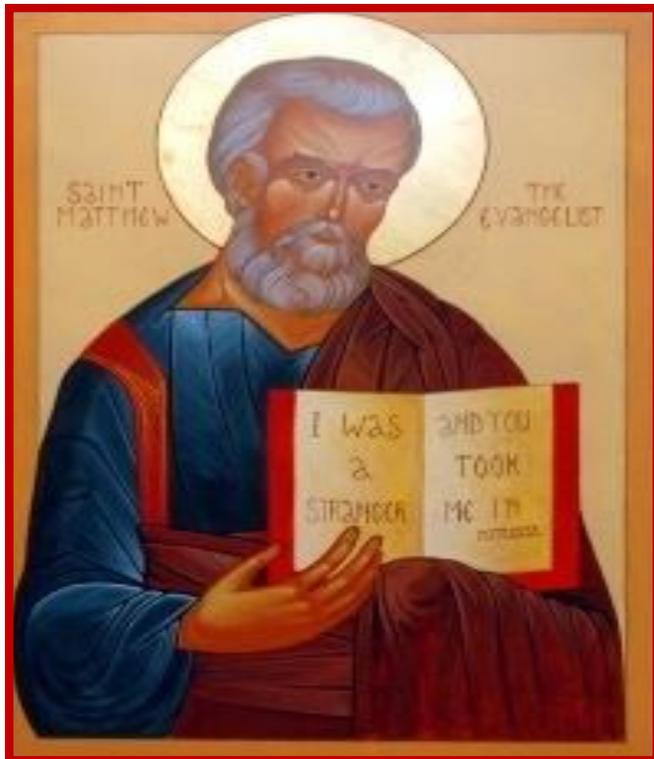


rigid penances and fasts, since they are not prescribed by the Law, but are voluntary, lest also the fruit of My teaching should be lost to them, and they, being moved to despair, should forsake Me and My teaching: but I am waiting until they shall be renewed by the Heavenly Spirit, whom I will send down at Pentecost, that, oldness and weakness being laid aside, they may undertake new austerities and new fasts. And this they shall do, not by compulsion, or from fear of punishment, like the Jews, but voluntarily, and out of love. For the New Law of Christ is one of liberty and love, as the Old Law was one of fear and servitude." That the Apostles, after Pentecost, kept frequent fasts, is plain from Acts xiii. 2, 3; 2 Cor. xi. 27; Acts xxvii. 9, &c. So Euthymius, Theophylact, Maldonatus, Jansen, and others explain this passage. Less appositely Tertullian, (*lib. de Orat. c. 1, and lib. 3 contra Marc. c. 15*) by old garments and old skins understands the Old Law, by the rough and new patch the New Law, or the Gospel. For the New Law hath reformed the Old, and as it were made it new. For precisely and adequately, by the old garment and the new, the Apostles are meant, who as yet, from their old habit of eating and living freely, were old, but were to be renewed at Pentecost by the spirit of temperance and austerity.



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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.

Matthew 9: 1-16

Douay Rheims Version

Christ heals one sick of palsy: calls Matthew: cures the issue of blood: raises to life the daughter of Jairus: gives sight to two blind men: and heals a dumb man possessed by the devil.

1. And entering into a boat, he passed over the water and came into his own city.
2. And behold they brought to him one sick of the palsy lying in a bed. And Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy: Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.
3. And behold some of the scribes said within themselves: He blasphemeth.
4. And Jesus seeing their thoughts, said: Why do you think evil in your hearts?
5. Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee: or to say, Arise, and walk?

But SS. Hilary and Ambrose say, we have Christ the Bridegroom with us, and we continually feed on His Body in the Eucharist. But those to whom the Bridegroom is not present, present, that is, by grace, such as those who are living in deadly sin, keep a perpetual fast, because they lack the Bread of Life. S. Ambrose, explaining the words of Christ, *The Bridegroom shall be taken away from them*, says, "No one can take Christ from thee, unless thou takest thyself away from Him."

Verse 16- *No man putteth a piece of new cloth, &c.* Note 1, for *piece of cloth*, the Greek has *ἐπιβλήμα*, *an addition, a patch*. S. Augustine and Tertullian call it *plagula*. Others call it a little rag, what is called in Italian, *un pezzo*. Whence S. Francis desired his Brothers to wear patched garments, like paupers. For thus we see beggars wearing clothes made of many and divers-coloured patches, which you might reckon up to the number of a hundred. Hence they are called *centos*.

Of new, *ἀγναφος*, cloth, that is, *unfulled, uncombed, uncarded cloth*—cloth such as is brought by the weavers to be prepared and dyed. S. Luke has, *commissuram a nova vestimento*, "a patch off a new garment." For such is a new and rough rag. Whence the Italians call clothes, *rags*.

That which is put in to fill it up. The Greek and the Vulgate have, *its plenitude*; by which Christ means, *its integrity*. For if you sew a piece of new cloth on to an old garment, you will take away its integrity, so that it will no longer seem one garment but two, partly old, partly new.

Note 2, the meaning of the parable is this: If an ancient garment be torn, it should be mended with the like old cloth, not with new. For if the new patch be sewed on to the old cloth, the garment is no longer whole and homogeneous, but multiform and heterogeneous, and so deformed and spoiled.

And the rent is made worse, that is, than it was before, when the garment was torn; *worse*, because of the division of the old parts from the other old parts, by the intervention of *the new patch*. Therefore *the rent is made worse*, because what has been added to it to mend it, tears it still more. Thus it is again cut out, and so there is a still greater rent.

In a similar way, Cicero said of Julius Cæsar, when he wished to decorate certain unworthy persons with Senatorial dignity, "Them he did not adorn, but brought disgrace upon the honours themselves."

Note 3, the parable is connected with the matter in hand, as follows: "As no one sews a new patch on an old garment, but attaches new to new, old to old, so I, who am the most prudent Physician of souls, perceiving the ancient and ingrained habits of My disciples, as it were an old garment, and their infirmity as old bottles, do not, as yet, impose upon them hard and

has, *sons of the bridegroom*. The meaning of *children of the bride chamber*, is that they rejoice in the Bridegroom's marriage, and are accounted His familiar friends, and are admitted to His chamber and hear His secret counsels. By a similar Hebraism, they are called sons of obedience, who love obedience; sons of pride, who delight in pride.

Mourn, by catachresis, for *fast*, because in mourning, men fast, and fasting makes men sad; just as, on the contrary, food and wine make men jovial and cheerful. The meaning is, "It is not wonderful that My disciples do not mourn and fast whilst they are enjoying Me and My nuptials. For at a wedding, modest banquets are becoming, fasting is unbecoming. But the sons of the Servant—that is, My servant John Baptist, who leads an austere life to bring men to repentance, and imposes the burdensome law of Moses upon his followers because it is still binding—grief and fasting, I say, become them; for they, by means of sorrow and austere deeds of penance, are preparing the way for sinners to the joyful marriage supper of the Bridegroom, Christ. But Christ shall die, and be taken from them, and then shall His disciples mourn and fast. He alludes to the ancient custom of mourning for the dead, accompanied by fasting. Thus the Hebrews mourned for Saul, fasting seven days.

Christ here intimates that novices in the faith and in religious orders must be gently and blandly treated, as being tender and but children in spirit, until they become matured in virtue, lest they should despair, or forsake the path of virtue on which they have entered. Thus S. Pachomius, who received the rule of his Order from an angel, directed novices to be instructed in it for three years, even as Christ fed His Apostles with milk, and instructed them in His school for three years.

We are here reminded of that ancient good Abbot, who used to receive his guests to dine before the canonical hour for refectio. When asked the reason, he said, "Fasting, my brethren, is always with me, but since I am about to send you away, I cannot have you with me always. Since, therefore, I receive Christ in you, I ought to refresh you; and when I shall have set you on your way, I shall be able, by myself, to make up for deferring my fasting." So Cassian and Sulpitius relate.

Moreover, after Christ's death, the Apostles often fasted, and suffered from hunger and thirst, as S. Paul relates at length, 2 Cor. xi. So in the Life of S. Peter we read that he did severe penance, and ate only bread with olives.

Hence, also, in the Eastern Church, says S. Epiphanius (*Hæres.* 75), Christians fast on Wednesdays and Fridays. So they still do in Greece, Poland, and Holland. In other parts of the Western Church they abstain from flesh on Fridays and Saturdays. These customs arose because on Wednesday the Bridegroom was betrayed to the Jews by Judas, on Friday He was crucified, and on Saturday He lay in the tomb. Epiphanius adds that formerly on fasting days Christians ate nothing but bread and salt, with water, and that this was enjoined by a decree of the Apostles.

Tropologically, S. Jerome says, "When Christ the Bridegroom departed from us on account of sins, then especially must grief and fasting be undergone."

6. But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then said he to the man sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house.

7. And he arose, and went into his house.

8. And the multitude seeing it, feared, and glorified God that gave such power to men.

9. And when Jesus passed on from thence, he saw a man sitting in the custom house, named Matthew; and he saith to him: Follow me. And he arose up and followed him.

10. And it came to pass as he was sitting at meat in the house, behold many publicans and sinners came, and sat down with Jesus and his disciples.

11. And the Pharisees seeing it, said to his disciples: Why doth your master eat with publicans and sinners?

12. But Jesus hearing it, said: They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill.

13. Go then and learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice. For I am not come to call the just, but sinners.

14. Then came to him the disciples of John, saying: Why do we and the Pharisees, fast often, but thy disciples do not fast?

15. And Jesus said to them: Can the children of the bridegroom mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast.

16. And nobody putteth a piece of raw cloth unto an old garment. For it taketh away the fulness thereof from the garment, and there is made a greater rent.

17. Neither do they put new wine into old bottles. Otherwise the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish. But new wine they put into new bottles: and both are preserved.

18. As he was speaking these things unto them, behold a certain ruler came up, and adored him, saying: Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.

19. And Jesus rising up followed him, with his disciples.

20. And behold a woman who was troubled with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment.

21. For she said within herself: If I shall touch only his garment, I shall be healed.

22. But Jesus turning and seeing her, said: Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

23. And when Jesus was come into the house of the ruler, and saw the minstrels and the multitude making a rout,

24. He said: Give place, for the girl is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

25. And when the multitude was put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand. And the maid arose.

26. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that country.

27. And as Jesus passed from thence, there followed him two blind men crying out and saying, Have mercy on us, O Son of David.

28. And when he was come to the house, the blind men came to him. And Jesus saith to them, Do you believe, that I can do this unto you? They say to him, Yea, Lord.

29. Then he touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it done unto you.

30. And their eyes were opened, and Jesus strictly charged them, saying, See that no man know this.

31. But they going out, spread his fame abroad in all that country.

32. And when they were gone out, behold they brought him a dumb man, possessed with a devil.

33. And after the devil was cast out, the dumb man spoke, and the multitudes wondered, saying, Never was the like seen in Israel.

34. But the Pharisees said, By the prince of devils he casteth out devils.

35. And Jesus went about all the cities and towns, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease, and every infirmity.

36. And seeing the multitudes, he had compassion on them: because they were distressed, and lying like sheep that have no shepherd.

37. Then he saith to his disciples, The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few.

38. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into his harvest.

Verse 1- *Passed over:* that is, sailed across the sea of Galilee, to its western side. *And came into his own city.* Sedulius thinks Bethlehem is meant because he was born there. S. Jerome, with more probability, understands Nazareth, where He was brought up. The best opinion is that of S. Chrysostom, Theophylact, Maldonatus, and many others, who say, Capernaum is to be understood, in which Christ often dwelt. And (chap. iv. 13) S. Matthew says that, leaving Nazareth, Christ dwelt there. And S. Mark teaches that the healing of the paralytic, which is now to be related, look place at Capernaum. (Mark ii. 3.) As Christ ennobled Bethlehem by His birth, Nazareth by his education, Egypt by His flight, Jerusalem by His Passion, so he adorned Capernaum, by His dwelling, preaching, and working miracles there.

Verse 2- *And, behold, they brought to him,* &c. S. Mark says, the paralytic man was carried by four bearers. Learn from this to care not only for thine own salvation, but for that of thy neighbours, and that earnestly, as well because charity demands it, as because God often chastises the good as well as the bad, because the good neglect to chastise and amend the faults of the bad.

And seeing their faith, &c. The faith of those who brought the paralytic to Christ. For when they were not able to bring him into the house to Christ, they carried him up upon the roof. The roofs of the houses in Palestine are not steep, as they are in Germany, but flat, more so than they are in Italy. *They uncovered the roof:* that is, they broke through it, by taking away the tiles. S. Mark says, *thy laid bare the roof:* and thus they let down the sick man by means of ropes before Christ. All these things showed their great faith and devotion to Christ.

Verse 14- *Then came to him the disciples of John,* &c. *Then,* signifies that it was shortly afterwards. The Pharisees being, therefore, upon just grounds, refuted by Christ, here frame another accusation against Him. They suborn the disciples of John, that by the occasion of fasting, practised by them in common with themselves, they might bring it as a charge against Christ, that neither He, nor His disciples fasted. Now this particular fast to which they refer was not prescribed by the Law, for Christ and His disciples observed the fasts as well as all the other requirements of the Law: but it was a fast, either appointed by the Jewish doctors, or else voluntarily taken up by their disciples at the exhortation of the doctors. Wherefore S. Luke relates that they said, *Why do the disciples of John fast oft, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees, but Thine eat and drink?* It is as much as to say, “Thou wishest to be our Reformer, and a master of perfection. Why then do we fast, when Thou and Thine lead a genial life?” S. Mark speaks of the disciples of John, in connection with those of the Pharisees. This was because the Pharisees instigated John’s disciples to propose this question to Christ. And this is the reason why S. Matthew in this place makes mention only of John’s disciples. They therefore press Christ with the authority of John the Baptist, which was very great among the Jews, but they do it in an unwarrantable and presumptuous manner. “This was a haughty interrogation,” says the *Interlinear*, “and full of Pharisaic pride.” “Therefore,” says S. Jerome, “John’s disciples are to be blamed, because of their boasting about their fasting, as because of their uniting themselves to the Pharisees, whom John had condemned; also because they were calumniating Him of whom John had preached.” Moreover, the disciples of John said these things out of zeal for their master, and out of envy of Christ, preferring John to Him. This may be gathered from S. John iii. 26. We may perceive a like jealousy in certain good men, even now, who busy themselves in extolling their own founder or patron above everybody else: but in this they are carnal and childish, and betray their own secret vanity and arrogance. For in thus extolling their master above others, they are really seeking to exalt themselves. Such were the Corinthians, who said, “I am of Paul, I of Cephas.” Such the Apostle sharply rebukes, saying, “When there is envy and contention among you, are ye not carnal and walk as men?” (1 Cor. iii. 3.)

Verse 15- *And Jesus saith unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber,* &c. The Bridegroom is Christ, because He hath betrothed human nature, and by it the Church, unto Himself, in the Incarnation, and hath united them unto Himself by a perpetual bond of marriage. This marriage Christ hath begun by grace on earth (Matt. xxii. 2), but He will consummate it in glory with His elect in heaven, where there shall be celebrated the endless marriage feast of the Lamb (Apoc. xix. 7). Hence John the Baptist calls himself the friend of the Bridegroom (John iii. 29). And Christ’s disciples, hearing this, knew that He was the Bridegroom.

Children of the bride chamber. So it is in the Greek. But the Latin Vulgate

Sinners are here distinguished from *publican*. These sinners seem to have been dissolute Jews, who cared little for the law and religion of the Jews, and lived in a heathenish manner, or who had apostatized to heathenism.

Verse 11- *And when the Pharisees saw it, &c.* These are the words, not of those who asked a question, but of those who were making an accusation. As much as to say, “Your Master Christ acts contrary to the law of God and the traditions of the Fathers. Why do you listen to Him, and follow Him? He associates with sinners. He is bringing the stain of their sins and infamy upon you.”

Verse 12- *But when Jesus heard that, &c.* from the report of His disciples. For even the Pharisees did not dare to make this charge to Christ Himself. *He saith*, not to His disciples, but to the Pharisees, for He turned Himself to those from whom the complaint proceeded, as is clear from what follows. *They that are whole, &c.* As a physician is not infected by the diseases of those who are sick, but rather overcometh diseases, and drives them away, and therefore it is not a disgrace, but an honour to a physician to be associated with the sick, so in like manner I, who have been sent from heaven to earth by God the Father, to be a physician of sin-sick souls, am not contaminated by their sins when I associate with them, but rather heal them, which is the highest praise to Me, and the greatest benefit to them. I therefore am the Physician, not the companion of sinners.

Verse 13- *But go ye: that is, go away from Me; depart out of My sight.* They are the words of one repudiating them. *And learn*, what Hosea says (vi. 6), *I will have mercy and not sacrifice: i.e.,* I prefer mercy to sacrifice, although sacrifice is the noblest act of religion. Therefore follow mercy, even as I do, that ye may save sinners. For I prefer mercy, and to have pity upon miserable sinners, rather than with you to offer victims to God. See what I have said upon Hosea vi. 6, where I have commented upon the dignity and surpassing excellency of mercy.

Well does S. Bernard (*Serm. 16 in Cant.*) exclaim, “O Wisdom, with what art of healing, by wine and oil, dost Thou restore health to my soul! Thou art bravely sweet, and sweetly brave, brave *for* me, sweet *to* me. Thy name is oil poured forth, not wine. For I would not that Thou shouldst enter into judgment with Thy servant. It is oil, because thou crownest me with mercy and loving kindness. It is indeed oil; for oil floats at the top of all liquids with which it is mingled: and thus it is a lively figure of that Name which is above every name.”

Verse 13- *For I came not to call the just but sinners.* So it is in the Vulgate. The Greek adds, *εἰς μετανοίαν, to repentance.* So too S. Luke, and the Arabic Version. This must be either expressed or understood. For Christ also called Nathanael, who was a just man. Also He called the Blessed Virgin, S. John, and Elizabeth, who were saints, to still greater sanctity and perfection.

Hilary, Jerome, Bede, &c., take the words differently, *I came not to call the righteous*, that is, those who proudly, but falsely esteem and boast themselves to be righteous, when they are in very truth sinners and hypocrites, such as ye are, O ye Pharisees.

Their refers to those who brought him, say SS. Ambrose and Jerome. S. Chrysostom adds, that the faith of the paralytic himself is included, for through this faith he wished himself to be carried, and let down through the roof before Christ. Neither would he have heard the words, “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” unless he had had faith. Moreover this faith was the faith of miracles. Learn from him that the measure of prayer is faith and hope. For what thou hopest from Christ that shalt thou obtain of Him. For the more thou enlargest the lap of thy soul by hope, the more capacious thou makest it, and the more worthy that God should fill it, according to these words in the Psalm, “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” And, “I opened my mouth and drew in my breath.” (Ps. cxix. 131.)

Wherefore Christ said to this man, *Son, be of good cheer.* “Trust that thou shalt be by Me miraculously healed, first in thy soul from sin, then in thy body from palsy. For because of sin, God has afflicted thee with this disease. Observe, this paralytic already had faith and hope in Christ as I have just shown, but Christ bids him confirm and increase his faith. Moreover, by these outward words, *Be of good cheer*, but more by the inward *afflatus* of His grace, Christ stirred up the paralytic to an act of great faith, hope, and sorrow for the sins which he had committed, and firm determination to enter upon a new and holy life, and love God above all things, that by this means he might be in a fit state to receive remission of his sins. For such are the dispositions which Scripture in other places requires, Christ, however, here and elsewhere, names and requires faith alone, and attributes salvation, more especially of the body, to faith, because faith is the prime origin and root of hope, fear, sorrow, and love of God. And faith in Christ was the thing, at that time, to be especially insisted on.

The heretics, therefore, can find nothing in this passage to prove that faith only properly justifies; especially since what is here treated of is miraculous faith, which they themselves distinguish from justifying faith. I may add that Christ here speaks of the faith of the bearers as much, or more than he does of the faith of the paralytic, and their faith could not justify the sick man.

Son. For he truly is a son of God, whose sins are forgiven, says Haymo. Observe here the kindness of Christ, addressing the sick man with these most sweet words. Hence S. Jerome exclaims, “O wondrous humility. He calls this despised and feeble one, all the joints of whose limbs were loosed, *Son*, a man whom the priests would not deign to touch.”

Thy sins are forgiven thee: Gr. *ἀφεωνται, have been forgiven.* This is a Hebraism for *are forgiven.*

S. Chrysostom observes that Christ first forgave the paralytic his sins, and then healed him, that from the calumnious remarks of the Pharisees, which

he foresaw would follow upon what he had said and done, He might take occasion to prove His Divinity. This He did by a triple miracle, as an irrefragable proof, first by declaring openly their secret thoughts and murmurs against Him, secondly by healing the paralytic, thirdly by performing the miracle with this end in view, that, by it, He might demonstrate He had the power of forgiving sins.

Taken, however, literally, the more patent reason was, that He might show that palsies, and other diseases often arise, not so much from natural causes, as from sin. For He forgives the sins first, and then He heals the paralytic; showing that when the cause was taken away, the effect followed.

This is why it is ordered by the canon law that physicians should seek the health of a sick man's soul before that of his body. (See chap. *Cum infirm. de pœnit. et remiss.*) This rule is strictly observed at Rome, where physicians after the third day of illness, especially when there is peril of death, may not go near a sick person, except he forthwith cleanse his soul from sin by sacramental confession. For, as S. Basil says (*Reg. 55*), "Oftentimes are diseases the scourges of sins, which are sent for no other purpose than that we should amend our lives."

Again, expositors collect from this passage that those who were corporeally healed by Christ were usually spiritually healed also by Him, and justified, as was the case with the paralytic. And this is consonant with Christ's liberality, that He should not bestow a half-healing, but whole and perfect salvation. For the works of God are perfect. And we must remember that Christ came into the world chiefly to bestow spiritual health. This is what he says of another paralytic, "I have made a whole man sound upon the sabbath." (John vii. 23, Vulg.)

Verse 3- *And, behold, certain of the scribes, &c. Within themselves.* Syr., in their soul; because He takes away God's special prerogative of pardoning sin, and claims it for Himself, which would be a grave dishonour done to God, and therefore blasphemy. Thus they thought, supposing Christ was not God, but a mere man. This was their perpetual and obstinate error, which led them perpetually to persecute Him, even unto the death of the Cross. Wherefore S. Mark adds, that they said, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" For sin is an offence against God, a violation of the Divine Majesty, so that no one can pardon it, except God Himself.

Verse 4- *And Jesus knowing their thoughts, &c.* S. Mark adds that Jesus knew in His Spirit. This was not because another revealed to Him the thoughts and blasphemies of the Scribes, as the prophets knew such things, but by Himself and His own Spirit, pervading and penetrating all things. From this the Fathers rightly prove the Divinity of Christ against the Arians. For He searches the hearts, a thing which God alone can do. Thus S. Jerome, who adds, "Even when keeping silence, He speaks. As though He said, 'By the same power and majesty by which I behold your thoughts, I am able also to forgive men their sins.'" So too S. Chrysostom and others. Whence Chrysologus says, "Receive the tokens of Christ's Divinity: behold Him come to the secret hiding-places of thy thoughts."

fault in this place, either with the lying un-skillfulness of the historian, or else with the folly of those persons who immediately followed the Saviour, as though they irrationally followed the first person who called them. But they do not consider that great miracles and mighty signs had preceded this calling. And there can be no doubt that the Apostles had witnessed these things before they believed. This at least is certain, the very refulgence and majesty of the hidden Divinity, which shone even in His human countenance, was able to attract to Him those who saw Him as soon as they beheld Him. For if there be in a magnet, which is but a stone, such force that it is able to attract, and join unto itself rings and straws, how much more is the Lord of all creatures able to draw unto Himself whom He will."

Thus then as a magnet draws iron unto it, so did Christ draw Matthew, and by His drawing, gave him his virtues, and chiefly his exceeding love of God, zeal for souls, ardour in preaching. Listen to the account of S. Matthew's conversion, which he himself gave to S. Bridget, when praying at his tomb at Malphi: "It was my desire at the time I was a publican to defraud no man, and I wished to find out a way by which I might abandon that employment, and cleave to God alone with my whole heart. When therefore He who loved me, even Jesus Christ was preaching, His call was a flame of fire in my heart; and so sweet were His words unto my taste, that I thought no more of riches than of straws: yea, it was delightful to me to weep for joy, that my God had deigned to call one of such small account, and so great a sinner as I to His grace. And as I clave unto my Lord, His burning words became fixed in my heart, and day and night I fed upon them by meditation, as upon sweetest food."

Verse 10- *And it came to pass as he sat at meat, &c.* This was in Matthew's own house, for he is silent about his virtues, outspoken about his errors. This appears from what Luke says, *Levi*, that is, Matthew, *made him a great feast in his own house*: to this feast he invited many of his companions, publicans like himself, and sinners, that they might be drawn by the kindness of Christ to follow Him, as he had done. It is indeed a sign of true conversion to be anxious that others also should be converted from their sins. For good is self-diffusive, and charity instigates men to seek the salvation of other lost sinners.

The office of a publican, although a just one in itself, and one that could be exercised without sin, yet, because avaricious men frequently undertook it from love of gain, who extorted unjust dues, especially from the poor, publicans were accounted infamous among the Jews, and public sinners, as public usurers are similarly accounted among Christians. There was this also, that the Jews maintained that they, as a people dedicated to God, ought not to pay tribute to the Romans, who were Gentiles and idolaters: for this was contrary to the liberty and dignity of the children of God. Thus they detested the publicans, who exacted the tribute.

of sin, and the bed of depraved habits, by calling to mind into what a state she has fallen, which she doth by confession; for as he who arises, so also does he who confesses, come forth: she ought to take up her bed, which pertains to satisfaction, for when that is enjoined in confession, it is a sort of burden to be borne, for the flesh which, as a bed, gave pleasure, and as it were carried the dead soul, ought, after remission and satisfaction. to be a burden to a man, as it was to him who cried out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” So Salmeron, Jansen, Toletus, and others, expound this passage.

Anagogically, understand it of the celestial glory, concerning which the Psalmist speaks, “I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord.” (Ps. cxvii. 1.) For, in the resurrection, the Lord will say, “Arise, that is, from death; and take up thy bed, that is, resume thy body, endowed with glorious gifts; and go into thine house, that is, into the eternal and heavenly mansion.”

Verse 9- *And as Jesus passed forth from thence, &c. Custom*, in Greek, *τελος*, means *revenue*; from which *telonium*, the word here used by S. Matthew, means the house, or place where the sailors and merchants paid the tribute and customs dues upon their ships and merchandise. Here sat the publicans, who were the farmers and collectors of these dues. Hence the Persian version, instead of *telonium* has, *in the house of payment*; the Ethiopic has, *in the forum, or market-place*. Matthew was one of these publicans; whence it is probable that his house was at Capernaum, by the shore of the Sea of Galilee, at a point where the vessels touched. The Roman Senate and the people were accustomed to let the tribute which was due to them from their subjects for a stipulated sum.

Jansen, in his *Harmony of the Gospels*, says, that persons who have carefully surveyed the Holy Land, assert that the spot where Matthew was called is still pointed out, outside of Capernaum, near the Sea. Mark and Luke say that Matthew was *sitting* at the *telonium*, because, by this word, they seem to mean not a house, but a table, on which they were counting the tribute money.

Named Matthew. Matthew names himself, both out of humility, that he might confess to the whole world that he had been a publican and a sinner, and also out of gratitude, that he might make known abroad the exceeding grace of Christ towards him, just as S. Paul does: “It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief,” (1 Tim. i. 15.)

Follow me: Whom in Capernaum thou hast heard preaching heavenly doctrine, and confirming it by many miracles, and especially by that recent healing of the paralytic. He calls Matthew, already subdued by the fame of His miracles, says Chrysostom. Observe the condescension of Christ who calls Matthew, the *publican*, and so a man infamous among the Jews, not only to grace but to His family and intimate friendship and Apostleship.

And he arose, &c. Note here the efficacy of Christ’s vocation, and the ready obedience of Matthew. Hear what S. Jerome says about it. “Porphyry and Julian find

You may say, the Scribes might have raised the following objection:— “Thou, O Jesus, indeed knowest and revealest our secret thoughts, but not by Thine own Spirit, for that Thou in no way makest plain to us, but by the Spirit of God. Therefore Thou art a prophet and not God, that thou shouldst remit sins.” I reply, if the Scribes acknowledged Jesus to be a prophet, then surely they ought to have believed that He was speaking the truth when He said that He had, of Himself, power to forgive sins, and therefore that He was God. Again, in the Old Testament, the power of remitting sins was given to none of the prophets, but it was promised to Messiah alone by the prophets. Therefore, they ought to have acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah, and consequently God, as is plain from many passages of Scripture.

Lastly, Christ by His command alone, and proper authority, both healed the paralytic, and forgave him his sins, and so in this, as in all His other miracles, He had this end in view, that He might convince them He was the Messiah—that is, the Son of God, who had come in the flesh, the Saviour of the world, the Redeemer of sinners, who had been foretold by Moses and the prophets.

Verse 5- *Whether is easier, &c.* You may ask, whether of these two is absolutely the more difficult? I answer—

1. It is, *per se*, more difficult to forgive sins than to heal a paralytic person, yea, than to create heaven and earth. And there is *à priori* reason for this: first, because sin, as an enemy of God, is far further away from God than a paralytic, yea, than any created thing, forasmuch as these are in themselves good: yea, further than nothingness, out of which all things were made, itself, for nothingness is only negatively and privatively opposed to entity and God; but sin is diametrically opposed and repugnant to God. For there are no contraries which are so mutually opposed as supreme goodness and supreme badness—that is to say, God and sin.

2. Because remission of sins is something of a higher order than the natural order. It has to do with the supernatural order of grace. Grace is the highest communion with the Divine Nature: for by grace “we are made partakers of the divine nature,” as S. Peter says (2 Pet. i. 4).

I observe, however, secondly: on the contrary, Christ here seems to speak of remission of sins as being easier than the healing of the paralytic. This was so, because the latter was more difficult in respect of the Jews, and it was a more perilous thing besides. For he who saith, I forgive thee thy sins, cannot be convicted of falsehood, whether he remits them or not. For neither sin, nor its remission, are things that can be seen. But he who saith to a paralytic, *Arise and walk*, exposes both himself and his good name to great peril, if the sick man does not arise. Such a one will be convicted by all of imposture and falsehood. Just as we are accustomed to say, It is

easier to write a history of Tartary than a history of Italy: because here a man might be convicted of falsehood by multitudes; but there by no one.

Lastly, the healing of paralysis is a physical operation, and, physically speaking, more difficult than the remission of sins, which is, *per se*, a moral act, of like nature with sin itself.

Jansen adds, With respect to God, both are equally easy and divine, for both are miraculous, and both require exercise of omnipotent power.

Moreover, although of itself the healing of the paralytic was a less work than the remission of sins, yet Christ conclusively proves by it that He had the power of forgiving sins.

Ver. 6.—*But that ye may know*, &c. Observe the expression, *Son of Man*, for Christ forgave sins, not only as He was God, but in that He was man, authoritatively and meritoriously. Because His Humanity was hypostatically united to His Divinity, and subsisted in the Divine Person of the Son of God, therefore He was able to make full satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

Wherefore this primary power and authority of forgiving sins was given unto Him, next unto God, which power He is able to grant unto others likewise, such as priests, who are instituted by Him, as His ministers, that they too should forgive sins. Whence S. Thomas says (3 *part. quæst.* 63, *art.* 3), “The power of the excellence of Christ standeth in four things. 1. Because His merit, and the virtue of His Passion, operate in the sacraments. 2. Because by His Name the sacraments are sanctified. 3. Because He Himself, who gives virtue to the sacraments, had power to institute them. 4. Because the *effect* of the sacraments—in other words, the remission of sins, and grace—Christ is able to confer without the sacraments. This power is peculiar to Christ alone, *quâ* man; and therefore it has been communicated neither to priest nor pontiff, nor to S. Peter.”

Arise, take up thy bed, &c. *Rise*: be sound and healed of thy palsy; and to show to the Scribes and all the people that thou art healed, *take up thy bed*, that now thou mayest bear that which has lately borne thee, as Sedulius says in this place, “He himself, with grateful thanks, repaid his hire.” Instead of *bed* (*lectum*), Mark has *grabatum*. *Grabatus*, says Sipontius, is a narrow sort of couch on which we recline at noon, as if from *carabatus*, something on which we lay our head, from *καρά*, *the head*, and, *βατόν*, passing. Whence the line of Martial— “Went the three-legged grabatus, went the three-legged table.”

Verse 7- *And he arose*, &c. He arose at once, for what Christ said was straightway done. And the man walked off with the bed upon his shoulders.

S. Simon Stylites followed the example of this miracle of Christ, as may be seen in his Life, taken by Surius out of Theodoret. “A certain Saracen prince brought to him a paralytic domestic, and asked him to heal him. The holy man commanded him to be

sinful habits and depraved inclinations, which the sinner of his own will contracted and put on. Thus S. Mary of Egypt, after her conversion, felt for seventeen years the sharp goads of lust, because for so many years she had shamefully lived in lust. brought into the midst, and bade him abjure the impiety of his ancestors. After the man had done this, he asked him if he believed in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. He replied that he did believe. ‘If thou believest,’ said he, ‘rise up.’ As soon as he had arisen, he bade him take up and carry the before-named prince, who was an excessively fat man, upon his shoulders, as far as his tent. And he immediately raised him up, and carried him whither he was bidden. All the spectators were amazed at this miracle, and glorified God.” In a similar manner S. Bernard, at the request of the King of France, healed a man sick of the palsy, with the sign of the Cross, and bade him take up his bed.

Tropologically; by the sick man’s taking up, and carrying his bed is meant, that by the just judgment of God it cometh to pass that the sinner who aforesaid willingly consented to temptation, after he has repented, *feels temptation against his will*. For repentance truly takes away sin, but not sinful habits and depraved inclinations, which the sinner of his own will contracted and put on. Thus S. Mary of Egypt, after her conversion, felt for seventeen years the sharp goads of lust, because for so many years she had shamefully lived in lust.

Verse 8- *But when the multitudes saw it they marvelled*, &c. Instead of *marvelled*, the Latin Vulgate has, *they feared*. S. Mark adds, that the multitude said, *We never saw it after this fashion*. S. Luke, *We have seen strange things today*. For this man’s whole body was paralysed. S. Mark says that, *he was borne of four*, which shows that the palsy had affected every limb. He was a different paralytic from the one of whom S. John makes mention (v. 2), who was healed in the Sheep-market at Jerusalem. That man had no one carrying him: neither did he believe, as this one did, to whom it was said, *Son, be of good cheer*.

Tropologically; paralysis is any disease of the soul whatsoever, but especially of fleshly lust, and the carelessness and indifference to spiritual things which it generates. For it so entirely prostrates the soul, that it is without power to lift itself up to virtue, to heaven, to God. Wherefore the man that labours under this disease must be carried by bearers, that is, by pastors, preachers, confessors, up upon the housetop, that is, to the desire of salvation and heavenly things; and then must be let down through the roof to the feet of Christ; and they must ask of Him by earnest prayer to heal him by His grace, and restore to him the power of motion, and the sense of spiritual things. Then when he is healed, let him give thanks to Christ his Saviour, and let him not be slothful, but let him go away to the house of his mind and conscience, and sweep it clean of vices, and adorn it with all virtuous actions. Thus ought the soul to trust in the Lord, because He alone is able to supply all her wants. She ought to arise from the sleep