw such a vast multitude of saints enjoying that eternal felicity, that nobody could count them. That's what you find written there.¹² And yet they are all included in this number, in a hundred and fifty-three. I want to reduce this number to an even more ample paucity.¹³ There are a hundred and fifty-three of them; let's make them fewer; there are seventeen of them. These hundred and fifty-three are seventeen. Why seven, why ten, or "teen"? Seven because of the Spirit, ten because of the law. There is a sevenfold pattern, you see, because of the perfection that is proclaimed in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. *There will rest*, says the blessed prophet Isaiah, *There will rest upon him the Holy Spirit*. And after mentioning the Holy Spirit, he listed seven virtues: *the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and courage*; there you have four. *The spirit of knowledge and piety, the spirit of the fear of the Lord* (Is 11:2).

He started from wisdom, ended at fear; he spoke as though coming down from the highest to the lowest, from wisdom to fear. From the lowest to the highest, from fear to wisdom: *For the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord* (Ps 111:10). That is the gift of grace, the Holy Spirit working with this sevenfold power in those beloved of God, in order that the law might be of some avail there among them. Because if you take away the Spirit, of what avail is the law? It makes you a transgressor; that's why it says, *The letter kills* (2 Cor 3:6). It commands, and doesn't carry out. It didn't kill you before anything was commanded; even if Providence marked you down as a sinner, it didn't, all the same, mark you down as a transgressor.¹⁴ Something is commanded and you don't do it, forbidden and you do it; there you have the letter killing.

Now the law has ten commandments. The first commandment of the law is: one God is to be worshiped, no other, no idol is to be made. The second commandment is: *You shall not take the name of the Lord*¹⁵ *in vain*. The third commandment is: *Observe the sabbath day* (Dt 5:6-12), in a spiritual, not a material and literal way like the Jews. These three commandments belong to the love of God; but that's because *on these two commandments*, as he says, *depends the whole law, and the prophets* (Mt 22:40), that is on the love of God and on the love of neighbor. After hearing what belongs to the love of God: unity, truth, rest; notice what belongs to the love of neighbor. *Honor your father and your*

mother; there you have the fourth commandment. *You shall not commit adultery*; there's the fifth. *You shall not commit murder*; there's the sixth. *You shall not commit theft*; there's the seventh. *You shall not utter false witness*; there's the eighth. *You shall not covet your neighbor's property*; there's the ninth. *You shall not covet your neighbor's wife* (Dt 5:16-21); there's the tenth. In saying *You shall not covet*, he is knocking at the inner door, striking interior spots, where covetousness or lust is carrying on its business.

There you are then, this law is to be found in the number ten. What's the use of it when you learn it and don't carry it out? You'll be a transgressor. In order for you to carry it out, help is needed. Where can help come from? From the Spirit. *The letter kills, but the Spirit brings to life* (2 Cor 3:6). Let seven be added to ten; they make seventeen. In this number is to be found the whole multitude of the perfect.¹⁶ But how they get up to a hundred and fifty-three, I have long been in the habit of telling you, and many of you are getting there before me. All the same, the sermon must be given solemnly every year. Many of you have forgotten, some of you haven't even heard it. Those of you though who haven't forgotten and have heard, please put up with it patiently, so that the others may be both reminded and instructed. When two people are walking along a road, one faster and the other slower, it's in the power of the faster one to see that his companion is not left behind. You don't lose anything by hearing what you knew already, and because you don't lose anything, you ought to rejoice that the one who didn't know it is being instructed. Count seventeen from one up to seventeen in such a way that you add all the numbers together, and you will arrive at a hundred and fifty-three. What are you expecting from me? Count for yourselves.

NOTES

1. So Kunzelmann and Pontet. Fischer prefers 412-413, and Poque, of course, after 411. Again, I think it would have been preached on the Saturday after Easter.

2. A curious little addition to Paul's text, *tanquam sint* in the *Sources Chrétiennes* text. The Maurists have *tanquam ea quae sunt*, like the things that are.

3. Meaning, primarily, baptism.

4. See Lk 5:4-11, and Jn 21:3-11.

5. See Lk 5:3. I am following the punctuation of the Maurists rather than of *Sources Chrétiennes*, with some modifications of my own.

6. See Lk 9:62.

7. So the Maurists. *Sources Chrétiennes* has "Do you notice," *Attendis*, instead of *Attendo*.

8. See Jb 1:21.

9. He should in this paragraph be saying something about the nets breaking, about schisms, rather than about the boats sinking, which he has already discussed at length. But he has wandered back to that theme with his explanation of the psalm verse as being uttered by the boat, the Church. Here now he returns to the schism theme, because the Donatists made their schism precisely by separating the bad, as they thought them, instead of tolerating them.

10. Omitting, with the Maurists, a phrase included by *Sources Chrétiennes*, *ipse et postea*, and also later.

11. Reading *quos* instead of the *quoties* of *Sources Chrétiennes*, “as often as,” which makes no sense. The Maurists simply omit, and start a new sentence with “The psalm says.”

12. See Rv 7:9.

13. A characteristically paradoxical statement, technically known, I believe, as an oxymoron.

14. Why does he bring in Providence here? I imagine it is because the second stage of the divine plan, after sin had come on the scene, was that the law should be given in order to make sin even more manifestly sinful, as Paul says in Romans 7:9-13. Providence had its eye on turning you into a transgressor, in order eventually, of course, to send you a savior bringing the grace of the Spirit, and to make you a believer, justified by faith, not by works.

15. *Sources Chrétiennes* adds “your God,” which is the correct biblical text. I think, with the Maurists, that Augustine, quoting from memory, is more likely to have said simply “the name of the Lord”—by “the Lord” meaning primarily Christ. Elsewhere he does specifically refer this commandment to the Son, while the first suits, so to say, the Father, and the third the Holy Spirit. Indeed, he goes on to hint at that apportionment in the next sentence or two here, where he mentions unity, truth, rest as commended to us by the first three commandments respectively.

16. So the Maurists. *Sources Chrétiennes* has “of the blessed.”

SERMON 251

DURING EASTER WEEK

Date: 414¹

The two catches of fish in the gospel, and what they signify

1. When our liberator goes fishing, we get liberated. Now we observe in the holy gospel two fishing expeditions of the Lord's, that is, when the nets were cast at his word; one earlier on, when he chose the disciples; and this other one, when he had risen from the dead.² That first catch represented the Church as it is now, while this one after the Lord's resurrection represented the Church as it is going to be at the end of time and the world.

So then, in that first catch of fish he ordered the nets to be cast, and didn't say on what side; he just gave the command to cast them. The disciples did so; it doesn't say to the right, it doesn't say to the left. The fish, you see, stood for people; so if it had said to the right, they would only have been good ones, if it had said to the left, only bad ones. But because both good and bad were going to be mixed up in the Church, the nets were cast without any distinction being made, so that the fish caught would represent the mixture of good and bad people.

Then again, there is also this written there, that such a mass of fish was caught that two boats were filled to sinking point; that is, they were overloaded to the verge of sinking. I mean, those two boats didn't actually sink, but they were in danger of it. Why in danger? Because of the multitude of fish. What this meant was that, as a result of the multitudes which the Church was going to gather in, discipline was going to be endangered.

This too was added, and told in the account of that catch of fish, that the nets were broken because of the multitude of fish. What else can the breaking of the nets have signified, but future schisms? So these three things were signified in that catch of fish: the mixture of good and bad, the overwhelming weight of the masses, the separations made by the heretics. The mixture of good and bad, because the nets were cast without distinction between right and left; the overwhelming weight of the masses, because so much was caught that the boats were on the verge of sinking; the separations made by the heretics, because so great was the multitude that the nets were breaking.

The meaning of the second catch of fish

2. Now take a look at this catch of fish, which was recounted today. It took place, you see, after the Lord's resurrection, to indicate that that's what the Church will be like after our resurrection. *Cast the net*, he says, *to the right-hand side* (Jn 21:6). So the number of those who will be standing on the right is set apart. You remember, after all, how the Lord said he is going to come with his angels, and *all the nations will be gathered together before him; and he will divide them, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats; the sheep he will place to the right, the goats to the left. To the sheep he is going to say, Come, receive the kingdom; to the goats he is going to say, Go into everlasting fire* (Mt 25:31-41).

Cast to the right. The nets were cast to the right; nor could they haul them for the multitude of fish. In that other one too a multitude was mentioned; but here there is a definite number, both many fish and big ones; while there no number was mentioned. Now, you see, before the resurrection comes and the good are separated from the bad, that thing the prophet said is being fulfilled: *I proclaimed the message and I spoke. What's I proclaimed the message and I spoke?* I cast the nets. And what happened? *They were multiplied beyond number* (Ps 40:5). There is a number, and there are those beyond number. The number refers to the saints, who are going to reign with Christ. Those beyond number can enter now into the Church, they can't enter the kingdom of heaven.

Which is why I am advising you to save yourselves from this present evil age;³ why I am warning those of you who wish to live⁴ not to imitate bad Christians. Don't say, "Why not? Isn't that man a believer, and he gets drunk?" "Why not? Isn't that man a believer, and he has several mistresses?" "Why not? Isn't that man a believer, and he cheats in his business every day?" "Why not? Isn't that man a believer, and he consults the astrologers?" Those of you who are now determined to be grains, you see, will find yourselves then in the pile in the granary. Those of you, however, who are determined to be chaff, will find yourselves in a great heap, but one that is to be burned in a great fire.

What is the kingdom of heaven?

3. So what next? *They hauled the nets*, it says, *to the shore*. Peter hauled the nets to the shore. You heard it just now, when the gospel was read. When you hear "shore," understand the edge, or end, of the sea; when you hear "end of the sea," understand end of the age and of the world. In that earlier catch of fish the nets were not hauled to the shore, but the fish that had been caught were emptied out into the boats. Here, on the other hand, they dragged them to the shore. Hope for the end of the world and of time. The end is going to come, all right, a good thing for those on the right, a bad thing for those on the left.

And how many fish? *They hauled the nets*, it says, *containing fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them*. And the evangelist adds a necessary point: *And though they were so big,³ the net was not torn* (Jn 21:11). They will be big, but there won't be any heresies; and it's all the more reason for there not being any

heresies, that they will all be big fish. Who are the big, or great ones? Read the Lord's own words in the gospel, and you will discover who the big ones are. He says somewhere, you see, *I did not come to dissolve the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them. For amen I tell you, that whoever dissolves one of these least commandments, and teaches*—dissolves and teaches like this: dissolves by living a bad life, and teaches by teaching good things⁶—*shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:17-18).*

But in which kingdom of heaven? In the Church which now is, because it too is called the kingdom of heaven. I mean, if this Church, which gathers in good and bad together, were not called the kingdom of heaven, the Lord himself would not say, speaking in a parable, *The kingdom of heaven is like a seine cast into the sea, which collects all kinds of fish.* But look here, what follows? *The kingdom of heaven is like a seine cast into the sea*—seines are nets—which *collects all kinds of fish.* But what next? They drag them to the shore. That's what the Lord says in the parable. And when they have dragged them to the shore, *they sit and gather the good ones together, and put them in baskets, while the bad ones they throw away.* And he explained what he had put to them; what does he say, after all? *So shall it be at the conclusion of the world's age; the angels come, he says, and gather the bad people together from the midst of the just, and throw them into the burning fiery furnace;*⁷ that is where there will be *weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt 13:47-50).*

And yet the Church is called the kingdom of heaven. And since of course the sea has both good and bad fish swimming in it together, in this kingdom of heaven, that is in the Church of this time, that person is called least who teaches good things and does bad ones. Because he is there in it too. You see, it's not the case that he isn't there; there he is in the kingdom of heaven, that is, in the Church as it is in this time. He's teaching good things, doing bad things; he's needed, he's a hired servant. *Amen I tell you, he says, they have received their hire (Mt 6:2.5.16).* They're of some use. After all, if they weren't any use, those who teach good things and live bad lives, the Lord himself wouldn't tell his people, *The scribes and Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses; what they say, do; what they do, however, do not do.* Why not? *For they say, and do not do (Mt 23:2-3).*

Who the big fish are

4. So would your graces please pay attention; I want to explain, you see, who the big fish are. *Whoever dissolves, he says, one of these least commandments, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.* He will be there, indeed, but least. *But whoever does them, and so teaches, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:19).* There you are, they are the great big fish, caught on the right. *Whoever does, and so teaches, does good things and teaches good things; doesn't contradict what he says by living a bad life, by having a good tongue as a witness against his bad life.*

So, *whoever does them, and so teaches, shall be called great in the kingdom*

of heaven. And he continues, *For I tell you, that unless your justice abounds over and above that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:20)*. So what are you to understand by the kingdom of heaven now? That about which those on the right are told, *Come, blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom (Mt 25:34)*. *Unless your justice abounds more than that of the scribes and Pharisees*. What's the meaning of *more than that of the scribes and Pharisees*? Observe those scribes and Pharisees who occupy the chair of Moses, about whom it was said, *What they say, do; what they do, do not do; for they say and do not do (Mt 23:2-3)*. So the justice of the Pharisees consists in saying and not doing. Let your justice abound over and above that of the scribes and Pharisees, so that you both say good things, and live good lives.

The number 153

5. So now what need is there to unravel the number of a hundred and fifty-three fish over again? You know it all. The number is achieved by growing from seventeen. Begin with one, arrive at seventeen by adding them together; that is, add one to two, and they make three; add three and they make six; add four and they make ten. Go on adding in the same way up to seventeen, and you arrive at a hundred and fifty-three. So our whole attention should be given only to what seventeen can mean; that, you see, is the foundation or base of one hundred and fifty-three.⁸

What is the meaning of seventeen? Recognize ten in the law; the first commandments to be given were ten in number. It's called the decalogue, written on tables by the finger of God.⁹ Recognize the law in ten, recognize the Holy Spirit in seven. The Holy Spirit, you see, is presented to us in the guise of the number seven.¹⁰ That's why sanctification is not mentioned in the law except on the seventh day.¹¹ God made light; it doesn't say he sanctified it. He made the firmament; it doesn't say he sanctified the firmament. He separated the sea from the land, he commanded the land to produce plants; it doesn't say he sanctified it. He made the moon and the stars; it doesn't say he sanctified them. He commanded animals that swim and fly to come forth from the waters; it doesn't say he sanctified them. He commanded four-footed animals, and all reptiles to come out of the land; it doesn't say he sanctified them. He made man himself; it doesn't say he sanctified him.¹²

We come to the seventh day, on which he rested; and that he sanctified.¹³ By his resting God sanctified our resting. So that's when our sanctification will be complete, when we rest with him without end. After all, why would God rest? I mean, he wasn't tired out with working. You yourself don't get tired if you do something with a word. If you give an order, and it is carried out straightaway, you just stand there, and remain unaffected. God spoke a few words, with which he made everything, and was he suddenly worn out?

The letter kills, but the Spirit brings to life

6. So acknowledge the law in the number ten, acknowledge the Holy Spirit in the number seven. Join the Spirit to the law. Because if you receive the law and lack the help of the Spirit, you don't fulfill what you read, you don't fulfill what you are commanded; but as a person under the law you are held furthermore to be a transgressor. Let the Spirit be brought in, let him help, and what is commanded is carried out. If the Spirit is lacking, the letter kills you. Why does the letter kill you? Because it will make you into a transgressor. Nor can you make the excuse of ignorance, because you have received the law. You have already learned what to do; ignorance does not excuse you, the Spirit doesn't help you; so you're done for.

But what does the apostle Paul say? *The letter kills, but the Spirit brings to life* (2 Cor 3:6). How does the Spirit bring to life? By getting the letter fulfilled, so that it doesn't kill. The saints, those sanctified, are the ones who carry out the law of God with the help of the gift of God.¹⁴ The law can command, it cannot help. The helping Spirit comes along, and God's command is carried out with joy, with delight. Because there are many who carry it out from fear. But those who carry out the law from fear of punishment would rather there was nothing for them to fear. Those, on the other hand, who carry out the law from love of justice, rejoice precisely in this, that they don't have her as their enemy.

Who is your opponent?

7. That's why the Lord says, *Reach agreement with your opponent quickly, while you are with him on the road* (Mt 5:25). Who is your opponent? The word of the law. What's the road? This life. How is that your opponent? It says, *Do not commit adultery*, and you want to commit adultery. It says *You shall not covet your neighbor's goods*, and you want to grab other people's goods. It says, *Honor father and mother*, and you treat your parents with insolence. The law says, *Do not bear false witness* (Ex 20:12-17); you, for your part, never stop lying.

When you realize that that word is commanding one thing, and you doing another, it is your opponent. You've got a bad opponent, don't let him enter the judge's chambers with you, come to an arrangement with him while you are with him on the road. Your God is present to make an accord between you. How does God make an accord between you? By forgiving sins and endowing you with the spirit of justice, so that good works may be performed. So when you have reached an accord with your opponent, that is with the ten commandments of the law, through the good offices of the Holy Spirit, you will belong to the number seventeen. As soon as you belong to seventeen, the number is already starting to grow out of that up to a hundred and fifty-three. You will be due for the award of the prize on the right. Don't lag behind to be declared a loser on the left.

NOTES

1. So Fischer and Kunzelmann, who actually say, more cautiously, 412-416. Lambot says after 409, Poque after 411. Again, it would have been preached on the Saturday after Easter.

2. See Lk 5:4-11 and Jn 21:3-11.

3. See Acts 2:40. Here, as the next sentence indicates, Augustine is primarily addressing the newly baptized.

4. See Ps 34:12.

5. He says, *Et cum tanti, id est tam magni, essent*, because *tanti* can also mean "so many," and he wishes to point out that here it means "so big." In fact he is almost certainly wrong. Anyway, the point does not arise in English.

6. The ingenuity of this great man's interpretation of a text can sometimes be staggeringly perverse. The text in full runs, . . . *and teaches men so*, that is, teaches them to dissolve any of the least commandments. But the method in his madness, I suspect, is this: if such people taught bad things as well as doing them, they would be heretics, and therefore not in the Church. Not that this excuses his exegetical willfulness.

7. Here Augustine is caught up in the phraseology of the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, cast into the burning fiery furnace, Dn 3:6.15 etc.

8. Foundation or base in a fairly literal way, because 153, as the sum of all the numbers from 1 to 17, is called the triangle of 17, and it is very likely that that is how Augustine imagined it. Put 17 points or dots along the base line, 16 on the line above it, and so on until you reach the apex of the triangle with 1, and you have 17 as the base of 153.

9. See Ex 31:18; Dt 9:19.

10. See Is 11:2-3, which he is probably alluding to here, though he chooses to elaborate a different association of the number 7 with the Holy Spirit.

11. A rather wild remark, whose accuracy can only be saved if we interpret Augustine as meaning here "until the seventh day." Sanctification, as he goes on to say, was not mentioned earlier in "the law," of which Genesis 1 is the opening chapter.

12. See Gn 1:3-31.

13. See Gn 2:3.

14. The gift of God is, for Augustine, the most proper name of the Holy Spirit.

SERMON 252

DURING EASTER WEEK

Date: 396¹

Christ speaks to mankind not only by sounds but also by deeds

1. *In many and various ways* (Heb 1:1) our Lord Jesus Christ manifested both his divine highness and his human kindness in the holy scriptures, doing this, as his habit is, in symbolic mysteries and sacraments,² so that those who ask may receive, those who seek may find, and those who knock may have the door opened to them.³ This passage too, you see, that was read today from the holy gospel, calls for understanding, and gives spiritual joy when it is understood. Would your holinesses please consider seriously what the meaning is of holy scripture testifying that the Lord showed himself to the disciples in the manner which the evangelist recounts.

The disciples, you see, went fishing, and caught nothing all night. Then the Lord appeared to them early in the morning, and asked whether they had anything to eat; they said they didn't. He said to them, *Cast the nets on the right-hand side, and you will find some* (Jn 21:6). He had come as though to buy fish, and lavished so many on them for nothing; and lavished his bounty from the sea, as from what he had himself created. A great miracle indeed. They cast their nets at once, and caught so much that they couldn't haul the nets aboard for the multitude of fish. But if you consider who performed this marvel, it isn't really marvelous; after all he had done many greater things already. I mean, for one who before his resurrection had raised the dead,⁴ it wasn't anything very big after his resurrection to get some fish caught.

So we should ask this miracle some questions, ask what it may be saying to us more inwardly.⁵ I mean, it was not without reason that he didn't just say "Cast the nets," but *Cast them on the right-hand side*. And then the evangelist made it his business to mention as well the number of fish. He also made it his business to say, *And though they were so big,⁶ the nets were not broken* (Jn 21:11). By these words he made us call to mind that nets were cast another time at the Lord's command, when he chose the disciples, before he suffered. Peter was there that time, and John and James. They cast the nets, they caught an amount of fish beyond counting, and when one boat had been filled, they sought help from a

nearby boat; and the two boats were filled with fish (all this before the resurrection), so many indeed that the nets were breaking.⁷

Why is no number mentioned there? Why were the nets breaking there, here they didn't break? Why weren't they told there to cast the nets on the right-hand side, while here he did say *Cast the nets on the right-hand side*? None of it, of course, is without reason. The Lord, after all, would never do these things pointlessly and for no reason. Christ is the Word of God, who speaks to mankind not only by sounds but also by deeds.

Light from the parable of the seine

2. So this is the task I have been set; to discuss with your graces what the meaning may be of this diversity. So now, those nets which were cast previously, and caught a countless number of fish, and overloaded two boats, and the nets were breaking, and the nets weren't cast on the right-hand side; but nor did it say on the left: the mystery of this catch is already being fulfilled in this present time. But that other mystery, which he had good reason to enact after his resurrection, now to die no more but to remain always living,⁸ not only in his divinity, in which he never died, but also in the body, in which he was pleased to die for us.⁹

So it wasn't pointless that that one took place before the passion, this one after the resurrection. There, neither to the right nor to the left, but simply *Cast the nets* (Lk 5:4); here, though, *Cast to the right* (Jn 21:6). There, no number, but only a vast quantity, so that it almost sank two boats; because that too was mentioned there; while here, both number and size of the fish is mentioned. Again, there the nets were breaking, here the evangelist made it his business to say, *And though they were so big, the nets were not broken*.

Can we fail to see, brothers and sisters, that the nets are the word of God, and the sea is this age, and all those who believe are enclosed within those nets? If any of you, perhaps, should have doubts about its meaning that, observe that the Lord himself said in a parable exactly the same thing as he demonstrated in the miracle. He said, you see, *The kingdom of heaven is like a seine cast into the sea, which gathers in all kinds of fish. When it was filled, they brought it out and hauled it to the shore; and sitting on the shore, they picked out the good ones into baskets, but threw out the bad ones. That is what it will be like at the end of the age; the angels will come out and separate the bad from the midst of the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire; that is where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Mt 13:47-50).

So it is clear that the nets cast into the sea carry the sign of faith. Or isn't the sea this age, in which people devour one another like fish? Or are they just minor affairs, the gales of temptation and the waves of trial that trouble this sea? Or are they just minor dangers that assail those who navigate it, those that is who seek the heavenly homeland on the wood of the cross? So the comparison is as plain as can be.

The two boats are the two peoples, Jews and Gentiles, converging on Christ the cornerstone

3. So let's confine ourselves, brothers and sisters—because the Lord's resurrection represents the new life which will be ours after this age has passed—to seeing how the Word of God was first sent into this sea, that is into this world. The Word of God was sent into this age of time, with its turbulent waves, and dangerous storms, and ruinous shipwrecks, and he caught many, enough to fill two boats. What are the two boats? Two peoples; the two peoples for whom the Lord became the cornerstone, as for two walls, to unite them in himself, as they converge from different directions.¹⁰ The people of the Jews, you see, came from a very different culture and customs from the rest, while the people of the Gentiles came from their idols. The people of the Jews came from the circumcision, the people of the Gentiles came from the uncircumcision. They came from different directions; but in the cornerstone they are joined together. Walls, after all, never make a corner, unless they come from different directions. So in Christ two peoples were harmoniously united, those called from among the Jews who were near, and those from among the Gentiles who were far off.¹¹

Now because the Jews were near (they already worshiped one God, after all), notice what they did when they believed in Christ. *They sold whatever they had, and laid the price of their properties at the feet of the apostles; and distribution was made to each according as each had need* (Acts 4:34-35). They were freed from the burdens of worldly affairs, and followed Christ with lightened shoulders. They bowed their necks beneath his *easy yoke* (Mt 11:30), and embracing the cornerstone from near at hand they were received in peace. The people of the Gentiles also came, though from afar, and they too reached that stone, and met the other in peace. These two peoples are signified by those two ships.

But they were filled with such a vast quantity of fish that they were almost sunk. We read, you see, that even among those who believed from among the Jews there emerged some literal-minded¹² people who formed a pressure group in the Church, and tried to forbid the apostles to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. They said that Christ was only sent to the circumcised, so that if Gentiles wished to receive the gospel, they should be circumcised. That's why the apostle Paul, who was sent to the Gentiles, by preaching the truth became hateful to those from Judea who believed. The apostle's desire, you see, was that the people of the Gentiles, coming from a different direction, should all the same touch the corner, where sure peace was to be found. So those literal-minded people who insisted on circumcision did not belong to the number of the spiritual ones. They still couldn't see that now that the sacraments of the letter and the flesh¹³ had been enacted, one had come at whose present light the shadows were to be put to flight. And yet, because they were making a row and a fuss, they were, as it were, trying to sink the ship by their numbers.

Those "beyond number" in the boat represent the people of the Gentiles

4. Let's also take a look at the ship of the nations. Let's see if such a vast

multitude has not been gathered into the Church, that the grains of wheat can scarcely be noticed in so huge a heap of chaff and straw. How many people there are grabbing and plundering, how many getting drunk, how many cursing and speaking ill of others, how many spectators at the theaters! Don't the very people who also fill the theaters fill the churches? And often enough they seek the same sort of things in the churches by rowdy behavior as they do in the theaters.¹⁴ And as often as not, if some spiritual point is made or insisted on, they resist, they put up a fight, following the flesh, opposing the Holy Spirit. Which is what Stephen also accused the Jews of doing.¹⁵

In this very city, my brothers and sisters, didn't we experience what your holinesses can recall as vividly as I can, what risks we ran when God expelled drunken celebrations from this basilica?¹⁶ Wasn't the ship almost sunk, along with us its crew, by the rowdy behavior, the rioting of worldly people? Where did this spring from, if not from that number of fish beyond counting? Again, it also says there that the nets were breaking. When the nets broke, heresies and schisms occurred. The nets indeed enclosed them all; but some impatient fish, being unwilling to come to be the Lord's food,¹⁷ hurl themselves against the nets and break them, and get away. Those nets, indeed, are spread out through the whole world; those who break them, though, do so locally. Donatists have broken them in Africa, Arians have broken them in Egypt, Photinians have broken them in Pannonia,¹⁸ the Cataphrygians broke them in Phrygia,¹⁹ the Manichees broke them in Persia. How many places, in which that seine has been broken!

And yet those that it encloses it brings along to the shore. Yes it brings the fish in, but not those, surely, which broke the nets? All the bad ones get away;²⁰ in fact it's only bad ones which get away, but both good and bad remain inside. How else, I mean to say, is the seine brought ashore with fish both good and bad in it, about which the Lord spoke in the parable?

*The same lesson from the image of grain and chaff
on the threshing floor of the Church*

5. The same comparison can be derived from the threshing floor, when it is threshed. There's chaff, there's the grain; but all the same, those who look at the threshing floor find it difficult to see anything there but chaff. You need persistence to find the grain among all the chaff. However, winds blow across the threshing floor from all sides; and when it's being threshed, before it is tossed up to be winnowed, doesn't it already feel the winds? The wind blows from this side, for example, and takes off some chaff; then it blows again from there, and takes it off to another side. It takes off chaff from any side and dumps it in the hedge, in the thorns, anywhere. It can't take the grain from there; the wind only takes off chaff. But all the same, when winds blowing from all directions have taken off chaff, will it only be grain that remains on the threshing floor? Only chaff removed from it; but both chaff and grain stay behind. When does all the chaff disappear? When the Lord comes *with the winnowing fork in his hand,*

and cleans up his threshing floor, he will store up the wheat in the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire (Lk 3:17).

Would your holinesses please pay closer attention to what I still have to say. Sometimes, you see, the winds which blow chaff off the threshing floor, blow again from the direction of the hedge where the chaff had stuck, and whisk it back to the threshing floor. Like, for example, some man or other well settled in the Catholic Church, who has to endure some test or trial of misfortune. He sees that he can be materially assisted in his business among the Donatists; he's told, "You won't be given any assistance, unless you communicate here, with us." The wind has blown, it has dumped him into the thorns. Should it happen that he again has some worldly business which can only be concluded in the Catholic Church, without bothering about where he is, but only about where he can the more conveniently conduct his business affairs, back he is whisked to the Lord's threshing floor.

An exhortation to the chaff to become wheat

6. So such people, brothers and sisters, who seek material advantages in the Church, and don't give any thought to what God promises; that here there are temptations, trials, dangers, difficulties; but after these temporal labors he promises everlasting rest, and the company of the angels; so because they give no thought to such things, but desire material advantages in the Church, whether they are on the threshing floor or off it, they are chaff. We don't find much joy in them, and neither do we butter them up with idle flattery.²¹ What would be good for them is to become wheat. This, after all, is the difference between that real chaff and these worldly people, that chaff and straw don't have freedom of choice, but to man God has given freedom of choice.²² And if you want, yesterday you were chaff, today you become wheat; if you turn away from the word of God, today you become chaff. The one thing we all have to ask ourselves is in what class the final winnowing will find us.

The meaning, now, of the second catch of fish

7. Now direct your attention, brothers and sisters, also to that blessed, mystic, great Church which is represented by the one hundred and fifty-three fish. I mean, what this present Church is like we have heard, and we know, and we can see; but what that one is going to be like is still only told us in prophecy;²³ but it hasn't yet arrived in actual experience. But all the same, it is quite in order for us to rejoice in what it will be, even though we cannot yet see it present among us.

That first time the nets were cast, but neither to the right nor to the left. I mean if it had said to the right, the bad wouldn't be included there; if it had said to the left, the good wouldn't have been included there. But since the nets were going to contain good and bad, they were cast on all sides, and they caught, as we have been discussing, both the wicked and the just. Now, however, in the

Church that is going to be found in that *holy Jerusalem* (Rv 21:2), where the hearts of all mortals will be an open book, there is no reason to fear that anyone who is bad will enter that Church. Nobody, you see, will be able to cover up the crafty deceits of a worthless heart under the skin of mortality. The Lord, after all, has already come;²⁴ and that's why after the resurrection he orders these nets to be cast to the right, now that he is not going to die anymore. And what the apostle said is coming about: *Until the Lord comes, and lights up the hidden things of darkness, and he will show up the thoughts of the heart; and then there will be praise for each one from God* (1 Cor 4:5); that is, when consciences are made public that are now covered up. Then, therefore, only the good will be there; the bad will have been driven away. The nets, you see, were cast to the right, they couldn't contain the wicked.

The meaning of 153; not 17 this time, but 50 being the key number

8. So why a *hundred and fifty-three* (Jn 21:11)? That isn't all the saints there are going to be, surely? I mean if we were to count up, not all²⁵ the faithful who have departed from the body with a good life to their credit, but only the martyrs; if we count just one day of the sufferings of the martyrs, we will find thousands of men and women awarded the crown. So it's obvious we have to inquire what the hundred and fifty-three fish can mean.

What does fifty mean? In this number, you see, that is in fifty, lies the key to the mystery; because fifty multiplied by three makes one hundred and fifty. I mean, the reason the number three was added appears to be to advise us by what particular multiplication a hundred and fifty was arrived at; as if to say, "Divide a hundred and fifty by three." I mean, if it had said a hundred and fifty-two, advised by the additional number we would divide it into seventy-five, because seventy-five multiplied by two makes a hundred and fifty. The addition of the number two, that is, would indicate division by two. If it had said a hundred and fifty-six, we would have had to cut it up into twenty-fives, to make six sets of them.

As it is, though, it says a *hundred and fifty-three*; so we must divide that whole number, that is a hundred and fifty, into three parts. So a third of this number is fifty. And so all our attention has to be fixed on the number fifty.²⁶

The eternal alleluia of the blessed

9. It couldn't be, perhaps, could it, these fifty days which we are now celebrating? You see, it isn't without reason, my brothers and sisters, that the Church keeps the ancient traditional custom of saying *alleluia* during these fifty days. *Alleluia*, after all, is praise of God. So the activity of our rest is being indicated to us by it while we are still toiling hard. When we arrive, you see, at that rest after this toil, our only business will be the praise of God, our activity there consists in *alleluia*. What does *alleluia* mean? "Praise God." Who can praise God without ceasing or flagging, but the angels? They don't get hungry, they don't get thirsty, they don't get sick, they don't die.

I mean, we too have been saying *alleluia*. It was sung here early this morning, and when we were already present, a short while ago we said *alleluia*. A kind of whiff of divine praise and of that rest is reaching us, but for the most part it is mortality that presses on us. After all, even speaking makes us tired, and we want to give our bodies some refreshment; and if *alleluia* goes on being said a long time, the praise of God becomes a burden to us, because of the very bulk of our bodies. You see it is after this age, and after our toil that we will find fullness without ceasing in *alleluia*. So what then, brothers and sisters? Let us say it as much as we can, so that we may deserve to say it always. There, our food will be *alleluia*, our drink *alleluia*, the activity of our rest *alleluia*, our whole joy will be *alleluia*, that is, the praise of God. Who, after all, will praise anything without flagging, but someone who enjoys it without wearying of it? So what toughness of mind there will be, what immortality and durability of body, to ensure that the mind's attention doesn't flag in contemplating God, and the body's limbs don't collapse with continuously praising God!

The symbolic meanings of the numbers 40 and 50

10. So why are fifty days celebrated in this paschal mystery? The Lord spent forty days with his disciples after the resurrection, as the Acts of the Apostles testifies;²⁷ after forty days he ascended into heaven, and on the tenth day after he had ascended he sent the Holy Spirit. Filled with this, the apostles and *all who had come together in one place spoke with tongues* (Acts 2:1-3), and did those wonderful works which we cherish as we read about and believe them, while they spoke the word of God with great confidence. He spent forty days on earth with his disciples, while before his passion *he fasted for forty days* (Mt 4:2). You won't find anyone else fasting for forty days, except the Lord, and Moses, and Elijah;²⁸ the Lord as the gospel, Moses as the law, Elijah as the prophets, because witness is borne to the gospel by the law and the prophets.²⁹ That's why on the mountain too, when our Lord Jesus Christ wished to manifest his glory, he stood between Moses and Elijah; he was resplendent with honor in the middle; the law and the prophets were bearing witness on either side.³⁰

So the number forty stands for this present time, during which we toil away in the world; because here wisdom is being dispensed to us in a temporal manner. There were the patriarchs, you see,³¹ and they have passed on from here; their dispensation was temporal. I am not saying they are living temporarily, because they are living always, and living with God. But a temporal, temporary dispensation of the word was made through them. They are not, after all, speaking here now; but what they spoke was written down, and is read in time. Then came the prophets in their own time, and went their way. The Lord came in his own time; because he never withdrew the presence of his divine majesty, never withdraws, being found everywhere as regards his godhead; but as it says in the gospel, *He was in this world, and the world was made through him, and the world did not know him; he came to his own home, and his own people did not receive him* (Jn 1:10-11). How was he here all the time, and how did he come? It can only

be that he was here in divine majesty, he came in humanity. That he came in the flesh, you see, means that he himself dispensed wisdom to us in a temporal manner, in a temporal manner through the law, in a temporal manner through the prophets, in a temporal manner through the scriptures of the gospel.

You see, when all times have passed on, we shall see wisdom herself as she is, and she will pay us the number ten.³² The number seven, you see, indicates the creature, because God worked for six days, and *on the seventh rested from his works* (Heb 4:4). The number three, on the other hand, suggests the creator, Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Perfect wisdom consists in piously subjecting the creature to the creator; in distinguishing the founder from his foundation, the artist from his works. Those who mix up the works with the artist³³ understand neither the art nor the artist; while those who distinguish them are filled with wisdom. So this number ten is the fullness of wisdom.

But when it is dispensed in time and a temporal manner, because the mark of temporal realities is to be found in the number four, ten multiplied by four makes the number forty. Even the year changes with a fourfold rhythm, spring, summer, autumn, and winter. And a kind of fourfold rhythm of change marks all time. Again, scripture mentions four winds.³⁴ The gospel, you see, has gone out through the four cardinal points of the compass, being dispensed in time; and that's where the Catholic Church itself is, occupying the four corners of the world. So that is the way in which the tenner makes the number forty.³⁵

The adding of the mystic number 10 to the mystic number 40

11. That's why those three fasted for forty days, to signify that in this time it is necessary to abstain from love of the things of time. That, I mean, is what is signified by those total fasts for so many days, forty days. For the same reason the people of Israel too was led through the desert for forty years, before it could enter the promised land to reign in it. In the same way we too in this life, full of endless anxieties, of fear, of danger from temptations and trials, are being led as it were through the desert by a temporal dispensation. But when we have made a good passage through the number forty, that is, lived good lives in this temporal dispensation, walking according to the commandments of God, we shall receive as our wages that tenner of the faithful; because the Lord too, when he hired workmen for the vineyard, gave them a tenner as their wages. He gave them all a tenner, both those he had hired early in the morning, and those at midday, and those at the end of the day, all of them a tenner.³⁶

Because any who have been believers from the beginning of their lives are each going to receive a tenner; wisdom, no longer by a dispensation of different times, but eternally contemplating the creator distinguished from the creature, so as to enjoy the creator and in the creature to praise the creator. But some have come to believe as young people, and in their earlier years were not believers; they are going to receive a tenner. But old people have come to believe, only now at the end of the day, as though hired for the vineyard at the eleventh hour; they too are going to get a tenner.

And so to that number forty well conducted add the wages of a tenner, and it will make the number fifty, which signifies the Church that is to be, in which God will always be praised. But because all have been called in the name of the Trinity in order to live good lives in the number forty and receive the tenner, multiply this fifty by three, and it makes one hundred and fifty. Add the mystery of the Trinity, it makes one hundred and fifty-three, which is the number of fish found on the right; in this number, though, are included countless thousands of the saints. No bad people will be thrown away from there,³⁷ because there won't be any there; nor will the nets, which are bonds of unity and peace, be broken by any schism.³⁸

A comparison of the lenten fast with its relaxation during paschal time; this is no excuse for drunkenness

12. I think that is a sufficient explanation of a grand mystery. But you know that it is our business to work well in the time of the number forty, so that we may be able to praise the Lord in the time of the number fifty. That's why we celebrate those forty days, before we keep the great vigil, in hard work³⁹ and fasting and abstinence; it's because they represent this present time. But after the Lord's resurrection, because these days stand for everlasting joy—they aren't this yet, but this is what they stand for; the thing is still only symbolized in a mystery, brothers and sisters, not yet realized in fact; after all the Lord isn't being crucified when we celebrate Easter, but just as by our annual celebration we signify past events, so in the same way future events that haven't yet happened. So during this season the fast is relaxed, because the number of these days signifies our future rest.

But see to it, brothers and sisters, that you don't plan to celebrate these days in a worldly way with a lot of drunkenness, as though complete self-indulgence were now permitted; if you do that, you won't deserve to celebrate with the angels for ever what these days stand for. Perhaps, you see, when I take some drunkard or other to task, he is going to say, "It was you that explained to us that these days stand for everlasting joy; you that suggested to us that this time is a foretaste of the heavenly joy of the angels; so oughtn't I to do myself a good turn?" Of course a good turn, and not a bad one. It stands for joy for you, after all, provided you are the temple of God. But if you fill God's temple with the filth of drunkenness, the apostle thunders at you, *Whoever ruins the temple of God, God will ruin him* (1 Cor 3:17).

Let this be written on your holinesses' hearts, that a person who understands less and lives a better life is better than one who understands a lot and doesn't live a good life. Complete and perfect happiness, indeed, consists in being quick to understand and in living a good life; but if you can't manage both, it is better to live a good life than to be quick to understand. If you live a good life, you see, you earn the right to a fuller understanding; while if you live a bad one, you will lose even what you do understand. That's what was said: *To the one who has, it will be given; but the one who has not, even what he seems to have will be taken away from him* (Mk 4:25).

NOTES

1. So most of the authorities, some of whom date the sermon precisely to Friday, 18 April 396. For reasons already stated, I would propose the Saturday after Easter. They also infer from section 4 below (see note 16) that it was preached in the Basilica Leontiana in Hippo Regius. Three scholars, however, suggest, rather perversely to my mind, that it was preached in Carthage.

2. For example in the mystery or sacrament of the two catches of fish, which cry out for symbolic interpretation.

3. See Lk 11:9; Mt 7:7.

4. See Mk 5:35-43; Lk 7:11-14; Jn 11:17-44.

5. More inwardly than the obvious, surface, meaning.

6. Again, as in Sermon 251, Augustine actually said, *Et cum tanti essent, id est, tam magni*. See Sermon 251, note 5.

7. See Lk 5:4-7.

8. See Rom 6:9-10.

9. He has forgotten how he began this non-sentence.

10. See Eph 2:11-22, especially 20; also Mt 21:42.

11. See Eph 2:17.

12. *Carnaliter*. Their carnality consisted in their treating the whole Mosaic law, an essentially this-worldly, temporal institution, as an absolute—in taking it literally.

13. *Sacramentis carnalibus*, meaning all the ritual prescriptions of the Mosaic law: the shadows of the next and last phrase of this sentence.

14. "Theaters" here includes amphitheaters and racetracks. And what they sought there by rowdy and riotous behavior was the success of their favorite charioteers, or actors, or "hunters," the men who took on wild beasts in the amphitheater. So in the churches, presumably, they sought in the same regrettable way the success of their favorite clergy, above all, I suppose, when a bishop was to be elected; some saying "I am for Paul, I'm for Apollo, I'm for Cephas" (1 Cor 1:12).

15. See Acts 7:51.

16. The story of Augustine's campaign, while he was still only a presbyter, to suppress the ancient custom of celebrating the feasts of the martyrs and the anniversaries of the dead with heavy drinking in the shrines, the cemeteries and the basilicas, is told in his Letters; see Letter 29 to his friend Alypius.

17. *Venire ad cibum Domini*; it could be translated "come to be fed by the Lord," as the Italian version renders it. But Augustine knew as well as we do that fish are caught to be eaten, not to be fed. And he thought of us as being caught in order to be eaten by the Lord, that is to be turned into his body. This is what heretics and schismatics refuse to undergo. They are outside the Church, and therefore do not belong to the body of the Lord.

18. More or less modern Hungary. Photinus was bishop of Sirmium in that province. Arius, of course, had been a presbyter of Alexandria. He may have broken the nets in Egypt, but the rent soon spread all over the Roman world.

19. Phrygia in Asia Minor, the home of the prophet Montanus in the second century, who founded an enthusiastic, rigorist sect, more usually known after him as Montanists, but also called, as here, Cataphrygians. They too had spread to Africa, as Augustine was well aware; the great African theologian Tertullian had joined them about the year 200.

20. He immediately has to correct himself; plenty of bad ones remain. In fact he seems rather to have lost the thread of what he is saying at the end of this section. To make some sense of his concluding question, I translate the *Unde* with which it begins as "How else."

21. He seems to have had in mind some of the wealthier, more prosperous members of his congregation.

22. *Liberum arbitrium*, usually but somewhat inaccurately translated "free will."

23. Above all in the last two chapters of the book of Revelation.

24. His second coming is being dramatically anticipated, since it is symbolically prefigured in his resurrection.

25. Reading *non omnes* instead of the text's *non solum omnes*, "not only all." But clearly, he is not embarking on a "not only . . . but also" statement; it would destroy the point he is making. We have here a slip either of the preacher's tongue, or more likely of the stenographer's stylus or the copyist's pen.

26. Evidently Augustine at this early stage of his career had not yet discovered the fascination of 153 as the triangle of 17, and so embarks on this more obvious, and cruder, method of analyzing that number. I suspect he learned about the connection between 153 and 17 from the works of the Donatist biblical scholar Tychonius, for whom he had a great respect. He quotes him at length in his *Teaching Christianity* III, 42-55.

27. See Acts 1:3.

28. See Ex 34:28; 1 Kgs 19:8.

29. See Rom 3:21.

30. See Mk 9:2-4.

31. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his sons. But he may indeed mean all the ancestors from Adam, through Noah, to Moses.

32. The allusion is to the *denarius*, the "penny," which I will shortly, as elsewhere, be translating by "tenner," that was paid to the workmen in the parable of the vineyard, Mt 20:1-16. He will refer to it explicitly later on.

33. Like the pagans, who treated creatures, such as the heavenly bodies, as gods.

34. See Rv 7:1. How like Augustine to go to scripture for the authority to talk about four winds and the four cardinal points of the compass!

35. Augustine's listeners, like his readers, may be forgiven for forgetting that the number he has really set himself to explain, as the key to 153, is 50.

36. See Mt 20:1-10.

37. An allusion to the parable of the seine, Mt 13:48.

38. How relieved the congregation must have been, when a year or two later Augustine graduated to the comparative simplicity of the number 17!

39. He means the hard work the catechumens put into their various Lenten exercises.

SERMON 252A

DURING EASTER WEEK:
SERMON OF SAINT AUGUSTINE ON JOHN 21

Date: after 400¹

1. Many things were written according to the evangelist John about how the Lord Jesus appeared to his disciples after the resurrection. He appeared to them indeed even when they were fishing. This fishing expedition of the disciples started² at the sea of Tiberias, where the Lord chose to show himself to them. It contains a great mystery, as you already know, but as I must very briefly remind you.

The first catch of fish

2. Call to mind that first fishing occasion, when he called the fishers of fish and made them into fishers of men, when he first started preaching, long before his passion. That, you see, as you ought to remember, is when he came to the disciples, though they weren't yet disciples; that, you see, is when they left their nets and followed him.³ And he found that they had caught nothing throughout the night, and he said to them, *Cast your nets into the sea* (Lk 5:4-5). And they cast them, and caught such a mass of fish that two boats were filled, were overloaded, and almost sunk. What's more, the nets were broken because of the multitude of fish. Then he said to them, *Come, follow me, and I will make you into fishers of men* (Mk 1:17). And he did, and the apostles cast the nets of the word throughout the sea of the world, and caught a mass of fish.

If you want to form an idea about the number of fish, an innumerable number, consider the multitudes of Christians; these have been caught in the holy nets, caught in order to live, not to die. But all the same, as a result of so many being caught many schisms have also occurred, because the nets were broken. Also the two boats, that is the two small skiffs,⁴ which were then filled, signified those coming from the circumcision and the uncircumcision, that is, the Church gathered together from Jews and Gentiles. That's why Christ is called the cornerstone,⁵ because in a corner two walls, as it were, kiss each other, coming from different directions. So those boats were filled, overloaded, and almost sunk. This represented Christians living bad lives, and overloading the Church

with their bad morals. But all the same, the vessels were not sunk; the Church, you see, puts up with those who live bad lives. It can be overloaded, it can't be sunk.

Now, though, after the resurrection Christ indicated the Church such as it will be after our resurrection. Then, you see, the blissful Church will contain only the good, with not a single bad one mixed in.

Now let the good and bad fish swim together; let them only not break the nets

3. So what did he say then to the disciples, after the resurrection? *Cast the nets to the right-hand side* (Jn 21:6). On the previous fishing occasion he hadn't said "on the right-hand side," to avoid signifying only the good; nor did he say "on the left," to avoid signifying only the bad. But the nets were cast on all sides, because the Church was going to contain both good and bad. That's how it is too in one of the comparisons that the Lord Christ himself made. He said, you see, *The kingdom of heaven is like a net cast into the sea, in which all sorts of fish have been collected. When they have brought it ashore they sit down, and pick out the good ones and put them in their baskets; the bad ones, though, they throw away.* He proposed it, and he explained it. *That is how it will also be, he said, at the final completion of the age; the angels come, and they gather up the bad from the midst of the just, and throw them away into the burning fiery furnace; that is where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Mt 13:47-50).

So let the good fish swim with the bad, the bad swim with the good. Let them swim within the nets and not break the nets. Those who break the nets, you see, are bad; while those who remain inside the nets are both good and bad, but only now, only for the present.

The supernumeraries

4. The other time, though, what did he say? *Cast the net on the right side* (Jn 21:6). What's "on the right side"? On the right side you are going to catch the ones who are going to stand on the right. You see, he's going to say to those who are on the right, *Come, blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom* (Mt 25:34). They were the ones he indicated, when he ordered the nets to be cast on the right-hand side. They were cast; they caught many fish, and big ones; and he didn't fail to mention the number.

In that first catch of fish, which represents both good and bad, he didn't mention the number, because there were supernumeraries there. Who are the supernumeraries? The ones who don't belong to the number of the saints; among them are those who break the nets, who engineer schisms; among them are those who renounce the world in their words and not in their deeds, who receive the sacrament of the new man,⁶ and persevere in the old man.⁷ So these were also going to be included that time. That's why it didn't say "on the right-hand side"; that's why it kept quiet about the number. These are the supernumeraries, about

whom the psalm says, *I proclaimed and I spoke; they were multiplied beyond number* (Ps 40:5). On that occasion there was a holy number, there were also many beyond number; but on this occasion nobody beyond number.

The thousands upon thousands of the elect counted in the number 153

5. And how many were there? *One hundred and fifty-three* (Jn 21:11). Is that the total number of the saints? God forbid that even this one Church alone in which I am now speaking should have so few! So what then? Those of us who don't know must get to know, and those of us who do must recall. Let the first purpose be achieved by my informing you, the second by my reminding you, or else forgetfulness may be overtaking you. *One hundred and fifty-three*, he said. The evangelist makes it his business to say this: *Although they were so big*, says he, *the net was not torn*, as though he was calling to mind how those nets were broken with that first catch of fish.

Now what? *And although they were so big*, he says, *the net was not torn*. Who now need fear any schisms there, where the all-embracing folds of unity cannot be torn, nor the offspring of mother Church torn away from her? No friend, you see, is being separated from her there, no enemy associated with her; her adherents, I mean, will all be the elect, all be perfect. There will be thousands and thousands of them, and more than thousands and thousands, and yet they will be reckoned in this number.

The key number 17, signifying the keeping of the law by the grace of the Spirit

6. This number grows from seventeen. If you want to count from one to seventeen, and add them all together, you will find it. You have put one; now add two, to make three; add three to make six; add four to make ten, and go on like that up to the number seventeen, and you will find it's one hundred and fifty-three. It remains for you to demand of me what the meaning is of seventeen. If we can find the sense of this smaller number, that is of seventeen, we will have the key to the mystery of the bigger one, that is of a hundred and fifty-three. Here in seventeen we have the root, there the tree.

So what's the meaning of seventeen? Ten stands for the law; the ten commandments of the law, you see, were written on two tables of stone by the finger of God, as the law says, as the holy books testify.⁸ The law, clearly, was marked by the number ten. But who can fulfill the law without help? Absolutely nobody. *For if a law had been given*, says the apostle, *which could bring to life, justice would be entirely from the law. But scripture has shut all things up under sin, so that the promise from the faith of Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe* (Gal 3:21-22).

The law was given. To save me from saying a lot, among other commandments it contains *You shall not covet your neighbor's property* (Ex 20:17). Don't covet; don't go up and down in front of that country house belonging to someone else, and sigh because it's such a fine one. Do not covet your neighbor's

property. *The Lord's is the earth and its fullness* (Ps 24:1); what haven't you acquired, if you have got hold of God? So don't covet your neighbor's property.

The law was heard, and some people, out of fear of punishment, held themselves back from doing bad deeds; they didn't, however, manage to keep themselves back from enjoying bad thoughts.⁹ So, Lord, give us some help; *For indeed, the one who gave the law will give his blessing* (Ps 84:6). Now just as it says here, the one who gave the law will give his blessing, that is to say, the help of the Holy Spirit, so that the law may be fulfilled; in the same way it is said of the wisdom of God, *but she carries the law and mercy on her tongue* (Prv 3:16, LXX). If she only carried the law on herself, who could endure it? The deeds of the law would be demanded, and all would be found guilty. Mercy has come along, which helps you to do the law, pardons what you don't do. This mercy comes from the Holy Spirit.

Now the Holy Spirit is presented to us in the scriptures under the number seven. I will remind you of this from one place: Isaiah says, *The Holy Spirit will rest upon him*; and he counts it out: *the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and courage, the Spirit of knowledge and piety, the Spirit of the fear of God* (Is 11:2-3). This Spirit comes along, and the result is seventeen. When the seven are added to the ten they make saints, who don't trust in the law, but place all their reliance on God's help, so that one may say to one's Lord, *Be my helper, do not forsake me nor despise me, God my salvation. For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord has taken me up* (Ps 27:9-10). These ones too¹⁰ have learned how to say with you, *Our Father who art in heaven* (Mt 6:9).

Let us have no fear, being found as we are in seventeen; because if we are found in seventeen, we will get to a hundred and fifty-three; and if we get to a hundred and fifty-three, we will be on the right; if we are on the right we will receive the kingdom.

NOTES

1. So Kunzelmann and Fischer; for Poque it was preached 410-412. They suggest the Friday after Easter; I continue to vote for the Saturday. From what he says in section 5, it is clear that this is not the first sermon in which he used the number 17 as the key to the meaning of 153. But it does come only a few years after Sermon 152 where, as we discovered, he hadn't yet come across this key.

2. *Sumpsit initium*. I suppose what he is implying is that having begun there it has continued all over the world with the preaching of the gospel. That, however, would better apply to the first catch of fish. So perhaps his implication is that it began there, and will end with the resurrection of the just.

3. See Mk 1:17-18.

4. *Navigia, id est duas naviculas*. I suppose it suddenly occurred to him that a *navigium* was probably too big for the vessels the disciples were likely to be using. This is the only occasion, so

far, on which he has this particular scruple. Or it may be that on this occasion his text had *naviculas* like the Vulgate, while the one he was more used to had *navigia*. I don't suppose the fact that his brother was called Navigius had anything to do with it.

5. See Eph 2:20.

6. Baptism.

7. The text just says "persevere in man," *in homine*. I think the word *vetere* must have dropped out by mistake. The allusion is to texts like Eph 4:22-24.

8. See Ex 31:18; Dt 5:22; 9:10.

9. In this case from coveting. He simply says *a delectatione mala*.

10. Pointing to the newly baptized in their white baptismal robes, their albs.

SERMON 253

DURING EASTER WEEK

Date: 412-413¹

Peter questioned three times by the Lord about whether he loved him

1. The gospel of Saint John the apostle, which is known as that according to John, came to an end today with what he told us about how the Lord appeared to his disciples after the resurrection. So he tackled the apostle Peter, that man who was so sure of himself and then denied him, and speaking to him, alive once more after conquering death, he said, *Simon of John* (that was Peter's name, you see), *do you love me?* He answered him from the heart. If Peter answered from the heart, why was the Lord who could see into hearts asking the question? As a matter of fact even Peter himself was surprised, and as he was well aware that Jesus knew the answer, it was with a certain weariness that he heard him asking the question.

The question came once, *Do you love me?* And the answer, *I love you, Lord, as you know.* And again, *Do you love me? Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.*² And a third time, *Do you love me? Peter was grieved* (Jn 21:15-17). Why are you grieved, Peter? Because you are answering three times with love? Have you forgotten your threefold fear? Allow the Lord to question you, it's the doctor who's questioning you, it's out of concern for your health that he's questioning you. Don't let it weary you. Wait; let the number of loyal love be completed, to cancel the number of denial.³

The Lord entrusts his sheep and lambs to Peter

2. Every time, though, every time, that is with each of his three questions, as Peter answers that he loves him, the Lord Jesus entrusts him with his lambs, and says, *Feed my lambs, feed my sheep* (Jn 21:15-17). What are you going to give me, since you love me? Show your love in my sheep. What are you bestowing on me by loving me, seeing that it was I who bestowed on you the ability to love me? But you do have the means of showing your love for me, you have the means of exercising it: *Feed my sheep.*

To what extent, though, the lambs of the Lord were to be fed, with what love

the sheep bought at such a price were to be fed, he indicated in what followed. I mean, after Peter, completing the just requirement of his threefold answer, had professed himself to be a lover of the Lord, and had his sheep entrusted to him, he heard about his own future martyrdom. Here the Lord indicated that his sheep are to be loved by those to whom he entrusts them, in such a way that they are ready to die for them. That's what this same John writes in his letter: *Just as Christ laid down his life for us, in the same way we too ought to lay down ours for the brethren* (1 Jn 3:16).

Peter had died by making his denial, but had risen again by shedding his tears

3. Peter had earlier answered the Lord out of a kind of proud self-assurance, when he had told him, *I will lay down my life for you* (Jn 13:37). He hadn't yet received the strength to carry out that promise; now, in order to be able to do so, he is already filled with charity. That's why he's asked, *Do you love me?* and answers *I do*, because it is only charity that can carry it out. So how do things stand, Peter? What were you afraid of, when you denied him? The sum total of what you were afraid of was dying. He's alive and talking to you, the one you saw dead. Don't be afraid of death anymore; it has been conquered in him whose death you dreaded.⁴ He hung on the cross, he was fixed there with nails, he gave up the spirit, he was struck with a lance, laid in the tomb; that's what you were afraid of when you denied him, afraid you would suffer this; and by fearing death you denied life. Understand the truth now; when you were afraid of dying, that's when you died.

You see, he had died by making his denial, but had risen again by shedding his tears.⁵ Why did Jesus say to him next, *Follow me* (Jn 21:19)? Because he knew he was ready for it. You see, if you remember—or rather because those who have read it do remember, and those too who read it and don't remember must be reminded, and those who didn't read it must learn—Peter had said, *I will follow you wherever you go*.⁶ And the Lord said to him, *You cannot follow me now, but you will follow later on* (Jn 13:36). “Now,” he says, “you cannot. You're promising to, but I can see your powers, I am taking the pulse of your heart, and I am informing the sick man of the truth: *You cannot follow me now*.” This verdict of the doctor's, though, is not desperate; he went on to say, “*But you will follow later on. You will recover your health and follow*.” *Now, however, because he can already see what's going on in his heart, and can see the gift of love he has given to his soul, he says to him, “Follow me. I had certainly said, You cannot now; I now say,⁷ Follow me.*”

The problem about what the Lord said about John

4. But a problem has arisen which mustn't be passed over. When the Lord said to Peter, *Follow me*, Peter looked back at the disciple whom Jesus loved, that is to John himself who wrote the gospel, and said to the Lord, “*Lord, what about this man? I know you love him; how is it I will follow, and he won't?*”

The Lord said, It is thus that I wish him to remain until I come; you follow me (Jn 21:20-22). But the evangelist himself, the one who wrote, the one about whom this was said, added his own words in the gospel and said, *A rumor arose among the brethren because of this word, that that disciple was not going to die; and to scotch this opinion, he added, But he did not say that he was not going to die, but he only said: It is thus that I wish him to remain until I come; you follow me* (Jn 21:23).

So John himself scotched this opinion, by which it was thought that John was not going to die, by his own subsequent words. To prevent people believing this, he said, "The Lord didn't say that, but he said this." Why he said it, though, John did not explain, but left it to us. Therefore let us knock, hoping it will be opened to us.⁸

Two ways of understanding this saying

5. As far as the Lord is good enough to enlighten me, as far as I can see—but better men will see better—what I think, is that this problem can be solved in two ways. The Lord either said what he said to Peter about his martyrdom, or he said it about the gospel of John. As regards the martyrdom and this *Follow me, suffer for me, suffer what I did; because Christ was crucified, Peter too was crucified, he experienced the nails, experienced the torments, while John experienced none of this: that's what's meant by It is thus that I wish him to remain.* "Let him fall asleep without wounds, without torment, and wait for me; you follow me, suffer what I did. I shed my blood for you; shed yours for me." So that's one way these words can be explained, *It is thus that I wish him to remain until I come; you follow me* (Jn 21:22): "I don't want him to suffer; you suffer."

As regards the gospel of John, though, this is what I think is meant: that Peter wrote about the Lord, others too wrote; but their writing was more concerned with the Lord's humanity.⁹ The Lord Christ, of course, is both God and man. What is man? Soul and flesh. So what is Christ? Word, soul, and flesh. But what sort of soul, because animals too have souls? Word, rational soul, and flesh, Christ is all that. But while there is something about the divinity of Christ in Peter's letters,¹⁰ in John's gospel it is very much to the fore. It's he who said *In the beginning was the Word.* He soared above the clouds and soared above the stars, soared above the angels, soared above every creature, arrived at the Word, through which all things were made. *In the beginning was the Word, this was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him* (Jn 1:1-3). Who can see this, who can think about it, who can worthily grasp it, who worthily proclaim it? Then will be the time for it to be properly understood, when Christ comes. *It is thus that I wish him to remain, until I come.* I have explained it as best I could; he himself can do it better in your hearts.

NOTES

1. So Fischer and Poque. This time the authorities all seem to agree that it was most likely to have been preached on the Saturday after Easter. This, no doubt, is because the gospel was not about the catch of fish, but about the subsequent conversation between Jesus and Peter, Jn 21:15:25.

2. So the Maurists. *Sources Chrétiennes* leaves out "you know that."

3. See Mk 14:66-72.

4. *In illo victa est quem timebas mori*, in him whom you feared would die; a peculiar statement, as the point is that Peter was afraid to die himself. The Maurist text simply reads, *in illo victa est quam timebas*, the death which you feared has been conquered in him. This makes straightforward sense, but looks like a tidying up of an awkward phrase.

5. See Mk 14:72.

6. He must be referring to Jn 13:36-37; but in fact he quotes Mt 8:19, Lk 9:57, where it is not Peter but an anonymous would-be disciple who says this.

7. Following the Maurists, *Ego modo dico*. *Sources Chrétiennes* has *Ego dico: Modo sequere me*, I say: Now follow me.

8. Lk 11:9-10.

9. Following the Maurists. *Sources Chrétiennes* has "the Lord's humility."

10. Nothing very explicit, except perhaps 2 Pt 1:3-4.

SERMON 254

DURING EASTER WEEK

Date: 414¹

Comparison between the time of gladness and the time of sadness

1. This, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the situation as regards the misery of our condition and God's commiseration, that the time of gladness is preceded by the time of sadness; that is, that first comes the time for sadness, later the time for gladness; first the time for toil, later the time for rest; first the time of calamity, later the time of felicity. That's how it is, as I said, with the misery of our condition and the divine commiseration. The time of sadness, after all, of toil, of misery, has sprung from our sins; whereas the time of gladness, of rest, of felicity is coming not from our merits but from the grace of the Savior. It's one thing that we deserve, another that we are hoping for; we deserve bad things, are hoping for good things. That's the doing of his mercy who created us.

*Sadness, like dung, is fine and fruitful in the right place,
just filthy and disgusting in the wrong place*

2. But in the time of our misery and, in the language of scripture, *the days of our futility* (Ecc1 7:15) we ought to know where this sadness itself should spring from. Sadness, you see, is just like dung. Dung dumped in what isn't its proper place is filth; dung dumped in what isn't its place makes a house filthy; dumped in its proper place it makes a field fertile. Observe the place provided by the farmer for this dung: the apostle says, *And who is it that can make me glad, if not the one who is made sad by me?* (2 Cor 2:2). And in another place, *Sadness*, he says, *that is according to God produces repentance leading to a salvation not to be repented of* (2 Cor 7:10).

If you're sad according to God, you're sad with repentance about your sins. Sadness about your own iniquity gives birth to justice. First be displeased with what you are, so that you can be what you are not. *The sadness*, he says, *which is according to God produces repentance leading to a salvation not to be repented of. Repentance*, he says, *leading to a salvation. What sort of salvation? Not to be repented of. What's not to be repented of? What you couldn't possibly be sorry for.*

We have had a life, after all, which we should have been sorry for; we have had a life to be repented of, but we can't reach the life that is not to be repented of except by repentance for the bad life. Will you ever, as I started to say, brothers and sisters, find dung in a freshly cleaned pile of wheat? And yet it's by means of dung that you end up with that lovely, that beautiful sight; ugliness has been the way to a thing of beauty.

The parable of the barren fig tree

3. The Lord too has something very apt to say about a barren tree: *Look, it is now three years that I have been coming to it, and finding no fruit on it; I will cut it down, to stop it blocking up my field.* The gardener intercedes; he intercedes as the axe is poised over the unfruitful roots and on the point of striking them;² the gardener intercedes as Moses interceded with God;³ the gardener intercedes and says, *Lord, leave it this year too; I can dig round it and give it a load of dung. If it bears fruit, well and good; if not, you shall come and cut it down* (Lk 13:7-9).

This tree is the human race. The Lord visited this tree in the time of the patriarchs, as if for the first year. He visited it in the time of the law and the prophets, as if for the second year. Here we are now, with the gospel the third year has dawned. Now it's as though it should have been cut down; but the merciful one intercedes with the merciful one.⁴ He wanted to show how merciful he was, and so he stood up to himself with a plea for mercy. Let's leave it, he says, this year too; let's dig round it—a ditch dug is a sign of humility. Let's apply a load of dung, perhaps it may bear fruit.

Or rather, because it does bear fruit, and in part does not bear fruit, its Lord will come and divide it.⁵ What does that mean, divide it? Because there are good people and bad people, though now in one company, as though constituting one body.

Worldly sadness of various sorts is like dung inside the house

4. So as I was saying, my dear brothers and sisters, dung in the right place produces fruit, dung in the wrong place just makes it dirty. Someone or other is sad, I find that So-and-so is sad. I see dung, I inquire about the place. "Tell me, friend, why are you sad?"

"I've lost a lot of money."

A dirty place, no fruit. You should listen to the apostle: *The sadness of the world brings about death* (2 Cor 7:10). Not only no fruit, but also very great damage. So too with all the other things that relate to worldly joys, things which it would take too long to list. I see someone else sad, sighing, weeping. I see a lot of dung, I inquire about the place; and when I saw him sad, weeping, I observed he was also praying. Sad, sighing, weeping, praying; this suggested to me heaven knows what goodness of meaning. But I still inquire about the place. I mean, suppose this prayerful man, sighing with floods of tears, is asking for

the death of an enemy of his?⁶ Even in this case, yes even in this case, he's already crying, already begging, already praying. The place is filthy, there's no fruit. What we find in scripture is even worse than that. He's begging for his enemy to die, he incurs the curse of Judas: *Let his prayer be treated as sin* (Ps 109:7).⁷

I've observed someone else again sighing, weeping, praying. I recognize the dung, I inquire about the place. I put my ear to his prayer, and I hear him saying, *I said: Lord, have mercy on me; heal my soul, because I have sinned against you* (Ps 41:4). He's sighing about his sin, I recognize the field, I look forward to the yield. God be thanked. Dung in a good place, it's not wasted there, it produces grain. This is indeed the time for fruitful sadness, for us to grieve over the condition of our mortality, over temptations sweeping over us, sins creeping up on us, greed of all sorts lining up against us, lusts always quarreling and agitating against good thoughts; these are the things we should be sad about.

*This present time of sadness signified by the forty days of Lent,
the future time of gladness by the fifty days after Easter*

5. This time of our wretchedness and our sighs⁸ is signified by those forty days before Easter; while the time of happiness, which is coming later, the time of rest, of good fortune, of eternal life, of the kingdom without end, is signified by these fifty days, days in which God's praises are being sung. Two times are being indicated to us, you see; one before the Lord's resurrection, the other after the Lord's resurrection; one in which we find ourselves now, the other in which we hope we are going to find ourselves in the future. The time of sorrow signified by the days of Lent we both represent symbolically and also have with us; while the time of happiness and quiet and the kingdom, signified by these present days, we certainly represent symbolically by *alleluia*, but we don't yet have the praises.⁹ But now we sigh *alleluia*. What's *alleluia*? "Praise the Lord." The reason why the praises of God are multiplied like this in the Church during these days after the resurrection, is that for us too there will be perpetual praise after our resurrection.

The scourging, the chains, the abuse, the spittle, the crown of thorns, the wine mixed with gall, the vinegar in a sponge, the jeers, the shame and contempt, finally the cross itself, the sacred limbs hanging on the tree, what does it all signify for us but the time we are living now, a time of sorrow, a time of mortality, a time of temptation? So it's a foul, an ugly time, but let it be the ugliness of dung in the field, not in the house. Let the sorrow be for sins, not for greedy desires cheated and disappointed. It's a foul, ugly time, but if used well¹⁰ a fertile time. What could be more foul than a field spread with farmyard muck? The field was beautiful before it received its cartload of muck from the dunghill. The field was first reduced to ugliness, in order to attain to fruitfulness. So the ugliness of this time is a sign, but let this ugliness be for us a time of fertility.

And let us see with the eyes of the prophet, who said, *We saw him*. What was he like? *He had no looks nor comeliness* (Is 53:2). Why not? Question another

prophet: *They counted all my bones* (Ps 22:17). The bones of the one hanging there were counted; ugly looks, the looks of the crucified; but that ugliness gave birth to beauty. What beauty? That of the resurrection, because he is *comely in form beyond the sons of men* (Ps 45:2).

God by his promises has made himself our debtor

6. So let us praise the Lord, brothers and sisters, because we are holding his trustworthy promises, though we haven't yet received the things promised. Do you imagine it's not enough to hold him to his promises, and that we should be demanding the payment of his debts? By making promises, God has become our debtor. It's out of his goodness, not our rights, that he has become a debtor. What have we ever given him, that we should be able to hold him in our debt? Or perhaps because you heard in the psalm, *What shall I render to the Lord?* First of all, when he says, *What shall I render to the Lord?* they are the words of a debtor, not of someone demanding repayment of a debt. Something had been advanced to him. *What shall I render the Lord.* What's *What shall I render?* What shall I pay back? What for? *For all the things he has rendered to me* (Ps 116:12). What has he rendered to me?¹¹ To begin with, I was nothing, and he made me; I had got lost, and he looked for me; looked for me and found me; I was a captive and he redeemed me; having bought me, he set me free; from a slave he made me into a brother. *What shall I render to the Lord?* You haven't got anything you can render.

When you look for absolutely everything from him, what have you got that you can render to him? But wait. There's something or other he wants to say, when he asks, *What shall I render to the Lord for all the things he has rendered to me?* He looks round everywhere for something he can render, pay back, and he seems to find it. What does he find? *The cup of salvation I will take* (Ps 116:13). But you were thinking of paying something back, you're still looking for something to take. Look here, please. If you're still looking for something to take, you'll still be a debtor. When are you going to be a payer back? So if you are always going to be a debtor, when will you ever pay back? You won't find anything you can pay back; you won't have anything apart from what he has given.

The only thing that is truly man's own is falsehood

7. Look here, when you said, *What shall I render?* it's connected with what you had just said a moment before, *Every man a liar* (Ps 116:11). Anybody, you see, who wishes to say that he has paid something back to God, is a liar. Absolutely everything has to be hoped for from him. From ourselves, apart from him, nothing—except perhaps sin and lies, because whoever utters a lie, speaks from what is his own.¹² Indeed, indeed, man is fully supplied with what is his own. Certainly he's got lies, and his heart is a storehouse of lies. Let him lie as much as he can, he will never run out of supplies. Let him pretend whatever he

can, tell whatever lies he can. Because what he has for nothing, free—I mean, he has it from himself—he doesn't have to buy.

But when it comes to the truth, if he wants to be truthful, it won't be from what is his own. Peter was a liar from what was his own. When was he a liar? The Lord promised us the gift of his passion, and Peter says, *Far be it from you; this shall not happen. Every man a liar.* How and why a liar? Listen to the Lord: *You have no idea of the things of God, but only those of man* (Mt 16:22-23). Peter being truthful though, when? *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God* (Mt 16:16). Where did this truth come from to a man who was a liar? Look, it's a man saying *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Who says it? Peter. What was Peter? A man who spoke the truth? It's quite certain, *Every man a liar.*

But look, look, his tongue, the truth from his tongue; how is *every man a liar*?

Listen to how *every man a liar.* The reason, after all, that he spoke the truth then, was that it wasn't from what was his own. So from where did Peter get being truthful? Listen to Truth itself: *Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona.* Blessed, where from? From what is your own? Perish the thought! *Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven* (Mt 16:17).

Let us praise God not only with our voices, but also with our behavior

8. So let us praise the Lord, who is in heaven, dearly beloved. Let us praise God, let us say *alleluia.* Let us signify during these days the day that has no end. Let us signify in the place of mortality the time of immortality. Let us hasten to our eternal house and home. *Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they will praise you for ever and ever* (Ps 84:4). The law says it, scripture says it, Truth says it. We are going to come to the house of God, which is in heaven. There we shall praise God, not for fifty days, but as it is written, *for ever and ever.* We shall see, we shall love, we shall praise. Nor shall our seeing come to an end, nor shall our loving fade away, nor shall our praising ever be silent. It will all be everlasting, all without end.

Let us praise, let us praise him, not only with voices, though, but also with our behavior. Let our tongues praise him, our lives praise him; let there be no quarrel between tongues and lives, but let them share an infinite charity.

Turning to the Lord, etc.

NOTES

1. Fischer, Kunzelmann, Poque, and la Bonnardière all actually say 412-416. Some scholars say the sermon was preached during Easter week, others during the Easter season; one, rather willfully

in my opinion, says during Lent; I think readers will agree with me when they reach section 5. All agree it was preached in Hippo Regius; but some place it in the Basilica Leontiana, others at the shrine of the Twenty Martyrs.

2. See Lk 3:9.

3. See Ex 32:11-14; Num 14:13-19.

4. Christ with his Father, Christ with himself. See Heb 7:25; Rom 8:34.

5. See Mt 24:51; also, and this is more likely to have been what he had in mind, 25:32.

6. Reading *inimici sui* with the Maurists, instead of *inimicis suis*, death for his enemies, with *Sources Chrétiennes*.

7. This is the curse of Judas, because Peter applied this psalm, though not this verse, to Judas in Acts 1:20.

8. Omitting with the Maurists a phrase given by *Sources Chrétiennes*, "if there is anyone who has such a hope from his sighs," which looks like the marginal comment of a somewhat jaundiced scribe or reader.

9. A very odd expression. What he seems to mean, as will become clearer in the next sentence or two, is that we do not yet have our share of being praised, do not yet have "our praise from God," as in 1 Cor 4:5.

10. *Si bene utatur*; it rather looks as if *utatur* is being employed in a passive sense, though it's a deponent verb, taking the ablative! The Maurists read *utamur*, if we use it well. Which did Augustine actually say? I think the ungrammatical one.

11. So the Maurists; *Sources Chrétiennes* has "to you." This is less likely, since he continues with "me."

12. See Jn 8:44. But Jesus is there speaking of the devil, not making a general remark about humanity.

SERMON 255

DURING THE EASTER SEASON:
ON ALLELUIA

Date: 418¹

In this time of our exile we say alleluia to cheer us on our way

1. Since it was the Lord's will that I should visit your graces in *alleluia* time, I owe you a word or two on *alleluia*. I trust I won't bore you if I remind you of what you already know; because, after all, we not only say this *alleluia* every day, we also take pleasure in it every day.² You know, of course, that *alleluia* means, in English,³ "Praise God"; and by singing this word together, our voices in harmony and our hearts in agreement, we are urging each other on to praise God. The only people who can praise him without a qualm are those who have nothing about them that might displease him.

And indeed, during this time of our exile and our wandering, we say *alleluia* to cheer us on our way.⁴ At present *alleluia* is for us a traveler's song; but by a toilsome road we are wending our way to home and rest where, all our busy activities over and done with, the only thing that will remain will be *alleluia*.

The point illustrated by Martha and Mary

2. That is the delightful part that Mary chose for herself, as she sat doing nothing but learning and praising, while Martha her sister was busy with all sorts of things.⁵ Oh indeed, what she was doing was necessary, but it wasn't going to last; she was engaged in journey business, not home business; what she was doing was the business of the exile, not of the home owner. She had, after all, received the Lord and those who were with him. The Lord too had flesh and blood; and just as he had been prepared to take flesh for our sakes, so he was prepared to be hungry and thirsty. And as a result of his being prepared to feel hunger and thirst, he was also prepared to be fed by those whom he had himself enriched; prepared to be received, not out of need, but out of grace.

So Martha was doing what was required by the needs of hungry and thirsty men; she was preparing, with all the trouble she was taking, something for the saints, and for the *Saint of saints* (Dn 9:24) himself, to eat and drink in her house.

A great work, but a passing one. Will there always be eating and drinking? When we cleave to that most pure and perfect goodness,⁶ there will be no needs requiring attention. We shall be blessed, lacking nothing, having much, requiring nothing.

And what is it that we shall have, so that we require nothing? I have told you;⁷ what you now believe, you will afterward see. So what I said, having much and requiring nothing, that is, lacking nothing; what is it that we are going to have? What is God going to give those who serve him, worship him, believe in him, hope in him, love him?

Good health the one thing we never weary of

3. I mean, we can see many things he gives in this time to those who have no faith in him, no hope in him, those who have turned away from him, who blaspheme him; we can see how many gifts he lavishes on them. First of all, you see, from him comes good health, which is something so pleasant and desirable that we never grow tired of it. When he has this, what does the poor man lack? When he doesn't have this, whatever else he has, what good does it do the rich man? So it's from him, that is from the Lord our God whom we worship, from the true God in whom we believe, and in whom we hope, and whom we love, it's from him that such a great thing as good health comes. Notice, however, while good health is indeed a great thing, how he gives it to both good and bad, both to those who blaspheme him and those who praise him.

And what more am I to say? Both sorts are human beings. Even a bad human being is worth more than any animal. He also gives good health to cattle and to serpents, right down to flies and worms he bestows good health on them; and he preserves all things because he created all things. So to leave aside everything else, because we can find nothing better than good health; God gives it not only to men but also to beasts, as the psalm says: *Men and cattle you will preserve, Lord, just as your mercy has been multiplied, O God* (Ps 36:6-7). That, after all, is what you are like, because you are God; so that your goodness does not just remain with the highest things, and abandon the lowest. It reaches from the angels down to the remotest, tiniest living creatures. *Wisdom, you see, reaches from end to end, extending mightily, and disposes all things sweetly* (Wis 8:1); and in this disposing of her sweetness, is the sweetness of good health for all things.

*The distinction between men and the sons of men,
based on that between the man and the Son of man*

4. So since he gives such a great good to both the good and the bad, to both men and cattle, what is it, my brothers and sisters, that he keeps for the good? I mean, he had already said, *Men and cattle you will preserve, Lord, just as your mercy has been multiplied*. And then he added, *But the sons of men*. Who are these? As though men are one thing, about whom he had said a moment before,

Men and cattle you will preserve, Lord; and the sons of men another. Are men something different, after all, from the sons of men, and the sons of men something different from men? So what can this distinction mean? Unless, perhaps, it's that men belong to the man, and the sons of men to the Son of man; men to the man, the sons of men to the Son of man.

There is one man, you see, who was not a son of man; I mean, the one who was made first was a man, he wasn't a son of man. So what has come to us by the man, and what has come to us by the Son of man? I will remind you of what has come by the man, and I will use the words of the apostle: *By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death; and thus it passed into all men, insofar as all have sinned* (Rom 5:12). There you have the drink the man has poured for us, there you have what we have drunk from our parent, and have scarcely managed to digest. If that's what's come by man, what has come by the Son of man? *He did not, he says, spare his own Son. If he did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for us all; how will he not, with him, grant us all things?* (Rom 8:32). Again, *just as by the disobedience of one man the many were constituted sinners; so by the obedience of one man the many will be constituted as just* (Rom 5:19).

So by that one man sin, by Christ justice. So all sinners belong to the man, all the just to the Son of man. So why be surprised that sinners, that the godless, the wicked, those who despise God, have turned away from God, who love the world, embrace wickedness, hate the truth, men, that is, who belong to the man; why be surprised that they enjoy this kind of good health, when you hear the psalm, *Men and cattle you will preserve, Lord?* In case men should pride themselves on enjoying temporal health, they were linked with cattle in that respect. So what is it you're congratulating yourself on, man? Isn't it something you have in common with your donkey, and your hen, with any kind of animal in your household, with these sparrows?⁸ Isn't health of body something you have in common with all these?

What has been promised to the sons of men: the part Mary chose, the life she represented, but did not yet enjoy

5. So inquire what has been promised to the sons of men, and listen to what follows: *But the sons of men shall hope under the shelter of your wings.* For the time being they shall hope, as long as they are on the road. *But the sons of men shall hope under the shelter of your wings. For it is in hope that we have been saved* (Rom 8:24). This is not for men and cattle, hoping under the shelter of God's wings. And here we are with hope suckling us, hope nourishing us, hope building us up, and giving us consolation and comfort in this life of toil. It's in this hope that we sing *alleluia*. Just look what joy there is in hope. What will the reality itself be like?⁹

You want to know what it will be like? Listen to what follows: *They shall get drunk on the plenteousness of your house* (Ps 36:7-8). That's the reality hope is about. We are thirsty, we're hungry, it must be that we shall be satisfied; but

hunger while on the road, satisfaction when we get home. When shall we be satisfied? *I shall be satisfied when your glory is revealed* (Ps 17:15). Now, though, the glory of our God, the glory of our Christ, is concealed; and with it is concealed ours also. But *when Christ appears, your life, then you too will appear with him in glory* (Col 3:4).

Then it will be *alleluia* in reality, the real thing; while now it is just in hope. Hope sings it, love sings it now, love will also sing it then; but now love sings it with hunger, then it will sing it with satisfied enjoyment. What, after all, is *alleluia*, my brothers and sisters? I've told you; it's the praise of God. There you are, you hear the word now, and in hearing it you are delighted, and in your delight you are praising him. If you so love the dew, what is your love of the fountain going to be like? What a belch is, you see, to the rumbling stomach,¹⁰ that's what praise is to the satisfied heart. After all, if we praise what we believe, how are we going to praise when we see? There you have the part that Mary chose for herself; but she was representing that life, not yet possessing it.

*The one and the many; we need the many on the road,
in order to reach the one at home*

6. There are two kinds of life; one involved with delight, the other with need. The one involved with need is toilsome, the one involved with delight is delicious. But come in inside; don't look for delight outside, or you may swell up on it, and not be able to enter through the narrow door.¹¹ Look how Mary could see the Lord in the flesh, and was listening to the Lord through the flesh, as you heard when the Letter to the Hebrews was being read, as *through the veil* (Heb 10:20). There won't be any veil, when we see *face to face* (1 Cor 13:12). So Mary was sitting, doing nothing that is to say, and listening and praising; while Martha was rushed off her feet with all the serving. And the Lord says to her, *Martha, Martha, you are busy with many things; for all that, only one is necessary* (Lk 10:41-42). One true thing; many will not be necessary.

Before we attain to the one thing, we are in need of many. May the one thing extend us, or the many things may distend us,¹² and tear us away from the one. This one thing was mentioned by the apostle Paul, saying that he had not yet received it. *I, he said, do not consider myself to have grasped it. One thing though, forgetting what lies behind, extended to what lies ahead.* Not distended, but extended; the one thing, you see, extends, it doesn't distend; stretches you out longways, not sideways. Many things stretch you sideways, one thing longways. And for how long does it go on stretching you longways? As long as we are here. When we arrive, it gathers us in, doesn't stretch us out. *One thing though, forgetting what lies behind, extended to what lies ahead, according to intention.*¹³ There you are, extended, never distended. *According to intention I pursue to the palm of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus* (Phil 3:13-14). The order of the words is: *One thing, though, I pursue.*¹⁴

So that's when we shall arrive, and enjoy the one thing; but this one thing will be all things for us. I mean, what did we say, brothers and sisters, when I

started speaking?¹⁵ What is the much that we shall have, when we are not in need of anything? What's the much that we shall have? That's what I had set out to say: what will God give us that he doesn't give them? *Let the godless be taken away, lest he see the glory of God (Is 26:10)*. So it's his glory that God will give us to enjoy, where the godless will be taken away from, lest he see the glory of God. All the much that we shall have will be God himself. Greedy grabber, what were you seeking to get? What can you look for from God, if God himself is not enough for you?

Having God alone, won't we miss all the other things we now enjoy?

7. But when it's said that we shall have God and be content with him alone; or rather that we shall be so delighted with him that we will require nothing else—because in the one thing which he is we shall enjoy each other,¹⁶ and also in each other we shall enjoy him—what are we, after all, if we don't have God, or what else but God should we love in ourselves and each other, either because we do have him or in order to have him? So when it's said that all other things will be withdrawn, and there will only be God to delight us, it's as if the soul feels restricted, because it has been used to delighting in many things; and the carnal soul says to itself, addicted to the flesh, tied up with fleshly desires, having wings stuck together with the birdlime of evil desires to stop it flying to God, it says to itself, "What will there be in it for me, where I shall not eat, I shall not drink, where I shall not sleep with my wife? What sort of joy will I have of that?"

This joy of yours comes from sickness, not from good health. Certainly, this flesh of yours, in this time, is sometimes sick, sometimes in good health. Pay close attention please, so that I may say something to help you understand, an example of the reality that I cannot express. There are certain desires that sick people have; they have a fierce craving for water from a particular spring, or for a particular kind of fruit; and the craving is such that they imagine that if they were well again, they should enjoy these very desires of theirs. Health returns, the craving fades away. What they had a craving for now fills them with distaste, because it was the fever in them that craved it.

And what sort of health is this, to which the sick are restored as they get better? This health, by which we are called healthy, what is it anyway? But at least you can take this example from it. Because since there are many desires sick people have that a return to this health eliminates; just as this health eliminates these, so immortality eliminates all desires; because our true health is immortality. Call the apostle to mind, and see what it will be like: *This perishable thing must put on imperishability, and this mortal thing put on immortality (1 Cor 15:53)*. And *we shall be equal to the angels of God (Lk 20:36)*. Are they miserable because they don't have grand dinners? Aren't they all the more blessed for the very reason that they have no need of such things?

Or on the other hand, what rich man will ever be equal to the angels? Angels really are rich. What are riches called? Facilities. And angels have vast facilities, because they have vast capacities.¹⁷ When a rich man is being praised, you will

hear, "What a great one he is, he's a lord, he's rich, he's powerful. What a great thing to go where he likes; the transport's there, the money for expenses is there, the slaves are there, the services are there." These are all the things a rich man has; he goes where he likes, he experiences no toil or hardship. As for an angel, wherever he likes, that's where he will be. And he doesn't say "Harness the horses"; he doesn't say "Make up the beds"; which rich people say with such pride, and they are ready to swell up like turkey cocks, because they have people to whom they can say, "Harness the horses," and "Make up the beds." Unhappy people, these are words indicating weaknesses, not resources.

So we shall not be in need of anything; and that's why we shall be blessed. We shall be full, you see, but of our God; and all these things that we desire here as being so important, that's what he will be for us. Here you look for food as something very important; there God will be your food. Here you seek the embraces of the flesh; *For me, however, to cleave to God is good (Ps 73:28)*. Here you seek riches; how will you be lacking anything, when you have the one who made everything? And to give you complete assurance with the words of the apostle, this is what he said about that life: *That God might be all in all (1 Cor 15:28)*.

NOTES

1. There is unanimity among the scholars on this date. Perler is even more precise, dating the sermon to between 5-16 May of that year. The opening sentence makes it clear that the sermon was not preached in Hippo Regius itself. Perler argues (*Les Voyages de Saint Augustin*, pages 340-342) that it was preached a few days after Sermon 256, which begins in much the same way. From this we can infer that the two sermons were not preached in the same place to the same congregation. However, it is certain, as Perler shows, that the Council Augustine was attending opened on 1 May; also that Sermon 256 was preached on Sunday 5 May. So both must have been preached in Carthage; but evidently in different churches, of which there was no lack in such a huge metropolis.

2. And so, the inference is, we can take pleasure in hearing about what we already know.

3. *Latine*.

4. *Ad solatium viatici*. *Viaticum* is evidently being used in an unusual sense, or at least one not given in Lewis & Short. It usually means provisions for a journey. Here it can only mean the journey itself. Augustine had just ended a journey of ten days or so from Hippo Regius to Carthage. He will be using the imagery of the road, and of traveling a lot during this sermon.

5. See Lk 10:38-42.

6. See Ps 73:28.

7. Has he? Perhaps he is referring to *alleluia*, which he has mentioned as what will remain, and of course to the better part chosen by Mary. But he hasn't said what it is yet; won't in fact do so till the very end.

8. "These" sparrows; presumably some little birds fluttering around inside the church.

9. One of his favorite pairs, *spes* and *res*, hope and the reality hoped for.

10. No vulgarity for Augustine and his audience—or was it, perhaps, a little dig at excessive refinement? The only difficulty is, stomachs tend to rumble more when they are empty than when they are full.

11. See Mt 7:13; Lk 13:24.

12. Here, I imagine, a little miming in the pulpit: “extend us,” and he stretches his hands like drawing a bow, to indicate stretching into a long, thin line; “distend us,” and he stretches his arms sideways, to indicate stretching a bag or a bladder.

13. *Secundum intentionem*, his text’s overliteral mistranslation of the Greek *kata skopon*, to the mark or goal. It is not clear what he understood by the phrase, apart from its reinforcing in his mind the “extended” of the previous one.

14. He is probably wrong in the way he construes the sentence, but right in grasping Paul’s meaning.

15. See above, section 2.

16. The text reads *quia et in uno ipso fruemur*, because in the one thing we shall enjoy him. But the *et* marks the first part of a “both/and” sentence (hard to render in this case in English); and the second part continues, as we see, “and in each other we shall enjoy him.” So I conclude that in the first part he said—or intended to say—“in him we shall enjoy each other.” Furthermore, he has already made it clear that God is the one thing. So *ipso* must be in apposition to *in uno*, and cannot be taken separately as the object of *fruemur*. That is what I supply by emending to *quia et in uno ipso nobis invicem fruemur*.

17. What he says in Latin is that riches are called *facultates*, and angels have vast *facultates* because they have vast *facilitates*.

SERMON 255A

THE SUNDAY AFTER EASTER ON ALLELUIA

Date: 410¹

1. It is right for us to utter the praises of our creator as much as ever we can. As a matter of fact, dearest brothers and sisters, when we praise the Lord, we are conferring some benefit on ourselves, by extending ourselves out in love of him. We have been singing *alleluia*, you see. *Alleluia* is the *new song* (Ps 96:1; 98:1).²

The newly baptized exhorted to live good Christian lives

2. The new song is sung by the new creature. All the rest of us have been singing it; you too have been singing it, *infantes*, so recently made new by him;³ and we have been singing it with you, because we have been redeemed at the same price. Let me now admonish you as fraternal charity demands; not only you, but all those who are listening; admonish you as your brother and your father; as your brother, because one mother Church gave birth to us all; as your father because *it was I who begot you through the gospel* (1 Cor 4:15).

Live good lives, my most dearly beloved children, so that you may get good results⁴ from receiving such a great sacrament. Let vices be corrected, behavior well ordered, virtues cultivated. May each of you be attended through life by devotion, holiness, chastity, humility, sobriety; so that as you offer such fruits to God, he may delight in you, and you in him. May I too have joy from the fulfillment of your hope, when I see in you the fruits with which my hope is rewarded.

Love the Lord, because he loves you; pay frequent visits to this mother who bore you. Consider what this mother has conferred upon you, joining creatures to the creator, making slaves into children of God, making the devil's henchmen into Christ's brothers and sisters. You won't show yourselves ungrateful for these immense benefits received from her, if you show her the proper consideration of your presence. Nor can any of you hope to have God as a gracious Father, if you neglect the Church as your mother.

So this holy and spiritual mother daily prepares a spiritual meal for you, with

which to nourish not your bodies but your souls. She lavishes on you *bread from heaven* (Ps 105:40), she gives you *the cup of salvation* (Ps 116:13) to drink. She doesn't want any of her children to be spiritually starved. Take every care, for your own sakes, dearly beloved, not to forsake such a mother, so that you may get your fill *from the plenteousness of her house*, and she may give you to drink *from the torrent of her delights* (Ps 36:8), and commit you to God the Father as worthy children, to be devotedly reared by her and brought through, safe and sound and free, to eternal life.

NOTES

1. This is the date suggested by Poque; nobody else makes any suggestion about the year. But while she and Morin maintain it was preached on the Easter octave, the Sunday after Easter, Kunzelmann says more generally, during the Easter season. The address to the *infantes* in section 2 supports Poque and Morin. It was preached in Augustine's own church, the Basilica Leontiana in Hippo Regius.

2. These few lines are a fragment found in a different manuscript from the rest of the sermon.

3. By Christ, possibly the "new man" *par excellence*. I keep the Latin *infantes* for the newly baptized, as we no longer have a similar expression in common use.

4. *Bonas causas*; I am guessing at the meaning. It cannot possibly be "good causes." I am assuming that *causa* is being used in the diluted sense which it was to acquire in the Romance languages as *cosa* and *chose*.

SERMON 256

DURING EASTER WEEK ON ALLELUIA

Date: 418¹

The alleluia of the anxious and worrying

1. It is evidently the pleasure of the Lord our God that, finding myself present here in the flesh, I should also have been singing *alleluia* with your graces. In English² that means "Praise the Lord." So let us praise the Lord, brothers and sisters, with our lives and our tongues, with hearts and mouths, with our voices and our behavior. That, surely, is how God wants *alleluia* to be sung to him, so that there is no discord in the singer. So first of all let there be harmony in ourselves between tongues and lives, between mouths and consciences. Let our voices, I repeat, be in harmony with our behavior, or else it may happen that good voices are witnesses against bad behavior.

Oh blissful *alleluia* in heaven, where the angels are God's temple! There, I mean, supreme harmony reigns among those who are praising, because there is no anxiety about their exultant singing. That's because there is no *law in the members fighting against the law of the mind* (Rom 7:23) there; no aggressive cupidity there, to endanger the victory of charity. So here let us sing *alleluia* while still anxious and worrying, so that there we may be able to sing it one day without any worry or care.

Why anxious and worrying here? Don't you want me to be anxious, when I read, *Is not human life on earth a trial and temptation* (Jb 7:1)? Don't you want me to worry, when I'm still being told, *Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation* (Mk 14:38)? Don't you want me to worry when temptation is so plentiful that the Prayer itself prescribes worry, when we say, *Forgive us our debts, as we too forgive our debtors*? Every day we're petitioners, every day debtors. Do you want me to throw care to the winds, when every day I'm requesting pardon for sins, assistance against dangers? After all, when I've said, because of past sins, *Forgive us our debts as we too forgive our debtors*, I immediately go on to add, because of future dangers, *Do not bring us into temptation*. And how can the people be in a good way, when they cry out with me,³ *Deliver us from evil* (Mt 6:12-14)?

And yet, brothers and sisters, in this time that is still evil, let us sing *alleluia* to the good God, who does deliver us from evil. Why look all round yourself for what he is to deliver you from, when he delivers you from evil? Don't go a long way away, don't strain your mind's eye gazing all round. Come back to yourself, take a look at yourself. You, there, are still evil. So when God delivers you from yourself, that's when he delivers you from evil. Listen to the apostle, and understand there what evil you need to be delivered from. *I take delight*, he says, *in the law of God according to the inner self; but I see another law in my members fighting back against the law of my mind, and taking me prisoner under the law of sin, which is—where? Taking me prisoner*, he says, *under the law of sin, which is in my members* (Rom 7:22-23).

“Oh, I thought it had taken you prisoner under goodness knows what unheard of barbarians; I thought it had taken you prisoner under goodness knows what foreign nations, under goodness knows what human masters.”

Which is, he says, *in my members*. So cry out with him, *Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me? Who will deliver me from what? Tell us what from*. One says from the press gang,⁴ another from prison, another from captivity among the barbarians, another from fever and illness; you tell us, apostle, not from somewhere we might be sent to, or led to; but from something we carry about with us, something we ourselves are: *from the body of this death* (Rom 7:24). From the body of this death? *From the body*, he says, *of this death*.

How we need to be delivered from ourselves

2. Another person will say, “The body of this death doesn't belong to me; it's my prison for a time, my chain for a time. I am in the body of death, I am not the body of death.”⁵

You're arguing, that's why you are not being delivered.

“I, after all,” he says, “am spirit, I am not flesh, but I am in flesh; when I have been delivered from the flesh, what will I have to do with the flesh from then on?”

Do you want me, brothers and sisters, to reply to this line of reasoning, or the apostle? If I reply, it's possible the seriousness of the word may be treated lightly because of the worthlessness of the minister. I would rather keep quiet. Listen with me, my friend,⁶ to the teacher of the nations, listen with me to the *chosen vessel* (Acts 9:15), to deprive you of all grounds for argument or disagreement. Listen, but first say what you said earlier on. This, precisely, is what you said:

“I am not flesh, I'm spirit. I sigh and groan in my prison. When this chain, and this workhouse crumbles, I depart a free man. Earth is given back to earth, the spirit is welcomed in heaven.⁷ I go; I leave behind what I am not.”

So this is what you were saying?

“Yes,” he says.

I'm not the one to answer you. Answer, apostle, answer please. You preached, in order to be heard; you wrote, in order to be read. It was all done so that you might be believed. Speak.

Who will deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 7:24-25).

What will it deliver you from?

From the body of this death.

But aren't you yourself the body of this death?

He answers, *Therefore I myself serve the law of God with the mind, but with the flesh the law of sin (Rom 7:25).*

But that *I myself*; how can it be you yourself through different things?

With the mind, he says, because I love; *with the flesh*, because I covet. I'm the winner, indeed, if I don't consent; but still wrestling, with the opponent engaging me.

And how will it be, my dear apostle, when you have been delivered from this flesh; will you no longer be anything but spirit?

The apostle replies, death now imminent, the debt which no one can get out of: "I do not put off the flesh for ever, but I put it aside for a time."

So you are going to come back to the body of this death? But why? Let's listen rather to his own words. How can you return to the body, from which you cried out with such religious words that you need to be delivered?

He answers: "I return indeed to the body, but no longer of this death. Not because it will be another body, but because *this perishable thing must put on imperishability, and this mortal thing put on immortality.*"

My dear brothers and sisters, when the apostle said *this perishable thing, this mortal thing*, he was after a fashion touching his own flesh with the words.⁸ So it's not another one. "I do not," he says, "put off this earthy body, and receive a brazen body, or an ethereal body. I receive the same one, but not any longer of this death. Because *this*, not another, but *this perishable thing must put on imperishability, and this*, not another, but *this mortal thing put on immortality. Then will come about the word that is written: Death has been swallowed up in victory. Let alleluia be sung. Then will come about the word that is written, a word no longer of people embattled, but of people triumphant: Death has been swallowed up in victory. Let alleluia be sung. Where, death, is your sting? Let alleluia be sung. Now the sting of death is sin (1 Cor 15:53-56). But you will look for its place, and you will not find it (Ps 37:10).*

For the present, sing and keep on walking

3. But even here, among the dangers, among the trials and temptations of this life, both by others and by us let *alleluia* be sung.⁹ *God is faithful*, he says, *who will not permit you to be tempted beyond what you are able to endure*. So here too let us sing *alleluia*. We human beings are still in the dock, but God is faithful. He didn't say, "He will not permit you to be tempted," but *will not permit you to be tempted beyond what you are able to endure; but with the temptation he will also make a way out, so that you may be able to endure it (1 Cor 10:13)*. You have entered into temptation; but God will also make a way out, so that you do not perish in the temptation; so that like a potter's jar, you may be shaped

by the preaching, cooked by the tribulation. But when you enter the temptation, bear in mind the way out; because God is faithful, *God will watch over your going in and your coming out* (Ps 121:8).

Furthermore, when this body has become immortal and imperishable, when all temptation has been done away with; because *the body is dead*—why is it dead? *Because of sin. But the spirit is life*—they’re the apostle’s words; why? *Because of justice*. So do we leave the body dead? No, but listen: *But if the Spirit of him who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life also to your mortal bodies*. Now, you see, it’s an embodiment of soul, then it will be an embodiment of spirit.¹⁰ *The first man, you see, became a living soul, the last man a life-giving spirit* (1 Cor 15:45). That’s why *he will give life also to your mortal bodies, because of his Spirit dwelling in you* (Rom 8:10-11). Oh, what a happy *alleluia* there, how carefree, how safe from all opposition, where nobody will be an enemy, no one cease to be a friend!

God praised there, and God praised here; here, though, by the anxious, there by the carefree; here by those who are going to die, there by those who are going to live for ever; here in hope, there in hope realized; here on the way, there at home. So now, my dear brothers and sisters, let us sing, not to delight our leisure, but to ease our toil. In the way travelers are in the habit of singing; sing, but keep on walking. Ease your toil by singing, don’t fall in love with laziness. Sing, and keep on walking. What’s “keep on walking”? Make some progress, make progress in goodness. There are some people, you see, according to the apostle, who progress from bad to worse.¹¹ You, if you’re making progress, are walking; but make progress in goodness, progress in the right faith, progress in good habits and behavior. Sing and keep on walking. Don’t stray off the road, don’t go back, don’t stay where you are.

Turning to the Lord etc.

And after the sermon

Tomorrow is the feast of the holy martyrs Marianus and James; but because I’m still rather busy on account of this big assembly of the holy council, I will, with the Lord’s help, give the sermon I owe you for their birthday¹² in two days’ time.

NOTES

1. See Sermon 255, note 1, for dating this sermon to Sunday, 5 May. One may infer from the tailpiece that it was preached at the shrine of the martyrs Marianus and James, while Sermon 255 would be preached in the next day or two in another church.

2. *Latine*.

3. This indicates that in the African, as in the pre-Vatican Roman Mass the celebrant chanted the *Pater noster* alone, while the people only joined in at the end with the final petition, *sed libera nos a malo*.

4. This is pure guesswork on my part. The Latin word is *de optione*, and it is clearly being used in a sense not given by Lewis & Short. Could it possibly mean something like a bank taking up its option; foreclosing on a mortgage? When I say "press-gang," I am thinking of a very crude kind of conscription where the victims are forcibly "co-opted" into the army or navy.

5. The Platonic view of the human self, which Augustine's language often reflects. But his Christian convictions always prevail over it.

6. The person arguing like a Platonist. The Latin doesn't include "my friend"; but the verb is in the singular, so he is no longer addressing the brothers and sisters.

7. See, by way of contrast, Eccl 3:20-21.

8. Reading *carnem suam voce tangebatur*, instead of *carnem sua voce tangebatur*, touching the flesh with his words.

9. Whom can he have had in mind by the "others"? The only "others" who would be singing *alleluia* would be heretics. Was this a tiny ecumenical gesture? It is in the highest degree unlikely.

10. See 1 Cor 15:44.

11. See 2 Tm 3:13.

12. Their birthday into eternal life, the day of their martyrdom.

SERMON 257

PREACHED ON THE OCTAVE DAY OF EASTER
AT THE SHRINE OF THE TWENTY MARTYRS

Date: 412¹

1. *Alleluia* in the Hebrew language is, in English, “praise the Lord.” So let us praise the Lord our God, not only with our voices but also with our hearts, because when you praise with the heart, you are praising with the voice of the inner self. The voice addressed to people is a sound; the voice addressed to God is the warmth of love.

If we wish to be truthful, let us take refuge in the Lord

2. Somebody said *in his ecstasy*, as you have read, as you have heard, *Every man a liar* (Ps 116:11). And so we have the man who wouldn’t believe, unless he touched the Lord’s body.² The truth his fellow disciples were telling struck him as being a lie. And it wasn’t enough for him to hear the truth; he even wanted to touch it. Well, the Lord granted him this in the events that follow in the gospel, which are to be recited in due course.³

But any of you who hear *Every man a liar*, shouldn’t settle back into the habit of lying and refuse to get out of it, rationalizing their attitude with a futile reason like this, like a man who’s a liar saying to himself, “When will I ever not be a man? But if as long as I’m a man here, I’m going to be a liar, it’s better that I should be a liar than that scripture should lie, when it says *Every man a liar*. I mean, if I am truthful, scripture will be the liar; but if scripture cannot be the liar, then *I* will be a liar.”

Babbling like that to yourself, it will seem to you that you are safe and sound, as in the harbor of Falsehood, where in fact you’re shipwrecked. How right you were to want to find shelter, so to say, in this haven! Now hear about the rock you are running onto: *You will destroy all who speak lies* (Ps 5:6).

“So he’s going to destroy everyone, because *Every man a liar*?”

But what have we been told? What advice have we been given? That on our own we are liars. If we want to be truthful, though, we must turn to the Lord for refuge. From what is his we can be truthful, from what is our own, only liars.

The point illustrated from the example of Peter

3. Get this point from one brief and weighty example; brief because it is soon given, weighty because it deserves to be wisely weighed up. Peter, all by himself, can illustrate what I want to say. When he said to the Lord Christ, *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*, what was the answer he got? *Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, because it was not flesh and blood that revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven* (Mt 16:16-17). What you have said is true, but it doesn't come from you. Where from, then? *My Father who is in heaven has revealed it*. That's why you are blessed, because it comes from God; only if it comes from yourself are you wretched.

After this, when the Lord said to him *Blessed are you, because it was not flesh and blood that revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven*; after these words the Lord Christ started to foretell his passion and death. Then Peter said straightaway, *Far be it from you, Lord!* (Mt 16:21-22). *Every man a liar*. There you are; a moment before Peter is truthful; here you are, now Peter's a liar. But what made Peter truthful? *It was not flesh and blood that revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven*. What made Peter a liar? *Get behind me, Satan; for you have no idea of the things of God, but only of the things of man* (Mt 16:23). *Every man a liar*.

So we are told *Every man a liar*, in order that we should flee from ourselves and run to God, who alone is truthful.

NOTES

1. Actually, Kunzelmann suggests 410-412, Fischer and Poque 412-413. I more or less take the average. The precision of the title as regards the place is a conclusion of the scholars. The manuscript title, apparently rather worm-eaten, so the Maurists inform us, simply says "Discourse on the Sunday, which he delivered at the shrine of the Saints"; it was, in any case, a shrine in Hippo Regius. According to the same manuscript, it was preached the day after Sermon 253.

2. The apostle Thomas, Jn 20:25.

3. *Postea*. Later in the day, it would seem, at another service in the Basilica of Peace, Augustine's cathedral church, at which Sermon 258 was preached. See Sermon 258, note 1.

SERMON 258

ANOTHER SERMON WHICH HE DELIVERED ON THE SAME DAY AT THE MAJOR BASILICA

Date: 412¹

Christ the cornerstone is also the day which the Lord has made

1. We have just been singing to God, *This is the day which the Lord has made* (Ps 118:24). Let us talk about it, seeing that the Lord has presented us with it. This obviously prophetic scripture wanted us to understand something, some day not of the common sort, not visible to eyes of flesh; not the kind of day that has a sunrise and sunset, but a day which could know a dawn but never know a setting.² Let's see what the same psalm had said just before: *The stone which the builders rejected, this has been made into the head of the corner. It was made by the Lord, this is wonderful in our eyes* (Ps 118:22-23). And it continues, *This is the day which the Lord has made*. Let us take the cornerstone as introducing us to this day.

Who is the cornerstone which the builders rejected, if not the Lord Christ, whom the learned leaders of the Jews rejected? The Jews learned in the law, you see, rejected him when they said, *This man who breaks the sabbath is not from God* (Jn 9:16). Now you've said it: *This man who breaks the sabbath is not from God*. So, *the stone which the builders rejected, this has been made into the head of the corner*. How into the head of the corner? Why is Christ called the cornerstone? Because every corner makes peace between two walls coming from different directions.

The apostles came from the people of the Jews, from there too came those crowds which went ahead and followed behind his donkey, saying what we find in this very psalm: *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord* (Ps 118:26; Mk 11:9); from there came the Churches of which the apostle Paul says, *I was unknown in person to the Churches of Judea which are in Christ; but they only heard that that man who once persecuted us now preaches the good news of the faith which he once ravaged; and in me they glorified God* (Gal 1:22-24). Jews, but adherents of Christ like the apostles, coming and trusting Christ, and making one wall.

There remained the other wall, the Church coming from the nations. The two

found each other—peace in Christ, unity in Christ, who *made the two one* (Eph 2:14). There you have *the day which the Lord has made*. Understand the whole day as being head and body, the head Christ, the body the Church. That is *the day which the Lord has made*.

The newly baptized have been made into the day which the Lord has made

2. Call to mind the original foundation of the world: *There was darkness over the deep, and the Spirit of God was being wafted over the water. And God said, Let light be made, and light was made. And God divided the light from the darkness, and the light he called day, while the darkness he called night* (Gn 1:1-5). Think of the darkness of these ones here,³ before they came to the forgiveness of sins. So there was darkness over the deep, before those sins had been forgiven. But the Spirit of God was being wafted over the waters; these ones here went down into the water, the Spirit of God was borne over the waters, the darkness of their sins was driven away: *this is the day which the Lord has made*.

It is to this day that the apostle says, *You were once upon a time darkness, but now light in the Lord* (Eph 5:8). He didn't say, did he, "You were darkness in the Lord"? *Darkness in yourselves, light in the Lord*. But *God called the light day*, because it is by his grace that what is made is made.⁴ They, left to themselves, were able to be darkness, they could not have become light unless God had made them so; because *this is the day which the Lord has made*, which the Lord has, not the day itself.

Doubting Thomas made by the Lord into this day which the Lord has made

3. Wasn't Thomas a man, one of the disciples, just a man in the crowd? His fellow disciples said to him, *We have seen the Lord. And he himself said, Unless I touch, unless I put my finger in his side, I will not believe* (Jn 20:25) The evangelists are telling you this, and you don't believe? The world believed them,⁵ and the disciple didn't. About them it says, *Their sound has gone forth to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world* (Ps 19:4). Their words go forth, they reach the ends of the earth, the whole world believes, they all tell this one man—and he doesn't believe.

He wasn't yet the day which the Lord had made, there was still darkness in the deep; in the depths of the human heart, that's where the darkness was. Let him come, let the head of this day come, and say patiently, mildly, not angrily, because he's the doctor, "Come," he says, "come, touch this and believe. You said, *Unless I touch, unless I put my finger in, I will not believe*. Come, touch, *put in your finger, and do not be unbelieving, but trusting* (Jn 20:27). Come, put in your finger. I was aware of your wounds; I preserved my scars specially for you."

But certainly, by putting in his hand he completed his faith. What, after all, is the complete fullness of faith? It's that we should neither believe that Christ

is only a man, nor believe that Christ is only God, but both man and God. That's the fullness of faith, because *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us* (Jn 1:14). So this disciple was offered the scars and the limbs of his Savior to touch, and when he touched them, he exclaimed *My Lord and my God* (Jn 29:28). He touched the man, he recognized God; he touched flesh, he directed his gaze to the Word, because *the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*. This Word let his flesh be hung on a tree; this Word let nails be hammered into his flesh; this Word let his flesh be transfixed with a spear; this Word let his flesh be laid in a tomb; this Word raised up his flesh, offered it to the gaze of the disciples to look at, presented it to their hands to be touched. They touch, they exclaim *My Lord and my God*.⁶ *This is the day which the Lord has made* (Ps 110:24).

NOTES

1. Since in the manuscript from which the title is taken this sermon follows immediately on sermon 257, it is telling us that sermon 258 was preached on the same day as sermon 257. But Kunzelmann and Poque give different dates for the two sermons, 410-412 for this one instead of 412-413 as for that; and others, following a suggestion of the Maurists, say this one was preached *ad Basilicam Majorum* a basilica in Carthage which I have elsewhere translated as the Basilica of the Ancestors, instead of *ad Basilicam Majorem*, which is what the manuscript has. I see no reason to doubt this reading. The Major Basilica in Hippo Regius is named more precisely by several scholars as the Basilica of Peace.

2. Here he seems to be quoting from the *Exultet*, the hymn in praise of the paschal candle.

3. The newly baptized, the *infantes*.

4. See 1 Cor 15:10.

5. Matthew and John were among the apostles who told Thomas they had seen the Lord.

6. Augustine is here conflating the story of Thomas refusing to believe and being convinced, in John 20, with that of all the disciples failing to believe and being convinced, in Luke 24:36-43.

SERMON 259

ON THE SUNDAY OF THE OCTAVE DAY OF EASTER

Date: 394¹

Blessed are those who do not see, yet believe

1. This day today is for us a great sacrament of everlasting felicity.² You see, the life which this day stands for is not going to pass away as this day itself is going to. And so, brothers and sisters, I exhort and implore you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ through whom our sins have been forgiven, who chose that his blood should be our price, who saw fit to make us, unfit though we are even to be called his slaves, into his brothers; I implore you to direct all your thoughts—that being why you are Christians, why you carry his name on your foreheads³—to nothing but that life which we are going to have with the angels; where there will be perpetual quiet, everlasting happiness, unfailing bliss, no disturbance, no sadness, no death.

Only those who experience it can know what this life is; and only those who believe it will be able to experience it. You see, if you require me to show you clearly what God is promising you, I cannot do it. But you heard how the gospel of John ended: *Blessed are those who do not see, and yet believe* (Jn 20:29). You want to see, and so do I. Let us believe together, and we shall see together. Don't let us be insensitive to the word of God. After all, brothers and sisters, would it be fitting for Christ to descend from heaven now and show us his scars? The reason he was prepared to show them to that unbelieving man,⁴ was to reprove the doubters and to instruct those who were going to believe.

*The meaning of the eighth day, in relation to the seventh,
and the other days of the week of creation*

2. So this eighth, octave, day represents the new life at the end of the age; the seventh day, the rest and quiet the saints will have on this earth.⁵ The Lord, you see, will reign on earth with his saints, as the scriptures say, and he will have his Church here, set apart and purified from all contagious wickedness, with no wicked person coming in, which is signified by those one hundred and fifty-three fish, with which I have already dealt some time ago, if I remember

rightly.⁶ For the Church will first be manifested here⁷ in great glory and dignity and justice. In it nobody will take any pleasure in deceiving or lying, or lurking as a wolf under the fleece of a sheep. *For the Lord will come, as it is written, and light up the hidden things of darkness and reveal the thoughts of hearts; and then shall each one have praise from God* (1 Cor 4:5).

So there won't be any wicked people in it; they will already have been separated out, you see. Then the whole multitude of the saints will show up like a purified heap of grain, so to say, on the threshing floor, and in this way it will be deposited in the heavenly granary.⁸ Just as wheat is purged in the same place as it is first threshed; and the place where the wheat has endured the threshing, in order to be cleansed of the chaff, is then adorned with the splendor of a heap of pure grain. We see this, don't we, on the threshing floor after the winnowing, a pile of chaff on one side, a pile of grain on the other? Now what the chaff is destined for we know very well; and also how happy the grain makes the farmers.

So just as the grain first appears on the threshing floor separated from the chaff, and then, once the inspection of that massive pile has done every one's heart good after all that labor—a pile that was hidden in the chaff and couldn't be seen while it was being threshed—it is put in the granary and kept under lock and key; so too in this age you can see how this floor is being threshed, but the chaff is so mixed up with the grain that it is difficult to tell them apart, because it hasn't yet been winnowed. So then, after the winnowing of the day of judgment, the vast column of the saints will become apparent, resplendent in worth and dignity, made mighty by their merits, and displaying at their head the mercy of their liberator. And that will be the seventh day.⁹ It is as if the first day could be the period in the whole course of time from Adam to Noah, the second from Noah up to Abraham, and then as Matthew's gospel has already divided it;¹⁰ the third from Abraham up to David, the fourth from David to the exile in Babylonia, the fifth from the exile to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So from the coming of the Lord the sixth day is passing; the sixth day is the one we are in. And that's why, just as man was formed in Genesis on the sixth day *in the image of God* (Gn 1:27), so too in this age, as in the sixth day of the whole course of time, we are made new in baptism in order to receive the image of our maker. But when this sixth day has passed, there will come the day of rest after that winnowing, and God's saints and just ones will enjoy their sabbath. But after the seventh day, when the full worth of the harvest becomes apparent on the threshing floor, that is the splendor and merits of the saints, we shall go into that life and into that rest of which it is said, *that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it occurred to the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love him* (1 Cor 2:9).

Then we return, as it were, to the starting point. You see, just as when these seven days have been spent, the eighth is the same as the first;¹¹ in the same way, after the ages of the fleeting course of time have run and come to their end, we shall return to that immortality and blessedness from which man fell. And that's why this octave rounds off the sacraments of the *infantes*.¹² In the same sort of

way,¹³ the number seven multiplied by seven makes forty-nine; and when one is added, it's as though you return to the starting point and you get fifty; the number which is mystically celebrated by us up to Pentecost. This also emerges by a different calculation, according to the division by which the tenner is added as wages to the number forty.¹⁴ Both calculations, of course, come back to the number fifty. Multiply this by three because of the mystery of the Trinity, and it makes a hundred and fifty; add three itself, as a kind of testimony and pointer to trebling and Trinity—and we can perceive the Church in those one hundred and fifty-three fish.

Show mercy, in order to receive mercy

3. But meanwhile, here and now, until we get to that place of rest, during this time in which we are toiling away, and are in the night as long as we cannot see what we are hoping for, and are making our journey through the desert until we get to the heavenly Jerusalem,¹⁵ as it were to the promised land *flowing with milk and honey* (Ex 3:8); so now, while trials and temptations never cease, let us do good. There is always a medicine available, to be applied to what are practically daily wounds; the medicine consists of the good works of mercy. I mean, if you want to obtain God's mercy, be merciful yourself. If you refuse to show humanity to a human being, though human yourself, God will refuse you divinity; that is to say, the imperishable immortality by which he makes us gods.

After all, God doesn't need anything from you; you, though, need everything from God. He isn't looking for anything from you in order to be blessed, while you, unless you get it from him, can never be blessed. What do you get from him? I don't know if you would have the nerve to complain if you received from him, the creator of everything, one of the most excellent things he has created. But it's not one of the things he's created, it's his very self that he gives you to enjoy, himself the creator of everything. What, after all, of the things that have been made by him, could be better or more beautiful than the one who made it? And in what way will he give himself to you? As something you deserve, perhaps? If you're looking for what you deserve, take a look at your sins. Listen to the sentence God passed on the man who transgressed: *Earth you are, and into the earth you shall go* (Gn 3:19), because the threat had been made, when the commandment was given: *the day you touch, you shall die the death* (Gn 2:17).¹⁶ If you're looking for what sins deserve, what else do you come across but punishment? So forget about your merits, your deserts, or they may fill your heart with fear. Or rather, don't forget, or you may repel mercy by your pride.

Let us commend ourselves to God, brothers and sisters, by works of mercy. *Confess to the Lord, since he is good, since his mercy is for ever* (Ps 118:1.29). Confess, since there is mercy with God, and he wants to forgive the sins of those who confess. But offer him a sacrifice. Show pity to a man, man, and God will show pity to you. You a man, the other a man, two pitiful creatures. God, though, is not pitiful but full of pity. So if you, a pitiful creature, don't have pity on a pitiful creature, how can you demand pity from the one who will never be pitiable?

Notice what I'm saying, brothers and sisters. Anyone who is cruel and unfeeling toward someone who has been shipwrecked, for example, will go on being cruel and unfeeling until he's shipwrecked himself. If that has happened to him, though, he is reminded, when he sees a shipwrecked sailor,¹⁷ of his own past life, and he is moved by a misfortune similar to what he experienced himself some time or other. And while he couldn't be induced to show pity by their companionship in humanity, he is induced to do so by their partnership in calamity. People will be very prompt to show kindness to a slave, if they have ever been slaves themselves. Anyone who has been a wage earner will be very prompt to feel sorry for a wage earner cheated of his wages. A person bitterly grieving for his child will receive ready sympathy from anyone who has once had a similar cause for grief. So a common experience of misery tends to soften the hardest of human hearts.¹⁸

So then if you, who either have been in a pitiful condition, or are afraid you may be so in the future—I mean, as long as you're living here, you must both fear what you have not been, and remember what you have been, and reflect on what you are; so then will you, with your memory of past misfortunes, and your fear of future ones, and your being afflicted with present ones, both fail to show pity to a person struck by disaster and needing your help, and still expect to be pitied yourself by the one whom misfortune can never touch? Will you both fail to give of all that you have received from God, and still want God to give you of what he has not received from you?

Two sorts of mercy in the Church, giving and forgiving

4. Kindness, my brothers and sisters, all of you who are going to go home, and from now on we shall scarcely ever see each other, except on occasional feast days—kindness is what you must practice, because sins abound. There is no other relief,¹⁹ no other road by which we can reach God, by which we can be made whole, be reconciled to him, whom we have so dangerously offended. We are going to come into his presence; may our works speak up for us there—and so speak up that they outweigh our offenses. You see, it's the side that's heavier that will gain the day, either for punishment if our sins deserve it, or for relief and rest if our good works do.

Now mercy in the Church²⁰ is of two sorts; one with the price tag that²¹ nobody has to spend any money, or even do any hard work; the other which requires of us the performance of some work or the spending of some money. The one which requires no expense or labor from us is a matter purely of your will, that you should forgive the person who has sinned against you. The fund from which you pay out this kind of alms is in your heart; it's there that you display what you are before God. You are not being told, "Produce your purse, open your safe, unseal your granary"; nor are you being told this sort of thing: "Come, walk, run, hurry, plead, speak, visit, do something difficult." Standing still in one place, you have thrown out of your bosom what²² you have against your brother; you have done a work of mercy at no cost, without any trouble, solely out of goodness, solely with the thought of being merciful.

I mean, if I were to say, "Distribute your goods to the poor," I would strike you as being harsh. Surely now, at least, I am being mild and easy with you when I say, "Spend in a way that costs you nothing; forgive so that you may be forgiven." However, I must also say this: "Give and things will be given to you." The Lord joined these two in a commandment, and stated these two kinds of mercy: *Forgive, and you will be forgiven*, the mercy of granting pardon; *give, and things will be given to you* (Lk 6:37-38), the mercy of paying out money.

See if God doesn't give us much more. You pardon a human being for an injury done by a human being to you, a human being; God pardons you for an offense committed by you, a human being, against God. I mean, is it the same thing to injure a human being as to offend God? So he has given you more, because you have forgiven something by which a human being was injured, while he has forgiven something by which God was offended. Consider the other kind of mercy, that of giving things away. You give bread, he gives salvation. You give a thirsty man a cup of some liquid or other, he gives you a cup of his wisdom. Are these things even comparable, what you give and what you receive?

The necessity of being both humble and friendly in giving

5. There's this too that I must advise your holinesses about: you should know that you perform a double work of mercy if you give something to the poor in such a way that you give it yourself. What's called for, you see, is not only the kindness of lavishing assistance, but also the humility of lending a helping hand.²³ I don't know how it is, my brothers and sisters, but the spirit of the person who actually hands something to a poor man experiences a kind of sympathy with common humanity and infirmity, when the hand of the one who has is actually placed in the hand of the one who is in need. Although the one is giving, the other receiving, the one being attended to and the one attending are being joined in a real relationship. You see, it isn't calamity that really unites us but humanity.

Your wealth will be yours,²⁴ and your children's, if the Lord so pleases. But there is no mention of this earthly wealth, which is subject, as you can see, to so many hazards. The treasure lies quietly at home; it doesn't allow its owner a moment's quiet. There's the robber to be feared, the burglar to be feared, the unfaithful servant to be feared, the evil and powerful neighbor to be feared. The greater the amount held, the greater the fear felt. But if you spend it for God on the poor, you don't lose it, and you stop having to worry, because God himself is keeping it for you in heaven, as he also gives you all you need on earth. Or perhaps you're afraid Christ may lose what you have entrusted to him? Doesn't anyone choose from his household a faithful steward to entrust his money to? But even if this man has it in his power not to make off with it, he doesn't have it in his power not to lose it.²⁵ What could be more comprehensive than the credit of Christ? What more divine than his omnipotence? He cannot make off with any of what is yours, because he himself gave it to you, in the hope that you

would give it to him;²⁶ nor can he lose any of it, because being almighty he keeps hold of everything that is.

You fill stomachs when you provide *agapes*.²⁷ Because we are seen to be serving at them, it is our goods that are being given, and by us that they are being given; and yet only things are being given which God has given to us.²⁸ It's good, brothers and sisters, to make the distribution with your own hands; it's very pleasing to God.²⁹ He himself receives it, and he will give it back to you, because he gave you what you could give even before he owed you anything.³⁰ The office of serving ought to be joined to the office of contributing. When you are permitted to earn two fees, why forgo one?

But those of you who are not in a position to give to all and sundry, should give what they can to the poor, and cheerfully. *For the Lord loves a cheerful giver* (2 Cor 9:7). The kingdom of heaven has been put up for sale, to be bought for any and every price. There's no room for anyone who only has two pence³¹ to say he is in no position to buy it. It's for that amount that the widow in the gospel bought it.³²

Rendering an account to God of your whole life

6. The holidays are over, now the days are coming for business arrangements, debt collection, litigation. Take care how you live in these days, my brothers and sisters. From the leisure of these past days you ought to have been acquiring some gentleness, not planning quarrels. There are people, you see, who were only using their leisure during these days to think up evil schemes, which they can put into effect when these days are over. I beg you to live in a way that shows you realize you will be rendering an account to God of your whole life, not just of this fortnight.³³

Then there are the problems of scripture which I put to you yesterday and didn't solve owing to lack of time. I confess I am here in your debt. But certainly, since the days that begin tomorrow permit the exaction of money owed, according to the public and civil law, you must exact this from me according to the Christian law. Now, you see, everyone is coming to Church, thanks to the solemnity. After these days, let love of the law bring you to demand from me what I have promised. After all, it's the real giver who is giving it to you through me; he of course is the one who gives to us all. I am certainly aware of the apostle saying, *Pay to all what is due to all; taxes to whom taxes, tolls to whom tolls, respect to whom respect; owe nobody anything, except to love one another* (Rom 13:7-8). Only love always has to be paid; nobody at all is quit of that sort of debt. You see, what I owe you, brothers and sisters, I am going to pay in the name of the Lord. I declare to you, however, that I am not paying it to those who are slack at their duties, but to those who are exacting, demanding, insistent.

NOTES

1. So Fischer and Kunzelmann, thus treating it as a sermon preached while he was still a priest, before he was ordained bishop in 396. Poque puts it after that event in 400. Its length, given the occasion, when everyone was rather exhausted, and when as bishop he usually preached very short sermons, inclines me to favor the earlier date. The place, as for Sermon 258, was the Basilica of Peace in Hippo Regius.

2. It represents everlasting felicity; truer, one would have thought, of Easter day itself rather than of the following Sunday. But as we have seen constantly in the previous sermons, Augustine applies this idea to the whole 50 days of the Easter season; and perhaps he justifies his preference here at the beginning of section 2.

3. Where they made the sign of the cross.

4. See Jn 20:27.

5. Augustine in this section seems to be teetering on the brink of a kind of millenarianism, an erroneous opinion that took the reign of the saints for 1,000 years, Rv 20:4, very literally. In his *Revisions* he never got as far as revising his sermons. But in fact he refers apologetically to this particular opinion in *The City of God* XX, 7, 1, where he says about it, "that it would be tolerable if those who held it believed that the saints would enjoy certain spiritual delights on that sabbath (the 1,000 years) through the presence of the Lord. For I too once shared this opinion." In a footnote to that text, the Maurists refer to this Sermon 259. Then he goes on to state his mature view about the 1,000 years' reign as representing the present time of the Church between Christ's first coming and his second, XX, 9.

6. See, for example, Sermon 252, 8, where he hasn't yet developed the key of 17 to the riddle of 153. Not that that sermon necessarily preceded this one. The one he refers to here could well have been lost. By "some time ago," *aliquando*, he probably means a day or two previously, and he is having a little joke. But he could be referring to what he had said the previous year.

7. On earth, before the final, eternal kingdom in the new heaven and the new earth.

8. I think that will be on the "eighth day," that is in the final kingdom, after the earthly reign of 1,000 years.

9. With the saints not yet put in the granary of the eighth day. In his mature view he puts the 1,000 years reign of the saints before the winnowing of the last judgment, on the sixth day—that is, the present age. It is happening here and now in a mysterious way. And so he merges the seventh day with the eighth, as being two representations of the eternity of the kingdom after the resurrection of the dead.

10. See Mt 1:17.

11. The eighth day of a seven-day week is the first of the following week. Sunday, the day of the resurrection, is indeed the first day of the ordinary, Mosaic week; but it is the eighth, endless, timeless day of the great Christ week.

12. The newborn, newly baptized. In the pre-Vatican Roman Missal the Introit for the Octave of Easter was taken from 1 Pt 2:2: *Like newborn infants, crave the rational, unadulterated milk.*

13. Of adding 1 to 7, which has just produced 8.

14. See Mt 20:1-16, the parable of the workers in the vineyard, in which each is given a *denarius*, a "tenner," as the day's wages. I have here, from "according to," rather freely translated his Latin, in which I think he was being rather careless. It runs, *secundum illam divisionem quadragiesimi numeri, cui accedit tanquam merces denarius*: according to that division of the number forty. . . . But he isn't dividing the number forty; he is making it part of a division of the number fifty.

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

16. He is mixing up Gn 3:3, Eve's reply to the serpent, with 2:17, God's command to Adam.

17. In fact, though, he probably has in mind merchants whose trade goods are lost at sea, as in *The Merchant of Venice*, rather than shipwrecked sailors.

18. Surely the opposite conclusion can be drawn—and would be, if the rhetorical occasion demanded: the attitude of "I have had to suffer like that; so you can suffer like that too"; or even "so I'll see that you suffer like that too."

19. *Requies*, literally, rest. It is an odd parallel for *via*, road, in the next phrase, because *requies* is usually contrasted with *via*, as the terminus with the way leading to it.

20. Why in the Church? Because he is talking about a specifically, one might almost say an officially, Christian value.

21. *Eo titulo quo*.

22. Emending *duo tenes* to *quod tenes*. *Duo* looks like a scribal error; it comes immediately after the word *tuo*.

23. Here Augustine is evidently addressing the more well-to-do among the neophytes, the Lady Bountifuls and their husbands, who might be inclined to think that it was enough to get out the checkbook, and leave to their subordinates, secretaries, and stewards, the job of “serving tables,” Acts 6:2.

24. Here, for the rest of this paragraph, he goes off on an abrupt tangent that has no bearing on the point he has started to make. The paragraph ends in a series of incoherences that make it difficult to see quite where it does end, and where he returns to this point. All in all, I suspect some kind of upheaval in the text, some intrusion from another sermon on this same general theme. How that could happen, I don’t know.

25. A most peculiar way of expressing the matter!

26. *Quia ipse dedit tibi spe quod illi dares*. The *spe* seems to be redundant. Keeping it though, I cannot see how else to translate the clause.

27. Here the incoherences begin after the tangent ends! The *agape* was the formal meal—laid on at this period, it would seem, for the poor—which sometimes followed the eucharist. Such agapes would be provided by the devout wealthy Christians.

28. Is this connected with the agapes that *you* provide? Are *we* here inclusive of you, or are we Augustine and the clergy? I favor the former construction.

29. Here, I think, we rejoin the particular theme introduced at the beginning of the section.

30. When does, or will, he ever owe you anything? In heaven he will be under the obligation (by a convention of pure grace, of course) to pay you back a hundredfold what you deposited with him, when you gave on earth to the poor.

31. *Denarios*.

32. See Mk 12:42. Actually, she bought it for even less than two *denarii*; for two *minuta* in the Vulgate, which make a *quadrans*, a farthing.

33. Holy week and Easter week—evidently a prolonged public holiday in the Christian Roman Empire.

SERMON 260

PREACHED ON THE SAME DAY IN THE LEONTIAN CHURCH:
ADVICE TO THE NEWLY BAPTIZED

Date: 409¹

*To the newly baptized, not to stifle, by living
bad lives, what has just been reborn in them*

We mustn't delay, we've got a great many things to do; to those who have been born again in baptism, and are today to be mixed in with the people at large, a short but serious sermon has to be given. You that have been baptized, and today complete the sacramental ritual of your octave,² must understand, to put it in a nutshell, that the significance of the circumcision of the flesh has been transferred to the circumcision of the heart. According to the old law, infants are circumcised in the flesh on the eighth day,³ and this because of the Lord Christ, who rose again, after the seventh day of the sabbath, on the eighth, or Lord's day. There was an instruction to circumcise with knives of flint, or rock;⁴ *the rock was Christ* (1 Cor 10:4).

You are called infants, because you have been born again, and have entered upon a new life, and have been born again to eternal life, provided you don't stifle what has been reborn in you by leading bad lives. You are to be given back to the Christian people, you are to be mixed in with the people of the faithful; beware of imitating the bad faithful, or rather the false faithful; those who are faithful in their confession of faith, but unfaithful, unbelievers in the bad lives they lead.

I hereby give you notice that I am calling God and his angels to witness what I am telling you: keep yourselves chaste, whether in marriage, or in total continence. Each one of you, pay what you have vowed. If you haven't got wives, it is permissible for you to marry, but only women who haven't got husbands still alive. Women who haven't got husbands are permitted to marry, but only men who haven't got wives still alive. If you have got wives, don't do anything bad apart from your wives. Give them what you demand from them. They owe faithfulness to you, you owe faithfulness to them. The husband ought to be faithful to his wife, the wife to her husband, both of them to God. Any of you who have vowed total continence, pay what you have vowed; because it

wouldn't be required of you, if you hadn't vowed it. What could have been lawful, is not lawful; not because marriage is condemned, but because the one who looks back is condemned.⁵

Beware of fraud in your business dealings. Beware of telling lies and of perjury. Beware of being talkative and extravagant.⁶ Whatever you don't want done to you, don't do to others,⁷ whether to human beings or to God. Why should I burden you any further? *Do all this, and the God of peace will be with you* (Phil 4:9).

NOTES

1. "On the same day" in the title does not refer to Sermon 259 but, in the manuscript from which it is taken, to Sermon 148, and possibly also 224. It is possible that the manuscript put them together, because in all of them he is concentrating on the virtue of chastity. But then he may well, one particular Easter, have felt it necessary to insist on this to the newly baptized—even, in Sermon 148, to the extent of warning those women, who vowed their virginity to God, of the dreadful fate that awaited them if they broke the vow and got married.

2. The liturgy of Easter week was specially devoted to the newly baptized, as indeed the liturgy of Lent was geared to them as they prepared for baptism. In Letter 55, 35, referring to some foolish "Christian" superstitions, he notes that some people thought it a much more serious breach of "the octave of the baptized" if any of them touched the ground with bare feet, than if "he buried his mind in drunkenness." Presumably the manner in which they were "mixed in with the faithful" involved the laying aside of the white baptismal robes, the albs, they had been wearing in church for the last week.

3. See Gn 17:12; Lv 12:3.

4. See Jos 5:2.

5. See Lk 9:62.

6. *A verbositate et luxuria*—a very odd pair!

7. See Mt 7:12.

SERMON 260A

ON THE OCTAVE OF EASTER TO THE *INFANTES*

Date: 397¹

*The new life begins in baptism with the forgiveness of sins,
is completed only in the resurrection of the dead*

1. My sermon is directed in particular to you, *newborn infants* (1 Pt 2:2), *little ones in Christ* (1 Cor 3:1), new offspring of the Church, born of the Father's grace and the mother's fruitfulness, tender buds, fresh swarm, flower of our honor and fruit of our labor, *my joy and my crown, all you who stand fast in the Lord* (Phil 4:1). I will address you with the apostle's words: *Behold, the night is far advanced, while the day has drawn near; cast away the works of darkness, and arm yourselves with the weapons of light; walk honorably, as in the day; not in revelry and drunkenness, not in wanton and shameless behavior, not in rivalry and jealousy; but clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not act out the prudence of the flesh in your desires* (Rom 13:12-14); which means, clothe yourselves in your lives with the one you have clothed yourselves with in the sacrament.

For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ. There is no Jew and Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is not male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:27-28). That's done by the very power of the sacrament; it's the sacrament, you see, of the new life, which begins in this time with the forgiveness of all past sins, while it will be perfected in the resurrection of the dead. *For you have been buried together with Christ into death, so that just as Christ rose from the dead, so you too might walk in newness of life* (Rom 6:4). Now, however, you are walking by faith, as long as in this mortal body you are in exile from the Lord;² but Christ Jesus himself, toward whom you are wending your way, has become this very way for you as the man which he was pleased to become for our sake.

You see, he has kept in store abundant sweetness for those who fear him,³ and he is going to open it up and complete it for those who hope in him, when we receive in actual substance what we have now received in hope. *For we are God's children, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. But we know that*

when he appears, we shall be like him, since we shall see him as he is (1 Jn 3:2). He made the very same promise himself in the gospel: *The one who loves me, he said, keeps my commandments. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will show myself to him* (Jn 14:21). They already saw him, of course, those he was talking to, but in the form of a servant, than which the Father is greater, not in the form of God, in which he is equal to the Father.⁴ He was showing the former to those who feared him, keeping the latter in store for those who hoped in him; he was appearing in the first to those who were still in exile, inviting to the second those who were going to live with him; he was laying down the former under the feet of those who were walking, promising the latter to them when they arrived.

There are some (Donatists) who have put on Christ in the sacrament, but remain unclothed in faith and morals

2. *Having therefore such promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves of all pollution of flesh and spirit, making holiness complete in the fear of God* (2 Cor 7:1). *I beseech you to walk worthily of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility of spirit and gentleness, bearing with one another in love, studying eagerly how to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph 4:1-3). What sort of thing must it be, after all, about which we have received a pledge like that?⁵ But there are some people who have put on Christ only in the sacrament, who⁶ remain naked in faith or morals. Even many heretics, I mean, have the actual sacrament of baptism, but not the actual fruit of salvation, nor the bond of peace, *having, as the apostle says, the form of godliness, but repudiating its power* (2 Tm 3:5). They are either signed on by deserters or deserters themselves, bearing the sign of the good king in flesh doomed to damnation.⁷

They say to us, “If we are not of the faith, not believers, why do you not give us baptism? If on the other hand we are already of that faith, why do you come looking for us?”⁸ As though they couldn’t read how Simon Magus both received baptism, and yet heard from Peter, *You have no part nor lot in this faith*⁹ (Acts 8:21). There you are, that’s how it can happen that someone has the baptism of Christ, and doesn’t have the faith or love of Christ; has the sacrament of holiness, and is not counted among the company of holy ones. Nor does it make any difference, as regards simply and solely the sacrament itself, if someone receives the sacrament there, where the unity of Christ is not to be found. Because even those baptized in the Church, should they become deserters from the Church, will be without holiness of life, but will not be without the seal¹⁰ of the sacrament.

Because it is obvious, of course, that you cannot lose when you leave what is not given back to you when you return; just as a deserter from the army is lacking the lawful company of his fellows, but doesn’t lack the royal mark.¹¹ And if he then marks someone else with the same mark, he doesn’t make a comrade in life, but a companion in punishment. If, however, the first one returns

and the other comes along to the lawful and properly regulated military service, the royal severity is mollified, and the one is pardoned for deserting, while the other who has come along is welcomed. In both of them the fault is corrected, the punishment remitted, to both of them peace is extended, in neither is the mark or seal repeated.¹²

*While the Donatists do not lack baptism,
they lack the Church, and all that goes with it*

3. So now they should stop saying to us, "What is there for you to give us, if we already have baptism?" They are so unaware of what they are saying, you see, that they are not even willing to read what holy scripture assures us of: that right inside the Church itself, that is to say, in the communion of the members of Christ, many were baptized in Samaria, and did not receive the Holy Spirit, but remained only in the baptismal state, until the apostles came to them from Jerusalem;¹³ while on the other hand Cornelius and those who were with him were found worthy to receive the Holy Spirit even before they received the sacrament of baptism.¹⁴ In this way God has taught us that the sign of salvation is one thing, salvation itself another; the form of godliness one thing, the power of godliness another.¹⁵

"What is there for you to give us," they say, "if we already have baptism?"

What sacrilegious nonsense to assume that the Church of Christ, which they don't have, is nothing, so that they consider they receive nothing if they join her communion! Let the prophet Amos say to them, *Woe to those who treat Zion as nothing!* (Am 6:1, LXX).

"What am I going to get," he says, "if I already have baptism?"

You're going to get the Church, which you haven't got; you're going to get unity, which you haven't got; you're going to get peace, which you haven't got.¹⁶

Or if these things strike you as being nothing, fight, deserter, against your emperor when he says, *Whoever does not gather with me scatters* (Lk 11:23). Fight against his apostle, or rather here too against the one who was speaking through him and saying, *Bearing with one another in love, studying eagerly to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph 4:2-3). Count the things he mentioned: forbearance, love, unity of the Spirit, peace. The Spirit here named produces all of them, and you don't have him. Were you being forbearing when you withdrew from the Church¹⁷? Whom did you love, when you deserted the members of Christ? What unity are you left with in your sacrilegious breach, what peace in your impious discord? Far be it from us to regard these things as nothing, but it's you that are nothing without these things. If you scorn to receive these things in the Church, you can indeed have baptism; but whatever you have without these things, having it will mean all the greater punishment. The baptism of Christ, you see, with these things is voting for your salvation; without these things it testifies to your iniquity.

*As baptism incorporates us into the risen Christ,
it requires us to live accordingly*

4. You though, holy children, Catholic members of Christ, have received, not a different baptism, but baptism for a different end; you have received it, you see, not for punishment but for life; not for destruction but for salvation; not for condemnation but for commendation. Together with it, after all, you have also received *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph 4:3); provided, however, that you too, which is what I desire, what I hope, what I urge upon you and beg of you, that you too both keep undamaged what you have received, and by making progress come to even greater things than these.

Today is the eighth day after your birth; today there is completed in you the seal of faith,¹⁸ which with the fathers of old¹⁹ was done by the circumcision of the flesh, on the eighth day after birth in the flesh. The stripping off of mortality, you see, was being represented in that part of the human body by which mortal human beings are born. That's why the Lord too, stripping himself of the mortality of the flesh by rising again and by raising up, not indeed another body, but yet the same one now to die no more, sealed the Lord's day by his resurrection; while it's the third after the day of his passion, in the number of the days after the sabbath it's the eighth, and at the same time the first. That's why you too, *if you have risen with Christ*—not yet in fact but certainly already in hope, because you not only have the sacrament of this thing, but have also received the pledge of the Spirit—why you should *set your minds on the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at God's right hand; seek the things that are above, not those that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory* (Col 3:1-4).

NOTES

1. The scholars put it more vaguely between 393 and 405, or at the beginning of Augustine's pastoral ministry. His calling the *infantes*, in his opening words, "the flower of our honor and the fruit of our labor" suggests to me that he was already bishop, and that's why I put the date 397, the year following his episcopal ordination. But of course this is not a necessary inference.

2. See 2 Cor 5:7. 6.

3. See Ps 31:19.

4. See Phil 2:6-7; Jn 14:28.

5. See 2 Cor 1:22, where the pledge is the Spirit. Here it is presumably the unity of the Spirit.

6. Reading *qui* instead of the *quo* of the text, which I take to be a scribal error, induced by the *solo sacramento* just before. He is referring above all to the Donatists, but could also have had in mind people receiving baptism for the wrong reasons, without genuine faith.

7. The metaphor is taken from the enlistment of soldiers in the Roman army. They were "signed on," not by their own signature on some document, but by receiving some kind of brand mark, the emperor's signature, so to say. This is the analogy for what the traditional sacramental theology,

which Augustine did so much to develop, calls the sacramental character. This is conceived of as being the mark or seal of Christ on the baptized—or confirmed; confirmation being in fact the sacrament of sealing or signing—showing that they belong to Christ, are enlisted in his army.

8. These are Donatists, whom Augustine and his colleagues were urging to return to the Catholic Church (“looking for us”), but refusing to rebaptize when they did so, because the Catholics accepted baptism by the Donatists—in our much later terminology—as valid.

9. “In this faith” is Augustine’s own rendering of “in this word,” this *logos*; *sermo* in the Vulgate.

10. *Signaculo*; what is now called the character of the sacrament.

11. And here he does use the Greek word “character,” which means in that language a brand mark, as in “the mark of the beast,” Rv 13:16; 14:9. 11.

12. A brief statement of the Catholic policy toward the Donatists.

13. See Acts 8:5-17.

14. See Acts 10:44.

15. See 2 Tm 3:5.

16. “Unity” and “Peace” are for Augustine synonyms of “Catholic Church.”

17. The Donatists broke communion, because they could not tolerate the *traditores*, those whom they accused, rightly or wrongly, of surrendering the sacred books to the persecutors in the great persecution, 303-313.

18. Could he mean by this the sacrament of confirmation? If so, it would indicate an interesting liturgical variant in the Church of Hippo Regius.

19. Under the old law.

SERMON 260B

PREACHED DURING THE OCTAVE OF EASTER,
ADDRESSED PRIMARILY TO THE *INFANTES*

Date: 405¹

The model of the Exodus and desert journey

1. A sermon, in which a good life is enjoined upon and recommended to the listeners, is indeed for the ears of everybody, so that all may procure and receive eternal life. All the same, I am particularly addressing you, fresh buds of holiness, born again of water and the Spirit,² planted and watered by our ministry in the field of God, who is the one *that gives the increase* (1 Cor 3:7).

You must think of yourselves as brought out of Egypt, freed from a harsh slavery, in which iniquity was your master; as having also passed through the Red Sea; through baptism, that is to say, which was marked by the bloodstained cross of Christ. As for the enemies pursuing you from behind, consider them to be your past sins; because just as the Egyptians perished when the people of God passed through, so were your sins obliterated when you were baptized. So now you must make for the heavenly kingdom, to which you have been called, as to the promised land; and while you make your way through this earthly life, as through the desert, watch out for and stand up to all kinds of temptation. You receive your manna, after all, from sharing at the holy altar, and what you drink flows from the rock.

The apostle Paul reminds us of all this, and proclaims it in his teaching: *I would not, he says, have you ignorant, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. Now they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock was Christ* (1 Cor 10:1-4). From these words of the apostle you can readily acknowledge that I have suggested these things to your ears and minds, not as my own idea or guesswork, but as taught by holy scripture.

What the apostle says about standing up to temptation

2. As for what I warned you about, in saying "Watch out for and stand up to

all kinds of temptation," have a good look at what the same apostle went on to say immediately, and how frightening it is: *But not with most of them was God well pleased; for they were laid low in the desert. But these things happened as an example for us, that we should not be lusting after bad things, as they too lusted; nor be serving idols like some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play (Ex 32:6). Nor should we fornicate, as some of them fornicated, and there fell on one day twenty-three thousand. Nor should we put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and they were destroyed by serpents. Nor should you grumble, as some of them did, and they were destroyed by the Destroyer.*³ Now all these things happened to them as an example; but they were written for our correction, upon whom the end of the ages has come (1 Cor 10:5-11).

Avoid bad examples, and cling to the one who redeemed you

3. So you then, dearly beloved, avoid such bad examples of the past, and imitate those who did please God, not those who perished for offending God. What use was it, after all, to have escaped from Egypt through the Red Sea, only to perish from fiery serpents in the desert? That's how it is with people who are baptized, and set free from their past sins, and then neglect such a wonderful grace, so that they are waylaid by the poisonous bites of death-dealing seductions, and are unable to reach the promised life. Shun the example of such people, cling with steadfast obedience to the one who redeemed you, so that you may reach the kingdom; not such a one as was given to the first people as a *shadow of the one to come* (Col 2:17), but one where you are going to live with Christ in eternal bliss.⁴

NOTES

1. The only suggestion of a date comes from Poque, who actually proposes 400-410.

2. See Jn 3:5.

3. See Num 11:1; 11:31-34.

4. This final clause seems overloaded in the Latin. It runs: *sed ubi cum Christo non erit finis aeterna sitis felicitate victuri*. I have omitted *non erit finis*, which sounds like an echo of the Nicene Creed, that may have been running in the copyist's head.

SERMON 260C

ON THE LORD'S DAY, THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

Date: 394¹

The newly baptized have God for their Father, the Church for their mother

1. I am quite sure that it is no new or unheard of idea to you, but one very plain to your faith, that just as we were born in the flesh to our human parents,² so too we are born in the spirit to God our Father and the Church our mother. But of course it's the same Lord God who creates us from those natural parents of ours, and who recreates us from himself and the Church. In that birth we drag with us the chain of sin; in this one we have it broken. There, we are born in order to succeed parents who are going to die; here, to stay close to parents who remain so for ever.

Now the children of men who are older by birth rejoice with a genuine family love over their brothers and sisters born later in the same house, and far from being jealous at having these blood relatives divide the inheritance with them, they are very glad to have them share the light of day with them. So how much more deeply and sincerely ought we to rejoice together, when these same children of men are born again by the grace of holy baptism, and become children of their creator, since we are all born for that inheritance which is entire and undivided for all its possessors, and complete in its entirety for each of them? *The Lord*, it says, *is the portion of my inheritance* (Ps 16:5). So if, as the prophet David says, God himself is our inheritance; and if, as the apostle John says, *God is charity* (1 Jn 4:8.16), and as the apostle Paul says, *charity is not jealous* (1 Cor 13:4); it follows that the more companions and partners we see being born, in addition to ourselves, to obtain such an inheritance as that, the more effusive is the charity with which we rejoice, since it is the possession of this charity that is being set before us. After all, where love itself is the inheritance, if you don't love your fellow heir, you show yourself not to be an heir to it.

And so would the rest of you please take to heart all the more willingly what, with the Lord's help, I am now going to say to those whose octave day of baptism we are celebrating; seeing that you are delighted at their being joined to you in a new kind of relationship as real brothers and sisters. At the same time, let the catechumens as well, whom mother Church has already conceived by some sort

of sacrament,³ agitate her womb with their desire for the new light, and hasten to be born and made perfect.

The eight persons saved from the flood and the eight days of the Easter octave have the same significance

2. It is supremely because all over the world, in whichever direction you turn, the nations have been subdued to the name of Christ by the solemnity of this octave,⁴ that it is celebrated so enthusiastically by all who have been born again through his baptism. So, with the Lord's help, let me attempt to remind you in a few words of what it all means, and what the explanation is of such a tremendous mystery. Let your Christian learning⁵ join me in considering how this mystery tallies with the main lines of our faith.

Now is there anybody who is unaware that the earth was once upon a time purged of all manner of iniquity by the flood, and that the mystery of holy baptism, in which all human sins are abolished through water, was then prefigured, when the ark, constructed of timbers that could never rot, representing the Church, contained only eight persons?⁶ So what is signified by the number of eight persons in the waters of the flood, by which sins were extinguished, is also signified in the waters of baptism, through which sins are abolished, by the number of eight days. You see, facts which signify something can be compared to the sounds that come from our mouths; so just as one and the same thing can be said in a whole range of words and languages, in exactly the same way one and the same thing is customarily signified, without any change of meaning, not only by words, but also by many and variable symbolic or figurative facts. That's why it does not mean, just because there we have eight persons and here eight days, that two different things are being stated; no, it's the same thing in two different ways, with a variety of signs, comparable to a diversity of letters.

The number 8 represents eternity

3. And so what is prefigured by the number eight is everything that belongs to the age to come, where nothing either advances or falls away with the unrolling of times and seasons, but everything persists continuously in a steady state of blessedness. And since the times of this age slip by with the repetition, round and round, of the number of seven days, it's only right that that should be called the eighth which the saints will reach after their labors in time, and which they don't any longer divide up into periods of activity and rest, distinguished by the alternations of daylight and night. Instead, theirs is a perpetually wakeful rest, and an activity that is a tireless, not an idle, leisure.

Just as for the saints, however, once they have passed through this sevenfold course of time, there is an eighth and eternal felicity, so for the godless, after they have gone through the same sevenfold roll of the wheel, there is an eighth and penal judgment. It is from this that the man wished to be delivered in the sixth psalm, which has inscribed as its title "for the octave," as he sighs and tells

the tale of his weakness, saying, *Lord, do not censure me in your indignation, nor chastise me in your wrath* (Ps 6:1). Again, in the eleventh psalm,⁷ which has the same inscription *for the octave*, we are shown that all the difficulties of this age are to be tolerated for the sake of that reward of eternal life; in case, when iniquity begins to abound, charity should grow cold, and those who do not persevere to the end should find it impossible to be saved.⁸

Whenever people wish, you see, to lie back and rely on others, and then find in many of them, about whom they would never have thought it, deceits and trickery and vain, proud boasting, it is good for them to look ahead to that eighth and everlasting day, in which the security of their happiness will not be sapped by the company of any wicked persons; good for them therefore to say with the psalmist, sighing and groaning here, and praying in tears, *Save me, Lord, since no saint is to be found, since truths have dwindled from the sons of men* (Ps 12:1). That, you see, is how the psalm begins. But they should also pray the last words of the same psalm in the certainty of hope; this, I mean, is how it ends: *You, Lord, will keep us, he says, and protect us from this generation for ever* (Ps 12:7). It's as though he begins with the seventh, and carries through to the eighth, *from glory to glory, as from the Spirit of the Lord* (2 Cor 3:18).

*The difference between the sabbath rest signified by the seventh day,
and the eternal sabbath of the eighth*

4. After all, what can it mean that elsewhere he also promises through the prophet *peace upon peace* (Is 57:19), but that the sabbath too, which is signified by the seventh day, even though it is contained in this temporal round of days, also of course has its rest, which is promised on this earth to the saints, where no storms of this age can disturb them, as they take their rest in their God after their good works?⁹ It was in order to indicate this, right from the beginning, that God himself rested on the seventh day, after he had made all things very good.¹⁰ Or could it have been for any other reason that it is written in the book of Saint Job, *Six times have I snatched you from your troubles, and on the seventh evil does not touch you* (Jb 5:19)?

But the reason that day doesn't now have an evening¹¹ is that without the slightest incursion or clouding over of sadness, which so often spreads from being mixed up in the company of bad men, it passes the saints on to the eighth day, that is to everlasting bliss.¹² It's one thing, you see, while times still pass,¹³ to rest in the Lord, which is what the seventh day, that is the sabbath, signifies; quite another to transcend all times and to be intimately and endlessly united to the architect of all times, which is what is signified by the eighth day; this, by not recurring in the same cycle as the others, indicates that it bears the mark of eternity. It is, of course, by the continuous repetition of these seven days of the week, going round and round in endless succession, that the wheel of all times and ages revolves.

The lovers of this world, though, do not figure in the symbolic meanings of these days. I mean, what they long for on the seventh day is not the rest of a

spiritual sabbath, from which their thoughts could also be directed to the eternity of the eighth; instead, being given over to those transitory festivities, they forsake the creator and slip into the habit of worshipping the creature,¹⁴ and become godless. Which is why that man who is singing *for the octave* went on to add something; and after saying *You, Lord, will keep us, and protect us from this generation for ever*, he immediately added *All round about the godless are prowling* (Ps 12:8); are given over, that is to say, to the round of temporal thoughts, unable to entertain any idea of the eternal.

We should wend our way toward Christ's exaltation by the road of humility

5. And in these days too, of course, which are so full of meaning, we find the same eighth day, which is also the first. Because the Lord's day is called *the first of the sabbath* (Mk 16:2; Mt 28:1; Lk 24:1). But the first day itself falls away when the second follows it. In that true day, which this eighth and first of ours represents, eternity is both the first, which we abandoned at the beginning by sinning in our first parents, and so came down into this mortal state; and also the last and as it were the eighth,¹⁵ which we look for again after the resurrection, once our *last enemy death has been destroyed* (1 Cor 15:26), so that *this perishable thing may put on imperishability, and this mortal thing put on immortality* (1 Cor 15:59); and the returning son may receive the first robe, which is to be given back to him on the last and so to say eighth day, after the labors of his distant exile and his feeding of pigs,¹⁶ and the other miseries of mortal life, and the sevenfold circulation of the wheel of time.

So it was perfectly reasonable that it should have been on the first, which is also the eighth day, the Sunday, that our Lord himself chose to give us an example in his own flesh of bodily resurrection too;¹⁷ for *now he dies no more, death will have no further mastery over him* (Rom 6:9). To that exalted state of his we have to wend our way by humility. This is what he set before the two disciples who came with their request, desiring to sit one on his right, the other on his left, when he said, *Can you drink the cup which I am going to drink?* (Mk 10:38). He wanted them to understand that the way to the heights has to start from *the vale of tears* (Ps 84:6); and that they wouldn't become fit to scale the summit of heaven, unless they first accepted the indignity of the cross.

The lofty heights of glory signified by the number 8 are to be preferred to the highest of temporal or human honors

6. And in fact the very last verse of that eleventh psalm, whose title *for the octave* stands out so, *Lord, according to your loftiness you have multiplied the sons of men* (Ps 12:8), may suitably be taken as addressed to the Lord Jesus Christ. He makes sons of men into the sons of God in himself, the Son of God and the son of man. And in this way, although on this earth they are few compared with the multitude of sinners, and like grain on the threshing floor are hidden and hardly to be seen for the mass of chaff, which is to be seen all round

as if it were all there was, in this way he multiplies them in the heavenly Jerusalem according to his loftiness, *calling the things that are not, as though they were* (Rom 4:17). And from what loftiness does he do this? Because *blindness overtook Israel in part, so that the fullness of the nations might come in, and thus all Israel would be saved* (Rom 11:25-26), the apostle cried out, saying, *Oh, the loftiness¹⁸ of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* (Rom 11:33).

So don't let us seek the tumble-down loftiness of temporal honors and high office.¹⁹ *For we have died, and our life is hidden with Christ in God; when Christ appears, our life, then we too shall appear with him in glory* (Col 3:3-4). So we must continue to keep our eyes firmly on that eighth day, when the circling round of times, in which *the godless are prowling* (Ps 12:8), will be over and done with.²⁰ Since we are already, in hope, domiciled in heaven,²¹ let us live with Christ, in Christ, the equals of God's angels, and already made partners in his eternity, because he did not refuse to become a partner in our mortality.

You see, in this octave of the sacraments,²² the eighth day comes after seven days; well, in much the same way, in the sacrament of Pentecost, the same eighth day is added after seven weeks, which we end on the forty-ninth day, in order to complete the number fifty. It is one day in the lesser number, and the same one in the greater. Eternity, after all, which this eighth day is the sign of, can neither increase nor diminish, and it is always "today" there, since nothing there replaces anything that is being displaced. And that "today" doesn't begin from the end of yesterday, or end with the beginning of tomorrow; but it is always today. All the past has passed by without its setting, and all the future is to come without its dawning.²³

The newly baptized are exhorted not to lay aside with their white baptismal robes what those robes signify

7. And so, *forgetting what is past, and extending yourselves to what lies ahead, following according to intention after the palm of your calling* (Phil 3:13-14), always carry with you in your hearts, my dearest brothers and sisters, my dearest children, the hope of this everlasting day, even when you have laid aside the insignia of the sacraments.²⁴ By these shining white garments, as by a visible word, there is inscribed in your memories at this fresh beginning of your new life, a seedling of light.²⁵ When you change them, take care not to change what they stand for, brilliant with the light of faith and truth. Don't let it be soiled with any filth of perverse behavior, in order that you may not be found naked on that day, and may pass without any difficulty from the glory of faith to the glory of sight.²⁶

But when, in today's solemn ceremony, you move out of this chancel, where in your spiritual infancy you were being set apart from the others, and are mixed in with God's people,²⁷ stick to the good ones! And remember that *depraved conversations corrupt good morals; be sober, just, and do not sin* (1 Cor 15:33-34). *For I have betrothed you to one husband, to present you to Christ as*

a chaste virgin; and I am afraid that, as the serpent seduced Eve with its cunning, so your thoughts may also be corrupted from the chastity of God which is in Christ (2 Cor 11:2-3). The friendship of this world leads souls into adultery, and into fornicating away from their only, their true and lawful consort,²⁸ from whom you have received the wedding ring of the Spirit.²⁹

Beware of the wide road which leads to destruction, and many they are who walk along it (Mt 7:13). Do not falter on the narrow road, whose end is the wide open spaces of eternity. And if ever you should fall into various temptations (Jas 1:2), as is bound to happen with human life in the sea surges of this age, and should find yourselves surrounded by the snarling, yapping wickedness of all kinds of people, then sing with persevering faith and joyful hope and ardent charity, sing for the octave, and say, Save me, Lord, since no saint is to be found, since truths have dwindled from the sons of men; each one has spoken vain things to his neighbor (Ps 12:1-2).

You must not think that you are the only grain of wheat on the threshing floor

8. You though, *sons of men*, now made into sons of God, *how far, so dull of heart? Do not love vanity and seek after falsehood (Ps 4:2)*, and you will not give the devil a foothold.³⁰ Nor should any of you, clinging unshakeably to Christ amid the uproar of temptations and scandals, and standing fast after embracing God's word, imagine that you are the only grain of wheat, because you are beleaguered by chaff on every side, and cannot see those who will be your companions in the granary. Just take a look back, even to those times before the blood of Christ was shed on the earth as the price of the whole world, when Saint Elijah said, *I alone am left*; the answer came, *I have left to me seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kgs 19:10.18)*. These seven thousand with him, as long as they were still being threshed on the floor of this age, were not yet touching each other in a pile, and that's why they each thought they were the only ones. There is a much more plentiful pile in all the nations, which will be kept for the Lord and protected *from this generation and for ever*, because by his secret counsels, *according to his loftiness he will multiply the sons of men (Ps 12:7-8)*.

NOTES

1. The sermon has all the marks of being very early, preached shortly after Augustine had been ordained priest, in order to be Bishop Valerius' right-hand man and do his preaching for him. It is over elaborate, too long for the occasion, and much of it must have been far above the heads of most of the congregation. The date proposed by Folliet is 393-395; I take the average.

2. Reading *ex parentibus hominibus* instead of the text's *ex parentibus homines*; born as human

beings of our parents, with the *homines* qualifying “we,” the subject, instead of the parents. But that fails to make the right antithesis, which is between our human or natural parents, and our supernatural, divine parents.

Or else, keeping *homines* as the right reading, one might just possibly construe it as a stunted relative clause, as standing for *ex parentibus qui homines*; employed because *ex parentibus hominibus* is not very euphonious.

3. The various rites of the catechumenate, which we would now call sacramentals. Premature spiritual birth was certainly not something the Church of those days encouraged, with its discipline of a long catechumenate. But the people Augustine was thinking of here would have been those many “Christians” who were content to remain catechumens until they were on their deathbeds, people like his own father, Patricius.

4. Subdued, surely, by what the solemnity represents; but also perhaps by the solemnity itself, since as we gathered from Sermon 259, 6, the whole octave of Easter, in addition to Holy Week, was kept in the Christian Roman Empire as a long public holiday.

The text here is a little strange. The sentence begins, *Eo potissimum ipsarum sollemnitas octavarum, quae . . . subjugavit, ab omnibus . . . celebretur*. Now one expects a relative pronoun, or equivalent, to correspond to the antecedent *eo potissimum*; and *quae* in the sentence as it stands will hardly do, its own obvious antecedent being *sollemnitas*. So I translate as though *quae* were really *quo*, or possibly *quia*; this latter could indeed easily have been turned into *quae*.

5. *Christiana eruditio*. He is paying them the dubious compliment of assuming a level of “erudition” in them that very few would have attained, and so he is going to be preaching well over their heads. But I may be doing both him and them an injustice.

6. See 1 Pt 3:20; the eight persons being Noah, Shem, Ham, Japhet, and their wives. When he says the ark was made of *lignis imputribilibus*—non-bio-degradable?—he is mixing it up with the very different ark of the covenant, which in Ex 25:10 and Dt 10:3 was constructed, according to the Septuagint, of *xylon asepton*; which would go into Latin as *lignis imputribilibus*. It translates the Hebrew *shittim* wood. Noah’s ark was made of *gopher* wood, and the Septuagint translates this much more prosaically as “foursquare” planks or timbers.

7. Twelfth in the Hebrew numbering, now followed by all modern translations, including the Catholic ones, except for the Grail Psalter, used in the English breviary, which still keeps the Vulgate and Septuagint numbering.

8. See Mt 24:12-13.

9. This is Augustine’s early brand of millenarianism surfacing again. See Sermon 259, note 5. Clearly, by “the sabbath which is signified by the seventh day” he doesn’t mean the weekly sabbath every Saturday, but what it stands for; and that is “the rest promised to the saints on this earth,” the 1,000 years of Rv 20:2-6.

10. See Gn 1:31; 2:2.

11. See Gn 2:2.

12. And thus are explained the prophet’s words *peace upon peace*, the peace of the eighth following on the peace of the seventh.

13. That is, during that 1,000 years.

14. This, presumably, is because the festivities or celebrations they are given to—namely the shows of theaters, amphitheaters and chariot races—were originally celebrated in honor of pagan gods, and still retained a flavor of pagan religion.

15. Emending *et ultimam quasi octavam* to *et ultima quasi octava*.

16. See Lk 15:11-22.

17. “Of bodily resurrection too,” because with us bodily resurrection will be the last or second resurrection.

18. *Altitudo*, normally and rightly translated in this passage as “depth.” It means both height and depth. Here the sermon’s context ties us to the sense of “height.”

19. He is directing his remarks primarily to men of substance, tempted to embark on the career in public life known as the *cursus honorum*, in which you rose, if you were lucky, from the humble rank of “edile” to the prestigious top position of “consul.” Not that this would have been open to

many people in Hippo Regius, unless like the young Augustine himself they went overseas to Italy and the imperial court in Milan or Ravenna. But presumably there were analogous positions to be eagerly sought and obtained at the level of local municipal politics.

20. This last clause is very strange in the Latin as it stands: . . . on the eighth day, *ubi transacto omni circuitu temporum ambulat impij*; where, having done with every circling round of the times, the godless are prowling. But in the psalm verse he is alluding to they are prowling *in circuitu*, which he interprets as the circling round of the times. So I have emended the text by shifting the *ubi*: . . . on the eighth day, *transacto omni circuitu temporum, ubi ambulat impij*.

21. See Phil 3:20.

22. The Easter octave, in which the great sacraments of initiation were completed.

23. His picture seems to be of all times, past and future, parading in front of the eternal present, the eternal today (represented by the eighth, and now also fiftieth, day), which was the same "today" before the past began, and will be the same "today" when the future has come and gone. But I don't think he paints it as clearly as I do in this note.

24. The white baptismal robes, and perhaps the lighted candles, which they may have carried at services throughout the octave of their baptism.

25. A most extraordinary mixed metaphor!

26. See 2 Cor 5:3.7; also 3:18.

27. This is the first clear indication of what "the sacrament of the eighth day" consisted of: the solemn laying aside of the baptismal albs, and a kind of procession of the neophytes, now in their ordinary clothes and neophytes no longer, out of their special place in the chancel, inside the *cancelli*, to mingle with the rest of the faithful.

28. See Jas 4:4; Ps 73:27.

29. The Holy Spirit is thought of as the wedding ring, I imagine, because of 2 Cor 1:22, which talks of God giving the pledge of the Spirit; and the wedding ring is the symbol of the couple "plighting—or pledging—their troth" to each other.

30. See Eph 4:27.

SERMON 260D

DISCOURSE ON THE SUNDAY OF THE EASTER OCTAVE

Date: 416-417¹

The day which the Lord has made

1. Your graces know that last Sunday, that is at the beginning of these eight days, we sang to the Lord the same as we did today, *This is the day which the Lord has made* (Ps 118:24). Well, what day is there that the Lord hasn't made? But here by the word "day" the Spirit of God² wished to draw our attention to some outstanding work of God. Now among all God's works, what is better than faithful men and women? As I reminded you last Sunday,³ in the first works of the world *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 night* (Gn 1:2-5). So if he called the light day, there can be no doubt that those to whom the apostle says, *You were once darkness, but now light in the Lord* (Eph 5:8), are day. All the saints, all the faithful, and thus all the just—because *the just man lives by faith* (Rom 1:17)—are, taken all together, day in a most harmonious peace; and that very unity of them all is one day. I mean, how can that not be one day, of which it says in the Acts of the Apostles, *They had one soul and one heart in the Lord* (4:32)?

Certainly with human beings too God has divided between day and night, between the light and the dark, and is going to give the light eternity, and the darkness damnation. We cannot yet see how, but God has already made the division. One person is living a bad life, and perhaps in God's predestination is light; and another is living a good life, and perhaps in predestination is night.⁴ The reason, though, that God has made the division, and kept it a secret hidden with himself, is so that the day should not grow proud, and turn into night. There are some people, you see, who wish to attribute the fact that they are just to their own virtue, and have the nerve to say, with hell-infected heart and sacrilegious lips, "God made us human beings, but we ourselves make ourselves just."⁵ If they themselves make themselves just, then this is not the day which the Lord has made.

So let the faithful say, and those who have been made out of darkness into light, to whom the apostle says, *You were once darkness, but now light in the*

Lord (Eph 5:8); let them say with the apostle himself, *I am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God* (1 Cor 15:9). When he was persecuting the Church of God, *there was darkness over the deep* (Gn 1:2). The Lord called him from above, *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?* (Acts 9:4). The darkness was shattered, the light rose; he began to preach the one he used to persecute, and he said, *I am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God*. So from where did you get it, to be what you are? *By the grace of God I am what I am* (1 Cor 15:10). That is the day which the Lord has made.

You are called the faithful; live faithfully

2. And so I am addressing you, the one day, infants, born badly from Adam, born again well in Christ. Realize that you are day, realize that the Lord has made you. He has chased away the darkness of sins from your hearts, he has made your lives new. Today you are to be mixed in with the peoples of God and counted among them.⁶ Choose which ones to imitate, don't choose for yourselves abandoned persons, with whom to be lost and perish. Don't say, "Why not? Isn't this man a believer? And he gets drunk. Why not? This man's a believer, isn't he? And he has a wife, and has a mistress as well. Why not? Isn't this man a believer? And every day he swears a lie for the sake of profit. Why not? This man's a believer, isn't he? And he lends out his money at exorbitant rates. Why not? Isn't this man a believer? And he consults a sorceress. Why not? This man's a believer, isn't he? And when he has a headache, he ties spells⁷ round his neck"—he doesn't want to die, and he ties death round his neck.⁸

If you say that sort of thing, you're lost, you perish. I swear to you before God and his angels, to the best of my ability I have given you what I have received; and it isn't I that have given it, but it has been given through me. It's the Lord's money; I am only the distributor of it, not the generous contributor. We all have one and the same Lord, I am just dealing out rations to my fellow servants; I too live from the same storehouse. We are not our own, but we all belong to him who shed his blood as the price for us. We were all redeemed together, we all have one and the same price; the grain we live on is the holy gospel. The one who redeemed us made us his brothers and sisters out of slaves; the only Son made us his co-heirs. He was the one and only, and he graciously chose to have brothers and sisters. Never forget this graciousness of his, my dearest friends.

You are called the faithful; live faithfully. Keep faith to your Lord in your hearts and your behavior. Don't go mingling with bad behavior and morals in the crush of bad Christians. Notice what I'm saying; be grains of wheat. There are masses of chaff on the threshing floor, but the winnowing is going to come, the chaff will be separated, and not a single wisp of it enters the granary with you, not a single grain goes on the fire. The one who was able to assemble you knows how to separate; you're wrong, if you think the Lord can go wrong. He knows you, because he created you, and recreated you; you see, if he had only

created you, and not recreated you, you would have gone in with the lump of perdition.⁹

Surely I'm not telling you, am I, my dear brothers and sisters, that you won't be able to find any Christians leading good lives? God forbid that I should have such an opinion of my Lord's threshing floor! If that's the case, what am I slaving away for? Keep an eye out for the good people to imitate; be good yourselves, and you'll find them. But if you start being bad, you will begin to believe that they're all bad; and it's not true, you're deceiving yourselves. You're looking at the threshing floor from a distance, that's why only the chaff strikes you. Come nearer, look, fill your hands, apply the judgment of your breath; everything that is light and can fly is blown out of your hands, and what is heavy remains.

You will find good Christians, believe me; good married men being faithful to their wives; good married women being faithful to their husbands. *Seek, and you will find* (Mt 7:7); be, and it won't escape your notice. Like meets like. Are you a grain? You attach yourself to grains. Are you chaff? You attach yourself to chaff. You will find people who don't lend their money at exorbitant rates; you will find people who detest financial fraud much more than financial loss; yes, you will find such people. Begin to be like that, and you soon see how many of them there are. They are few, but only in comparison with the many. It is winnowed, and there's a whole pile. He is going to do the winnowing, the one *who is carrying the winnowing fork in his hand* (Mt 3:12).

Exhortation to the rest of the congregation

3. And now, dearly beloved, I must address those of you, the faithful, who were baptized long ago, baptized last year, baptized several years ago; I have something to say to you too. Go by that same road along which, if these wish to follow you, you cannot get lost. You see, it will be something for you to answer for at your judgment, if with your evil behavior you not only perish yourselves, but also lead these others to their ruin.

NOTES

1. Kunzelmann and Fischer suggest this date.
2. Who inspired the psalmist.
3. See Sermon 229V for the theme. But that sermon, or the main fragment of it, was preached during the week, not on Easter day. So he cannot be referring to it here. If he is, then what the scholars say about that sermon and its date is incorrect. In fact, he does what he alludes to here, in Sermon 258. So if that was preached on Easter Sunday, it could be the one referred to here. But most of the scholars assign it also, like this sermon, to the Sunday after Easter.
4. Catholic doctrine formally repudiates the idea of double predestination, that is that some

people are predestined by God to damnation, as others are to salvation. And indeed, in here suggesting such an idea, Augustine is guilty of using words rather loosely. He is, in the second instance, treating predestination as if it meant the same as reprobation (that at least is how I like piously to interpret him). Where predestination means God's positively intending the creature to reach its destiny, as you positively intend a letter to reach its destination when you address and post it, reprobation means God's simply not having that intention, and permitting the creature to fail to reach its destiny. The truth being stated in the doctrine of predestination is that only with God's grace can we attain our destiny and get to heaven; but we don't need any divine "negative assistance" to get to hell; we do it on our own by sin. The punishment of hell is not something imposed extrinsically, like a prison sentence in the system of human justice; it is an intrinsic consequence of the sin, permitted by God, in that he does not help the sinner to repent. But to speak of God predestining people to damnation is rather like your posting a letter with the intention that it should get lost; it hardly makes sense. See Saint Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, 23; in particular a.3.

5. The Pelagians. It was in his controversy with them that the whole mystery and problem of predestination was raised.

6. *Numero populorum*; mixed in with the number of the peoples. "Peoples" in the plural, perhaps, because in the singular it would refer just to the Christian people of the Church of Hippo Regius, and he wanted them to realize that they have joined all the Christian peoples, all the local Churches that make up the Catholic Church; and that they are as likely to fall into bad Christian company if they travel to Carthage or Rome, as if they stay all their lives in their own city.

7. *Characteres*; presumably special texts rolled up in amulets, obtainable no doubt from the sorceress, the *pythonissa*, just mentioned.

8. I interpret this as Augustine's comment on such a superstitious practice. But it could be translated as another instance of it: "the man who doesn't want to die ties them round his neck." The Latin omits any specific object, whether "death" which I supply, or "them" in the alternative translation: *et qui non vult mori, ad collum sibi ligat*.

9. A phrase modeled on "the son of perdition," Jn 17:12, where it is applied to Judas, and 2 Th 2:3, where it is applied to Antichrist. The idea owes more to Paul's use of the image of a lump of clay, Rom 9:21, and a lump of dough, 1 Cor 5:6; Gal 5:9.

SERMON 260E

DISCOURSE ON THE SUNDAY OF THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

Date: after 409¹

We must proclaim what we have heard, even though we have not seen

1. When the blessed apostles performed miracles and healings in the name of Christ, the Jews were filled with jealousy, and forbade them to speak in the name of the one who had chosen them and empowered them to be what they were. But they replied, *Whether it is right in the presence of God to obey you rather than God, you must judge for yourselves; we for our part are unable not to speak of the things we have seen and heard* (Acts 4:19-20). They claimed to be Christ's witnesses; but those who are called "witnesses" in English,² are called "martyrs" in Greek. So when they said, *We cannot but utter the things we have seen and heard*, they ignored the prohibition of men, in order to be sure of the blessing of God.

They saw and heard; what about us? We too have to proclaim the good news; but we haven't seen. Certainly, let us proclaim what we have heard; because the apostle says, *Therefore faith comes from hearing, while hearing comes through the word of Christ* (Rom 10:17). Judea saw Christ the Lord in the flesh; the nations did not see him. And yet those who didn't see, heard and believed, while those who saw, dismissed and killed him. So we too were going to hear, not to see; seeing is being kept for us, so that what we now believe we may see at the end of the world. So we too were being foreseen by the Lord, when he said in prophecy, *A people whom I did not know has served me; the one I did know opposed me, the one I didn't know served me.*

"But how could a people serve you which you didn't know, that is, one to which you hadn't shown yourself present in the flesh, to whose eyes after the resurrection you hadn't shown your scars, how could it serve you?"

Carry on, and hear: *With the obedience of the ear it obeyed me* (Ps 18:43-44).

We too should be "martyrs" for the faith, not more afraid of ridicule than the martyrs were of tortures and death

2. So you too, then, must say, "We are unable not to speak about what we have heard, not to proclaim the Lord Christ." Preach wherever you can, and you

are a martyr. Sometimes, though, people don't suffer persecution, and are afraid of ridicule. They are going out to dinner, for example, with pagans, and are ashamed of being called Christians. If they're terrified of their fellow diners, how can they make light of persecutors. So proclaim Christ wherever you can, to whomever you can, however you can. What's demanded of you is faith, not eloquence; let faith speak through your mouth, and Christ is speaking.

You see, if there is faith in you, Christ is living in you. You heard the psalm: *I have believed, therefore have I spoken* (Ps 116:10). It was impossible for him both to believe and remain dumb. It's being ungrateful to the one who fills you, if you don't pour out; so the fuller you are, the more you ought to pour out. A fountain, you see, is being born in you of a kind that is able to flow, unable to dry up: *It will become in him a fountain of water leaping up to eternal life* (Jn 4:14). You need have no qualms about preaching, because you are not lying about the fountain of truth; you have received what comes bubbling off your tongue. I mean, if you want to say something of your very own, you will be liars. That's what's said in this very psalm: *I said in my ecstasy, Every man a liar* (Ps 116:11). What's *Every man a liar*? Every Adam a liar. Strip yourself of Adam, and put on Christ, and you won't be a liar.

That must be enough for your graces, because there is a lot to do.

NOTES

1. This is the only suggestion about the date; made by Poque. The sermon, all the scholars are agreed, was probably preached at the shrine of the Twenty Martyrs in Hippo Regius.

2. *Latine*.

SERMON 261

SERMON PREACHED IN THE BASILICA OF FAUSTUS IN CARTHAGE
ON THE FORTIETH DAY
THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

Date: 418¹

*Lifting up our hearts to the Lord is taking refuge;
lifting them up not to the Lord is pride*

1. The resurrection of the Lord is our hope, the Lord's ascension our glorification. Today, you see, we are celebrating the feast of the Ascension. So if we are to celebrate the Lord's ascension in the right way, with faith, with devotion, with reverence as godfearing people, we must ascend with him, and *lift up our hearts*. In ascending, however, we mustn't get above ourselves.² Yes, we should *lift up our hearts*, but *to the Lord*. Hearts, you see, lifted up, not to the Lord—that's pride; while hearts lifted up to the Lord, that's called taking refuge. After all, we say to the one who has ascended, *Lord, you have become a refuge for us* (Ps 90:1).

He rose again, you see, to give us hope, because what rises again is what first dies. So it was to save us from despair at dying, and from thinking that our whole life ends with death. We were anxious, I mean, about the soul, and he by rising again gave us an assurance even about the flesh. So he ascended—who did? The one who descended.³ He descended in order to heal you; he ascended in order to lift you up. You will fall if you've lifted yourself up; you remain standing if you've been lifted up by him. So, *lift up your hearts*, but *to the Lord*—that's taking refuge. Lifting up your heart, but not to the Lord, that's pride. So let us say to him as he rises again, *Since you, O Lord, are my hope*; and as he ascends, *you have placed your refuge very high* (Ps 91:9). How, I mean, can we possibly be proud, if we lift up our hearts to him, seeing that he humbled himself for our sakes, so that we should not remain proud?

In what way Christ is God

2. Christ is God, and always so; he will never cease to be so, because he never began to be so. After all, if something begins to be by his grace what it will never

cease to be, how will he cease to be, who never began to be? Our immortality will have a beginning, won't have an end. I mean, we haven't yet got what we will never lose once we have begun to have it. So Christ is always God. And what sort of God? You ask what sort? Equal to the Father.⁴ So in eternity don't seek for yourself that quality of equality, but only felicity.⁵ Grasp, if you can, what sort of God Christ is.

Look, I'll tell you, I won't cheat you. You're asking what sort of God Christ is? Listen to me, or rather, listen with me; let's both listen together, both learn together. I mean, just because I'm talking and you're listening, it doesn't mean that I'm not listening with you. So when you hear "Christ is God," you ask, "What sort of God is Christ?" Listen with me. I'm not saying listen to me, but with me. In this school, you see, we are all fellow students; heaven is our professor's chair. So listen to what sort of God Christ is.

In the beginning was the Word. Where? And the Word was with God. But words are something we're used to hearing every day. Don't think about this one in the way you're used to hearing; *The Word was God* (Jn 1:1).

"I'm asking what sort.⁶ Because look, I already believe he is God; but what sort of God he may be, is what I want to know."

Seek his face always (Ps 105:4). Let nobody fall away in seeking, but instead make progress. You make progress by seeking, if it's seriousness seeking, not frivolity. How does seriousness seek, how does frivolity? Seriousness seeks by believing,⁷ frivolity by arguing and scoring points. I mean, if you want to argue with me and score off me by saying to me, "Which God do you worship? What sort of God do you worship? Show me what you worship," I will answer. "Even if there is something I can show, you aren't⁸ somebody I can show it to."

The example of Paul in seeking to know God

3. Nor am I brazen enough to claim that I have grasped what you are seeking. As far as I can, you see, I am following in the footsteps of that great athlete of Christ's, namely the apostle Paul, who says, *I, brothers, do not consider myself to have attained* (Phil 3:13). "I," "myself"; who⁹ is "I," and "myself"? I who *worked harder than all of them put together* (1 Cor 15:10).

I know, my dear apostle, in what way you are saying "I" here; it's a statement of fact, not of conceit.

I mean, do you want to know in what way he says "I"? After saying *I worked harder than all of them put together*, he took away from himself that very "I." *I worked harder, he says, than all of them put together.*

Then it's as if we say to him, "Who?"

And he says to us, *Not I, though, but God's grace with me* (1 Cor 15:10).

So there he was, God's grace with him to such an extent that, though he was the last to be called, he worked harder than those who came before him. And yet he says, *I, brothers, do not consider myself to have attained.* Yes, "I" here, where he hasn't attained. It is, of course, a matter of human weakness, not to attain. But where he was lifted up *into the third heaven, and heard inexpressible*

words, which it is not lawful for man to utter, he didn't say "I." What did he say, though? *I know a man fourteen years ago* (2 Cor 12:2.4). *I know a man*—and it was the same man who was speaking, and he treated what happened to him as if it was someone else, and for that reason he did not fall away.¹⁰

So don't be aggressively argumentative in demanding of me what sort of God I worship. After all, he isn't an idol, and I just have to point a finger and tell you, "There's the God I worship." Nor is he some constellation, or some star, or the sun or the moon; and I just point a finger at the sky and say, "There's what I worship." He isn't something a finger can be pointed at, but he is something the mind can be pointed at. Look at him¹¹ not comprehending, and yet seeking, following on behind, panting, sighing, longing; look at him, see what he's pointing at his God, what he's stretching out, whether it's a finger or in fact his spirit. What does he say? *I do not consider myself to have attained. One thing, though, forgetting what lies behind, stretching out to what lies ahead, according to intention I follow on toward the palm of God's calling from above in Christ Jesus* (Phil 3:13-14). I follow on, he says, I keep on walking, he says, I'm on the way.

Follow on yourself, if you can; let us come to our final home together, where you won't seek answers from me, nor I from you. So let us both seek together now by believing, so that later on we may both rejoice together by seeing.

Blessed are the pure of heart, because it is they who will see God

4. Because who in fact does show you what sort of God Christ is? Here's what he was good enough to say through his servant; let him also say it through this servant of his, to my fellow servants, his servants. You have been told, *In the beginning was the Word*. You were inquiring where it was, and the answer came, *The Word was with God*. And in case you should think lightly of mere words from being so used to human speech, you heard, *The Word was God*. Are you still inquiring what sort of God? *All things were made through him* (Jn 1:1.3).

Love him; whatever you love, it comes from him. Don't let us love the creature to the neglect of the creator; but let us pay attention to the creature, and praise the creator. I can't show you my God; I can show you what he made, I can remind you of what he made. All things were made through him. He made them new, not being new himself; he made them temporal, being eternal himself; he made them changeable, while innocent of all change himself. Look at the things made, praise the maker. Believe, in order to be purified.

I mean, do you want to see? It's a good thing, a great thing that you want. I'm encouraging you to want it. Do you want to see? *Blessed are those of pure heart, because it is they who will see God* (Mt 5:8). So first of all give some thought to purifying the heart. Make this your business, give yourself time for this,¹² apply yourself to this task. What you want to see is pure, what you want to see it with is impure. You're thinking of God as if he were some vast and manifold light for these eyes, you're enlarging space to yourself to your heart's

content; you're not setting bounds where you don't want them, you're setting them where you do. These are all the fancies and imaginations of your heart, they are all the impurity of your heart. Remove them, throw them away. If some dust fell in your eye, and you wanted me to show you the light, your eyes would first seek something to wipe them clean.

There's so much impurity, uncleanness in your heart; love of money constitutes no trifling uncleanness for you.¹³ You're hoarding what you can't take away with you. Don't you realize that when you hoard things, you are dragging mud into your heart? So what are you going to see it with, this thing you are seeking?

You have filled your safe and shattered your conscience

5. You're saying to me, "Show me your God." I'm saying to you, "Pay a little attention to your heart."

"Show me your God," you say.

Attend a little to your heart, I say.

Anything you see there, that displeases God, remove it from there. Your God wants to visit you. Listen to the Lord Christ himself: *I and my Father will come to him, and we will take up our abode with him* (Jn 14:23). There you have what God is promising you. So if I promised that I was going to visit your house, you would clean it; God wants to visit your heart, and are you going to be slack about cleaning the house for him? He doesn't enjoy living with love of money, with Avarice, an impure and insatiable woman, whom you were serving, always at her beck and call, while still seeking to see God. What have you done at God's beck and call? What haven't you done at the beck and call of avarice? What have you done at God's beck and call?

I'll now show you what's inhabiting your heart, you that want to see God. You see, I said earlier, "There's something to show, but there's nobody to show it to."¹⁴ What have you done that God has ordered? What have you put off doing when avarice has ordered it? God ordered you to clothe the naked; you shook in your shoes. Avarice ordered you to strip the clothed bare; you went crazy. If you had done what God ordered, what shall I tell you? You would have this and that? You would have God himself. You did what Avarice ordered, what have you got? I know, you're going to tell me; "I've got what I grabbed."

So you've got by grabbing. You've got something with you, though you've lost yourself?

"I have," you say.

Where, where, please? Certainly, it's either in your bedroom, or in a sack, or in a safe. Wherever you have it, you certainly haven't got it with you now. Certainly, you now think you've got it in a safe. Perhaps it's disappeared and you don't know it. Perhaps when you get back home, you won't find what you left there. I'm querying your heart; I'm questioning what you've got there. Look, you've filled your safe, and shattered your conscience. Take a look at someone who's full, learn to be full yourself: *The Lord has given, the Lord has taken*

away; as it pleased the Lord, so has it happened; blessed be the name of the Lord (Jb 1:21). Now he had lost everything; so from what treasure was he offering these jewels of praise to the Lord?

The darkness does not comprehend the light

6. So clean up your heart, as much as you can; do that, work at it. And that he may clean it up as a place to stay in, ask, beg, humble yourself. You can't grasp: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; this was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was made nothing. What was made in him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it* (Jn 1:1-5). There you have why you can't grasp it: *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it*. What is the darkness but evil works? What is the darkness, but evil longings, pride, avarice, ambition, envy? All these things are darkness; that's why you don't comprehend. Because *the light shines in the darkness*; but give me someone to comprehend it.

The Word was made flesh

7. So look, and see if you can't at least somehow or other grasp this: *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us* (Jn 1:14). By Christ as man you wend your way to Christ as God. God is too much for you; but God became man. What was a long way away from you has come down right next to you through a man. The place for you to stay in, that's God; the way for you to get there, that's man. It's one and the same Christ, both the way to go by and the place to go to. So he is the Word who *was made flesh and dwelt among us*. He took to himself what he was not, he did not lose what he was. He appeared openly as a man, and remained hidden as God. The man was killed, God was offended. But the man rose again, and was discovered to be God.

So just reflect on how much he did as God, how much he suffered as man. He was killed, but not in his divinity. It was Christ himself that was killed. They are not two, you see, a God and a man, so that now we should not be making, or knowing three persons, but four. Man indeed is man, and God God; but the whole Christ is man and God. So it's Christ himself who is man and God. Just as you, a human being, are body and spirit; in the same way the whole Christ is a human being and God. So the whole Christ is flesh, soul and God. He himself says something that refers to his being God; he says something that refers to his being soul; he says something that refers to his being flesh; the whole refers to his being Christ.

What does he say as God? *Just as the Father has life in himself, so he has given to the Son to have life in himself. Whatever the Father does, these same things the Son also does likewise* (Jn 5:19). *I and the Father are one* (Jn 10:30). What does Christ say as regards his soul? *My soul is sorrowful even to death*

(Mk 14:34). What does Christ say as regards the flesh? *Pull down this temple, and in three days I shall raise it up* (Jn 2:19). *Feel and see, that a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you can see that I have* (Lk 24:39). These are the *treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col 2:3).

*By loving Christ you fulfill both commandments,
to love God and your neighbor*

8. Certainly the whole law depends on two commandments: *You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with your whole mind; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depends the whole law, and the prophets* (Mt 22:37-40). In Christ you have it all. Do you want to love your God? You have in Christ, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (Jn 1:1). Do you want to love a neighbor? You have in Christ, *And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us* (Jn 1:14).

The struggle for purification can never let up

9. May he purify us with his grace; may he purify us with his support and his comfort. My brothers and sisters, through him and in him I implore you, abound in good works, in kindness, in goodness, in generosity. Be quick to forgive wrongs done to you. None of you must nurse your anger against another, or you will be blocking your prayer to God. All these things, you see, because we are in this world, because even if we are making progress, even if we are living just lives, we cannot live here without sin. Sins, after all, are not just those that are called serious offenses, adultery, fornication, sacrilege, theft, robbery, false witness; they aren't the only sins. To pay attention to something you ought not to is a sin; to listen to something willingly which shouldn't have been listened to is a sin; to think something that shouldn't have been thought is a sin.

Daily remedies for sin

10. But our Lord has given us other remedies for every day after that *bath of regeneration* (Ti 3:5). Our daily purification is the Lord's prayer. Let me say, and say something true, that it's also almsgiving: *Forgive us our debts, just as we too forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12). *Give alms, and all things are pure for you* (Lk 11:41). Remember, brothers and sisters, what he is going to say to those who will be standing on the right. He won't say, "You've done this and that great deed," but: *I was hungry and you gave me to eat* (Mt 25:35). To those who will be standing on the left he isn't going to say, "You have done this and that evil deed," but: *I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat* (Mt 25:42). Those, for giving alms, *into eternal life*; these, for meanness, *into eternal fire* (Mt 25:46).

Make your choice now of either the right hand or the left. Because I ask you,

how can anyone hope for good health by being slack over the remedies and constant with the ailments?

“But they’re only little ailments.”

Pile them up, and they weigh you down.

“But they’re minor sins that I have.”

Aren’t there many of them? I mean, how can they be minor, if they weigh you down, bury you? What more minute than drops of rain? Rivers are filled by them. What more minute than grains of wheat? Granaries are filled with them. What you notice is that they are minor, and you don’t notice that they are many. You know how to take notice of that? Try counting them, if you can. But anyway, God has provided a daily remedy.

Conclusion

11. Great is the mercy of him who *ascended on high, and took captivity captive* (Eph 4:8; Ps 68:18). What’s *took captivity captive*? Slew death. Captivity was taken captive; death died. So what next? Is that all he did when he ascended on high and took captivity captive? So did he leave us behind? *Behold, I am with you, even to the completion of the age* (Mt 28:20). So notice this: *He gave gifts to men* (Eph 4:8). Open the lap of piety, receive the gift of felicity.¹⁵

NOTES

1. Many other dates have been suggested. But this one has finally been definitely established by Lambot and la Bonnardière. It used to be assumed that this is a sermon mentioned by Possidius in his *Index*, and dated accordingly to 397. But it has since been proved that it is one of a series contained in an old collection of sermons, which were all preached in May and June, 418, while Augustine was attending a Council of the African Churches in Carthage. It was preached a few days after Sermon 255, on Thursday, 16 May. See O. Perler, *Les Voyages de Saint Augustin*, Paris, 1969, page 341.

The Ascension was a comparatively new feast at the time, which is perhaps why he had to explain to the congregation that that is what they were celebrating—and why he really says very little about it.

2. Some manuscripts add, “and rely presumptuously on our own resources, our own merits.”

3. See Jn 3:13.

4. There is a little word-play here in the Latin: *Quaeris qualis? Patri aequalis*.

5. The line of thought is not very clear. The first stage is the immortality that Christ has won for us. It will be eternal in that it will have no end, but will have a beginning. It is compared, not with Christ’s immortality, but with his divinity, which is properly eternal, in that it has no beginning either, as well as no end. So when we attain to our eternity, we must not look for the same quality (equality with the Father) as marks his eternity.

6. I have repunctuated the last few sentences. The punctuation of the edited text seems to me to miss the preacher’s point all along the line.

7. According to his favorite (mis)quotation from Isaiah 7:9, *Unless you believe, you shall not*

understand. Here we have the seeds of Anselm's famous definition of theology, or sacred teaching, as "faith seeking understanding."

8. Reading *non es qui*, instead of the text's *non est qui*, there is not somebody . . . The meaning is the same; the second person simply makes the point more clearly, and perhaps forcefully.

9. Reading *quis est* instead of the text's *quid est*.

10. Into pride.

11. Paul.

12. *Ad hoc te avoca*; literally, "call yourself away, withdraw yourself for this." Other manuscripts read *advoca*, dedicate yourself.

13. A very sudden change of tack, from the imagination to the affections, to what we could perhaps call the machinations, of the heart. This is really the subject of the next section.

14. At the end of section 2.

15. A very perfunctory return to the theme of the ascension.

SERMON 262

ON THE DAY OF THE LORD'S ASCENSION
PREACHED IN THE LEONTIAN BASILICA

Date: 411¹

Christ became man, died, rose again, for our sake

1. The Lord Jesus, the only-begotten Son of the Father, and co-eternal with his begetter, equally invisible, equally unchanging, equally omnipotent, equally God, became man, as you know, as you have received, as you firmly believe, for our sakes; taking a human form without losing the divine, his power hidden, his weakness manifest. He was born, as you know, that we might be born again; he died, so that we might not die for ever. It was straightaway, that is on the third day, that he rose again; to us he promised the resurrection of the flesh at the end.

He presented himself to the eyes of his disciples to be seen, and to their hands to be touched; persuading them of the reality of what he had become,² not eliminating what he always was. He spent forty days with them, as you have heard, going in and coming out, eating and drinking; not now because he needed to, but all as an indication of his power, and by way of revealing to them the true reality of his flesh; its weakness shown on the cross, its immortality in rising from the tomb.

*Today also the feast of Saint Leontius;
but the star is happy to be eclipsed by the sun*

2. Today we are celebrating his ascension. But in this Church it coincides with another, domestic, solemnity. Today is the anniversary of the burial of Saint Leontius, the founder of this basilica.³ But I trust the star will agree to being eclipsed by the sun. So let me talk, rather, as I began, about the Lord. The good servant rejoices when his Lord is praised.

This day is celebrated all over the world

3. So on this day, that is, the fortieth after his resurrection, the Lord ascended into heaven. We didn't see it, but let us believe it. Those who did see proclaimed

it, and filled the whole world. You know who saw it, and who told us about it; about them it had been foretold, *There are no languages nor utterances whose voices are not heard. Their sound has gone forth into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world* (Ps 19:3-4). So they also came as far as us, and woke us up from sleep. So there you are, this day is being celebrated all over the world.⁴

Christ who had emptied himself is exalted above the heavens

4. Call to mind the psalm.⁵ To whom was it said, *Be exalted above the heavens, O God* (Ps 57:5.11)? Who was being spoken to? It wouldn't be said to God the Father, would it, *Be exalted*, seeing that he has never been brought low? No, *you* be exalted, you who were enclosed in your mother's womb; you that were made in her whom you had made; you who lay in the manger; you, suckled at the breast as a baby, according to the very nature of flesh;⁶ you, holding up the world and being held by your mother; you, the baby acknowledged by Simeon the old man, and praised as great; you, seen by the widow Anna being suckled, and acknowledged as almighty; you, who were hungry for our sakes, thirsty for our sakes, tired along the road for our sakes—did you ever hear of bread being hungry, a fountain being thirsty, a road being tired?—you that endured all these things on our account; you who went to sleep,⁷ and yet *you slumber not, watching over Israel* (Ps 121:4); you, finally, whom Judas sold, whom the Jews bought and did not gain possession of; you, arrested, bound, scourged, crowned with thorns, hung on the tree, pierced with the lance, you dead, you buried: *be exalted above the heavens, O God*.

Be exalted, it says, *be exalted above the heavens*, because you are God. Take your seat in heaven, after hanging on the tree. You are awaited as the judge who is to come, after being awaited as the one who was judged. Who would believe all this, if that one didn't make it possible, *who lifts up the needy from the dust, and raises up the poor from the dunghill?* He himself lifts up his own needy flesh, and *sets it beside the princes of his people* (Ps 112:7-8), with whom he is going to judge the living and the dead. He has set this needy flesh beside those to whom he says, *You shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel* (Mt 19:28).

*The Church is the glory of Christ, which we see,
though we did not see the ascension*

5. So, *be exalted above the heavens, O God*. It has already happened, already been fulfilled. But we say:⁸ "We haven't seen, but we believe, how what was foretold, *Be exalted above the heavens, O God*, was going to come true. But look, the fulfillment of what follows is in front of our very eyes: *and over all the earth your glory* (Ps 57:5.11). If you can't see this, you shouldn't believe that."

What, after all, can *and over all the earth your glory* mean, but over all the

earth your Church, over all the earth your wife, over all the earth your bride, your beloved, your dove,⁹ your consort? She is your glory. *The man indeed, says the apostle, ought not to veil his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man* (1 Cor 11:7). If the woman is the glory of the man, the Church is the glory of Christ.

NOTES

1. More precisely, on 4 May 411. What makes this precise date certain is that it was also the feast of Saint Leontius, the patron of the basilica: see section 2 below. It was only in 411 and 422 that Ascension day fell on 4 May during Augustine's life. All the evidence points to the earlier date. Immediately after celebrating the Ascension in Hippo Regius, Augustine will have set off for Carthage to attend the great conference of Catholic and Donatist bishops, convened by the imperial commissioner, Marcellinus.

2. That is, the fully human reality of his risen body. The next phrase is a little odd; it is hard to see how anyone could have supposed that the resurrection should cast doubts, so to say, on the divinity of Christ.

3. Does he strictly mean founder, or rather patron saint, whose remains were buried in the basilica? What was being celebrated was probably what in official liturgical language is now called the translation of the saint, the transfer of the remains from the original grave to a more honorable tomb. His feast day is mentioned in the heading of Letter 29, which Augustine wrote, while still only a priest, to his friend Alypius, now bishop of his home town Thagaste, describing how he had preached against the custom of celebrating Saint Leontius' feast with a banquet in the basilica itself at which people got very drunk; a common practice, it seems, at the shrines of martyrs. Now he mentions in the letter that it was the day before, or about, *quadragesima*; and that was interpreted by the Maurists as meaning the first day of Lent; and so they supposed there was another feast of Saint Leontius, the anniversary perhaps of his martyrdom, sometime in February, since Easter, in the year Letter 29 was written, 395, occurred about 25 March. But *quadragesima* simply means fortieth, and could equally well refer, and I think probably did refer here, to Ascension day. Practically nothing is known about Saint Leontius, except that he was bishop of Hippo Regius about a hundred years previously, and was martyred in the great persecution of 303-313.

4. Unlike the feast of Saint Leontius.

5. The responsorial psalm which had just been sung. The verse he quotes is the refrain of the psalm.

6. *In vena carnis*, a highly idiomatic expression, emended understandably by some manuscripts to *in vera carne*, in true flesh.

7. For all these allusions, see the following texts: Lk 2:7. 25-32. 36-38; Mt 4:2; Jn 19:28; 4:6; 6:35; 4:13; 14:6; Mk 4:38.

8. We say this to the Donatists, to emphasize that the worldwide universality of the Catholic Church, which they denied by their parochialism, had been prophesied by scripture.

9. See Sg 5:2.

SERMON 263

ON THE FORTIETH DAY, THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Date: 396-397¹

The reason Christ ascended was to provide us with protection from on high

1. The glorification of our Lord Jesus Christ was completed by his rising again and ascending into heaven.² We celebrated his resurrection on Easter Sunday; we celebrate his ascension today. Each day is a feast for us. The reason he rose again was to show us an example of resurrection, and the reason he ascended was to protect us from above. So we have our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ first hanging on the tree, now seated in heaven. He paid our price when he was hanging on the tree; he has been gathering up what he bought while seated in heaven. When he has gathered them all up, you see, whom he has of course been gathering up throughout the course of time, he will come at the end of time, and as it is written, *God will come openly* (Ps 50:3); not as he came the first time, disguised; but as it says, *openly*.

He had to come disguised, you see, in order to be judged. But *he will come openly*, in order to judge. After all, if he had come openly the first time, who would have dared to judge him? As indeed the apostle Paul says: *For if they had known, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory* (1 Cor 2:8). But if he hadn't been killed, death wouldn't have died. The devil was defeated by his own victorious achievement. The devil, you see, hugged himself for joy, when by leading the first man astray he cast him down into death. He killed the first man by leading him astray; by killing the last man, he lost the first from his snare.

The Lord's cross is a kind of mousetrap for the devil

2. So the true victory of our Lord Jesus Christ was achieved when he rose again and ascended into heaven; and then was fulfilled what you heard when the Apocalypse was read, *The lion from the tribe of Judah has conquered* (Rv 5:5). It's he that's called a lion, he that's called a lamb; a lion for courage, a lamb for innocence; a lion because unconquered, a lamb because gentle. And when this lamb was slain, he conquered by his death the lion *who prowls around seeking whom he may devour*. The devil, you see, is called a lion for his ferocity,

not for any virtue. Thus the apostle Peter says we must be on the watch against temptations, *because your adversary the devil is prowling around seeking whom he may devour*; but he did say how he prowls around: *Like a roaring lion he is prowling around, seeking whom he may devour* (1 Pt 5:8). Who could avoid encountering the teeth of this lion, if the lion from the tribe of Judah had not conquered?

Against the lion a lion, against the wolf a lamb. The devil was exultant when Christ died, and by that very death of Christ was the devil conquered; it's as though he took the bait in a mousetrap. He was delighted at the death, as being the commander of death; what he delighted in, that's where the trap was set for him. The mousetrap for the devil was the cross of the Lord; the bait he would be caught by, the death of the Lord. And our Lord Jesus Christ rose again. Where now is the death that hung on the cross? Where is the crowing mockery of the Jews, where is the self-importance and the pride of those people shaking their heads in front of the cross, and saying, *If he is the Son of God, let him come down from the cross* (Mt 27:40)? In fact, he did more than they in their mockery required of him; there's more, after all, to rising from a tomb, than to coming down from a tree.

*Believing with the eyes of the heart is more important
than seeing with the eyes in the head*

3. Now, however, how great is his glory, as he ascends into heaven, as he takes his seat at the right hand of the Father! But we can't see this with our eyes, just as we didn't see him either hanging on the cross,³ nor observe him rising from the tomb. We hold on to all of this by faith, we behold it with the eyes of the heart. We have received praise, because we haven't seen, and yet have believed.⁴ After all, even the Jews saw Christ. It's not a particularly great thing to see Christ with the eyes in the head, but it's a great thing to believe about Christ with the eyes of the heart.

If Christ were to be presented to us now, and stand right here before us, and say nothing, how would we know who he was? And then if he said nothing, what good would that be for us? Isn't it better for him to speak in the gospel, though absent, than to be present and say nothing? And yet he isn't absent, if he's held onto in the heart. Believe in him, and you see him; he isn't in front of your eyes, and he is in possession of your heart. Because if he were absent from us, what we heard just now would be a lie: *Behold I am with you even to the consummation of the world* (Mt 28:20).

NOTES

1. So Kunzelmann, the only scholar, apparently, to suggest a date. The sermon exists in two or three forms. It is considerably longer in the Maurist edition than in the one being translated here. But this one seems to opt consistently for the shorter version. Thus it follows the Maurists in the opening section.

2. So the Maurist text. One manuscript, to which they did not have access, has the sermon beginning as follows:

"Today, my dearest brothers and sisters, we are celebrating the Lord's ascension. You see, our celebration is only genuine, if we are ascending to him in our hearts. Let us ascend to him, because he descended to us, not just to live with us, but to die for us, and to die precisely for this, to save us from dying for ever. So let us ascend to him for the time being in the mind, because we cannot yet do so in the body. Now our ladder for this is not one of steps to tread on, but of good behavior to make progress in. Which is why the apostle Paul also says, *If you have risen with Christ, savor the things that are above, not those that are on earth. For you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God; when Christ appears, your life, then you too will appear with him in glory* (Col 3:1-4). So you ascend if you put up with the earthly things, and desire the heavenly ones. This feast of ours today, you see, dearly beloved, is the day of the Lord's ascension. We celebrated the same Lord's resurrection at Easter" . . . and then as in the text.

3. From here the Maurists go their own, and much longer way, with what turns out to be a variant of Sermon 263A.

4. See Jn 20:29.

SERMON 263A

ON THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Date: 396-397¹

*Let us too ascend with Christ, and be with him in heaven,
even while we are still here on earth*

1. Today our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven; let our hearts ascend with him. Let us listen to the apostle, when he says, *If you have risen together with Christ, savor the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of the Father; seek the things that are above, not those that are on earth* (Col 3:1-2). Just as he ascended, you see, and still didn't depart from us, so we too are now there with him, although what is promised us hasn't yet come about in our bodies. He has already been exalted above the heavens;² and yet he suffers on earth whatever hardships we experience as his members. It was to this truth he bore witness when he cried out from on high, *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?* (Acts 9:4); and *I was hungry, and you gave me to eat* (Mt 25:35).

Why should we too not endure hardships on earth, in such a way that we take our rest with him in heaven through faith, hope, charity, by which we are joined to him? He, while he is there, is also with us; and we, while we are here, are also with him. That's true of him in both his divinity and his power and his love; while as for us, even if we cannot make it true with divinity, we can make it true with love, provided it is love for him. He didn't depart from heaven, when he came down to us from there; nor did he depart from us, when he ascended to heaven again. I mean, that he was still there while he was here, he declares himself, like this: *Nobody*, he says, *has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven* (Jn 3:13). He didn't say, "the Son of man who will be in heaven," but *the Son of man who is in heaven*.

Christ is our head and we his body

2. But that he is with us even while he is there, is something he promised before he ascended, when he said, *Behold, I am with you right up to the*

consummation of the world (Mt 28:20). We, for our part, are there in our names, since he said himself, *Rejoice because your names are written in heaven* (Lk 10:20); although with our bodies and our toil we are wearing out the earth, and are being worn out by the earth. But when after the resurrection of the body we begin to share his glory, our bodies won't be inhabiting these mortal³ things around us, nor our feelings be attached to them; the one who holds the firstfruits of our spirit is gathering everything up from here.⁴

Nor, for that matter, should we find it a reason to despair of attaining a perfect dwelling place in heaven with the angels, that he said, *Nobody has gone up to heaven, except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven* (Jn 3:13). He does, it is true, seem to be speaking about himself alone, as though none of us would be able to achieve that; but it was said because of the unity by which⁵ he is our head and we his body. So it does indeed mean nobody but himself, because we too are himself, insofar as he is the Son of man because of us, and we are sons of God because of him. That, indeed, is what the apostle says: *For just as the body is one, and has many members; but all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so too it is with Christ* (1 Cor 12:12). He didn't say, "so it is with Christ," but *so too it is with Christ*.⁶ So Christ is many members, one body. And so he came down from heaven out of mercy, and none went up to heaven but he himself, since we are in him by grace. And thus it is that none but Christ descended, none but Christ ascended; not because the worth of the head would be compromised by the body, but because the unity of the body could not be separated from the head.

For it does not say, "from seeds," as though in many; but as though in one, "in your seed," which is Christ (Gal 3:16). Thus he calls Christ the seed of Abraham, and yet the very same apostle says, *So you are the seed of Abraham* (Gal 3:29). So if not in seeds as in many, but as in one; and this seed of Abraham is what Christ is; and this seed of Abraham is what we are; when he ascends into heaven, we are not separated from him. The one who came down from heaven doesn't envy us heaven, but in a kind of way cries out, "Be my members, if you wish to ascend into heaven."

For the time being let us find our strength in this truth, let us ardently direct all our hopes and wishes to this end; let us meditate while on earth upon what we are reckoned to be in heaven. Then we are going to put off the flesh of mortality; now let us put off the staleness of the spirit. The body will easily be lifted up to the heights of heaven, if the spirit is not weighed down with the burdensome load of sins.

Christ ascended with his body

3. Some people, you see, are worried by the misrepresentations of heretics, who wonder how the Lord could come down without a body and ascend with a body; as though that contradicted those words of his, when he said, *Nobody has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven* (Jn 3:13). "So how could a body," they say, "which did not come down from heaven ascend

into heaven?” As though he had said, “Nothing has gone up to heaven except what has come down from heaven.” But what he actually said was, *Nobody has gone up except the one who came down*. This, I mean, referred to the person, not to anything the person had. He descended without the garment of a body, he ascended with the garment of a body; and yet nobody ascended except the one who descended.

I mean, if he has attached us to himself as his members in such a way that even with us joined on he is his very same self, how much less would that body which he took to himself from the virgin be able to constitute in him another person? After all, if someone climbs a mountain, or a wall, or any high place, with clothes on after coming down without any clothes, or goes up armed after coming down unarmed, would anybody say it wasn't only the one who came down that went up? So just as you can say about such a person, “No one went up except the one who came down,” although he went up with something he had not come down with; in the same way, nobody has ascended into heaven except Christ, because nobody has come down from heaven except Christ, although he came down without a body, ascended with a body, and we too are going to ascend, not by our own prowess, but by our and his oneness. *Two, indeed, in one flesh; it is a great sacrament in Christ and in the Church* (Eph 5:31-32); which is why he also says himself, *No longer two, but one flesh* (Mk 10:8).

Why Christ fasted for forty days, and spent the same number of days with his disciples after his resurrection

4. And that's why he fasted when he was tempted, when he was still in need of food before his death; while he ate and drank when he was glorified, when he was not in need of food after his resurrection. On the first occasion, you see, he was demonstrating in himself our pain, on the second demonstrating in us his consolation;⁷ marking both with a period of forty days. I mean, he fasted for forty days, when he was being tempted in the desert, as it's written in the gospel, before his death in the flesh;⁸ and again he was with the disciples for forty days, as Peter puts it in the Acts of the Apostles, going out and coming in, eating and drinking⁹ after his resurrection in the flesh.

This number forty seems to signify the course of this age in those who are being called to grace, through the one who *did not come to undo the law, but to fulfill it* (Mt 5:17). There are, after all, ten commandments of the law, now spread by the grace of Christ throughout the world (and the world is four-cornered, and ten multiplied by four makes forty); since *those who have been redeemed by the Lord, from the regions he has gathered them together, from east and west and north and the sea* (Ps 107:2-3).¹⁰ And so by fasting for forty days before his death in the flesh, it's as though he was crying out, “Hold yourselves in check from the desires of this world”; while by eating and drinking for forty days after his resurrection in the flesh, it's as though he was crying out, *Behold I am with you until the consummation of the world* (Mt 28:20).

Fasting, of course, represents the pains of the contest, since *anyone who enters the contest is abstemious in all matters* (1 Cor 9:25). Food, on the other hand, represents the hope of peace, which will not be perfect until our bodies, whose redemption we are awaiting,¹¹ have *put on immortality* (1 Cor 15:54). We don't yet glory in the acquisition of this, but are already being fed on hopes of it. The apostle shows us both things together, when he says, *Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation* (Rom 12:12); as though that were in food, this in fasting. While we are traveling the way of the Lord, you see, we should at one and the same time be fasting from the vanity of the present age, and feasting on the promise of the age to come; not setting our hearts on this one, feeding our hearts lifted up to that one.

NOTES

1. Again Kunzelmann suggests this date, supported this time by Fischer. We have just seen, in note 3 to Sermon 263, that the Maurists treat this as part of the same sermon; so for them it clearly has the same date. But for Kunzelmann it must have been preached in one of these two years, while Sermon 263 was preached in the other.

2. See Ps 57:5.11.

3. One would expect the word "temporal" here.

4. A very odd sentence. There is an obvious allusion to Rom 8:23, but with a radical reversal of that verse, where Paul talks of us having the firstfruits of the (Holy) Spirit, while here Augustine talks of Christ having the firstfruits of our spirit—in which we are already savoring the things that are above. Furthermore, the sentence begins in the Latin with the word *totus* in the nominative, and thus agreeing with the subject, the one who holds the firstfruits of our spirit; and it is hard to make sense of that here. So I emend it to *totum* in the accusative, and make it the object of "gathering up," which otherwise lacks one.

5. Reading *qua* with the Maurists, instead of *quia* with Dom Mai.

6. What point he is making here it is very hard to see. Possibly, he is trying to say that we are not dealing here with a mere metaphor or comparison, as when Christ is compared, say, to a vine; but with a quasi-identical reality—what we now in fact call the mystical body of Christ, what Augustine liked to call "the whole Christ." (Could *totus* in note 4 above have referred to the whole Christ? In the precise context, I don't think so.)

7. A rhetorical antithesis that seems entirely misconceived. On both occasions Christ was demonstrating (in Augustine's terms) something *to us in* himself; on the first occasion, indeed, his sharing in our painful condition; on the second the consolation prize he had won for himself, and had in store for us.

8. See Mk 1:13.

9. See Acts 10:41. The "going out and coming in" is an echo of another speech of Peter's, Acts 1:21. The forty days are only mentioned by the writer, not by Peter, in Acts 1:3.

10. The Hebrew text has this strange reading, east, west, north, sea. All modern textual critics emend the Hebrew *ym*, (*yom*), sea, to *ymn*, (*yamin*), right hand or south, very sensibly. But ancient exegetes and translators would never have dreamt of taking such a liberty with the sacred text.

11. See Rom 8:23.

SERMON 264

ON THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Date: 417¹

Something has to be said about the ascension, in spite of those in the congregation who are impatient to get home to their dinners

1. There are many hidden meanings² of the divine scriptures, which I myself still have to seek out, or ones which the Lord has already deigned to reveal to my lowliness;³ but there is not enough time to open them all up to your holinesses. I'm well aware, you see, that especially during these days the church is filled with the sort of people who would much sooner leave than come; and they think we are being very burdensome, if we sometimes go on talking a little longer. As for their dinners, though, to which they are in such a hurry to get back, they don't mind, or get in the least tired, if they drag on until the evening, nor do they finally at least take their leave with some sense of shame.

Still, we mustn't cheat those who have come here hungry;⁴ and so even though I do it briefly, I will not keep silent about the inner meaning⁵ of this fact, that our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven in the body with which he rose from the dead.

Christ spent forty days with his disciples after his resurrection as a concession to their weakness, like a hen fussing over her chicks

2. Certainly, it was because of the weakness of his disciples; after all, there were not lacking among their number those whom the devil would tempt to unbelief; to the extent, indeed, that one of his disciples,⁶ seeing him in the aspect he was familiar with, would put less faith in his living body than in his recent wounds. So for their encouragement he was prepared to live with them after his resurrection for the whole of those forty days, from the day of his passion⁷ up until today, going in and coming out, eating and drinking, as scripture says.⁸ He was thereby confirming that what was restored to their sight after the resurrection, was the very same thing that had been taken from them by the cross.

However, he did not wish them to remain fixated on his flesh, nor to be held down by a merely human love. The spirit, you see, in which they wanted him

to be with them always in the flesh, was the same as the spirit in which Peter had also shrunk from the prospect of his suffering.⁹ They could see him with them, I mean, as a teacher, a comforter, an encourager and protector, a man such as they saw themselves to be. If they couldn't see something like that, they assumed he was absent; although in fact he is present everywhere in his divine greatness.

But he really was looking after them, as he himself was happy to put it, in the way a hen looks after her chicks; in the way, I mean, that a hen enfeebles herself too, because of the feebleness of her chicks.¹⁰ If you care just to refresh your memories, there are so many different kinds of birds in front of our very eyes which rear chicks; but we never see any bird which enfeebles itself with its chicks, except the hen. And that's why the Lord compared himself with one, because it was on account of our feebleness that he was willing to enfeeble himself by taking flesh to himself.

It was necessary, though, for the disciples to be given a lift, and to begin now to think of him in a more spiritual way, as the Word of the Father, God with God, through whom all things were made;¹¹ and the flesh which they could see wouldn't let them do that. So while it was good for them to be confirmed in their faith by having him with them for forty days, it was better for them, all the same, that he should withdraw himself from their eyes, and that having been with them on earth as a brother, he should assist them from heaven as the Lord, and that they should begin to think of him as God.

That, after all, is the message that rang out from the evangelist John—if anybody should notice, anybody understand. The Lord, you see, said, *Let not your hearts be troubled (Jn 14:1). If you loved me, he says, you would rejoice, because I am going to the Father; since the Father is greater than I (Jn 14:28).* And in another place he says, *I and the Father are one (Jn 10:30).* And he claims such a total equality for himself, not by robbery but by nature,¹² that he could say this to a disciple who said to him, *Lord, show us the Father, and it will suffice us;* and he answered, *Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you do not know the Father? Whoever has seen me, has also seen the Father (Jn 14:8-9).* What's meant by *Whoever has seen me?* If it meant with the eyes of the body, then even those who crucified him saw him. So what can *Whoever has seen me* mean, but "Whoever has understood, whoever has seen with the eyes of the heart"? You see, just as there are inner ears, which the Lord was looking for, when he said, *Whoever has ears, let him hear (Mk 4:23),* though there wasn't any deaf person standing before him; in the same way there is an inner gazing of the heart, and if anyone had seen the Lord with that, he would have seen the Father, because he is equal to the Father.

Christ emptied himself, taking the form of a servant

3. Listen to the apostle, wishing to commend to us the mercy of Christ, by which¹³ he enfeebled himself for our sakes, in order to gather us, his chicks, under his wings. He was teaching other disciples also, that they too should show

compassion to the weakness of the weak, when they themselves had managed to ascend to some level of strength from the common level of weakness. Christ had himself, after all, come down to our level of weakness, from his heavenly strength. The apostle said to them, *Have this mind among yourselves which is also in Christ Jesus*. Be willing, he is saying, to imitate the Son of God by being compassionate to the little ones. *Who, though he was in the form of God*. By saying now *he was in the form of God*, he shows he is equal to God. The form, after all, is not less than the one it is the form of. I mean, if it is less, it isn't his form.¹⁴ Still, in case anyone should have doubts about this, he added something and used the precise word which would stop the mouths of the sacrilegious: *who, though he was in the form of God, he says, did not think it robbery to be equal to God* (Phil 2:5-6).

What, my dearest brothers and sisters, what is it that the apostle is saying, *did not think it robbery*? Because he was equal by nature. So for whom was equality with God a kind of robbery? For the first man, to whom it was said, *Taste, and you will be like gods* (Gn 3:5). He wished by an act of robbery to stretch himself up to equality, and as a punishment he lost his immortality. The one, you see, for whom it was not robbery, *did not think it robbery to be equal to God*. So if not robbery, then nature, unbroken fellowship and that supreme agreement.¹⁵ But what did he do? *He emptied himself, he says, taking the form of a servant; being made into the likeness of men, and found in condition as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the death, the death indeed of the cross* (Phil 2:7-8).

It wasn't enough to say death, he even indicated the kind of death. Why even the kind of death? Because many people are prepared for death. Many, I mean, say, "I'm not afraid to die, but I would like to die in my bed, surrounded by children, grandchildren, the tears of my wife." Such people indeed appear not to shrink from death, but by choosing the kind of death, they are convicted¹⁶ of fear. Christ, though, chose the kind of death, but one that is worse than all others. Just as people choose a better sort of death for themselves, so he chose the worst kind, one that was abominable to all Jews. He wasn't afraid to die, you see, through false witnesses and the sentence of a judge, though he is going to come to judge the living and the dead. He wasn't afraid to die disgracefully on the cross, in order to deliver all believers from all kinds of disgrace. So *he became obedient to the death, the death indeed of the cross*; yet by nature he is equal to God; strong in the power of his greatness, weak in the compassion of his humanity; strong, in order to make all things; weak, in order to remake all things.

If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I am going to the Father

4. So notice what John writes: *If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I am going to the Father; since the Father is greater than I* (Jn 14:28). How is he equal, then, as the apostle says; as the Lord himself says, *I and the Father are one* (Jn 10:30); and in another place, *Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father* (Jn 14:9)? How then here, *because the Father is greater than I*? These words,

brothers and sisters, as far as the Lord inspires us to observe, were those of one somehow both chiding and consoling. You see, they were fixated on the man, and unable to think of him as God. The time they would think of him as God would be if the man were removed from their sight; this would cut short the familiarity they had acquired with him in the flesh, and so they would learn at least through his absence in the flesh to think about his divinity.

That's why he says this to them: *If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I am going to the Father.*

Why?

So that when I go to the Father, you may be able to think of me as equal to the Father. The reason, you see, that *he is greater than I*, is that while you can still see me in the flesh, the Father is still greater than I am.

See if you've grasped this; I mean, they only knew how to think of him as a man. I'll say it a little more plainly, for the sake of our slower brothers and sisters; while those who have understood must bear with the slowness of the rest, and imitate the Lord himself, *who, though he was in the form of God, humbled himself, becoming obedient to the death* (Phil 2:6.8).

If you loved me: What's this, *If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I am going to the Father*? What else is *If you loved me*, but "You don't love me"? So what do you love? The flesh which you can see. That's what you don't want withdrawn from your sight. *If, however, you loved me—what's me? In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (Jn 1:1), which is what John himself says. So if you loved me like that, in the way that all things were made through me,¹⁷ *you would rejoice, since I am going to the Father. Why? Since the Father is greater than I*. While you can still see me on earth, the Father is greater than I am. Let me withdraw from your eyes; let the mortal flesh be removed from your sight, the flesh which was taken on because of your mortality; just begin not seeing this garment, which I assumed in humility; let it be lifted up to heaven, so that you may learn what to hope for.

You see, he didn't leave behind here the tunic he had been willing to don here; because if he had left it behind here, they would all have despaired of the resurrection of the flesh. I mean, even now he has lifted it up to heaven, and there are people who have doubts about the resurrection of the flesh. If God exhibited this in himself, is he going to deny it to man? God, after all, received flesh out of compassion, man at his creation. And yet he did show it, he confirmed their faith, and lifted it up. But once his fleshly appearance had been removed from their sight, they didn't now see him as a man. If there was any trace in their hearts of fleshly yearning, it was presumably saddened in them. Still, they all gathered together in one place, and began to pray. He for his part was going to send them after this event, and an interval of ten days, the Holy Spirit, so that the Holy Spirit might fill them with a spiritual love, removing their fleshly yearnings. In this way he was already making them understand Christ as the Word of God, God with God, *through whom all things were made* (Jn 1:1-3).

They couldn't, however, be filled with such an understanding, unless the

object of their fleshly love¹⁸ had first withdrawn from their sight. And that's why he said, *If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I am going to the Father, since the Father is greater than I.* Greater than me as man, equal to me as God; equal as regards nature, greater as regards the Son's compassion. He humbled him, you see, not only below himself, but also below the angels, as scripture says.¹⁹ He isn't less, even if by taking on flesh he seems²⁰ to have receded a little from equality with the Father, from which in fact he never receded; but by accepting flesh (he accepted man, you see), he wasn't changed.

Just as someone who accepts a garment isn't turned into the garment, but remains himself, completely human inside; and if a senator accepted a slave's garment, if perhaps he can't enter the prison to comfort someone in chains there, wearing his senatorial clothes, he accepts the prison dress; he looks squalidly dressed out of humanity, but inwardly he keeps his senatorial dignity all the more intact, for the great compassion that made him willing to put on what involved humiliation. In this way the Lord too, while remaining God, remaining the Word, remaining wisdom, remaining the divine power,²¹ remaining in control of the heavens, remaining in command of the earth, filling the angels, entire everywhere, entire in the world, entire in the patriarchs, entire in the prophets, entire in all the saints, entire in the virgin's womb, in order to put on flesh, in order to join it together to himself as his bride, so that he might *proceed like a bridegroom from his chamber* (Ps 19:5), so that he might betroth the Church *as a chaste virgin* (2 Cor 11:2).²² So that's the reason he is less than the Father, because he is man; but equal to the Father, because he is God.

So away with fleshly yearnings from your midst. As though this is what he was saying to his apostles: "You don't want to let me go—as nobody wants to let a friend go, as though you were saying, 'Stay with us a little while, our souls are refreshed when we see you'; but it is better that you should not see this flesh, and should turn your thoughts to my divinity. I am removing myself from you outwardly, and filling you with myself inwardly." I mean to say, can Christ enter the heart in the flesh and with the flesh? It's in his divinity that he possesses the heart (in the flesh he speaks to the heart through the eyes, and instructs it from outside); dwelling within, so that we may be converted inwardly and be brought to life from him, and formed from him, because he is the unformed form of everything there is.

Why it was forty days that Christ spent with his disciples after the resurrection

5. So if Christ spent forty days with his disciples, it was not without reason that it was forty days he spent. Perhaps twenty would have been enough, thirty would have been enough; forty days represent the divine management of the whole of this age. I've talked about this before sometimes, in connection with the number ten multiplied by four. Those of you who have heard it before, I'm just refreshing your memories. The number ten, you see, signifies the totality of wisdom. This wisdom has been deployed through the four quarters of the world, throughout the whole globe; and times also are divided in a fourfold arrange-

ment. The year, I mean, has four seasons, and the world has its four cardinal points. So ten multiplied by four makes the number forty.

Now the reason the Lord fasted for forty days,²³ was to show us that the faithful must abstain from all corruption, as long as they are in this world. Elijah fasted for forty days, representing the prophets as a whole, to show that the same lesson is taught by the prophets. Moses fasted for forty days,²⁴ representing the law, to show that this lesson is also taught in the law. The people of Israel were led for forty years round the desert.²⁵ It was for forty days that the ark was tossed about in the flood,²⁶ and the ark is the Church, constructed from planks that cannot rot.²⁷ The planks that cannot rot are the souls of the saints and the just. But it contains both clean and unclean living beings,²⁸ because as long as the Church is living in this world, and being cleansed by baptism as by the flood, it cannot help having both good and bad members; and that's why that ark contained both clean and unclean animals. But after Noah had disembarked from it, he didn't offer to God in sacrifice any but clean animals.²⁹ From which we are meant to gather that in this ark³⁰ there are both clean and unclean living beings, but that after this flood³¹ God only accepts those who have made themselves clean. So then, brothers and sisters, regard the whole of this time that can be seen as forty days. For the whole of this time, as long as we are here, the ark is in the flood; as long as Christians are being baptized, and being cleansed by water, the ark appears to be floating on the waves, the ark which remained in the water for forty days.

The Lord, however, by staying with his disciples for forty days, was pleased to indicate that throughout this time faith in the incarnation of Christ is necessary for all; necessary precisely for the weak. If there were already an eye which could see *In the beginning was the Word* (Jn 1:1), which could see, could grasp, could embrace, could enjoy this, there wouldn't be any need for *the Word to become flesh and dwell amongst us* (Jn 1:14). But because the inner eye had already had the dust of sin thrown in it, blinding it and disabling it from grasping and enjoying that, there was no longer any means by which the Word could be understood; and so the Word agreed to become flesh, to purify the organ by which he could later be seen, which he can't be just yet.

So the provision of the flesh of Christ is necessary for the faithful for this life, so that by it they may wend their way to the Lord; but when you come to the sight of that Word, no more fleshly provision will be needed. And that's why his presence in the flesh among them for forty days after the resurrection was necessary; it was to demonstrate that faith in the incarnation of Christ is necessary as long as the ark is being taught in this life how to float on the waters of the flood. Look, brothers and sisters, this is what I am saying: believe that³² Jesus Christ, born of the virgin Mary, crucified, has risen again. There is no need for us to inquire about after this age, because we have already accepted that in faith; let us hold onto it,³³ it's necessary for our weakness.

So then, think about the charity of that hen, which is protecting our weakness;³⁴ think of it as the beast of that kind-hearted passer-by, onto which he lifted the sick man who had been wounded.³⁵ He lifted him up, you see, but onto what?

Onto his own beast. The Lord's beast is his flesh. So when this age has passed, what is going to be said to you? Because you have rightly believed in the flesh of Christ, enjoy now the greatness and divinity of Christ. He was needed as weak by the weak, he will be needed as strong by the strong.

As long as you are in the flesh, believe in Christ incarnate

6. Because you too have to lay aside this weakness, according to what you heard from the apostle: *This perishable thing must put on imperishability, and this mortal thing put on immortality* (1 Cor 15:53); because *flesh and blood*, he says, *shall not gain possession of the kingdom of God* (1 Cor 15:50).

“Why shall they not gain possession of it? Because the flesh won't rise again?”

Perish the thought! The flesh will rise again, but what does it become? It's changed, and it becomes a heavenly and angelic body. Angels don't have flesh, do they?³⁶ But this is the difference, that it is this flesh which will rise again, this very flesh which is buried, which dies; this very flesh that can be seen, can be handled, that needs to eat and drink in order to last; that gets sick, suffers pain and grief; it's this that has to rise again, to everlasting punishments for the bad, while for the good, to be transformed.³⁷ When it's been transformed, what will it become? It will now be called a heavenly body, not mortal flesh, because *this perishable thing must put on imperishability, and this mortal thing put on immortality*.

But people are astonished if God makes a heavenly body out of flesh, though he made everything out of nothing. The Lord, present in the flesh, made wine from water,³⁸ and is it so astonishing if he can make a heavenly body out of flesh? So don't have any doubts about God having the power to do that. For angels to be, there was nothing; but it's by his great power that they are what they are. If he could make you when you didn't yet exist, can't he repair what you were, and can't he reward your faith with the honor of glorification, on account of his own incarnation? So when all this has passed away, the thing that John says will come our way: *Beloved, we are children of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be; we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, since we shall see him as he is* (1 Jn 3:2). Meanwhile, prepare yourselves for this vision; as long as you are in the flesh, believe in Christ incarnate, and believe in such a way, that you cannot be led astray by any falsehood.

Truth, after all, never lies; I mean, if it does, where can we go for counsel? What can we do? Who are we to believe? So Truth, the true Word, true Wisdom, the true Power of God,³⁹ *the Word, became flesh* (Jn 1:14), true flesh. *Feel and see*, he says, *that a spirit does not have bones and sinews, as you can see that I have* (Lk 24:39). They were true bones, you see, true sinews, true scars; it was something real that was being touched, something real that was being understood. It was a man being touched, God being understood; flesh being touched, wisdom being understood; weakness being touched, power being understood. The whole of it true and real.

Yet the next thing that happened was that the flesh, that is the head, went

before us into heaven. The other members will follow. Why? Because it's right that these members should get some sleep for a while, and that they should all rise again in their time. If the Lord had also wanted to rise then, at the end, there would be no one for us to believe in. The reason he wished to deliver *the firstfruits of them that sleep* (1 Cor 15:20) to God in his own person, was so that you could see in him what has been restored, and hope in yourself for what is to be granted. The whole people of God will be equated and associated with the angels.

So don't let anybody say to you, brothers and sisters, "The silly Christians believe that the flesh will rise again; who ever rises, or who has ever risen again? Or who has ever come back here from the underworld, and told you about it?" Christ has come back from there. Miserable man! Perverse and preposterous human heart! If his own grandfather rose again, he would believe him; the Lord of the world has risen again, and he is unwilling to believe.

The mystery of the Trinity and of the incarnation

7. And so, my brothers and sisters, hold on to the true, genuine, Catholic faith. The Son is equal to the Father; the gift of God the Holy Spirit is equal to the Father; and that's why Father and Son and Holy Spirit are one God, not three gods;⁴⁰ they are not attached to each other in grades, but united in majesty, and one God. But all the same, for our sakes the Son, *the Word, became flesh and dwelt among us* (Jn 1:14). *He did not think it robbery to be equal to God, but he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, and being found in condition as a man* (Phil 2:6-7).

And to show you, brothers and sisters, that this Trinity really is equal, and that we only have the words, *The Father is greater than I*, on account of the flesh which the Lord took on; why is it never said about the Holy Spirit, "He is less"? It's because he never took on flesh. Consider what I've said. Search all the scriptures, turn all its pages, read all its verses; you will never find that the Holy Spirit is less than God. So only that one was called less, who for our sakes became less, in order that through him we might be made greater.

NOTES

1. The date suggested by Fischer, Kunzelmann and la Bonnardière is more indefinite: 413-420; I have taken the average. But I am not in fact convinced that they are right. Two things make me wonder if it should not be dated to about 20 years earlier: first its length, for such a feast day as the Ascension; secondly the opening section, in which he says he can only preach a short sermon (!), because so many of his congregation are so keen to get back to their interminable dinners. And this last rather acid remark turns my thoughts to the sermon, or rather sermons, he writes about in Letter 29, when in 395 he had successfully preached against the drunken banquets with which they had been accustomed to honor Saint Leontius. His feast, 4 May, always fell close to the Ascension, and

sometimes coincided with it. See Sermon 262, note 3. So a date like 387 would seem to me to be rather more probable.

2. *Sacramenta*.

3. A deliberate contrast to the honorific “your holinesses” of the next sentence. The whole tone here, and that of the rest of the section, smacks to my mind of the earlier Augustine, still rather brash and full of himself, not yet the more mellowed bishop of later years.

4. For the word of God, not for their dinners.

5. *Sacramentum*.

6. Thomas; see Jn 20:25.

7. This sounds odd; one always assumes Ascension day is 40 days after Easter, after the resurrection. But in fact Luke says, Acts 1:3, “to whom he showed himself alive after he suffered . . . being seen by them for forty days.” The common assumption, all the same, interprets the verse correctly, because the first sight of him was on Easter day. But one can see where Augustine got his idea from.

8. See Acts 1:3-4; 10:40-41; also 1:21. See Sermon 263A, note 9.

9. See Mt 16:22.

10. See Mt 23:27; Lk 13:34. In Sermon 105, 11 he expands the picture, explaining how the hen “enfeebles herself”; by ruffling her feathers, clucking, drooping, etc.

11. See Jn 1:1-3.

12. See Phil 2:6.

13. Reading *qua* instead of the text’s *quia*, because.

14. Form meaning basically “shape”; my shape must be co-extensive with me, or it wouldn’t be my shape.

15. Of the divine persons of the Trinity.

16. The text says *puniuntur de timore*, they are punished for fear. There is, as far as I know, no evidence that *puni* could mean “convict”; but that, surely, is what it must mean here. It could, perhaps, have replaced something like *convincuntur*; but it’s hard to see how.

17. See Jn 1:3.

18. He just says “their fleshly love,” *carnalis caritas*; but since he never supposes the eye or the sense of sight to be the seat of love, my interpretation is, I think, justified.

19. See Ps 8:5.

20. Reading *videtur* instead of the text’s *videtis*, you see that he has receded . . .

21. See 1 Cor 1:24.

22. He has quite forgotten how he began this sentence—and the precise point he wants to make.

23. See Lk 4:2.

24. See 1 Kgs 19:8; Ex 34:28.

25. See Nm 32:13.

26. See Gn 7:17. But Augustine is not interpreting this verse correctly; he is also ignoring 7:24, which says the waters prevailed over the earth for 150 days. What 7:17 must mean is that the rain, the deluge (Hebrew, *mabul*, the name for the “waters above the heavens”), went on for 40 days. But the chronology of the story in Gn 7 and 8 is hardly consistent with itself.

27. These are taken from the ark of the covenant, Ex 25:10; Dt 10:3, where the Hebrew *shittim* wood becomes in the Greek *aseptic* wood. See Sermon 260C, note 6.

28. *Animalia*. But I don’t think it is sufficient to translate this as “animals” here, though it will be at the end of the sentence. Here he is talking about what the Church contains, and he has just mentioned the souls, the *animae*, of the saints and the just; and now these *animalia* clearly echo those *animae*. They are animated beings, ensouled beings—which is, of course, what animals are. But none of this can be said (except in long-winded, painstaking notes) in English.

29. See Gn 8:20.

30. He means the Church now.

31. The present age.

32. Omitting *in* from the text. It makes an unconstruable sentence, which would go something

like this in English: "believe in Jesus Christ has risen again." I presume it slipped in from the subconscious while a copyist's attention was distracted.

33. Reading *teneamus* instead of the text's *tenemus*, we hold on to it.

34. See Lk 13:34.

35. See Lk 10:30-34; the good Samaritan, whom the Fathers always identify with Jesus.

36. But, according to Augustine, and perhaps most of his contemporaries, they do have bodies—airy ones. So our heavenly bodies after the resurrection are going to be something like theirs, but as a result of the transformation of *this* very flesh.

37. Reading *ut commutetur* instead of the text's *ut commutentur*, for them to be transformed. But all the time he is specifically taking about the flesh, and continues to do so.

38. See Jn 2:1-10.

39. All names for the Word, of course. See Jn 14:6 and 1 Cor 1:24.

40. Equality, he is saying, implies unity. In creatures, of course, it doesn't; it presupposes multiplicity. But in the divine sphere, given the absolute simplicity of the divine nature, it does.

SERMON 265

ON THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Date: 412¹

The Lord spent forty days with his disciples after his resurrection to build up their faith in it

1. On this solemn feast day my business is to refresh the memories of those of you who are well informed, and to instruct those who aren't as interested as they might be. It's the Lord's ascent into heaven that we are solemnly celebrating today. The Lord our Savior, you see, having laid aside his body, and received his body back again, showed himself to his disciples after he had risen from the dead, since they had despaired of him when he died. So he gave himself back to their eyes to gaze upon, to their hands to touch and feel, thus building up their faith by presenting them with the truth. But it was scarcely enough for human frailty and the uncertainty and hesitancy of the weak, just to present them with so great a miracle on one day only, and then withdraw it; so he lived with them on earth, as we heard when the book of the Acts of the Apostles was being read, he lived with them on earth for forty days, going in and coming out, eating and drinking;² this was to drive home the reality, not because he was under any necessity. So on the fortieth day itself, which we are celebrating today, as they watched and escorted him with their eyes, he ascended into heaven.³

Our sin was our ruin; our price, the blood of Christ; our hope, the resurrection of Christ; its realization, the coming of Christ

2. So there they were, astonished at seeing him ascend, and yet rejoicing at his going up above; the head going first, you see, gives hope to the members; and then they heard the voice of angels: *Men of Galilee, why are you standing here, gazing up to heaven? This Jesus will come in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven* (Acts 1:11). What's will come in the same way? Will come in that same form,⁴ in order to fulfill what was written, *They will see the one whom they pierced* (Zec 12:10). That's how he will come. He will come to men, he will come, a man; but it is God who will come as a man. He will come as true man and God, in order to make men into gods.

The heavenly judge has ascended, the heavenly herald has blown the trumpet.⁵ Let's see to it we have a good case, so that we need not be afraid of the judgment to come. He has ascended, you see; those who have proclaimed it to us saw it. Those who didn't see it have believed it. Others haven't believed, and have mocked. *For not all have faith* (2 Thes 3:2). And because all don't have faith, and *God knows who are his* (2 Tm 2:19), what's the point of arguing about God ascending into heaven? Let us be astonished, rather, at God's descending into hell.⁶ Let us be astonished at the death of Christ, but as for his resurrection let us rather praise it than be astonished at it. Our sin was our ruin; our price, the blood of Christ; our hope, the resurrection of Christ; its realization, the coming of Christ. So he's seated at the right hand of the Father, and is to be awaited until he comes. Let our soul, thirsting for him, say to him *When will you come?* (Ps 101:2); and, *My soul has been thirsting for the living God* (Ps 42:2). When will he come? He will come; but when? You want him to come; if only he finds you ready!

The disciples, like us, were anxious to know when he would come

3. We mustn't think, however, that we are the only ones to have had this desire about our Lord, and to say, "When will he come?" His disciples too had the same desire. If I could tell you, all agog as you are, expectant, in suspense, longing to know when the Lord our God is coming; if I could tell you, what sort of man would I strike you as being?⁸ But if you don't have any hopes of being able to hear this from me—well, if you do have such hopes, it's very silly of you! Certainly if you had the Lord Jesus Christ himself present in the body, before your very eyes and before your very hands, alive and talking, I know you would question him because of this desire, and would say to him, "Lord, when are you going to come?"

Well, the disciples themselves questioned the Lord Jesus Christ when he was present. You can't question him as they did; still, hear what they heard. Yes of course, they were there then, we didn't yet exist; but still, if we believe them, they questioned him for us as well, they heard his answer for us as well. So the disciples of Christ, who were going to accompany Christ with their gaze as he ascended, questioned him and said to him, *Lord, if at this time you will present yourself.*⁹ To whom were they saying it? To one they could see, one present with them. *If at this time you will present yourself?* And what can that mean? Couldn't they see him present? Couldn't they hear him present? Couldn't they touch him present? So what can this mean, *if at this time you will present yourself*, but that they knew the future judgment to be the presence of Christ, when he would be seen both by his own and by all others?

I mean, when he rose again, he was only seen by his own followers. So this is what they knew, and faithfully held onto, that a time would come when the one who had been judged would be the judge, when the one who had been rejected would do the testing, the accepting and the rejecting;¹⁰ when he would be plainly visible to men and women of either sort, and would place some on

the right, some on the left, preparatory to saying what both sorts would hear, to offering what only one sort would receive, to threatening what only one sort would dread. They knew it was going to come; but they were asking when. “*If at this time you will present yourself? Not of course just to us, because we can see you even now; but present yourself also to those who have not believed in you.*”

*If at this time you will present yourself, tell us, and when the kingdom of Israel?*¹¹ That’s what they asked. *If at this time you will present yourself, and when the kingdom of Israel?* What kingdom? The one about which we say, *Your kingdom come* (Mt 6:10). Which kingdom? The one about which those set on the right are going to hear, *Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the origin of the world* (Mt 25:34); when he is also going to say to the ones on the left, *Go into the eternal fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels* (Mt 25:41). Terrible words, terrifying words; but, *The just will be held in eternal memory; he will not fear for an evil hearing* (Ps 112:6-7). For these ones this, for those ones that; in each case true, because in each case just.

Christ’s reply

4. But let’s hear whether they heard what they were asking for; if they didn’t hear it, let’s hold onto what they did hear. And let us not be afraid of what is to come. *Lord, if at this time you will present yourself?* Let us imagine too that we can see the Lord present here in the body, and let’s say to him, *Lord, if at this time you will present yourself, and when the kingdom of Israel?* (Acts 1:6). When the kingdom of your own people, when the kingdom of the humble, how long the arrogance of the proud? Certainly that’s what you were asking, that’s what you were longing to hear. Let’s see what answer he gave. The lambs shouldn’t scorn to listen to what the rams heard. Let’s hear what the Lord himself said. To whom? To Peter, John, Andrew, James, the others, all so great, so worthy of respect; but made worthy by him, after he had found them quite unworthy.

What answer did he give them when they said, *If at this time you will present yourself, and when the kingdom of Israel?* *It is not for you to know the times, which the Father has placed under his own authority* (Acts 1:7). What is this? Peter’s told, *It’s not for you*, and you there say, “*It’s for me*”? *It is not for you to know the times, which the Father has placed under his own authority.* What you believe, you are right to believe: that it is going to come; when it’s going to come, what’s that to you? Whenever it comes, see you’re ready for it. *It is not for you to know the times, which the Father has placed under his own authority.* Let curiosity take her departure, piety take her place. What business is it of yours when he comes? Live as though he were going to come today; and you won’t be afraid, when he does come.

Christ's skill as a teacher

5. But notice the method and teaching skill of the good master, the one and only master. He didn't tell them what they were asking about, and he did tell them what they weren't asking about. He knew, after all, that it wasn't expedient for them to know what they were asking about; but what he knew was expedient for them, he told them even though they weren't asking about it. *It is not for you, he said, to know the times.* What have the times got to do with you? All this is being done,¹² so that you may escape times, and you ask about the times. *It is not for you to know the times, which the Father has placed under his own authority* (Acts 1:7).

And it's as if they said to him, "What is it for us to know?" Now let's hear what is supremely our business, now let's hear it. A question was asked which it wasn't right to answer; but something was said which it is right to hear. *It is not for you to know the times, which the Father has placed under his own authority.* But what is it for you to know?

The disciples ask about the time of the judgment, and the Lord replies about the place of the Church

6. *But you shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming down upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me.* Where? *In Jerusalem.* It followed logically that this is what we should hear, because by these words the Church is being proclaimed, the Church being commended to us, unity being announced, division being denounced.¹³ The apostles were told, *You shall be witnesses to me;* the faithful are told, the vessels of God are told, *the vessels of mercy* (Rom 9:23) are told, *You shall be witnesses to me.* Where? *In Jerusalem, where I was killed, and in the whole of Judea and Samaria, and as far as the ends of the earth* (Acts 1:8).

There's what you are to hear, there's what you are to hold onto. Be the bride, and wait for the bridegroom without anxiety. The Church is the bride. Where was it foretold she would be, the bride whom those witnesses announced, where was it foretold she would be? Many people, you see, are going to say, "Look, she's here." I would pay heed to that, if there wasn't someone else also saying, "Look, she's here."

What do you say?

"Look, she's here."

I was already on my way to you; but someone else calls me back with the same words: "Look, she's here." You on one side, "Look, she's here"; someone else on the other side, "Look, she's here." Let's ask the Lord, let's appeal to the Lord. Let the parties, the parts, keep silent, let us hear the whole.¹⁴

One says from one corner, "Look, she's here"; the other from another corner, "No, but look, she's here." You, Lord, say your say; declare yourself who is the one you redeemed, show who is the one you loved. We've been invited to your wedding, show us your bride, or we may upset your exchange of vows with our dispute.

He does say, very clearly, he shows us clearly, he doesn't disappoint inquirers, he doesn't love disputers. He says it to his disciples, and he says it to them though they aren't asking about it, because he wants to contradict those who are being contentious about it.¹⁵ And the reason, perhaps, the apostles weren't asking about it, was that Christ's flock was not yet being divided up by rustlers. We have experienced the pains and sorrows of division, let us earnestly, painstakingly, seek the coagulant, the rennet, of unity.¹⁶

The apostles ask about the time of the judgment, and the Lord replies about the place of the Church. He didn't answer their question, but he did foresee our pains and sorrows. *You shall be*, he says, *witnesses to me in Jerusalem*.

"That's not enough; you didn't pay such a huge price just for that, just to buy that only: *in Jerusalem*. Say some more."

And as far as the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

You've come to the ends of the earth; why don't you put an end to your disputes? Don't let anyone say to me anymore, "Look, she's here. No, but look, here she is." Let human presumption be silent, the divine proclamation be heard, the genuine promise be accepted: *in Jerusalem, and in the whole of Judea and Samaria, and as far as the ends of the earth*. When he had said that, *a cloud received him* (Acts 1:9). There was no need now for anything to be added, in case anything else should be thought of.

Christ's last will and testament for the unity of the Church

7. Brothers and sisters, the last words of a parent already sinking into the grave are usually listened to with the greatest respect and seriousness, and are the last words of the Lord as he ascends into heaven to be treated lightly? Let us suppose our Lord wrote a will, and in his will placed his last words. He foresaw, you see, the future disputes of bad sons, he foresaw people striving to make portions for themselves of someone else's property. Why, after all, shouldn't they divide up what they never bought? Yes, why shouldn't they cut up what they gave no price for?¹⁷ He, though, didn't want the tunic to be divided that was woven from the top, with no seam anywhere; it was to be won by lot.¹⁸ That garment was an advertisement for unity, that garment was a declaration of charity, it is charity itself, woven from the top; from the earth comes cupidity; from above, from the top, comes charity.

Come now, brothers;¹⁹ the Lord has written his will, he has added his last words. Take note of it, I implore you, and let it move you as it moves us; let it move you, if that is at all possible.

Christ, twice glorified, twice gives the Holy Spirit

8. Christ has been twice glorified with respect to the form of the man he took to himself; first, by rising from the dead on the third day; next, by ascending into heaven before the eyes of his disciples. There are these two glorifications of his, to which our attention is being drawn, which have already taken place.

There remains one more to come, it too in the sight of men, when he presents himself in judgment. Now about the Holy Spirit John the evangelist had this to say: *But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified* (Jn 7:39). *But the Spirit had not yet been given; why had it not yet been given? Because Jesus had not yet been glorified.* So it was expected that when Jesus was glorified the Spirit would be given.

Very properly then, being twice glorified, by rising again and ascending, did he twice give the Spirit. What he gave was one, he himself who gave it was one, he gave it to the unity,²⁰ and yet he gave it twice. The first time, when he said to his disciples after he had risen again, *Receive the Holy Spirit* (Jn 20:22). And he breathed into their faces. There you have it once. Next he promises that he is still going to send the Holy Spirit, and he says, *You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming down upon you* (Acts 1:8); and in another place, *Stay in the city; for I am to fulfill the promise of my Father, which you have heard, he said, from my mouth.*²¹ After he had ascended, and they had spent ten days there, he sent the Holy Spirit. That's the solemnity of Pentecost that is coming.

Why the Holy Spirit was given twice

9. Look here, my brothers and sisters; someone may ask me, "Why did he give the Holy Spirit twice?" Many people have said many things about it, and inquired about it as people do; and they've said things that are not against the faith; one this, another that, neither of which should go beyond the standard of truth. If I say I know why he gave the Spirit twice, I will be lying to you. I don't know. If one says one knows what one doesn't, one's being rash; if one denies one knows what one does, one's being ungrateful. So I confess to you, I am still trying to find out why the Lord gave the Holy Spirit twice; I'm longing to reach greater certainty on the point. May the Lord help me, while you pray for me, so that what he is pleased to grant me, I may pass on to you as well. So I don't know. What I think, however, while still not knowing, still not being certain, as I am absolutely certain that he did give it; so what I think, I won't keep to myself. If it's the answer, may the Lord confirm it; if there's another that may seem to be more true, may the Lord grant us to know it.²²

So I think, but it's only what I think, that the reason the Holy Spirit was given twice was to impress on us the two commandments of charity. There are two commandments, you see, and there's one charity: *You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul;* and, *You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depends the whole law, and the prophets* (Mt 22:37-40). One charity, and two commandments; one Spirit and two givings. I mean, it wasn't one given first and another given later on; because it is not a different charity which loves the neighbor from the one which loves God. So it's not another charity. With the same charity as we love our neighbor with, let us also love God. But because God is one thing, our neighbor another, they are loved with one charity, and yet they are not one thing being loved.

So while love of God is the great commandment that first has to be impressed on us, love of neighbor the second, one begins all the same from the second in order to attain to the first: *For if you do not love the brother whom you can see, how will you be able to love God, whom you cannot see?* (1 Jn 4:20). And that's why, perhaps, in order to activate or mold us to the love of neighbor, it was while he was still visible on earth and very much neighbor to neighbors, that he gave the Holy Spirit by breathing in their faces; and then from this supreme²³ charity which is in heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit from heaven. Receive the Holy Spirit on earth, and you love your brother; receive the Holy Spirit from heaven, and you love God. Christ gave it on earth, but what he gave is from heaven. The one who gave it, after all, is the one who came down from heaven. Here he found the ones to give it to, but it was from there that he brought what he would give.

Charity the gift of the Holy Spirit

10. So what's the case, brothers and sisters? Or do I perhaps have to remind you of this too, how charity belongs to the Holy Spirit? Listen to Paul: *Not only so, he says, but we also glory in our afflictions, knowing that affliction leads to patience, patience to approval, approval though to hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the charity of God has been poured out in our hearts* (Rom 5:3-5). Where has the charity of God been poured out from in our hearts? Where from? What were you crediting yourself with? Why were you presuming it came somehow from your own resources? *For what do you have that you have not received?* (1 Cor 4:7). So where from, if not as it goes on, *through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5)?

This charity only to be possessed in the unity of the Church

11. This charity can only be possessed in the unity of the Church. The makers of division don't have it, as the apostle Jude says: *These are the ones who set themselves apart, worldly²⁴ people, not having the Spirit* (Jude 19). *Who set themselves apart.* Why do they? Because they are *worldly, not having the Spirit.* That's why they trickle away, because they lack the coagulant of charity. That hen is full of charity, when it enfeebles itself for the sake of its chicks, lowering its voice to the cheeps of the chicks, ruffling its feathers: *How often, he says, have I wished to gather your children?* (Lk 13:34). To gather, not to divide. Because, he says, *I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I have to bring them along too, so that there may be one flock and one shepherd* (Jn 10:16).

How right he was not to listen to the brother appealing to him against his brother, and saying, *Lord, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me* (Lk 12:13)! *Lord, he says, tell my brother.* Tell him what? *To divide the inheritance with me.* And the Lord answers, *Tell me, man.* Why, after all, do you want to divide it, except because you are a man? *For when one person says, I am Paul's follower, and another, I'm Apollo's, are you not men?* (1 Cor 3:4). *Tell me, man, who set me up as a divider of the inheritance between you?* I came to gather

together, not to divide. *Therefore*, he says, *I tell you all, beware of all cupidity* (Lk 13:13-15). Cupidity, you see, desires to divide, just as charity does to gather together. In any case, what is *Beware of all cupidity*, but “Be filled with charity”? Let us, who have charity in our little measure, appeal to the Lord against our brother, just as that man did against his brother; but not with those words, that request. I mean, he says, *Lord, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me*. We say, “Lord, tell my brother to possess the inheritance with me.”²⁵

The unity of the Church commended to us by Christ

12. So consider, brothers and sisters, what it is that you should love supremely, what you should hold on to with all your strength. The Lord, glorified by rising again, commends the Church to us; on the point of being glorified by ascending into heaven, he commends the Church to us; sending the Holy Spirit from heaven, he commends the Church to us. When he rises again, after all, what does he say to his disciples? *These are the things I told you while I was still with you, that it was necessary for everything to be fulfilled that is written about me in the law and the prophets and the psalms. And then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them: Since thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead on the third day. Where is the commendation of the Church? And for repentance and the forgiveness of sins to be preached in his name. And where was that to be? Through all nations, with you beginning from Jerusalem* (Lk 24:44-47). That’s when he was glorified by his resurrection.

What about when he was on the point of being glorified by his ascension? What you heard: *You shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in the whole of Judea and Samaria, and as far as the ends of the earth* (Acts 1:8). What about with the coming of the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit came; those whom he first filled started speaking in the tongues of all nations.²⁶ Each man speaking all languages—what else could it mean but unity in all languages?

Let us hold on to this, be confirmed in this, be stiffened and strengthened in this, fixed solidly in this with unshaken charity, and in this way let us praise, boys, the Lord, and say *alleluia*. But just in one part? And where from? And how far? *From the rising of the sun to the setting, praise the name of the Lord* (Ps 113:2-3).

NOTES

1. So Fischer, Kunzelmann, and la Bonnardière, Ascension day in 412 being on 25 May. An alternative date, suggested by Monceaux, is before 405. This has much to be said for it; the length of the sermon for one thing—my impression is that Augustine, unlike most of us, grew less garrulous

the older he got; and its preoccupation with the Donatists for another. But there can, of course, be no certain inferences and conclusions, and the majority vote must be given its due.

2. See Acts 1:21; 10:41.

3. See Acts 1:3-10.

4. The form of a servant, Phil 2:7.

5. That is, the angels.

6. See the Apostles' Creed.

7. Reading *quando venies*, making it a quotation from the psalm, instead of *quando veniet*, when will he come.

8. And what sort of answer did he expect to this rhetorical question? A magician, I suppose, or a prophet; but it doesn't relate very obviously to the way in which he continues.

9. A most peculiar variant, which Augustine's text had of Acts 1:6, *si praesentaberis*.

10. More effective in the Latin: *quando reprobatus probaret et reprobaret*.

11. This is the full idiosyncratic reading of that verse 6; "will present yourself, tell us, and when," *praesentaberis, dic nobis, et quando*, has been got out of the one Greek word, *apokathistaneis*, will restore. It is certainly very mysterious. The *dic nobis* could be, and probably was, Augustine's free amplification of the text.

12. The whole action of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension.

13. An attack on the Donatists is being prepared. While in a sense the Donatist issue was settled at the Carthage Conference in 411, this doesn't mean that after that date Augustine didn't bother to preach about it. So the fact of his doing so here only marginally favors the earlier date mentioned in note 1.

14. The parties, the parts, the sides—all *partes* in the Latin. Augustine's consistent name for the Donatists was the *pars Donati*. The part is contrasted with the whole, the universal Church, which is here identified with Christ, being in fact with him "the whole Christ."

15. An untranslatable play on words: . . . *et non quaerentibus dicit, quia contententibus contradicit*.

16. A truly ecumenical aim! But in his days both tactics and strategy for achieving unity were very different. What Augustine clearly means here by the *coagulum* of unity is the whole range of scriptural texts he regularly quotes in this connection. But later on he refers to charity as the coagulant.

17. Ironical questions, of course.

18. See Jn 19:23-24. The seamless robe of Christ has always been seen as a figure of the Church, which Augustine here so characteristically calls both unity and charity.

19. Here he is directly addressing the Donatists, not the members of his congregation, and in particular, I imagine, the Donatist clergy. So I refrain this time from interpreting *fratres* as "brothers and sisters."

20. That is, to the Church.

21. This is in fact two places, which Augustine is conflating: Lk 24:49 and Acts 1:4.

22. An unusually long, but entirely characteristic piece of Augustinian hesitancy about the meaning of a scriptural text or fact.

23. Reading *maxima* instead of the text's *maxime*; which would mean practically the same thing, but less well put.

24. *Animales*, that is, people with only *anima* and no *spiritus* to quicken them. Paul's synonym for *animalis*, using the two interchangeably, is *carnalis*.

25. The brother in this case being the Donatists.

26. See Acts 2:4.

SERMON 265A

ON THE FORTIETH DAY, THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Date: 420¹

The ascension of Christ completes the mystery of the incarnation

1. The holy and solemn day of the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ has dawned today; *Let us exult and be glad on it* (Ps 118:24). Christ descended, the realms below lay open to him; Christ ascended, the realms above shone with his glory. Christ on the tree, let the madmen mock; Christ in the tomb, let the guards tell lies; Christ in the realms below, let those who are at rest be visited; Christ in heaven, let all the nations believe. So he must be the real author of our sermon, since he is the one who accomplishes our salvation.

I am not talking to you about anyone else, only about the one who was talking to us all just now from the gospel, and who was saying to his disciples as he was about to ascend to the Father, *These are the things I said to you, while I was still with you. But the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things, and will remind you of all the things that I have said. Let not your hearts be troubled, nor afraid. You heard what I told you; I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I* (Jn 14:25-28).

Christ is God above us, and at the same time man among us

2. You are well aware, brothers and sisters, that our Lord Jesus Christ became for our sakes what we are, but remained nevertheless in that form in which he is equal to the Father.² We believe, you see, that the Son of God came to share in our weakness, and yet did not lose his share in his own divine greatness. So this is our faith: he is God above us, while at the same time being man amongst us. But he did many things for our sakes in the form of the humanity which he took on, that were intended to conceal the divine nature which was hidden in him, and to manifest only the human nature, which was plain to see; and as a result many people, who were unable to perceive this and make the distinction, started heresies. Among them, and leading the field, are the Arians, who maintain that God the Father is greater than God the Son. Let Catholic truth give them a brief and clear answer.

God is great in power, not in size

3. What we ask them, you see, is in what way they call the Father greater than the Son. If they said in magnitude, that is in some bodily mass, as we say, for example, “This mountain is greater than that one,” or “That city is greater than the other”; then we answer them from the gospel that *God is spirit* (Jn 4:24), and that bodily realities cannot be compared with spiritual ones. Something can only be called greater or less, you see, when there is some definite bodily shape in each of them. But God is not extended in size, nor distinguished by the outlines of a body, nor enclosed in places, nor squeezed in narrow spaces, nor bounded by any limits. God is great, you see, not in size but in power. So let unworthy fancies, which clog the minds of the faithful with their images, be stilled and put to rest; let all familiarity with the flesh also be set aside; when we think of God, let no appearance of flesh occur to our eyes.

The Father is not greater than the Son in age

4. But then again, they say it is in time, that is in age, that the Father is greater than the Son; they declare, you see, that in no way can it happen that the one who begets and the one who is born are co-eval. It’s necessary, they say, that the one who begets should exist first, from whom the one who is born can in turn come to exist. And where do they get this assertion from, but from thoughts of flesh? They’ve learned this, after all, from what we are used to in human reproduction. They fail to consider that among human beings, where the son is inferior in age, the father is made weaker by old age. So if they go so far as to insist that the Father is older, they must equally admit that the Son is stronger. And if that is obviously an absurd idea to have about God, let them give up at last presenting divine secrets in human terms.

The truth illustrated from the example of light

5. But that sort of argument won’t be enough to convince them, unless we can point to something in the visible creation, where that which is born is co-eval with its begetter. So to dispel the darkness of this error, let us put forward a single lamp for comparison, which sheds its trembling light from its burning linen wick. It is fire, of course, that is burning; fire in substance, radiance in appearance. Yet it isn’t fire that is born of the radiance, but the radiance of the fire; and yet the fire was never there without its radiance, although the radiance is born of the fire. But from the very first moment that tiny fire started, it burst into flame together with its co-eval radiance. So radiance is co-eval with the fire of which it is born, and the radiance would of course be co-eternal, if the fire were eternal.

"The Father is greater than I" must be considered together with "I and the Father are one"

6. But God forbid that we should appear to do our Lord Jesus Christ an injustice with this very mean comparison. So we must show in the gospel where the Son himself either said in what form he is less than the Father, becoming obedient to the death (Phil 2:8), or showed himself to be equal to his begetter: *I and the Father are one* (Jn 10:30). They, you see, say to us on the contrary, "Look, the Son himself said, *The Father is greater than I* (Jn 14:28); and they don't take into account that he said this when established in the flesh, when as the divine psalm says, he was *made less*, not only than God the Father, but even *a little less than the angels* (Ps 8:5).

If that's the only thing they are willing to hear, why don't they pay attention to what he said himself on another occasion: *I and the Father are one*? And then they must consider why it was said: *The Father is greater than I*. As he was about to ascend, you see, to the Father, the disciples were saddened that he would be leaving them in his bodily form; and so he said to them, *What I told you: I am going to the Father, has filled your hearts with sadness. If you loved me you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; because the Father is greater than I* (Jn 16:6; 14:28). That amounts to saying, "The reason I am withdrawing from your sight this form of a servant, in which the Father is greater than I, is so that you may be able spiritually to see the Lord, once the form of a servant has been removed from in front of your eyes of flesh."

Other texts relating to the form of God and the form of servant

7. So on the one hand, because of the true form of a servant which he had taken, it was true what he said, *The Father is greater than I*, because obviously God is greater than man; and on the other hand, because of the true form of God³ in which he remained with the Father, it was true what he said, *I and the Father are one*. So he ascended to the Father insofar as he was a man, but he remained in the Father insofar as he was God, because he had come forth to us in the flesh without departing from the Father. What I am saying is, there ascended to the Father *the Word which had become flesh to dwell among us* (Jn 1:14). And he promised us his continued presence, saying, *Behold I am with you all days, until the consummation of the age* (Mt 28:20).

According to the form of God the apostle John says about him, *He is true God and life eternal* (1 Jn 5:20). According to the form of a servant the apostle Paul says about him, *Though he was in the form of God, he did not think it robbery to be equal to God; but he humbled himself, taking the form of a servant* (Phil 2:6-7). According to the form of God he says about himself, *I and the Father are one* (Jn 10:30); according to the form of a servant he says, *My soul is sorrowful unto death* (Mk 14:34). Where does that confidence come from, where this dread? That voice, surely, echoes his own proper substance, while this one springs from his share in the weakness he assumed.

Conclusion

8. So, dearly beloved, by having a prudent understanding about the scriptures, let us observe these distinctions while we read them. But while we are doing so, in case perhaps we should go wrong, let us ask the Lord himself for understanding.

NOTES

1. Fischer and Kunzelmann date this sermon to Ascension day, 16 May 418. But that must be wrong, because since their time Lambot and Perler have established beyond reasonable doubt that Sermon 261 was preached on that day, in Carthage. Fischer and Kunzelmann assign that sermon to 410; so one could just switch round and assign this sermon to that date. But 410 is really too early for a sermon against the Arians, who figured scarcely at all in the life of the African Church until the arrival of Gothic troops in the 420s, or a year or two earlier. So a date like 420 seems reasonable.

In fact, though, the authenticity of this sermon has been doubted, and reasonably so in my opinion. The Maurists knew it; but they printed it in the appendix to Augustine's works, among unauthentic sermons attributed to him. In this century Dom Morin reappraised it and pronounced it genuine. But as I say, my instincts support the Maurists. It is certainly Augustinian in its doctrine and tone; but all sorts of little points of style jar—that over-elaborate beginning for example, which could have come from Augustine newly ordained, but not from Augustine in his mid-sixties; and a certain clumsiness in the use of texts.

Now if it wasn't a sermon of Augustine's, then it could have been preached on Ascension day, 6 May 418. He was then in Carthage, attending a council. This could well have been a sermon by one of his senior clergy in Hippo, say the priest Heraclius, who was to succeed him as bishop. Or possibly (in another year) a sermon by one of his fellow bishops who was a keen admirer and disciple, like his lifelong friend Alypius, bishop of Thagaste, or Possidius, his first biographer.

2. See Phil 2:6.

3. See Phil 2:7.6.

SERMON 265B

ON THE FORTIETH DAY, THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Date: 396-397¹

*By his ascension Christ deposited in heaven the dwelling of flesh,
which he had fashioned for himself in the womb of the virgin*

1. After our Lord Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, he wished to give the most certain and trustworthy possible proof that he had risen again in the same body, in which he had hung on the cross; and so he spent forty days with his disciples, going in and coming out, eating and drinking.² In this way, you see, it was fitting both that the doubtful should be reassured, and the truth of the gospel be preached to later generations, that the faithful should be shown the imperishable immortality of his flesh in eternal bliss, and evil-minded men be refuted who hold and teach opinions about the Lord that are far from the truth. After rising again, you see, he ascended into heaven in the same body in which, after dying, he had visited the underworld.³ He now, that is, deposited in heaven that dwelling of his immortal flesh, which he had fashioned for himself in the womb of his virgin mother.

*The problem of how the Son of man can be said to have been
in heaven and to have come down from heaven*

2. Some people, certainly, find very surprising what the Lord said in the gospel, *Nobody has ascended into heaven, except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven* (Jn 3:13). How, they ask, can the Son of man be said to have come down from heaven, when it was here that he was taken on in the virgin's womb?⁴ People who say this are not to be rejected, but instructed; I think, you see, that they are raising this question out of piety, but are not yet able to understand what they are inquiring about. They don't realize, I mean, that the divinity took on the humanity in such a way as to become one person, God and man; and that the humanity was attached to the divinity in such a way that Word, soul, and flesh were the one Christ. And that's why it could be said, *Nobody has ascended into heaven, except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven.*

*The sharing of properties, the so-called
"communicatio idiomatum," between the two natures of Christ*

3. Each substance or nature, you see, shares with the other the names that are proper to itself, both divine names with the human nature, and human names with the divine nature; so that on the one hand the Son of God can be called a man, and on the other the Son of man can be called God, while each, all the same, is identical with Christ himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ, you see, deigned to take on the man in such a way that he did not disdain himself to be called the Son of man, as we can read in many places in the gospel. I mean, he says himself to the blessed Peter, *Who do men say that the Son of man is?* To which Peter replied, inspired by Christ the rock himself, *You are the Christ the Son of the living God* (Mt 16:13.16). Here we are, in the presence of the harpist whom David had prefigured; he has now revealed himself, by touching the hearts of his followers, and striking from them any note he wished, to be heard by all.

And about his final coming he alarmed the Jews during his passion, by saying, *Henceforth you will see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven* (Mt 26:64). And in another place, *You will see angels going up and coming down to the Son of man* (Jn 1:51). When he said *going up*, he showed he was in heaven; when he said *coming down*, he indicated that he would never be absent either from the earth, as he also promised his disciples when he was about to ascend, saying, *Behold I am with you all the days up to the completion of the world's age* (Mt 28:20).

Christ the life of the world

4. But God *so loved* the human race, *that he gave his only-begotten Son for the life of the world* (Jn 3:16; 6:51). Unless the Father, you see, had handed over life, we would not have had life; and unless life itself had died, death would not have been slain. It's the Lord Christ himself, of course, that is life, about whom John the evangelist says, *This is the true God and eternal life* (1 Jn 5:20). It was he himself that through the prophet had also threatened death with death, saying, *I will be your death, O death; I, hell, will be your sting* (Hos 13:14). As though to say, "I will slay you by dying, I will swallow you up, I will take all your power away from you, I will rescue the captives you have held. You wanted to hold me, though innocent; it is just that you should lose those you had the power⁵ to hold.

Through Christ we have been made heirs to eternal life

5. So then, life not only died, life also remained life, and life rose again, and in killing death by his death conferred life on us. And so *death has been swallowed up in the victory* (1 Cor 15:54) of Christ, who is *eternal life* (1 Jn 5:20); so he *gobbled up death*, as the apostle says, *so that we might become heirs to eternal life*.⁶ So through Christ we have been made heirs to eternal life, having been delivered through him from everlasting death, and having no doubts at all that we are his members.

And so on the fortieth day, that is today, the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, while his disciples beheld him and marveled. In fact, while they were standing around, and talking together, a cloud suddenly caught him up, and he was taken away from them into heaven.⁷

NOTES

1. So Fischer, Kunzelmann, and la Bonnardière. This early date seems much more likely than the 412 suggested by van Bavel.

2. See Acts 1:21; 10:41.

3. An interesting assumption, that Christ “descended into hell” *in the body*. But the grave, or tomb, and the underworld, hell, easily merged in popular language and imagination.

4. The assumption behind the question, one shared by Augustine, is that the title “Son of man” applies to Christ’s humanity, whereas “Son of God” signifies his divinity. Texts like this one should have called that assumption into question, but never did. In fact “Son of man” was, within the apocalyptic tradition, a heavenly title of the “heavenly man”; see 1 Cor 15:48; Dn 7:13. Augustine’s answer is in terms of the *communicatio idiomatum*, the sharing of properties, as he goes on to explain in section 5. For this theological idea, see on *The Trinity* I, 28.

5. Reading *quos tenere potuisti*, instead of *quos tenere voluisti*, whom you wanted to hold—which entirely fails to make the contrast required with the first phrase of the sentence. It was an easy mistake for a copyist to repeat inadvertently the *voluisti* of that first phrase. That *potuisti* was the word he eliminated is just my guess.

6. See 1 Pt 3:22, Latin versions only. That the preacher says “as the apostle says,” and not “as the apostle Peter says,” is not characteristic. The apostle, without further qualification, is nearly always Saint Paul.

7. See Acts 1:9.

SERMON 265C

ON THE FORTIETH DAY, THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Date: 415¹

Christ's ascension is an invitation to us to lift up our hearts

1. Today we are celebrating the Lord's ascension into heaven, in the flesh in which the Lord had risen again; this solemn anniversary does not repeat the fact, but refreshes the memory of it. Meanwhile, let us ascend with him in heart, being sure that we will also follow in the flesh. It is not without point that we heard just now *Lift up your heart*;² nor without reason that the apostle exhorts us with the words, *If you have risen again with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God; savor the things that are above, not the things that are on earth* (Col 3:1-2). Lift yourselves up from the earth; the body can't do it, but let the spirit fly up. Lift yourselves up from the earth. Put up with toil and fatigue on earth, think of eternal rest in heaven. Let good be done here, to ensure permanent residence there. There is no place for the heart in the earth where it can preserve its integrity; if it's in the earth, it rots.

Whatever people have that is precious, they lift up above; many people, in fact all people, when they hear that there's some imminent danger of war, look around for somewhere to keep safe whatever they value. Isn't that so? Can anyone in the human race be other than I say? He's got silver, got gold, got gems, got precious jewels, got expensive clothes; he looks for somewhere to keep it all safe, in order not to lose what he has, of course. It's better that he should put the best things he has up above, he should put them up above.³ What has he got that is better than his heart? It's with the heart that material things of earth are possessed. Take the case of small children—since they don't yet enjoy the use of sense and intelligence (they have it on deposit, so to say, it's been created in them, but hasn't yet stirred into action), can they be said to possess anything? He's born as the heir of the whole property, and though it's all his in law, he isn't yet in possession of what is his, because he hasn't yet got what he can possess it with. That's why the apostle says, *As long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave* (Gal 4:1). So what we possess anything on earth with is the heart, is intelligence, sense, character, is reason, thought, judgment. How many things have I said, and what have I said? Who, after all, can fully

comprehend themselves? How much less comprehend the one who made them? That's where we should deposit what we hold dear.

Take stock, my brothers and sisters, of all your possessions, and ascertain which of them you value most. I'm talking to the greedy, the avaricious among you as well; how much easier it should be for those who aren't greedy to listen to me! So you there, greedy man, money-grubber, looking for profit from any source, whether honest or shady makes no difference to you, you are amassing for yourself a great deal of mud. You're collecting mud, and you aren't in the least worried about sticking in it, material, earthly things are so dear to you. You're a human being, you've got a body, got a soul. My first question to you is: what do you hold most dear in your body? I rather think you won't find anything in your body dearer to you than your eyes. In fact, when people love someone very much, they say, "I love you as my own eyes."

Let's take a step toward what I'm anxious to demonstrate. Among the parts of your body nothing is dearer to you than the eye. Now turn your attention to your treasures, think of what you are hoarding. If anyone were to say to you, "Either give me what you're hoarding in the ground, or right now I'll remove your eyes," wouldn't you give everything for your eyes? You would give everything, in order not to remain rich, while being blind; because after all, you wouldn't really possess what you could no longer see. And as a matter of fact, with your greed you possess some gold, such a paltry and I don't know how infinitesimal a part of the earth; while with your eyes you possess the sky, with your eyes you can take a look at the sun, with your eyes gaze at the stars; by means of your eyes you are in possession of the world. And why should I go on and on? Ask yourself; your soul will answer for your body: "Give away the lot, only keep my windows for me." That's what your soul says to you: "I've got two windows in your face, through them I can see this light; give your gold away, only don't let my windows be blocked up." So you give everything for your eyes.

The mind is of more value than the eyes

2. Certainly you've got nothing more valuable than your eyes; nothing, that is, in the body. Because I can show you something which you do hold dearer than your eyes. You'll be admitting it right now, the one I'm talking to is of more value in you than your eyes. I say the one I'm talking to, not what I'm talking through; it's through the ears that I meet the mind, through the ears I interest the mind, through sounds I talk to the mind, encourage the mind, edify the mind. I'm inquiring of the mind, and about the mind, and this is the question I now have for you, the human being. I was saying a moment ago, if anybody wanted to take from you your treasures or your eyes, one of the two; you would choose to keep your eyes; though it would grieve you, you would rather lose your treasures than have your eyes destroyed. But now I've got a question about these very eyes. If you were permitted to keep them both, your eyes and your mind, that's fine. Suppose you were not allowed to keep them both, and one of

two things were proposed to you: “Choose which is better, to lose the eyes of the body or the mind.” If you lose your mind, you’ll be an animal; if you lose your eyes, you’ll still have a mind, you’ll be human still. Tell me, choose which you prefer; which would you rather be, a blind human being, or an animal that can see?

You all shouted, you made your choice. Where did you see what you chose? What did I show you, to make you shout like that? Some beautiful colors, the loveliest of shapes, gold, silver, is that what I’ve shown you? Have I produced some gems for your inspection? None of these things; and yet you shouted out, and by shouting you signified that you have made your choice. The thing with which you saw what you have chosen, that’s the mind itself, which I’m talking to. The thing with which you chose what you heard through my word, use it to believe in the Word of God. You hear this and do it, when the words are spoken, *Lift up your hearts.*

Think of Christ seated at the right hand of the Father; think of him coming again to judge the living and the dead. Let faith think about it. Faith is in the mind, in the depths of the heart, that’s where faith is. Notice who died for you; observe him ascending, love him suffering; observe him ascending, and hold on to him dying. For such a wonderful promise, for what Christ promised you, you have a guarantee.⁴ What he did today, his ascension, is his promise to you. We just have to hope that we are going to rise again, and ascend to the kingdom of God, and be there with God for ever, to live without end, to be joyful without any sadness, to abide without any troubles. There you won’t be told, “Beware of evil,” but “Hold on to the good.” It’s a very great thing that’s promised us; when would timid and feeble mortality ever dare to make itself such a promise? When would rottenness ever dare to promise itself such a thing? When, as it considered what it was, would it ever promise itself such a thing? God, though, has promised it. “In order for you to believe,” he says, “that you will ascend to me, I first descend to you; and in order for you to believe that you will live by me, I first die for you.”

NOTES

1. No date is suggested by the scholars, or the editor of this text. But it strikes me as vintage Augustine; hence not very early, and probably not very late; a little too energetic for his old age. There is no reference at all to Donatism in it, so it is less likely to have been preached before 411; also no reference to Pelagianism, so it is less likely to have been preached when that error was becoming something of an obsession. So I suggest about 415, with Augustine just entered upon his sixties, the best decade of any man’s life, if he gets that far.

2. When had we just heard *sursum cor*? We usually hear it *after* the sermon, at the beginning of the eucharistic prayer, or canon of the Mass. Could this sermon have been preached after the Mass?

3. As against the normal “earthly” custom of burying them in the garden. Put them up above—in heaven with Christ.

4. Christ’s death is the pledge, or guarantee that we will share in his resurrection and ascension.

SERMON 265D

ON THE FORTIETH DAY, THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Date: 417¹

The Manichees believe what the disciples thought, when they saw the risen Christ, that he is only a spirit

1. We heard, when the holy gospel was read, how the Lord appeared, fresh from his resurrection from the dead,² and offered himself as a lesson to people who were going to die, and as a model for people who were going to rise again. He appeared to men in despair, who *were so startled and frightened, they thought they were seeing a spirit* (Lk 24:37). There is a malignant heresy, which thinks today what the disciples thought then; the Manichees say that the Lord Christ was a spirit, not a body, and that everything that took place in the form of a body and the movement of limbs appeared to be happening, rather than actually was happening.³ Let me talk a little about this, if you will be patient with me; because perhaps there are some such persons present among you incognito, and the chance this reading offers of persuading them must not be let slip.

If you are a Christian, Mr. Manichee, listen to Christ saying "See that a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you can see that I have"

2. What do you say, whichever of you is a Manichee, what do you say?

"Christ," he says, "was a spirit, did not have flesh, but appeared as flesh."

I allow you for the time being, I allow you to contradict, in order to induce you, if I can, to believe. So this is what you say, is it, that Christ seemed to have been a spirit, not a body?

"Yes," you say, "that's it."

That, I say, is also what the disciples thought before you. So I am not very indignant that you have gone wrong in this way; but you are certainly to be condemned because, while they let themselves be put right, you have persisted in being wrong. Christ was a spirit, didn't have flesh? I've allowed you to make your contradiction; listen now to instruction. Listen, I repeat, to instruction, not mine, but his. Go, all of you, and speak, and broadcast, and preach, and teach,

and worm your way into houses, and take captive silly females loaded with sins (2 Tm 3:6); do it, and say, "Christ was a spirit, he didn't have flesh and bones." Listen to what he says himself: *Why are you troubled, and why are thoughts rising up into your hearts? See my hands and my feet; feel and see, that a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you can see that I have* (Lk 24:38-39).

What have you got to say against that? Are you a Christian? If you are a Christian, listen to Christ as he says, *Why are thoughts rising up into your hearts? See my hands and my feet; feel and see, that a spirit—that is, what you think I am—does not have flesh and bones, as you can see that I have.* Are you still going to contradict him? If you are, consider if there's nothing bad about thinking Christ was a spirit, even if he did have real flesh. If there were nothing bad about it, the Lord would have left his disciples in that harmless mistake. Don't make light of a wound which a doctor like that was at pains to heal. If those thoughts weren't like thorns, damaging to the Lord's field, the farmer wouldn't be pulling them out with such busy hands. But the disciples let themselves be put right, the Manichees have got themselves all twisted up. That thought in the hearts of the disciples has effected a transfer, like a traveler; it possesses the hearts of the Manichees like a master, because it has invaded them like an enemy.

Christ is Word, soul, and flesh

3. If any of you, brothers and sisters, still perhaps have doubts about that, let yourselves be cured; listen to the truth, put aside all argument. Christ is Word, soul, and flesh. Any human being you like is soul and flesh. Christ is Word and human being. If he's Word and human being, he's Word, soul, and flesh. They aren't three persons, Word and soul and flesh; because neither are you two persons, soul and flesh. You, soul and flesh, are one man or woman; he, Word soul and flesh, is one Christ. Sometimes, though, he speaks in terms of his being Word, and yet it's Christ himself speaking; sometimes he speaks in terms of his being soul, and yet it's the same Christ speaking; sometimes he speaks in terms of his being flesh, and yet it's the same Christ speaking.

Let's prove it with examples from the divine utterances. Listen to something said in terms of his being the Word: *I and the Father are one* (Jn 10:30). Listen to something said in terms of his being soul: *My soul is sorrowful unto death* (Mk 14:34). Listen to something said in terms of his being flesh: *It was necessary for the Christ to suffer, and to rise again on the third day* (Lk 24:46). To rise again in what, if not in that in which he was able to fall? He rose again in that part of him in which he died. Look for death in the Word; it could never be found there. Look for death in the soul; it was never there, because sin was never there.⁴ Look for death in the flesh; that's where it certainly was; and that's why the resurrection was real, because the death was real. Death really was to be found there. Why was there death, where there was no sin? There in him it was punishment without fault, so that both fault and punishment might be dissolved in us.

Christ went to his passion because it was the will of his good Father, not because he owed it to the evil prince

4. Why be surprised that Christ died, although Christ committed no sin whatsoever? He wanted to pay back for you what he didn't owe himself, in order to deliver you from debt. The devil, having taken in the human race, was in possession of it by right; he possessed what he had taken, he had taken what he had taken in. Christ brought along in his mortal flesh his blood to be shed, with which to cancel the bill of our sins.⁵ That other one would still be holding the guilty, if he hadn't put the innocent to death. But now see with what justice he is told, "You've put to death one who had no debt; now hand over the debtors." *Behold, he says, the prince of this world is coming, and in me he will find nothing* (Jn 14:30).

"How nothing? Haven't you got a soul, haven't you got flesh? Aren't you also the Word? Is all that nothing?"

Of course not. Nothing of his own, because no sin. He is the prince of sinners; the prince of sinners will find nothing in me. I haven't sinned, I've contracted nothing from Adam, because I came to you from the virgin.⁶ I didn't add anything, because I didn't have anything to add it to, and by living a just life I committed no sin. Let him come, and find something of his own in me, if he can. But he will find nothing of his own in me; I have no sin; born innocently, I have led an innocent life. Let him come, he will find nothing.

"So why are you dying, if he is coming, and will find nothing?"

And he gives the reason why he must die: *Behold, the prince of this world is coming, and in me he will find nothing*. And as though we were to say, "So why are you dying?" he answered, *But that all may know*, he said, *that I am doing the will of my Father, arise, let us go from here* (Jn 14:30-31); to his passion, because it was the will of his good Father, not because he owed it to the evil prince.

The cross of Christ was a mousetrap for the devil

5. So why be surprised? Certainly, Christ is life; why did life die? The soul didn't die, nor did the Word die; the flesh died, in order that in it death might die. He suffered death, he slew death; he put a bait for the lion in the trap. If the fish didn't want to swallow anything, it wouldn't be caught with a hook. The devil was greedy for death, the devil was a hoarder of death. The cross of Christ was the mousetrap; the death of Christ, or rather the mortal flesh of Christ, was like the bait in the mousetrap. He came, he swallowed it and was caught.

And presto, Christ rose again; where's death now? Already it can be said for his flesh, what will be said for ours at the end, *Death has been swallowed up in victory* (1 Cor 15:54). It was flesh, but no longer perishable. Its nature remains the same, its quality changes; it's the same substance, but now there's no deficiency there, no sluggishness, no tendency to decay, no neediness, nothing mortal, nothing we are used to knowing as earthly. He could be touched, could be handled, could be felt, but he couldn't be slain anymore.

*You cannot yet preach and die for what you have seen and touched,
until you are clothed with power from on high*

6. There's still more for you to hear. He ascends into heaven, accompanied by the eyes of the disciples gazing after him. He lets them observe it, he makes them witnesses.⁷ Then they're told, *Why are you standing here? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you, will come in the same way* (Acts 1:11). In the same way; what's that? In the same way, in that form, in that flesh, *they shall look on the one they have pierced* (Zec 12:10; Rv 1:7). *He will come in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.* They certainly saw, certainly touched, certainly felt him; they confirmed their faith both by looking at him and touching him; they accompanied him with their gaze as he ascended into heaven. With attentive ears they heard the angel's voice assuring them and foretelling that Christ would come again.

Yet, with all these things completed for them, neither that sight alone, nor that handling of the Lord's limbs was enough to ensure that they would become witnesses of Christ, and bravely endure everything for the preaching of the truth, fighting against falsehood to the shedding of their blood. But who did give them such a capability? Listen to the Lord himself. *You, though, stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high* (Lk 24:49). You have seen, and touched; but to preach and die for what you have seen and touched you are still not able, *until you are clothed with power from on high.* Let human beings go now, and attribute it to their own powers, if they can do anything.⁸ There was Peter, and he hadn't yet been confirmed in the rock;⁹ he hadn't yet been clothed with power from on high; because *nobody can receive anything, unless it has been given him from heaven* (Jn 3:27).

You are capable of sinning all by yourself; for doing good you need help

7. So, brothers and sisters, let Truth itself¹⁰ persuade us of this; none of us must boast about our own powers, none of us be too confident in the free decision of our own wills.¹¹ You are capable of sinning all by yourself; for acting rightly, you need help. Say, *Be my helper, do not forsake me* (Ps 27:9); woe betide you, if he does forsake you! When he leaves you, to whom but a man does he leave you? So aren't you appalled when you hear, *Cursed be everyone who places his hopes in man* (Jer 17:5)? Look at Christ the Lord, Word, soul, and flesh, as I said; God is there, there also are you; and it's one Christ. So what puts you there? For what merit, for what free choice, did the Lord take on human nature, was the Word clothed with human nature? What merit of that particular human nature came first? Or are you perhaps going to say that Christ lived a good life heaven knows where, and by living a good life deserved to be taken up by the Word, and become one with the Word, and be born of the virgin?

God forbid, God forbid! Take such ideas out of the minds of Christians, O Lord our God. We see him *as the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth* (Jn 1:14). The Word, you see, had nothing with which to die for you; it was necessary that Christ should die for you, and there was nothing in the Word

with which to die for you, because *in the beginning was the Word*, sheer life, without flesh and blood, without anything changeable. How far removed from death! And so, what extraordinary mercy and kindness! Mary, of course, was of the human race; a virgin, but a human being; holy, but a human being. The Lord, though, the only-begotten Word, took on for you what he would offer for you. But he took it on for you from nowhere else but from you, because he did not have in himself anything to die for you with. You didn't have anything to live by, and he didn't have anything to die with. What a marvelous exchange! Live by what is his, because he died with what is yours.

NOTES

1. Fischer and Kunzelmann suggest 417-418. But we have already seen that 418 is definitively reserved for Sermon 261 on Ascension day—see note 1 on that sermon. So we can reduce their suggestion to a more precise 417. Van Bavel suggests a much earlier date, soon after 400; possibly because of the attention paid to the Manichees. But then at the end attention is also paid to the Pelagians, and that would hardly have been the case around 400. It is true, Augustine could as easily have preached then about our need for the help of divine grace; but not, I think, quite in this way.

2. Augustine, or at least the text, actually says, “how he appeared from the resurrection of the dead”: *apparuisse Dominum a resurrectione mortuorum*.

3. The Manichees believed this, not just of the risen Christ, like the disciples, but of Christ throughout his life, and above all, his death.

4. Sin being the cause of the death of the soul, which actually consists in the soul being separated from God.

5. See Col 2:14.

6. Original sin, for Augustine, was contracted precisely through the sexual intercourse of parents, and specifically from the male contribution to that joint act. But this is not the prevailing orthodox theology, or official Church teaching. Original sin being “a sin of nature” (as Augustine himself says), not of the person, it is contracted with the acquisition of human nature—which is of course acquired through the intercourse of one's parents, but not precisely, as Augustine thought, through the distortion by concupiscence of the sexual act. The reason Christ was immune from original sin was indeed because he was born of the virgin, who was herself without original sin; and that, not because her mother conceived her virginally, but because of a special divine act, preserving her from “contracting the virus.” The dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin really constitutes a criticism of Augustine's doctrine.

7. See Lk 24:48.

8. This is the beginning of a warning against Pelagian ideas, that continues to the end of the sermon. The reference to Peter that follows immediately is presumably to his confident assertion that he was ready to die for Christ, Jn 13:37.

9. That is, in Christ, as participating in his “rockiness” by faith. It does not mean confirmed as the rock, because Augustine never thinks of Peter as the rock. Jesus, after all, did not in fact call him the rock (at least not in the Greek and Latin; I'm not sure of the meaning of “Cephas” precisely), but “Rocky.” The rock on which he would build his Church was, for Augustine, both Christ himself and Peter's faith, representing the faith of the Church.

10. Christ, the truth.

11. *De arbitrio voluntatis*.

SERMON 265E

ON THE FORTIETH DAY, THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD:
A FRAGMENT

Date: unknown¹

God has already kept all his promises, except the one about the day of judgment; he will certainly keep that one

1. . . . *fudit.*² I have paid the debt.³ Your price came out of his side. The purse of your ransom hung upon the tree. So I have paid you the blood of Christ. I have paid his resurrection. I have paid his sending of the Holy Spirit. I have paid the promise of the Church spread throughout the world. I promised that idols would be smashed, the temples of demons demolished. It has happened. What was promised has been paid. I promised that the Church was going to be exercised and trained through heresies, but that it would not be destroyed, and that with some useless twigs being cut off, the vine would be pruned, not cut down.⁴ This promise too I have kept. I promised the blood and the crowns of the martyrs. I have paid up. It is only about the day of judgment that you still hold me in your debt. Why be in such a hurry? This debt too will be paid. And if only, as certainly as it is coming, it may find you all as certainly prepared!

Christ has been exalted, only because he humbled himself

2. So we have sung about Christ: *You are the Lord, most high above all the earth; you are exceedingly exalted above all gods* (Ps 97:9). Who, I mean to say, was exalted, but the one who had been humbled? See him humbled, and see him exalted. The apostle tells you about both. He was exalted, you see, from the beginning, because *in the beginning was the Word*. This exaltation is without beginning, without time, because *through him all things were made* (Jn 1:1.3). So what does the apostle say about it? *Since he was in the form of God*, he says, *he did not think it robbery to be equal to God* (Phil 2:6); because it was his nature, it wasn't robbery. He didn't, after all, put in a claim for equality with God, but he was always equal, because he was born equal. So, *since he was in the form of God, he did not think it robbery to be equal to God*.

You have heard about his inexpressible exaltation; now hear about his hu-

mility. *He emptied himself*, the apostle says. How? So he lost what he was? No. And how did he empty himself? Not by losing what he was, but by taking on what he was not. Listen to the apostle explaining this himself. After saying *he emptied himself*, as though we asked him how, he added, *taking the form of a servant* (Phil 2:7); not by losing what he was, but by taking what he was not; existing in the form of God, afterward taking the form of a servant. So the emptying consisted of taking on a lowly state, not of losing a sublime one. It was by taking on the form of a servant that he emptied himself. Inside, God was concealed in the man. If what was inside had been seen, that man would not have been crucified.⁵ If that man had not been crucified, that blood would not have been shed. If that blood had not been shed, the world would not have been redeemed.

So he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men—because in the form of God he was not made, since *all things were made through him*, so that it should never be said, “The Word was made.”⁶ So the one who made all things was made himself, in case what he had made should perish; *made in the likeness of men, and being found in condition as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the death, the death what is more of the cross*. There you have the extent of his humiliation. And what follows? *Therefore God has exalted him, and granted him the name that is above every name, so that in the name of Jesus every knee should be bent, of heavenly, of earthly and of infernal beings, and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father* (Phil 2:7-11). *Exceedingly exalted above all gods, and you alone most high above all the earth* (Ps 97:9).

The difference between Christ and other human beings

3. *Exceedingly exalted above all gods*. Above which gods? Because there are gods. Another psalm shows us this: *God has taken his stand in the synagogue of gods* (Ps 82:1); those it is calling gods are men born of man. But they are adopted sons. There is one by nature, others by grace; one Son by nature, the rest by grace. Our Lord Jesus Christ is Son by nature in that he is the Word. Who are the adopted ones? The rest who have believed in him. They are men, he’s a man, but *exceedingly exalted above all gods*.

There is a great difference between you, Lord, and them. You were born, they were born; but the human condition is one thing, divine compassion another. You died, they die; but necessity is one thing, sheer goodness another.

We all die of necessity, he alone died of sheer goodness. We were all born according to the human condition, he was born out of divine compassion.

So, *you are exceedingly exalted above all gods*, because you are human, and there are human beings who⁷ can be compared with you; but a virgin birth is one thing, conception by sexual desire another. You have risen, they are going to rise; but the words *his flesh did not see corruption* are one thing, and *he was laid with his fathers and saw corruption* (Acts 13:37.36) another.⁸ The flesh of all who die is handed over to corruption; you rose again on the third day,

corruption was unable to do anything to you. You went ahead to heaven; you have taken your seat at the Father's right hand; all confess and praise you, angels, men, heavens, earth, the underworld.

Prophecies of both Christ and the Church

4. *You are exceedingly exalted above all gods* (Ps 97:9), was very well and justly said to him in prophecy, because of what we see being fulfilled, because this too is being fulfilled: *Hear, O daughter, and see* (Ps 45:10)—*Be exalted above the heavens, O God* (Ps 57:5.11), it's about this one that it says *You are exceedingly exalted above all gods*.⁹ To whom did he say this, *You are exceedingly exalted above all gods*? To Christ. And what about the Church? *And over the whole earth your glory* (Ps 57:5.11). *Be exalted above the heavens, O God*. We haven't seen Christ; the apostles did; they were there. He led them out to the Mount of Olives, and they asked him about the end of the world, and he said to them, *It is not for you to know the times, which the Father has placed under his own authority. But you shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming down upon you, and you shall be my witnesses to Jerusalem and to the whole of Judea, and as far as the ends of the earth. When he had said that, a cloud took him up* (Acts 1:7-9).

He didn't want to say anything after those words. He wanted those to be his last words, which he would very forcefully impress on our minds, words about the Church that would be found throughout the whole wide world. This was because many people were going to make themselves their own flocks, to herd disciples together behind them and make themselves heresies and schisms in various places.¹⁰ But there is the vine itself, from which the twigs were lopped off, occupying the whole world. Where the twig is lopped off, there it remains. The vine grows, and occupies the whole world, holds on to the whole world. That's how he made the Church.¹¹

The Church is the glory of Christ, as the wife is the glory of her husband

5. What did he endow the Church with, the bridegroom endowing the bride, as he promised? *Be exalted above the heavens, O God* (Ps 57:5.11). Who is God? About whom but Christ have we said today, *You are exalted above all gods* (Ps 97:9)? *And above the earth your*¹² *glory* (Ps 57:5.11). What is *your glory*? Your Church, your wife. That's what the apostle says: *The man indeed ought not to cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God. But the woman is the glory of the man* (1 Cor 11:7). The wife is the glory of her husband. Who is the wife of such a great king as that? The whole Church. Where is he? *Be exalted above the heavens, O God*. Where is he? *Exceedingly exalted above all gods*. Where is she? *And above all the earth your glory*.

A tremendous mystery. We have been invited to the wedding, and we ourselves are the wedding. With ordinary human weddings, the bride is one person, the invited guests are others. We, as well as being invited, are also ourselves the

bride. We are, after all, the Church, and we have been invited in the Church. And where have we been invited to? If it's already happened, dearest friends, if we can now see, if we can now perceive that it's been fulfilled, if it can't be denied, what we say, *Over all the earth your glory*—then what shall we be when he comes?¹³ But only if we keep and preserve what we have received.

NOTES

1. This fragment is published by Lambot, and the only definite suggestion he makes is that it was preached on Ascension day, its text or theme being Ps 97:9: *You are the Lord most high over all the earth. You are exceedingly exalted above all gods.*

2. The text begins with this single word, the last in a sentence of which the rest has been lost. There is no point in translating it, because one cannot tell how it fitted into its sentence. Most likely, it is referring to Christ shedding his blood on the cross; but it could also refer to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit into our hearts.

3. It seems to be God the Father speaking until the end of this section.

4. A play on words: *vitem putari, non amputari.*

5. See 1 Cor 2:8.

6. This in fact is what the Arians said.

7. Reading *qui* instead of the text's *quasi*, which makes the sentence impossible to construe grammatically, and as a qualification does not seem necessary. One could of course read *qui quasi comparantur*; and perhaps the inadvertent omission of *qui* would have been a more likely mistake than the substitution of *quasi* for *qui*. The clause would then run "who can, as it were, be compared with you."

8. See Ps 16:10.

9. An altogether impossible sentence. He starts stating a familiar theme, that we have seen prophecies about the Church fulfilled, for example Ps 45:10, and that we should therefore be able to believe that those about Christ were fulfilled too, though we weren't there to see them, as the disciples were. But after quoting Ps 45, he realized it wasn't the text he really wanted, and switched to Ps 57:5.11, which was. But in a characteristically maddening fashion, he fails for the moment to quote the part of those verses which he really needs.

10. He is thinking here, of course, almost exclusively about the Donatists.

11. See Jn 15:1-8.

12. Reading *gloria tua* instead of *gloria ejus*; *gloria tua* is the phrase he immediately goes on to explain, and is a direct quotation from Ps 57:5.11. What he is doing, and what seems to have baffled both copyists and editors, is interlarding his quotation from Ps 57 with one from Ps 97, which appears to have been the responsorial psalm. But it is only Ps 57:5.11 that gives him the text he wants about the Church, "your glory." If you pass over his little sidetrack, "Who is God?" and his answer to that question from Ps 97, his line of thought becomes much clearer.

13. See 1 Jn 3:2.

SERMON 265F

ON THE FORTIETH DAY, THE ASCENSION

Date: 405¹

The one who was our Lord was prepared to be our brother

1. Today, dearly beloved, we are celebrating, as you know, the solemnity of the Lord's ascension. He ascended, as you heard, to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God.² How did we come to deserve having Christ as our brother? In no way at all could we expect him to be our brother, if he hadn't taken to himself our weak nature. The reason, after all, that we are brothers is that he became man. So the one who was our Lord was prepared to be our brother; Lord always, brother from a point in time; Lord in the form of God, brother in the form of a servant. *Since he was in the form of God, you see, he did not think it robbery for him to be equal to God; there he's Lord. So where brother? He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant* (Phil 2:6-7).

If he were only our brother, that would be a great deal. He also took the form of a servant, he was prepared to be a servant. Our servant, or not? Ours too. After all, he said about himself, *I did not come to be served, but to serve* (Mk 10:45). It was about him that the prophet foretold that the just one would justify many by serving them well.³ But we mustn't let it go to our heads. A lord and master often enough serves sick servants, so that he can have healthy servants to serve him; he serves them when they are sick to make them better. Our Lord and master serves us because we are sick. Didn't he make medicines for the sick from his own infirmity? He shed his blood for the sick; from the eye-salve of his blood, he anointed the eyes of the blind.⁴

Why he said "my God and your God, my Father and your Father"

2. So it was by a favor that he became our brother, while it is by nature that he is our Lord. He said, *I am ascending to my God and your God, to my Father and your Father*. To whom did he say this message was to be given? *Go*, he said, *tell my brothers*, and because I am their brother, *I am ascending to my Father and your Father, my God and your God* (Jn 20:17). He didn't say, "I am ascending to our Father," nor did he say, "I am ascending to our God." It isn't

without meaning, *my Father and your Father, my God and your God*. This distinction indicates something which I must not pass over in silence.

My Father, because I am the only Son; *your Father*, because you have all been adopted through me. How *my God*? The psalm shows how. *My God*, because I took the form of a servant: *From my mother's womb my God are you* (Ps 22:10). If you put aside the mother's womb where he was made man, he is not his God, but only his Father. So he is always his Father, the eternal Father of the everlasting Son. But in order for him to be his God, a mother's womb was introduced, and he said, through the prophet, *my God are you*. But not in the same way as he is ours. He is our God, after all, because he has saved sinners; but he's his God, because he became a man without sin.

Thus when he came to God he also distinguished between *my God and your God*. In what way *my God*? Because I am a human being. So why not all together our God, because you too are a human being, and we are all human beings? But it's one thing to be a human being without sin, who came to wipe out sins; and another to be human beings with sin, to whom someone came to deliver them from sin. So this is a distinction, not a separation. We have a common Father in heaven, but Christ in a different way, because he is the only Son⁵ who adopted us. We have a common God in heaven, but Christ in a different way, because he is without sin, we are sinners.

We all belong to one big family

3. And yet this is the favor done us, which the apostle mentions: *heirs indeed of God, but fellow heirs of Christ* (Rom 8:17). We have found a Father in heaven, we all belong to one big family. The Son came to us from there, in order to become our brother. He didn't leave the Father when he came to join us, nor when he went back to the Father did he leave us. Let us believe that Christ is in heaven, let us believe that he is with us. How in heaven, if also with us? By being God. My word is both with me and with you; both with me in my mind, and with you in your ears. If my word can do that, do you think the Word of God couldn't?

He did indeed descend, when he was here. So what does descending mean? Christ appearing as Jesus.⁶ How did he appear as Jesus? Because he was made man. So what does ascending mean? Christ's body being lifted up to heaven, not his divine majesty departing from here. And from where he ascended he is going to descend; and as he ascended, that's how he is going to descend. It's what angels say, not me. The disciples were standing there, you see, and accompanying him with their eyes as he ascended. And they were told, *Men of Galilee, why are you standing here? This Jesus will come in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven* (Acts 1:11). What's *will come in the same way*? He is going to judge in the same form, in which he was judged. Visible only to the just, visible also to the unjust,⁷ he will come to be seen by both just and unjust. The unjust will be able to see him, they won't be able to reign with him.

Exhortation

4. So let us celebrate this holy fortieth day; you see, the whole world is celebrating this day with us. And the Church spread throughout the world also celebrates with us the fiftieth day.⁸ So the celebration of twenty and thirty is a custom of Africa, not a significant symbolic occasion for the Church as such.⁹

NOTES

1. This sermon was first published by Lambot, and he has made no suggestion about the date or place. I suggest about 405, because of the concluding little section, in which Augustine is at pains to commend the celebration of Ascension and Pentecost, feasts of the universal Church, in preference to a local African custom of celebrating the twentieth and thirtieth days—presumably after Easter. I feel that after 405, when he had been bishop for almost ten years, that would hardly have been necessary, at least in his own Church of Hippo Regius; but perhaps this sermon was preached somewhere else in some backwoods Church. On the other hand, the brevity of the sermon prevents me from dating it to the earliest years of his ministry.

2. See Jn 20:17.

3. See Is 53:11.

4. A rather general, and not quite accurate, reference, it would seem, to the cure of the man born blind, Jn 9.

5. Omitting *sine peccato*, without sin. It is redundant here, as it only applies to the second distinction between *my God and your God*. A copyist could have slipped it in inadvertently; Augustine could even, I suppose, have said it inadvertently; but not, I am sure, deliberately.

6. Christ, as nearly always for Augustine, and not quite correctly, is the divine name, Jesus the human name.

7. Surely a glaring contradiction? But as he says elsewhere, Christ will be visible as God only to the just, but as man, as the Son of man to whom all judgment has been given, he will also be seen by the wicked. See Rv 1:7. It's odd that he doesn't explain his paradox here.

8. Pentecost.

9. It is a little peculiar that he says "the celebration of twenty and thirty, *celebratio viginti et triginta*, and not of the twentieth and thirtieth days; but that is presumably what he means. The twentieth and thirtieth days after Easter, or first the twentieth day after Easter, and then the thirtieth after that, bringing one again to Pentecost? Anybody's guess; we seem to have no other information about this African custom. Possibly it was applying to Christ a custom by which the dead were remembered on the twentieth and thirtieth days after their decease or burial, the "month's mind."

SERMON 266

ON THE VIGIL OF PENTECOST AGAINST THE DONATISTS

Date: 397¹

What is meant by "the oil of the sinner"?

1. Among the other divine utterances, which we heard when the psalm was being sung, I would like, with the Lord's help, to deal with and discuss this one in particular, where it says, *The just man will correct me with mercy and rebuke me; but let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head* (Ps 141:5). Some people, you see, have thought that the oil of the sinner is the oil of man, because *every man a liar* (Ps 116:11). The oil of Christ, on the other hand, because he had absolutely no sin at all, is not the oil of the sinner, even if it is administered by a sinner. Three things here have to be taken into account: by whom it is given, to whom it is given, through whom it is given; so let us not be afraid of the oil of the sinner, because the minister in the middle cannot cut off the generosity of the benefactor.²

The event of Pentecost

2. Well, we are certainly now celebrating the solemnity of the coming of the Holy Spirit; because of the day of Pentecost, which has already begun, there were in one place a hundred and twenty souls, among whom the apostles and the mother of the Lord, and others of both sexes, praying and waiting for what Christ had promised, that is, the coming of the Holy Spirit.³ Their expectant hopes were not in vain, because the one who made the promise was not deceitful; what they were waiting for arrived, and found the vessels for its reception clean and purified. *There appeared to them divided tongues as of fire, which also settled on each one of them; and they began to speak with tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance* (Acts 2:3-4).

Each individual was speaking in all tongues, because the Church that was going to exist in all tongues was being foretold. One individual was the sign of unity; all tongues in one individual, that meant all nations in that unity.⁴ Those who were filled were speaking; those who were empty were astonished; and

what is more reprehensible, they were astonished and finding fault. They were saying, you see, *These men are drunk, and full of new wine* (Acts 2:13). What a stupid and dishonest criticism! A drunken man doesn't suddenly learn a foreign language; on the contrary, he loses the power to speak his own. All the same, Truth was in fact speaking through these ignorant and dishonest critics. These people were indeed already full of new wine, because they had become new wineskins.⁵ The new wineskins, though, greatly astonished the old wineskins, who with their criticisms were not made new, and neither were they filled. But their criticisms were eventually silenced,⁶ and as soon as they gave their ears to what the apostles were saying, and to their explanation of what was happening and their preaching of the grace of Christ,⁷ their consciences were pricked by what they heard; their consciences being pricked, they changed their attitudes; their attitudes being changed, they believed; by believing they were made fit themselves to receive what had astonished them in others.⁸

The minister must not lay claim to more than what he does as minister

3. After that, the Holy Spirit started being given through the ministry of the apostles. They would lay hands on people, and he would come. But this wasn't something that came from men; the minister must not lay claim to more than what he does as minister. The benefactor is one person, the administrator of the grant another. In fact the Holy Spirit bore witness to this, in case mere men should lay claim to what is properly God's. It was on this point, you see, that Simon wanted to puff up his own importance; he thought this was something attributable to human beings, and so he promised the apostles money, so that the Holy Spirit might come when he too laid hands on people.⁹ He knew nothing about grace; I mean, if he had been aware of grace, he could have had it gratis, for nothing. But as he wanted to buy the Holy Spirit, he was not found fit to be redeemed by the Spirit.

What are you, man, that you should want to puff yourself up? It's enough for you to be filled, not to be puffed up. Get filled up, and you're rich; get puffed up, and you're empty.

"But he was given," they say, "through men."

Does that mean that what was given came from men?

"But he could only be given," they say, "through holy men."

And had he come to them through men? The apostles would lay hands on people, and the Holy Spirit would come; who laid hands on the apostles themselves, when he came to them?

The Spirit sometimes given without any human ministers

4. Let me give you some divine examples to remember; don't forget, they're God's words, they have the authority of scripture, whose words are trustworthy, the examples real. We can read it all, let's believe it all. The Holy Spirit was given to many people through the laying on of the apostles' hands; but those

through whom he was given had already received him. When had they? When a hundred and twenty people were in one room together; they were all praying, none of them was laying on hands. He came upon them as they were praying, filled them as they were praying, made them ministers once filled, and through them gave what was his own.

Listen to some more: Philip the evangelist, who preached the gospel in Samaria, was one of the seven deacons. Because of the needs of the ministry, seven deacons had been added to the twelve apostles,¹⁰ of whom Philip, as I said, was one, who rightly deserved to be called the evangelist, because of his readiness to preach the gospel—though in fact they all did this. This one, as I said, preached the gospel in Samaria. Many people in Samaria believed, and on believing were baptized. When the apostles heard about it, they sent them Peter and John, to lay hands on the baptized, and by laying hands on them to obtain for them the Holy Spirit as they invoked him. Simon was amazed at such a great grace as the apostles had, and wanted to give them money, as though what was being invoked by them was being put up for sale. But he was repulsed, and found to be unworthy of so great a grace.

So those people received the Holy Spirit through the hands of the apostles. But that Simon fellow had thought that the gift of God was the gift of men, and so, to prevent this assumption taking root among the weaker brethren—shortly afterward a certain eunuch of Candace the queen was coming from Jerusalem, where he had gone to pray, and was sitting in his chariot, reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Holy Spirit told Philip to approach the chariot. The very man who had been baptizing in Samaria, and not laying hands on anyone, and who had sent word to the apostles, so that on their arrival, by the laying on of their hands those he had baptized might be found worthy to receive the Holy Spirit, this man now approaches the chariot and asks the eunuch whether he could understand what he was reading. He replies that he could understand, if he had someone to explain it to him; he asks Philip to get in the chariot; he gets in, sits beside him, finds he's reading in the prophet Isaiah what had been foretold about Christ: *Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter* (Is 53:7), and the other things mentioned in that reading. And then asking him whether the prophet was saying this about himself or about someone else, taking this chance of a door being opened to him, he gave him the good news of Christ, the door of salvation.¹¹

This is all happening while they are driving along; so they come to some water, and the eunuch says to Philip, *There's water; who can forbid me being baptized?* Philip said, *If you believe, it can be done. And he answered, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God. They went down into the water, Philip baptized him* (Acts 8:36-38). After they came up from the water, the Holy Spirit came upon the eunuch.¹² Look, there was Philip, who had been baptizing in Samaria, and had brought the apostles down to those he had baptized; he himself baptized, but did not lay on hands; but the Spirit, to show that Simon had not been right in supposing that the Spirit of God was in the gift of men, came upon the man freely, and set him free. He came as God, and filled him; as the Lord had come and redeemed him.¹³

It does not matter which Philip this was, whether the apostle or the deacon

5. Someone who loves to argue may say, perhaps, that this Philip wasn't the deacon who had been baptizing in Samaria, but that he was the apostle; because a Philip is also mentioned among the apostles,¹⁴ and the one who's properly called the evangelist is one of the seven deacons. But let them guess what they like, I can soon solve the problem. Let it be uncertain whether it was the apostle or the deacon, which the text said nothing about. What it did say is, that as soon as he came up from the water, the Holy Spirit came upon the eunuch. There's no mention there of a laying on of hands. Oh, perhaps even that's not enough; this man can say, after all, "Of course someone laid hands on him, but scripture kept quiet about it."

The case of the centurion Cornelius

6. So, what are you saying?

"This is what I'm saying," he says; "that indeed with those first a hundred and twenty, because that was when the Holy Spirit first came, he did come upon them without any laying on of hands. But from then on he came to nobody unless hands had been laid."

You've forgotten Cornelius the centurion; read about him carefully, understand wisely. Cornelius the centurion, as you can read in the same book of the Acts of the Apostles, in which the coming of the Holy Spirit is also proclaimed. To the centurion Cornelius an angel was sent; he brought him the news that his alms had been accepted, his prayers heard; that he should forthwith send to Peter, who was staying in Joppa at the house of Simon the tanner, and should invite him to come.

Now at that time there was a great argument going on between Jews and Gentiles, that is, between believers who had come from the Jews and those from the Gentiles, whether the gospel should be offered to the uncircumcised.¹⁵ As a result, there was a lot of hesitation when Cornelius sent his messengers. Meanwhile, Peter is being warned; the business of the kingdom of heaven is being conducted, both here and there,¹⁶ by the one who is everywhere. While all that was going on at Cornelius' place, Peter meanwhile in Joppa was feeling hungry; he went upstairs to pray while his dinner was being prepared; as he prayed his thoughts were distracted—but from the commonplace to the sublime, not to wander away from the point, but to see it. A dish came to him, let down from heaven, like a heavenly refreshment for a hungry man. Now it was a dish attached to four lines, containing all kinds of animals, clean and unclean, and the hungry man was hammered by a voice from on high: *Get up, Peter, kill and eat*. He looked, he saw in the dish unclean animals which he was not accustomed to touch, and he answered the voice, *Far be it from me, Lord; never has anything common and unclean entered my mouth*. And the voice said to him, *What God has made clean, do not you call unclean* (Acts 10:9-15). It wasn't material food being offered to Peter, but a Cornelius made clean being announced. This happened three times, and the vessel was taken back to heaven.

A mystery with a very clear meaning. The dish is the world. The four lines holding the dish are the four corners of the world, which scripture reminds us of, saying *From the east and the west, from the north and the sea* (Ps 107:3).¹⁷ The animals are all the nations. The dish being let down three times suggests the Trinity; Peter, the Church; Peter hungry, the Church longing for the faith of the nations; the heavenly voice, the holy gospel; *Kill and eat*, kill what they are, make them what you are. While Peter was having difficulties with the order, it was suddenly announced that some soldiers sent by Cornelius wanted to see him. And the Holy Spirit said to Peter, *Go with them; it was I who sent them* (Acts 10:20). Peter goes, with no more hesitations about the vision, but complete certainty; and as you can read, he is announced to Cornelius, he meets him humbly, humbly he is prostrated to, he raises him up more humbly still. They come to the house, they find many other people gathered together. Peter is told why he was sent for, and they give thanks that Peter has come.

So he began openly to preach the good news, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, to uncircumcised Gentiles, as a result of which that great question was raised.¹⁸ There were some people with Peter, believers from among the Jews, who could be upset if uncircumcised people were baptized; Peter says there quite plainly, *You, brothers, know how abominable it is for a Jew to approach or associate with a Gentile; but God has shown me to call no person common or unclean* (Acts 10:28). In his hunger, he was looking back at that dish.

This story compared with "the oil of the sinner"

7. Where now are those who were saying—that, after all, is why I have told the whole story, because of what I want to say—where are those who were saying that the Holy Spirit is given through the authority of men?¹⁹ While Peter was proclaiming the good news, Cornelius and all his people with him, that is Gentiles, believed; and suddenly, before they were baptized, they were filled with the Holy Spirit.²⁰ What answer can human obstinacy give to that? Not only before hands were laid on them, but even before baptism itself did the Holy Spirit come; because he was able to, not because he had to. He came before the baptismal washing, in order to settle the argument over circumcision. You see, the fault-finders or the less intelligent could have said to Peter, "You did wrong, giving the Holy Spirit." But lo and behold it's been fulfilled, lo and behold it's been demonstrated, what the Lord said: *The Spirit breathes where he will* (Jn 3:8). Look, it's been fulfilled, look, it's been demonstrated how true what the Lord said is: *The Spirit breathes where he will*.

And yet the proud heretic is not yet breathing out the spirit of arrogance. He's still saying, "It's mine; don't receive it from him, but from me."

You answer, "I want to know what is God's."

He: "Haven't you read, *Let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head* (Ps 141:5)?"

So it's your oil, is it? If it's yours, I don't want it; if it's yours, it's bad. But if it's God's, even coming through bad you, it's good. The mire doesn't pollute

the sun's rays, and can you pollute God's oil? But the reason it's bad for you is that you have what is good while you are bad; you have received what is God's, though being bad yourself, because having cut yourself off, you haven't gathered, but scattered.²¹

Those who eat unworthily, eat and drink judgment upon themselves (1 Cor 11:29); because they eat unworthily, does that mean they don't eat? Christ gave a morsel to the unworthy Judas, and he received it to his judgment. Was the one he received it from bad? Was what he received bad? But the reason he is guilty is that being bad himself, he received something good from someone good. So the oil of salvation is not the oil of the sinner. Let it be received well, and it's good; even if it's received badly, it's good. Woe betide people who receive what is good badly!

Love the one who takes you to task, beware of the one who flatters you

8. However, let's see the real meaning of scripture; it may have some advice for us, perhaps, which will become clear to a better understanding. *The just man*, he says, *will correct me out of mercy*. Even if he beats me, he loves me; the one who rebukes me respects me;²² the flatterer takes me in. The first is showing compassion, the second getting round me. The rod of the one who beats me is hard, the oil of the one who fawns on me soft. In fact all flatterers anoint the head, failing to heal the heart. Love the one who rebukes you, beware of the one who flatters you. After all, if you love the one who rebukes you with the truth, and beware of the one who flatters you with deceit, you can say what was sung: *The just man will correct me out of mercy, but let the oil of the sinner*, that is the compliments of the flatterer, *not fatten my head* (Ps 141:5).

A fat head²³ is a big head; a big head is a proud head. Better a healthy heart than a big head. But a heart is made healthy by the rod of rebuke; a head made big by the oil of the sinner, that is, by the agreement of the flatterer. If you've made your head big, beware of your head becoming top-heavy, and toppling you over the precipice.²⁴

Well, I rather think I've spoken enough for the time at our disposal on this one verse of the psalm, with the Lord helping me, and secretly building up your hearts.

NOTES

1. To be more precise, 23 May 397. So Lambot, Perler, and Zwiggli; Possidius' catalogue of Augustine's works, his *Indiculum*, is quite definite and specific on this point, identifying this sermon on the text of Ps 141:5 as being delivered on the vigil of Pentecost in that year. It was preached in Carthage, where Augustine seems to have spent two or three months that summer. On the same

occasion—that is the same night—so Possidius suggests, he also preached Sermon 29A. Kunzelmann, however, prefers 410, when Pentecost fell on 28 May.

2. It looks as if it was some Donatists who first interpreted the oil of this verse of Ps 141 as the sacramental oil of confirmation, and more specifically the oil of the sinner with the oil used by Catholic bishops. The Catholics simply reply that the sacramental oil is the oil of Christ, whatever the moral status of the minister who administers it. But Augustine doesn't get down to the proper interpretation of the psalm until the very last section. The point concerns all the sacraments, particularly baptism, the whole Donatist case resting on the assumption that sacraments administered by unworthy ministers are invalid and without effect.

3. See Acts 2:1; 1:14-15.

4. Augustine is certainly stretching the text in assuming that each person spoke in all tongues; each, on the contrary, spoke *as the Spirit gave them utterance*—the Spirit decided which tongue or tongues each would speak. The text goes on to say that each of the hearers heard his own language spoken—a rather different thing.

5. See Mk 2:22.

6. By Peter pointing out it was only 9 o'clock in the morning, Acts 2:15.

7. Reading *et Christi gratiam praedicantibus* as a parallel phrase to *rationemque reddentibus*, instead of the text's *gratia praedicantibus*, preaching by the grace of Christ.

8. The grace of the Holy Spirit; but he also seems to mean, perhaps on the strength of some Christian legendary embroidery, or *midrash*, on the text, that they received the gift of tongues. The actual text so interpreted would be Acts 2:38.

9. See Acts 8:9-24.

10. See Acts 6:1-6.

11. Augustine appears (from the grammar of the sentence) to suppose that Philip asked the eunuch whom the prophet was talking about—as a kind of teacher's opening gambit; though the text clearly says the eunuch asked Philip. The door being opened to Philip is an echo of 1 Cor 16:9, and 2 Cor 2:12; doors being opened to Paul in respectively Ephesus and Troas. See also Col 4:3.

12. This is the reading of many Greek, Syriac, and Coptic manuscripts. The text we are familiar with says the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip and deposited him at Azotus.

13. *Ut venit Dominus, et redemit*. After the previous phrase, *venit ut Deus, et implevit*, one expects *venit ut Dominus, et redemit*, and one could easily so emend the text: he came as Lord and redeemed him. But we don't usually attribute redemption to the Holy Spirit, and neither did Augustine. What he is here saying is that the Holy Spirit acts with the same divine freedom as the Lord, the Word, God the Son, had done. He came and redeemed us without the employment of any human "ministers"—extra- or pre-sacramentally, as one might say. The Holy Spirit could also fill and sanctify extra-sacramentally.

14. See Mt 10:3.

15. He is not very accurate here; believers who had come from the Gentiles *were* the uncircumcised. The argument was between different parties of Jewish Christians, more or less the James party and the Paul party (which was, perhaps, heir to the Stephen party) of Acts 15. Luke presents the Cornelius episode as a kind of curtain raiser to that epic contest.

16. Both in Caesarea with Cornelius and in Joppa with Peter.

17. See Sermon 263A, 4, note 10. Why he quoted this text, rather than Lk 13:29, which correctly gives all four cardinal points, and whose context suits him much better, it is impossible to say. Other editors, from the Maurists onward, give that reference, as if that is what he was quoting. But it isn't; there is that awkward, incongruous final word, "sea."

18. Here he is being more accurate than he was two paragraphs ago; see note 15.

19. These are the Donatists.

20. See Acts 10:24.

21. See Mt 12:30.

22. *Diligit*; normally, of course, translated "loves"; but here a variant is required.

23. Not in the colloquial English sense!

24. The precipice of pride.

SERMON 267

ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Date: 412¹

New wineskins were expecting new wine from heaven; and it came

1. Today's solemnity makes us remember the great Lord God and the great grace that has been poured out over us. That, after all, is why a solemnity is celebrated, to save something that only happened once, from being lost to the memory. A solemnity, you see, gets its name from what is "customary in the year."² Just as we talk of a river being perennial because it doesn't dry up in the summer, but flows throughout the year; perennial, therefore, that is "through the year";³ so too "solemn," something that is customarily celebrated every year. Today we are celebrating the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Lord, you see, sent the Holy Spirit from heaven, having promised him on earth. And because this is how he had promised he would send him from heaven: *He cannot come, he had said, unless I go away; but when I go away, I will send him to you (Jn 16:7)*; he first suffered, died, rose again, ascended; it now remained for him to carry out his promise.

This is what his disciples were waiting for, a hundred and twenty souls, as it is written,⁴ ten times the number of the apostles; I mean, he chose twelve, and sent the Spirit on a hundred and twenty. So while awaiting this promised gift, they were together in one house, praying; because they were now awaiting⁵ in faith itself what they were expecting in their prayer and their spiritual desire. They were new wineskins, the new wine was expected from heaven;⁶ and it came. That great bunch of grapes, after all, had already been trodden and glorified. You see, we read in the gospel, *For the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified (Jn 7:39)*.

The gift of tongues

2. You heard just now what the answer was; a great miracle. All the people present had learned one language. The Holy Spirit came, they were filled with it, they began to speak with the different languages of all nations which they didn't know, and hadn't learned. But the one who had come was teaching them;

he entered, they were filled, he poured out from them. And then there was enacted this sign; whoever received the Holy Spirit, suddenly, filled with the Spirit, started speaking with the tongues of all; not only those hundred and twenty. The text itself teaches us this; when people believed, they were baptized, they received the Holy Spirit, they spoke with the tongues of all nations.⁷

Those who were present were dumbfounded, some filled with wonder, others given to mockery, to the extent of saying, *These people are drunk, full of new wine* (Acts 2:13). They were jeering, and they were saying something true. Wineskins, you see, were filled with new wine. You heard about it when the gospel was read: *Nobody puts new wine into old wineskins* (Mk 2:22⁸); the carnal person does not receive the things of the Spirit.⁹ Being carnal means being old, grace means newness. The more you are renewed for the better, the more you receive what smacks of the truth. The new wine was fermenting, and with the new wine fermenting, the languages of the nations were flowing freely.

Now is being fulfilled what was then being foreshadowed

3. Isn't the Holy Spirit being given nowadays, then, brothers and sisters? Anyone who thinks that, isn't worthy to receive it. It certainly is given nowadays. So why is nobody speaking with the tongues of all nations, as people spoke who were filled with the Holy Spirit at that time? Why? Because what that signified has been fulfilled. What was that? When we celebrated the fortieth day,¹⁰ remember, I drew your attention to how the Lord Jesus Christ drew a sketch of his Church and then ascended. His disciples were asking, "When will the end of the world be?" And he said, *It is not for you to know the times or moments, which the Father has placed under his own authority*. He had still to promise what he has carried out today: *You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming down upon you, and you will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in the whole of Judea and Samaria, and as far as the ends of the earth* (Acts 1:7-8). The Church was then in one house, it received the Holy Spirit; it consisted of a few people, it consisted of the languages of the whole world.

There you have what it was pointing forward to now. The fact, I mean, that that small Church was speaking with the tongues of all nations, what else can it signify but that this great Church *from the rising of the sun to its setting* (Ps 113:3) is speaking with the tongues of all nations? Now is being fulfilled what was then being promised. We have heard, we can see. *Hear, daughter, and see* (Ps 45:11); the queen herself was being addressed. *Hear, daughter, and see*; hear the promise, see the fulfillment. Your God hasn't deceived you, your bridegroom has not deceived you, the one who gave his blood for your dowry hasn't deceived you. The one who found you ugly and made you beautiful, found you unclean and made you a virgin, has not deceived you. It's you that were promised to yourself; but promised in a few people, fulfilled in many.

The Holy Spirit is to the Church what the soul is to the human body

4. So none of you must say, “I have received the Holy Spirit; why aren’t I speaking with the tongues of all nations?” If you want to have the Holy Spirit, consider this, my dear brothers and sisters: our spirit, by which every person lives, is called the soul; our spirit by which every single human being lives, is called the soul. And you can see what the soul does in the body. It quickens all its parts; it sees through the eyes, hears through the ears, smells through the nostrils, speaks with the tongue, works with the hands, walks with the feet. It’s present simultaneously to all the body’s parts, to make them alive; it gives life to all, their functions to each. The eye doesn’t hear, the ear doesn’t see, the tongue doesn’t see, nor do ear and eye speak. But they’re alive, all the same; the ear’s alive, the tongue’s alive; different functions, life in common.

That’s what the Church of God is like; in some of the saints it works miracles, in other saints it proclaims the truth, in other saints it preserves virginity, in other saints it preserves married chastity; in some this, in others that. All doing their own thing, but living the same life together. In fact, what the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the body of Christ, which is the Church.¹¹ The Holy Spirit does in the whole Church what the soul does in all the parts of one body. But notice what you should beware of, see what you should notice, notice what you should be afraid of. It can happen in the human body—or rather from the body—that one part is cut off, a hand, a finger, a foot; does the soul follow the amputated part? When it was in the body, it was alive, cut off, it loses life. In the same way too Christian men and women are Catholics, while they are alive in the body; cut off, they have become heretics, the Spirit doesn’t follow the amputated part. So if you wish to be alive with the Holy Spirit, hold on to loving-kindness, love truthfulness, long for oneness,¹² that you may attain to everlastingness. Amen.

NOTES

1. So Fischer and Kunzelmann. Pentecost that year fell on 2 June.
2. *Sollemnitas . . . ab eo quod solet in anno*; not quite accurate, but certainly derived from *annus*, a year. The *soll-* part is from an archaic word *sollus*, meaning “every.”
3. *Ideo perenne, id est, per annum*.
4. Acts 1:5.
5. Reading *quia expectabant jam ipsa fide*, instead of the text’s *desiderabant*. A rather drastic emendation, to be sure; but expecting seems to go better with faith than desiring. A copyist could easily have substituted *desiderabant* for *expectabant* unintentionally, his eye being caught by *desiderio* a few words later on.
6. See Mk 2:22.
7. See Acts 2:38, and Sermon 266, note 8.
8. The editions, of course, refer to Matthew, as always. But as a matter of fact Matthew here has

the indefinite plural, *Neither do they put new wine into old wineskins*. Both Mark and Luke have the singular, as here, and identical texts. So which of these two gospels had been read we cannot tell; but it is unlikely to have been Matthew.

9. See 1 Cor 2:14.

10. Ascension day; see Sermon 26, 6. Fischer and Kunzelmann date this sermon to 412; so for them it is clearly the one he is referring to here. Even if they are wrong about the date, it seems likely that these two sermons form a pair.

11. See 1 Cor 12:12-31.

12. Two names for the Church: charity and unity (loving-kindness and oneness); one for Christ: truth (truthfulness).

SERMON 268

ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Date: 405¹

The unity of the Church represented in the tongues of all nations

1. It is because of the coming of the Holy Spirit that this is a solemn day for us, the fiftieth after the Lord's resurrection, coming after seven weeks. But count the days of seven weeks, each of seven days, and you will find there are forty-nine of them; one is added, to impress upon us the importance of unity. What about the actual coming of the Holy Spirit, what did that do? How did he make his presence known, how did he demonstrate it? They all spoke with the tongues of all nations. Actually, there were a hundred and twenty people in one place—the symbolically sacred number twelve of the apostles multiplied by ten.

So what, then? Did each single person, of those upon whom the Holy Spirit came, speak in a single tongue of all the nations, these speaking one language, and those another, and did they somehow or other divide up the languages of all nations between them? Not like that; but each person, one person, was speaking in the languages of all nations.² One person was speaking in the tongues of all nations; the unity of the Church in the tongues of all nations. So there you are; here too the unity of the Catholic Church is being impressed on us, as it is spread throughout the whole world.

*Whoever has the Holy Spirit is in the Church,
which speaks the languages of all nations*

2. So whoever has the Holy Spirit is in the Church, which speaks the languages of all people. Whoever is outside this Church, hasn't got the Holy Spirit. The reason, after all, why the Holy Spirit was prepared to demonstrate his presence in the tongues of all nations, was so that those who are included in the unity of the Church which speaks all languages might understand that they have the Holy Spirit. *One body*, says the apostle Paul, *one body and one spirit* (Eph 4:4). Consider our own bodies and their parts. The body consists of many parts, and one spirit quickens all the parts. Look here, by the human spirit, by which I am myself this human being, I bind together all parts of my body; I command

the limbs to move, I direct the eyes to see, the ears to hear, the tongue to talk, the hands to work, the feet to walk. The functions of the different parts vary, but the unity of the spirit³ coordinates them all. Many things are commanded, many things are done; but it's just one who commands, and one who is served. What our spirit, that is our soul, is to the parts or members of our body, that the Holy Spirit is to the members of Christ, to the body of Christ. That's why the apostle, after mentioning one body, in case we should take it as a dead body—*One body*, he says.

But I ask you, is this body alive?

It's alive.

What with?

With one spirit. *And one spirit.*

So consider, brothers and sisters, the case of our own bodies, and grieve for those who cut themselves off from the Church. With our parts or members, as long as we're alive, while we're in good health, all the members carry out their functions. If one member is hurt in any way, all the other members sympathize with it. And yet, because it's in the body, while it can feel pain, it can't expire. What, after all, does it mean to expire, but to lose the spirit?⁴ But now, if a member is cut off from the body, the spirit doesn't follow, does it? And yet the member can be recognized for what it is; it's a finger, a hand, an arm, an ear. Apart from the body it retains its shape, it doesn't retain life. So too with persons separated from the Church. You ask them about the sacrament, you find it; you look for baptism, you find it; you look for the creed, you find it. That's the shape or form; unless you are quickened inwardly by the Spirit, any boasting you do about the outward form is meaningless.

The value of unity impressed on us in the creation of the human race from one single individual

3. My dearest friends, there's so much God does in order to emphasize the importance of unity. What he did at the very beginning of creation should make you think; when God established the universe, he made the constellations in the sky, while on earth he made the plants and trees. He said *Let the earth produce*, and the trees and all green plants were produced; he said, *Let the waters produce things that swim and fly*, and it happened like that; he said, *Let the earth produce the living soul of all cattle and beasts* (Gn 1:11.20.24), and it happened like that. Did God make all the other birds from one bird? All the fishes from one fish? All horses from one horse? All beasts from one beast? Didn't the earth produce many of them simultaneously and together, completing the requisite numbers with multiple births?

We come now to the making of man, and only one was made, and the human race from that one.⁵ He wasn't even willing to make two separately, a male and a female; but just one man, and from the one man one woman.⁶ Why so? Why is the human race begun from one person, if not because the importance of unity is being impressed upon the human race? The Lord Christ too was from one

person, the virgin represents unity, she holds onto virginity, she preserves integrity.

Unity is the dowry with which the Lord has endowed his Church

4. The Lord himself impresses the importance of the unity of the Church upon the apostles. He shows himself to them, they think they're seeing a spirit; they're petrified, they're reassured, they're told, *Why are you troubled, and thoughts coming up into your hearts? See my hands; feel and see that a spirit does not have bones and flesh, as you can see that I have* (Lk 24:38-39). And look, while they are still agitated for very joy, he takes some food, not because he needs it, but to show that he can. He takes it in their presence, he thereby impresses on them, against the godless,⁷ the true reality of his body, he impresses on them the unity of the Church.

After all, what does he say? *Isn't this what I spoke to you about, while I was still with you, that it was necessary for all the things to be fulfilled that were written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms? Then he opened their minds, it's the gospel speaking, to understand the scriptures. And he said to them, that thus it was written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead on the third day* (Lk 24:44-46). There you have our head; there's the head, where are the members? There's the bridegroom, where's the bride? Read the marriage contract;⁸ listen to the bridegroom. You're looking for the bride? Hear about her from him. Nobody is taking his bride from him, nobody substituting a strange one;⁹ hear about her from him. Where are you looking for Christ; in the fables of men, or in the truth of the gospels?¹⁰ He suffered, he rose again on the third day, he showed himself to his disciples. Now we have him; where are we to look for her?

Let's inquire of him: *It was necessary for the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead on the third day.* There you are, it's happened, he can now be seen. Tell us, Lord; you tell us, Lord, in case we get it wrong. *And for repentance and the forgiveness of sins to be preached in his name throughout all nations, with you beginning from Jerusalem* (Lk 24:46-47). It began from Jerusalem, and has come as far as us. It is both there and here. It did not withdraw from there, you see, in order to come to us; it spread, it didn't emigrate. That's how he commended the Church to them immediately after his resurrection. He spent forty days with them; as he was about to ascend into heaven, he again commended the Church to them.¹¹ The bridegroom setting off on a journey commended his bride to his friends—not to love any particular one of them; but to love him as bridegroom, them as friends of the bridegroom, none of them as if he were the bridegroom.

The bridegroom's friends are properly jealous about this, and do not allow her to be corrupted by any flirtatious sort of love. They hate it when they are loved and flirted with like that. Notice how jealous this friend of the bridegroom is; when he saw the bride being to a certain extent seduced by friends of the bridegroom, he said, *I hear that there are schisms among you, and in part I*

believe it.¹² *I have been told about you, brothers, by those of Chloe's household, that there are rivalries among you, and that each of you is saying, I, of course, belong to Paul; well, I to Apollo; I, though, to Cephas; I, though, to Christ. Has Christ been divided up? Was Paul crucified for you, or were you baptized in the name of Paul?* (1 Cor 1:11-13). What a friend! He thrusts away from himself the love of another man's bride. He doesn't want himself to be loved instead of the bridegroom,¹³ because he wants to be able to reign with the bridegroom.

So the Church has been commended to us; and when he ascended into heaven, this is how he spoke to them, when they were inquiring about the end of the world: *Tell us, when will these things happen, and when will be the time of your coming?*¹⁴ *And he said, It is not for you to know the times, which the Father has placed under his own authority.* Listen, disciple, to what you should learn from the master: *But you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming down upon you* (Acts 1:7-8).¹⁵ And it happened; on the fortieth day he ascended, and here we are today, when all who were present are filled with the Holy Spirit as he comes upon them, and speak with the tongues of all nations. Yet again, unity is being commended to us through the tongues of all nations. It is commended to us by the Lord as he rises again, it is commended by Christ as he ascends; it is confirmed by the Holy Spirit as he comes today.

NOTES

1. Kunzelmann and Fischer suggest between 405 and 410, while Monceaux proposes before 405. So both converge on 405.

2. Augustine insisting on his own idiosyncratic interpretation of the event. See Sermon 266, note 4.

3. So the manuscripts: *unitas spiritus*. The Maurists emend to *unus spiritus*, the one spirit; I think, unnecessarily.

4. *Exspirare* means to breathe out the *spiritus*, the breath.

5. Augustine is now interpreting Gn 1:26-27 as though it were saying the same thing as Gn 2:7; naturally enough, since he knew nothing about different sources and authors for the two different stories of Gn 1 and Gn 2. But in fact it is more than likely that the priestly author of the Gn 1 account of creation was talking in 1:26-27 of the creation of man = mankind, the human race, and not of an original couple, the Adam and Eve of the Gn 2 story. For one thing, I suspect he wished to correct any impression that story may give of a divinely intended subordination of women to men; he is stating the essential equality, as being equally in God's image, of both sexes. But against this view of mine, one has to acknowledge that the priestly continuator of the Gn 1 account, picking up the thread again in Gn 5, does assimilate Gn 1:26 to the Adam story of Gn 2. Or perhaps Gn 5:1-3 is the harmonizing work of the final editor of Genesis and the Pentateuch.

6. See Gn 2:7. 21-22.

7. In particular, here, the Manichees.

8. The matrimonial tablets, which seem to have played a central part in weddings celebrated according to Roman law.

9. A contrast intended, perhaps, with Jacob's marriage, Gn 29:21-30, where he was cheated of Rachel to begin with by his father-in-law Laban.

10. To judge from some books being published nowadays, it seems a lot of people just love looking for him, or inventing him in the fables of men; for example, *Jesus the Man: A New Interpretation from the Dead Sea Scrolls*, by Barbara Thiering, Doubleday, 1992; and *Jesus*, by A.N. Wilson, Sinclair-Stevenson, 1992. But it is indeed an old, old industry, going right back to the apocryphal gospels.

11. See Acts 1:6.

12. This is a direct quotation of 1 Cor 11:18. But it seems he thought he was quoting the introduction to the text he continues with.

13. The manuscripts have *pro sponsa*, instead of the bride; but this surely must be a slip for *pro sponso*, which I have translated.

14. Again, he is mixing his occasions and quotations. This is what they asked him *before* his passion, when he foretold the destruction of the temple: Mt 24:3.

15. And now he forgets to complete the quotation with the words that make his point: *and you shall be witnesses for me in Jerusalem . . . and to the ends of the earth!*

SERMON 269

ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Date: 411¹

The gift of the tongues of all nations at Pentecost foreshadows the unity of the Church among all nations

1. It is the coming of the Holy Spirit that we are celebrating on this annual feast. Such a feast calls for a solemn gathering, a solemn reading, a solemn sermon. The first two tributes have been paid, because you have come together in great numbers, and you have heard the readings. Let me now pay the third as well; let the obedience of my tongue not fail to be given to the one who granted knowledge of all tongues to unlearned people, and subdued the tongues of the learned in all nations, and gathered the different tongues of the nations together into the unity of the faith.

*Suddenly, you see, there came a sound from heaven, as if a fierce gust were bearing down; and there appeared to them divided tongues as of fire, which also settled upon each one of them; and they began to speak in tongues, as the Spirit gave them to utter (Acts 2:2-4). That gust, that puff, did not puff them up, but quickened them instead; that fire did not burn them up, but stirred them up instead. There was fulfilled in them what had been prophesied so long before: *There are no dialects, no words, whose voices may not be heard; so that from then on, scattering to preach the gospel, they might do what follows: Their sound has gone forth to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world (Ps 19:3-4).**

What else, after all, was the Holy Spirit foreshadowing, by endowing with the tongues of all nations people who had only learned the one tongue of their own nation (that's what he chose at that time to indicate his presence by), but that all nations were going to believe the gospel; so that first each of the faithful,² later on, though, the very unity of the Church, should speak in all languages? What have they got to say to that, these people who refuse to join and be incorporated into the society of Christians, which is bearing fruit and growing in all nations?³ Can they possibly deny that even now the Holy Spirit comes upon Christians? So why does nobody now, either among us or among them, speak in the tongues of all nations—which was then the sign of his coming—if

not because what was then being signified is now being fulfilled? Then, you see, each single believer was speaking in all languages; and now the unity of believers is speaking in all languages. And so even now all languages are ours, since we are members of the body in which they are to be found.

Receiving baptism does not necessarily mean receiving the Holy Spirit

2. And it's right and reasonable for us to maintain that heretics or schismatics, even though we admit they have baptism, do not receive the Holy Spirit, except when they adhere to the framework of unity in the fellowship of charity. Then, you see, the languages of all nations will also be theirs, because they too will be where the languages are, to wit in the same body of Christ which is growing everywhere, and they will be *keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph 4:3). Anyone not tied up by this bond is a slave. *For we have not received, as the apostle says, the spirit of slavery again in fear; but we have received the Spirit of sonship by adoption, in which we cry out, Abba, Father* (Rom 8:15). Accordingly our opinion is entirely in line with the truth, that the reason the Holy Spirit indicated his presence at that time with the tongues of all nations, was that nobody separated from the unity of all the nations should be considered to have the Spirit, even if marked by the sacrament of baptism.

And to stop you assuming that a consequence of your having the baptism of the Trinity is your having the Holy Spirit as well, a very considerable distinction was made even within the unity itself. So we find some people baptized, and found worthy to receive the Holy Spirit later on, when the apostles came to them in Samaria, where they had been baptized in their absence;⁴ while others—and there's only a single instance of this—received him before baptism, as was conceded by divine authority, which none can gainsay, to Cornelius and those who were with him, while Peter was speaking.⁵ On others he came the moment they were baptized, as upon that eunuch to whom Philip preached the good news of Christ from the prophet Isaiah.⁶ Upon some, through the laying on of hands by the apostles, by far the greatest number; upon others without any laying on of hands, but with them all praying, as on that very day which we are solemnly celebrating today, when there were a hundred and twenty souls with the apostles in one hall. Upon some, with nobody laying hands and nobody praying either, but with them all listening to the word of God, as upon those I've just this moment mentioned, Cornelius and his household.

Why therefore now in this way, now in that, if not to make sure that nothing here is attributed to human pride, but everything to divine grace and power?⁷ And so this distinction between the reception of baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit is sufficient to instruct us, that we should not immediately suppose that those people, whom we cannot deny to have baptism, also thereby have the Holy Spirit. How much more those who are not only unequipped with any love of Christian unity . . .⁸ because *the love of God has been poured out in our hearts*—not of course through ourselves, but as it continues, *through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5). So it is, that just as at that time

the languages of all nations in one person indicated the presence of the Holy Spirit, in the same way he is now indicated by the love of the unity of all nations.

Directly against the Donatists

3. *But the worldly man,*⁹ they are the apostle's words, *does not receive the things of the Spirit of God* (1 Cor 2:14). And of course, he upbraids the worldly people, to whom he says, *Each one of you is saying, I of course belong to Paul; I thought to Apollo; well, I to Peter; I thought to Christ. Has Christ been divided up? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?* (1 Cor 1:12-13). Just as spiritual people, you see, take pleasure in unity, so worldly people are ever ready to wrangle. About them the apostle Jude also writes very plainly: *These are the ones*, he says, *who set themselves apart, worldly, not having the Spirit* (Jude 19). What could be clearer, what more explicit? So they should stop foolishly flattering themselves, and saying to us, "What are we going to receive when we come along to you, since you admit that we already have the baptism of Christ?"

We answer them: You have Christ's baptism; come, in order to have Christ's Spirit as well. Be afraid of what's written: *But anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not belong to him* (Rom 8:9). You have put on Christ in the form of the sacrament; put him on by imitating his example; *since Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, so that we might follow his footsteps* (1 Pt 2:21). Don't be people who *have the form of piety, but deny its power* (2 Tm 3:5). What greater power could piety have than the love of unity? It says in the psalms, *I have seen the end of every consummation; your commandment is exceedingly broad* (Ps 119:96). Which commandment, if not the one about which it says, *A new commandment I give you, that you should love one another* (Jn 13:34)? Why *broad*, if not because *the love of God has been poured out in our hearts* (Rom 5:5)? Why *an end of every consummation*, if not because *the fullness of the law is love; and the whole law is summed up in this that is written: You shall love your neighbor as yourself* (Rom 13:10.9)? The way you people, though, love your neighbors as yourselves, is that while you don't want anything bad to be believed about you, which has neither been seen nor proved, you are happy to believe about the whole world what you have neither seen, nor received any proof of.¹⁰

Saying "Jesus is Lord" is a matter of deeds rather than words

4. You appear in your own eyes to say, *Jesus is Lord*. And perhaps, without understanding it rightly, you are paying attention to what the apostle says: *Nobody can say: Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit* (1 Cor 12:3). But when he says *can say*, he puts it emphatically, and means it in a special sort of sense. *Yes, nobody can say: Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit*—but provided you say it in deeds, not just in words. After all, *Jesus is Lord* can be said even by the people of whom he says, *Do what they say; but do not do what they do* (Mt

23:3). All the heresies, which you people¹¹ also condemn of course, they all say, *Jesus is Lord*. And he's not, of course, going to eliminate from the kingdom of heaven those whom he finds to be in the Holy Spirit; and yet he did say, *Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Mt 7:21). But: *Nobody can say: Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit*; nobody at all, evidently; but in the sense in which it was meant, that is in deeds. Which is why the Lord went on to add, *But the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven, that is the one who will enter the kingdom of heaven* (Mt 7:21). The same apostle, you see, also says of some people, *They claim to know the Lord, but deny it by their deeds* (Ti 1:16). As it can be denied by deeds, so it can be said by deeds. In this manner of saying things, *Nobody can say Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit*.

So if you don't accede to the unity, but continue to set yourselves apart, you will be worldly, not having the Spirit.¹² If, though, you accede under false pretenses, *The Holy Spirit of discipline will put to flight false pretenses* (Wis 1:5). So then, the time you can be sure you have the Holy Spirit, is when you consent through sincere charity firmly to attach your minds to the unity.¹³

That's the sort of answer we must give them, when they say, "What are we going to receive?" As for ourselves, brothers and sisters, let us present them with the example of good works, neither being proud because we happen to stand firm ourselves, nor despairing of those who are still lying flat on their faces.

NOTES

1. So Kunzelmann and Perler. Pentecost that year fell on 14 May. It was the year of the great Catholic-Donatist conference in Carthage, presided over by the imperial commissioner Marcellinus. The conference was convoked for the beginning of June, so Augustine would have been in Carthage by Pentecost, consulting his colleagues about the forthcoming event. But the date, though probable, is not absolutely certain.

2. See Sermons 266, note 4; 268, note 2.

3. The Donatists, of course.

4. See Acts 8:14-17.

5. See Acts 10:44-48.

6. See Acts 8:26-29—following the variant reading of the text that seems to have been the African one. See Sermon 266, note 12.

7. He is getting at the Donatist doctrine of the sacraments, according to which the effectiveness of the sacrament (in this case, one infers, of what we now call confirmation, and so of the reception of the Holy Spirit) depends on the moral character of the minister, here the apostles and their successors the bishops. Augustine is also very usefully making the point, that sometimes needs to be made to good Catholics also (who too easily slip from time to time into a kind of unwitting Donatism), that God can and does bestow his grace quite independently of the sacraments. He is not bound by the sacraments; we are.

8. Either the concluding part of the sentence has dropped out of the text in transmission, or—

equally likely—it dropped out of Augustine's mind, which was carried away by the quotation that suggested itself. But it is not entirely clear, whom, in addition to the Donatists, he had in mind. It was too early for the Pelagians; and nobody would ever have suggested anyway that the pagans had the Holy Spirit. The finger was probably to be pointed at bad, merely nominal Catholics.

9. *Animalis homo*; impossible to translate. The Latin *animalis* is a literal rendering of the Greek *psychikos*, which doesn't mean psychic in the current sense, but just animated with a *psyche* or *anima*, instead of with *pneuma* or spirit. Paul treats it as being entirely synonymous with carnal or fleshly.

10. He means complicity in the *traditio*, the surrender of the sacred books at the time of the great persecution. The whole world's complicity was shown simply by its maintaining communion with the Catholic Church in Africa. What the Donatists lack proof of, he is suggesting, is the original *traditio*, and above all it is the guilt of Caecilian, the bishop of Carthage whose election in 310 the Donatists so vehemently objected to.

11. The Donatists.

12. See Jude 19.

13. That is, to the Catholic Church; a rather curious way of saying it!

SERMON 270

ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Date: 416¹

We are all fellow students in the school of Christ, bishops and people alike; so we are inquiring together into certain mysteries connected with the Holy Spirit

1. We are celebrating the sacred anniversary of a day so holy, that the Holy Spirit himself came today; such a festive and happy anniversary requires us to say something about this gift of God, this grace of God and the abundance of his mercy toward us, that is, about the Holy Spirit himself. I'm talking to my fellow students in the school of the Lord. You see, we all have one master, in whom we are all one;² and he gave us bishops³ a warning, in case we should perhaps have the nerve to grow proud about our *magisterium*, our position as masters, when he said, *Do not let yourselves be called Rabbi by men; for you have only one master, the Christ* (Mt 23:8). So we are all to be educated under this master, whose chair is heaven, from his writings; in that spirit, please, pay attention to the few things I'll be saying, if I am enabled to do so by the one who commands me to say them. Those of you who know it already can refresh your memories; those who didn't know it can learn it now.

The devoutly inquisitive mind is often moved—provided, however, that human frailty and weakness is permitted to investigate such things. It most certainly is permitted to. What's obscure in the holy scriptures, after all, is not locked up there in order to be denied us; the reason rather is, that it should be opened up to us when we knock, as the Lord says himself: *Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it will be opened to you* (Lk 11:9). So inquiring minds are often moved to wonder why it was on the fiftieth day after the Lord's passion and resurrection that the promised Holy Spirit was sent.

Why the Holy Spirit could only come after Christ had gone away

2. Here the first advice I would give your graces, is that you shouldn't be reluctant to consider for a moment why the Lord himself had said, *He cannot come, unless I have gone away* (Jn 16:7). As though, to speak for a moment on a crude, materialistic understanding of the words, as though the Lord Christ was

keeping something in the high places, and when he came down from there had entrusted what he was keeping to the Holy Spirit; and that's why he couldn't come to us, until Christ had returned to get back what he had entrusted him with; or as though we hadn't the strength to bear them both together, and couldn't tolerate the presence of them both. As if, indeed, either could be separated from the other, or when they come to us they find there's not enough room for them both, and don't rather enlarge and extend us.

So what's the meaning of *He cannot come unless I have gone away? For it is expedient for you, he is saying, that I should go. For if I do not go, the Paraclete will not come to you* (Jn 16:7). So would your graces please accept its meaning from me in a few words, as far as I can grasp it, or work it out, or perceive it with his help, or at least tell you what I believe. It seems to me that the disciples had been taken up with the human form of the Lord Christ, and as human beings were held in the grip of a human affection for a man. But he wanted them, rather, to have a divine affection, and in this way to turn them from being under the spell of the flesh to being spiritual; which a person cannot become except by the gift of the Holy Spirit.⁴ So what he's saying is this: "I am sending you a gift which will make you spiritual, the gift, that is, of the Holy Spirit. But you cannot become spiritual unless you stop being spellbound by the flesh. Now you will stop being under the spell of the flesh, if the form of flesh is removed from your eyes, so that the form of God may be inserted in your hearts."

You see, it was by this human form that the Lord—that is, the form of a servant: *he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant* (Phil 2:7);⁵ so it was by this form of a servant that Peter's affection was also held captive, when he was afraid of the one whom he loved so much having to die. He loved the Lord Jesus Christ, you see, as one human being loves another; as a being of flesh loves a being of flesh, not as a spiritual being loves the divine majesty. How can we be sure of this? Because when the Lord had been questioning his disciples about who he was said to be by people, and they had given the opinions of others as they recalled them, that some said he was John, others Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the prophets, he said to them, *You, though, who do you say that I am?* And Peter, one speaking for the rest of them, one for all, said, *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God* (Mt 16:15-16). Excellent, couldn't be more true; rightly did he deserve to receive a reply like this: *Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, because you have told me; you have said something, hear something; you have made a confession, receive a blessing; so: And I tell you: you are Peter, because I am the rock, you are Rocky, Peter—I mean, rock doesn't come from Rocky, but Rocky from rock, just as Christ doesn't come from Christian, but Christian from Christ; and upon this rock I will build my Church* (Mt 16:17-18); not upon Peter, or Rocky, which is what you are, but upon the rock which you have confessed. *I will build my Church* though; I will build you, because in this answer of yours you represent the Church.

This and the other things, because Peter had said, *You are the Christ, the Son*

of the living God, and had heard, as you remember, *It was not flesh and blood that revealed it to you*, that is a human mind, human weakness, human inexperience, *but my Father who is in heaven*. Then the Lord Jesus began to foretell his passion, and how much he was going to endure from the ungodly. Here Peter was horrified, and was afraid that the Christ, the Son of the living God, was going to be done in by death. Obviously the Christ, the Son of the living God, the good from the good, God from God, the living from the living, the fountain of life and true life⁶ had come to do death in, not to be done in by death. And yet it was as a human being that Peter was terrified, all his human affection, as I said, being centered on the flesh of Christ. *Go easy, Lord, he said, on yourself. God forbid, this must not happen*. And the Lord rebuts such words with a proper and fitting reply. Just as he gave proper praise to that confession, so too proper correction to this alarm: *Get back, he says, behind me, Satan (Mt 16:22-23)*. Where now is that *Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona?* Distinguish between the words of praise and of repulsion; distinguish between the cases of confession and of alarm. The case of confession: *It was not flesh and blood which revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven (Mt 16:17)*. The case of alarm: *For you do not savor the things that are of God, but those that are of man (Mt 16:23)*.

So wouldn't we like such people to be told, *For it is expedient for you that I should go; unless I go away, the Paraclete will not come to you (Jn 16:7)?* Unless the human form is withdrawn from your sight, you won't be in the least capable of grasping, perceiving, thinking about something divine. That should be enough. That's why it was necessary that only after the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ should his promise be fulfilled about the Holy Spirit. That also, after all, is what the evangelist John himself had said in his own person, when Jesus, referring to this same Holy Spirit, had cried out, *If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink; and rivers of living water will flow from his breast*. The evangelist, you see, continued, *But he was saying this about the Spirit, which those who were going to believe in him would receive. For the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified (Jn 7:37-39)*. So our Lord Jesus Christ was glorified by his resurrection and ascension, and he sent the Holy Spirit.

The symbolism of the numbers 40 and 50

3. But as we learned from the sacred books, he completed forty days with his disciples after the resurrection, showing them the reality of his risen body, going in and coming out with them, eating and drinking,⁷ in case they should think it was a kind of pretense. But on the fortieth day, which we celebrated ten days ago, in their sight he ascended into heaven, with the promise that in the same way as he was going, so he would come;⁸ that is, he was going to judge in the same human form as he had been judged in. It was his wish to send the Holy Spirit on a different day from when he ascended; not after a mere two or three days, but after ten days. This point obliges us to investigate and ask questions about certain obscurities of numbers.

Forty days contain four times ten. This number, it seems to me, presents us with a significant symbolism.⁹ I'm speaking as a man to men and women, and I'm rightly called an interpreter of the scriptures, not an asserter of my own opinions.¹⁰ So this number forty, containing four times ten, signifies, so it seems to me, this age which we are now acting our parts in and passing through. We are in fact being acted on and passed along by the parade of the seasons, by the instability of affairs, by the going and coming, in fleeting snatches, as in a kind of stream, of things that don't last. So it's this age that is signified by this number, because of the fourfold seasons of the world which make up the year; also the fourfold cardinal points of the world, known to everybody, and often mentioned by sacred scripture: *from east and west, from north and south* (Lk 13:29).

So it's through these fourfold segments of time and throughout the fourfold quarters of the world that the law of God is being preached, like the number ten. That's why the decalogue was the first thing to be impressed upon God's people. The law was established, after all, in ten commandments; for the good reason that there seems to be a sort of perfection or completion in this number ten. When you count, I mean, you go up to this number, and then go back from one up to ten, and again back to one.¹¹ In the same way hundreds, in the same way thousands; in the same way over and above that, the forest of numbers grows endlessly in folds of ten.¹² Thus the complete law found in the number ten, and the law preached through the fourfold world, being four times ten makes forty. Now we are taught, while we are leading our lives in this world, to abstain from worldly desires; this is signified by the forty day fast known to everyone by the name of Lent.¹³ This has been enjoined on you by the law, this by the prophets, this by the gospel. That's why, since the law commanded it, Moses fasted for forty days; since the prophets did, Elijah fasted for forty days;¹⁴ since the gospel did, the Lord Christ fasted for forty days.¹⁵

So ten days being completed after the forty days,¹⁶ the number ten just once, the number ten singly, not four times over, the Holy Spirit came, so that the law might be fulfilled by grace. The law, you see, without grace, is the letter that kills. *For if a law, he says, had been given that could bring to life, justice would certainly have come from the law. But scripture locked all things up under sin, so that the promise from the faith of Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe* (Gal 3:21-22). That's why *the letter kills, but the Spirit brings to life* (2 Cor 3:6). Not so that you should fulfill something other than what you are commanded by the letter; but the letter by itself makes you guilty, while grace both sets you free from sin and enables you to fulfill the letter. So it is that grace achieves the forgiveness of all sins and the *faith which works through love* (Gal 5:6).

So don't assume that the letter was condemned, because it said, *The letter kills*. What that means, you see, is that the letter makes people guilty. A commandment is given, you are not helped by grace; straightaway you find yourself not only not putting the law into practice, but also guilty of transgression. *For where there is no law, there is no transgression* (Rom 4:15). So the law was not being criticized when it said, *The letter kills, but the Spirit brings to life, as*

though to condemn the former and praise the latter; but, *the letter kills*, the law by itself without grace. Let me give you an example. By the same manner of speech it says, *Knowledge puffs up*. What's the meaning of *knowledge puffs up*? Is knowledge condemned? If it puffs up, it would be better if we remained uneducated. But since he added, *but charity builds up* (1 Cor 8:1), just as where he added *but the Spirit brings to life*, he gave us to understand that the letter without the Spirit kills, while with the Spirit it brings to life and gets the letter fulfilled; in the same way knowledge without charity puffs up, charity with knowledge builds up.¹⁷ So the Holy Spirit was sent, so that the law might be fulfilled, and what the Lord himself had said might come about, *I have not come to undo the law, but to fulfill it* (Mt 5:17). He grants this same power to those who believe, grants the same to the faithful, grants the same to those to whom he sends the Holy Spirit. The more capacity anybody has for the Spirit, the greater facility he acquires in keeping the law.

The difference between chaste fear and servile fear

4. What I'm saying, after all, to your graces, which you yourselves will be able both to think about and to see very easily, is that charity fulfills the law. Fear of punishment makes a person do the works of the law, but still in a servile manner. You see, if the reason you do good is because you are afraid of suffering evil, or the reason you refrain from doing evil is that you are afraid of suffering evil; then if anybody promised you impunity, you would immediately lay hold of iniquity. You would be told, "Don't worry, you won't suffer any evil at all; do it": and do it you would. I mean the only thing holding you back was fear of punishment, not love of justice. Charity, you see, wasn't yet at work on you.

So then, see how charity gets to work. Let us love the one whom we fear, in such a way that we fear him with a chaste love. I mean, even a chaste wife fears her husband. But make a distinction between these sorts of fear; the chaste wife is afraid of being deserted by her absent husband; the adulterous wife is afraid of being caught by her husband suddenly returning. So charity fulfills the law, because *perfect charity casts out fear* (1 Jn 4:18); servile fear, that is, proceeding from sin. I mean, *the chaste fear of the Lord abides for ever and ever* (Ps 19:9). So if charity fulfills the law, where does charity itself come from? Think a bit, cudgel your brains, and see that charity is the gift of the Holy Spirit. *For the charity of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5). And so it was entirely fitting that after ten days had passed, the number that also reminds us of the perfection of the law, the Lord Jesus Christ should send the Holy Spirit; because grace enables us to fulfill the law, which he *did not come to undo, but to fulfill* (Mt 5:17).

Various reasons why the Holy Spirit is signified by the number seven

5. But the Holy Spirit is usually indicated in the holy scriptures by the number seven, not the number ten; the law by ten, the Holy Spirit by seven. That the law

is indicated by ten, you know; that the Holy Spirit is represented by seven, I am reminding you of. First of all in the book itself, at the beginning of the book which is entitled Genesis, the works of God are listed. Light is made, the sky is made, which is called the firmament between waters and waters; the dry land is laid bare, the sea separated from the land, the land is given the fertility to produce all plants; the greater and lesser lights are made, the sun and moon and the other stars; the waters produce their broods, the earth its own; man is made to the image of God; God completes all his works on the sixth day. In none of all these works listed and completed was sanctification mentioned. *God said, Let light be made; and light was made; and God saw the light that it was good* (Gn 1:3-4); it didn't say, God sanctified the light. *Let the firmament be made; and it was made; God saw that it was good* (Gn 1:6); and it didn't say that the firmament was sanctified. So with everything else, not to labor the obvious, right up to what was made on the sixth day, when after man has been made to the image of God, the total is summed up,¹⁸ nothing is said to have been sanctified.

We come to the seventh day, on which no work was done, but God's resting is suggested, and God sanctified the seventh day; the first mention of sanctification is on day number seven. It can be looked for in all the passages of scripture, and first found here. Where God's rest is mentioned, our rest too is being suggested. God, after all, didn't find it hard labor, so that he needed a rest; and then, as though congratulating himself for a day off after hard work, sanctified the day on which he was permitted to have a holiday. That's a crude, literal-minded way of thinking. What's being suggested to us is rest after all our good works, just as God's rest was suggested after all his good works. God, you see, made all things, *and behold they were all very good. And God rested on the seventh day from all his works which he had made* (Gn 1:31; 2:2). Do you want to rest too? First make works that are very good.

The sabbath was given to the Jews to be observed literally, like the other things, as rites symbolically signifying something deeper. A particular kind of vacation, you see, was enjoined on them; mind you carry out what that vacation signifies. A spiritual vacation, I mean, is tranquillity of heart; but tranquillity of heart issues from the serenity of a good conscience. So the person who really observes the sabbath is the one who doesn't sin. This, after all, is the way the command was given to those who were commanded to observe the sabbath; *You shall perform no servile work* (Lv 23:7). *Everyone who commits sin, is the slave of sin* (Jn 8:34).

So the number seven is consecrated to the Holy Spirit, just as the number ten is to the law.¹⁹ The prophet Isaiah also suggests this in the place where he says, *The Spirit of wisdom will fill him, and of understanding—count—of counsel and courage, of knowledge and piety, the Spirit of the fear of God* (Is 11:2-3). Like spiritual grace coming down upon us, he begins from wisdom, and ends at fear. We, on the other hand, going up, tending to the heights from the depths, must begin from fear, and end at wisdom. *The beginning of wisdom, you see, is the fear of the Lord* (Ps 111:10). It would take too long, and is quite beyond my strength even if not your eagerness, to mention all the testimonies about the number seven, where it refers to the Holy Spirit. So that must be enough.

How Pentecost as the feast of weeks signifies the Holy Spirit

6. The law, then, is fulfilled through the grace of the Holy Spirit; so now observe how the number ten was to be both drawn to our attention and impressed upon us, as we have already shown, and also the number seven, on account of this very grace of the Holy Spirit.²⁰ In the number ten, by sending the Holy Spirit after ten days, Christ was impressing upon us the importance of the law itself, and enjoining its fulfillment. So where, in this connection, shall we find the number seven impressed on us, above all because of the Holy Spirit himself? In the book of Tobit you have this very festival, that is Pentecost, consisting of seven-day weeks.²¹ How? Multiply the number seven by itself, that is seven by seven, which is something learned in school; seven times seven make forty nine. To this value of seven, by reason of seven times seven—²²

Because it's the Holy Spirit himself who assembles us, and gathers us together; which is why the very first sign he gave of his coming was that those who received him should each and every one of them speak in all tongues. The unity of the body of Christ, you see, is gathered together from all tongues, that is to say, throughout all the nations that are spread over the whole wide world. And the fact that one individual then spoke in all tongues, was a testimony to the unity that was going to be found in all tongues. Now the apostle says, *Bearing with one another in love*, which is charity, *doing all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph 4:2-3). So because the Holy Spirit assembles us from many into one—he's received, though, through humility, repelled through pride. He is water, you see, looking for a humble heart, like a hollow place where he can stay; but he is repelled by the self-importance of pride, and runs away from it, as from the swelling slopes of a hill; which is why it says *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (Jas 4:6; 1 Pt 5:5). What's *gives grace*? Gives the Holy Spirit. He fills the humble, because he finds them capacious.

So²³ because that's how things are, to forty-nine, which is seven times seven, one is added to make Pentecost, and unity is impressed upon us.

Seven, the Holy Spirit; ten, the law

7. Because the eagerness your graces show is helping my weakness with the Lord God, let me offer you something which, so it seems to me, is all the sweeter when explained, for being so obscure if it isn't explained. Before the resurrection the Lord commanded his disciples to cast their nets into the sea, on the occasion when he chose them. They cast them, they caught such a vast quantity of fish beyond counting, that the nets were breaking, and when the boats were loaded they started sinking. He didn't tell them in what quarter to cast the nets, but just said, *Cast the nets* (Lk 5:1-7). If he had ordered them, you see, to cast on the right-hand side, it would have indicated that only good ones were caught; if on the left, only bad ones. But because they cast on all sides, neither just to the right nor just to the left, both good and bad were caught. This signifies the Church of the present time, in this age and world. I mean, there were also those servants

who were sent and went off to the people who had been invited; and *they brought along any at all they found, good and bad; and the wedding was filled with guests sitting down* (Mt 22:1-10). Why, in any case, do schisms occur, if the nets don't break? Why is the Church so often overwhelmed by the scandals of the worldly multitudes behaving so badly and rowdily, if the boats too aren't being overloaded? So this is what the Lord did before the resurrection.

After the resurrection, though, he found his disciples fishing as before; he gave instructions again for the nets to be cast, not anyhow and anywhere, because it's now after the resurrection. After the resurrection, you see, his body, which is the Church, won't have bad members any more. *Cast the nets*, he said, *on the right-hand side* (Jn 21:6). The nets were cast, as he ordered, on the right-hand side, and a precise number of fish was caught. Those fish that couldn't be counted, you see, those by which the Church that is now continuing was signified, come, as it were, from this catch: *I proclaimed and I spoke; they have been multiplied beyond number* (Ps 40:5). So we can take it that some are supernumeraries, somehow or other superfluous; yet they are being gathered in. In the other case, however, the fish are caught on the right-hand side, and counted, and they are big ones. *For whoever does them*, he says, *and teaches in that way, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven* (Mt 5:19).

So great, big fish were caught to the number of one hundred and fifty-three. Who wouldn't be stirred by the thought that this number wasn't mentioned for nothing? The Lord, I mean, wouldn't really be signifying nothing at all, either in saying *Cast the nets*, or in being concerned that they should be cast on the right-hand side. This number, a hundred and fifty-three, also signifies something; and the evangelist also made it his business to say, as though looking back to that first catch, where the broken nets signified schisms—because in that Church of eternal life there will be no schisms, because no disagreements; where all will be great, because all full of charity; so as though he had looked back at what had first occurred in order to signify schisms, he made it his business to say about this second catch, *and though they were so big, the nets were not broken* (Jn 21:11).

And so what the right-hand side signified has been said, that they are all good. What they're being great big ones means has been said, that *whoever does them and teaches in that way, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven* (Mt 5:19). What, too, the nets not being broken means has been said, that there aren't any schisms then. So what about a hundred and fifty-three? Obviously this won't be the total number of the saints. No, there clearly will not be just a hundred and fifty-three saints, seeing that those alone *who have not defiled themselves with women* are mentioned as being *twelve times twelve thousand* (Rv 14:4.1). But this number,²⁴ like a tree, seems to grow from a kind of seed. Now the seed of this big number is a smaller number, which is seventeen. Seventeen make a hundred and fifty-three. If, in fact, you count from one to seventeen, and add all the numbers—because if you count from one to seventeen and don't add all the numbers you mention together, they will just be seventeen. But if you count like this: one, two, three; just as one and two and three make six, six, four and five

make fifteen; in this way you reach seventeen, carrying a hundred and fifty-three on your fingers.

So now call to mind what I reminded you of and suggested, and see who and what are signified by seventeen. Seven, the Holy Spirit; ten, the law. What else are we to understand from that, but that those are going to be in the Church of the eternal resurrection, in which there will be no schisms, in which death will not be feared, because it will be after the resurrection; so those are going to be in it, and going to live with the Lord for ever, who have fulfilled the law through the grace of the Holy Spirit and the gift of God whose feast we are celebrating?

NOTES

1. Thus Fischer, Kunzelmann, and La Bonnardière. An unusually long sermon for a great feast filled with elaborate liturgy. In fact it gives the impression of not being preached to the faithful at large, but to a more select group of the faithful. Augustine away from his own Church of Hippo Regius, perhaps staying in an outlying villa, and preaching in a small chapel.

2. See Jn 17:21.

3. I think that is how *nos* has to be interpreted here; see Sermon 23, note 5. That sermon was probably preached earlier the same year, in Carthage. Was he, perhaps, becoming conscious of a certain authoritarian, domineering tone among his fellow bishops, and in some of the documents they were producing? Or perhaps in the tone of the replies of the Apostolic See to the communications of the African bishops on the Pelagian issue? Relations with the Roman Church did get a little strained about this time.

4. An important point; being spiritual means being animated by the Spirit, God's Spirit, instead of just by the human soul, instead of being just "anima-l." The word has been rather reduced to meaning just being pious or devout. Piety and devotion are indeed natural fruits of being animated by the Holy Spirit—but they don't constitute the essence of being spiritual.

5. Here he drops the sentence he had started, and starts another.

6. See Ps 36:9; 1 Jn 5:20.

7. See Acts 1:21; 10:41.

8. See Acts 1:3-11.

9. *Sacramentum*.

10. Is he being a little apologetic about his fascination with number symbolism, and had some critics suggested that it was just a personal fad?

11. When you are counting on your fingers.

12. Just as ten hundreds make a thousand, so in Greek, though not in Latin, ten thousands make a myriad, which was the highest block number, as a million is with us—until they started inventing billions and trillions.

13. I am afraid English completely misses the point of this last remark, which is about the *quadragenarium* fast, known to everyone by the name of *Quadragesima*.

14. See Ex 34:28; 1 Kgs 19:18.

15. See Mt 4:2; Lk 4:1-2.

16. Not of Lent now, but of the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension, though he doesn't bother to say so.

17. He ends up, it seems, explaining the example with the text which he brought the example up to explain.

18. See Gn 1:31; 2:1.

19. He has not argued the case at all lucidly. The assumption he starts from, but never states, is that sanctification is the special field or prerogative of the Holy Spirit. So the seventh day being sanctified means the seventh day being devoted to the Holy Spirit.

20. He now means, but again fails to state clearly, how these numbers are brought into play in the "sacrament" or mystery of Pentecost, on the fiftieth day.

21. See Tb 2:1.

22. The sentence will be completed, or rather resumed, at the beginning of the next paragraph but one.

23. Here he resumes the thought started above, as indicated in note 12.

24. 153, not 144,000.

SERMON 271

ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Date: 399¹

*The pentecostal tongues prefigured the Church,
as the ultimate answer to the tower of Babel*

The glad day has dawned, brothers and sisters, on which holy Church is resplendent in the faces of the faithful, and warm in their hearts. This day that we are celebrating, of course, is the one on which the Lord Jesus Christ, glorified after the resurrection by his ascension, sent the Holy Spirit. That, after all, is what was written in the gospel, when he said, *If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink; whoever believes in me, rivers of living water will flow from his breast*; the evangelist went on to explain, and said, *But he was saying this about the Spirit, whom those were going to receive who would believe in him. For the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified* (Jn 7:37-39). So it remained, once Jesus was glorified when he had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, for the Holy Spirit now to be given, sent by him as it had been promised by him;² and that indeed is what happened.

The Lord, you see, spent forty days with his disciples after the resurrection, and then ascended into heaven; and on the fiftieth day, which we are celebrating today, he sent the Holy Spirit, as it is written, that *there came suddenly a sound from heaven, as if a violent gust was bearing down; and there appeared to them divided tongues as of fire, which settled upon each one of them; and they began to speak in all tongues, as the Spirit gave them to utter* (Acts 2:2-4). That gust was purging their hearts of worldly chaff; that fire was consuming the straw of ancient lusts; those tongues they were speaking in, filled by the Holy Spirit, were prefiguring the Church of the future through the languages of all nations.

I mean, just as after the flood the ungodly pride of men built a high tower against the Lord, and the human race was deservedly divided by languages, so that each nation would speak its own language and thus not be understood by the others; so in a similar way the devout humility of the faithful has brought to the unity of the Church the variety of their different languages; so that what discord had dissipated charity might gather together, and the scattered members of the human race, as of one body, might be attached to their one head, Christ,

and so reunited, and fused together into the unity of the holy body by the fire of love.³

And so it is that those people have absolutely no share in this gift of the Holy Spirit, who hate the grace of peace, who do not hold on to the fellowship of unity.⁴ Yes, they too may come flocking to the solemnity of this day, may hear these readings in which the Holy Spirit was promised and sent; but their hearing them brings judgment on them, not reward. What good, after all, does it do them to perceive with their ears what they turn from in disgust with their hearts; and to celebrate the day of one whose light they hate? You, though, my brothers and sisters, members of the body of Christ, seedlings of unity, sons and daughters of peace, keep this day joyfully, celebrate it without anxiety. Among you, after all, is being fulfilled what was being prefigured in those days, when the Holy Spirit came. Because just as then, whoever received the Holy Spirit, even as one person, started speaking all languages; so too now the unity itself is speaking all languages throughout all nations; and it is by being established in this unity that you have the Holy Spirit; you that do not break away in any schism from the Church of Christ which speaks all languages.

NOTES

1. Fischer, Kunzelmann, and Monceaux in fact suggest between 393 and 405. The style, though not the brevity, is characteristic of the early years of Augustine's ministry, and so is the way the Donatists are alluded to at the end.

2. A play on words not available to English: *ab eo missus a quo promissus*.

3. An elaborately extended metaphor, taking us all the way from the threshing floor to the baker's oven!

4. Who, in other words, hate the Catholic Church (peace) and its baptism (its grace); and do not remain in fellowship with the Catholic Church (unity). Peace and unity were two of his favorite names for the Church. He is, of course, alluding to the Donatists.

SERMON 272

ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST TO THE *INFANTES*, ON THE SACRAMENT

Date: 408¹

One thing is seen, another is to be understood

What you can see on the altar, you also saw last night; but what it was, what it meant, of what great reality it contained the sacrament, you had not yet heard. So what you can see, then, is bread and a cup; that's what even your eyes tell you; but as for what your faith asks to be instructed about, the bread is the body of Christ, the cup the blood of Christ. It took no time to say that indeed, and that, perhaps, may be enough for faith; but faith desires instruction. The prophet says, you see, *Unless you believe, you shall not understand* (Is 7:9). I mean, you can now say to me, "You've bidden us believe; now explain, so that we may understand."

Some such thought as this, after all, may cross somebody's mind: "We know where our Lord Jesus Christ took flesh from; from the Virgin Mary. He was suckled as a baby, was reared, grew up, came to man's estate, suffered persecution from the Jews, was hung on the tree, was slain on the tree, was taken down from the tree, was buried; rose again on the third day, on the day he wished ascended into heaven. That's where he lifted his body up to; that's where he's going to come from to judge the living and the dead; that's where he is now, seated on the Father's right. How can bread be his body? And the cup, or what the cup contains, how can it be his blood?"

The reason these things, brothers and sisters, are called sacraments is that in them one thing is seen, another is to be understood. What can be seen has a bodily appearance, what is to be understood provides spiritual fruit. So if you want to understand the body of Christ, listen to the apostle telling the faithful, *You, though, are the body of Christ and its members* (1 Cor 12:27). So if it's you that are the body of Christ and its members, it's the mystery meaning you that has been placed on the Lord's table; what you receive is the mystery that means you. It is to what you are that you reply *Amen*, and by so replying you express your assent. What you hear, you see, is *The body of Christ*,² and you answer, *Amen*. So be a member of the body of Christ, in order to make that *Amen* true.³

So why in bread? Let's not bring anything of our own to bear here, let's go on listening to the apostle himself, who said, when speaking of this sacrament, *One bread, one body, we being many are* (1 Cor 10:17). Understand and rejoice. Unity, truth, piety, love. *One bread*; what is this one bread? The one body which we, being many, are. Remember that bread is not made from one grain, but from many. When you were being exorcised, it's as though you were being ground. When you were baptized it's as though you were mixed into dough.⁴ When you received the fire of the Holy Spirit,⁵ it's as though you were baked. Be what you can see, and receive what you are.

That's what the apostle said about the bread. He has already shown clearly enough what we should understand about the cup, even if it wasn't said. After all, just as many grains are mixed into one loaf in order to produce the visible appearance of bread, as though what holy scripture says about the faithful were happening: *They had one soul and one heart in God* (Acts 4:32); so too with the wine. Brothers and sisters, just remind yourselves what wine is made from; many grapes hang in the bunch, but the juice of the grapes is poured together in one vessel. That too is how the Lord Christ signified us, how he wished us to belong to him, how he consecrated the sacrament of our peace and unity on his table. Any who receive the sacrament of unity, and do not hold the bond of peace, do not receive the sacrament for their benefit, but a testimony against themselves.

Turning to the Lord, God the Father almighty, with pure hearts let us give him sincere and abundant thanks, as much as we can in our littleness; beseeching him in his singular kindness with our whole soul, graciously to hearken to our prayers in his good pleasure; also by his power to drive out the enemy from our actions and thoughts, to increase our faith, to guide our minds, to grant us spiritual thoughts, and to lead us finally to his bliss; through Jesus Christ his Son. Amen.⁶

NOTES

1. Fischer, Kunzelmann, and Monceaux actually suggest between 405 and 411. Several eminent scholars think this sermon was preached at Easter, not Pentecost. The Maurists, however, accept the evidence of all the manuscripts—all they had access too, that is—in assigning it to Pentecost. There is no reason why it should not have been preached at Pentecost; it was the time for solemn baptisms as well as Easter. The sermon can scarcely have been preached anywhere else but in Augustine's own Church of Hippo Regius.

2. At the administration of communion, presumably.

3. *Amen*, of course, means "True."

4. Because water is added to the flour to make dough. This is suggested more obviously by the Latin *conspersi estis*, since *conspargo* means to sprinkle or moisten.

5. Confirmation, anointing with chrism.

6. See Sermon 15A, note 12, for this concluding prayer; but the text will first be found at the end of Sermon 67, not Sermon 34.

SERMON 272A

ON THE FIFTIETH DAY OF THE RESURRECTION: A FRAGMENT

Date: uncertain¹

The miracle of the whole world believing

The Lord Christ humbled himself, so that we might know how to be humble. Though containing all things he was conceived; though giving birth to all things he was born; though giving life to all things he died; but after three days he rose again, and ascended into heaven, and placed the human flesh which he had taken to himself at the Father's right hand. It's a miracle, brothers and sisters—and this is what the godless refuse to believe—it's wonderful that a man should have risen again in the flesh, and have ascended into heaven with his flesh; but it's a much greater miracle that the whole world should have believed something so unbelievable.

Which is the harder to believe, that God did such things, or that the world was able to believe them? Which indeed, particularly if we consider the way in which the world believed? That too can be observed to be truly divine, and found to be an astounding marvel. It was men quite untrained in the liberal arts, and as far as secular disciplines go totally uneducated, unskilled in grammar, un-equipped with the techniques of dialectic,² it was fishermen whom Christ sent into the sea of the world with the nets of faith, and very few of them at that. Why should I say very few? He sent twelve. And yet by their means he so filled the Churches with every kind of fish, that a great many even of the wise ones of the world, to whom the cross of Christ seemed so disgraceful, are signing themselves with it on the forehead, and setting up in the seat of shame³ the very thing they thought we should be ashamed of, and about which they used to taunt us.

NOTES

1. The Maurists edit this fragment in their supplement from the *florilegium* of Florus, who includes it as a kind of comment on 1 Cor 1, probably with reference to verses 26-30.
2. Grammar and dialectic, the two basic liberal arts.
3. The forehead.

SERMON 272B

ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Date: 417¹

*The Holy Spirit poured out into the disciples
like new wine into new wineskins*

1. I think your graces know that what the Church of the Lord² is celebrating today is the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Lord, you see, promised he would send the Holy Spirit to his apostles, and being of course entirely faithful to his guarantee, he fulfilled what he had promised. While the Lord's resurrection, you see, confirmed people's faith in his divinity, much more so did his ascent into heaven, and even more fully and completely did the gift of the Holy Spirit which he sent; and it filled his disciples, now made into new wineskins, so that they might be able to receive the new wine. That's why, when they started speaking with tongues, they were said to be drunk, and full of new wine.³ The words of the hearers lent support to the Lord's scripture; the Lord himself, after all, had said, *Nobody puts new wine into old wineskins* (Mk 2:22).

So he was preparing new wine for new wineskins.⁴ I mean, they were old wineskins as long as they were thinking about Christ in a merely human way.⁵ I mean, that opinion of Peter's belonged to the old wineskin, when he was afraid of Christ dying, and perishing, I suppose, just like other men, and when the Lord said to him *Get back behind me, Satan; you are a scandal to me* (Mt 16:23). Peter's being upset like that was a mark of the old wineskin. But when the Lord rose again, and showed himself to them, and they felt and touched what they had lamented hanging on the cross; and they saw the body was alive which they had wept for when it was dead and buried; they were confirmed in their faith and believed him.⁶ He ascends into heaven, and instructs them to gather together in one place, and wait there until he himself should send what he had promised. So they gathered together in one place, and by praying and longing for what was promised, they put off the old and put on the new.⁷

So now that they had acquired the necessary capacity, they received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. And it's not without reason that we celebrate this day as a great, and indeed a very plain and evident "sacrament."⁸ But would your holinesses please notice how the old and the new scriptures harmonize with

each other; in those grace is promised, in these it is given; sketched out there, completed here. It's like a craftsman of things to be fashioned from some metal or other, bronze or silver; he first makes out of wax the shapes he is going to cast, and the first sketch paves the way for the solid object that is to come—I mean, he makes the very shapes with which he is going to fill the molds. In the same way the Lord sketched everything and formed it in figures for the old people, while for the new he filled the molds with a perfect casting.⁹ So would your holinesses please observe with rather closer attention what that first shape or form was, and what this casting is on the day of Pentecost. Attentiveness is the price you must pay for this work.¹⁰ A thing is said with great profit, when what is said is heard attentively. All of you too must certainly be new wineskins, so that by my ministrations you may receive the wine.

*Why do the Jews also celebrate Pentecost,
or for that matter Easter, the Passover?*

2. I'm often asked, "If we celebrate the day of Pentecost because of the coming of the Holy Spirit, why do the Jews celebrate Pentecost?" Yes, they too keep Pentecost. You heard earlier this morning, those of you who were paying attention, when the reading from Tobit was being read at the shrine of the blessed Theogenes,¹¹ how on the day of Pentecost he made a dinner for himself, intending to invite others of his people who would be worthy to share his table, seeing that they had in them the fear of the Lord: *On the day of Pentecost*, it said, *which is the holy day of weeks* (Tb 1:1-2). Seven times seven weeks makes forty-nine days; to these one is added for the sake of unity, to bring us back to the head, the beginning, because unity is the strength of every multitude; and a multitude, unless it is bound together by unity, is quarrelsome and torn by disputes; but a harmonious multitude makes one soul, as in fact those who received the Holy Spirit, as scripture says, *had one soul and one heart in God* (Acts 4:32). So it makes fifty days, which is the "sacrament" of Pentecost.

So why do the Jews celebrate it, if not because there was something prefigured there? Pay close attention; you know, and absolutely no Christian can be unaware of what I am going to say, that a lamb is killed among the Jews, and the Passover celebrated, to prefigure the passion of the Lord that was to come. I mean, they were even given this particular command, to look for a lamb from among the goats and the sheep.¹² How can a lamb be found from among goats and sheep? But the impossible thing there commanded was pointing to the future possibility of the Lord; a lamb, you see, *was* found from the goats and the sheep, because our Lord Jesus Christ was born *according to the flesh of the seed of David* (Rom 1:3), and so derives his origin from both sinners and just men. You will find in the ancestry of the Lord, according to the genealogies which the evangelists set out,¹³ both many sinners and also just men; that's why he also called such people, namely sinners, because it was also by such that he came.¹⁴

After all, he gathers the just and sinners together into his Church; he is going to send on the just to the kingdom of heaven, and separate the sinners who

persevere in sins and wickedness. And yet he came in order to bear our sins, in such a way that he did not disdain to derive his origin from sinners. And there are many other “sacraments” contained in those genealogies, which God, I’m sure, will grant me the time to explain to your holinesses.¹⁵ Now, though, let’s get back to what we had undertaken.

Pentecost and the giving of the law

3. We were talking about the day of Pentecost, and why the Jews celebrate this day. They kill the lamb, it’s the killing of the paschal lamb; in the same way we too celebrate the Pasch, Easter, the Passover, on which *the spotless lamb without fault* (1 Pt 1:19) was slain. Truly a lamb, as John testified when he said, *Behold the Lamb of God, behold the one who takes away the sins of the world* (Jn 1:29). It’s in his passion that we celebrate the Passover, or Easter.

The law was given to the Jews in fear;¹⁶ the Holy Spirit has been given to Christians in grace. They were unable to fulfill the law through fear, and through the very law they were found guilty. The law contains five books; five arcades surrounded the pool of Solomon;¹⁷ but they used to hold the sick, they were quite unable to cure any of them. The five arcades held the sick where they were lying; just as in the books too nobody was cured.¹⁸ Why nobody? Because of pride; while they imagine, you see, that they can accomplish by their own powers what has been ordered, they have not accomplished what was commanded. And the law, by which they are found guilty, was against them, until they cry out, as I also mentioned earlier this morning to your holinesses, *Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Rom 7:24-25). So the law shows you up as guilty, grace delivers you from guilt; the law threatens, grace coaxes; the law lays down penalties, grace promises pardon. And yet the things that are commanded are the same both in the law and in grace. And that’s why that law is said to have been written by the finger of God; that’s what we find written.¹⁹

The finger of God means the Holy Spirit

4. Let us inquire, though, in the gospel what the finger of God may be, and we shall find out. What does the finger of God signify? I mean, God hasn’t really got the sort of bodily shape that we have; able to see with one part of it, and not able to see with another. Nor is the one who is everywhere, and present to all things, defined by the shape of the body’s limbs. So what can the finger of God be? The Holy Spirit. Pay close attention; how can I prove this? From the gospel. Sometimes, you see, what one evangelist says in a figure, another states, in the same episode, more plainly. Now there is an episode in the gospel, where the Jews said about the Lord that he cast out demons in the name of Beelzebub. The Lord answered, though, *If I by the finger of God cast out demons, be sure the kingdom of God has come upon you* (Lk 11:20). Another evangelist sets out the same episode like this, and says, *If I by the Spirit of God, therefore the kingdom*

of God has come upon you (Mt 12:28). So where one evangelist says the finger of God, the other explains it, to show us that the Holy Spirit is the finger of God.

We mustn't look for material fingers in God, but we must try to understand why the Holy Spirit is called his finger. It's because the apostles received a *division of gifts* (1 Cor 12:4) through the Holy Spirit; and the division of the hand is apparent in the fingers; with them one counts and distributes. So why do the Jews celebrate Pentecost? It's a great "sacrament," brothers and sisters, and altogether wonderful; if you would just note it, it was on the day of Pentecost that they received the law written by the finger of God, and on the day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit came.

The law on hearts of stone and on hearts of flesh

5. But this has to be shown about the law that was given: why²⁰ the Jews received it on tables of stone. Well, it signified their hardness of heart.²¹ And yet it was written with the finger of God, because everything that was written there is also enjoined upon Christians.²² But now, as the apostle says, *not on tables of stone, but on the fleshy tables of the heart* (2 Cor 3:3). So this is the difference: that the same law was written on their hard hearts, and was not carried out; the same law has been given to the now believing hearts of Christians as something easy and everlasting. So that's why there was that stone; but the hearts of Christians were a fertile ground, which could bear fruit.

That's why the Lord also in the gospel, when the woman was brought to him who had been found in adultery, and they wanted to stone her according to the law, but the Lord wanted her not to sin from then on, and was prepared to pardon her sin; why he said to the people who wanted to stone her, being made of stone themselves, *If any among you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.* But when he said this, he bent his head and began to write with his finger on the ground; while they, taking a look at their consciences, departed one by one, from the eldest to the youngest, and that woman was left alone. The Lord, though, raised his head and said to her, *What's this, woman? Has no one condemned you? And she said, No one, Lord. And the Lord said, Neither will I condemn you; go, from now on do not sin* (Jn 8:3-11).

What was signified by this indulgence? Grace. What was signified by that hardness? The law given on stones. Which is why the Lord was writing with his finger, but now on the ground, from which he could obtain crops. But anything sown on stone doesn't come up, because it can't put down roots.²³ The finger of God then, and the finger of God now; it was by the finger of God that the law was written; the finger of God is the Holy Spirit.

Why the law was given on the day of Pentecost

6. The law was given on the day of Pentecost, and the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. But I said I was going to prove that the Jews received the law on the fiftieth day from the Passover, or Pasch, which we both celebrate.

You have it that they were commanded to kill the lamb on the fourteenth day of the first month, and to celebrate the Passover.²⁴ Of that month there are seventeen days left, if you include the fourteenth day itself, on which the Passover begins. We come now to the desert, where the law was given, and this is what scripture says: *But in the third month from when the people was brought out of Egypt* (Ex 19:1) the Lord spoke to Moses that those who were going to receive the law should purify themselves in readiness for the third day, on which the law was to be given.²⁵ So at the beginning of the third month a purification is commanded in readiness for the third day.

And Passover begins . . . — Pay close attention, please, or the numbers may set your heads spinning, and bring a fog down upon your understanding. I am opening the thing up as best I can, with the Lord's approval. If you help me with your attention, you will soon grasp what is being said; but if that's lacking, whatever I say will remain obscure, even if it is said ever so plainly . . . — So the Passover is announced for the fourteenth day of the month;²⁶ and a purification is ordered, so that the law may be given on the mountain, written by the finger of God; and the finger of God is the Holy Spirit. Remember, we proved this from the gospel. So a purification is proclaimed, in readiness for the third day of the third month. So from the first month deduct thirteen, and seventeen are left, as you begin from the fourteenth. Add the whole second month; it makes forty-seven days;²⁷ from that day of purification to the third day, it makes fifty days. Nothing could be plainer, nothing more obvious, than that the Jews received the law on the day of Pentecost.

The weight of the law and the easy yoke of Christ

7. But it's hard, it was a burden, it was a hard burden. The Lord comes with grace, though, and cries out, *Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me that I am gentle and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my load is light* (Mt 11:28-30). How is his yoke easy? The law threatens, he coaxes. The law says, "Unless you do it, I will punish"; Christ says, "Whatever you do, I overlook; from now on see you don't sin." So his yoke is easy, and his load light.

If we let ourselves be made into new wineskins, we wait attentively for his grace; we shall then be filled in great style with the Holy Spirit, and through the Holy Spirit we shall have charity in us. That's when we have already started fermenting with new wine, and got drunk on his intoxicating and splendid chalice,²⁸ so that we forget those secular things that used to hold us in thrall, in the way the martyrs forgot them when they went to their deaths. They forgot children and wives, and parents throwing dust on their heads, and their mothers pulling out their breasts to reproach them with the milk they had sucked, and refusing to eat; they forgot everything, didn't even recognize their own people. Why be surprised if a martyr doesn't recognize his own people? The man's drunk. But what's he drunk on? On charity. And where's he getting charity

from? From the finger of God, from the Holy Spirit, from the one who came at Pentecost.²⁹

NOTES

1. So all the scholars agree, Fischer, Kunzelmann, la Bonnardière and Bori. Pentecost fell in that year on 10 June. The sermon was preached in Hippo Regius.

2. The Latin here is wholly ambiguous: *adventum Sancti Spiritus Domini Ecclesiam celebrare*. It could also be construed, "that what the Church is celebrating is the coming of the Holy Spirit of the Lord"; or "... the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Lord."

3. See Acts 2:13.

4. Surely what he really meant to say was, he had prepared new wineskins for the new wine.

5. *Carnaliter*; one of several Pauline words that defy translation into English.

6. He is trying to say, they believed him to be divine, or believed in his divinity. It is really rather strange, his saying *crediderunt ei* instead of *crediderunt in eum*, they believed in him.

7. See Col 3:9-10.

8. In the Augustinian sense of a symbolic or figurative thing representing a deeper reality. The "sacrament" he means here is precisely the day of Pentecost, the fiftieth day.

9. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit being compared to the pouring of molten bronze or silver into a previously prepared mold; a very powerful metaphor.

10. For God's Pentecostal work of art, which we are hoping to buy? Or for Augustine's work in expounding the sacrament?

11. A previous bishop of Hippo Regius, and a martyr; see Sermon 273, 7. He may have been a contemporary of Cyprian's, who attended a council at Carthage in 256. Perhaps a "station," like the stations of the Roman Church and liturgy, was held at his shrine, his *memoria*, as a regular feature of the celebration of Pentecost. This sermon, though, is clearly not being preached there, but in one of the main basilicas of the city.

12. See Ex 12:5. In treating this as an impossible command, Augustine is taking the text far too literally (goats and sheep are not lambs, so you cannot get a lamb out of them), in the interests of his own entirely non-literal, figurative, or mystical interpretation.

13. See Mt 1:1-16; Lk 3:23-38.

14. Surely he has again got it the wrong way round; what he really wants to say is that the reason Jesus came by sinful ancestors was that he intended to call sinners.

15. See Sermon 51, for example, which was preached, it would appear, the following January, round about Epiphany.

16. And what the Jews celebrate at Pentecost is the giving of the law on Sinai. But he carelessly fails to say so openly, leaving it to his audience to deduce it as he proceeded. Still, they must have been used to his ways by this time.

17. See Jn 5:2. The pool is not called Solomon's; Augustine is being influenced by Acts 3:11, which talks of the arcade of Solomon.

18. There are, surely, several cures, or equivalents, described in the five books of the law, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. But when he says *in libris*, he will also be meaning "by the books," that is "by the law." I have to translate "in the books," though, because the comparison is being made with the sick lying in the arcades.

19. See Ex 31:18.

20. Reading *quare* instead of the text's *quam*; which the Jews received. The Italian edition prints *quam*—and translates *quare*.

21. Meaning, as always in scripture, not callousness or hardheartedness in our current sense, but obstinacy, mental obtuseness and stupidity, refusal to see.

22. Not the whole Mosaic law, but the ten commandments, which alone were written on the tables of the law.

23. See the parable of the sower, Mk 4:5.

24. See Ex 12:6.

25. See Ex 19:11.

26. He doesn't bother to say the first month now; was he deliberately teasing them as he often did? I rather think so. On the other hand, after the strenuous liturgy of the Pentecost vigil, and the dawn station at Saint Theogenes, he may just have been very, very tired.

27. The months being of a regular 30 days each—as the Jewish lunar months indeed were.

28. See Ps 23:5.

29. He actually says *per Pentecosten*, through Pentecost. But I don't suppose this has any particular significance.

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, 1953)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna, 1866)
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	Patrologia Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1878-90)
PLS	Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum, ed. A. Hamann (Paris, 1957)
PW	<i>Paulys Realencyklopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , new ed. by G. Wissowa et al. (Stuttgart, 1893).
RB	<i>Revue Bénédictine</i> (Maredsous, 1884).
SC	Sources Chrésiennes
SPM	Stromata Patristica et Mediaevalia 1 (= 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>Études C. Mohrmann, Études 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 S. Poque</i> (ed.), <i>Augustin d'Hippone. Sermons pour la Paque</i> (SC 116; Paris, 1966)
Verbraken	<i>Études P.-P. Verbraken, Études critiques sur les sermons authentiques de saint Augustin</i> (Instrumenta Patristica 12; Steenbrugge-The Hague, 1976)

Nr.	Theme	Date	Edition
230	Easter Season	Easter Season (L) Easter (K, B) Easter Vigil (Po)	PL 38:1103-1104
231	Easter Season Mk 16:1-16	Week of Easter after 400 (K) from 412 (Po)	PL 38:1104-1107 SC 116:244-258
232	Easter Season Lk 24:13-35	Week of Easter after 400 (K, M) 412-413 (Be)	PL 38:1107-1112 SC 116:260-278
233	Easter Season Mk 16:1-16	Week of Easter after 400 (Be) from 412 (Po) Monday of Easter 418 (L)	PL 38:1112-1115
234	Easter Season Lk 24:13-35	Week of Easter after 400 (K, Be) 418 (L, B)	PL 38:1115-1117
235	Easter Season Lk 24:13-35	Week of Easter after 400 (K) 410-412 (P)	PL 38:1117-1120 RB 67 (1957) 137-140
236	Easter Season Lk 24:13-35	Week of Easter c. 410-412 (Po)	PL 38:1120-1122
236/A	Easter Season Lk 24:13-35	Monday after Easter (?)	Caillau II, 60:1-4 Casinen. 1:168-169 PLS 2:1073-1075
237	Easter Season Lk 24:36-53	Week of Easter 402-404 (Ba) 412-413 (Be)	PL 38:1122-1124 SC 116:280-292
238	Easter Season Lk 24:36-53	Week of Easter c. 400-412 (Po) 395-405 (Be)	PL 38:1125-1126
239	Easter Season Mk 16:1-16	Week of Easter before 400 (K, Be) c. 410-412 (Po)	PL 38:1126-1130
240	Easter Season Mk 16:1-16	Week of Easter from 412 (Po) 405-412 (Be)	PL 38:1130-1133
241	Easter Season Lk 24:13-35	Easter Season 405-410 (K) Week of Easter 405-410 (Be, Po) Easter Season 405-410 (K)	PL 38:1133-1138
242	Easter Season Lk 24:36-53	Week of Easter 400-412 (Ba) Easter Season 404-410 (K)	PL 38:1138-1143
242/A	Easter Season	Week of Easter 410-411 (K, Be) from 412 (Po)	Mai 87 MA 1:327-330 PLS 2:478-480
243	Easter Season Jn 20:1-18	Week of Easter Thursday after Easter 408-409 (K, Be) after 409 (L)	PL 38:1143-1147
244	Easter Season Jn 20:1-18	Week of Easter Thursday after	PL 38:1147-1151

Nr.	Theme	Date	Edition
		Easter 418 (K, L, B) from 412 (Po)	
245	Easter Season Jn 20:1-18	Week of Easter 410-412 (Po)	PL 38:1151-1153
246	Easter Season Jn 20:1-18	Week of Easter April 10, 413 (K) 412-413 (B, Be)	PL 38:1153-1156 SC 116:294-306
247	Easter Season Jn 20:19-23	Week of Easter Friday after Easter c. 400 (K) Thursday after Easter 410-412 (Po)	PL 38:1156-1158
248	Easter Season Jn 21:1-14	Week of Easter Friday after Easter 412-416 (K) 410-412 (Po) 412-416 (Be)	PL 38:1158-1161
249	Easter Season Jn 21:1-14	Week of Easter before 405 (Mo) Friday before Easter 410-412 (K) c. 418 (L)	PL 38:1161-1163
250	Easter Season Jn 21:1-14	Week of Easter 412-413 (Be) from 412 (Po) c. 416 (K)	PL 38:1163-1167 SC 116:308-324
251	Easter Season Jn 21:1-14	Week of Easter Friday after Easter 412-416 [d.] after 409 (L)	PL 38:1167-1171
252	Easter Season Jn 21:1-14	Week of Easter c. 395 (Mo, L) c. 396 (K, Po, B)	PL 38:1171-1179
252/A	Easter Season Jn 21:1-14	Octave of Easter Friday after Easter 400 (K) week of Easter c. 410-412 (Po)	Wilmart 13 MA 1:712-715 PLS 2:735-739
253	Easter Season Jn 21:15-25	Saturday after Easter from 412 (Po) 412-413 (Be)	PL 38:1179-1182 SC 116:326-336
254	Easter Season Lk 13:6-9	Week of Easter (Maur.) Easter Season 412-416 (K, B, Be)	Wilmart 3 RB 79 (1969) 63-69 PL 38:1182-1186
255	Easter Season Lk 10:38-42	Week of Easter 418	PL 38:1186-1190
255/A	Easter Season	Sunday, octave of Easter 410 (Po)	Wilmart 18-Mai 92 MA 1:719. 332-333 PLS 2:742. 482-483
256	Easter Season	Week of Easter May 5, 418 (K, B, Be, P, Mor)	Wilmart 19 PL 38:1190-1193 MA 1:719 PLS 2:742

Nr.	Theme	Date	Edition
257	Easter Season Ps 115:11	Sunday, octave of Easter 410-412 (K) 412-413 (Be)	PL 38:1194-1196 SC 116:338-342
258	Easter Season Ps 117:24	Sunday, octave of Easter 410-412 (K) 412-413 (Be)	PL 38:1193-1194 SC 116:344-350
259	Easter Season Jn 20, 19-29	Sunday, octave of Easter c. 393 (K, Be) C.400 (Po)	PL 38:1196-1201
260	Easter Season Jn 20, 19-29	Sunday, octave of Easter after 409 (L) after 412 (Po)	PL 38:1201-1202
260/A	Easter Season	Sunday, octave of Easter 393-405 (K,Be)	Denis 8 MA 1:35-38
260/B	Easter Season	Sunday, octave of Easter c. 400-410(Po)	Mai 89 MA 1:330-332 PLS 2:481-482
260/C	Easter Season	Sunday, octave of Easter 393-395 (F) from 410 (Po)	Mai 94 MA 1:333-339 PLS 2:483-488
260/D	Easter Season	Sunday, octave of Easter 416-417 (K, Be) from 412 (Po)	Guelfer, 18 MA 1:499-501 PLS 2:585-587
260/E	Easter Season Acts 4:19-20	Sunday, octave of Easter from 410 (Po)	Guelfer, 19 MA 1:502-503 PLS 2:587-588
261	Ascension	May 14, 397 (L) May 19, 410 (K, Po) May 16, 418 (Pe)	PL 38:1202-1207 SPM 1:88-94
262	Ascension	May 4, 411	PL 38:1207-1209
263	Ascension	396-397 (K)	Guelfer. 21 MA 1:507-509 PL 38:1209-1212 PLS 2:591-593
263/A	Ascension	396-397 (K, Be) after 396. 400 (Ba)	Mai 98 MA 1:347-350 PLS 2:494-497
264	Ascension	413-420(K, B, Be)	PL 38:1212-1218
265	Ascension	May 23, 412 (K,B)	PL 38:1218-1224
265/A	Ascension	May 16, 418 (K, Be)	Liverani 8 MA 1:391-395 PLS 2:528-531 See PL 39:2083- 2084
265/B	Ascension	396-397 (K,B,Be) c. 412 (Ba)	Casinen. II, 76-77 MA 1:504-506 PLS 2:531-532
265/C	Ascension	Ascension	Guelfer. 20 MA 1:504-506 PLS 2:589-591
265/D	Ascension	after 400 (Ba) 417-418 (K, Be)	Morin 17 MA 1:659-664 PLS 2:704-708
265/E	Ascension	Ascension? (L)	Lambot 16 RB 51 (1939) 25-27

Nr.	Theme	Date	Edition
265/F	Ascension	Ascension	PLS 2:805-807 Lambot 25 RB 62 (1952) 97-100 PLS 2:828-830
266	Pentecost Ps 140:5	Vigil of Pentecost May 23, 397 (L, P) May 28, 410 (K)	PL 38:1225-1229
267	Pentecost	Pentecost June 2, 412 (K)	PL 38:1229-1231
268	Pentecost	Pentecost before 405 (Mo) 405-410 (K, Be)	PL 38:1231-1234
269	Pentecost	Pentecost before 405 (Mo) May 14, 411 (K, B, P)	PL 38:1234-1237
270	Pentecost	Pentecost 416? (K, B, Be)	PL 38:1237-1245
271	Pentecost	Pentecost 393-405 (K, Be)	PL 38:1245-1246
272	Pentecost	Pentecost (Maur) Easter 405-411 (K)	PL 38:1246-1248
272/A	Pentecost	Pentecost	PL 39:1729 RB 84 (1974) 264-265
272/B	Pentecost Old and New Testament	Pentecost June 10, 417 (K, B, Be)	Mai 158 MA 1, 380-385 PLS 2:522-527

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