

Gaudete et Exsultate*
("Be Glad and Rejoice ...")
[November 1, 1453; preached in Brixen]¹

[1] "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in Heaven" (Matthew 5).²

The Gospel-[text]³ is the Lord's Sermon-on-the-Mount that was delivered to His disciples separately [from the multitude]. [2] "Jesus, [as we read,] seeing the multitudes ..." As a man He saw the multitudes; i.e., He saw a collection of men. But as God He saw individual members of the multitude at once, and He saw the hearts of each one. And as a man He who as God was everywhere ascended the Mount. And when He sat down when teaching as a teacher, His disciples drew near to Him in order to be closer to His word. This was the reason for the incarnation of the Word: [viz.,] so that He could be approached and heard. And opening His mouth as a man, He taught them as a teacher, uttering, in particular, human words in which the power of the word of God was present. Now, He uttered those words—located throughout three chapters in Matthew's Gospel⁵—which describe a man who is perfect in moral conduct. Hence, He concludes His sermon [by saying]: "Whoever hears these words of mine and does [according to] them, him will I liken unto a wise man ..." etc. (Matthew 7).⁶

[3] And we must consider that the Word of God creates wisdom in the souls capable [of receiving it], for He is Wisdom. Now, Wisdom is the Power of Omnipotent Reason. For all things are present in Eternal Reason as in their Cause; and as they are present there, they cannot be comprehended, although they can be seen from afar. Hence, that Infinite Reason, which enfolds all things, is the Light that shines in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.⁷ For it is incomprehensible by darkness. All philosophers-who-want-to-know sought this Light (which is the Formal Cause (*ratio*) of things), because to know is but to apprehend a thing in its Cause (*causa*). This Cause is not contingent but is necessary; moreover, it is not [simply] universal but, rather, is so universal that it is most particular. And it is only God, who is the Word, etc.

[4] And note that God created the earth, and the capability in it, in order that by His Word He could make man from it. He breathed into man a spirit, and in this spirit of life He created a capability for wis-

dom. Hence, the Wisdom of God created the soul of man in such a way that the soul is like a suitable tablet wherein Wisdom could form a likeness of its own Reason, in conformity with which it created. Therefore, in man's spirit is created a wisdom that is like Eternal Wisdom, even as from earth there is created a man similar to Wisdom's conception [of man]. [The situation is] as if a painter, in accordance with his conception, were to paint a man and then were to impart to this same man the art of painting. Or, again, [the situation is as] if a father who is a painter were to beget in accordance only with his own design a son from a mother (even as a painter in accordance only with his own design paints from colors) and thereafter were to breathe into him a certain power that was capable of receiving his art and thereafter were to form in that spirit, which was capable of art, a likeness of his own art.

[5] And, likewise, preaching or teaching has a similarity to creating: when God creates, He calls unto Himself all things, but they approach Him in different ways. By comparison, when I call all men unto me by means of a single word, viz., "Come!," then my singular-calling summons all in equal measure. But since those whom I summon are many, one [of them] cannot occupy the same spot as another, but each one [comes] in the order that is his. Similarly, Paul says that in the resurrection the dead are called to life with a single summons; but each one arises in his own order.⁸ A similar example [is that] of the sound of the trumpet in the army: The one sound of the trumpet is heard by all [the soldiers]. But at this sound of the trumpet one [soldier] sets out to ready the horses; another [soldier sets out] to collect his gear; another, to load the chariots; another, to gird on his weapons, ..., etc. In a similar way, Wisdom, by means of a single word, summons unto itself all souls in order that they may be filled by His riches. But each soul comes in its own order. [There is] one teacher, [but there are] many students. A plurality [of things] is not without otherness. Accordingly, students come to their teacher in different ways; and their souls come by different pathways unto Wisdom.

[6] Now, the spirit that was breathed into the body by the Creator was not from the earth but was from the Creator only and from no material. In a similar manner faith is created initially in the soul by the grace of God from no pre-existing thing. (For faith does not presuppose anything except the authority of the one from whom it comes.) Thereafter, the believing soul is fit for receiving wisdom, etc. And note that the inner man⁹ has as its abode the spirit-of-life, which is capable

of faith and of wisdom—just as the outer man has earth as its material and just as the body's sensible soul is capable of receiving that spirit-of-rational-life. [I do] not [mean] that the sensible soul is the material from which the rational spirit is created; rather, it serves as a place capable of receiving the rational spirit. Likewise, the spirit-of-life serves as a place capable of receiving faith; and faith is the ground of wisdom. Wisdom presupposes faith. As Isaias says: "Unless you believe, you will not understand."¹⁰ [7] The spirit-of-life is free, and faith is created in it with the spirit's freedom being preserved. For a soul is not made to be believing unless it wills to be. It is capable of receiving faith; but it is not constrained to receive it, as clay is constrained to receive the form that the potter wishes [it to have]. Hence, it is necessary that the soul, which cannot be compelled, be summoned and guided. Thus, the Word was made flesh in order to be able to be approached and to be heard and in order for men to be led from the darkness of ignorance to faith. And the manner of drawing [men] to faith is [the following]: to work miracles—those things which are above man—in the sight of man. Hence, Christ worked in this way so that He could implant wisdom after faith had been received.

[8] Now, [Christ] said: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*"¹¹ Consider how it is that Christ begins to speak of that spirit which is capable of receiving the Kingdom of Heaven. For the Kingdom of Heaven is nothing but wisdom itself. Through wisdom all kings rule. Therefore, to have wisdom is to have supremacy over all kingdoms. Now, the Kingdom of Heaven is the supreme kingdom; for higher things rule over lower things. All the visible things of this present world are subordinate to celestial influence; and they are moved in accordance with the movement of that celestial kingdom, even as in accordance with the movement of the sensible soul's desire all of the soul's corporeal and visible members are moved. [9] But that spirit which is to be a possessor of wisdom must be poor; for unless it is poor and beggarly, it is not capable of receiving that gift. For example, it is necessary that the eye, which is supposed to possess the kingdom of things visible, be altogether impoverished and have nothing of all visible things; otherwise, it cannot freely make judgments as regards everything visible. Likewise, the intellect is poor in order to be rich, for it must possess none of the things intelligible, so that it can arrive at the kingdom of wisdom. Accordingly, that spirit which abides in earthly and carnal affections and in earthly and carnal delights is not capable of attaining wisdom, because it has

not yet rid itself of all that it possesses. Such [an undivested spirit] cannot be a disciple of Christ, who is the Wisdom of God.¹² And take note of the coincidence of poverty and riches. For the poorer the spirit is, the more capable it is of attaining wisdom and the happier it is; [and] the happier it is, the richer it is. Poverty of spirit coincides with riches.

[10] And take note, [furthermore, of the following]: unless the spirit altogether divests itself even of worldly knowledge, it is not capable of attaining wisdom. For one who is wise must become foolish in order to be wise.¹³ He becomes foolish when he despises all that which the world judges to be wisdom. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.¹⁴ But when someone wants to be wise in the sight of God, he must abandon the wisdom of this world. Now, the children of this world are wiser in their generation than are the children of light.¹⁵ Hence, he who leaves behind this worldly wisdom is regarded as foolish, even as all the martyrs, who despised this worldly wisdom of living in sins, were regarded as foolish.

[11] There follows in the Gospel: “*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*”¹⁶ Note that Christ calls them all blessed. His words, then, must be understood in accordance with this [rubric]. For to possess the Kingdom of Heaven is the reward of him who chooses poverty, just as he who humbles himself will be exalted.¹⁷ Exaltation coincides with humility; the Kingdom of Heaven coincides with poverty.¹⁸ And if someone is poor in spirit and is meek, then together with the earth, which he inherits, he obtains also the Kingdom of Heaven. For riches can flow to us without our setting our heart on them. Thus, we still remain poor in spirit while inheriting the earth. Hence, properly speaking, someone is not meek unless he is poor in spirit. For, otherwise, how would someone meek be blessed, as someone poor in spirit is blessed? Therefore, he is not meek who does not yet have poverty of spirit. As long as in his spirit there is such aggression that he does not want to believe but wants to pursue the movement of anger and spite, and as long as he does not know how to overcome evil with good, he is not poor [in spirit]. But the meek are those who inherit the earth, because they do not hurl words and are not disturbed by words but restrain themselves, etc. Moreover, it is generally thought that the meek lose all their possessions, as if they were careless; but Christ teaches us [about] a coinciding: [viz.,] that to be meek is to inherit.

[12] “*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comfort-*

ed."¹⁹ One who is poor in spirit is meek. And because he who is meek overcomes evil with good, there is mourning amid this triumph. Christ strengthens us, [telling us] that we ought not to be withdrawn on account of mourning, because the reward amid mourning is comfort. For when we mourn, we wash away sadness, and comfort ensues. Mourning is a medication of the aggrieved soul: it purges of things grievous and unnatural. And after the soul is purged, it begins to hunger and to thirst for its food, viz., for justice, just as after the body has been evacuated and purged, it recovers its appetite. And so, consider the fact that mourning ought to be so intense that it purges to the point of inducing hunger. For as long as hunger for justice and thirst for justice do not ensue after mourning, the purifying does not suffice. Therefore, one must repeat this purifying as many times as it takes for this sign [viz., hungering and thirsting for justice] to appear.

[13] There follows [in the Sermon on the Mount]: "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.*"²⁰ Note that justice, which coincides with wisdom, is the nourishment of the healthy soul. Wisdom orders all things and places one thing *above*, another *below*, and gives to each his own;²¹ and so wisdom is justice. For wisdom judges all things; and judgment proceeds from justice, which is also wisdom. Therefore, to hunger for justice is to savor wisdom. For to hunger after obedience and after compliance with God's commandments, etc., and to do all that God commands, is to hunger after justice. And in this hunger there shines forth wisdom, without which there would not be such hungering. A soul that has not been purified hungers only for injustice, viz., for alien goods; and it desires those things which *just reason* forbids, as does the corrupt appetite of one who is sick. However, a purified soul hungers for those things which just reason dictates; and so, it hungers for justice, which is the light of reason-that-is-just.

[14] Take notice of the fact that the Kingdom of Heaven and the inheritance of the earth and the being filled, and the other [rewards] that follow [in the Sermon] express an unnameable happiness by means of a likeness that can be grasped. Yet, the blessed state of feeling full will not be had unless a state of hunger precedes it; otherwise, it would not be pleasant to be filled with food but would be loathsome. Nor would the delight be complete unless [the food] were your due. For he-who-hungers craves food that is suitable for himself and that is in his power [to obtain]. And this food will be given to him if, being a

just man, he hungers justly. Thereupon, justice dictates that this [suitable food] be given to him—as Christ teaches us that a father does not give a scorpion to his hungry son who is asking for bread but, rather, provides suitable and right food.²² And the right food for the intellectual soul is wisdom, which is justice. [15] Be aware that the food that is ours feeds us more agreeably because we obtain it by right, not by grace. (As we say: ‘Fire, although small, quite properly heats and is worth gold.’) And this food is called a reward because justice is that which can satisfy us with the food of utmost happiness. But if the food were not owed to us, because we did not earn the having of it, it would not be for us a very succulent food that would accord with our free nature but would be, instead, the food of servants (who possess nothing by right but who are possessed) rather than the food of sons (who are heirs by right). However, take note of the coinciding of justice and of grace. For the Kingdom of Heaven is a grace with which justice coincides, because it is a gift, and a gift is from grace. But since [that Kingdom] is a food that makes one happy and that contains the satisfaction of desires, it is not *just* that it be given to those who do not desire it and do not hunger for it. Therefore, those who hunger after justice deserve to obtain the gift of being filled satisfyingly. Consider this point carefully.

[16] But no one who is not merciful can hunger after justice, for hunger for justice is a sign that mercy is present. Justice is as bread in which there is moistness, without which the bread does not nourish. The moistness is mercy. The severity of justice does not nourish, but justice tempered with mercy does. Therefore, justice coincides with mercy, or grace.

Hence, there follows [in the Sermon on the Mount]: “*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*”²³ Justice requires that you do to another that which you would want done to you.²⁴ But there is no one who does not wish to be shown compassion and mercy. For those who mourn seek thereby to be shown mercy. If, then, after having been purified through mourning, one hungers for justice: whether the hunger is true hunger is proved by mercy. For it sometimes happens that hunger and appetite return to those feverish ones who have been purged—[returns] as if they were well, but they are not. And the instability of their appetite shows that the appetite does not result from health but from sickness. Hunger for justice is proved in the following way: If the sweetness of mercy comes to be present, so that where previously you were miserly but now you are generous in almsgiving and

so that you rejoice in being able to display works of mercy in order to be justified, then the appetite results from healthiness. But if you hunger for justice and to be justified but do not have compassion on the wretched but have your earlier inflexible and hard heart, then the hunger does not result from healthiness but, rather, you hunger unstably for justice, and your appetite will not continue on; instead, it will be marred from your uncleanness of heart, and your illness will recur.

[17] Hence, in order that [the illness] not be feared to be going to return, the heart must be clean. And so, there follows [in the Sermon on the Mount]: “*Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.*”²⁵ They have a clean heart who hunger and thirst after justice. A sign of this [hunger and thirst] is that they are merciful. And then there is a sign that they are wholly²⁶ healthy—[a sign] in the eye of their mind, whose gaze is directed only toward that for which there is hunger, viz., toward Justice, which is God. And for this reason they shall see God. And consider the following: that to see God is to obtain mercy and to be filled and to inherit the earth and to attain the Kingdom of Heaven. Keep in mind that God is not visible to the outer eyes, which are capable of seeing only corporeal and temporal objects. Rather, [He is visible] to the eye of the heart, and this eye is the intellect. And He is visible to the eye of the intellect only in accordance with the condition of [this] world—i.e., only symbolically.²⁷ However, in the next world, which is the world of truth, God is seen in accordance with the condition of that world, viz., in truth. This present world is not present in truth but is present in an image. The Apostle says: “The fashion of this world passes away.”²⁸ Hence, truth can be seen only in a figure and in an image. But because truth is present in the next world, where the figure passes away, Christ says that those there, who will have a clean heart, shall see God. Now, He uses the word “God”; and God is Truth; and He says “they shall see ...,” etc. Therefore, those who have departed from this world and who did not beforehand have a clean heart shall not see God. Hence, it is necessary to have a clean heart here, so that there God can be seen.

[18] And keep in mind that Purgatory does not purify the heart or mind that is turned away from God and turned toward creatures; rather, [it purifies only the heart] that is turned toward God but that is not yet completely pure, etc. And, for this reason, mourning is a more effective purifier than is the fire of Purgatory, because it purges the mind of all disease and blindness. Such is not the case with

Purgatory; rather, Purgatory only clears up sight. Now, he who sees God [will] thereupon have peace. Hence, there is added [in the Sermon on the Mount]:

[19] *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”*²⁹ For he who has arrived at cleanness of heart is a peacemaker; and this is a sign that his heart is clean, [viz.,] that he is a peacemaker. For if he does not take offence: not only does he not take offence at the fact of whatsoever injuries’ being inflicted upon him, but he even wishes every good on his enemies and on those who are harming him. Such a man has no stain in his heart but, instead, is of pure heart, from which only godly things can go forth. He has God ever before his eyes, and he does not judge himself to be harmed but judges that all things result in good for him³⁰ and that gracious deeds are to be done to those-who-harm-him, who are trying him, so that as someone tried and found to be peaceable he may be made more like God, who does not withhold even from those who are evil that which He has granted to be done from heaven by the sun and the rain for the life of those who are good. Therefore, in the future age they will obtain sonship with God, i.e., with the King of peace, and they will obtain this new name [of “sons of God”]. For since the sons of Satan take their name from Satan, who is the prince of divisiveness, (for [these sons] are thieves, robbers, hateful, envious, angry, etc., which [conditions] are sins that exclude one from peace), so too the sons of the Prince of peace,³¹ (who is God) will be called sons of God.³² For God is Absolute Peace. Hence, [believers] are God’s sons and heirs and will possess the inheritance of peace, which is eternal rest. But one who is peaceable is tested amid adversity. Hence, [Christ] adds [in the Sermon on the Mount]:

[20] *“Blessed are they who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”*³³ Note that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who, having been tested by persecution, have been found to be peaceable. When Christ was mistreated, He opened not His mouth,³⁴ because He was peaceable. But He says that peace-making is tested by ‘persecution for justice’s sake.’ For he who suffers willingly and readily all persecution in order that God, who is Justice, may be glorified—he is a son of God and an heir to the Kingdom. Hence, these are the ones who are poor in spirit, whose is the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, all these [sufferings] are required for poverty of spirit; and so, the poverty is only poverty of spirit. Indeed, this pover-

ty of spirit cannot be true poverty unless in it is found each of the things that are expressed serially by the Savior and the Teacher of truth. The Teacher adds the reason that these things are so:

[21] Blessed are you disciples “*when men shall revile you and shall persecute you and, though lying, shall speak all [manner of] evil against you for my sake.*”³⁵ It is as if He were to say: ‘if the poor in spirit are blessed, then you are blessed when you suffer persecution.’ For suffering for justice’s sake amid persecution is the utmost sign of poverty of spirit. For by seven trials one is tried, as gold is tried in seven ways [in order to determine] whether it is true gold; and if it holds up under the seventh test, then its authenticity has been proved. Poverty of spirit is gold and is tried by seven temptations and fires; and the last trial is persecution, by which martyrs, having been tested, are found to be true paupers in spirit. Hence, Christ speaks of the manner of persecution: first, when [believers] are reviled; secondly, when they shall be persecuted from city to city; and, thirdly, when men, who are lying, shall say all [manner of] evil against them and [shall do] this on account of me, who am Justice, etc. Note [the following]: those who suffer persecution by revilings, by defamation, or otherwise: if they suffer these things for the sake of truth and justice (because Christ is Truth and Justice), and if those who speak evils are lying, then those who suffer are blessed. Note that [Christ] says: “Blessed are you.” By the fact that someone suffers persecution he is blessed, with respect to God.

[22] [Christ] concludes: “*Be glad, therefore, and rejoice, for your reward is very great in Heaven.*”³⁶ Note that [Christ] says that one is to be glad, and to rejoice amid persecution and tribulation—even as the Apostles, being glad, departed from the judgment hall, where they were condemned to death for the truth’s sake, being glad because they were counted worthy to suffer reproach for the sake of Christ,³⁷ who is Truth. Therefore, the greater the joy amid persecution, the greater the reward. For the reward begins in this life, i.e., with this present joy; and it is continued in eternity. If there is joy in death, then there can never be sorrow. For nothing is more frightful than is death, and [nothing is] more removed from gladness [than is death]. Accordingly, if there is joy in death, then it is evident that there is never going to be sorrow. Therefore, [Christ] says, “Be glad”; and He adds, “Rejoice”—as if to say: ‘Be glad as much as possible, for very great is the reward for that gladness which you shall have amid tribulation.’ He says that [the reward] is very great, because in place of temporal glad-

ness He gives eternal gladness.

[23] Take note of the fact that justice is the reward and that justice-with-mercy is an abundant reward. With Christ there is abundant mercy; for the abundance is mercy, which exalts itself above judgment.³⁸ And pay careful attention to the fact that the reward is Abundance itself: God is the exceedingly great reward, as God said to Abraham.³⁹ An abundance that is infinite is exceedingly great. And so, be aware that we are transferred unto an [infinite] abundance, so that we may attain, with abundance, that unto which we aspire, viz., the enjoyment of God, who is forever blessed. Be aware also that this Sermon [on the Mount] extends throughout three entire chapters in Matthew and is a most perfect teaching for him who hears [these words] and who acts [according to them]—as Christ says at the end [of the Sermon], where He likens such a man to a house founded on solid rock, and where He likens one not acting [according to His words] to a house founded on sand.⁴⁰

And if anyone considers [the Sermon on the Mount] carefully, [he will see that] the entire Sermon is enfolded implicitly in the [verse]: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for ...,” etc.

NOTES TO *Gaudete et Exsultate*

- * Sermon CXXXV.
1. This was the day of All Saints.
 2. Matthew 5:12.
 3. Matthew 5:1-12.
 4. Matthew 5:1.
 5. Matthew 5-7.
 6. Matthew 7:24.
 7. John 1:5.
 8. I Corinthians 15:22-23.
 9. Nicholas follows Augustine, who held that the outer man consists of the body, together with the outer and the inner senses, whereas the inner man is the rational soul, i.e., is reason or mind or the *imago Dei*. Note also II Corinthians 4:16.
 10. Isaias (Isaiah) 7:9 (Old Latin version). *De Docta Ignorantia* III, 11 (244).
 11. Matthew 5:3.
 12. I Corinthians 1:24.
 13. I Corinthians 3:18.
 14. I Corinthians 3:19.
 15. Luke 16:8.
 16. Matthew 5:4.
 17. Luke 14:11.
 18. We must keep in mind (as we here see clearly) that the verb “coincides with” does not mean “is identical with.”
 19. Matthew 5:5.
 20. Matthew 5:6. The word “justitia” (in the Vulgate) is translated in the Douay-Rheims version by “justice”. The corresponding word in the Greek text (δικαιοσύνη) is translated in the King James version by “righteousness”.
 21. Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, V, 23, 67. See also Augustine’s *De Libero Arbitrio*, I, 13, 27 (PL 32:1235).
 22. Luke 11:11-12.
 23. Matthew 5:7.
 24. Matthew 7:12.
 25. Matthew 5:8.
 26. Here (at 1 7:7-8) I have corrected the printed text’s “integrae” to “integre”.
 27. Here the reference is to I Corinthians 13:12, where “in aenigmate” is translated (in the Douay-Rheims version) as “in a dark manner.” I here translate Nicholas’s “in aenigmate” by the English adverb “symbolically,” a word that expresses his meaning more accurately than does the expression “in a dark manner.” See *De Docta Ignorantia* I, 12 (3 3) and III, 10 (2 4 1).
 28. I Corinthians 7:31.
 29. Matthew 5:9.
 30. Romans 8:28.

31. Isaias (Isaiah) 9:6.
32. Romans 8:14. II Corinthians 6:18. Galatians 4:5.
33. Matthew 5:10.
34. Isaias (Isaiah) 53:7.
35. Matthew 5:11.
36. Matthew 5:12.
37. Acts 5:41.
38. See Psalms 129:7 (130:7). James 2:13.
39. Genesis 15:1.
40. Matthew 7:24-27.

Trinitatem in Unitate Veneremur*
("We Worship Trinity in Oneness.")¹
[May 23, 1456; preached in Brixen]²

[1] "We worship Trinity in Oneness." ([Words found] in the Creed.)³

Aristotle said that the First Cause is trine since it is efficient cause, formal cause, and final cause. The one Cause is trine, or tri-causal: it is the First Efficient Cause, the First Formal Cause, the First Final Cause. There cannot be three First Causes, because prior to all plurality there is oneness. Therefore, the First Cause will be tricausal. The Efficient Cause is not the Formal Cause or the Final Cause; likewise, the Formal Cause is not the Final Cause. Therefore, they are [seen to be] distinct Causes when we view them in their hypostases. But when we view them in their primacy, they are [seen to be] one [and the same] Cause.

[2] Plato said⁴ to Dionysius the Tyrant that all things are present with the First King and that all things happen for that King's sake. Perhaps Plato meant the same thing as Aristotle said, viz., that the First Cause is trine. Because by "the First King" Omnipotence is understood, [the First King] is the Efficient Cause. And because [Plato] says that all things are present with the First King as in a cause, [the First King] is Formal Cause, or the Form-of-forms, which enfolds every formable form. Next, Plato says that all things happen for that King's sake; thus, [that King] is Final Cause. That which exists is not impossible to exist. Hence, a thing has from an Omnipotent Cause—which causes the possibility of being—the fact that it is possible to exist. But the fact that a thing that is possible to exist is made actually to exist is derived from an Art, in which all forms are present; and the Art is a Formal Cause. But that which finalizes the causal power of the Efficient [Cause] and the Formal [Cause] is the Union of possibility and actuality.⁵

[3] Analogously, a potter produces possibility in [a portion of] earth by adapting the earth so that it is capable of receiving a form. Then he exhibits the intention to make such and such a jar, whose form he conceives in his mind. Thereafter, he *unites*, by means of motion, the *possibility* that is in the [portion of] earth (so that it can become a jar) and the *form* that he has in mind. Hence, in a single [artisan]-mastery these three are present.⁶ However, the potter does not produce the

possibility *ex nihilo*, as does the First, Omnipotent Cause, [viz., God].

[4] Moreover, note that final cause is twofold: the one cause defines and completely plans the work and is called the subjective end; the other is the actual accomplishment of the work and is called the objective end. Now, with respect to the First Trine Cause: it is the Final Cause, which causes union [of possibility and actuality] and which is the Cause of the work in that it works all things for its own sake, i.e., in order that its glory may be manifested. [The situation is] as if a potter were to make a beautiful artifact for the purpose of displaying his glory, because he wanted to manifest his admirable artisanship.

[5] From the Gospel of John we know that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are called by our Teacher, [viz., Jesus], *Givers of life*. For [Jesus] says: “As the Father gives life, so He grants also to the Son to give life.”⁷ And subsequently He says elsewhere: “It is the Spirit who enlivens.”⁸ Let us seek, then, in [the phenomenon of] enlivening a certain gusto of the Most Blessed Trinity. God is a trine and one Enlivener. Now, it is necessary that that which is to live optimally have this [gift] from the First, Enlivening Cause. But present in the essence of the best life there is, necessarily, *living*—together with *knowledge* and *delight* (or gladness). For one who lives [but] who does not have knowledge of his life does not at all live perfectly; rather, he is as someone sleeping or as an eye situated in darkness. He who is alive and knows that he is alive is not without delight and joy.

A rational spirit has from the Enlivening Father (whose image [that spirit] is) its possessing a vital nature. From Wisdom, or the Word, or the Son (who has the words of an enlivening life), the rational spirit is formed, or illumined, so that it actually lives and so that it understands that it understands and lives. (The same thing is true of the intellectual nature, in which to exist and to live are to understand.) From the Holy Spirit, who enlivens, the rational spirit has gladness and joy, because it has a vital nature and understands that it is alive. Therefore, God creates the vital nature with a rational life; God illumines it so that it sees itself to be alive; God renders it happy and glad.

[6] I want still further to investigate the Trinity—[to do so] from [a consideration of] the image of the Trinity. The intellectual spirit, created in the image of God, is king of the heavens. In its kingdom is found a heaven in which all things are present, and the heaven is called *memory*. Moreover, there is found a heaven in which distinguishing and selecting are done, and it is called *knowledge*. And there is a heav-

en of delights, and it is called *will*. In the first heaven of the kingdom of our mind all things are present, since memory is the image of the eternal God. (Mind takes its name from this heaven, since mind (*mens*) is called mind from its remembering (*memoria*.) Therefore, all things are present in memory, which is the mindfulness of Him who is all in all.⁹ In the second heaven [of our mind] all things come into light in order to be measured. (And mind takes its name from this heaven, because mind (*mens*) is called mind from [the activity] of measuring [*metiri*]).¹⁰ In the third heaven are present delights.

So the [three] heavens are [three] kingdoms of the mind. In the first kingdom mind has a treasure of riches; in the second kingdom mind enumerates and selects; in the third, it finds delight. Memory, insofar as it is mindfulness of eternity, has within itself truth, justice, beauty, and whatever such things are everlasting and eternal. In the second kingdom [mind] makes judgments about what is just, true, [or] beautiful. And unless the first kingdom conveyed to mind truth, justice, and beauty, mind would not have that whereby to judge something as just, something as true, something as beautiful. In the third kingdom [mind] delights and rejoices that it has found the just, the true, the beautiful. Mind, then, endeavors to equalize the [three] kingdoms. For knowledge is begotten of memory. And if mind could understand to the extent that the capacity of memory is extended, then there would result supreme delight and [supreme] joy and eternal happiness. For, in that case, mind would know God, who is hidden in His image (*viz.*, in memory) as an original is concealed in its image.

[7] God is omnipotent. Omnipotence enfolds all things. And we can name it Eternity, which in relation to creation is a Beginning-without-beginning, in which all [created] things are enfolded. And because [the Beginning] is omnipotent, it begets from itself a Knowledge of itself, or a Light. For it would not be omnipotent if it were ignorant. And because it produces from itself a Light in which it sees itself, this Light has in it Omnipotence, whose Light, or Substantial Form, it is. Therefore, from these [two]—*viz.*, that the *Omnipotent Beginning* has *Knowledge* that it is all things—there proceeds [*Eternal*] *Happiness*, or *Eternal Joy*.¹¹

The Omnipotent Beginning is the first kingdom, in which all things are present in an enfolded way. The second kingdom is the kingdom of Sonship or of Form or of the Word or of Knowledge, in which all the things that are present in the first kingdom ([*viz.*, the kingdom] of the Father)—present as in *Eternal Memory*—are unfolded (as from

the treasury of Memory) into the Light, where they are all distinguished. In the third kingdom, viz., the kingdom in the Holy Spirit, all things are present as things embraced with joy and love (as being things eagerly sought and gladly found); and it is a kingdom of gladness and of happiness.

Combine with the foregoing points those which you find in Book One of *Learned Ignorance*¹² and in my other sermons for this feast-day.

NOTES TO *Trinitatem in Unitate Veneremur*

* Sermon CCXXXIII.

1. This title is taken from the Pseudo-Athanasian Creed called, from its opening word, the *Quicumque*. It was composed by an unknown author some time between 430 and 500 A.D. If the Latin title here used were to stand alone, without a context, it would be translated as "Let us worship Trinity in Oneness." But Nicholas explicitly mentions that he is drawing the wording from the Creed. Since, in the Creed, the present subjunctive of "*veneremur*" is to be translated into English by the indicative mood, the indicative is appropriate in the translation of the present title. See n. 3 below.

2. This was the feast-day of the Trinity.

3. "Fides autem catholica haec est, ut unum Deum in Trinitate, et Trinitatem in unitate veneremur, neque confundentes personas neque substantiam separantes" See n. 1 above.

4. Plato, *Epistola* II (312 E). See also Nicholas's *De Beryllo* 16.

5. Because in this paragraph Nicholas is alluding to the Trinity and the persons of God, "Cause" and "Art" have been capitalized.

6. That is, the three things that are present in artisanship are possibility, form, and union.

7. John 5:21.

8. John 6:64.

9. I Corinthians 15:28.

10. See Nicholas's *De Mente* 1.

11. The image of the Trinity here alluded to is trine image of omnipotence, knowledge, and joy.

12. *De Docta Ignorantia* I, 7-20.

Spiritus autem Paraclitus*

(“But the Spirit, the Paraclete ...”)

[May 25, 1455 (Feast-day of Pentecost); preached in Brixen]

[1] “But the Spirit, the Paraclete, whom the Father will send in my name—He will teach you all things and will bring to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you.”¹ [Text found] in the Gospel.

[2] First of all, we must attend to the fact that God is the Creator of all visible things and all invisible things. For since whatever things the perceptible world contains are finite, they cannot exist of themselves. For the finite can exist in a way different from the way it does exist; and so, its *being* is not eternity, which cannot exist in a way other than it does. Nor is [the world’s *being*] infinity or absolute necessity. And so, if that which is not eternity itself were to exist from itself, it would exist before it existed—[something impossible]. Thus, then, we come, necessarily, to a Beginning of all finite things—[a Beginning] which is infinite ..., etc. ([I have written] about this matter elsewhere.)² Therefore, there must be a single Beginning of all things—(an assertion that even the pagan philosophers make). Hence, the Apostle Paul said to the Romans that God had manifested Himself to them through visible things.³

Secondly, we must consider that since God is the Beginning, He is Pure Intellect.⁴ For we say that Intellect is that power which from out of itself begets and produces. For example, it is the Beginning of movement. For it did not have the beginning of movement from elsewhere; thus, it is the Beginning [of movement], since it is the First Beginning. And because Intellect, since it is the Beginning, produces from itself movement: we [ourselves], who have intellect, experience that we discover, of ourselves, arts that were not previously seen and known; hence, we know that new things are made by the intellect and not by some lesser power. (For intellect begets of itself an understanding-of-itself, which it loves.)⁵ Hence, the Intellectual Beginning is an Omnipotent Beginning.

[3] Now, omnipotence begets from itself an understanding of itself; from these, [viz., omnipotence and understanding], there proceeds most glorious happiness. For how could omnipotence be omnipotence if it did not know itself? And how could sight be omnipotent if it did not see itself? But if sight is omnipotent, then there is

nothing that is beyond its power. So if omnipotent sight begets of its own power the seeing of itself, then there arises supreme happiness and delight. For omnipotent sight cannot fail to be content, and at rest, when it sees itself; for nothing can be more desirable [for it]. Hence, the Omnipotent Intellect, which begets of itself an Understanding of itself, is happily at rest.

Now, from Omnipotent Intellect that understands itself there proceeds Omnipotent Glory. But Omnipotent Intellect can beget from itself an Understanding of itself only if [the Understanding] is equal to the Omnipotence. For from Omnipotent Intellect there cannot be begotten a lesser than it. For [omnipotence would] not [be] omnipotence unless it beget what is equal to itself. Now, Omnipotence is Pure Intellect; accordingly, the Begotten Intellect, [or Understanding],⁶ cannot be lesser. Otherwise, it would not be *of an Omnipotent⁷ Intellect* but would be *of a lesser intellect* than an Omnipotent Intellect. And because it must be the case that the Begotten Intellect is Omnipotent, the Begetting Omnipotent Intellect begets—i.e., understands, i.e., sees—itself both in itself and in [the Intellect] begotten from itself. And the Begotten Omnipotent Intellect sees within itself the Begetting [Omnipotent Intellect]. [4] And in this way Glory arises, proceeding from them both. For Begetting Omnipotence cannot, without Infinite Glory, see Omnipotence that is begotten from it. Nor without Infinite Glory can Begotten Omnipotence see within itself Begetting Omnipotence. And when viewing its Begotten [Omnipotent Intellect], the Begetting Omnipotent Intellect has Infinite Glory only if the Begotten [Intellect] also has this same [Glory]. Hence, there is one Glory of Begetter and Begotten. Therefore, the Glory of the Omnipotent Begetting Intellect and of the Omnipotent Begotten Intellect cannot exist unless it is Omnipotent and Intellectual and Equal to the Begetter and the Begotten. This [Glory] can also be called Goodness or Love or Delight or Gladness or Joy, etc.⁸ For if Supreme Intellectual Beauty begets from itself Knowledge-of-itself, or Equality-with-itself—i.e., [if it begettingly reproduces] its Intellectual Beauty—then from the beholding of its Beauty in the Begotten Beauty, and from the beholding by which Begotten Beauty sees within itself all the Beauty of the Begetter, there arises the true Glory of them both.

By analogy, the vain glory of a corruptible and sensory beauty arises if an especially beautiful father begets a son equal to himself in beauty. Then when the father beholds in the beauty of the son his own beauty, and the son beholds in the beauty of the father his own beauty,

there arises a certain glory, by means of which the father and the son glory⁹ vainly in the excellence of each other's beauty. For glory—whether true glory or vain glory—does not exist without knowledge. As long as a beautiful woman does not know that she is beautiful, she does not glory in her beauty. But when she sees in a mirror (in the likeness begotten from her) that she is beautiful, she begins to glory vainly, etc. Therefore, glorying is a loving of excellence. But without knowledge there is no love.

[5] Now then that we know to some extent that God the Father is Purest Intellect that begets from itself an Understanding¹⁰ of itself, from both of which there proceeds Infinite Glory: we ought to consider how it is that God is a Beginning that is above all intellect. Because we judge all things with our intellect and because we judge not to exist that whose existence we cannot apprehend with the intellect: we assert to be the case that among existing things intellect is the supreme thing, as among things hot, fire [is supremely hot]. Accordingly, we ascribe to God intellectual being, even though He excels all intellect. Moreover, He is said by Jesus (in John 4)¹¹ to be Spirit—viz., the Most High Spirit, which is Intellectual Spirit. And from the nobility of intellectual being (*qua* being that first goes out from God, its Beginning,) we endeavor to make a surmising concept of God Himself. [We do so] in the likeness of someone who from a close *image* ascends [mentally] to the *original*.

[6] Now, we experience in our own case that our intellectual nature seeks, with all concern, to make known the glory that it possesses by virtue of understanding. And for this reason those-who-rejoice seek out, and desire [to have], others who will rejoice with them—as Christ illustrates as regards joy over finding a lost son, a lost sheep, and a lost coin.¹² And, in general, on account of our desire that our glory and gladness be made known, the possession of any benefit is not gladdening apart from company. And the intellect cannot make known its glory unless it summons, for a sharing, other intellects to which it endeavors to impart itself so that in this way other individuals may in their own intellects taste of the glory which it itself has within itself by virtue of understanding. Similarly, we deem that God Almighty does all things in order that the riches of His glory may be made known and may be appreciated—as the Apostle [Paul] indicates in many passages.¹³ And in this regard consider the text in Ephesians 3, where he says:

But to me, the least of all the saints, is given the following grace: [viz..] to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to enlighten all men as to what is the dispensation of the mystery that was hidden from eternity by God, who created all things in order that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known, by the Church, to principalities and powers in Heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by means of faith in Him.

Lo, according to Paul, all created things have come about—and Christ, too, has come—in order that God’s manifold wisdom may be made known. And in Romans 3 it is said that God made Christ to be [our] Propitiator through faith in His blood—[doing so] in order to show His justice.¹⁴ So too, all the works of a rational creature ought to be done in order to glorify God—as in I Corinthians 10 the Apostle commands when he says: “Do all things unto the glory of God.”¹⁵

[7] Therefore, God wills to be known. Hence, all things exist to this end. And for this reason man was created, as Paul says in Acts 17.¹⁶ And God looks down from Heaven [to see] whether man understands, and He inquires after Him, as the Psalmist says.¹⁷ And because it is the case that man was created in order to know God, man’s happiness, peacefulness, restfulness, repose, eternal life, glory, and supreme good consist in his knowledge of his Creator. And the manifesting of God’s glory is nothing other than the manifesting of all good, as [we read] in Exodus 33.¹⁸ And hence it is that all men by nature desire to know.¹⁹ For they came into the world in order to seek and to know God. Indeed, by means of this knowledge the desire-to-know is fulfilled. Wherefore Jesus taught us that the intellect’s eternal life is this: [viz..] to know God (John 17).²⁰

[8] But there cannot enter into the heart of man anything that is like God, as Paul [says] somewhere earlier [in Corinthians].²¹ (Now, man’s heart is the soul’s [faculty of] reason). And the senses cannot arrive at anything which is such that it would render the intellect happy. Therefore, man cannot by any of his own powers come to a knowledge of God, for in the human intellect there is only that which comes to it by way of the senses.²² Therefore, although man was created in order that the riches of God’s glory might be made known to him, and although this [manifesting was] for the purpose of his praising God’s glory, nevertheless [he was not created] in such a way that of his own powers he could arrive at this [state of knowledge]. For God

Himself remains hidden from the eyes of all the wise, and God is called *hidden* by the Prophet.²³ Something excellent that is perceptible corrupts the senses more quickly than it is apprehended successfully by the respective sense. Similarly, God, who is excellent, is not seen by the intellect. Rather, [He is seen] even less than the brightness of the sun [is seen] by the eye, although nothing is more visible than is [that] brightness, which imposes itself on the eye. But because the [sun's] excellence does not meet with a very strong power in the eye, the eye's light²⁴ is dimmed rather than [the sun's light] being apprehended. Eternal Wisdom is a Light in which there is no darkness.²⁵ Likewise, created-reason is a light, because it is an image of that [Uncreated] Light. But the Infinity of the Light of Wisdom cannot be apprehended by that discriminating created-light. Instead, it is rather the case that created-reason is dimmed than that it takes in the infinite brightness of Wisdom. Hence, of Wisdom it is written: "Man shall not see me and live."²⁶

[9] Therefore, God's riches would be small if they could be grasped by creatures; and His Light would be small if it were directly visible by a created intellectual eye. Accordingly, God in His glory²⁷—which as it is [in and of itself] cannot be manifested as visible (because [that glory] infinitely exceeds the power of all creatable sight)—willed to manifest the riches of His goodness and mercy in the best way in which creatures could apprehend them. Therefore, He created a creature to whom He gave intellect, through which intellect the creature could arrive at knowing that God (although incomprehensible) is his Creator. (By analogy, man's sight arrives at the fact that the brightness is the sun's but that this brightness is not fully apprehensible.) But because the weak light of nature cannot fully attain to a vision of [God's] glory, God willed to manifest the *riches* of the glory [that is present] in this infinity-[of-glory]. And He retained for His infinite generosity the prerogative of granting to His creature the power of attaining the *riches* of His glory within the Light of His glory. For He added to the light-of-nature, which [now became] perfectly disposed for receiving [that super-added light]. For in this way the treasures of His goodness and mercy are manifested when by the gift of our most merciful King we are freed from the failing, and the impoverishment, of our nature and are made rich by means of His gifts. Thus, in regard to the attaining of happiness, no one can ascribe glory to himself but [can ascribe it] only to His Creator. For the Most Glorious King—being ever-willing to show the grace of His mercy to those²⁸ whom He

called unto the showing of His glory, in order that they might experience it—gives them gifts from His treasure, according as He sees each of them to be deserving. Therefore, [the following] will redound to manifesting our great God's glory: [viz.,] that He can always make known through gifts the magnificence of His mercy.

[10] Similarly, [the following] redounds to showing God's glory: [viz.,] that man, who without free choice could not have been a noble creature of God's, was able to err and to sin. For since the ability to sin contributed to the nobility of free choice, then by the marvelous providence of God it happened that this ability redounds to a manifesting of God's glory. For since God is a very noble King who wills to manifest His nobility in and through His servants, He created intellectual natures, which alone can be capable of serving Him. For only these [natures] can hear and obey the commandments of Wisdom. [God] did not will to have ignoble servants, who, being compelled in the manner of beasts of burden, bore their burdens under the yoke of necessity. Rather, [He willed to have] free and noble [servants] who by free choice and loving affection would freely offer themselves for the keeping of His commandments. And there followed that those who were able to serve by free choice were also able to choose not to obey and thereby to sin against the King. But this ability to sin was turned by the King into a manifestation of His very great graciousness and mercy, so that when He would show the grace of forgiveness to those sinners who were truly contrite and humble in His sight, He would make known His mercy, unto the praise of His glory. In the case of the unrepentant the situation is similar, with regard to the showing of His justice unto the praise of His glory.

[11] Thus, then, our God ordained all things in the best way in which to show the riches of His glory. Therefore, everyone who turns to the visible works of God sees in each and every one of them that a manifestation of God's glory shines forth. And when [anyone] ascends from visible things to invisible things, he discovers that in the invisible things the glory of God shines forth more brightly. And these men have been called lovers of wisdom, or philosophers. Turning to intelligible things by means of perceptible things, they disparage all the delights of this world and discard corruptible pleasures and corruptible lusts of the flesh in order more freely to attain unto things incorruptible. And they turn to the immortal virtues.

Now, although God had manifested His great glory to them by

means of visible and perceptible things, they nevertheless did not glorify God as having manifested these things to them for the praise of His glory.²⁹ Rather, they continued in vanities, seeking their own glory—as if on their own they would have come to a knowledge of the truth. And they were puffed up because of their knowledge, and they were full of vain glory. And so, ascribing to themselves the praise that they were supposed to have given to the glory of God, they became foolish, though esteeming themselves to be wise (as Paul shows [in his letter] to the Romans).³⁰ Thus, when Adam—who wanted to ascend, by means of his own knowledge, unto God’s likeness—thought that he had found life, he found death. And this is the outcome of all those who have endeavored to ascend unto happiness by their own ingenuity. For all [these] men found no knowledge in their possession; instead, they became vain in their thoughts.³¹ For they did not know that happiness is a grace of God and that it can be obtained not by means of their own ingenuity but only by the gift of God. And [they did not know] (1) that every human endeavor to obtain happiness is supposed to be nothing other than for the praise of God’s glory in regard to everything that He created and (2) that conformity to the life-of-reason obtains that gift of God’s mercy [and] grace—through which [gift] those who are clothed with the light of glory obtain happiness.

[12] The foregoing is the ignorance in which those who sought God were kept until [the time of] Christ. For they did not know the means of arriving at an apprehension [of happiness]. This means is only God’s grace, diffused by the Holy Spirit, in the hearts of those who believe and hope.³² Therefore, Paul says in Romans 11 that Christ has concluded all in unbelief in order that He might have mercy on all.³³ And so, he adds: “O the depth of the riches . . .,” etc.³⁴ Therefore, the [Holy] Spirit, the Paraclete, is He who alone teaches all truth. He is given to those who are called to eternal life. For He is sent unto our soul’s [faculty of] reason and reveals [to it] truth and remains forever in it. Since He is the Spirit of life, He ever enlivens—just as the Light of life, [viz., Christ], ever enlightens vitally those who receive [Him]. Hence, this knowledge is obtained from revelation on the part of the Incarnate Word of God. For God’s word, which is sent by the Spirit, nourishes the intellect. By way of illustration, a teacher who wants to display the glory of his fertile intellect does so by means of his word. By emitting this word, he sends it into his student’s conception, [thereby] giving to him a [cognitive] sharing in his own intellect. (For otherwise one man’s spirit could not manifest itself to another man’s spirit.)

In a similar way, God reveals to an intellectual creature a knowledge of Himself only through His word—[doing so] by means of the Spirit of truth. For the inner Word is a perfect likeness of its Father, i.e., of the Intellect that begets this [Word] from itself. And by means of the Spirit, which is Love, the Word conveys a knowledge of the Father to that intellectual spirit to which it wills to manifest itself. Hence, the Word reveals—to that spirit to which it is bound by the Spirit of love—the Father, who is present in the word. Therefore, angelic spirits cannot know God the Father except by means of the Holy Spirit, who is united to their spirit, in which the word is present—and, in the word, the Father.³⁵ But because human nature has an intellectual spirit, to which God planned to manifest His glory, and since this [manifestation] is not possible apart from revelation: it was necessary that the Word of the Father put on human nature (just as a teacher's word [puts on] a vocal, or sensory, nature) so that thereby in the word of a man who was a Teacher the word of God could be conveyed to mankind by means of the Spirit. Hence, the gift by which the Spirit is given to us—and [by which], in the Spirit, the Word [is given to us] and [by which], in the Word, the Father [is given to us]—is the maximal manifestation of God's grace and wisdom, unto the praise of His glory.

[13] And note that God the Father manifested His glory supremely in that creature in which the Word put on a human nature in order to reveal the Father. For if you consider that a man can come to a knowledge of God's glory, i.e., can come to his own happiness, only by means of the Son's (i.e., the Word's) revelation, then you see rightly that the man who is the Father's Word is the one without whom it is not possible to come³⁶ to happiness. Hence, Christ Jesus—the Word of God and the Son of man—is the Intermediary without whom God's glory cannot be manifested. Therefore, [Christ] is the Fulfillment, and Perfection, of creatures. Therefore, Paul rightly says that in this Mediator are hidden all the treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge.³⁷ By way of illustration: in the words of a teacher's instruction there are hidden, beneath the perceptible sounds, all the treasures of the teacher's knowledge and wisdom; and by means of such words his students are enlightened in spirit in order to be able to be brought to a knowledge of the hidden treasure.

Jesus rightly said that the Father had given Him that which is greater than all. For the Father gives by means of one Spirit various gifts: to one [man He gives] prophecy, to another the interpretation of languages, etc.³⁸ But the gift given to Jesus is greater than all other

gifts. For Christ's Spirit, or Gift,³⁹ enfolds the excellence of all other gifts. For [Christ's Gift] is, without measure, altogether full and perfect—to such an extent that [the following is true]: the Gift that God gave to our Teacher, [viz.,] Christ, is of such great fruitfulness (as regards the knowledge that makes a man happy) that every man who hearkens to [this] teaching can obtain happiness. And the Gift is such that, as it were, the Son—who alone is the Father's heir, because of the Father's love for His Son—imparts to others who are capable of receiving it the art by which He is the Beloved Son, in order that they too, by means of that knowledge, may become beloved sons of [this] same Father. (By way of analogy: from the perfection of a teacher's art all his students can be instructed, so that whichever [of them] grasps the meaning of his words can likewise become a teacher.)

Accordingly, the nature of the human intellect is teachable; and Christ, our unique Teacher, is the Word-of-the-Father, who speaks (as one sent by God) the things that God speaks within Himself. And [Christ does this] not unto His own glory and praise but unto His Father's glory and praise. [And Christ] teaches (1) His own way of life and (2) the art-of-happiness by which He came to happiness and glory in preaching and in working and by which eternal life is truly possessed. [The situation is] as if some natural father were to pass on to his son (who had reached adult age) a secret art together with assured instructions. [It is as if] through this art the son could free himself from a miserable and needy life and could live splendidly. [And it is as if the father] were to give to the son the power to impart [that] same art to all who (1) would honor and love the father and honor and love the son as the father's son and also (2) would adhere to the instructions that he had given to this same son of his.

[14] Thus, then, it is evident to some extent that the Son of God, [i.e.,] Jesus, is necessary for us, since without Him we would all remain ignorant of the art by which one arrives at happiness. For only Jesus Himself is the Most High, in whom God shows all the riches of His glory altogether perfectly. Moreover, [Jesus is necessary for us] because preaching (in which the glory of God is manifested) does not suffice for our obtaining the spirit of glory, or gift of glory, with which our nature is clothed-upon in order to be made happy. Rather, purification and adaptation of our spirits to the receiving of the light of glory [are needed], so that in this way the exceedingly great glory of God is shown in Christ Jesus with regard to the restoration of the fallen and

the justification of the wicked. For the Spirit of Wisdom cannot enter into a servile spirit bedarkened with sins or into a soul of evil intent. For the spirit is not capable of wisdom unless it is pure and clean and altogether free of, and purified from, every alien desire. For as long as the spirit is bound to shameful affections, it is powerless to receive wisdom. For it must so cling to the Spirit of truth that it is made one Spirit with it⁴⁰—something that is not possible if it is shackled to worldly servitude. And so, our Teacher was to purify and enlighten us not only by His teaching but also by His merit, so that in that way the glory of God was manifested supremely and most perfectly in Him. For the Father did not spare His very beloved Son; and the Son gave Himself over to death in order that we might receive purification-of-soul by the merit of His blood. Thereupon, God maximally showed the praising of His own glory in order that we would praise His infinite love and would see very clearly that He alone is the one to whom all glory is due, since He is our Creator and Redeemer. Whatever we are, we are from Him, because we are redeemed by His most innocent and most precious blood.

Moreover, consider that in order for us to give praise to His glory, it is fitting (1) that we rightly recognize our indisposition for happiness-in-His-presence and is fitting (2) that we need the grace of redemption and (3) that we seek that [grace] with all our devotion. And [when these conditions are met], then we are giving glory to God in a way that is worthy. Now, the more we recognize our baseness, the more [we give glory to God]. And yet, we believe steadfastly that God can, in accordance with the greatness of His glory, conform the body of our humility to the Body of the brightness of His Most Beloved Son.⁴¹ And we hope that this [transformation] is going to occur—on the basis of the merit of Christ's suffering—when we walk that pathway by which Christ entered into glory. For in that case we shall be moved by the same Spirit as was Christ—[the Spirit] that leads to the Father and to eternal life.

[15] I think that this evangelical teaching is elucidated, especially by the Apostles, in Sacred Scripture, which speaks of the Spirit, who is not of this world (where truth is absent) and whom neither the world nor any of the wise of this world know. In this [Spirit] we were baptized with the baptism of Christ when we received faith in Him.⁴² For faith is that which alone is able—through the Spirit of Jesus, who dwells in us through our faith⁴³—to strengthen the weakness of our spirit and to give strength for all things. For our spirit can become a

beholder of majesty only by means of the indwelling Spirit of God's Son. This [Spirit] dwells in us because of the faith which we have within our spirit—[faith] concerning Jesus, [faith] that He is God's Son. Through [our] love [this Spirit] becomes one Spirit with our spirit, provided that our faith is [in-]formed by love. By means of this faith we anticipate in this world the happiness that we shall obtain in reality when our Jesus—whom here we have received by faith—will have appeared to us visibly.

Furthermore, note that the art of arriving at happiness is, practically speaking, nothing other than that we keep to the way that Christ kept to. Therefore, if we have faith that Jesus is the Son of God and that no one is happy unless he is a son of God: then if we believe this unhesitatingly, we have the faith (1) through which we overcome the world and all the wise and (2) through which we shall attain unto happiness. For since we have accepted as most assuredly true this one thing—[viz.,] that Jesus is the Son of God—we do not doubt (1) that all of Jesus's words are so steadfast that heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than will one iota of any of His words⁴⁴ and (2) that all His promises about the Eternal Kingdom are beyond doubt. So, then, it will not be possible [for us] *not* to keep His commandments, [even] to the point of [being put to] death [because of keeping them]. For He teaches that to-obey-unto-death is to-enter-into-life.

[16] Therefore, he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God and that the sacred Gospels are true has Him in whom his spirit most agreeably finds consolation. (For just as there is no comparability between the Son of God and the sons of men, so there is no comparability between the teaching of Christ and that of the philosophers.) [Such a believer] sees that the whole of Sacred Scripture serves the gospel and that the entire teaching of the philosophers is empty and vain and without an enlivening and delighting spirit. He will clearly learn by experience that through the certitude of faith one arrives at love for God and that together with love that is rooted in faith there comes an intellectual vision, i.e., knowledge. For by means of love a living faith proceeds continually onwards unto seeing and unto knowing. For a loving spirit in which Jesus dwells because of our faith is caught up unto a *beholding*—[one] that is a foretaste of the eternal bliss that we await.

The teaching of Jesus is that without *faith* it is not possible to arrive at happiness. Next, [He teaches that] without *love* it is impossible for there to be true faith. Hereafter, there follows that such a believer comes to a *knowledge* of that which he has received by faith. And

not only (1) does he believe that he believes what is true but also (2) he knows that faith is true faith and that through faith he will arrive at happiness, as says Wisdom 3: "Those who trust in Him will understand the truth, and those who are faithful in love will rest in Him."⁴⁵ Hence, he who chooses not to *believe* unless he *knows*, thereby giving priority to knowing: such a man remains in darkness, because his knowledge cannot ascend to God unless his spirit is strengthened by faith in Jesus.

[17] But how it is that the foregoing teaching of Jesus's is found in Sacred Scripture is itself found in another sermon [of mine] for this day.⁴⁶ But for now let it suffice to have said the following: [viz.,] that the [Holy] Spirit, the Paraclete, will bring to mind all the things which the Word of God speaks.⁴⁷ [This bringing to mind] is the gift by which our rational spirit sees in itself (i.e., sees by means of its rational faculty) that which the Word of God speaks is true. By way of illustration: when a teacher sets forth a true mathematical proposition, then if one of his students has the gift of understanding, he quickly sees in his own reason the truth of the proposition that was set forth. And [this truth] is sweet and pleasing to him. And so, [in a corresponding way], the Spirit from whom [a believer] has the foregoing gift of understanding is rightly called Comforter, or Paraclete. For He aids the spirit that is still bedarkened with the darkness of ignorance, and He brings to its mind an evidential ground; and from this bringing-to-mind there arises great consolation. But he who has not yet received this gift of understanding does not apprehend the meaning of the words or feel the consolation, i.e., the nourishment.

Now, the Spirit that gives understanding proceeds from the Father, who is Pure Intellect⁴⁸ from whom comes every best gift and every perfect gift.⁴⁹ And because [this Spirit] is the Spirit of truth⁵⁰ (or of an understanding of the words), it is the Spirit of Jesus, who is Truth and who is the Word of God. Therefore, this gift of the Spirit of truth proceeds from the Father and the Son (i.e., from the Word) and is sent from the Father in the name of the Son; for it is sent in order that the Word be understood. Therefore, it is sent in the name of the Son in order to prompt an understanding of Jesus's words. Hence, there is written in Wisdom 9: "Who will know Your thought unless You will give wisdom and will send Your Holy Spirit?" etc.⁵¹

NOTES TO *Spiritus autem Paraclitus*

* Sermon CLXXXVII.

1. John 14:26. See my n.1 in Notes to Sermon XXXVII.

2. *De Docta Ignorantia* 1, 6. *De Possess* 3. *Cribratio Alkorani* II, 2 (90).

These passages, together with the text above, are as close as Nicholas comes to giving *arguments* for God's existence. See my *Nicholas of Cusa: Metaphysical Speculations: Volume Two* (Minneapolis: Banning, 2000), pp. 52-60.

3. Romans 1:19-20.

4. "... is Pure Intellect": or, "... is Pure Understanding".

5. Throughout this sermon Nicholas signifies in a twofold way. On the one hand, he is referring to God's Trinity by means of the words "Omnipotence," "Understanding," and "Love." On the other hand, he is using these words with their common significations. Sometimes a single word plays upon both significations at once. Accordingly, it is not always clear whether or not to use capitalization in the English translation.

6. Throughout this section Nicholas uses the one Latin word "*intellectus*" both with the sense of the English word "intellect" and with the sense of the English word "understanding." The latter English word is ambiguous, since it can be used to stand not only for the act of understanding but also for the faculty of understanding (i.e., for the intellect). Nicholas's use of "*intellectus*" is ambiguous in this same way. Only the context can serve to disambiguate the meaning.

7. Here (at 3:22) I am reading, with the Paris edition, "omnipotentis" in place of "omnipotentiae".

8. These words are construed by Nicholas as names for the Holy Spirit.

9. In this example of the father and the son, as well as in the subsequent example of the beautiful woman, the idea contained in the signification of the Latin verb "*gloriar*" and the Latin noun "*gloria*" is more like the sense of our expressions "to take pride in" and "a taking pride in."

10. See n. 6 above.

11. John 4:24.

12. Luke 15:11-24; 15:4-6; 15:8-9—respectively.

13. E.g., Romans 9:23. Colossians 1:27. The indented text below is from Ephesians 3:8-12.

14. Romans 3:25.

15. I Corinthians 10:31.

16. Acts 17:24-27.

17. Psalms 13:2 (14:2).

18. Exodus 33:18-19.

19. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, opening sentence.

20. John 17:3.

21. I Corinthians 2:9. See also Romans 11:33-34. Nicholas makes the point that man can have no conception that corresponds to God's nature as it is in and of itself. All knowledge of *what* God is is symbolical.

22. Here Nicholas shows the influence of Aquinas's theory of knowledge. See pp. 121-139 of my *Nicholas of Cusa: Metaphysical Speculations: Volume Two*

(Minneapolis: Banning, 2000). For an alternative view see Klaus Kremer's, "Erkennen bei Nikolaus von Kues. Apriorismus – Assimilation – Abstraktion," pp. 3-49 in his *Praegustatio naturalis sapientiae. Gott suchen mit Nikolaus von Kues* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2004). In this same volume see also pp. 103-146 ("Das kognitive und affektive Apriori bei der Erfassung des Sittlichen").

24. Plato, Augustine, Anselm, and others teach that the eye emits an invisible ray that meets with the light of day (or other external light), making possible the actual seeing of visible objects.

25. I John 1:5. Cf. John 8:12.

26. Exodus 33:20.

27. Literally: "God's glory"

28. Here (at 9:28) I am surmising "illis" in place of "illos".

29. Romans 1:21-23.

30. *Loc. cit.*

31. *Loc. cit.*

32. Romans 5:5.

33. Romans 11:32.

34. Romans 11:33.

35. See my n. 51 in Sermon CLXXXIII.

36. Here (at 13:8-9) I am reading, with the Paris edition, "pervenire" in place of "perveniri".

37. Colossians 2:3.

38. I Corinthians 12:4-31.

39. "Gift" is a name that Medieval writers often use for the Holy Spirit. See n. 5 and n. 8 above.

40. See *De Filiatione Dei*, Nicholas's treatise on a believer's deification, a believer's becoming a son of God through Christ.

41. Philippians 3:21.

42. Nicholas accepts both the view that baptism removes the guilt of original sin and the view that faith is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8).

43. Ephesians 3:17.

44. Matthew 5:18.

45. Wisdom 3:9.

46. "... for this day": viz., the feast-day of Pentecost. See Sermon XXXVII.

47. John 14:26.

48. "Pure Intellect": or "Pure Understanding." See n. 4 and n. 6 above.

49. James 1:17.

50. John 14:17 and 15:26.

51. Wisdom 9:17.

**Qui Me Invenerit Inveniet Vitam
et Hauriet Salutem a Domino***
("He Who Finds Me Shall Find Life
and Shall Acquire Salvation from the Lord")¹
[September 8, 1455; preached in Brixen]²

[1] "He who finds me shall find life and shall acquire salvation from the Lord" (Proverbs 8).

[2] Today the Church reads these words from the Book of Solomon. And because they are read aloud for the honor of the glorious Virgin's birth, they are likewise in this way set forth for our instruction.³ For we sons of Eve are exiles in this world; we are sons of the mother who brought death into the world because she chose what was beautiful in appearance and because she preferred her own desires to the commandment of the Giver of life. Therefore, with groaning and weeping we seek in this vale of tears a mother who will turn the curse of Eve into a blessing, who will feed us sons of Eve with the milk-of-her-breasts, the stream of Heavenly life. Accordingly, to us who are wailing to be fed, the Mother speaks as follows: "He who finds me [shall find life] ..." etc. She means not *life* but (a) the vessel in which there is life and (b) the stream that flows with life, from which stream salvation from the Lord can be drawn forth.

[2] We must consider that although Solomon spoke of the Creator's wisdom, by which the Creator made the ages and is delighted to be with men,⁴ nevertheless among all the works of God, the Virgin Mary came into this world in order to manifest His glory. First of all, we must reflect on the fact that there cannot be a world unless there is a beginning; and there can be only one Beginning. And because that Beginning is without a beginning, it is eternal, or Eternity. From that [Beginning] there does not naturally come a world. For by nature sameness of species is preserved; for example, man begets man. Now, God, or Eternity (which is also Oneness), is not more than one; for, [were Eternity more than one], God would cease to be Eternity, or Oneness. And because He is *actually* everything *possible*,⁵ He cannot be multiplied or increased or decreased. Therefore, since creatures do not proceed from this First Beginning by way of nature or of necessity, they proceed by way of art (for there are no other modes [of their originating]), although we can say that in God art coincides with

nature. For the art of the Creator is not of a different nature but is of the nature of the Beginning. This art is eternal, since Solomon says that it is from eternity.⁶ Therefore, the Eternal Art is from Him who is eternal; and there cannot be more than one eternal thing. Hence, the Art, i.e., the Wisdom of God, is Eternal God from Eternal God.⁷ This Art, by means of which God the Father made all things,⁸ is apprehended in terms of orderedness. For Wisdom is established (*ordinata*)—as we find in today's reading. But Art acts freely [and] not by necessity, as does nature. Therefore, the First Beginning cannot be understood to be perfect unless He is [understood to be] triune—i.e., [unless we understand] that in Him is Capability, Knowing, and Willing.

[3] Now, God created all things for His own sake in order to manifest His glory. And so, Solomon says that the Wisdom of God delights to be with the sons of men.⁹ For the sons of men were created by God so as to be capable of wisdom, so that they would see in God's Wisdom the glory of Him who created all things so wisely and orderedly—and so that by means of things that are caused they would contemplate the Cause. And since Wisdom, while remaining in itself, transfers itself to the souls of the saints: choosing to perform a very perfect work, He determined from eternity to descend unto human nature. And because that Eternal Art willed to unite Himself to a human nature, He ordained for Himself from eternity a mother by means of whom He would assume a human nature.

Take note of our wondrous God, who from eternity foreordained for Himself a temporal mother! Eternity creates for Himself a mother from whom He would be begotten! [Analogously, it is] as if a knowledge of philosophy were eternal and as if there were to be begotten a man who would have the entire art of philosophy, to which art nothing could be added. In that case, there would not be one art that was eternal and another art that was begotten. A similar situation would occur if philosophy were a self-existent art (not an accident),¹⁰ so that (1) the one begotten would be both a philosopher and a man (and qua philosopher would be of one nature and qua man would be of another nature; and the temporal nature of the man would exist in the eternal nature of the art of philosophy) and so that (2) philosophy would be the creator of that man.

[4] We rightly marvel at the glorious God—[marvel] in and through Mary, who is not the mother of a human being without being also the mother of God, because she is *theotocos*.¹¹ For she is the

mother of Christ, (1) who is a human being (*homo*) in such a way that He is the Wisdom of God the Father [and] (2) who is the Son of God in such a way that He is also the son of a human being [*homo*]. Therefore, Eternal Wisdom created for Himself a mother. What can be thought to be more wondrous [than] that what-was-originated would be the mother of the Unoriginated? Christ, the Son of God, is, *apart from a male seed*, the son of Mary; and, nevertheless, He is *of the seed* of Abraham according to the flesh.¹² What can more profoundly be said, surpassing all understanding, [than] “apart from a seed but of the seed”? [He was] born of a woman who was a virgin—[born] of a woman (for He was of the seed of Abraham) who was a virgin (for [He was conceived] apart from a male seed). In Adam there was present Eve, who was a woman;¹³ she is the mother of all those who are alive according to “Adam,” i.e., according to the flesh. In Mary Christ was present; He is the father of all those who are alive according to the spirit. Eve came from a male without coming from a male seed; Christ came from a female without coming from a male seed. Eve came from a male without there being lust of the flesh; Christ came from Mary without there being lust of the flesh.

NOTES TO *Qui Me Invenerit Inveniet Vitam*

- * Sermon CCIII.
- 1. Proverbs 8:35.
- 2. This date was the feast-day of the Virgin Mary's birth.
- 3. Cf. II Timothy 3:16.
- 4. Cf. Proverbs 8:31.
- 5. This is the theme of Nicholas's *De Possess*, written in 1460.
- 6. Proverbs 8:23.
- 7. Nicholas is here alluding to God the Son's begottenness from God the Father. In Medieval theology God the Son is called the Wisdom of the Father, the Art of the Father, the Word of the Father, the true Image of the Father, etc.
- 8. Colossians 1:16.
- 9. Proverbs 8:31.
- 10. The word "accident" is here being used in the sense of the Aristotelian distinction between substance and accident.
- 11. "Theotocos" is the Greek name used (in the Chalcedon Creed of 451) for Mary with respect to her being the *God-bearer*, or *Dei genetrix*.
- 12. Cf. Romans 1:3.
- 13. Genesis 2:23.

Maria Optimam Partem Elegit*
("Mary Has Chosen the Best Part . . .")¹
[August 15, 1446; preached in Mainz]²

[1] "Mary has chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her." Luke 10.

We celebrate the feast-day on which—in and through the most glorious Virgin Mary, who is our most gracious advocate—our human nature was exalted above all the choirs of angels unto the Heavenly kingdoms, unto the Son. We come together today in *this* place praising her in order that through [this] Mother of mercy we may merit to obtain in *Heavenly places* kindness from her and fellowship with her. Let us who salute her implore her that for the sake of our edification I may be able to say something worthwhile about her assumption.

[2] The words of the theme-text can be applied to the rational spirit, which has chosen the best part, even as [this same] Gospel-passage befits [our present] feast-day in terms of its gist. For if to sit at Jesus's feet and to hear His word and to devote oneself to the one necessary thing and to choose that part is something so perfect that it shall never be taken away, then if this [verdict] holds true in the case of Mary Magdalene,³ [as it does], it is also altogether true in the case of the Mary who is Theotocos, i.e., the God-bearer. Hence, according to this reasoning we can consider, for our learning,⁴ that the end-goal of our intellectual nature is to obtain *happiness*. But *choosing* precedes the happiness; for we must obtain happiness intellectually; hence, choosing precedes. But that which is altogether unknown cannot be either chosen or desired. Therefore, *enlightening* precedes choosing. In accordance with these three [considerations] let us elicit something [for our present edification].⁵

I

[3] Now, first of all, with respect to enlightenment: the learned ought to elicit from the words of Christ a certain deep teaching, viz., that our rational spirit partakes of the form of Divine Reason, which is called *Word* or *Logos*. And, accordingly, from the Source of this divine light (which enlightens every man who comes into this world)⁶ we sense (by means of the power of apprehending through innate desires) that in us are present those things which the Incarnate Word declares that He *is*:

viz., Truth, Life, and the Way.⁷ For if Divine Reason—in whose image our rational faculty was created and from which it has the light-of-reason—declares that it *is* these things, then it is not strange that with great desire we are inclined toward *truth* (i.e., toward true and unfailing *life*) and that eternal law (which is the *way* to truth and to life) is present in us as in its own image.

[4] But our faculty of reason, which is a light from Divine Light, shines forth in the darkness of this corporeal and fleshly substance, so that its immaterial nature cannot be apprehended amid the corporeal shadow. Yea, rather, our rational spirit exists as if in a fleshly prison⁸ and is able to seek immaterial nourishment only through the windows of the body. Therefore, since all its nourishment is taken in by means of what is perceptible, the nourishment remains disproportionate, so that it is not nourishment that is true and vital and formed in the way that the rational spirit requires. Hence, reason, which is embodied in flesh, cannot attain in truth that which is sought—just as the eye [that is looking] through an impure medium (e.g., colored glass) also cannot attain the truth of the object.

[5] God, taking account of this ignorance, sent Absolute Reason (i.e., His Word or consubstantial Son) into the flesh in order that we might be instructed as to how we would be able to attain the desired truth and life, which are not present in this world. And [His Son] teaches us about this [attainment]—[teaches us] in a clear and simple and concise manner in this Gospel-passage. There He instructs us that the rational soul that was in Martha and that was in Mary can have a twofold endeavor in regard to seeking truth or life or the way: thus, [the rational soul] is nourished in spirit either by means of the multiplicity of frequent endeavors or with respect to a single endeavor. [The endeavor] that occurs by means of multiplicity is perturbing and temporal and does not have truth, life, or the way, because truth is abiding and undisturbable. Moreover, that which is supposed to nourish the [rational] spirit with incorruptible life cannot be divided into a plurality-of-things, [for] plurality is beset by a troubling unsteadfastness. Therefore, to be busy with the frequent ministering of many things is not to proceed on the pathway of the eternal and incorruptible law.

[6] Hence, since a plurality of things brings disquietude to the [rational] spirit, which seeks peace, a single thing is necessary in order that the spirit may choose. For what is *one* is unifying and, hence, enlivening and eternalizing. Reason ... can choose ([in accordance

with] the part that is lower-directed) to be busy with attending to multiple affairs, which cannot be multiple without division and which, accordingly, are disquieting; or reason can choose ([in accordance with the part] that is higher-directed) to devote itself to the One, which is the Self-existent Beginning that is eternal and at rest, free of all disquietude. Therefore, if [the rational spirit] chooses the one necessary End, it chooses the best part, in which it will rest eternally [and] which will not be taken away from it. Indeed, since things that are more-than-one are things that are multiple, they can exist neither from themselves nor through themselves; nor can they find rest in themselves; for that which is One [and] Necessary is the *Beginning* of plurality. For that which is necessary for the existence of a multiplicity of things is One Thing, without which there could not be a multiplicity.

[7] Therefore, the One Thing that is necessary for positing a plurality of things is the Cause—the Beginning, Middle, and End—from which, through which, and in which the many exist.⁹ Therefore, it is not the case that to be troubled with many things is rightly to proceed unto rest; for the many have nothing from themselves; rather, the *One* alone is their rest. But since only the *One* is the rational spirit's termination of desire, it is that which is so necessary that only in it, qua in what is absolutely necessary, can the rational spirit happily rest as in the Beginning, Middle, and End of it and of its desire for truth, life, and eternity. For only then does the [rational] spirit turn back upon itself with a complete turning. For in this way it attains its end not, as it were, in something else—as does he who seeks his end in a plurality. For this latter [individual] cannot find his end except in something other than [the true end] itself. And, hence, he finds [the end] only as existing otherwise than it does [in and of itself]; and, thus, [his finding] is defective and disquieting. However, he who seeks his end-goal in the One Necessary Thing finds it not as it is present in something else but as it is present in the One Necessary Thing.

[8] The *one* attains itself unfailingly only in the One Thing, which is necessary for it, through which Thing it is *one*. By way of illustration: The form of a signet-ring in wax can attain itself unfailingly only in the ring of which it is the image. For only *there* does it attain its own measure in truth. For, indeed, the exemplar is the true measure of the exemplification. And just as a student is perfected when he is made like his teacher, and just as then he attains rest, so our reason is perfectly at rest in the One Necessary Thing, viz., in Infinite

Reason, because [*there* it is present] not as in [some] other [reason] but as in our own [Source of] reason. For when [our reason] shall appear as resting in that [Infinite Reason], [our reason] will be like that [Infinite Reason]—as we are sufficiently instructed from the teaching of the saints.¹⁰ [9] And we, as being those who are instructed from this teaching of Christ's, will now be able to grasp with ready discernment all the philosophers' deepest laborings, which seem to students to be especially difficult. For, indeed, the Platonists (as is evident from Plato's book the *Parmenides*) after turning away from multiplicity toward the One, professed that the One is Absolute Necessity and is the Ground (*ratio*) of all existing things. For all things exist insofar as they are one, as states Boethius¹¹ regarding oneness and the *one*. And as Dionysius says toward the end of *The Divine Names*: the absolutely One is all things unitively.¹² For, as Cause, [the One] enfolds all things.

[10] The *one* precedes all things, as our ordinary German language teaches us. For before anything that is expressible we always put a oneness. For example, we say "one man," "one essence," "one congregation," "one substance," "one quantity," "one angel," "one virtue," and so on.¹³ Hence, after "one" we have everything expressible. Through the [One], from the [One], and in the [One] all things partake of One in their own way; the One is ineffably and inco-ordinately¹⁴ exalted above all things.¹⁵ Therefore, whatever is named is less than it. Similarly, whatever part of a city is named is less than the city, since with the name of the city there come, implicitly, all the things that are in the city. Likewise, whatever part of all things [is named is] less than the One.¹⁶ Hence, Martha, who by means of many ministrings went off into many things, was rightly perturbed, since all things exist only by means of the One.

[11] Since the one is one, it cannot exist from another, because before all otherness there is oneness, so that otherness is a falling away from oneness, or a defect in the approach to the *one*.¹⁷ Therefore, the *one* acts as one. That is, just as the characteristic of heat is to make-warm and the characteristic of cold is to make-cold, so the characteristic of *one* is to unite. Hence, for the *one* to act is for it to summon the not-one unto the *one's* oneness. Now, of its own nature *one* is unmultipliable, because twice one is not one but is other than one, viz., two. Therefore, when *one* summons what is not-one (i.e., what is pure nothing) unto its own unattainable oneness, then a creature rises up in [the *one's*] likeness. Thus, you have [the following truth]: because

there is one thing, there are all things. And so, one thing is necessary for all things. Thus, then, that which has nothing at all of oneness—viz., what is altogether nothing—comes, by means of the *one's* omnipotence, to be a likeness of the *one*. Therefore, because any creature can exist only if it is one, it is found in the likeness of the Absolute and Super-exalted One.

[12] Yet, multiple creatures cannot have one and the same degree of likeness, because *one* is unmultipliable. Therefore, each creature in its own individual manner is found to exist in a likeness of the Absolute One. But since [these] multiple creatures are found to exist only in a likeness of the Absolute One, they will be compatible in their differences of individuality. And this [compatibility] constitutes the world's harmony. Therefore, just as every creature has from the One that it is one, so it also has [from the One] that it unites. Hence, every activity of creatures is likewise found to exist with [a degree of] likeness [to the One's activity]. When heat heats, it summons to itself that which is not-hot. But since [heat] cannot [cause] what is not-hot to attain unto an identity with heat's unattainable oneness, there arises [in the not-hot] a likeness [to heat]. The case is similar as regards the intellect: since its operation is to summon what is not-intellect unto a oneness with itself, [that which is not-intellect] is found to arise with a [degree of] likeness [to intellect]—and so on, in the case of all natural and all constructed objects.

[13] Hence, the wondrous teaching of Christ is this: [viz.,] that whoever wishes to seek truth not tire himself with a multiplicity of objects so that, for example, he seek [to know] what the sky is, what the earth is, etc. For if all these things are considered in and of themselves, there will be found in them, qua multiple things, nothing of the true; rather, there is [only] a mental disquieting when, after infinite tiring efforts, [the seeker] finds that he has arrived at nothing precise but has wasted his time. However, when amid all [these] things he turns his attention to the One, then he finds that the One is the Absolute Necessity of all the things. For, as Dionysius says: because there is the Absolute One, there are all things.¹⁸ For [the reason that it is] the Cause of [all] causes and of all being is only that it is One. Hence,¹⁹ because [the seeker] attains the One, the Necessary Cause of all things, he seeks peace and rest in all things. He uses rightly the book written by God's Finger, viz., [the book of] the created world. He knows that every creature is a likeness of the One. He knows that the one heaven, when sum-

moned forth from the not-one, arose in a likeness of the Absolute One. And [he knows] that the more [the heaven] was elevated away from the not-one, the closer it drew near to the One in terms of likeness.

[14] [The seeker] rests at the feet of the sensory world in order to hear what the Rational Spirit speaks in and through it. For he sees in each creature—as in a likeness of the One—the One Necessary Thing, and he chooses it. He sees here one tree and there one stone and here one animal and there one star. Hence, he readily understands—since these all agree only in terms of their oneness—that, accordingly, they all derive from One thing, from which they have the fact of their being united in regard to [being] one. And since there can be only one One, all things have their oneness from the one [Oneness]. But since a tree is not a star or a stone, then there does not belong to the essence of the One that the One be a tree or a stone or any other nameable thing. Rather, the Absolute One is prior to everything nameable. And everything nameable has a mode²⁰ in which it is named one, because it does not attain the unmultipliable One unto which it is summoned. Hence, with respect to likeness it is the case (1) that the one heaven is a likeness-of-the-One such that it is called heaven and (2) that one man is a likeness-of-the-One that is called a man and (3) that one essence is a likeness-of-the-One that is called an essence and (4) that one power is a likeness-of-the-One that is *thus* called [i.e., is called a power].

[15] Accordingly, the point of ready accessibility to difficult matters is this: [viz..] that since we know that present in all things there is One Necessary Thing and that all things are in its likeness, we are at ease and we hear how it is that in and through our reason all things speak of the One and how it is that all things endeavor to express the One through a likeness but that, nevertheless, they cannot do so, because the likeness always falls short of the One. Thus, our intellectual power, which is inclined toward the true, turns toward the One's truth, equality, and highest likeness. And [the intellect] attains the One (which is unattainable because it precedes everything understandable and effable) in and through a highest likeness of equality with (the truth about) the One. For the truth about the One is a supremely precise likeness. Hence, this preciseness, which can be called truth, is that by means of which our intellect desires to attain the Absolute One. We are disposed toward truth, because truth is the highest equality with the One. For example, when it is said of gold that it is true gold, then [the gold] admits of nothing other than gold. Hence, the true is a highest

equality, and highest likeness, that admits of no otherness.

[16] Hence, when we attain the One in Truth (which Truth is also called Logos, or Word, or Son), then we attain the One as it is—[attain it,] that is, in a precise Likeness.²¹ And so, to attain the One is to attain it as it is attainable *by the intellect*, although in and of itself [the One] surpasses every intellect. And when [the One] is thus attained by the intellect, then the intellectual life, which cannot then perish, is at rest in Truth and is made happy in Truth. And so, the part²² of the One Necessary Thing that is chosen will never be taken away from this soul. Moreover, since the sacred text of the Gospel²³ instructs us that Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and heard His teaching, we ought to infer from this [passage] that these words of Christ were [spoken] in order that he might *instruct* Mary, who [elsewhere] is said to be an illumined tower. [The words were meant to instruct her] that [our rational] spirit—which desires, with respect to the inner desires of its nature, the immortality of the intellectual life—is like an illumined tower. [It is like this] when it has been instructed [and] when it knows that that which it seeks is One Thing, which is not found in a discrete plurality, although without the One there could not exist anything.

[17] By analogy, suppose that the living eye wished to seek the true source of its life in order to know from whence it truly is alive. [In order to do so,] the eye ought not to turn toward any other one of the members of the body, as if the eye had life from that member. For no such member is the cause, or basis, of the eye's life, even though the members might seem to persuade the eye that they give life. For example, the hands, which administer food, [might therefore seem to be persuasive]—as might also the stomach, which digests, and the mouth and the teeth and all the other members that seem to work cooperatively so that the eye might be alive. But, indeed, none of these rather distinct living members are the true life of the eye; instead, in their own way they are partakers of the eye's true life. Each of them has life in its own way after the fashion of the life-source toward which they [all] are turned and in which they rest [and] which they all serve. For together with the eye they are alive by means of one life, viz., the soul. Accordingly, if the eye were to judge that the source of its life is in these several members, and if it were to find that the life in them is perturbed, it itself would be perturbed to have judged that the true source of its life is in corruptible things.

Hence, when [the eye] sees that the hand becomes lacking in life

because the hand withers and when it sees that nevertheless it itself is still alive, then it knows that the life of the [bodily] members depends on a truer life that does not fail in its own true being, even if the member perishes. Therefore, [the eye] turns toward the one life by a partaking of which the entire life of the members is that which it is. [The eye turns] as if toward the singular and necessary cause [of the life] of all living members. In particular, [it turns] toward the soul, and it chooses the soul as the best part. [The eye turns toward the soul] as toward the true source of its life, and it cherishes the soul and loves it as being the source of its life. And life is not taken away from the eye as long as the eye remains united, in a oneness, to the life of the soul. And thereupon the eye recognizes that the living members—such as the living hand, the stomach, etc.—have the state of being alive for the purpose of being useful to [the source] of their life, not for the purpose of conferring life.

[18] The intellect is present in man as God is present in the world; for the intellect is not imbedded but is independent. The one intellect summons all things unto itself in order that they may live in the oneness of its life. But its oneness is unmultipliable. Therefore, all the members of a man, by partaking in their own way of the intellect's life, have life in the likeness of the intellect's life. Now, the intellectual life of the soul imparts itself in an equal way [and] as something one. But in the different members it is found in various degrees of likeness. For [it is present] in one way and very obscurely in strands of hair and in nails [of the fingers and toes]. [It is present] in another way, and somewhat more obviously, in the hands—and present still more apparently in the eyes. The Absolute One is related in a similar way to all the members of this present world, each of which members in its own way is one in the likeness of the Absolute One. And just as one intellect enfolds, in its oneness, all things unitedly in its own way, viz., intellectually, so the Absolute One [enfolds] all things unitedly in an absolute way. And just as from the things unfolded by the intellect we are led in a unitive way unto the enfolding, so that to some extent we can attain [a knowledge of] the oneness of the intellect, so from the many onenesses [of the things in the world] we are elevated in a unitive way unto [a knowledge of] the Absolute One, so that as a result we arrive at the One Necessary Thing, which is the Best because of the fact that it is the Super-exalted One. For it is of the nature of the good to *summon unto itself* and to *make good*. Because the good is one, whose nature is to unite: the Best is the Absolute One, which is exact-

ly and supremely and perfectly identical [to the Best].

[19] If, then, Mary Magdalene,²⁴ seated at Jesus's feet, came—as a result of having heard His words—unto a choosing of the Best in her own way, viz., as Mary Magdalene: how excellently the Virgin Mary, when elevated above all the heavens, was brought to a choosing of the Best—she who merited to be the mother of Jesus and of the Word and Light and Reason and Truth! O how highly above all intellectual visions she saw that One Invisible [Being], and how she tasted, with a healthy palate, of the one Fount of life! If David was elevated to the point of having said “Taste and see that the Lord is pleasant!”²⁵ then, as is right, the higher [the Virgin Mary] was than all the prophets, the more perfectly she saw and tasted of Him with whom is the Fount of [all] good, Him who alone is the One Good that all things seek. Therefore, she chose this best part, which shall not be taken away from her, since to choose is to unite.

[20] Therefore, Mary's power-of-choice, viz., her intellectual spirit, was united to the Best. Therefore, her soul cannot be turned away from the Best, which is worthy of choice in and of itself [and] which is the Cause of her choice. If all things naturally seek the good, then after the intellect has intellectually chosen the best, it can never fail to keep choosing it. But it chooses intellectually when it has intellectually foretasted that the Best is the One Necessary Thing. Now, this tasting comes by way of an administering of a refection to the life of the [intellectual] spirit. This [refection] occurs by means of an enlightening from the word-of-God, which *enlightens*—as Mary Magdalene was enlightened while she sat listening to Jesus's word. Hence, although many daughters, or rational souls, who were enlightened by the word of life by way of choosing the Best have gathered riches: only that most enlightened-Tower—Mary, the God-Bearer—surpassed all [souls], so that with respect to excellence there rightly befits *her* that which the Gospel states that the sinner Mary Magdalene obtained.

This [suffices] as regards the first part [of the sermon].

II

[21] In the second place, our text from the sacred Gospel can be construed [in such a way] that it expresses the vital endeavor of every Christian. And this [endeavor can be construed] in a manner such [as Mary's] or in a similar manner [to hers]. For after Jesus had entered into this world as into a certain town of the universe, He was received

in a house of the town, viz., in the Church, which is called His house. Now, in the house where Jesus was received there are two sisters, who symbolize [two] endeavors of the Christian man. Although these [endeavors] are different [from each other], nevertheless they occur in the same house of the two sisters: the one endeavor concerns love of neighbor; the other concerns love of God. As regards love of neighbor, the endeavor is symbolized in Martha, who received Jesus and who was busy with much serving. Hence, the works that we do for Christ—whom, in and through our neighbor,²⁶ we feed, give drink to, [and] visit—are works-of-Christians that are pleasing to God. For [they are] works of mercy done to our neighbor [and] done in love for Christ's sake.

[22] But [these works] produce very much perturbation because disinclination of mind is sometimes present during the ministering. Or [there is perturbation] because of the flesh's weakness or because of a lack of supplies to be ministered or because of the insistence and disobedience of those to whom one is supposed to minister or because of many other obstacles that often cause disturbance. For example, there are instances of bodily fatigue; there is listlessness, is lukewarmness, and so on. Nevertheless, that [kind of] life is pleasing to God and is quite meritorious in proportion to the degree of love that the one who does the works has. And [that kind of life] ought to be the life of those who wish to make progress as Christians. For according to Gregory²⁷ it is necessary that Christians prove themselves in the field of actions by means of physical and spiritual works of mercy and necessary that they busy themselves with much serving of Christ by means of such holy endeavors. [It is necessary] in order that hereby they may arrive at a Christ-like fixed disposition, viz., humility and gentleness of heart, so that they can turn completely to the Best and to the One Necessary Thing once the perturbations are overcome and the hardships are dissipated.

[23] Secondly, there is the life that follows the foregoing life. [It involves] a clinging solely to God by means of godly love—after, indeed, [there are ended] the labors of the active life, in which through righteous endeavors one has subdued the flesh and has, from the benefits conferred on him by God, shown himself merciful to his neighbor in terms of love. As a result, the following have no place in him: neither greed nor pride nor lust nor gluttony nor sloth nor anger nor envy.²⁸ Rather, [there has place] only the humble desire to arrive at the sabbath-

-of-rest [and] to be free of labor in this world and to see that the Lord is pleasant.²⁹ For at that point, having become of firm disposition in the sweetness of holy prayers and having in remorse of heart left behind the cares of the world [and while dwelling] only in love for God, he aims with the eye of his mind at the joy of happiness, [and] he foretastes it with great fervor of desire; [and] in ecstasy he elevates himself sublimely unto it, insofar as [this elevation] is granted by Divine gift. This [attainment] is the best part of the Christian life—a part that will not be taken away. For [the attainment] is begun here on earth and is perfected in eternity. But it is begun here below by sitting at Jesus's feet and meditating on Jesus's humility—by meditating on how He entered into this world and walked in it, not [by meditating] perfunctorily but by putting on that form [of Christ-like humility] and by receiving in the ear of our heart Christ's word.

[24] Now, the word that emanates from the Godhead is not of this present world but is of the other world, so that a contemplative who is thus inflamed with the desire for happiness posits his entire course of conduct in Heaven. For when in this way [the contemplative] yearns for Heavenly things—[yearns] with his whole heart and from out of the warmth of love—then his heart is expanded, and, by the attestation of his consciousness, God is sensed to be present and God is seen spiritually with the eye-of-the-soul, which is the intellect. For where He is fervently desired, He is present; and there he makes His abode³⁰ and conveys Himself unto those holy souls. From this pleasing visitation—by which, as a sudden flash of lightening, [God] shows Himself to be present—there arises an elevation of the mind. And [the contemplative] begins to become drowsy between the arms of his Beloved, so that he clings not only delightedly but also tightly to the Beloved. Thus, he is drawn away, as if by a certain force, from the perception and the memory of all visible things. And he almost forgets himself,³¹ in accordance with the Canticle: “I sleep, and my heart watches, like one who is drowsy but not yet asleep.”³² And this love for God, when it is grounded in understanding, intoxicates the mind and glues the mind to God, once it is free from outer objects. And the more robust the love and the more lucid the understanding, the more strongly [the love] wrests the mind [away from the world and] unto itself—until the point, at length, that [the mind] casts aside all that is beneath God and remains dwelling as if amid gleaming light.

[25] The mind, by itself, can just barely think of few things.

[But] when it is lifted upwards by a flash of Heavenly light, then it sees many things at once in proportion to its being loftily elevated beyond itself. And because the body is a load upon the mind and presses it down,³³ and because the affairs of this world call the soul back toward itself, [the soul] cries out with Paul: “O wretched man that I am! Who shall free me from the body of this death?”³⁴ For the contemplative soul will suddenly lapse back toward lower things and [will] be [now] fed from the memory of the [lofty] things that it has agreeably seen. In this way devout men attain slightly and privily some measure of the uncircumscribed light; and, according to St. Gregory,³⁵ they return, sighing, to their own darkness. And at this stage different kinds of devoutness manifest themselves: viz., joyous shouting, intoxication of spirit, melting, and spiritual delight. Thereupon, one comes to mental alienation—at times because of the magnitude of the devotion, at times because of the magnitude of the amazement, at times because of the magnitude of the exultation—so that the man’s mind does not apprehend itself but, rather, passes over into alienation because it is elevated beyond itself. For the flame that has increased beyond human measure melts the mind of man like wax, even as the brilliant light beclouds the sight. And oftentimes because of the stunningness of the Heavenly beauty [the mind] is alienated due to the magnitude of its exultation when it tastes of the inmost [delights] of Heavenly sweetness. And [the soul] is led unto alienation-of-mind because of its excessiveness of joy. And as long as we do not detect these [states] in ourselves, we are [in a lower state of] loving less intensely, since these [previous states] result from ardent love.

[26] Now, these stages of contemplation can be detected from the Gospel-passage. For the lowest stage of [the heart’s] expansion is detected in the sitting at Jesus’s feet. For love caused [Mary] to sit and to be prepared for receiving the word of her Beloved. The second stage of the mind’s elevation is observed in the fact that [Mary’s] mind was nourished by the word of life³⁶ and was uplifted so that it beheld the true Life.³⁷ The third stage of separation [from the world] is observed in the choosing of the Best. For the mind to which Heavenly Life was shown, passed over into alienation from itself by choosing that Best Life.

[27] However, among all men Mary the God-Bearer had the best part in respect both to the active [life] and to the contemplative [life]. For she was most holy, because she was a tabernacle sanctified for the

Most High. Hence, she was the true “Martha” who welcomed the Word of God into her house and who was busy with much serving and who performed works of mercy in the highest degree. For these works [of mercy] have degrees because of their greater [or lesser degree of] love or because [they are done] for one who is more needy or for a needy one who is more worthy or because of the greater effort spent or because [the work is] more necessary and less indispensable; therefore, all these [factors] came together in the highest degree in the Virgin Mary. For in her was the greatest love, [and] she aided Him who was the neediest of all creatures, because no one among wayfarers was poorer than was Jesus. [And] she aided a pauper who was most worthy, because no one is a more worthy mendicant than was Jesus. For a work of mercy is greater if it is done for a bishop rather than for a layman—assuming that both are equally needy. Hence, the greatest work [is that which is done] for God. [The Virgin Mary] engaged in the maximum act of mercy. For, as an instance of good works: [through giving birth] she gave God as a ransom for wretched captives. [She gave Him] as a provision for the hungry, as a reward for those who labor, as medicine for the sick. And along with Him she gave the Kingdom of Heaven. She did works of mercy that were not of a dispensable kind but that were of a necessary kind. She made for her Son, who was very poor and a pilgrim, a tunic embroidered with her own blood. She lodged Him in the core of her womb; from her own body she fed Him and gave Him milk to drink.

[28] Moreover, Mary was, in all excellence, the contemplative about whom the beloved in the Canticles is seen to say: “Who is she who goes up by way of the desert ...?,” etc.,³⁸ and “Who is she who comes forth as the morning rising ...?,” etc.³⁹ and “Who is this who comes up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning on her beloved?”⁴⁰ But after she had tasted, with an intellectual tasting, the agreeableness of the One—[tasted, with the intellect, of this pleasantness] more deeply and more lucidly than all others—she passed beyond all contemplation. For God can be loved most greatly only when He is attained most greatly by the intellect.

Although some men might, in a rapture, at some time taste of the [refreshing] moistness that comes down into their mouth from the head of the divinity, nevertheless their stomach cannot take it in, because their mind is occupied with cares and is through its memory beclouded with images. [Their mind] does not return to its full powers because it is drawn away by desires. Moreover, it fails to turn back toward itself

through a desire for eternal salvation. And if it does turn back [toward itself], this [movement] occurs with great difficulty, since it did not previously taste rightly and fully of the pleasantness of the Lord, (as Gregory, in his *Moralia* [speaks] about this matter).⁴¹ However, Blessed Mary tasted fully [thereof], being inflamed with eternal desire that was free of satiety. She hungered and thirsted more and more for the apprehension—in an eternal embrace—of such a great good. Hence, [her desire] was always increasing; and so, the best part, [viz., the apprehension,] was never taken away from her.

This [suffices] as regards the second part [of the sermon].

III

[29] Thirdly, the Gospel-passage can be construed [as teaching] that Jesus discloses to us what we are to expect after this present lifetime. Thus, then, with regard to the words of our theme-text, a threefold understanding will suffice us for now, although many other [construals] can be given.

In the theme-text [the name] “Mary” is mentioned. The interpretation of “Mary” is *enlightenment*, so that, therefore, we may infer the enlightenment of an inquiring intellect—even as we touched upon in the first part [of the sermon]. Next, there is said: “She chose the best part,” so that we may infer what ought to be more choice-worthy for a Christ-like affection; and we touched upon this [topic] in the second [part of the sermon]. Lastly, there is added [in the verse]: “... which shall not be taken away from her.” And in accordance with this [portion of text] we ought to infer what the outcome of the journey of our soul will be with respect to the soul’s powers—i.e., with respect to the intellect [and] the affections. Let me now add a few things about this [topic].

[30] Accordingly, we know, first of all, that works of mercy that are greatly troublesome are not found in the Kingdom of the next world—[a Kingdom] that is a Kingdom of peace. For *there* no one is needy. Hence, all the works that can be done in this present world—no matter how praiseworthy they are—do not continue on [in the next world] but rather cease. And eternal peace is not at all bestowed on account of these [works], since they contain nothing of the eternal. Rather, only love—whose works are signs—is that which neither falters nor fails when the works cease; instead, [love] is of the same domain as is the immortal soul, which it does not forsake, since the

soul is rooted in it.⁴² For just as the life of the soul gives life to a man, and just as the life of a man is rooted in the life of the soul, so love is the life of the soul. And the life of the rational soul, insofar as it is rational, is rooted in love.

[31] But love is a power that unites the soul's affections to the *soul's own life*, which is the One, the True, and the Good. (Similarly, the *life of the perceptible body* consists of a union with the sensing soul. This bond [of union] is called love.) Hence, powerlessness to perform works of love does not hinder the union of the soul with the soul's own life. But he who wills to attain love must know where he ought to look for the life of the soul. For if [only] he can find that [life], he can but love it. And, hence, the Gospel-text teaches us that only One Thing is Necessary in order for all things to be that which they are or that which they desire to be. If after this One Thing is known it is chosen, then this [choosing] occurs because of love and a loving will. Thereupon, the one who is choosing is united to the One Thing and will never be separated from this Thing best-chosen by him.

[32] Hence, from this Gospel-text we know that the soul which does not turn to the One Necessary Thing and choose it, but which turns to whatever other things, will never be at peace. For whatever things [the soul] chooses other than the One cannot bestow on it a restful life, since they do not have it to give. There is but one Fount-of-life that can give [life] abundantly. But whatever is chosen other than the One Necessary Thing will be taken away. And death for the loving soul is this: [viz., the condition that obtains] when the beloved is taken away—even as death for sight that sees occurs when the visible object is taken away. For then the eye sees nothing—not because the eye has been blinded but because what is visible has ceased for it. Similarly, the stomach does not cease desiring food when food is taken away; however, the stomach is afflicted the more greatly because it is hungrier and has less food. Likewise, the absence [of what is true] or the turning away from the true is the death of the intellect, because [the intellect] does not have that on which to feed.

[33] Thus, then, in accordance with the fervor of its love the soul is joined to its own Life, which, since it is the unfailing Fount of life, shall not be taken away from it. Now, since the soul obtains happiness in proportion to its degree of love, it is self-evident that the Virgin Mary obtained happiness more than did all other spirits. For, as God attested through the angel, she obtained full grace by means of a very

deep partaking of the absolute fullness of the Incarnate Word within her. And for this reason the saints continue to chant her praises. Jerome, writing to Paula and Eustochius, speaks as follows: “If any saints have obtained grace so that they were conveyed to the Heavenly homeland with triumph by means of hymn-singing choirs of angels, then such an accompaniment was not lacking to Mary, whom, we are to believe, a multitude-of-Heavenly-spirits—terrible as an army set in array⁴³—led into the palace of Heaven.”⁴⁴

[34] Albert,⁴⁵ says a similar thing, when he tells of the privileges of other saints: [there were those] who foreknew of their death (e.g., Martinus), [those] who died without pain (e.g., John), who were immediately assumed into Glory, who did not experience corruption [of body], etc. The Ark of the Testament, in which was manna, etc., was made of pieces of setim wood,⁴⁶ which are not corrupted. This [Ark] befigures Mary, whom John in the Apocalypse saw in Heaven, etc.⁴⁷ Hence, as David led the Ark in triumph,⁴⁸ so too we are to believe that Christ led the Ark of His resting place, in accordance with this [text]: “Arise unto [your] resting place—you and the ark of your sanctification.”⁴⁹ If the saints obtained crowns and golden wreaths, etc., then in all [these respects] Mary was exalted above all [these saints]. And in the Apocalypse John saw this great sign in Heaven: [viz.,] a woman clothed with the sun [and] having the moon under her feet [and] crowned ...,” etc.⁵⁰

(Here let there be added a pleasing contemplation of Mary’s death and of her ascension, through choirs of angels, to the point where the Queen stood at [God’s] right hand in the gilded clothing of eternal glory.⁵¹ Christ, her ever-blessed Son, leads us to her, at her entreaty.)

NOTES TO *Maria Optimam Partem Elegit*

* Sermon LXXI.

1. Luke 10:42: “But one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

2. Monday, August 15, 1446 was the feast-day of the Assumption of Mary.

3. Nicholas here wrongly supposes that Mary the sister of Martha is Mary Magdalene.

4. Romans 15:4.

5. The three topics are enlightenment, choice, and happiness. Three other topics are (1) the rational spirit’s choosing the best part; (2) the Virgin Mary’s choosing the best part; and (3) the intellectual nature’s obtaining happiness.

6. John 1:9.

7. John 14:6.

8. The notion that the body is a prison for the soul is the Pythagorean theme of σῶμα σῆμα, a theme picked up by Plato.

9. Colossians 1:16-17.

10. Cf. I John 3:2. See also Nicholas’s *Sermo* IV (3 2:26-28), which makes clear his view that we will never (not even in Heaven) know *what* God is. In the passage above, Nicholas is teaching that the believer’s reason will one day be a closer “mirroring” of the Divine Reason. Yet, this mirroring yields only a finite image, which is infinitely other than the mirrored Infinite Reason.

11. Dominicus Gundissalinus. See *Die dem Boethius fälschlich zugeschriebene Abhandlung des Dominicus Gundisalvi De Unitate*. Edited by Paul Correns. [Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters, Vol. I (1891), Heft 1], p. 3, lines 8-9.

12. Pseudo-Dionysius. *De Divinis Nominibus*, XIII, 2 [*Dionysiaca*, Vol. I, p. 540 (*Patrologia Graeca* 3:978)].

13. Nicholas is alluding to the German word “ein” (and its endings)—a word that both (1) means *one* and (2) functions as the indefinite article. For example, “ein Mann” can mean either *one man* or *a man*. Sometimes nowadays “ein” will be italicized in order to show clearly that it is being used as a numeral and not as the indefinite article—should the use not be immediately clear.

14. “... inco-ordinately”: i.e., disproportionately.

15. In this section Nicholas alludes to God, who is supremely one, who is Infinite Oneness. Yet, Nicholas is also, at the same time, speaking of oneness and one in a non-theological sense, i.e., in the ordinary sense.

16. By “all things” Nicholas here (as also elsewhere) means all finite things, all things other than God.

17. See n. 16 above.

18. See the quotations from Pseudo-Dionysius that are found in Nicholas’s *De Li Non Aliud* 14 (70), my edition.

19. Here (at 1 3:16) I am reading, with the Paris printed edition, “Hinc” in place of “Hic”.

20. Here (at 1 4:17) I am reading, with the Paris printed edition, “modum” in place of “modo”.

21. II Corinthians 4:4. Colossians 1:15. Christ is the perfect Likeness of the Father qua God.
22. God has no parts. We apprehend God as having aspects, attributes.
23. Luke 10:42 and surrounding sentences.
24. See n. 3 above.
25. Psalms 33:9 (34:8). Cf. I Peter 2:3.
26. Matthew 26:31-46.
27. Gregory the Great, *Moralium Libri* (= *Expositio in Librum B. Job*), VI, 37, 59 (PL 75:763C).
28. This is a listing of the seven deadly sins as found in the High Middle Ages. This list has several variants. Sometimes the capital sins are numbered at eight.
29. See n. 25 above.
30. John 14:23.
31. Nicholas is influenced by Pseudo-Dionysius partly by way of Hugh of Balma. See *Hugh of Balma on Mystical Theology: A Translation and an Overview of his De Theologica Mystica*, edited, introduced, and translated by J. Hopkins (Minneapolis: Banning, 2002).
32. Cantic of Canticles (Song of Solomon) 5:2. Nicholas is *alluding to* this verse rather than attempting to quote it exactly.
33. Wisdom 9:15.
34. Romans 7:24.
35. Gregory the Great, *In Ezechielem Prophetam*, II, 2, 12 (PL 76:955AB).
36. Cf. John 6:69.
37. John 14:6.
38. Cantic of Canticles (Song of Solomon) 3:6.
39. Cantic of Canticles (Song of Solomon) 6:9.
40. Cantic of Canticles (Song of Solomon) 8:5. Here (at **2 8:6**) I am reading, with the Clementine Vulgate Bible, “deliciis” and “innixa” in place of “deliciarum” and “enixa”.
41. Gregory the Great, *Moralium Libri*, *op. cit.* (n. 27 above); see, perhaps, Book XXXI, Chapter 12, n. 19 (PL 76:583-584).
42. Ephesians 3:17.
43. Cantic of Canticles 6:3 (Song of Solomon 6:4).
44. This passage comes not from Jerome but from Paschasius Radbertus. The letter was falsely ascribed to Jerome: *Epistola Beati Hieronymi ad Paulam et Eustochium de Assumptione Sanctae Mariae Virginis*.
45. Pseudo-Albertus Magnus, *Mariale*, chapters 169-172.
46. Exodus 25:10. Hebrews 9:4.
47. Apocalypse (Revelation) 11:19.
48. II Kings (II Samuel) 6:12-17.
49. Psalms 131:8 (132:8).
50. Apocalypse (Revelation) 12:1.
51. Psalms 44:10 (49:9).

Tota Pulcra Es, Amica Mea*
("You Are All-fair, O My Love.")¹
[September 8, 1456; preached in Brixen]²

[1] "You are all-fair, O my love, and there is no blemish in you"

Since we are celebrating the joyous birth of the glorious Virgin and are singing the [foregoing] thematic words, our sermon will be about beauty. [2] To begin with, there comes to mind the statement of Dionysius (where he discusses beauty):³ viz., that we are to note that in Greek the word for the good is "*kalos*" but the word for the beautiful is "*kallos*"—as if the good and the beautiful were cognates. Now, "*kalo*" in Greek is "*voco*" in Latin, for the good calls [things] unto itself and attracts [them], as does also the beautiful. Furthermore, the beautiful is called "*formosum*" (from *forma*) and "*speciosum*" (from *species*) and "*decorum*" (from *decorum*, or *decet*, for that which is fitting is comely and beautiful).⁴

[3] Now, if we are attentive, then with our more immaterial powers-of-sense, with which we pursue teachings, we [will] arrive at things beautiful in their own way. For we say that color and shape have beauty and, likewise, that a sound, a song, and a spoken word have beauty. Thus, sight and hearing attain unto beauty in some measure. [But] we do not call an odor beautiful or a taste beautiful or sensations of touch beautiful. For these senses are not so similar in nature to the rational spirit; for they are merely brute-senses, or animal-senses. Now, all of man's senses—because of their union with the intellectual spirit—are more noble than are [the corresponding senses] in brute animals. For the quite noble power makes what is united to it noble, even as sunlight illumines the air. Now, the senses that are the more discriminating have a closer union with the intellect. Hence, sight is attracted by beautiful form and color, as hearing is by beautiful harmony. And this [fact] is true in the case of man because reason, which takes pleasure in proportions, shines forth in these senses in a more proximate way. And so, things proportioned and well ordered—i.e., where a unity of proportion or of harmony shines forth amid the plurality—are pleasing.

[4] The same Dionysius says⁵ that the form [*ratio*] of beauty consists in a certain agreement of different things with one another. He writes⁶ that there are certain divine processions into creatures whereby creatures are perfected into a divine likeness since the processions

go forth in a formal way (just as from what is at first hot other things [are made] hot). Now, the first procession, which occurs with respect to the mind, occurs in accordance with the apprehension of what is true. Next, that [apprehended] truth glows and is received under the aspect [*ratio*] of the good; and, thus, at length, desire is directed toward it. For a twofold apprehension must precede the motion of desire: [there is] one apprehension that occurs on the part of the speculative intellect [and] is apprehension of what is true *simpliciter*; [there is] another apprehension that occurs on the part of the practical intellect [and occurs] through a further consideration of the true under the aspect of the good. Only then does there arise the motion of desire-for-the-good. [5] And Albert [Magnus] adds—over and above Dionysius (whose words these are)—the example that just as the art of medicine does not obtain its effectiveness-in-working unless it is aided by the power of nature, so too desire is not moved unless it is guided by an apprehension of the true.⁷ To the apprehension of the true there corresponds the procession of light; to the apprehension of the true under the aspect of the good there corresponds the procession of the beautiful; to the motion of desire there corresponds the procession of the loveable—according as Dionysius treats of these in ordered relation.

[6] And Tully in Book One of his *Moral Obligations* defines the *beautiful qua intrinsic goodness* as, namely, that which draws us by its own power and attracts us by its worth.⁸ Hence, we must consider that the beautiful, in its essence, includes three things: [First, it includes] excellence of form (whether substantial or accidental form) with regard to the parts of the material object that are proportioned and delimited. (E.g., a material object is called beautiful because of excellence of color as concerns its proportioned members.) Secondly, [beauty includes] the fact that it draws desire toward itself. (The beautiful has this characteristic insofar as it is something good and is an end-goal.) Thirdly, [the beautiful includes] the fact that it gathers all things together. (And this is said with reference to the form, whose excellence makes [the object] beautiful. But beauty in and of itself is that which through its own essence both is the cause-of-beauty and produces all beauty. [7] Therefore, the beautiful and the intrinsically good are the same thing by reason of their subject. But they differ by reason of the fact that, in general, the essence of the beautiful consists in the excellence-of-form in the parts that are proportioned to the material object—i.e., in the different material objects or the different actions. [But] the essence of the intrinsically good consists in the fact that it

draws desire unto itself. According to Dionysius beauty and the beautiful are identical in God. For in God Beauty is supreme-and-primary beauty, from which emanates the nature of beauty in all beautiful things. [In God Beauty] is the Form of beautiful things; for it makes all beautiful things beautiful, even as whiteness [makes all white things] white. The essence of God—which *is* God—is, according to Albertus [Magnus], supreme-and-primary Beauty.

[8] In everything beautiful there are present agreement (i.e., proportion) and manifestness. Agreement is present as subject; manifestness is present as essence. Virtue has within itself manifestness, through which it is beautiful. Even if virtue were unrecognized by anyone, nevertheless it would still have a proneness for coming to be known manifestly. Accordingly, Tully called the intrinsically good *beautiful*. [9] The beautiful, through the essence of its subject, is joined with the good. And so, all things desire beauty. It is of the essence of the good that it be the goal of desire, moving desire toward itself. And so, the [following] definition is given by the Philosopher: the good is that which all things desire.⁹ The *intrinsically* good adds to the [concept of the] good the idea that the good draws us by its own power and worthiness. The *beautiful* further adds, to certain well-proportioned things, a certain illustriousness and manifestness. Hence, there befits beauty—qua an end and qua a good—to call things unto itself. [There befits beauty]—qua form—to unite things to itself; for it properly befits form to unite, because form unites multiple potencies of matter and confines them in one thing. Insofar as beauty is an end, it summons unto itself. Beauty that depends only on one form is of more perfect beauty than is that thing whose beauty is produced from more than one form. For the more something receives its perfection from fewer things, the more noble it is.

[10] Next, Dionysius deals with the fact that the beautiful (which is convertible with the good) is the cause of all the movements of spirits—which, indeed, are moved by desire. Therefore, properly speaking, desire is on the part of a spirit. When the beauty of the good is shown to an angel, he attempts eagerly to reveal it and to return as quickly as possible to enjoying it—so that in this way the circle is closed. The showing occurs in the center. The descending of the revelation is the movement, by means of a straight line, toward the extremes—i.e., is the way of providence. Then the return is like a sideways movement, so that in the beauty of goodness the circle is com-

pleted. Just as someone by whom a treasure is discovered shares his delight with a friend as quickly as possible and then returns to counting and enjoying the treasure, so angels move circularly—in a straight direction and [then] in a bending direction—as do souls, which likewise move by a great number of motions.

[11] When the sun illumines sight so that by means of the sun sight sees colors, then if sight wishes to gaze upon the light of the sun, it turns away from all colored objects. Similarly, the soul, because of the light of the active intellect, sees particular things. And when it wishes to gaze upon the light itself, it turns away from particular things and likewise returns to the primary light. According to Albertus [Magnus] this is a circular movement.¹⁰ For sight is comparable to the intellect; the light of the sun is comparable to the light of the active intellect; things understandable are comparable to colors. [12] The movement due to the beauty of the First occurs in a comparable way, as does the return to the First. For by means of the power of the divine light that glows within the active intellect, the active intellect *makes* all things.¹¹ Therefore, after the possible intellect has received the light of the active intellect and turns its gaze away from particular things back onto itself, then from the fact that it has received that which has furnished to it actual being, it reflects on the First in accordance with its understanding.

[13] The movement of all sensing things is from the beautiful unto the beautiful. The same fact holds true of all progressions, positionings, lives, senses, [as well as] of the soul, of nature, of smallnesses, largenesses, proportions, mixtures, properties—and of all things. For whatever is from the beautiful-and-good is also in the beautiful-and-good and turns toward the beautiful-and-good. And whatever all things are and become, they are and become on account of what is good-and-beautiful. And all things look toward it and are moved by it and are encompassed by it; and on account of it and through it and in it is every beginning from which instances are derived.

[14] And [Dionysius] concludes by saying: “Now, to summarize: all existing things are [from] the beautiful-and-good; and all non-existing things are super-substantially in the beautiful-and-good, and the latter is the beginning and the end of all things.”¹² And, later, [Dionysius states]: “Therefore, the beautiful-and-good is apprehended by all as desirable and lovable; and through it and on account of it inferior things love more excellent things by way of turning [toward them]. And things socially equal love similar things; and more excellent

things provide for, and are joined by love to, less excellent things. And individual things love one another by reason of their constancy and contiguity; and whatsoever they do and will, they do and will out of desire for the beautiful-and-good.”¹³

[15] He concludes as follows: “Furthermore, we will say confidently, on a very firm basis, that even the Author of all things, because of His great goodness, loves all things, makes all things, perfects all things, encompasses all things, and turns all things [toward the good].”¹⁴ Amply and with multiple terms, that great Areopagite teaches us that the good (which all things seek) and the absolutely beautiful (which *is* beauty) are one and the same thing. He sets out the properties of absolute goodness, exemplifying them by [the illustration of] the sun. And then he turns his attention from perceptible light to intelligible light, noting how it is that that light affects intellectual spirits after the fashion of the sun’s affecting the sensory nature. Assuredly, all the things that he writes about the beautiful are themselves beautiful.

[16] Let us note how it is that by means of our more immaterial senses, viz., sight and hearing, we arrive at the final stage of the resplendence of the beautiful, so that the intellectual spirit is moved by wonder. And [the intellectual spirit’s] potency is stimulated so that that spirit proceeds to the act of hastening intellectually toward the beautiful at which it has arrived, to a very small extent, by way of the sense [of sight or of hearing]. (By comparison, he who with the tip of his tongue has made contact, foretastingly, with what is sweet is moved to take his fill of it.) For all things seek the good, which is also the beautiful; and they turn toward it—each thing in accordance with its own nature—either in terms of their existing or in terms of their being alive or in terms of their being intellects. [17] Now, because the intellectual nature partakes intellectually of the nature of the beautiful-and-good (since this is its form), it can be nourished and kept alive only by the in-flow of the beautiful-and-good. Therefore, its life consists in the good-and-beautiful, which it beholds and tastes intellectually.

[18] Now, in all things that flourish by means of reasoning we experience there to be a power of judgment that is concerned with the beautiful. For example, [these rational beings] call this circular shape beautiful, that rose beautiful, this piece of wood beautiful, this song beautiful. Hence, unless the judge, i.e., the intellect, had within itself a representation-of-beauty¹⁵ that enfolded all perceptible beauty, it could not judge between beautiful things, saying this one to be beauti-

ful, that one to be more beautiful. Therefore, the intellect is a certain universal beauty or universal representation of [perceptual] representations, since the [perceptual] representations are contracted beauties. And as fire enfolds within itself the form and nature (*species*) of all hot things, so the intellect is a power that enfolds all intelligible forms [*species intelligibiles*].¹⁶ For intellectual nature—which is the first irradiation of the beautiful, in that it is the image of God, who is Beauty itself in an antecedent way—enfolds within itself [conceptually] all the natural instances of beauty that are unfolded in the universe through their specific forms. [19] Absolute Beauty, which is God, beholds itself and is ardently filled with love for itself. For the Fount of all beautiful things, a Fount that all beautiful things rightly call their Father—how could it be Supreme Beauty if it did not know itself to be beautiful? (For the intellect is more beautiful than are the senses.) Therefore, Infinite Beauty cannot fail to know itself. Hence, if Beauty beholds (i.e., understands) itself, then only Infinite Love can follow therefrom. Here, then—where the *Fount of Beauty* begets *Understanding of Beauty*, from both of which comes *Love [of Beauty]*—is a Trinity in the oneness of the essence of Beauty.

[20] This eye of ours sees itself only in the reflection of a mirror. By contrast, the spirit does not see other things unless it first sees itself, for through itself it sees other things. Similarly, if sight, which is in the eye, were the intellect, it would first see itself and would [then] see other things within itself. For the intellectual nature knows that it is intellectual (otherwise, it would not be intellectual); and this knowing is its seeing itself. And after [seeing, or knowing, itself], it intellectually sees within itself other things, even as within themselves the senses arrive perceptually at perceptible things. [21] Therefore, Beauty, which is alive with divine and eternal life, which is Life itself, which is God, willed to make manifest its glory, which is a form of beauty. And [Beauty did] this because Beauty is Goodness. Now, the good diffuses itself. Similarly, Beauty—summoning unto itself not-being in order that not-being would manifest Beauty's glory and would partake of Goodness and Beauty—created all things. Beauty attracts unto itself. Therefore, as regards everything attracted from not-being by Beauty: insofar as from not-being it approaches Beauty, it comes from not-being unto being. Hence, there is not anything that is devoid of beauty, just as there is not anything that is devoid of goodness. [22] Therefore, form, which gives being, is only a partaking of beauty. Hence, the gradations-of-beings accord with their resemblance to beauty. By means

of accidental beauty—at which we arrive by way of the senses [and] which is present in the outward appearances and outer shapes—we arrive at the beauty of substantial form. All existing things are works on the part of Absolute Beauty; these works are formed in the likeness of Absolute Beauty. And this formation is their attractiveness.

[23] The Prophets say that the Israelites sat in the beauty of peace.¹⁷ Elsewhere we read about the beauty of justice.¹⁸ David says that the beauty of the field is with God¹⁹ and that praise and beauty are in His sight.²⁰ From these [verses] we can infer that in the Kingdom of Beauty are present (1) all the beautiful things that exist and can exist, (2) the beauty of all the *being* of all existing things, the beauty of all the *life* of living things, and the beauty of all the *intellect* [of things that have intellect]. For just as in oneness every number is present in an enfolded way, and just as in number all proportion and all intermediateness are present enfoldedly, and just as in proportion all harmony and order and concordance [are enfolded]: so too, for this reason, [there is enfolded in oneness] all beauty, which shines forth in the ordering and the proportion and the concordance. [24] Hence, when we say that God is One, this One is Supersubstantial Oneness itself, which is also Beauty, enfolded in itself all things beautiful. We say that God is Light in which there is no darkness.²¹ Therefore, that Light is nothing other than Oneness; and if there were a simple name that signified Light that is Oneness, then [that name] would befit God. In this name would be enfolded all beauty—viz., [both] that which is something material in beauty (e.g., proportion) and that which is something formal (e.g., splendor). The former [would be enfolded] because [God is] Oneness; the latter, because [God is] Light.

[25] What are the powers of the heavens except instances of beauty within the Kingdom of God? Power is great insofar as it is beautiful. Things ugly do not belong to the Kingdom of Beauty. Souls' defects are only ugly blemishes that deform their beauty and that are not derived from Beauty; for from Primary Beauty there can emanate only things beautiful and good. Loveliness comes from the Giver of form; defectiveness comes from the recipients. [26] If the eye looks unto the Kingdom of Beauty, it sees the beauty of all beautiful things, in such a way that the beauty of the one thing does not displace the beauty of another thing. For beauty is not quantitative or small or large; rather, small things and large things are beautiful through beauty. If in the Kingdom of Heaven the beauty of the Kingdom [of Heaven] is

seen, or if the beauty of the hierarchy of the Church Militant is seen, then the beauty is seen there in its purity, above all contractedness due to place or time. In the Kingdom of Beauty the beauty of the truth of things, the beauty of places, of locations, and of all things is only spiritual and eternal. The beauty of innocence, the beauty of purity, of adolescence, of manliness, of chastity, of courage, and so on, are not commingled domains but are beautiful and well-ordered domains in the Kingdom of Heaven.

[27] The many mansions in the Kingdom are the beautiful virtues. In these mansions are placed the beauties of virtuous spirits, each spirit being in the region that befits it because of its imitation of virtue. For the twelve tribes of *Israel* (i.e., of *those who see God*) in the kingdom of *Jerusalem* (i.e., of the *vision of peace*) have, in the one kingdom, seats divided in accordance with the tribes; and there they are nourished by beauty in accordance with the beauty of virtue.

[28] In this beautiful world (which because of its beauty is called a cosmos) the intellectual spirit pursues the beauties of the virtues, with which it adorns its natural beauty. Love is the end-goal of beauty, which wishes to be loved. God is Beauty itself, because He wills to be loved. But beauty, which is lovable in and of itself, *is* love; and so, without love no one will see Absolute Beauty. [29] Our earnest desire ought to be to ascend from the beauty of perceptible things unto the beauty of our spirit—a beauty that encompasses all perceptible beauties. And from our beauty let us ascend admiringly unto the Fount of Beauty, to whom our beauty bears a likeness. And let us leave behind all things ugly, i.e., all sins. For our spirit attests that sins are hideous. (This testimony is called conscience.) And let us amidst our beauty aspire with continuous love to be conformed to the Fount of Beauty. For living, intellectual beauty, by beholding (or understanding) Absolute Beauty is brought to it by means of indescribable desire. And the more fervent its desire, the closer it approaches and the more and more it becomes like the Exemplar. For the desire, or love, continually transforms the one-who-loves into a likeness with the Beloved. And this ascending occurs by means of the attracting power of beauty, i.e., of God's glory. (For there is glory only in royal beauty.) To be amid glory is to be in the visual presence of beauty and to be united to it in love.

Let these things now have been said in the foregoing way regarding beauty.²²

[30] But our theme-topic—"You are all-fair . . .," etc.—must be

expounded as regards the soul: in all its powers and in its entirety of, and fullness of, perfection the soul comes from the vale of sorrows without blemish. The Bridegroom, who is Absolute Beauty, welcomes her with a very beautiful word, viz., by calling her His love. For the soul that loves Beauty so greatly that she gives her entire self to Beauty, so that no blemish is found in her—such a soul comes as the beloved into the embrace of Beauty. Therefore, these five words [“*Tota pulchra es, amica mea*”] can be interpreted broadly as words of the King of Beauty, who wills to have nothing short of the entire soul—beautiful in every respect [and] languid in her whole being because of love—as the most elect beloved-one only of Himself.

[31] Next, the words are applied to the glorious Virgin Mary, who assuredly, more than all other women, was totally and most perfectly beautiful in every manner of beauty. From the origin of her being, she gave herself, as bride, to Absolute Beauty. She was attracted—as the beloved, and over and above all other women—unto Supreme Beauty. Since she possesses the beauty of all the virtues, she drew nearer to the throne of the King of Beauty than did all other daughters of Jerusalem who, in the distribution of allotted duties, hold a seat in the circuit of Jerusalem. She approached as being the mother of the true King Solomon, viz., of the Beauty of eternal peace. Let us approach her with movements of devotion, so that she, being conscious of our weakness, may pray for us to her ever-blessed son, Jesus.

NOTES TO *Tota Pulchra Es, Amica Mea*

* Sermon CCXLIII.

1. Canticle of Canticles (Song of Solomon) 4:7. In the printed edition of Nicholas's Latin text the full sermon title, which I have abbreviated, is "Tota Pulchra Es, Amica Mea, et Macula Non Est in Te."

2. This was the feast-day of the Virgin Mary's birth.

3. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus*, 4, 7 (*Dionysiaca*, Vol. I, p. 180).

4. The Latin words all indicate loveliness, attractiveness, comeliness, congruence, and the like. A free translation would be: "... is called well-formed (from *form*) and lovely (from *appearance*) and decorous (from *congruence* ...)."

5. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus*, 4, 7 (*Dionysiaca*, Vol. I, pp. 183-184.)

6. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, 1, 1 (*Dionysiaca*, Vol. II, pp. 727-728. Nicholas borrows from Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium De Divinis Nominibus*, Chap. 4, Section 71, *solutio* [p. 181^b in Vol. 37 (edited by Paul Simon, 1972) of *Alberti Magni Opera Omnia* (Münster: Aschendorff)].

7. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium De Divinis Nominibus*, Chap. 4, *loc. cit.*

8. Cicero, *De Officiis*, I, 6, 18. Cicero's use of the word "*honestum*" can be translated by "an intrinsic good," "what is good in itself," "what is intrinsically valuable," "what is morally good," and the likes.

9. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, A, 1 (1094^a2-3).

10. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium De Divinis Nominibus*, Chap. 4, Section 103, *solutio* [p. 202^b in Vol. 37 (edited by Paul Simon, 1972) of *Alberti Magni Opera Omnia* (Münster: Aschendorff)].

11. The active intellect makes concepts from perceptual images by way of abstraction. Nicholas takes this view from the tradition of Albertus Magnus, Aquinas, and Aristotle.

12. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus*, 4, 10 (*Dionysiaca*, Vol. I, p. 198 (in the translation of Ambrose Traversari)).

13. Pseudo-Dionysius, *ibid.* (*Dionysiaca*, Vol. I, pp. 199--200).

14. Pseudo-Dionysius, *ibid.* (*Dionysiaca*, Vol. I, pp. 200-201).

15. That is, unless the intellect had within itself a concept of beauty

16. The intelligible forms are concepts.

17. Isaias (Isaiah) 32:18.

18. Jeremias (Jeremiah) 31:23, as worded in the Vulgate Latin text.

19. Psalms 49:11 (50:11), as worded in the Vulgate Latin text.

20. Psalms 95:6 (96:6), as worded in the Vulgate Latin text.

21. I John 1:5.

22. That is, let what has now been said about beauty suffice.

Non Sumus Ancillae Filii*
("We Are Not Children of the Bondwoman")¹
[March 27, 1457; preached in Brixen]

[1] "We are not children of the bondwoman but of the free [woman], by the freedom by which Christ has made us free."

The feast today is one of a certain gladness and is called *Laetare Sunday*. It is [also] called *Rose Sunday* [and] *Loaves of bread Sunday*. You know the reasons [for these epithets].

I

[2] We can rightly name [this] Sunday from "*laetitia*" because in the Epistle for [today's] mass the Apostle expresses for us those things that are joyous. For he says: 'Rejoice, O barren, for our mother is she in whom barrenness is fecundity—just as in Mary virginity was fecundity, because she brought forth a blessing for all nations. For the faith which in the case of Mary brought about these things is barren. [3] In the intellect there is a certain fountain-like fecundity; for [the intellect] begets streams of reasons by means of which it imparts an intellectual likeness of itself. For its fecundity shines forth in its reasons, which are lovely and good to the extent that the intellect shines forth in and through them. However, faith is barren, for it has no children, i.e., no reasons; and the more reasons it would have, the more diminished it would be.

[4] So faith is barren; but when we rightly consider it, [we see that] that barrenness is fecundity. This fact is evident in the case of Abraham and Sarah, where by faith in the promise, there was born by natural means Isaac, who otherwise [than by faith] could not have been born. And in that seed was present a fount of blessing; and later it was present in Jacob. For the Apostle declares [in the Epistle] to the Romans that not only the children of Sarah but also the children of Rebecca were children of the promise.² Likewise, it is also evident [that this blessing was present] in the case of Zachary and Elizabeth³—and, at length, last of all and most perfectly, in the case of the Virgin Mary, where faith gave to us Christ. [5] And take note of the reason that Scripture says that Christ came in the end-time and in the fullness of time.⁴ For in the Virgin Mary this fecundity of faith reached its highest and final level, beyond which there is no other level. This [level] is of such great perfection that it enfolds within itself the entire fecundi-

ty of faith; for it is the form and exemplar whereby faith regenerates a son of man and elevates him in proportion to his ability to believe—[elevates him] even unto the form of God.

[6] In the case of Abraham faith culminated in a begetting on the part of one who was barren, who begat a child promised to her by God, whom she believed. In the case of the Virgin Mary faith culminated in the begetting of the Son of God—[God] whom Mary believed. Behold, how fecund is that barren mother-of-faith, [Sarah], from whose fecundity all the children of Israel have proceeded and continue to proceed!⁵ These [descendants] see God [both] here and in the future—here in a dark way,⁶ there face-to-Face. [7] Now, note well that in the barrenness of faith there is very great fecundity. For example, as say those physicians who are called empiricists: at times certain herbs produce wondrous cures. Indeed, we experience this [fact about herbs] to be true; for instance, [we experience] that scammony purges cholera. However, no reason for this can be given, since the effect proceeds from a hidden and special property; but he who trusts the authority of him-who-is-experienced discovers this fact to be true, even though no rational consideration is persuasive thereof. And from these medicines we experience greater-effects, and more assuredly reliable⁷ effects, than we do in cases where the physiologists, through exploratory reasoning, concoct a remedy.

[8] Therefore, faith (1) that the Incarnate Word of God cures all lassitude of soul and (2) that causes the soul to renew its youth, i.e., its innocence, and (3) that always keeps the soul in [a state of] innocence is like a proven remedy that has this [set of effects] from a special property. And if someone believes this [claim] to be true, then he will find, by experience, that he is happy. This finding is a *seeing*, which is a more reliable state than is *reasoning*. [9] And so, it is evident that in the barrenness of faith, from which seeing follows, there is greater fecundity than is present in that which, on the basis of many rational considerations, is asserted to be fecund. And, indeed, in the case of the children-of-promise experience has taught that faith has brought about the outcome. Note very carefully that the promise is the word of God. God is truthful and faithful. Hence, he who has the word of His promise rests assured. This word saves him who believes in Christ, who is the Promise⁸ and the Word. The [one who believes] will obtain God's sonship, because sonship is promised to believers,⁹ and sonship *is* the promise.

[10] Pay attention to the difference between Sarah's faith and Mary's faith. For the fact that an elderly woman believes that by the grace of God she still can conceive from an elderly man in accordance with the pleasure of the flesh has no comparison with the faith of the Virgin, who believed that apart from a male seed she could conceive a son by the gift of the Holy Spirit of the Most High. Of what great fecundity was that promised seed—in barren Sarah—is evident. For, as said the Prophet,¹⁰ and as Paul states in the Epistle,¹¹ many more were procreated from her who was barren [than from her who had a husband]. For on account of the grace of the promise the blessed seed was, [in the case of Sarah], turned into a living and fecund fount—more so than in the case of fecund Hagar, the bondwoman. For the descendants of Isaac increased innumerably. Similarly, spiritual fecundity, as symbolized in barren [Sarah], is immeasurable. For John of the Apocalypse says that he saw a multitude that no one can number—[a multitude] which, in the vision, followed from out of the tribes of Israel. [11] Moreover, note (in accordance with the lovely gloss¹² on this passage to the Romans¹³ concerning the fact that Abraham believed against [all] hope and was justified) that just as Abraham was justified because he believed that through his seed Christ would come according to the flesh, so we too are justified who believe that Christ has come and that God has raised Him from the dead. Hence, we do not have doubt about [our] resurrection and glorification on the basis of justification by faith.

[12] I understand, then, that we who are not descended from the bondwoman Hagar (for he who is born from a bondwoman is a servant, [since] the offspring follows the womb)¹⁴ are from barren Sarah, our mother, who is free. Through her we are children of the promise,¹⁵ which is faith. And so, we are not brothers of Ismael (who was born in bondage and according to the flesh and in a natural way). For we are not bound to the servitude of the Old Testament, viz., to circumcision and to ceremonial observances and to the law of works. For in accordance with the promise we are brothers of free Isaac and are born of faith. [13] Hence, the promise made to Abraham, the father of faith, culminated in Christ, who was promised to Abraham; that is, [there was promised] that Christ would come from Abraham's seed. Therefore, it is evident that the promise-of-faith does not stop with Christ in order that He can be greater but rather is fulfilled in Christ, than whom nothing greater can be thought.¹⁶

[14] Likewise, note that Abraham, who believed the foregoing, was justified by Christ, for his faith ascended all the way unto Christ. Therefore, all justification by faith is perfected in Christ. Therefore, one errs who thinks that he can obtain justice¹⁷ on the basis of a faith that does not accept Christ. Hence, in the Gospel there is rightly said that Christ is the son of Abraham,¹⁸ for He is the Son promised for Abraham's seed. And, likewise, Christ is promised to us believers; i.e., it is promised that He is to be born spiritually in our spirit by means of the seed of faith. For He is born in us when His life is hidden in us.¹⁹ For just as because of Abraham's faith Christ, according to the flesh, was in his seed, so through faith Christ was spiritually in Abraham's spirit. For in spirit Abraham desired nothing except Christ. Therefore, Christ, who was yet to exist from Abraham according to the flesh, was in a real way present in Abraham's thought and spirit. And so, Abraham was *just*, because God's justice was in him. [15] Christ is the true Justice that justifies everyone who is just. Thus, in every believer who is justified by faith it is necessary that Christ be present, who alone is the justification of those who are just.²⁰ This justification is received when one takes account of the merit of the suffering by means of which when [Christ] obeyed²¹ the Father He merited eternal life for all those who accept Him by faith. Because they believe Christ, Christ makes them to be sharers of the merit of Him who justifies everyone who is justified. Therefore, Christ is the Liberator, who frees the sons of God²² and of the promise from all bondage of the Prince of darkness²³ and of death.

[16] Pay careful attention to the fact that Abraham had two sons. One was born according to the flesh; the other, according to the promise. One was born by natural means; the other, through the grace of faith. The son who [was born] according to the promise propagated from himself the people of *Israel*—i.e., *the people who saw God*.²⁴ Hence, all who arrive at seeing God are sons of Abraham according to the promise. And the promise was fulfilled in Christ, who was promised in and through all the sons of promise. (For they all have the name of promise from Christ, who was promised in and through them. Indeed, Christ *is* the Promise.) Therefore, the sons-of-Abraham in whom Christ is present through faith—these are the true sons of the promise. They are born not according to the flesh but through faith.

[17] Therefore, the mystical Body of Christ is the Promise, i.e., the Seed, in and through which all the nations of the earth will be

blessed. Thus, it is evident that only Christians are sons of Abraham according to the promise. The true names “Israel” and “Jerusalem that is from above” befit them—i.e., [the names] “the vision of God” and “the vision of peace.”²⁵ All other sons are called sons of Abraham (i.e., sons of the father of many nations),²⁶ according to the flesh; these sons do not arrive at the things that are of the Spirit of God. Consider the Apostle, who says that Jerusalem that is from above is our mother,²⁷ i.e., is [the mother] of Christians. And this mother is faith. In the present [world, faith is] a symbolic seeing, but in the future [world there will be] a face-to-Face seeing. Moreover, faith is from above because it is a grace of God.

Let these points suffice with regard to the first topic.

II

[18] The second topic concerns the rose. We ought to know that by means of the rose—which [at today’s feast] the pope carries with honor and gives to one who is quite noble—the Roman Church symbolizes for us spiritual joy. For at the beginning of planting, the rose was hidden in the rose-cutting;²⁸ and in the springtime it comes into the visible world. [The new rose is] not another rose than what it was in potency; but [it now exists] in a different way. For what is intellectual takes on visible form when it is seen by the intellect, which saw the bush in the seed and saw, in the bush, the blossom—and [which saw], speaking generally, in the potential the actual and in the present [condition] the future [condition]. Hence, when the rose that comes from potency to actuality is visible, then the rose-cutting ceases its activity; and so, the rose is the end-product of the planting of the rose-cutting. [19] In the rose there are two things, viz., beauty and fragrance. Beauty nourishes the eyes; fragrance nourishes the sense of smell. Hence, by means of the rose we are given to understand that a certain immaterial beauty nourishes the eye of the mind, viz., the intellect, and that [a certain] immaterial fragrance nourishes the olfactory power of the mind, viz., the will, or the affective power.

Now, this immaterial beauty is an object that makes the intellectual spirit cling tightly to it; and [this beauty] continuously infuses a likeness of itself, so that it makes the [intellectual] power to be like itself. We see that the beauty in things turns the eyes to itself and in a certain way binds immovably to itself the beholder, so that he cannot look away. [20] Lo, how greatly pleasing is the beauty of innocence, the beauty of life, the beauty of courage, the beauty of honorableness,

the beauty of glory, the beauty of honor, the beauty of orderedness, the beauty of customs, the beauty of virtue, and so on. And since all of these are beautiful because of beauty, how greatly pleasing can be true Beauty itself, which has no admixture of the impure and imperfect. No one can [adequately] express this fact. [Yet,] he easily understands [it] who considers that the ornate cosmos—or something perceptibly beautiful (which has a sizable admixture of impurity and imperfection) is [greatly] pleasing. Now, no beautiful thing in this world has all possible beauty; and so, [it] is imperfect. However, Ineffable Beauty—the Fount of everything beautiful [insofar as it is beautiful]—has within it all beauty in an eternal and infinite perfection.

[21] Secondly, there is in this world nothing that so resembles a feast for the spirit as does a fragrance, which is an invisible aeration and thus is more nearly immaterial than are all other nutrients. Now, a fragrance nourishes; for it is written that certain men in India are nourished by, and live from, fragrance. Therefore, fragrance that so greatly delights us arouses us to draw it unto us. And when it is drawn unto us, it begets enjoyment in our natural spirit. For it very greatly comforts our nature. Hence, that [analogous] fragrance that nourishes our rational spirit with gladness is pleasant, pure, true, and unmixed, and is pleasantness itself.

[22] Our spirit, or mind, is rightly made happy by God's beauty and pleasantness. God is Goodness itself. Hence, by means of the goodness of beauty (which unites the mind to itself) and the goodness of pleasantness (which is drawn-close by the mind) the mind will live in perpetual gladness. But the Medium of the coinciding in which the beauty and the pleasantness of the intellectual life coincide is the Word-of-God made flesh. Through this [Medium] the happy man is united with God, who is Beauty itself; and through this [Medium] the happy man is nourished with divine pleasantness.

[23] Thus, since this rose symbolizes Christ's humanity, in which is present Beauty itself and divine Pleasantness, and since Christ's humanity is no longer corruptible, because it is glorified and hence is completely separated from death and corruption: the pope carries a golden rose (i.e., one that is incorruptible and very precious), so that we are elevated from a corruptible rose unto that incorruptible [Rose] and are elevated from the visible [rose] unto the eternal and invisible [Rose] that bestows immortal life and that is the Paradise-of-delights for our mind.²⁹ [24] Therefore, to the [golden] rose [carried

by the pope] chrism is applied in order to denote Christ; and balsam is added because of its very pleasant fragrance, which the gold does not have, although it well has the shape of a rose. Paul said: “We are Christ’s fragrance.”³⁰ For those who convey the word of God convey Christ; and by preaching the gospel they spread the fragrance. If they live like Christ did, then they *are* His fragrance; for he who pursues this fragrance will come to this Rose.

Let the foregoing things have been said according as God has given [them] for an increase of our gladness. He who desires to know more concerning the symbolism of the rose will be able to read the *Rationale regarding Divine Matters*³¹ and other writings of the learned.

III

[25] There is a third topic concerning the third name for [this present] Sunday, viz., “Loaves of bread Sunday.” [This name is given] because the Gospel-reading [for today] speaks of loaves of bread.³² So let us consider that the Word of God, who preached to the people about eternal life, willed to inform even the simple people [of the following]: that he to whom God is merciful and to whom He disposes to give the Kingdom of eternal life—[to him] the Word of God can give living food, even as here below He gave, by the power of God, food to the hungry when there was more [food] than it took for the feeding. [26] Today’s feast is joyous because if [when] we are hungry because of abstaining from vices, we find here below in our desiring spirit [that] there is someone who can feed [us] and who is merciful, so that He permits no one to perish on this pilgrimage, then how much more abundantly will the Word of God feed [us] in the Heavenly Land of plenty! By means of this Gospel-passage of ours³³ we see, in [right] order, that the word of God nourishes first through our hearing [and] then through our tasting. We saw earlier that it nourishes through our sight and our sense of smell. By reference to these four senses let us infer four stages of spiritual contact. Every sensing is a certain touching. The intellectual nature is nourished by the word of God—i.e., is nourished by its authority [and] by its succulence. [27] Here it is relevant to consider in what condition, in relation to us, ought to be the spirit that is to be fed in this way. For our inner man, in order to apprehend the word, ought to have (1) ears that are open and receptive and (2) a strong and clear auditory spirit. Hence, since the word of God is intellectual bread, we ought to take note of the condition of the bread.

[28] The bread is Sacred Scripture. And he who is to draw nour-

ishment from the bread must chew it and must moisten its dryness with his own moisture in order in this way to [be able to] swallow it and be nourished. Scripture ought to be greatly broken into smaller sections and greatly ground up as if by teeth. And [this breaking-and-grinding] is called *searching*; for the Savior says “Search [the Scriptures] ...,” etc.³⁴ Now, vital nourishment is elicited if one comes to Scripture’s center; for its deepest [center-point] is Christ, who is Living Bread.³⁵ [29] And consider that the one to be fed must introduce salivary moistness into the bread that has been broken down [in chewing]—[must do so] if the bread is to provide him with nourishment. This moistness is the humility of faith. Thereafter, the word is conveyed into the stomach of memory, and there it is cooked by the heat of love. Next, the *spiritual* (which befits the spirit) is separated from the *perceptible*, i.e., from the letter.³⁶ And this separation is made by the very subtle mesentery veins; they are the spiritual senses. And in the liver there is made a distribution to all the [bodily] members, i.e., to all the powers of the soul. [30] All these things occur by themselves without our paying attention if only we are healthy, so that our soul has healthy senses and instruments—i.e., healthy spiritual organs. If [the soul] lacks teeth, or if the teeth are dull or unfit for chewing, [or] if the mouth is dry, [or] if the tongue is infected, [or] if the stomach is weak, [or] if the liver is infected, then the word will not nourish the spirit.

[31] The word of God³⁷ gives wholesome bread; but the Evil One gives the bread of death. The word of God gives the bread of nature. Genesis 3: “In the sweat of your face ...,” etc.³⁸ Ecclesiasticus 33: “Fodder and a rod and a burden are for an ass; bread and correction and work are for a slave.”³⁹ By “ass” and “slave” the body is understood; by “fodder” and “bread” the food of nature and the necessity of sustenance [are understood]. By the other [two] things [are meant] (1) an affection for mortifying [the flesh] and (2) the engaging in labor. Consult Mauritius’s *Distinctions* as regards *bread*.⁴⁰

[32] Likewise, we must carefully consider the fact that Christ ministers the bread of life. As has been said very wisely, let Christ be conceived of as Virtue. In that case, the persuasion that leads away from the lusts of the flesh and leads unto a love of the immortal virtues is the ministering of the bread of life for the intellectual spirit—[the bread of life] that the Word of God ministers. And [the Word] distributes one bread unto a thousand who are hungry, because, in them all, there is one faith, one spirit, one baptism.⁴¹ Even as they are *just* by

means of one justice and through one justice have been called from injustice unto justice, and even as by one heat [they have been brought] from coldness into warmth, so all who are just are the body of a single justice—of which body justice is the form, or life. The case is similar as regards truth and life; for there is one divine life that enlivens all the spirits of [all] the just. And [the just] are one body that is alive with one divine life, which is the Word of God, i.e., Christ.

Our having touched upon the foregoing topics in the foregoing way suffices for our better understanding the things that follow, in John 6, regarding the Living Bread, which enlivens all who partake of it.⁴²

NOTES TO *Non Sumus Ancillae Filii*

- * Sermon CCLXXV.
- 1. Galatians 4:31.
- 2. Romans 9:8-10.
- 3. Luke 1:5 ff.
- 4. Galatians 4:4.
- 5. Nicholas does not mean that all the natural descendants of Abraham are saved. He means that all men of faith are saved. These are called children of Abraham, the father of faith (Galatians 3:7). Abraham and many of his natural descendants were saved by looking forward to Christ, even as Christians are saved by looking back on Christ. See section 14 below.
- 6. I Corinthians 13:12.
- 7. As regards the translation of “*infallibilis*” and its variants, see pp. 10-12 of my *Hugh of Balma on Mystical Theology: A Translation and an Overview of His De Theologia Mystica* (Minneapolis: Banning, 2002).
- 8. II Cor. 1:20. N.B. In the Latin text above (at 9:10) I am repunctuating the Latin sentence so as to read: “... est promissio et verbum. Assequetur filiationem ...” This punctuation is permitted by both manuscripts (viz., *Codex Ashburnham* 1374 in Florence, Italy and *Codex Vaticanus* 1245).
- 9. II Corinthians 6:18.
- 10. Isaias (Isaiah) 54:1.
- 11. Galatians 4:27-30.
- 12. Origen, *Commentarii in Epistolam ad Romanos*, IV, 6. See n. 19 of Sermon CCLXX, as regards an English translation.
- 13. Romans 4:18-22.
- 14. “The offspring follows the womb” (“*Partus sequitur ventrem*”). That is, the offspring follows the mother. In other words, if a mother is a bondwoman, then her neonate is born into bondage, irrespective of whether the father of the child is a bondman or a free man.
- 15. Galatians 4:28.
- 16. St. Anselm’s formula (“God is Something than which a greater cannot be thought,” from *Proslogion* 2) is here applied by Nicholas to Christ, who, according to Orthodox theology, is God.
- 17. Nicholas uses “justice” (“*iustitia*”) in the sense of *righteousness*.
- 18. Galatians 3:7.
- 19. Colossians 1:27. Cf. therewith Colossians 3:3 and John 6:54.
- 20. I Corinthians 1:30.
- 21. Philippians 2:8.
- 22. John 1:12.
- 23. Satan is the Prince of Darkness (and the Prince of Death). Cf. Colossians 1:13.
- 24. Nicholas here unfolds the meaning of the name “Israel”.
- 25. “Jerusalem” means “possession of peace,” and “Israel” means “seeing God.”
- 26. “Abraham” means “father of many.”

27. Galatians 4:26.
28. Usually, not a rose-seed but the “cutting” from a rose-plant is planted in order to grow new roses.
29. Christ is this Rose. Traditionally, Song of Solomon (Canticle of Canticles) 2:1 has been construed by Christian orthodoxy as signifying Christ: “I am the rose of Sharon”
30. II Corinthians 2:15.
31. Guillaume Durand, *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* (Nürnberg, 1494), Book VI, section entitled *de Quarta Dominica Quadragesimae et Feriis*. In particular, see folio CXCIII^v.
32. John 6:5-59.
33. John 6:5-59.
34. John 5:39.
35. John 6:41.
36. That is, the meaning is extracted from the written words.
37. See n. 22 of Sermon CCLXIX (“Sufficit Tibi Gratia Mea”).
38. Genesis 3:19: “In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread” These words were said by God to Adam and Eve after they had sinned and immediately before they were expelled from the Garden of Eden.
39. Ecclesiasticus 33:25.
40. Mauritius Hibernicus, *Distinctiones*. The editors of the Latin texts here refer to *Codex Cusanus* 27.
41. Ephesians 4:4-5.
42. More literally: “In the foregoing way [we] have sufficiently touched upon the foregoing matters, so that in John 6 the items that follow [there] regarding the Living Bread, which enlivens all who partake of it, are better understood.

Beati Qui Habitant in Domo Tua*
("Blessed Are They Who Dwell in Your House ...")
[November 1, 1456; preached in Brixen]¹

[1] "Blessed are they who dwell in Your House, O Lord; they shall praise You forever and ever."²

First, the Prophet excludes an error as regards happiness; secondly, he describes the happiness of the saints. [2] All (even the philosophers) who speak about happiness understand happiness to be a perfect good. And so, in [this] good there is a contentment of desire. Now, whatever admits of greater and lesser degrees cannot be that perfect good. For in the case of things that admit of greater and lesser degrees we do not arrive at an unqualifiedly maximum or at an unqualifiedly minimum—i.e., at that than which a greater or a lesser could not be posited. Nonetheless, we can arrive at that than which there is not *actually* a greater or *actually* a lesser. Hence, the perfect good, which is unqualifiedly maximum in being and possibility, cannot at all be of the nature of things that admit of more and less.

[3] Therefore, all those were mistaken who situated happiness in things temporal or in riches or in knowledge or in the virtues;³ for these things admit of more and less. And so, the Prophet David rightly indicates⁴ to be mistaken those who call the people who have these things *happy*. For it is not true. Rather, the people who have the Lord as their God are happy. Hence, it is not at all possible that there be [true] happiness in this world, where no one can arrive at the unqualifiedly perfect either with respect to purity or with respect to constancy. [4] Nor can the opinion of the Platonists be true. They said that souls which are divested of a body are happy but that after the course of years [these souls] re-enter bodies and are enveloped in their former conditions of unhappiness. But, [in fact, such souls that are free of a body] would cease being happy. For a nature that lacks reason has, as the scope of its desire to exist perfectly, only the here and now. However, a *rational nature*, which surmises about what is universal, has as the scope of its desire perpetuity and all time; and if it were ever deprived of its desire [to exist perfectly], it would not be happy. Nor could a [rational] soul be happy if it were ignorant of its inconstant state or if it had foreknowledge of its fall [back into a body]. [5] Moreover, Christ eliminates this error [of Plato's] when He says: "Whatever comes to me I will not cast out."⁵ Furthermore, since the saints cling

to God with the intent of never being separated from Him, how is it that Divine Justice would separate Himself from them? Thus, they are mistaken who say that happiness is not an abiding good. And this point [the Prophet David] makes in [the words of] our theme-verse: “they shall praise You forever and ever.”

[6] Man has the prerogative that among animals he alone is capable of happiness. The Epicureans and the Saracens (and all who place happiness in food, drink, and sexual pleasures) speak against this prerogative; for other animals agree with man in [having] these [appetites]. And, for this reason, the Apostle says: “The Kingdom of Heaven is not meat and drink . . .,” etc.⁶ In the hierarchy of nature man is higher than all other things—in accordance with [the verse]: “You have subjected all things [under his feet],” etc.⁷ Now, the lower does not perfect the higher; moreover, (as is self-evident), abstinence, continence, temperance, etc., would not be virtues if the opinion [of the Epicureans and the Saracens] were true.

[7] Secondly, as regards the description of [the saints’] happiness, our theme-text touches upon three things: viz., state-of-being, location, and role.⁸ The state-of-being [of the saints] is perfect, because there is happiness and because they are all happy. For [the text] says: “Blessed are they who . . .,” etc. According to Boethius happiness is a perfect state with a complete assemblage of goods.⁹ Of this state-of-being, and of happiness, a sequence of the Gospel speaks, in which [passage] the Gospel mentions three things regarding the saints: viz., their number and character, their reward and happiness, their merit and holiness.¹⁰

[8] To begin with, there are seven orders of saints: some of the saints are saints from the beginning of the world, viz., (1) the [good] angels. Other saints are found in the Old Testament, viz., (2) the Patriarchs and (3) the Prophets. Others are found in the New Testament, viz., (4) the Apostles, (5) the martyrs, (6) the confessors [of Christ under persecution], and (7) the virgins. And in accordance with this [set of distinctions the text] posits seven beatitudes by means of which these orderings are distinguished.¹¹ An eighth beatitude—viz., “Blessed are they who suffer persecution . . .,” etc.—is common to all [these orderings of saints]: Consider these [orderings] further, according as [they are discussed] in the sermons of Aldobrandinus of Tuscania,¹² and consider further the beatitudes according as [they are discussed] in my other sermons for this feast-day.¹³

NOTES TO *Beati Qui Habitant in Domo Tua*

* Sermon CCL.

1. This was the Feast-Day of All Saints

2. Psalms 83:5 (84:4).

3. Plato was thought—in accordance with one interpretation of his *Republic*—to have regarded a life of virtue not only as a necessary condition of happiness but also as a sufficient condition thereof. Nicholas considers it to be the former without being the latter.

4. Psalms 143:15 (144:15).

5. John 6:37.

6. Romans 14:17.

7. Hebrews 2:8.

8. The saints' state-of-being is one of happiness. Their location is the House of the Lord. Their role is to praise God.

9. Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, Book III, Prosa 2 (*PL* 63:724 A).

10. See the list of beatitudes in Matthew 5. The *number* of saints Nicholas immediately designates as being constituted by seven groupings.

11. Nicholas means to correlate the seven groups of saints with the seven beatitudes. But since he does not do so expressly, we cannot know how he would have envisaged the correlation, since none is obvious.

12. See n. 2 of Sermon CCLXX.

13. See Sermons X and CXXXV.

Sermon CCXLVI: Michael et Angeli Eius*

(“Michael and His Angels ...”)¹

[September 29, 1456; preached in Brixen]²

[1] “Michael and his angels fought with the Dragon ...” (Apocalypse 12).

This feast-day of the angels is called the feast-day of Michael. For “Michael” means “he who is like God” or “he who is as the Ruler.” Michael, who is a defender of God’s honor, is rightly called a prince. Everyone who is puffed up with pride exalts himself against God; hence, Michael cast out from Heaven *Pride*, which is called the Devil, the Dragon, or Lucifer. The Dragon, or Serpent, deceived our First Parents; for he motivated in them pride, with the result that through disobedience they desired to be like God.³

[2] He who thus motivated was for this reason cast out of Heaven by Michael—[cast out] because he placed his throne in the North⁴ and willed to be like the Most High. Ascending by pride, he placed his throne in the North, and the *ascent* to the North is a *fall*. For the more someone ascends to the North, the more he recedes from the middle of the heavens, from the sun, and from the zodiac (i.e., from the way of life), toward death and toward the cold and the frozenness of vital movement. [3] Michael was rightfully put in charge of the Church, for the regimen of the Church consists of a humbling and of a ministering and of an orderliness (which orderliness does not occur apart from obedience). Orderliness is a divine splendor; obedience is a sacrament of sacred orderliness. All multiplicity is present in an orderly way; without orderliness multiplicity neither exists well nor can exist. For multiplicity falls short of *one* and of *being*. For each thing *exists* insofar as it is *one*. Therefore, the existence of multiplicity is found only in a union. But what except orderliness unites the many? For the many have an ordered relation to the *one* so as to exist; in and of themselves they cannot exist as many. But order requires proportion and harmony. And, indeed, the Church’s governance, which is diffused from one unto many, depends upon hierarchy and divine governance, whose likeness it bears.

[4] Yet, in the following way understand how it is that we arrive at some knowledge of the existence of angels, or intellectual substances. For all nations, alike, maintain that intellectual substances exist. First of

all, [this claim is made by] the Bible's sacred books, which precede all other books. (Abraham preceded all who wrote in Greek; similarly, Moses was prior to Plato and to Socrates.) The philosophers speak of intelligences (which Moses calls angels) when they claim that all things arise from the movement of the heavens. [5] However, life is not from heavenly bodies, for material power is directed toward material objects. Therefore, something that executes the vital movement in a material object is not from the material heavens but is from a mover of the heavens. Therefore, just as the movement of *material* objects derives from the movement of the heavens, so *vital* movement derives from a mover of the heavens. But since vital movement is movement toward a goal, it is from an intelligence, which moves [it] toward the goal. Therefore, there are intelligences, which are movers of the orbits.

[6] The zodiac is said to be the place beneath which the planets are moved. The zodiac is said to be alive. Therefore, there are as many intelligences as there are different motions in the heavens. And if each of the stars has its own movement, then it also has its own mover, or intelligence, from outside itself. For, as a rule, it is true that if two things are found in combination, then if one of them is found [also] existing separately, then both of them are found existing separately. For example, with regard to the color dark-grey: because white is found [existing separately], black is also found [existing separately]; (for dark-grey contains both colors). Similarly, human nature enfolds within itself a spiritual nature and a corporeal nature. And the corporeal nature is found, qua separated, in earth, in metals, and in other things; therefore, the spiritual nature is found as existing separately, i.e., as an immaterial, or an intellectual, nature. Now, an angel is a separated, immaterial substance.

[7] In every movement that relates to a species we see a concordance. For example, the species of horses is a single species, and all horses have from the oneness of the species a single specific movement. And so, an intelligence presides over that species; the intelligence moves in a uniform way that [specific], or formal, set of equine characteristics. Therefore, we find from the uniformity of the regular specific movement an intelligent mover, without which there would not be a single species, power, and activity. [8] Every species, which consists of what is indivisible, is a domain over which there presides an intelligence, or an angel, that is as a god in his kingdom. Every man, on account of his perfection, is as a species. For Hermes Mercurius

Trismegistus, writing to Asclepius, called humanity a genus [and] called men species.⁵ Certain men say that the text has come down to us not rightly translated in this respect. Nevertheless, we see that the rational soul (without which a man is not a man) is not from traduction⁶ but is, in the case of each man, from the Creator (who is the Creator of [all] species). Therefore, we know by experience that in man intellect⁷ presides over reason's movement, for rational movement is from intellect. [9] But unless our intellect (which in the bodily state is subject to sins) were directed by a separate intelligence, it would always follow [the influence of] the bodily passions. Therefore, there is an angel who moves us upwards so that we may desire things of an intellectual nature; and the angel stimulates rational motivation for things eternal. There is another motivation, [viz., that which is] from our animal nature, to which nature things earthly are pleasing; and the Prince of Darkness stimulates this motivation. And in us is this conflict, because we experience reason and the senses as subject to opposing princes and as waging war with each other incessantly.

[10] Moreover, law is ministered by angels. There is law with respect to specific nature. Each specific nature has its own laws; and the angel who presides [over that species] governs [the nature] according to the laws. The law is God's spirit, or God's providence. An angel is the one who proclaims, and executes, the law. And [reference to] his manner [of doing so] is inserted, to some extent, into the introit of the mass: "Bless [the Lord] all you His angels, you who are mighty powers for proclaiming His voice," etc.⁸ For just as the voice of an emperor is sent to his subjects in a letter, and just as in the voice his word is present, and in the word his spirit, which informs and enlightens the subjects as to what the intent of the emperor is: so the writing, or the missive, that contains the word can be called a messenger or an angel. But the word and the meaning in the word can be called the spirit that motivates in accordance with God's providence. Accordingly, an angel is the one through whom God proclaims and ordains all that He wills. Angels are bearers of the eternal law and of God's will, and they are executors of the divine ordinance.

[11] God is a Spirit.⁹ In every angel there is a receiving of the intent of the Spirit that God is. Therefore, an angel is like a living and intellectual book-of-law, or written-tablet-of-law, that contains the writing, or imprint, of God's intent. [An angel is] like an intelligent envoy to creatures, or speaker to creatures, so that [rational creatures],

which cannot see into the mind of the Invisible God, may by means of a sign receive enlightenment as to God's intent. [12] I mean this in regard to angels' names, which are names of roles, as concerns angels' being ministering spirits.¹⁰ Just as we call a burning candle a light because we receive from it illumination, so angels take their names—one being called Michael, another Gabriel, a third Raphael, a fourth Uriel—from their role, because in accordance with the meaning of their name they minister to us such divine gifts. Just as in a king's court the attendants have names (because one attendant is the cupbearer of the king, another is the king's food-server, another his porter, and so on), so the names of angels end in "el"¹¹ (El is God) because angels are attendants of the King of Justice,¹² who is called El and Elohim.

[13] But if those [angelic] spirits are considered in and of themselves [and] not as attendants, then they are unknown to us. We know someone from his role; for example, we say "I know him" because I know him to be the king's cupbearer, because I know him as cupbearer. But if the role is removed, I do not know him—with respect, that is, to his being an image of God. For an image is not known unless its exemplar is known.¹³ Hence, an intellectual nature is apprehended by us only by means of a likeness. For, as Dionysius teaches us, our visible sun (which in Greek is called Helios) summons all things unto itself, so that it infuses into them its power; and all things receive [this power] in accordance with their capability. [14] Now, visible objects that are generated because of the approach of the sun's ray show what the wondrous power of the sun is. For the sun's inexpressible power is received in the best way in which it can be; but it is received in different ways. For all the power of the sun is received in each thing contractedly.¹⁴ In each apple the power of the tree is present contractedly (although it is present in one apple in one way and is present in another apple in another way); the case is similar with respect to each pear and to other things. Analogously, the whole power of the sun is present in the tree and, by means of the tree, in the fruit. Accordingly, the whole power of the sun's influence is received in each [tree] in accordance with the nature of the receiving-tree. Similarly, in every moveable¹⁵ thing motion is received in accordance with the condition of the moveable thing: in one moveable object it is received in terms of location; in another, with respect to growth; in another, with respect to perceiving, etc.

[15] Now, the species receive a universal power in the way that

species do, and by means of the species individuals [receive that power] in an individual way. In each individual the power of the species shines forth completely [and] in its own way, i.e., more perfectly or less perfectly in conformity with the individual contraction [and] in accordance with the individuation and determination—as one face is present completely in each mirror in conformity with the disposition of the mirror, [so that it] is present in one mirror more brightly, in another more dimly. Analogously, the Sun of Justice,¹⁶ which is an intellectual Sun, diffuses (in its Kingdom, which is above all the senses) the light of understanding and the warmth of love; and the intellectual species receive the influence in accordance with their capability. (For the intellect is higher than are number and reason, and it is immaterial; for the intellect separates, and abstracts, intelligible forms from matter, so that it makes them to be forms that are understood within the intellect—as we experience in the case of our intellect. For that which is universal is present in the intellect. Matter individuates the form and contracts¹⁷ it.) And by means of this inflowing of the rays of the Intellectual Sun we behold intellectual natures ([viz., angels]), which are noble and Godlike and are like living, clear mirrors. [The situation is] as if a mirror-image were alive and as if the mirror were clear by virtue of the fact that it is an image of God, who is the Sun of Intelligence.) All things are formed by means of this Sun, for Intelligible Being is the Source by means of which all things receive form.

[16] Hence, by virtue of the fact that [an angel] is an intellectual spirit, he is a divine ray. And because he is an image of the light of the Intellectual Sun, he has in himself a likeness of all formable species. For the Intelligible Being that is the Sun [and] the Source of light and of species is received [by each being] in its unique way: seraphically, cherubically, thronically, and so on.¹⁸ Visible light is received in a diaphanum—in one diaphanum simply and closely, and the light is called the color white. In another diaphanum the light is received more distantly and is called blue; in another, still more distantly and is called red; and so on. And in this way nine orders of color are produced from the various modes of receiving. Therefore, in a certain comparable way: as nine discrete colors are produced from the different receptions of light (none of which colors appear to exist outside the region of the domain of visible things), so there are nine discrete choirs of intellectual spirits [i.e., angels] because of the different receptions of the intellectual light, and [these choirs] are apprehended only

in the domain of intellectual beings, i.e., in the intellectual world.

[17] The Gospel says that the angels [who preside over] believers see the Face of the Father, who is in Heaven.¹⁹ Therefore, angels are like clean eyes of the heart. For a mirror, if it is not clean, ceases to be a mirror in its operation; so too, unless the eye is clean it does not see. Therefore, angels are very clean intellectual eyes. And just as sight vitally delights in visible beauty, which it seeks in all its meanderings, so the intellectual nature by means of its sight (viz., its intellectual sight) seeks to see the Giver-of-form, than whom nothing is more beautiful [and] in whom it finds rest. [18] A face is [i.e., symbolizes] knowledge; by means of the face we recognize men. To see the Face of the Father of the intellectual nature is to understand (or have knowledge of) the Fount of one's life. Every intellect desires to know the Cause-of-all-things, which we call *God*; and so, [this knowing] is the apprehending of Him than whom nothing is more pleasant or more delightful. But this seeing occurs by means of the manifestation of the Son of God, because only the Son knows the Father and because all others who know [the Father] know [Him] from the Son's revealing [Him].²⁰ For (as says the Son) the Father is hidden.²¹ And so, the Word of God, or Son of God, is the Mediator for all rational spirits. Through the Son of God all things attain ultimate happiness and the goal of their desires.

[19] From the foregoing point let us come next to the reason for the strife between Michael and the Dragon, according as we read [of it] in Apocalypse 12. For the Dragon, or that old Serpent (viz., the Deceiver of [our first] parents), Lucifer, Satan, the Devil, gloried over his natural gifts and placed his highest happiness in self-love—[doing so] up to the point of contempt for God. Thereafter, he elevated himself (together with those [angels] whom he attracted unto his side) against God, to whom he willed to be similar by means of a natural ascent. He supposed that apart from merit and grace, and apart from the Son of God's teaching and manifesting, he could by his own natural means arrive at a vision and an apprehension of God's glory and could be happy. And because, afterwards, God created [other] *free* intellectual natures, He created them in that way so that they would not eat of the Tree of knowledge by feeding themselves from their own fruit of presumption but would serve [Him] in humility, relying on the grace of the Son, or Word, [of God]. Through the Son He showed that the work of redemption (which excels the work of creation) would be

completed. And He showed that the Son would lead every intellectual nature to happiness and to fellowship with Himself when the Son by His own merit would convey those subject to Himself unto the King of Justice and would bring them to an inheritance of the vision and enjoyment of God. [20] But the Dragon, contending that he had no need of the Son's grace and merit but that his own nature sufficed, elevated himself (contrary to obedience) by [presuming] to make himself equal to the Most High. And in doing so, he sinned mortally. For as much as he could, he presumed to remove from God His glory—glory which is God Himself—and in this way to slay God and to reduce Him to naught. (By comparison, he who arrogates to himself a king's glory destroys the king qua king and slays him.) Thereupon, Michael, together with those who sided with him, took up battle, saying: "Who is like unto the Lord?"²² And he cast Pride out of the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus, Lucifer fell from Heaven and from the height of unchanging Wisdom; and there remained to him [only] the mundane knowledge that is characteristic of this world unto which he was cast.

[21] Self-love fell from Heaven, and this love pervades this present perceptible world, and it deceived our [first] parents. And Satan, who is the Prince of this world,²³ is the ruler over this [domain]. Therefore, woe to the earth and to the sea!, etc.²⁴ For where self-love (to the point of contempt for God) holds sway, *there* there is eternal woe, because the inhabitants do not obtain happiness and their [true] end. Instead, those who in this way love themselves more than they love God end in self-hatred. For the damned could not in this world love themselves so much that they would not out-weightingly hate themselves after passing from this world. This is the punishment deserved by those who posit themselves as the goal of their movements; for they will be tormented with eternal hatred for themselves.

[22] And note with regard to this battle that it was fierce. For the power of the Devil reared itself against the power of our Christ. And because of this [rebellion] there arose a turmoil that was opposed to well-being, to virtue, and to the Kingdom of God, in which is present the power of Christ. But Michael, together with his [forces] took up the defense of Christ's power, which the Dragon warred against; and he obtained victory by the merit of Christ. And the [Scriptural] text tells us this when it says: "they overcame him through the blood of the Lamb and through the word of the testimony; and even unto death they loved not their lives."²⁵ That is, they battled for, and were prepared to

die for, the Word. [23] In this [text] we must note that the angels who were fighting triumphantly for Christ merited to be confirmed steadfastly in grace, because they preferred to their own lives God's honor. However, the fact that they were victorious results from the merit of Christ's shedding-of-blood. For Christ merited that those who to the point of death contend on behalf of His honor not be overcome by Satan but, rather, overcome Satan. For Christ Himself overcame Satan, and Christ has power over him. Therefore, the Dragon is conquered by the virtue of Christ: Christ's virtue is His obeying even unto death and His seeking not His own honor but God's honor. Thus, Christ's merit assisted the angels from the beginning, even as [it assisted] the holy fathers who preceded Christ's coming in the flesh. (By comparison, a reliable and trusted guarantor frees a debtor [of his debt] immediately upon his assuming the [debtor's] debt, even though he actually pays off the debt later, at the prescribed time.)

[24] And so, note that the Word of God, i.e., Christ's Power, is the royal power of the blessed [angelic] spirits. Accordingly, I said previously that the [good] angels execute the authority of the Word of God. And when Christ was led to His suffering, He attested that angels are in His power.²⁶ They battle for Him when He wills [for them to]. Hence, Christ is called an Angel, [or Messenger], of great counsel;²⁷ for He is the one who by His counsel directs the [good] angels in every respect. [25] From the [aforesaid] victory there followed gladness. For the text says: "Be glad, you heavens and you who dwell in them!"²⁸ For turmoil, or rancor, among brothers (this results from hatred and envy on the part of those who love themselves) was cast out of that Kingdom, where there is only peace. For Christ, our Peace,²⁹ holds the eminence there. And because this turmoil was cast out of Heaven, it descended unto the dwelling-place of men, who inhabit the sea and the earth. And so, in this world there is impermanence, pain, woe, death, and all other such things that are troubling.

[26] But the text indicates that the Devil has great anger because he knows that he has [only] a short time; for he is not ignorant of the fact that his dominion will be cast off. Hence, when Christ came to the world in order to instruct us regarding Satan's wickedness and in order to teach us [to do] battle to the point of triumph: the Devil said, in and through those whom he possessed, why he had come to torment them ahead of time (as if in that case there would not be a definite time at which [he and his followers] would be ejected from this world. And

Christ allowed them [viz., those whom the Devil possessed, to dwell] in the desert and in places where they would not harm men. [27] Moreover, note that just as in Heaven the angels, who were created at [one and] the same time, came to eternal gladness by means of triumph over the Dragon, so too human beings, who come into the world at different times, are by means of victory adapted so as to merit to be assigned to the celestial army. And to all of [these] assigned-elect there will come the power of Christ for the purpose of *judging*—[judging] together with the [good] angels.³⁰ And [Christ] will cast out the Dragon together with all the apostate spirits; and those who have received counsel of the Devil [will] also [be cast] out of this world into darkness, so that there will remain only the power of our Christ, to whom all things are subject. And the earth will be freed from that woe, because the earth will be new and purified.

[28] In the meantime, the Dragon persecutes a woman, viz., the Church of Christ. And note that the persecution occurs in order that the Church (or “Jerusalem”) may be restored in Heaven. Persecution descended when Lucifer and his angels were overcome [by Michael]; and so, [the Church] will be restored by means of an on-going battle. For unless the Evil One is conquered, no one will ascend unto the place from which he, the Devil, fell. And the angels who are among the loyal combatants [and] who in Heaven always behold the Face of the Father: just as from the beginning they fought against the Dragon, so they do not cease [to fight], so that the number of the expelled [evil angels] may be replaced.³¹ This number [of replacements] will be taken from human beings, in whom there is the capability of becoming citizens of Heaven because of their intellectual nature, which derives from the Kingdom of those who are incorruptible, i.e., from the Kingdom of Heaven.

[29] And so, the Devil was not cast out of the world; rather, he fell to the earth, to the place of human beings, so that he persecutes a woman, viz., the Church, i.e., the Mother of Heavenly wisdom. [In the text] the offspring is called male³² because male strength is triumphant over Lucifer. By means of this persecution soldiers are made noble [and] worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven—just as peasants and farmers because of their strength and virtues and loyalty are elevated all the way to the emperor’s court, where they are made noble if they strive lawfully.³³ And they become citizens and members of Caesar’s family.

[30] At times there comes to my mind why it is that the end of

the world is delayed. For many saints have previously surmised that the Day of Judgment ought to have come already. These saints saw from the triumph of the martyrs that the Heavenly Jerusalem was greatly increased [in number of inhabitants]. And from the fact that it grew so greatly from the beginning they surmised that it ought very soon to be completed. Yet, because ardor ceased with the ceasing of the emperors' persecution and because almost all men yield to the temptation of the flesh, the establishing or restoring of the City of Jerusalem, i.e., of the vision of God (a vision which is a peace that surpasses all understanding³⁴), is delayed. [31] For no one except a crowned king³⁵ can be the living [corner]stone of this edifice.³⁶ However, unless one strives lawfully, he will not be crowned.³⁷ For the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away.³⁸ And those bearing it away are those who by means of violence conquer the Evil One. Therefore, when the end of the world approaches, there will be very great persecution, in order that the number of the predestined may be filled up quickly.

[32] Now, John is seen to describe, in the [Book of] the Apocalypse, the disposition of this warfare on the part of the Church— [to describe it] even to the point of the construction of the new City of Jerusalem. And we have great strife with spirits, with the world, and with the flesh. And at different times the mode of the strife differs. And so, [John] depicts the different battles with their different modes by means of figures and symbols. And one who with this supposition enters into the intent of that book will find sweet pastures.

Let these thus-expressed points be now sufficient.

NOTES TO SERMON CCXLVI

- * Sermon CCXLVI.
1. Apocalypse (Revelation) 12:7.
 2. This was the feast-day of St. Michael the Archangel.
 3. Emphasis here must be place on the words “through disobedience.” For there is a rightful desire to be Godlike. See I John 3:2.
 4. Isaias (Isaiah) 14:12-14.
 5. *Apulei Platonici Madaurensis Opera Quae Supersunt*. Vol. III: *De Philosophia Libri*, IV, 21 (p. 42). Edited by C. Moreschini. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1991. [Contains the *Asclepius*.]
 6. Augustine and other Church Fathers raised the question as to whether an infant’s soul is passed down from his parents (as is his body) or whether the soul is created anew by God. In the end, Augustine accepts the doctrine of creationism and rejects that of traducianism.
 7. Nicholas here (and subsequently) uses “*intelligentia*” as a synonym for “*intellectus*”. Note, for example, Sermon XIX (6:9-10): “... supremam intelligentiam sive intellectum ...” Cf. Hugh of Balma, *De Theologia Mystica*, text edited and translated into French by Francis Ruello (Paris: Cerf, 1995-1996, two vols.). Vol. 2, “*De Via Unitiva*,” 8 4:20 (p. 136): “... remoto omnis imaginationis, rationis, intellectus vel intelligentiae exercitio ...”
 8. See Psalms 102:20 (103:20).
 9. John 4:24.
 10. Hebrews 1:14.
 11. The Latin word-stem of *angeli* and the Greek word-stem of ἄγγελοι both end in ‘el’. (Transliterated, ‘ελ’ is ‘el’.) In the Latin manuscript Vaticanus 1245, which the editors of the printed Latin text are following, ‘el’ is not capitalized in either of its two instances.
 12. See Malachias (Malachi) 4:2: “Sun of Justice.”
 13. Cf. Cusa, *De Possest* 38:13-14 (Latin text in my *Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa* (Minneapolis: Banning, 1986; second printing 1994): “Non enim potest se causatum cognoscere causa ignorata.”
 14. “... contractedly”: i.e., in a restricted, delimited way.
 15. “... moveable”: i.e., changeable.
 16. See n. 12 above.
 17. See n. 14 above.
 18. Nicholas is here alluding to the orders of angels: cherubims, seraphims, thrones. Regarding the hierarchy of angels, see Nicholas’s *De Ludo Globi* II, 77-78. As regards Nicholas’s referring to God as Infinite Sun, see *De Coniecturis* II, 13 (136).
 19. Matthew 18:10.
 20. Matthew 11:27.
 21. Matthew 6:18.
 22. Isaias (Isaiah) 40:18.
 23. John 16:11.
 24. Apocalypse (Revelation) 12:12.

25. Apocalypse (Revelation) 12:11. The point of view of the Apocalypse is future. The text that is alluded to signifies not that the good *angels* "loved not their lives even unto death" (for angels do not die) but that the redeemed human followers of Christ, who side with the Archangel Michael, are such as have not, and do not, love their own lives more than they love God.

26. Matthew 26:53.

27. Isaias (Isaiah) 9:6. The Latin word and the Greek word for angel (see n. 11 above) signify *messenger*.

28. Apocalypse (Revelation) 12:12.

29. Ephesians 2:14.

30. Matthew 19:28. Wisdom 3:8.

31. Nicholas borrows from Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* the doctrine that the places of the fallen angels will be filled by redeemed human beings. See *Cur Deus Homo* I, 16-18.

32. Apocalypse (Revelation) 12:13.

33. II Timothy 2:5.

34. Philippians 4:7.

35. See Hebrews 2:9.

36. See I Peter 2:4-5.

37. II Timothy 2:5.

38. Matthew 11:12.

Nos Revelata Facie*
(“ We, with Unveiled Face ...”)
[November 1, 1456; preached in Brixen]¹

[1] “ With unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord” (II Corinthians 3).²

Since I spoke yesterday³ (in accordance with the Gospel-text) about the denarius that had Caesar’s image, and since I did not fully explain the notion of God’s image [in us], I will now take for our consideration the words of the Apostle that seem to be the words of all saints if someone were to ask them what they are now doing. [2] For they would reply: “With unveiled face” (i.e., face to Face and not by means of a symbolism)⁴ “we are beholding the glory of the Lord.” For beholding, or contemplating, or seeing, is a very perfect activity that renders happy our supreme nature (viz., the intellectual nature), as also Aristotle shows.⁵ However, Aristotle himself does not speak of the glory of the Lord. In this [present Biblical] passage we understand this glory to be the glory of Christ, who exists in the glory of God the Father.⁶ For to see the glory of God and of His Son is the ultimate goal of creation, as you know from elsewhere.

[3] Now, the saints say that they are beholding the glory of the Lord; for this vision always transforms into the same image, from glory to glory. For those who behold are transformed continually into the image of the object, being transformed as by the Spirit of the Lord. For it is the spirit that is transformable, but [it is transformable] only by the Spirit of Him into whose image the transformation is made. (By analogy, when the affection of a lover is transformed into affection for the beloved, this happens by virtue of the beloved’s spirit’s attracting unto itself the lover’s spirit and transforming it, so that in the lover there lives only the beloved.) [4] But this transformation [of the saints] is always new. For [the saints’] love never ceases but is ever increased, since the Beloved One is always pre-eminent, so that He is loved more [and more]; for He can never be loved to the extent that He is lovable,⁷ since He is Absolute Love. Correspondingly, the transformation never ceases. Therefore, those-who-are-beholding pass over—continually and eternally—from glory unto glory, since Absolute Maximality, in and of itself, always [and] incomprehensibly holds the

pre-eminence and attracts.

[5] Let us speak, then, about God's having given something of the image into which saints are transformed. And let us first of all consider Moses's having told of God's having said "Let us make man in our image and likeness."⁸ The Apostle says that the Son of God is the Image of the Father,⁹ just as Moses, too, writes that Adam begat a son in his own image.¹⁰ Therefore, the true Image of the Father, who is Creator of the heavens and the earth, is His Son, who is the Splendor and Figure of [the Father's] substance¹¹ and who is a spotless Mirror¹² of the Father's majesty. Now, man was *made* in the image of the Creator. Therefore, man is not a true image, as is the Son, but is *created* in God's image. [6] Now, "image" signifies an express likeness of the original of which it is the image. Therefore, when the human mind is created, the Creator creates it by means of His true Image, viz., the Son. (The human mind elevates man above all things that lack a mind, and by means of its perfection it bears a quite close imprint of its Cause.) As the Apostle says: through the Son, as through the First-born prior to all created things, God also made the world.¹³ Therefore, the Father looks into the Mirror of His majesty, [viz., the Son], when He creates mind.

[7] And in order that you may understand what I mean, consider [the following]: A painter wishes to paint his own portrait on a polished tablet¹⁴ and can do so only with respect to his image. He has a mirror, and [in it] he views his image as very perfectly containing his face qua representation of the whole face. And he endeavors to paint another image—like that [mirror-image]—on the tablet, which is mirror-like, i.e., polished. But because the tablet, although mirror-like, is not a mirror, it does not receive the face as does the mirror; rather, it copies the mirror-image, which is itself an image. The image in the mirror is the result of nature; and this is because the appearance [in the mirror] has gone out from the being of the face. [8] For the being [of the face] is, because of being's goodness, so fecund that it begets from itself a similar appearance. And the [human] will does not, as a source, share in this [begetting]; for even if the acts-of-will of the painter were excluded, this begetting would still occur by nature. But when begetting occurs by nature: will, or love, arises from both [the painter and his image]. For the painter loves his "son" (or image); and from the painter and the image there proceeds love, or union.

In an analogous way, the Son of God the Father is the true Image (or true Figure) of God the Father's substance. That is, the Son is the

Brightness (or Mirroring) of the Light that the Father is. Thus, these names coincide.¹⁵ Moreover, the Son exists by nature from the Father, because by virtue of the fact that [God] is Father, the Son [of God] is begotten without an accompanying act of will. And from the Father and the Son there proceeds the Holy Spirit ([i.e.,] Love, or Union), so that the Holy Spirit is not the Image of the Father but proceeds from both [the Father and the Son].

[9] Now, the works which God the Creator works outside Himself are the works of a God who is three and one. Hence, they are works that are done not with the will's acts being excluded but with the will's active cooperation—(just as a painter paints his own face on a tablet only with his will actively cooperating). For, as the Prophet says, “just as He willed [to do, so] He did.”¹⁶ And consider, next, that when a painter wills to paint something (e.g., a certain past scene), he looks unto his visualization of the thing to be painted, and he paints a picture in the likeness of the idea that he views within himself. But if the intellect were to undertake to paint the art-of-painting, it would not paint in particular anything that could be painted. For [it would paint] not the heavens, not the earth, not an animal, and not anything visible; rather, [it would endeavor to paint] the intellectual nature, which alone is capable of art. And the intellect would imprint on the painting the principles of the art-of-painting, so that [the painting] would be an image of the form of the art-of-painting and would be a visible representation of all the forms that could be perceptibly painted.

[10] Similarly, when God creates this or that, He looks at His Word, or Mental Concept.¹⁷ But when He creates mind, i.e., an intellectual nature, He does not look unto some particular mental concept, i.e., unto some [aspect] of the Son; rather, He looks unto the Art itself, i.e., unto the Son Himself insofar as the Son is, in regard to the totality of the Father's perfection, the Father's truest Image. For mind is an image of God's universal Art. For the Son of God, or Word of God, is the Art through which God made the world. But the Creative Art is begotten from the fecundity of God the Father's Infinite Intellect. Therefore, the [human] mind is not bounded but is elevated above all [else] that is contracted. Mind is as a form created in the image of the Divine Art; this form, in its intellectual fecundity, enfolds the forms of all perceptible things.¹⁸ [11] Therefore, when from nothing mind is called forth unto being the image of the Creator, when from nothing it first approaches the image, it arrives at the potentiality of being an

image—so that it is like a seed in which the image, not yet actually present, is present potentially, as manhood is present in the potency of boyhood. And when [the image] passes from potency into actuality, it is transformed—(1) as boyhood is continuously transformed when it is moved toward manhood and (2) as the potency-of-knowing is continuously transformed, from glory unto glory, in a student, so that he becomes a teacher. But this transformation is caused by the teacher's spirit, which is *actually* knowledgeable; it moves the spirit of the student from potentiality unto actuality. Analogously, the image [of God, viz., mind,] is led from potentiality unto the point at which it is completely actualized—led by the tutelage of the Word of God.

[12] And note that in II Corinthians 4 Paul is seen to speak to some extent of the manner in which the image [of God] is perfected [in us], when he says that “God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ Jesus.”¹⁹ And he adds: “We have this treasure in earthen vessels in order that the excellency may be of the power of God and not of us.”²⁰ Accordingly, the power of God elevates with respect to excellence, viz., elevates from potency unto actuality—just as the power of the sun elevates from potency unto actuality a tree that is present in a seed that has been flung to the earth. So our mind is a likeness of the Son of God's Image.²¹ This likeness does not yet appear [in us] in actuality; but when the Son of God shall appear and we shall see Him, then by means of that seeing we shall pass over into that same image, because we shall be like the Son.²² [13] Hence, in our mind we find a seed of the Divine Image, because we are capable of knowledge, of wisdom, of foresight, of governance, and of virtue—things which supremely befit God but befit no creature that is without a mind. Thus, just as God enfolds all things divinely, so mind enfolds all things intellectually.²³ Therefore, God alone can be present in the mind as an original is present in its image. And the more the mind is perfected in the just-mentioned things that have a likeness to God, the more the image [that the mind is] is perfected and the more clearly God shines forth in it. For as Augustine said:²⁴ the soul is an image of God by virtue of the fact that it is capable [of receiving] God. For unless an image were to receive, in an express likeness, the original of which it is an expression, it would not be its image.

[14] Hence, note that our mind is an image of God's beauty;²⁵ and so, it enfolds within itself all perceptible beauty, which is lower

than God [and God's beauty]. A similar point holds as regards all other things. Moreover, if you consider carefully: if mind is removed, there is no perceptible beauty, no discrimination of things, no ordering; in the perceptible world all these result from mind's judgment. And so, mind is not of the region of this world; rather, its perfection is higher than the world, and when mind looks at the world, it looks downward. And when mind turns its gaze back upon itself, then once the turning back is accomplished, mind finds that there is nothing of the beautiful and the lovely that it does not see to be present in itself²⁶ as in the form of all [perceptible] forms.

[15] Many things remain to be discussed here. These have been partly dealt with elsewhere. Still, we must not neglect the following thing: [viz.,] that in the mind there is freedom of choice,²⁷ so that the mind has within itself the origin of its acts and so that (according to Damascene)²⁸ mind controls its own works. Mind has this freedom because it is created in the image of God. And one who carefully considers [the matter] sees that the First Cause has placed in mind a likeness of Himself as Cause, so that mind is a living image, or a caused cause. And it is not possible that mind's excellence be [adequately] articulated. But Augustine sufficiently explains the way in which an image of the Trinity is present in our soul, and [this explanation] has often been repeated by me.²⁹

Let the foregoing [remarks] suffice, in view of the shortness of time.

[16] Now, we ought carefully to safeguard this treasure which we carry about in earthen vessels.³⁰ And we ought always to retrieve it from the earth, in which it lies hidden—[to do so], for our profit, by imitating Christ (our Teacher) and all the saints who have gone before us in every circumstance. And we ought to beware lest we ever assume the image of the Beast and assume its figure, or characteristics.³¹ For those who, after having blotted out the image of God, take on the image of the Anti-Christ (i.e., of the Serpent and Dragon) incur God's wrath; and day and night they shall never have rest. But those who, having spurned the image of the Beast and its characteristics, bear the image of the Word of God: in the future [they shall have] eternal life and eternal joy (according as is written in Apocalypse 20)³²—even as shall all the saints, whom today we are commemorating in order that by their intercession we may merit to be in their company and to be joined to Christ, our Lord, who is forever blessed.

NOTES TO *Nos Revelata Facie*

- * Sermon CCLI.
1. This was the Feast-Day of All Saints.
 2. II Corinthians 3:18. Almost an exact quotation. The word “*omnes*” is omitted by Nicholas.
 3. Sermon CCXLIX.
 4. I Corinthians 13:12.
 5. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7 (1177^a12-18).
 6. Matthew 16:27.
 7. *De Visione Dei* 17 (75).
 8. Genesis 1:26.
 9. Colossians 1:12-15. II Corinthians 4:4.
 10. Genesis 5:3.
 11. Hebrews 1:3.
 12. Wisdom 7:26. Nicholas also uses the mirror-metaphor at *De Visione Dei* 15 (67) and 8 (32) and 12 (49). See also *De Filiatione Dei* 3 (67) and *De Aequalitate* 12.
 13. Hebrews 1:2. Colossians 1:15. Ecclesiasticus 24:5.
 14. Cf. *De Mente* 13 (148-149).
 15. “... these names”: viz., “true Image,” “true Figure,” “Brightness,” “Mirroring.”
 16. Not an exact quotation. Psalms 113B:3 (115:3) and 134:6 (135:6).
 17. *De Visione Dei* 11.
 18. The human mind enfolds the forms of all perceptible things in that it has the *power* to abstract a concept from particular sensory images. See *De Mente* 4 (77-78), where Nicholas refers to the *vis iudiciaria*, etc.
 19. II Corinthians 4:6. Nicholas’s text here differs slightly from that of the Vulgate: whereas Nicholas (at **1 2:6**) has “*faciem*”, the Vulgate has “*facie*”. The difference makes no difference to the translation (although “*facie*” is grammatically the better reading).
 20. II Corinthians 4:7.
 21. That is, our mind is a likeness of the Image that the Son of God is. (The Son of God is the perfect Image of the Father. We are an image of this Image.)
 22. I John 3:2.
 23. See n. 18 above.
 24. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIV, 8, 11 (*PL* 42:1044).
 25. See Sermon CCXLIII.
 26. Here (at **1 4:13**) I am reading “*ipsa*” (with ms. Eisleben 960) in place of “*ipso*” in *Codex Vaticanus Latinus* 1245 and in the printed edition of the Latin text.
 27. See Sermon CCXLVIII, endnote 9.
 28. Saint John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, Book II, Chapters 25-27 [pp. 194-195 in Vol. I of *Sancti Patris Nostri Joannis Damasceni Monachi et Presbyteri, Opera Omnia Quae Exstant*. Paris: Delespine, 1712]. See also Vol. 37, pp. 255-259 in Frederic H. Chase, Jr., translator, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* [*Saint John of Damascus: Writings* (New York: Fathers of the

Church, 1958)].

29. See Augustine's *De Trinitate*.

30. II Corinthians 4:7. Believers are themselves the earthen vessels to whom Nicholas is referring.

31. Apocalypse (Revelation) 20:4.

32. Apocalypse (Revelation) 20:4 – 21:4.