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LUKE 14: 1-35

The Gospel of
Luke

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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.*

Luke's gospel is a compilation of various interviews with eye-witnesses and close followers of Jesus (Luke 1:1-4). The author, Luke, probably did not become a Christian until several years after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He is first mentioned (implicitly) in Acts 16:10 (Acts is another book of the New Testament which Luke wrote). He did not, therefore, meet Jesus in the flesh and he himself was not an eye-witness.

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.

Luke 14: 1-35

Douay Rheims Version

*Christ heals the dropsical man. The parable of the supper.
The necessity of renouncing all to follow Christ.*

1. And it came to pass, when Jesus went into the house of one of the Pharisees, on the sabbath day, that they watched him.
2. And behold, there was a certain man before him that had the dropsy.
3. And Jesus answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying: Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?
4. But they held their peace. But he taking him, healed him and sent him away.
5. And answering them, he said: Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit and will not immediately draw him out, on the sabbath day?
6. And they could not answer him to these things.

parents, friends, and possessions, thus making them enemies.

“But if he see that he has not strength enough for this, let him make conditions of peace with them, and bind himself by the gospel precepts only, leaving for others the counsels of poverty, obedience, and the preaching of salvation. For this is that which Christ would teach, as is clear from the following verse; hence he makes mention of two armies, two leaders, and two banners, one His own, and the other that of Lucifer. Wherefore the Apostles and their successors have need to bear in mind that they are engaged in actual warfare against the devil and his angels.” S. Cyril.

Ver. 33.—*So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, &c.* This is the post-parable, and sums up the teaching of the parable itself. “He who refuseth to give up all, in order that he may live a life of evangelical perfection, cannot be My disciple as the Apostles were.” And again, It would be better for him who is unwilling to give up all, when persecution or necessity demand it and will not submit to the loss of possessions, family, and even life itself for the gospel's sake, not to take My yoke upon him, rather than having begun to lead a Christian life, to fall away and apostatise from the faith. For such an one adds the sin of apostasy to that of unbelief, according to the Scripture: “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.” 2 S. Pet. ii. 21.

Christ here teaches us that to become a disciple is no child's play, but a work for men, needing great gifts of grace, and much strength of purpose and much vigour of mind.

The Christians of the first three centuries, particularly those of Rome, in time of persecution, cheerfully made sacrifice of their fortunes, their liberty and their lives, for the gospel's sake. “Few,” says Bede, “are wishing to leave all and give up earthly cares; but it is for every one who is faithful to renounce all, *i.e.* so to hold the things that are of the world, that he may not be held in the world.”

Hear also S. Gregory (*hom.* 36): I “would advise you to leave all, but I dare not. But if you are not able to give up all, be masters of your earthly possessions; let them not gain the mastery over you.”

Ver. 34.—*Salt is good, but if the salt have lost his savour, &c.* Salt is good as long as it retains its peculiar properties. So also ye who are my Apostles, as long as ye preserve your spiritual powers, will be useful to the world to season it with the salt of gospel faith and wisdom. But if ye lose your savour, ye will be good for nothing but to be despised and trodden under feet of men, for there is no one to season or correct you. Bede. See also Comment. on S. Matt. v. 13, and S. Mark ix. 50.

This parable applies not only to the Apostles, but in a measure to all Christians. For they ought, by the innocence of their lives and their good example, to season unbelievers who are, as it were, unsalted.

Ver. 35.—*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.* Let him hear and meditate on what I say and teach. Our Lord calls attention to the seriousness and the difficulty of the matter about which He has been teaching. See Comment. on S. Matt. xiii. 9-13.

“By the tower therefore we may understand the religious state, which is coupled to the contemplative life.

“1. Because as a tower overtops all other buildings, so does a life of religion excel all other vocations and callings.

“2. As a tower gives grace to a city, so is the religious life an ornament to the Church.

“3. As a tower is a look-out, to discover the movements of the enemy, so in the contemplative life we look forth on the wiles of our adversary, and on the good and evil laid up in futurity.

“4. As a tower is a protection to them that dwell therein, so is a life of religion a defence against the world, the flesh and the devil, and a safe storehouse for the fruits of good works. So it is written, Cant. iv. 4, ‘Thy neck is like the tower of David, . . . whereon hang a thousand bucklers,’ *i.e.* the bucklers of holy vows, holy examples, and holy observances.

“5. As every one ought to count the cost before he commences to build a tower, so a year is given a novice in order that he may make trial of his fitness for the religious life. For he whose heart is fixed on heaven looks down as from a lofty tower upon the world which lies beneath, and counts it worthless.”

So S. Chrysostom (*hom. 15 ad. Pop.*), says: “Just as to those who look back from the highest mountain tops, not only men and trees but even entire cities look small, and great armies seem to be creeping about like ants, so to those whose minds are uplifted by the constant contemplation of heavenly things, all human affairs, power, glory, riches, and the like, seem minute and worthless: unworthy of the greatness of the immortal soul.”

Hear also the lament of S. Gregory, when he was called from a religious order to be the Pope: “Seeking nothing, in this world, and fearing, nothing, I seemed to stand on a certain eminence, so that I thought that the promise of God, ‘I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth’ (Isa. lviii. 14), had well-nigh been fulfilled in me. For he rides upon the high places of the earth, who despises and treads under feet all that this world counts great and glorious. But suddenly cast down from this eminence, and plunged into the whirl of temptation, I have become a prey to terror and affright, for although I fear nothing for myself, I fear much for those committed to my charge” (*Lib. 1, epist. 5 and 6*).

Ver. 31.—*Or what king, going to make war against another king, &c.* By this, says Titus, we are given to understand that we have a war to wage against the hostile powers of Satan and that law which, reigning in our members, is continually the cause of inward perturbation and strife.

So also S. Cyril: “The ten thousand of him who is going to fight with the king who has double the number, signify the simplicity of the Christian about to contend with the subtlety of the devil.” And Theophylact: “The king is sin, and devils are his satellites, who, compared to us, are considered to have greater strength.”

But S. Gregory (*Hom. 37*) gives another interpretation. “The king that is about to come against us is Christ, who will come with a double army against a single one. For while we are scarcely prepared in deeds only, He will discomfit us at once, both in thought and deed. Let us send Him therefore an embassy; our tears, our works of mercy, and propitiatory victim.”

Ver. 32.—*Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, &c.* This verse gives completeness to the parable, but is not to be taken as the teaching of Christ, for we may not bargain with either the evil spirits or our vices; against these we must wage *ἀσπονδον πόλεμον*, an irreconcilable war.

This verse may however be interpreted in this way—“He that desires to follow me perfectly in poverty and in the preaching of the gospel, must make an entire surrender of self, and give up

7. And he spoke a parable also to them that were invited, marking how they chose the first seats at the table, saying to them:

8. When thou art invited to a wedding, sit not down in the first place, lest perhaps one more honourable than thou be invited by him:

9. And he that invited thee and him, come and say to thee: Give this man place. And then thou begin with shame to take the lowest place.

10. But when thou art invited, go, sit down in the lowest place; that when he who invited thee cometh, he may say to thee: Friend, go up higher.

Then shalt thou have glory before them that sit at table with thee.

11. Because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

12. And he said to him also that had invited him: When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends nor thy brethren nor thy kinsmen nor thy neighbours who are rich; lest perhaps they also invite thee again, and a recompense be made to thee.

13. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind.

14. And thou shalt be blessed, because they have not wherewith to make thee recompense: for recompense shall be made thee at the resurrection of the just.

15. When one of them that sat at table with him had heard these things, he said to him: Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

16. But he said to him: A certain man made a great supper and invited many.

17. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited, that they should come: for now all things are ready.

18. And they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him: I have bought a farm and I must needs go out and see it. I pray thee, hold me excused.

19. And another said: I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to try them. I pray thee, hold me excused.

20. And another said: I have married a wife; and therefore I cannot come.

21. And the servant returning, told these things to his lord. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant: Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city; and bring in hither the poor and the feeble and the blind and the lame.

22. And the servant said: Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded; and yet there is room.

23. And the Lord said to the servant: Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

24. But I say unto you that none of those men that were invited shall taste of my supper.

25. And there went great multitudes with him. And turning, he said to them:

26. If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

27. And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

28. For which of you, having a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it:

29. Lest, after he hath laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all that see it begin to mock him,

30. Saying: This man began to build and was not able to finish.

31. Or, what king, about to go to make war against another king, doth not first sit down and think whether he be able, with ten thousand, to meet him that, with twenty thousand, cometh against him?

32. Or else, while the other is yet afar off, sending an embassy, he desireth conditions of peace.

33. So likewise every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple.

34. Salt is good. But if the salt shall lose its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?

35. It is neither profitable for the land nor for the dunghill: but shall be cast out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Ver. 1.—*And it came to pass that He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees.* “To do them service,” says Titus, “Christ makes Himself their friend, and, as it were, one of their household,” for “although He knew the malice of the Pharisees, yet He became their guest that He might benefit by His words and miracles those who were present, and teach them the lawfulness of healing on the Sabbath, and the respective duties of entertainers and guests.”

Ver. 2.—*And behold there was a certain man before Him which had the dropsy.* This man seems to have been a friend of the Pharisee, who perhaps had invited Jesus in order that He might heal him. Certainly, as S. Cyril and Euthymius say, the suiterer presented himself of his own accord to Jesus, silently pleading that he might be restored to health. But the Pharisees sought His presence for another purpose, in order that they might see whether Christ would heal him on the Sabbath day, and thus show that He was not in truth a prophet sent by that God who had sanctified the rigid observance of the seventh day.

Ver. 3.—*And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees.* Answering their thoughts and not their inquiry, for they had asked no question, but thought in their hearts that Christ would be acting unlawfully if He healed on the Sabbath day.

Ver. 4.—*And He had took him, and touched him, and ley him go (ἐπιλαβόμενος,* “when he had ouched him.” apprehensum, Vulg.) He heals by His touch the dropsical man who, from fear of the Pharisees, did not ask to be healed on account of the Sabbath, but only stood up, that when Jesus beheld him He might have compassion on him and heal him. S. Cyril.

Mystically. S. Gregory (*lib. xiv. Moral.*) observes: “The sick of the dropsy is healed in the Pharisee’s presence, for by the bodily infirmity of the one is expressed the mental

effort and powerful call.”

Ver. 24.—*For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper,* because they made light of my invitation. So the Pharisees and the rulers of the Jews, given up to earthly enjoyments, are to be excluded from the heavenly feast because, called by Christ to accept the teaching of His gospel, they refused the invitation. “Because I have called and ye refused, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.” Prov. i. 24. Then shall they, too late, repent of their ingratitude and folly, and shall say, “What hath pride profited us, or what good hath riches with our vaunting brought us? For those things are passed away like a shadow.” Wisdom v. 8.

So far Christ had said all these things in the house of the Pharisee, whose invitation He had accepted, in order that He might instruct him and his friends. Let all those, therefore, who are followers of Christ, imitate His example, and not take part in any entertainment unless it be for the purpose of reaping spiritual fruit.

Ver. 26.—*If any man come to Me,* &c. That having left all (ver. 33) he may, with the Apostles and the seventy disciples, follow Me, the Master and Teacher of perfection.

All these things are of evangelical counsel, and not of precept although they may be said in a measure to extend to all Christians, inasmuch as they are bound to hate their parents, *i.e.* to give up the love of their friends and relations—even the love of life, if such love oppose itself to the law of Christ. Hence Maldonatus thinks this to be of precept; Jansenius, of counsel. But see S. Matt. x. 37.

Suarez (*lib. ii. De Concurs. Dom.*) says, “to hate” signifies the same as “to love less,” in which sense it is written, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” Rom. ix. 13.

Ver. 28.—*For which of you, intending to build a tower,* &c. By means of this parable Christ would teach us with what prudence we ought to test our bodily, and above all our spiritual strength, as well as such gifts of grace as we may possess, before we attempt to build the lofty tower of evangelical perfection, and declare war against ourselves our passions, our friends and the whole world; lest afterward, recoiling from so great an undertaking, we incur the loss of all our outlay, and also the reproach of having rashly commenced a building which we were unable to finish, and of having entered upon a war in which we were worsted.

“He counts the cost,” says the Gloss, “who perceives that money will have to be spent, *i.e.* that the heart must be weaned from corrupt desires, and the soul prepared for adversity.”

Symbolically. Salmeron (tom. vii. *tract* 24) says, “Christ puts forth two parables to teach the rulers of the Church that they must be skilled both in action and in contemplation, the one about building a tower, which is a symbol of contemplative life, for a tower commands an extensive prospect; the other, about engaging in war against a hostile king, which is significative of the active life.

“For those who are novices in the way of God, and are learning, as it were, the first elements of the perfect life, are called upon to battle with their enemies, and to fight against their vices and evil passions.

Let the blind come and say, "Lighten Thou mine eyes, that I sleep not in death."

These poor and miserable creatures teach us:

1. That none are to be despised, but that salvation in Christ is to be offered to all.
2. That it is easier for the poor to obey the gospel precepts, and therefore to be saved, than for the rich.
3. That we must despair of no one's salvation, however wretched, blind, or perverse he may be.

Ver. 22.—*And the servant said, Yet there is room.* The number of the elect is not yet complete. Heaven is not yet filled with those who are to obtain salvation. Learn to imitate the zeal of this servant who rejected no one, however blind, deformed, or maimed, but busied himself in summoning and saying more and more.

Ver. 23.—*And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the high-ways and hedges, &c.* Go forth, without the city-without Jerusalem, and beyond Judæa, and call the Gentiles to Christ.

Into the highways. "The partings of the highways" (S. Matt. xxii. 9), *i.e.* into the roads which lead to all nations and to the ends of the earth.

And hedges. The hamlets and villages, which were surrounded not by walls but by hedges. Hence we are taught that the Gospel is to be preached by the Apostles and their successors, even to savage and uncivilised nations; a duty which is recognised more and more by the followers of Christ.

Hence the servant does not say, as he added of the Jews in the 22nd verse, "it is done as thou hast commanded;" because the work is not yet finished among the Gentiles; it is being done more fully from day to day, to be completed at the end of the world. "The meaning of this verse," says Titus, "is, that after the Israelites had been gathered in, the people of the Gentiles were also to be called, *i.e.* men who, as being born and brought up in the country, in the highways and hedges without the city, were entirely uncivilised." Or, as Theophylact interprets it, "The Israelites were within the city, having received the law, and having been granted a more civilised lot in life; but the Gentiles were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, and without God in the world." (Eph. ii. 12.)

Compel them to come in. Many of the Gentile nations were wholly given up to idolatry and evil living. Hence they were to be compelled to salvation by the burning zeal and energy of the preacher, by miracles, even by the scourge and judgments of God sent upon them "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. ii. 4). For "our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." 1 Thess. i. 5.

"Therefore," says Suarez, "compel them to come in, either by afflicting them with labour and sorrows, or by converting them, as it were, miraculously, by a mighty

disease, *i.e.* the avarice and covetousness, of the other." "For," says Bede, "the dropsical man represents one who is weighed down by an overflowing stream of carnal pleasures." S. Augustine adds, "We, lightly compare one sick of the dropsy to a covetous rich man, who, the more he abounds in riches, the more ardently desires them. Avarice and covetousness, then, are very similar to the dropsy, and as this dire disease is best remedied by abstaining from drinking, so the remedy for unlawful desire is mortification, abstinence, and continence, all of which wither and drive out virtuous habits."

Ver. 5.—*And He answered them, saying, Which of you, &c.* "If," says Bede, "ye hasten on the Sabbath to pull an ox or an ass out of the pit into which he has fallen, consulting not the good of the animal, but your own avarice, how much more ought I to deliver a man who is much better than a beast?" He adds also, "they were not to violate the Sabbath by a work of covetousness, who were arguing that He did so by a work of charity." And again, in a mystical sense, the ox and the ass represent the wise and the foolish, or the Jew oppressed by the burden of the Law and the Gentile not subject to reason. For the Lord rescues from the pit of concupiscence all who are sunk therein."

S. Augustine also (*Lib. ii., Quæst. Evang.*) says, "He has aptly compared the dropsical man to an animal which has fallen into a ditch (for he is troubled by water), as He compared that woman whom He loosed, to a beast which is let loose to be led to water."

Ver. 6.—*And they could not answer Him again to these things.* Because they were convinced by the truth of His reasoning. Yet privately they murmured amongst themselves, and afterwards openly clamoured amongst the people. "This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day," S. John, ix. 16. Although Jesus knew this, He healed the man, and permitted their malice and obstinacy to gather force, so that the cross ordained for Him by God might be prepared for the salvation of men. "Caring nought," says Theophylact, "for the offence given to the Pharisees" For when a great good is the result, we must not care if the foolish are offended.

Ver. 7.—*And He put forth a parable to those which were bidden, i.e.* He taught, under the similitude of a man seeking the highest place at a feast, that we must beware of every kind of ambition. For sin continues to be sin, although the manner of sinning be changed.

"*When He marked how they chose out the chief rooms.*" For as teachers of the Law, they considered themselves entitled to the highest honour, and fought for precedence as eagerly as now-a-days ladies of rank and men of small brains.

This is a kind of introduction to the parable, and indicates the occasion on which it was spoken, and the persons against whom it was directed.

Ver. 8.—*When thou art bidden . . . sit not down in the highest room.* For when the master of the house takes your place from you to give it to a more honourable guest, those who sit next in order will not give way to your ambition, and you will begin with shame to go down from the highest to the lowest room. Do not unduly exalt thyself, lest some one, offended by thy insolence, humble it and lay it low.

Ver. 10.—*Go and sit down in the lowest room.* The master of the house usually assigned to each guest his place at the table, a duty formerly discharged by the “ruler of the feast,” regard being had to each one’s age and social standing. Thus Joseph’s brethren “sat before him, the first-born according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth” Gen. xliii. 33. In this verse, Christ makes evident allusion to the saying of Solomon, “Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king,” &c. (Prov. xxv. 6, 7). Titus very justly remarks, that “a wise man, however deserving he may be of the highest place, so little affects it, as to give it up to others of his own accord. Wherefore a mind modest and content with its own lot is a great and a glorious gift.”

Then shalt thou have worship. Christ teaches that if we would acquire glory and greatness, we must fly from them and be humble; for men hate the proud and seek to humiliate them, but make much of the modest and meek; the true glory is that which is given, not that which is sought: furthermore, God has decreed by an eternal law that the humble should be exalted, but that the mighty should be put down from their seat. Wherefore, the proud, if they are wise, will humble themselves, that they may have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with them. Knowing that if they seek the most honourable places, they will excite envy, and men will strive, whether rightly or wrongly, to humiliate them.

Hear what the wise man says, “The greater thou art, the more humble thyself, and thou shalt find favour before the Lord.” (Ecclus. iii. 20.)

This precept of Christ, or rather this wise dogma, was recognised and taught by the Gentile philosophers. So Plutarch introduces Thales thus sharply rebuking the pride of Alexidemus, who, because he was the son of Thrasybulus had rushed from the banqueting hall at seeing others seated above him: “Fearest thou lest thy place at table shall bring thee glory or obscurity after the manner of the stars, which, as the Egyptians say, wax and wane according to the places wherein they rise or set? Thou art not so wise as the man, who, when the leader assigned him the lowest place in a chorus, said, Thou hast done well in having discovered a means of making even a position such as this honourable. For he was of opinion that a man is not distinguished by his position, but rather the position by the man.”

Honour, like the shadow cast by the body, follows him that flee from it, but flees from him that follows it.

“The piece of ground which was bought denotes government. Therefore pride is the first vice reprov'd.

“The five yoke of oxen are taken to be the five senses, by means of which earthly things are pursued. For the oxen till the ground; but men at a distance from faith, given up to earthly things, are occupied with carnal matters.

“Love not the world, therefore, neither the things that are in the world,’ for ‘the world passeth away, and the lust thereof’ 1 S. John ii. 15, 17. Away then with wicked and vain excuses, and let us come to the supper wherewith we may be inwardly nourished. Let not the lifting up of pride hinder us, neither let lawless curiosity fright us, and turn us away from God. Let not the pleasures of the flesh keep us from the pleasure of the heart. Let us come and be filled.”

Ver. 21.—*So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things, &c.* We are here taught that Christ chose the outcasts and poor in place of the Priests and Pharisees who had made light of His gospel. According to that which is written, “The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.” S. Matt. xxi. 31. And again, “Many that are first shall be last: and the last shall be first.” S. Matt. xix 30.

For albeit that Christ preached from the commencement of His ministry both to the Pharisees and to the multitude, yet the Pharisees, as of higher rank, were the first invited; to preserve the unity of the parable; and also because Christ would have the scribes first, by reason of their position, acknowledge Him, and then be His witnesses amongst the people. But the contrary came to pass. “They,” says Euthymius, “who refused to acknowledge Him, were the chief Priests and rulers of the people, and these, who were chosen in their stead, were the humble and the outcasts of the nation.” For of a truth “God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” 1 Cor. i. 27.

Symbolically. S. Augustine says (*serm. 34 De Verb. Dom.*): Who were those that came, but the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind? Those who absented themselves were those who thought themselves rich, and robust; who, as it were, could walk well, and see clearly, the hopelessness of whose state was proportionate to their pride.

Let the beggars come to the feast at the invitation of Him who made Himself poor that we might become rich.

Let the weak come, for the physician has no need of those that are whole, but of those that are sick.

Let the lame come and say, “Order my steps in Thy word.”

Gregory (*Hom. 36 in Evang.*), “offers what ought to have been asked. Unasked, He is ready to give, what we could scarcely dare hope for. He announces that the delights of the eternal feast are ready, and with one consent they make excuse.” “They say, I pray thee, and then disdain to come. The word sounds of humility, but the action is pride.” S. Bernard rightly calls men who seek wealth, pleasure, honour and the like, lunatics. “I once” says he, “saw five men: why should I not look on them as lunatics? For the first, with swollen cheeks, was chewing the sand of the sea-shore. The second, standing by a lake of sulphur, was endeavouring to inhale the foul and noxious vapour which arose therefrom. The third, leaning over a blazing furnace, was enjoying the burning sparks which he received within his gaping jaws. The fourth, seated on a pinnacle of a temple, was drawing in with open mouth the light breezes, and if they seemed to flow less freely he fanned himself, as if in hope of inhaling the whole atmosphere. The fifth, standing aside, was laughing at the others, although himself the most deserving of ridicule, for he was busily engaged in sucking his own flesh, applying now his hands, now his arms, now one part of his body, now another to his mouth.” By these figures S. Bernard pictures the various kinds of sin. The first represents the greedy, the second the lustful, the third those prone to anger, the fourth the ambitious, and the fifth those who boast themselves over much of their possessions and are self-satisfied, who are never content, but ever thirsting for the good things of this world.

Ver. 19.—*And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them, &c.* Another kind of avarice is here described, viz, the desire of possessing oxen, and animals for tillage, or food, or some other purpose; for the riches of the patriarchs lay in their herds. So think Theophylact and Titus. S. Gregory, however (*Hom. 36*), says, “What are we to understand by the five yoke of oxen but the five senses? which are rightly called yokes, because they are double in the two sexes.”

Ver. 20.—*And another said, I have married a wife, &c.* What, asks S. Gregory, are we to understand by a wife but carnal gratifications? The Pharisees, like many at the present time, were ensnared by avarice and luxury. These are the thorns which choke the word of God. S. Luke viii. 14.

Let us all then give heed to the warning of S. Paul, and remember that “the fashion of this world passeth away” (1 Cor vii. 31). “For the ‘res temporalis’ consists in possession, and ‘res eterna’ in expectation,” S. Gregory (*Hom. 36*). Not that marriage is censured here (save so far as it interferes with the work of salvation), says S. Ambrose, but purity is held up to greater honour, for “the love of the things of this world is a fetter to (viscus est) the wings of the spirit.” Gloss.

In carnal things, desire begets satiety, and satiety disgust; but in spiritual things, satiety provokes desire. S. Gregory.

S. Augustine (*serm. 33, De Verb. Domini*) explains and applies somewhat differently the excuses of the invited guests:

Symbolically. Members of religious orders, according to the words of Christ, “sit down in the lowest room.” For they who have kept nothing, but given up all, even their very will, have no lower place to which they can betake themselves. Here they are at rest, for their humility is not limited, like that of other men, to this or that action, but is life-long; for it is a part of their profession which embraces their whole life.

Ver. 11.—*For whosoever exalleth himself shall be abased, &c.*, both by God and man, often in this life, always in the life to come. This verse explains the meaning and scope of the parable. See S. Matt. xxiii. 12.

Ver. 12.—*Then said He also unto him that bade Him, i.e.* to the chief Pharisee mentioned in the first verse, whose hospitality Christ recompensed by the spiritual banquet of ghostly counsel and advice. This man, says the Gloss, seems to have invited his guests in order that he in turn might be entertained by them.

“Call not thy friends.” Christ counselled this as the more perfect way. He did not command it as of necessity. For it is lawful, nay, meritorious, for us to invite our friends, if it be done out of friendship and kindness. Whence Bede says, “Brethren then, and friends, and the rich are not forbidden, as though it were a crime, to entertain one another, but this, like all the other necessary intercourse among men, is shown to fail in meriting the reward of ever lasting life,” unless, as I have said, such entertainment springs from a higher motive of brotherly love or charity.

“Lest they also bid thee again.” Like worldly men are wont to do from gratitude or else avarice, for “to be hospitable to those who will make a return, is,” says S. Ambrose, “but a form of avarice.”

“And a recompence be made thee” by man, and this prove worthless and transient. If you regard this alone, you exclude the spiritual recompense from God and deprive yourself of it; if you look for both you will receive both, but both lessened, for the one lessens and as it were interferes with the other; but if you regard the divine alone, and only admit or rather bear with the human recompence because it is offered you, you will receive the divine whole and undiminished.

Ver. 13.—*But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.* “The maimed,” ἀναπήζους, the cripple, the mutilated, i.e. those wanting in body or mind. S. Chrysostom assigns the reason. “If ye invite the poor, God will be your debtor. For the humbler the brother is, so much the more does Christ come through him and visit us. For he who entertains a great man does it often from an interested motive or from vainglory. But thou sayest, the poor man is unclean and filthy. Wash him and make him sit with thee at table. If he has dirty garments, give him clean ones. If thou will not receive him in a quiet chamber, at least admit

him where thy servants are. If thou art not willing that he should sit at meat with thee, send him a dish from thy table.”

Following this counsel, S. Gregory had often twelve beggars at his table, and therefore was rewarded by receiving Christ. Himself in the guise of a poor man. S. Louis of France also, not content with entertaining 120 beggars at his table daily, and on feast days 200, frequently waited upon them himself, and even washed their feet. In like manner acted S. Louis the Minorite, Bishop of Toulouse, following the example of his uncle S. Louis; S. Hedwig, Duchess of Poland, and her niece S. Elizabeth, the daughter of Andrew king of Hungary, who fed 900 poor every day, receiving a rich reward in divine favour and grace.

Mystically. Origen says, “He who shuns vainglory calls to a spiritual banquet the poor, that is, the ignorant, that he may enrich them; the weak, that is, those with offended consciences, that he may heal them; the lame, that is, those who have wandered from reason, that he may make their paths straight; the blind, that they may discern the truth.”

Ver. 14.—*And thou shalt be blessed*, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just, when, says the Interlinear, the entertainers of the poor will enter into blessedness.

The neediness of the guests purifies the intention of the host, who expects no return from them, but acts solely out of love to God. Wherefore God, who considers that what is done to the poor is done unto Him, will grant him a bounteous reward, even the everlasting delights of the heavenly banquet, according to the promise, “and I appoint unto you . . . that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.” S. Luke xxii. 29. Hence S. Chrysostom says, “Let us be troubled not when we receive no return of a kindness, but when we do; for if we have received it, we shall receive nothing more; but if man does not repay us, God, out of love for whom we have acted, will be our recompense.”

Ver. 15.—*Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God; i.e.*, in the resurrection of the just, of which Christ had made mention in the preceding verse. S. Cyril in the *Catena*, says, “This man was carnal, for he thought the reward of the saints was to be bodily.” He must therefore have been one of the Pharisees, for they believe in the resurrection, which the Sadducees deny. Acts xxiii. 8. For in heaven God feeds, satisfies, and fills (inebriat) the blessed with all delights. So the Psalmist: “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.” Ps. xvii. 15. And again, “They shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of Thy house, and Thou shalt give them drink of Thy pleasures as out of the river.” Ps. xxxvi. 8. This joy S. Augustine describes at length in his Soliloquies and Meditations.

Mystically. “He was sighing for something which was afar off, and the bread itself was lying before him. For who is that Bread of the kingdom of God but He who says, I am the living bread which came down from heaven.” S. John vi 51.

Ver. 16.—*Then He said unto him, A certain man made a great supper.* This parable is very similar to that recorded by S. Matthew. See commentary on S. Matt. xxii. 2.

But you will ask, What was this supper? 1. Some understand by it, the incarnation of the Word of God, the preaching of His Gospel, and the redemption wrought by Him. For this is the great supper to which Christ, when He became incarnate, invited us. S. Matthew calls it a dinner. It is a dinner as regards the Church Militant; a supper with respect to the Church Triumphant. In this sense Leonidas addressed his comrades before the battle. “Let us dine, fellow-soldiers, for we shall sup in the nether (or rather the upper) world.” For the Church Militant here on earth is striving eagerly to attain the Church Triumphant in Heaven.

2. S. Cyril, in the *Catena*, understands the Eucharist by the supper. “The man,” he says, “is God the Father, who has prepared for us a great supper in Christ, for He has given us His own body to eat. Whence the Church makes choice of this parable for the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament.”

3. But in its literal sense, the supper is the happiness and glory of heaven. It is called a supper, because it will be given in the evening, *i.e.* at the end of the world, when life and its troubles are over: because, also, it will be our only and everlasting refreshment.

The great supper, says S. Gregory (*Hom.* 36), is the full enjoyment of eternal sweetness; for after it no guest is cast out.

A great. For nothing greater than it can be imagined, since God Himself will be our food and feast. Hence, Euthymius says, “Hereby is signified the unspeakable fruition of God, who will fulfill the utmost expectations of the blessed. For ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.’” 1 Cor. ii. 9.

And bade many: *e.g.*, the whole nation of the Jews, who were the Church and the chosen people of God, and specially their rulers, who were bidden to “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” S. Matt. iii 2.

Ver. 17.—*And sent his servants, &c., i.e.*, sent the Apostles after the resurrection to say that all things were ready for the heavenly feast.

Ver. 18.—*And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, &c.* The Scribes and Pharisees, and the chief Priests are here clearly indicated; for they, invited by Christ to the Gospel feast, made light of it, because they were so intent on their farms, *i.e.* their worldly possessions, that they had neither time nor inclination to think about the salvation of their souls. “God,” says S.