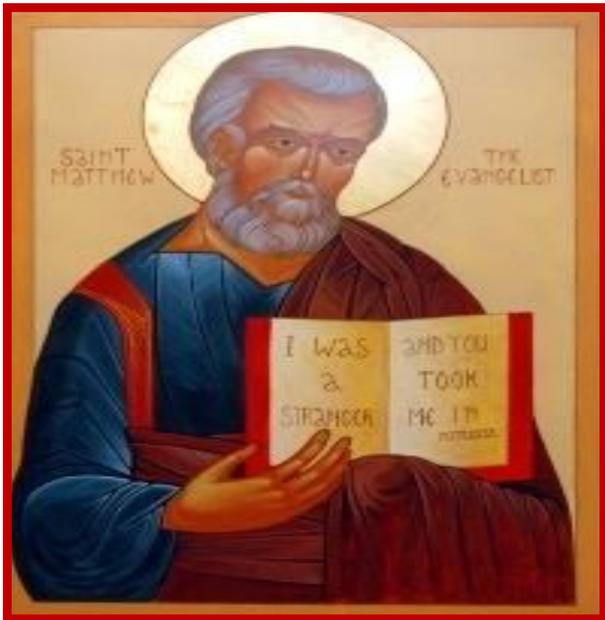


Lastly, many Fathers and scholastic Doctors—whom I will cite on the first verse of the following chapter—take the words *first* and *last* as applying strictly and literally to *eternal* life. In this manner: Rich men who here below have led an honest but comfortable life, keeping only the precepts of God, in Heaven shall be the last; but the poor men, who to the precepts have added evangelical counsels, and in poverty have followed Christ in preaching the Gospel, shall be the first in Heaven. I have said more about this in the following chapter. The meaning will be more ample with a more complete application to all that is said in the parable which follows, if you take *last* in both ways—viz., as signifying those who are to be excluded from Heaven, as well as those who are last in Heaven. For the Apostles, who as *first* shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel, as it were the last, shall award to many of them, as being just, the kingdom of Heaven, and to many as being unjust, hell. Moreover this sentence, *many that are first shall be last, and the last first*, Christ explains by the subsequent parable of the labourers. This sentence is, as it were, the *pro-parable*, i.e., the title and argument of that parable, to which is annexed the *post-parable*, as it were the scope and application of the parable (xx. 16). *Thus the last shall be first, and the first last; for many are called, but few chosen*. Whence it is plain that the *post-parable* exactly corresponds to the *pro-parable*, indeed that it is one and the same thing with it. The *first* therefore are called the *chosen*, or the *elect*: but the *called* only, not the *elect*, are called the *last*.



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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.

Continuation of Matthew 19: 29-30

Verse 29—*And every one that hath forsaken houses, &c.* Observe that in the several clauses of this sentence the disjunctive conjunction, *or*, is put because Christ is not speaking now of those who have left *everything* to follow Him, but of those who have only left *some things* for His sake and the Gospel's. So Origen, S. Jerome, Maldonatus. S. Chrysostom is of a different opinion, and thinks that the same thing is here promised by Christ to all the faithful which a little previously He had promised to the twelve Apostles. As though He had said, All the faithful who have acted in the same way as the twelve Apostles, by forsaking all things and following Me, shall receive the same honour with them, and shall obtain one of the twelve thrones among the Apostles, and on it shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel. But the previous explanation is the best, as being required by the disjunctive conjunction, *or*.

thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, when there are in them very many men eminent in dignity, wealth, learning, fame, authority, such as the Scribes and Pharisees, and that young ruler, who was also a keeper of the Law?" Christ meets this objection, and declares that they indeed are eminent, and the first in this world, but that in Heaven and the *life eternal they will be the last*. That is, they would find no place there, they will be rejected and excluded from it. He used a like mode of expression (v. 19), "Whoso shall break one of these least commandments, shall be called the least, *i.e.*, not at all in the kingdom of Heaven." And *the last* are called here the most remote from the kingdom of Heaven, as is plain from Luc. xiii. 30. This was because they despised Christ as being a poor man. But the Apostles, and others like them, who left all to follow Christ, who seemed in this world the poorest and the least of men, were to be *the first* in the *life eternal*, forasmuch as they were most dear to Christ, the King of Heaven, and most like Him in life and character, especially in poverty and zeal in preaching. So S. Jerome, Bede, S. Thomas, and others; also Victor Antioch (*in cap. x. Marci.*). Now He saith *many* not *all*, because there are some first here, who shall be first also in Heaven, such as holy kings, princes, doctors, bishops, pontiffs, who although they abound in wealth, yet are poor in spirit. And in turn there are some who are last here who shall be also last in Heaven, such as paupers and beggars, who give themselves up to theft and rapine in order to supply their wants, and that they may become rich and opulent.

On the whole, by this saying Christ signifies that the rich, and those who pant after earthly good, shall be shut out of Heaven; but the poor who covet heavenly things shall be the first *there*. He refers to what He said to the rich young man (ver. 21): *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven.* Also to Peter's words: *Lo, we have left all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?* Thus Christ in Heaven is the *first*, Who on earth was the *last*, according to the words in Isaiah liii.: "We saw Him, and there was no comeliness; we desired Him, Who was despised and the last of men." (Vulg.) See what is there said. Next to Christ is the Blessed Virgin, who, after Christ, was the last among men. The Apostles follow, of whom Paul spake (1 Cor. iv. 9, 13): "For I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. . . . Being defamed, we in treat; we are made as the filth of the earth, and are the off scouring of all things unto this day." Thus concerning S. Martin the Church sings: "Martin is received with joy into Abraham's bosom. Martin, the poor and lowly, enters Heaven rich. He is honoured with celestial hymns." There was seen in Heaven by a certain holy man a lofty and glorious throne, and as he was wondering for whom it was designed, he heard the words, "This seat is kept for the lowly Francis."

means, we shall endure worse penury.” (So Wadding, in *Annal. Minorum*, A.C. 1212, num. 14.) Mark adds, that this *hundredfold* will be given *with persecutions* (x. 30). How this is I have there explained.

Tropologically. Cassian, in the place already cited, asserts that the joy of the converted in virtue is a hundred times as great as it was before in cupidity and vice; and he says, “If instead of the perturbation of anger and fury, you weigh the perpetual calmness of the mind; for the torment of anxiety and distraction, the quiet of security; for the fruitless and penal sadness of this world, the fruit of sorrow unto salvation; for the vanity of worldly joy, the richness of spiritual delight; you will perceive that the recompense of such an exchange is *a hundredfold*.”

Anagogically, S. Anthony, as S. Athanasius testifies in his *Life*, understands by *hundredfold* the kingdom of Heaven, in which there are a hundred times more good things than there are on earth. “He who hath left,” he said, “the dominion of the whole world shall receive a hundredfold better rewards in the kingdom above.” Instead of transitory things, those which are steadfast shall be given him; for worthless, things excellent, great things instead of small; heavenly for earthly; divine for human; things eternal for those of a moment.

And shall inherit, &c. Syriac, *shall possess in inheritance*. Arabic, *shall become the heir of eternal life*. This is the most ample inheritance, in which the blessed are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Therefore they shall possess not only earth and Heaven, and all things which in them are, but even God Himself; and every honour, all riches, all glory, all sweetness, all delights, all joys, and in short, all good things in God; and that, not as having the mere usufruct, but as heirs and masters, with perpetual inheritance, to endure for ever, so long as God shall be God. All this is involved and signified in the expression, *eternal life*. Moreover all who keep the commandments of God shall inherit this *eternal life*, as Christ hath said, ver. 17. They however shall possess it in a more full and glorious degree, who have united counsels to precepts. Whence in this place Christ promises and assigns it to such only. By this manner of speaking He tacitly intimates that it is a difficult thing to attain *eternal life* by the observance of precepts only, without keeping the counsels. For the one is hard without the other. It is difficult to keep all the commands of God, unless the counsels, especially that of poverty, be observed. For, as Christ says (ver. 23), it is difficult, and as it were impossible, for a rich man to be saved.

Verse 30. *But many that are first*, &c. Observe how appositely Christ subjoins these words to what He had previously said. For He Himself has through almost the whole of this chapter, opposed Himself and His grace and the counsels of the Gospels, to the Pharisees and the Old Law. Whence He here, by consequence, opposes its reward to His reward, as will be plain in the next chapter. But He has especial reference to what He had spoken immediately before concerning the *twelve judicial thrones*; concerning the *hundredfold*; concerning the *life eternal*. And He appears to answer a tacit objection of the Apostles. For they might have said within themselves, “How shall this be, that we who are vile, poor, ignorant, ignoble, should sit on twelve

Who hath left house: either because he has been despoiled of his house, and been driven into exile by a tyrant; or because he has voluntarily given up his house on account of the scandals and temptations which he hath found in it; or because he hath left his house and fled to a monastery, or church, in order to give himself up entirely to the service of God. I say the same thing concerning brethren, sisters, father, mother, wife, children; for when they are unbelieving and wicked, they make it their business to draw a believer away from faith and righteousness. Wherefore, if a wife draw away her husband from faith and piety, Christ advises the husband to be divorced from her; for it is better to desert a wife than to desert Christ. But voluntarily they leave the same who from zeal for the more perfect life, flee to the cloisters. This is the meaning of *for My name’s sake*; *i.e.*, for the sake of Me and My love and reverence, that they may better and more fully serve Me.

Shall receive (Gr. *ἐκατονταπλασίονα*) *a hundredfold*—*viz.*, of each that instead of one house which he has left for the sake of Christ he should receive a hundred, for one brother a hundred brethren, and so on. The Syriac is, *one in to a hundred*, *i.e.*, augmented a hundred per cent. Thus also the Egyptian, Arabic, Ethiopic and Persian, which generally agree among themselves, especially the Ethiopic with the Persian, and the Egyptian with the Arabic. *A hundredfold* here means *many times more*, as Luke has it. A definite number is put for an indefinite, in order that the vast magnitude of the compensation may be signified.

You will ask, what sort of a recompense is this which is promised to those who have left their possessions for Christ? 1. The Chiliasts or Millenarians by *a hundredfold* understand a thousand years, with which these saints after the General (*communis*) Resurrection* shall be delighted in this world, and shall enjoy all sorts of pleasures. But this is an error which I have confuted in Apoc. xx. And what Mark says is repugnant to this (x. 30), *Receive a hundred times as much now in this present time*. Hear S. Jerome, “By reason of this sentence, some introduce a thousand years after the Resurrection, and say, then there shall be restored to us a hundred times as many of all the things which we have forsaken; and also eternal life. They do not perceive if in other things the recompense were becoming, it would be something shameful in the matter of wives, that he who had forsaken one wife for the Lord’s sake, should receive a hundred wives in the time to come.”

2. S. Gregory (*Hom. 18 in Ezech.*) says, “He shall receive *a hundredfold*, because God shall take care that such a one shall rejoice far more in his poverty, or his renunciation of his goods for the love of Christ, than rich men rejoice in all their riches and advantages.” And this, these who give up their possessions for Christ’s sake do in very deed experience.

3. S. Jerome, Bede, and others, take *a hundredfold* to apply not to

temporal, but to spiritual goods, such as peace, joy, Divine consolations, and all other gifts and graces, with which God comforts them, and which He heaps upon them. These things surpass all earthly goods and joys, far more than a hundred exceeds unity. But because Mark particularly explains *a hundred times as many*, by adding, *houses, brethren, sisters, mothers, children, and lands*. Hence,

4. And more correctly, Origen, Theophylact, Euthymius, and Cassian explain *the hundredfold* thus, that the man who forsakes his possessions and friends for Christ's sake, shall find that Christ will take care that he has a hundred, *i.e.*, very many others, who will give him the love and help of brothers, wives and mothers, with far more exceeding sweetness and charity; so that it shall not seem that he has lost his own possessions, but has only laid them down, and in Christ's providence has multiplied them with great usury. For spiritual affections are sweeter than natural ones. Wherefore he who has left one home for Christ will find a hundred and more homes of pious people open and ready to receive him with love and gladness. Priests and those who flee from their homes on account of the persecution in Japan, England and Scotland know this by experience. They find the houses of all the faithful open to receive them to hospitality, and are frequently migrating from house to house. So too a religious, who has left one house of his father for Christ finds a hundred, not houses, but colleges and monasteries, very great and fair to receive him with maternal tenderness. So also he who has left one field for Christ will find a hundred fields of the worshippers of Christ by which he may be nourished, and that without labour, or toil, whereas he would have had to cultivate his own. In like manner for one brother forsaken, there will be very many Christians who will cherish him with fraternal love, and cleave to him more sweetly with spiritual attachment. For one sister, very many maidens will chastely love him, and attend to his wants like a brother. Instead of one father, very many elders will cherish him as a son. For one mother, very many matrons will supply his necessities with maternal care. For one wife, a hundred wives of others, united to him in chaste spiritual bonds will be ready by means of themselves and others to care for him in sickness, and attend to his wants just as lovingly as though they were his own wives. Lastly, instead of a single son or a daughter, innumerable children will revere him as a father, and hang upon his sound doctrine and counsels, from whom his mind will derive greater pleasure than he could from his own children. This is what S. Augustine says from Solomon (*epist.* 89, *quæst.* 4): "The whole world is the riches of the faithful." Cassian teaches the same thing (*Collat. ult. cap.* vii.). The Apostles had experience of this *hundredfold*, and so had the early Christians, in the fervour of the Primitive Church, concerning whom Paul says, "having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Also Luke, Acts iv. 32. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." And by and by, "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or Houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold. And laid them down at the Apostles' feet: and distribution was made to every man according as he had need." This is experienced even now by good religious. And even if at any time it falls out otherwise, and they are in want of anything for the body, then God supplies the corporeal deficiency, and compensates for it by abundance of spiritual gifts and joys.

There was a famous example of this in the philosopher Peregrinus, who pretended to be a Christian, and as such in a time of persecution offered himself to be put in prison, that he might enjoy the assistance and the money of Christians who succored him. Nor was he mistaken in his opinion. For the Christians vied with one another in helping him, and the impostor went back to his own country laden with gold, as Lucian relates, *in Peregrino*.

Lastly, S. Ambrose (*in Ps. cxix. lit. Cheth.*), by *a hundredfold*, understands God Himself, and consequently the whole world, which is God's property. For to such as leave all things for God's sake, God is father, mother, wife, brother, sister, and all things. "Because," says S. Ambrose, "he who has left all things begins to possess God, and He is, as it were, the perfect reward of virtues, which is reckoned not by the enumeration of *a hundredfold*, but by the estimation of perfect virtue." He adduces the example of the tribe of Levi, which—because, by the Lord's command, it had no portion of the land among the other tribes—the Lord Himself promised, and constantly confirmed it, that He would be its portion and inheritance. Whence he concludes with this golden sentence. "He who has God for his portion is the possessor of all nature. Instead of lands, he is sufficient to himself, having good fruit, which cannot perish. Instead of houses, it is enough for him that there is the habitation of God, and the temple of God, than which nothing can be more precious. For what is more precious than God? That is the portion which no earthly inheritance can equal. What is more magnificent than the celestial host? What more blessed than Divine possession?" And Cassian says: "Instead of that joy which any one had in the possession of a single field or house, he shall enjoy a hundredfold more the delight of riches, who passing into the adoption of the sons of God, shall possess as his own all things which belong to the Eternal Father, and in effect and virtue (following the example of His True Son) shall proclaim, 'All things that the Father hath are Mine;' and now no more with any penal care of distraction or anxiety, but secure and joyful he cometh, as it were, everywhere to his own, hearing daily what the Apostle preaches—'All things are yours, whether things present, or things to come.'" This, therefore, is the congruous and condign reward of poverty—that having nothing, nothing should be wanting to it, but that it should possess all things. S. Francis experienced this, and exhorted his brethren to it. "Dearest sons," he said, "great and unspeakable are the kindnesses of our God toward us, who thus turns the hearts of the faithful towards us His humble and worthless servants. From what we have received we daily hope for what we are to receive. Cast, therefore, your care upon the Lord, and He will nourish you on this mountain (*Alvernia*), Who sustained Elias in the wilderness, Antony and Paul in the desert. Know this of a surety, that there is no more secure refuge for the relief of our necessities than to have nothing. For if we be truly and evangelically poor, the world will have compassion upon us, and feed us abundantly. But if we are false to poverty, the world will forsake us; and if we ward off indigence by unlawful