

Christ here intimates that there are two capital vices of Prelates, from which all their other faults take their rise. They are imperious and tyrannical audacity, and a seeking after pleasures, gluttony, and luxury. This is why S. Peter admonishes Pastors and Bishops (1 *Pet.* v. 2) thus, "Feed the flock of God, which is among you, providing for them not by constraint, but spontaneously, according to God; neither for filthy lucre's sake, but voluntarily; neither as lording it over the clergy, but as affording examples of their actions to the flock from the heart. And when the Prince of the Shepherds shall appear, ye shall receive the unwithering crown of glory."

**Verse 50-** *The Lord . . . shall come . . . when he looketh not; Vulg. non sperat, hopeth not, expecteth not.* Thus Virgil, in the First *Æneid*, "Hope," that is, fear, "that the gods take note of right and wrong."

**Verse 51-** *And shall cut him asunder; Gr. διχοτομήσει, cut in twain, i.e., soul and body in death, and after death, by sending the soul to hell and the demons, and the body to the tomb and the worms, "He shall divide," says S. Jerome, "not by cutting him in two with a sword, but by severing him from the company of the Saints."* It means that not only shall Christ remove such a Bishop from his office, but shall separate him from the company of the Blessed, and deliver him to the devil to be tormented for ever.

*With the hypocrites, i.e., slothful servants, who, like hypocrites, serve only the eyes of their masters. As soon as they are out of their master's sight, they indulge in sleep and drunkenness, and so shall be sent to the prison-house of hell, which is the proper place for the slothful. Thus in Proverbs, passim, a hypocrite signifies a wicked man, who serves God slothfully, but his own lusts fervently. There is an allusion to Job viii. 13, "The hope of the hypocrite shall perish."*

Christ has shown that it is the duty of every believer to watch, that by good works he may prepare himself for the certain coming of the Lord to judgment, forasmuch as the time is uncertain, lest that day should come upon him unawares. This He showed: 1st By the example of the Deluge, which drowned the world at unawares (ver. 37). 2d By the parable of the house-holder, who watches that he may repel the thief, who comes by night, at a time unexpected (ver. 43). 3rd By the parable of the servants, one faithful, the other unfaithful; the one of whom receives from his master an ample reward, the other severe chastisement (ver. 45). 4th In the following chapter (ver. 1), by the parable of the virgins. 5th By the parable of the talents, which the master distributes to his servants, and gloriously recompenses those who had traded diligently, but beats those who were idle and slothful.



For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

### Continuation of Matthew 24: 32-51

**Verse 32-** *Learn a parable.* Take a similitude from the *fig-tree*. Learn from the analogy of the *fig-tree* what I have spoken concerning the signs of the destruction of the world, when it is nigh at hand. Christ makes mention of the *fig* rather than of other trees, because the *fig-tree* only puts forth its leaves and fruit under the influence of heat, because its sap is exceedingly sweet, and therefore concocted; and for that there is need of the heat of summer. Hence Aristotle (*lib. 9, Histor. Animal*) says that the fig is the food of bees, which only fly and make honey in summer. They make honey from the fig, for it is indeed a purse of honey. Again, he says that cattle grow fat upon figs. Again, the fig does not flower, but produces fruit immediately from the leaves, and brings it to maturity. Whence Pliny says (15. 18), "Wonderful is the haste of this fruit, one in all things hastening to maturity by the art of nature." Again, "the fig is the sweetest of all fruits, devoid of all acidity, and therefore most tasty and wholesome. Moreover, the fig-tree is extremely fruitful, so much so that there are fig-trees in Hyrcania, each yielding a yearly produce of 70 bushels," as Pliny affirms in

In the Life of S. Amandus, who flourished about A.D. 870, and who converted Sclavonians and many other tribes to Christ, it is related, that at the very hour when he departed this life, he appeared to S. Aldegonde in glory, encompassed with a white-robed throng. And when she knew not what it meant, she heard an angel saying, "Amandus, the man of God, has passed in glory to celestial joys. The white-robed throng are they who by means of his earnest preaching have been enrolled as citizens of Heaven, and from henceforth he shall appear as a prince over them for ever." Among the more illustrious of his disciples were S. Landvald, S. Bavo, S. Amantius, S. Gertrude, S. Maurontus, and many others.

**Verse 47-** *Over all His goods; Gr. over all the things which belong to Himself.* The good things of God are twofold, viz., 1st Things external and created, as Heaven and earth, and all creatures contained in them. So Origen. 2d Things internal and uncreated—such are His infinite majesty, goodness, wisdom, power, and glory. For God is, as it were, an infinite ocean of all good things; and over them all He will appoint His faithful servant His bishop and pastor. He will make him to rule, as it were, not only over all creatures, but also over all the immense and infinite goodness which God contains in Himself, that he may enjoy them with God, and be blessed and glorified for ever. For if Jacob, wrestling with the angel of God, and overcoming Him, willing to be overcome, was called Israel, *i.e.*, "ruling God"

*Gen. xxxii. 28*), much rather shall blessed Bishops, by their own virtue, as it were, overcoming God, be called and become Israels, that is, "rulers of God," that "they may have these eternal rewards, both because of their own life, as well as for their care of their flocks," as Rabanus says. For in that they have rightly presided over the flock of God, they have therefore deserved that they should, in a certain sense, through God's wonderful condescension, be appointed over the good things of God, and even over Himself. For God makes Himself over to them, as their peculiar possession, as it is said in the 16th Psalm, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup."

**Verse 48-** *But if that evil servant, i.e., such a servant as has been set by his master over his household, shall say, &c* It means, "If a Bishop shall think, 'The day of death and judgment is far away: wherefore I will abuse my life and my office for the purposes of luxury and ambition.'" Therefore He adds—

**Verse 49-** *And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, &c. To smite, i.e., unjustly.* For, as saith *Auctor Imperf.*, "He who smites for just cause, even if he smite, does not seem to smite. For as righteous anger is not anger, but diligence; so just smiting is not smiting, but correction. Thus a father and a master smite their sons and pupils for the sake of correcting them."

them it is incumbent to feed the Church, which is their family, indeed Christ's family, that they should distribute the food of holy doctrine according to the capacity of every one to receive it. Wherefore it behoves them to be vigilant in this matter, prudent, and faithful. Thus, S. Hilary saith, "Although He exhorts every one of us in common to betake ourselves to unwearied watchfulness, yet He gives a special charge of solicitude to the princes of the people, that is, to the Bishops, in expectation of His Advent. For He signifies that he is a faithful servant, and a prudent overseer of His family, who is careful about the profit of the people committed to his charge; who hears the word and obeys it; who in opportunity of doctrine and truth strengthens the weak, establishes the fallen, converts the depraved, and dispenses the word of life as the eternal food for nourishing the family."

This question, *Who thinkest thou?* intimates that such servants, such Bishops and Pastors as are wholly faithful to Christ in the care of His flock, are few. Whence the saying of S. Jerome, "Priests many, Priests few." Also that of S. Boniface, Apostle of Germany, and Martyr, "Formerly Priests of gold celebrated in chalices of wood; now Priests of wood celebrate in chalices of gold."

**Verse 46-** *Blessed is that servant . . . so doing:* that is, assiduously and continually until death, and the day of particular judgment, and so, by consequence, of the general Judgment, namely, that he should distribute to all the faithful of his Church such food as is suitable for each, the word and Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, to nourish their souls in faith and piety. Blessed therefore is the Bishop who doth this, because, not only on account of his own holiness shall he receive of Christ the crown of righteousness, but shall obtain as many crowns as there are faithful people whom he has nourished and profited, according to the words of Daniel, "They that instruct many to justice shall shine as the stars for perpetual eternities." (Vulg.)

**Verse 47-** *Amen, i.e., Verily I say, &c.* He alludes to the servant who, because of his merit in faithfully and prudently ruling his master's household, deserves to be exalted by him and set over all his goods, so as to enjoy them as an associate and companion, and almost like an equal of his master. Such was Joseph, who was set by Pharaoh to preside over Egypt, and was virtually king of Egypt (*Gen. xli. 10*). In like manner will God bless prudent and faithful Bishops, who have ruled all their flocks, and have guided them to everlasting salvation. He will bestow upon them greater glory than He will upon private believers. He will cause them to preside, not only over them, but He will make them kings and lords of the whole universe. Thus Remigius says, "He will make the good hearers to sit down, as Luke saith: the good preachers He will set over all His goods. For as the difference of merits is great, so also is the difference in rewards." This is what is spoken of in *Apoc. iv. 10*, "The four and twenty Elders," *i.e.*, Bishops and Prelates, "cast their crowns before Him that sitteth on the Throne and worshipped Him that liveth for ever, saying unto the Lamb," that is, to Christ, "Thou hast made us unto God a Kingdom and Priests, and we shall reign for ever and ever." What I have said of Bishops applies to every father of a family, for he is, as it were, a bishop of his own house; and as S. Augustine saith, every faithful soul is a bishop of himself.

the same book. He adds that Romulus and Remus were suckled by the she-wolf under a fig-tree, and therefore that the fig was worshipped at Rome in the forum.

*Symbolically*, therefore, Christ would intimate that His Saints and elect ought to bring forth most sweet and abundant fruits of good works, that so they may deserve to taste in the summer of the Resurrection the abundant sweetness of celestial glory.

Lastly, a fig was the cause of the destruction of Carthage. For when Cato, as Pliny tells us, was exclaiming in the Senate that Carthage must be destroyed, he brought one day into the Senate house a very ripe fig which had been grown in Africa. Showing it to the Senators, "I ask you," said he, "to guess how long ago it is since this fig was plucked from the tree." All allowed that it must have been but recently gathered. "Yes," he said, "I would have you know that it is but three days since it was plucked at Carthage; so near is the enemy to your walls." Immediately afterwards the third Punic War, in which Carthage was destroyed, was begun.

In like manner those signs which Christ compares to a fig-tree shall be the cause of the destruction of the world.

*When her branch, &c.* For the reason already mentioned, inasmuch as the sap of the fig-tree is most sweet, it lies dormant during the winter in the root, but being drawn out by the heat of summer, it rises into the branches, and comes out in leaves and fruit. It is like the mulberry tree (*morus*), which does not germinate until the cold is all gone. The mulberry is called for that reason *μῶζος*, or "a fool," because it is anything but foolish, but the wisest of trees.

**Verse 33-** *So likewise ye, &c. Near:* it is as though Christ, the judge, and His glorious Kingdom, and *your redemption*, as Luke has it, that is, the resurrection and everlasting glory, were entering the earth, as it were by a door. For *redemption* signifies deliverance from all evils and miseries. This will be *the summer*. And after the winter, there shall come this most joyful *summer* to all the elect, as this parable intimates. As when the fig comes into leaf summer is nigh, which causes to be brought forth most sweet figs and other fruits; so when ye shall behold the elect to flourish with such great patience in the winter of such great tribulations as shall befall them at the end of the world, know ye that the reward of your patience is *nigh at hand*, the *summer* of a joyful resurrection, which shall heap upon you the fruit of every good gift, when Christ the judge shall bless and glorify you.

**Verse 34-** *Verily I say, &c. This generation,* that is to say, 1. of all men, or this age, which shall last until the end of the world. So S. Jerome. As though Christ had said, "Before the end of the world all these things shall come to

pass.”

2. Origen, Hilary, and Chrysostom take *generation* in a more restricted sense, to mean the generation of believers of Christians, that were now sprung from Christ, to whom Christ was speaking in the person of His Apostles, according to the words in Ps. xxiv. 6, “This is the generation of them that seek the Lord.” As though the Lord had said, “The Christian religion which I have instituted shall not come to an end until Christians, who faithfully serve Me, are rewarded by and crowned in the Day of Judgment.”

**Verse 35-** *Heaven and earth, &c., shall pass away, i.e., shall be changed, shall cease to be, shall perish, as regards their present state and condition, that they may pass into one which is better, and be glorified with the Saints.*

Some are of opinion that at the end of the world the heavens will be changed as regards their form and substance. Of this question I have treated at length on 2 Peter iii. 13 and Isa. xxxiv. 4.

Lastly, this sentence may be understood comparatively, thus, “The heavens shall pass away and perish, sooner than My words shall come to naught.”

**Verse 36-** *But of that day (namely, of My glorious coming to judgment) and hour, &c. As if He had said, “Do not, O My apostles, ask Me when I shall come again as Judge, or what shall be the day of the general Judgment, for no one except God knoweth this: and He willeth not any other being to know it.” “He held them back,” says Chrysostom, “from wishing to learn that which the angels are ignorant of.” As to the time when the world shall come to an end, there are various opinions.*

1. Many suppose that the world will come to an end after it has existed for six thousand years, as it was created in six days, according to the saying or prophecy of Elias, “six thousand” (years?) “the world.” (*Sex millia mundus*, Lat.) This opinion is probably true, as I have shown at length on Apoc. xx. 4.

2. Some think that there will be just as many years after Christ to the end of the world as there were from the Creation to Christ. They gather this idea from Hab. iii. 2, “O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years Thou shalt make it known.” But this passage has a different meaning, as I have there shown.

3. The third opinion was one which supposed the world would last as many jubilees after Christ as there were years in His earthly life. This calculation would place the end in A.D. 1700.

4. Druilimarns, who flourished about A.D. 800, and who wrote upon S. Matthew, says, “Our ancestors have left in writing that the world was created, the Lord was conceived and crucified, on the 25th of March, and in like manner the world will be destroyed upon the same day; but in what year they say not.” But these things have no foundation.

A fifth calculation was put forth by a contemporary of *à Lapide*, whose name he

should teach them to do the very opposite. When they appear to themselves to enjoy the most perfect health, they should think that death is lying hid at the very threshold of their doors, and should believe that they are then about to die when thoughts and hopes of long life are suggested to them, either by the devil or their own concupiscence. So would the day of death never come upon them unawares, nor overtake them as a thief.

Thus did the wise and holy men of whom we read in the *Lives of the Fathers* (*lib. 5, libello 3, de Compunc. n. 2*). Abbot Ammon gives this precept of salvation to a certain person, “Entertain such thoughts as evil-doers who are in prison have. For these men ask, ‘Where is the judge, and when will he come?’ And they weep in expectation of their punishments. After this manner ought a monk to do. He should ever be chiding his soul, and saying, ‘Woe is me, who have to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to render unto Him an account of all my deeds.’ For if thou wilt always meditate thus, thou wilt be safe.” And Abbot Evagrius said, “That is divine, to picture the dreadful and terrible judgment. Consider the confusion which is laid up for sinners, which they shall endure in the presence of Christ and God, before angels, and archangels, and powers, and all men. Think of the everlasting fire, the undying worm, the blackness of hell; and in addition to all these things, the gnashing of teeth the fears and torments. Consider likewise the good things which are laid up for the righteous—confidence before God the Father and Christ His Son, and before the angels. Consider the heavenly Kingdom and its gifts of joy and rest.” And, Abbot Elias saith, “I am afraid of three things—the first, the going forth of my soul from the body; the second, when I shall meet God; the third, when sentence shall be pronounced against me.” Abp. Theophilus, of holy memory, said, when he was about to die, “Blessed art thou, O Abbot Arsenius, because thou always hadst this hour before thine eyes.” In the same work we read that a certain old man saw one laughing, and said to him, “We have to give an account of our whole life before the Lord of heaven and earth, and dost thou laugh?”

**Verse 45-** *Who then is a faithful and wise servant, &c Who then? Gr. τίς ἄζα; Vulg. Who thinkest thou? At first sight there might seem to be a hiatus here, or a question without an answer. But it is not so. The sentence should be disposed as follows. “Who, thinkest thou, is the faithful and prudent servant, whom the Lord hath set over His family, to give them of His household food in due season?” He assuredly is faithful and prudent who performs that for which he is appointed, who does give every member of the family their food in due time. He distributes, that is, to the servants and domestics, their proper portion of victuals, as the price of their labours. For in ancient times, when money was scarce, the wages of servants were paid in rations of food.*

This saying of Christ has special reference to Bishops and Pastors. For on

vain desires. Neither shall we be angry, nor covet to lay up earthly treasures. But rather by the fear of departure, from day to day we shall trample upon all transitory things." Barlaam also taught the same to his Josaphat, "Think that this day thou hast begun the religious life. Think that this day also thou wilt finish it." S. Jerome says, "So live as though thou shouldst die today; so study as though thou wert to live always." The same Father (*Ep. 16, ad Principiam*) says that Marcella was wont to praise that saying of Plato, "that philosophy was a meditation upon death;" and the precept of the Satirist, "Live mindful of death: time flies." She therefore so lived as though she always believed herself at the point of death. When she put on her clothes, she remembered the grave, offering herself to God as a reasonable, living, acceptable sacrifice.

**Verse 43-** *But know this, &c.* Here we must supply what is to be understood, somewhat as follows. But forasmuch as a man knows not this hour, and is not willing or able to watch at every hour, therefore the thief, as his manner is, comes at the hour in which he thinks the householder is not watching, but sleeping, and so robs his house while he is asleep. It is clear that this is the meaning from the Greek, which has in the past tense, *If the master of the house had known in what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through.* You must supply, "But because he did not know the hour, he did not watch, and did suffer his house to be broken into and robbed."

By the *thief*, S. Hilary understands *the devil*. "The thief," he says, "shows that the devil is very watchful to take from us our goods, and to plot against the houses of our souls, that he may dig through them whilst we are careless, and given up to the sleep of our own devices; and he would pierce through them with the darts of enticements. It behoves us, therefore, to be prepared, because ignorance of the day sharpens the intense solicitude of expectation ever suspended." But it is better to apply the words to Christ. For so He Himself explains, applying this parable of the thief to Himself in the following verse.

**Verse 44-** *Be ye also ready, &c. the Son of man shall come,* to judgment, both the particular judgment of your own soul, and the general judgment of all men at the end of the world. Christ therefore compares Himself to *a thief*, not as regards the act of stealing, but as regards silence and secrecy, in that the thief chooses the hour in which he thinks the householder will be absent or asleep, that so he may come upon him unawares, and rob his house. In like manner Christ summons those who are careless, and not waiting for Him, to death and judgment. Whence the Apocalypse warns every one saying, "Behold, I come as a thief" (xvi. 15). And S. Paul (1 *Thess. v. 4*) says, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all children of the light, and of the day." Truly hath the wise man said, "The life of mortals is a vigil."

The truth of this sentence of Christ is seen in daily experience. For we see very many men seized by death at a time when they think themselves to be in good health, and are forming grand projects in their minds. They think death is far distant, and promise themselves many years of life. And yet both experience and the warning of Christ

does not give, whom he calls a jester rather than a reckoner, which fixed on 1666 as the end of the world.

"If," says *à Lapide*, "you object to this '*joculator*' the words of Christ, 'of that day knoweth no man,' he answers, that only applied to the time when He was speaking, and that the day might be known afterwards by revelation or in some other way."

But all this *à Lapide* characterises as frivolous and old wives' fables.

*My Father only:* because from eternity He had determined in His own mind, and appointed this day, which He keeps secret. Now by the word *only*, the Son is not excluded, neither the Holy Ghost, for They know the day and the hour of the Judgment equally with the Father, since They have all the same essence, majesty, will, mind, power, understanding, and knowledge. For it is a theological principle, that if the word "only" be added to any of the essential attributes of the Godhead, such as wisdom, and be ascribed to one of the Divine Persons, it does not exclude the other two Persons, but only creatures, which are of a different nature and essence. But in Personal Attributes, the expression "only" does exclude two of the, Divine Persons, as when it is said, "The Father only begets;" "The Son only is begotten."

You will say, Mark adds (xiii. 32), *neither the Son*, for so it is in the Greek, Latin, Syriac, Arabic, Persian, Egyptian, Ethiopic. Various answers are given. The best is that which is common among the Fathers. It is that the Son, both as God and as man, by infused knowledge, knows the Day of Judgment and of the end of the world, for it pertains for Him to know this, inasmuch as He has been appointed the Judge of the world. But Christ denies that He knoweth this as man, and as He is God's messenger to us, because He did not know it so that He could reveal it to us, or because He had not been commissioned by the Father to reveal it to us. As an ambassador who was questioned concerning the secrets of his prince would reply that he did not know them, although he did know them, because he did not know them as an ambassador. For an ambassador declares only those things which he has a commission to declare.

Christ's meaning then is, "God only knows what year and day and hour the end of the world and the Judgment shall be. And although God has caused Me, Christ, as I am man, to know the same, as I am that one man who is united to the **WORD**; yet as I am the Father's ambassador to men, He hath not willed Me to make known that day, but to keep it secret, and to stir them up continually to prepare themselves for it." There is a like mode of expression in S. John xv. 15.

There are some who explain thus: that Christ, *qua* man, knoweth not the Day of Judgment; but that He knoweth it as He is the God-man. That is to say, Christ as man knoweth it not by virtue of His humanity, but of His

divinity. So S. Athanasius (*Serm. 4, contra Arian.*), Nazianzen (*Orat. 4, de Theolog.*), Cyril (*lib. 9, Thesaur. c. 4*), Ambrose (*lib. 5, de Fide, c. 8*).

Maldonatus gives another explanation. He says that Christ, even as He is God, knoweth not the Day of Judgment in, as it were, an *ex officio* sense, because it is the office of the Father, alone to predestinate, decree, and determine the Day of Judgment; and, by consequence, that He knows it, and reveals it when He wills. For providence, in which predestination is included, is a special attribute of the Father. But this explanation is somewhat too subtle and abstruse.

**Verse 37-** *But as the days of Noah*, &c. Like the Deluge, which suddenly and unexpectedly drowned all men, shall My Advent come upon all. This is made plain by the subsequent verse.

*As in the days that were before the flood*, &c.

**Verse 39-** *And knew not*, &c. You may say, "From the darkness of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars, and the other dreadful signs, men will know that the end of the world is near." As Luke saith, *Men's hearts withering with fear, and with looking for those things which are coming on the earth*. "Therefore the end of the world cannot be unexpected by them." I reply, that after the darkening of the sun and moon, and the other signs, God will give a certain space of quietness and peace; and then men will forget the signs, and will give themselves up to pleasures, to gluttony and lust, even as they did before. Then will God put an end to them and to the world, crushing them with a sudden destruction. In like manner, dying persons will seem to revive for a little while, but soon grow worse and expire. So, too, a candle when it is burnt out will flicker up with a last effort before its flame, like a breath, departs and is extinguished. Again, so great shall be the hardness and the wickedness of the multitude of the ungodly at that time, that even though they do behold the sun and moon darkened, yet will they apply themselves to the gluttony and the luxury to which they have been accustomed, and will not think of the end of the world so nigh at the doors. Thus was it with Belshazzar, when he was feasting with his lords, on the night when he was besieged and slain by Cyrus, until he beheld the fateful hand which foretold his destruction by the words, *Meni, Tekel, Phares*. Wherefore S. Augustine teaches that at the end of the world, the righteous will be sorrowful on account of these signs, but the wicked will indulge their bent, and rejoice.

**Verse 40-** *Then two shall be in the field*, &c. In the Day of Judgment Christ will separate companion from companion, neighbour from neighbour; as, for example, husbandman from husbandman. Him who has lived justly and piously He will take up with Himself to glory. But his companion, who has lived wickedly, He will leave in his sins, and condemn to everlasting punishment. For as S. Ambrose says (*in Luke xvii. 35*), "He who is taken is carried away to meet Christ in the air; but he who is left is condemned. Christ says this, that no one may trust to good society merely because he lives among the righteous. He would also show how exact and searching will be that judgment, which will separate father from son, wife from husband, brother from

brother."

**Verse 41-** *Two women*, &c. He instances the same thing in persons grinding at a mill. For formerly mills were in use which were not turned by wind or water, but by hand. These were worked by male and female slaves to grind flour (*see Ex. xi. 5*). *In mola* (Vulg), *ἐν τῷ μύλωνι*, *in the place of grinding*, where was the bakehouse.

**Verse 42-** *Watch therefore*, &c. That is, "think continually that death is certain, but the day of death uncertain. I say the same of the Day of Judgment, both that particular judgment which comes to every one at death, as well as the general Judgment, which shall take place at the end of the world. Wherefore prepare yourselves for both by giving heed to virtue and good works." For as S. Jerome saith (*in Joel, c. ii.*), "That which shall happen to all in the Day of Judgment is fulfilled in each at the day of death." And S. Augustine (*Epist. 80*) says, "In whatsoever state a man's last day shall find him, in the same state shall the world's last day come upon him; because as the man dies, so shall he be judged. Therefore ought every Christian to watch, lest the coming of the Lord find him unprepared. But that day shall find unprepared the man whom the last day of his life now shall seize unprepared."

Moreover, the reason why God wills that this day should be unknown to us is, that the uncertainty may be a never-failing stimulus to us in the practice of every virtue. "For," as S. Chrysostom says, "if men knew surely when they were to die, at that time only would they seek to repent."

The devil, therefore, in order that he may take away this stimulus of uncertainty, gets rid of it by degrees, and in part. He persuades every one that they have at least one year to live. When that has come to an end, he tells them they have another, and so on interminably. He causes men to believe themselves so strong and well, that they can surely live this one year. Year by year he does this, and puts such a thought into their minds as, "You are in very good health; you will not die this year." Thus it comes to pass that being, as it were, certain of life, they neglect repentance from year to year, deferring it to the year in which they are to die. Wherefore, when that year comes to each in which it is God's decree that they shall die, they, in like manner, persuade themselves that they will not die in it. Thus it comes to pass that they are always unprepared when certain death and the last day overtake them. Wherefore this idea, instigated by the devil, must be crushed. Every one should say to himself at the beginning of each year, of each day, "It may be that thou shalt die this year or this day. Therefore so live as if thou wert to die to-day." This was the advice which S. Anthony was wont to give to his disciples, as S. Athanasius testifies, "When we awake out of sleep, let us be in doubt whether we shall see the evening. When we lay us down to rest, let us not be confident that we shall come to the light of another day. Thus we shall not offend, nor be carried away by