



Three Sermons for the Feast of Saint Francis.
by
Lawrence of Brindisi OFM CAP

At that time Jesus exclaimed, 'I bless you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light'. (Matthew 11:25-30)

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Dedicated to the Memory of Reg and Peggy Boddington.

THE FIRST

I. Celebrating today the feast of the glorious and Seraphic Patriarch Francis, Holy Mother Church reads this sacred Gospel where Christ specially exhorts the faithful to the perfect imitation of his divine holiness: 'Learn from me, since I am gentle and humble of heart and you will find rest for your souls'; and it shows that Blessed Francis was a true and perfect imitator of Christ and had become most like Christ by divine power¹. Every saint and chosen one is like Christ. As Paul says, "(God) foreknew and predestined those who are to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He may be the first born among many brothers."² This should be understood that "God created man to His image, in the image of God He created him,"³ Origen⁴ and Saint Jerome⁵ interpret this to mean 'in the image of Christ' "who is the image of the invisible God, the first born among all creation."⁶ Therefore the humanity of Christ, which was the first created thing in the divine plan,⁷ was the archetypal exemplar of human nature, not only as a natural being but also as a supernatural being in grace and glory.

Francis, moreover, has become especially like Christ. Among his many sons, David had one most like himself from Abigail of Carmel. His name in 2 Kings 3 is *Chileab*,⁸ that is, "like his father." In 1 Chronicles 3 he is called *Daniel*,⁹ that is, "God's judgement." Nor at all can *Nabal*, whose wife had been Abigail, be considered in the divine plan to have become a son most like his father David.¹⁰ And Adam begot a son most like himself. We read in Genesis 5:3: "(Adam) begot him according to his image and likeness, and called him Seth"¹¹ who was his third son, born in the place of Abel, slain by the wicked Cain.

So then among the many saints Christ wanted to have one most like himself, who would be just like another crucified, just as the moon is almost like another sun in the sky. Just like Jonathon, the son of Saul, the king and general of the whole kingdom of Israel. When he saw that David in extraordinary combat single-handedly killed the tall, arrogant Philistine giant Goliath who terrified all entire army of Israel, he loved him with great, heartfelt affection. As a sign of love he gave him all his garments and

¹ *virtute*

² Rom 8,29

³ Gen 1,27

⁴ *Super Genesim*, Hom.1; PG 12, 156.

⁵ *Super Ezechielem*, Book 1, chap.1; PL 25,219.

⁶ Col 1,15

⁷ *quae prima fuit creatura in mente divina*

⁸ 2 Sam 3,3 (in the Vulgate 2 Regum 3)

⁹ 1 Chron 3,1 (in the Vulgate 1 Paralipomenon 3).

¹⁰ *Ne enim censeretur filius Nabal, cuius Abigail fuerat uxor, divino iudicio factus fuit Davidi patri simillimus*. See 1 Sam 25. Nabal was not David's son and opposed David.

¹¹ Gen 3,3

arms. And David put them on. As we read in 1 Kings¹² 18:11-14: “Jonathan's soul became closely bound to David's and Jonathan came to love him as his own soul ... Jonathan made a pact with David to love him as his own soul. He took off the cloak he was wearing and gave it to David, as well as his armour too- even his sword, his bow and his belt.”

The power of love is great! If he could have given him his heart and soul, he certainly would have, for he loved him on account of the great valour and extraordinary virtue evident in him. And so with Christ, the only Son of the supreme king of heaven and the son of the emperor and monarch of the entire universe. Because of the extraordinary virtue evident in Francis by which he conquered the world, Christ loved him supremely and made him most like himself with virtues.

The enemy of God, that great and formidable giant is the world – the whole of which is under the evil one.¹³ The terrifying giant whom all fear and tremble at is like Antaeus, the giant son of the earth, whom the strength of Hercules was able to conquer since he drew his great strength from earth. The Philistine is that, moreover, and dusty. So then the world is that son of the earth and it cannot be conquered except lifted up from the earth and grasped strongly around the chest by the mind.¹⁴ The giant was called Goliath, that is, the captor.¹⁵ Thus the world itself holds many captive under the law of sin - bound by the chains of earthly cupidity, vanities, riches and desires. However the world is conquered by the one who spurns and despises these things from on high as if mire and filth. As Paul says: “I have accepted the loss of all other things and look on them as filth.”¹⁶

II. It seems truly most difficult to spurn sincerely the honours of the world with its dignities, status, praise, riches, desires and other good things of the world. By their very nature these things look desirable since man fears shame, contempt, insults, poverty and whatever else afflicts the way of the flesh.¹⁷ So the world is that extremely terrifying and formidable giant. Goliath frightened the whole army of Israel until David came along. He was of humble birth, the shepherd of sheep, young and helpless. However, fortified by divine power, he descended into the arena for single

¹² In the older versions of the Vulgate, such as the *Vulgata Clementina* (1592), in modern editions, including the new Vulgate (2002) First and Second Kings are known as First and Second Samuel. Therefore this reference is to 1 Sam 18, 3-4, also in the *Clementina*.

¹³ Cf. 1 John 5:19

¹⁴ In Greek mythology Antaeus (also Antaios) (Ἄνταϊός) was a son of Poseidon and Gaia. When in contact with the earth, his mother, no one could defeat his strength. When lifted from the ground his strength became like that of any man. Hercules could defeat him by lifting him up and applying a bear-hug. The combat of Antaeus and Hercules was a popular renaissance theme.

¹⁵ Cf. 1 Kings 17, 4 (Vulgate), i.e. 1 Sam 17,4. The footnote adds, “*Sic latine hoc nomen interpretatur*” = “This is the meaning of the name in Latin.” However, VC has *egressus est vir spurius de castris Philisthinorum nomine Goliath de Geth*, while VN reads *egressus est vir propugnator de castris Philisthinorum nomine Goliath de Geth*. Neither adjective qualifying *vir* - *illegitimate* and *defender* - suggest the meaning of “captor.” Perhaps the connotation of captor derives from Goliath’s impact on the Israelites rather than the etymology of the name.

¹⁶ Phil 3:8. VC=VN: *Verumtamen existimo omnia detrimentum esse propter eminentiam scientiae Christi Iesu Domini mei, propter quem omnia detrimentum feci et arbitror ut stercora, ut Christum lucrifaciam.*

¹⁷ *sensum carnis*

combat with the giant and conquered, prostrated and slew him. Thus Francis conquered the world and triumphed over it. As John says: “All that is in the world is concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of the eyes and vanities of life.”¹⁸ Francis however overcame all these vices. With supreme care he practised chastity, penance and the affliction of the flesh against concupiscence of the flesh. By wishing to have and possess nothing in the world he cultivated voluntary poverty against concupiscence of the eyes. By constant subjection to every creature and humility he laboured against the vanity of life. When he instituted his Order he decreed the three vows of humble obedience and subjection, most high and most strict poverty and mendicancy, and the purest and brightest chastity against the three vices of the world. He founded a very strict and severe life in order to afflict the flesh and subdue the spirit.

Therefore when Christ saw how Francis, fortified by divine strength, had so conquered the world and had triumphed, He loved him supremely. He wanted to make him like Himself not only in spirit and soul, but even in the flesh and the body so that Francis might be like another Crucified.

In this way the mystical Jonathan clothed the mystical David in His own garments and arms that He gave him. Similarly Rebecca dressed Jacob, the lesser son, in the clothes of Esau the elder brother and first born son,¹⁹ so that Jacob might look like another Esau. The king of Egypt wanted to honour Joseph on his release from prison. Sure that the spirit of God was in him, the king clothed Joseph in the royal robes. He placed the royal ring upon Joseph’s hand and hung the royal chain around his neck, He appointed Joseph to his second carriage and ordered that everyone honour and venerate him.²⁰ King Assuerus, wanting to honour and magnify Mordecai because of his great fidelity towards the king, ordered that he be clothed in royal robes and placed him upon the king's horse and led through the city to be honoured by all.²¹ Balthazar, the king of the Chaldeans, had Daniel dressed in royal robes and made him the third prince of the kingdom, for he was filled by the divine spirit.²² Thus Christ honoured Francis then and made him a prince in his Church.

III. There is the Angel whom we read about in the Apocalypse, “I saw the other Angel ascending from the sunrise, having the seal of the living God. In a loud voice he called the four Angels appointed to ravage the earth and the sea, saying: Destroy neither earth, sea nor trees until we have marked foreheads of the servants of our

¹⁸ 1 John 2,16. VC: *quoniam omne quod est in mundo concupiscentia carnis est et concupiscentia oculorum et superbia vitae; quae non est ex Patre, sed ex mundo est.* VN: *quoniam omne, quod est in mundo, concupiscentia carnis et concupiscentia oculorum et iactantia divitiarum, non est ex Patre, sed ex mundo est.* NJB: Because everything there is in the world - disordered bodily desires, disordered desires of the eyes, pride in possession – is not from the Father but is from the world. NRSV: for all that is in the world – the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches – comes not from the Father but from the world. NIV: For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world.

¹⁹ Cf. Gen 27,5-16

²⁰ Cf. Gen 41:37-45

²¹ Est 6: 8-11

²² Cf. Dan 5,29

God.”²³ Who does not see how like to Christ the Son of God Francis is - a man by nature and an angel by grace, and having the sign of the Living God? Just as there are two great lights in the sky, so in the Church we have two marvellous Crucified: Christ and Francis. Francis is a vibrant and natural image of Christ just as a parhelion²⁴ reflected in a cloud is an image of the sun, or like the countenance of a man in the best and most faultless mirror. However, just as the sun surpasses the moon by infinite degrees, so Christ exceeds Francis’ holiness by infinite measure: one is the humble servant and the other is the sublime Lord: “King of kings and Lord of lords.”²⁵ And yet as Christ has said: “Those who believe in me do these things and they will do even greater things than these.”²⁶ In fact Peter cured the sick with the shadow of his body, something Christ had not done; and in one speech he converted three thousand men and in another five thousand. We do not read this about Christ. And as the servant is sometimes dressed in nobler clothes than the lord, so it will be permissible for me to say that Francis is the more wonderful Crucified than Christ, as God has so arranged for His greater glory.²⁷

This will be more evident if we consider the agents,²⁸ tools and manner by which each would have been crucified. The first had been crucified by the most inexpert craftsmen, the Jews: “If...they ever knew they had crucified the Lord of glory;” “Father, forgive them because they know not what they do”²⁹; “I know brothers that you and your leaders did this in ignorance.”³⁰ Francis however was crucified by Christ the wisest artificer of all things. Christ was crucified by the wiles of the devil, and Francis by the wisdom of God. Christ was crucified by men and with iron, by the divine and with divine power. Christ was crucified by hammer blows, Francis by the gaze of divine eyes. Christ was crucified to the tree of death, Francis to the tree of life, Christ himself. “I have been crucified to Christ. I live, but not I, but Christ lives in me.”³¹ Oh marvellous crucified! True and intrinsic image of the Crucified!

In Isaiah we read of two Seraphim unfolding their wings in the form of a cross, and moreover, flying with the middle wings. For “one has six wings and the other has six.” Two wings covered the head, two the feet and they flew with two wings, “They were calling out to each other ... Holy, Holy, Holy Lord ... of hosts.”³² Two Seraphim and two Crucified: Christ and Francis. Christ is the Seraph wholly aglow with love for God and man. Hence because of the joy of the glory of God and of human salvation he exulted today. As Luke has said, “In that very moment he exalted in the Holy

²³ Rev 7,2-3

²⁴ Ms.: *Paraelius*. The published text has *parelium*. *Parhelion* is the scientific name (Gk: παράλιον or *parelion*). Also called a “sundog”, “mock sun” or “phantom sun.” A bright spot in the sky on either side of the sun, formed by refraction. (Oxford Concise Tenth edition).

²⁵ 1Tim 6,15; Rev 19,16

²⁶ Cf. John 14,12

²⁷ *...sic licebit mihi dicere quod mirabilior crucifixus est Franciscus quam Christus, Deo sic disponente, ad maiorem gloriam suam.*

²⁸ *artificibus*

²⁹ Luke 23,34

³⁰ Acts 3,17

³¹ Gal 2,19-20

³² Isaiah 6,2-3

Spirit.”³³ “In that moment” the disciples, having returned from preaching, reported to Christ that the demons submitted to them and they cast out the demons in His name.³⁴ He “exulted in the Holy Spirit” because of the glory of God and the salvation of the world. Hence he said, “I acknowledge you”, I praise you, I give you thanks, “Father, Lord of heaven and earth, since you have hidden these things from the wise and the prudent and have revealed them to little ones” - namely these mysteries of the kingdom of heaven and of eternal salvation. “Since Father, this had pleased you.”³⁵ In this Christ shows His love towards God. And then to the world he then said, “Come to me all who labour and are burdened and I will refresh you”(Mt 11:28). In this way Christ the Seraph is wholly aglow with love.

However He does have six wings, that is, the highest perfection of the powers which are required so that man may be perfect towards God, towards himself, and towards his neighbour. So in today's Gospel Christ is shown perfect in virtues towards God- as he gives thanks to Him and praises Him for the divine works of mercy and then justice according to the good pleasure of the divine will, and also for the knowledge of benefits: "All things have been handed to me by my Father"(Mt 11:27); towards himself "since I am gentle and humble in heart"(v.29), gentle in adversities and humble in favourable times; towards his neighbours - providing for those in bad times and desiring good things for them: "Come to me all you who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you and you will find rest for your souls."

I say on the other hand, Francis is the other Seraph having six wings in the shape of a cross, a seraph all aglow with love. for in the ardour of this love he has been transformed completely into Christ. The twin aspects of love are depicted in those Seraphim: love for God whom they therefore praise, saying “Holy, holy, holy Lord of hosts,” and love of neighbour. For with a burning coal one of them cleansed the lips of the prophet Isaiah. Thus Francis’ love for God was great, for love of whom he relinquished everything and had followed Christ. And great was his love for his neighbour, preaching penance by his life and teaching for the salvation of souls and by founding his holy Order.

He had six wings, the wings of the six virtues of faith, hope, justice, prudence, fortitude and temperance. He possessed the perfection of all the virtues needed for a man to be perfect towards God, towards his neighbour and towards himself. Regarding God are the virtues of religion and reverence: “I acknowledge you Father, Lord of heaven and earth.” The saint spent the most of his time in prayer to God and gave thanks for the benefits received: “All things have been given me by my Father.” He was endowed with great faith and hope in God, but also with humility and the fear of the Lord, knowing both God’s mercy and his justice. Out of the greatness of his faith and hope in God he established his Order in supreme poverty, like another Jonadab the father of the Rechabites who ordered his sons to live in high poverty, having nothing - neither house nor possessions, and not to drink wine. He wanted his

³³ Luke 10,21

³⁴ Luke 10,17

³⁵ Math 11,26

entire Order to depend on divine providence, so that by having nothing the brothers might possess all things.³⁶

Hence Francis could truly say, “Learn from me, since I am gentle and humble of heart.” He was like another Moses, the most gentle and humble leader of the Hebrews through the desert. He led many out from the Egypt of this world into the desert of sacred Order. He led them from slavery to the devil into the service of the blessed God. Francis was most gentle and patient, endowed with the firmest resolve to endure and overcome adversities.³⁷ Indeed, he desired martyrdom very much. Furnished therefore with the most perfect gentleness, he was far from vindicating wrongs since he desired to suffer even much more. He was most humble, fleeing honours amid success. Equally he was even very desirous for any dishonour. Because of this he called his Brothers “Minors.” So indeed he fled all the riches of the world and the delights and desires of the flesh. His heart was most modest, abstinent, chaste and always most holy. He was very strict and severe towards himself, while truly most clement and dutiful towards others. So Francis lived temperately, justly and piously in this world: temperately regarding himself, justly towards his neighbour, and piously towards God.

So Francis was most like Christ in nature, virtue and operation. By nature - Christ the man and Francis the man. Christ the man united to the Godhead³⁸ by nature, Francis united to the Godhead by grace: “He who ... adheres to God is of one spirit”³⁹ with Him. “I said, You are Gods and all sons of the Most High”⁴⁰(Ps 81:6). “He has given us great and precious gifts so that through these you may be made sharers in the divine nature.”⁴¹ (2 Pet 1:4). Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit and Francis was filled with the Holy Spirit. Christ was holy and Francis was holy through the grace of Christ. Christ, the author and head of the Church and Francis, the author and head of holy Order. Christ instituted the Gospel law. Francis instituted the gospel Rule. Christ founded his Church from nothing, for the foundation of the Church is His passion and death. Just as God founded the world from nothing, for outside the world there is nothing, so then Francis founded his Order upon nothing in supreme poverty. He prescribed that the entire Order have or possess nothing in the world. Christ despised all the goods, riches, dignities, desires of this world - choosing poverty, humility, suffering and pain.⁴² Similarly Francis wanted to live in supreme poverty, humility and penance and founded his Order that way. Christ conquered the devil, the world and the flesh, and Francis conquered by the grace of Christ. It befell Christ that he was indeed most humble even to the point of death, and yet after death was most glorious. He was the first to be despised by all was later adored. This also befell Francis. In the world he was most humble and abject even unto death and yet after death he was most glorious. The whole world respected, honoured, venerated and glorified him. Christ had worked many miracles by his divine power: “The blind see,

³⁶ Cf. 1Cor 6,10

³⁷ *fortissimo animo praeditus in perferendis superandisque adversis*

³⁸ *divinitati*

³⁹ 1Cor 6,17

⁴⁰ Ps 81,6 (Vulg.)

⁴¹ 2Pet 1,4

⁴² *passiones et poenas*

the crippled walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead arise.”⁴³ And by the power of Christ Francis did many miracles.

So Francis the Seraph was clearly most similar to Christ, another Cherub in the Holy of Holies of the divine tabernacle, where Cherubim were standing with outstretched wings in the form of the crucified. And in the sanctuary of his temple Solomon similarly placed two other Cherubim with wings outstretched in the form of the crucified. After Christ Francis is the second crucified, who with Paul truly said: “Far from me to boast except in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ through whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world”⁴⁴(Gal 6:14): having been crucified, not because of the infinite cruelty of the Jews, but because of God’s infinite love.

(IV) “God is wonderful in his saints”⁴⁵ for if the works of nature are marvellous, much more marvellous are the works of grace. If God is wonderful in the creation of the world, He is much more marvellous in the recreation and the constitution of the mystical world of the most holy Church. “Wonderful ... in his saints”, in their predestination and election, creation and vocation, as he calls them and brings them to natural existence and to existence in grace.⁴⁶ Wonderful in justification and sanctification, as he lavishes the grace by which he deifies men and makes them sharers of the divine nature. He not only lavishes his grace but increases it more and more each day. Wonderful, finally, in the exaltation and glorification in both the Church militant and the Church triumphant. God magnifies his saints both the living and the dead just as he has magnified Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Elisha, Elijah, Daniel, Peter and all the Apostles and his disciples.

Francis however is especially “wonderful.” The term ‘holiness’ is particularly suitable for him just as he had been specially in the image and likeness of Christ. In the Scriptures ‘holy’ is the same as clean or pure of all corruption. “God did not call us to impurity but to holiness.”⁴⁷ “If not your children would be unclean, whereas now they are holy” Paul said.⁴⁸ In Greek this “holy” is ἄγιος⁴⁹, almost like “without earth”, since all dirtiness springs from the earth. So the holy heart is the one free of earthly contagion. By loving earthly goods the heart is polluted by arrogance, avarice, pleasure, and by prestigious, useful and desirable things. On the other hand, Francis renounced for himself all things by the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity, by leading a life in voluntary humility, mendicancy and rugged penance. In Latin, *sanctus* (holy) is like “*Sancitus*” or consecrated⁵⁰, for someone consecrated in faith hope and charity is holy. As with the Apostle, he may say: “Who will separate us from the love of Christ?”⁵¹ Such was Francis – united to Christ, crucified with Christ,

⁴³ Mt 11,5; Lk 7,22

⁴⁴ Gal 6,14

⁴⁵ Ps 67:36

⁴⁶ *dum eos vocat et adducit ad esse naturae et esse gratiae*

⁴⁷ 1Th 4:7

⁴⁸ 1Cor 7:14

⁴⁹ Ms. Has *Aghios*

⁵⁰ Sanctified, consecrated, sanctioned.

⁵¹ Rom 8,35

In Hebrew “holy” is *קדוש*, that is, prepared, adorned, like the woman prepared and adorned to receive her beloved, or like a soldier prepared for war so that in the struggle of combat he may fight the enemy. So whoever has been adorned with all the virtues is “holy.” Especially equipped with the virtues Francis was a six-winged Seraph. Thoughts and desires are the wings of our soul. With these wings our soul in fact flies to hell by evil deeds, or to heaven by good deeds. Perfect goodness consists in this: that a person⁵² manfully refrain from and guard against every evil and steadfastly and earnestly do all the good he can.⁵³ Thus the person has the irascible power to flee evil and the power to yearn for the good. The man⁵⁴ is perfect who abstains from every offence against God, his conscience and his neighbour and who is careful to please God in everything. He desires for himself and treasures the good things of grace and glory and helps neighbours in the things he can, or at least he longs to help. These are the six wings: two for the head, two for the body and two for the feet. Francis was equipped with all these: the two upper wings since he pleased God. “So Father since it has pleased you”; but “The Lord is pleased with those who fear him and to those who hope in His mercy.”⁵⁵ With these wings in prayer and the contemplation of the works of divine mercy and of justice, he flew to God- with a vigorous and living faith and charity, and giving thanks to God in everything. With the middle two wings - “Since I am gentle and humble in heart” - He guarded himself from all evil with gentleness in the midst of adversities through gentleness, and with humility in the midst of prosperity. He never offended his conscience in anything, but advancing in the school of Christ he acquired all the virtues and made a treasure for himself in heaven.

And finally, in the two lowest wings. He was always diligent not to offend his neighbour either in deed or word, and not even in his heart or with the slightest thought. But in all their hardships he suffered with those with those who laboured and were burdened, and he helped everyone with all his strength - “I will refresh you” - with supreme kindness and devotion. In this way he bore the yoke of Christ and observed the Divine Law which is total charity, devotion and kindness: “Whatever you’d wish others do to you, do for them. This is the Law and the Prophets.”⁵⁶ In this way Francis was trained and endowed most abundantly with all the virtues.

⁵² *homo*

⁵³ Cf. Ps 36:27; 1 Pet 3:10-11 (citation is not in the Ms.)

⁵⁴ *vir*

⁵⁵ Ps 146:11(citation is not in the Ms.)

⁵⁶ Mt 7:12

THE SECOND

(I) Many are the mysteries in today's gospel. It deals with the inscrutable mystery of divine predestination and rejection, so that the ultimate cause be attributed to each - "So Father, since it was pleasing in your sight," or good pleasure¹ or good will² or εὐδοχία in Greek. For what pleases God must be just and good.³ Here it also teaches that the cause of rejection is arrogance⁴ in fact, which cast down the Angel from the heavenly paradise⁵, and which expelled man from the earthly paradise. "You have hidden these things from those wise and prudent" in their own eyes. Woe to those who are wise in their own sight!⁶ Predestination however only comes from the goodness of God and is unmerited:⁷ "You have revealed these things to little ones", that is, to those men who like little ones have merited nothing.⁸ There is the mystery of the divinity of Christ and his consubstantiality and equality. "All things have been given to me by my Father."⁹ "All authority¹⁰ has been to me"¹¹ and "The Father put all things in his hands."¹² "No one knows the Son except the Father." No one knows who the Son is except the Father for the divinity of Christ is incomprehensible. "Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son" by natural understanding, and "the one to whom" through grace "the son shall want to reveal him."¹³ Therefore the Father and the Son together- the whole Trinity together reveals the gospel mysteries to the chosen ones.

The gospel also deals with the mystery of Vocation. "Come to me all you who labour and burdened and I shall refresh you"¹⁴, that is, I shall restore and revive you. I shall give you coolness and tranquillity. Here it is shown that the call¹⁵ occurs through revelation and a divine illumination of the mind. It is like one who finds a treasure in a field, "He goes and sells all that he has and buys that field"¹⁶ for a treasure he has discovered and found.

It deals with justification. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble of heart." Finally, the gospel deals with blessedness: "You will

¹ *bonum placitum*

² *bona voluntas*

³ *nam quod Deo placet, non potest non esse iustum et bonum*

⁴ *Superbia*

⁵ Cf. Is14:12-15; Ez 28:12-16

⁶ Cf. Is 5:21

⁷ *Praedestinatio autem ex sola Dei bonitate est, absque ullis meritis.*

⁸ *...idest hominibus qui parvulorum instar nihil meruerunt.*

⁹ Mt 11:27

¹⁰ *potestas*

¹¹ Mt 28:18

¹² Jn 13:3

¹³ Mt 11:27

¹⁴ Mt 11:28

¹⁵ *vocatio*

¹⁶ Mt 13:44

find rest for your souls: my yoke is easy and my burden light."¹⁷ These are the mysteries which Paul opened up to the Romans. "For God foreknew and predestined those to become conformed to the image of his Son, so that He might the first born among many brothers. Moreover, those whom He predestined, He called; and those whom He called, He justified; and those whom He justified, He magnified them", that is, He made them blessed "and glorified" them."¹⁸

In so far as these mysteries are concerned, God is truly wonderful in His saints, but especially in Francis, whom He wonderfully predestined from eternity, whom He wonderfully called, whom He more wonderfully justified and whom He most wonderfully glorified.

(II) In regard to the first mystery he said, "I acknowledge you Father," that is, I give thanks to you, "Lord of heaven and earth" creator of all things, "because you have hidden these" mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, the treasure of everything good, "from the wise and the prudent" according to the flesh, "and have revealed them to little ones", that is, to humble, simple and uneducated fishermen. But what is this? Does the Lord rejoice about the damnation of the false¹⁹? Not in the least, says. Chrysostom in Homily 30 on *Matthew*. However he only rejoices over the salvation of the elect, as Paul says to the Romans. "I give thanks to my God since you had been slaves to sin but now you have obeyed from the heart... the form of teaching that you have been given."²⁰ Paul does not rejoice that they had been the servants of sin, but because when they were, they would become the cultivators of justice. As it has been written, "The just man will rejoice when he sees retribution. He will wash his hands in the blood of the sinner."²¹ Just as all Israel had rejoiced over the drowning of Pharaoh and his whole army in the Red Sea; just as did Jerusalem rejoiced over the destruction of Sennacherib's army,²² the faithful rejoice over the destruction of the infidels when the Christian army gained victory against them. And in the Psalms David frequently desires retribution and vendetta over the enemies of God. "May God rise up and his enemies be scattered and those who hate him in his presence flee. Just as smoke disperses, may they be dispersed. Just as wax melts in the presence of the fire, so may sinners perish before God."²³ What wonder therefore if Christ rejoices over the perdition of the false? However the glory of does not shine out or appear less in works of justice than works of mercy, for justice is equal to mercy. On equal balance God loves good and hates evil, loves virtue and hates vice. Therefore Christ praises the Father for His works both of justice and of mercy, for a prince not only rewards the good and extols and praises them fittingly, but he also punishes the bad and rids the republic of its plagues. "So Father, since it was pleasing in your sight," since justice

¹⁷ Mt 11:29

¹⁸ Rom 8:29-30

¹⁹ *reprobatorum*

²⁰ Rom 6:17

²¹ *Laetabitur iustus cum viderit vindictam, manus suas lavabit in sanguine peccatoris.* Ps 57[58]:11 (VC); *Laetabitur iustus, cum viderit vindictam, pedes suos lavabit in sanguine peccatoris* Ps 58[57],11 (VN).

²² Cf. Ex 14,23

²³ Ps 67:2-3

and mercy please the divine will: justice against the counterfeit proud,²⁴ but mercy towards the humble and simple. “The Lord is well pleased with those who fear him and those who hope in his mercy.”²⁵

The first (mystery) is praise, the first praise of Blessed Francis, because he pleased God like another Enoch and was acceptable to Him. He was also like another Jacob, the beloved of God. “I have loved Jacob, but I hated Esau.”²⁶ For he has been predestined and chosen by God from eternity and from the infinite goodness of God. Because he was a little one, for “Unless you will be converted and become as little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven”²⁷ as innocent and simple children who neither know how to do, desire or think evil. God praises the innocence of the simple person.

From eternity God prepared this gift of his grace of innocence, purity, simplicity and humility in his servant Francis. For predestination and election is the preparation of the gifts of God out of divine compassion and goodness, without previous merits, because a man cannot perform deeds before he exists. If he cannot do deeds, nor can he merit at all because a man merits in doing good. Christ prepared this gift for him, Christ who is true God, consubstantial, eternal, and coequal with the Father. “All things have been given me by my Father and no one knows the Son,” in as much as he is God by Nature, “except the Father” who begot and gave all things to him! Nor does anyone know the Father” naturally “except the Son and the one to whom the Son wants to reveal him.” For “No one has ever seen God. His only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has manifested Him to us.”²⁸

The second is the mystery of vocation. “Those whom... He predestined, He called them”; “Come to me all of you.” Christ called vocation a divine attraction: “No one comes to me unless the Father who sent me has drawn him.”²⁹ This attraction is the attraction of love for God who moves the heart by love and the desire for good. However there cannot be love without prior knowledge. This is, “You have revealed these things to little ones”: “to the one whom the Son wants to reveal” the treasure hidden in the field. Therefore vocation is a divine attraction through knowledge and love, from the world to God, from Egypt and the harsh servitude under Pharaoh, into the sacred desert and divine service. Hence Jesus said, “Come to me all you who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you”, as happened to the Hebrews who were working and burdened in Egypt, but who were restored, revived and refreshed from heaven in the desert.

And so it happened that the Lord understood in this reference the burden of the Mosaic law, about which he said, “You tie up heavy and unbearable burdens and placed them on the shoulders of men;”³⁰; and Peter: “Why do you tempt (God). . .

²⁴ *reprobos superbos*

²⁵ Ps 146:11

²⁶ Mal 1:2-3; Rom 9:13

²⁷ Mt 18:3

²⁸ Jn 1:18

²⁹ Jn 6:44

³⁰ Mt 23:4

imposing upon the necks of disciples a burden which neither we nor our Fathers have been able to carry?”³¹ Moses had heavy hands.³² That was a law of fear, prescribing the punishment of retaliation, inflicting many punishments and death for sins. However the gospel law is a law of love and charity, a law not of servitude but of liberation; not for servants, but for sons. For even if at the time the Hebrews were made sons of God by grace, nevertheless they did not have the status of sons but of servants. Nor did they have the spirit of sons towards God, but of servants. Just like the sons of a prince who are not yet declared nor know themselves to be sons of the king, even if they truly are sons. Nevertheless they remain as servants in the house, for they only have the spirit of servants. And as a father rules his son from his boyhood years with heavier and stricter disciplines under threats and the rod, with tutors, guides and teachers, so that he might better acquire the virtues. From his youth and manhood, however, the father uses much more lenient means. In the same way God ruled the Hebrews with a heavy yoke when they were like children under Moses the guide. Under Christ, however, he rules and even guides us gently, easily and placidly like sons who are already perfect adults. So Paul teaches that Christ placed himself under the law “so that He might redeem us who were under the law and that we would receive adoption of sons.”³³

But apart from this burden there are also the burdens of the flesh, the burdens of the world, the burdens of the vices and of sins. For those who wish to live according to the flesh and far from God there is the great burden of the flesh. “What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear?”³⁴ On the other hand, the service of Christ has either removed these cares entirely or has lessened and mitigated them in great part, since He said, “Because your Father knows you need all these things.”³⁵ “Cast your cares upon the Lord and he will sustain you.”³⁶ It is a great burden to live according to the world and to serve the vanities and pomps of the world. The servant of Christ though cares nothing for the world, but on high with Christ has contempt for it. Thus Francis said with Paul, “The world has been crucified to me and I to the world.”³⁷ “I regard everything as loss and consider all as dung so that I may have Christ.”³⁸ There are also the burdens of sins. “My iniquities have swept over my head. Like a heavy burden they weigh down upon me.”³⁹ Then there are the burdens of the trials that God allows as punishment for sins, as we read about the “burden of Babylon”;⁴⁰ the “burden of Moab”;⁴¹ the “burden of Tyre”;⁴² the “burden of Egypt.”⁴³

³¹ Acts 15:10

³² Cf. Ex 17:12: *Manus autem Moysi erant graves* (VC and VN). JB: “Moses arms grew heavy.”

³³ Gal 4:5

³⁴ Mt 6:31

³⁵ Mt 6:32

³⁶ Ps 54:23

³⁷ Gal 6:14

³⁸ Phil 3:8

³⁹ Ps 37:5

⁴⁰ Is 13:1

⁴¹ Is 15:1

⁴² Is 23:1

⁴³ Is 19:1

Christ alleviates from all these burdens “and I will restore you”; “I will give you rest and tranquillity, just like the Hebrews living in the desert under divine protection without any care for food and clothing.”⁴⁴ So Saint Francis, called by God, established his Order just like a special family of the heavenly Father, without any burden of the world or of the flesh and wholly dependent from God.

(IV) The third mystery is about justification. “Those, whom he called, he justified.” By the observance of the divine law in grace he made them completely just. “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am poor and humble in heart.” The school of Christ is the school of the virtues, not of natural philosophy but of the moral and the divine. Vane and worldly wisdom is not acquired there, but heavenly and divine wisdom. Christ is the teacher and model⁴⁵ of the virtues. In this school all the Saints learned perfect justice, holiness and the perfection of every virtue, especially Francis. He was the most diligent and most perfect imitator of the virtues of Christ. He reached the supreme integrity of the virtues, the apex and summit of Christian perfection. Anyone who desires to acquire some knowledge or discipline or the perfection of some art so that he may become excellent in that profession, does not waste time. He attends school. He studies day and night. Every day he strives to learn something more and to be always more proficient in the profession. To do the same is necessary for anyone who wants to acquire Christian philosophy perfectly in the school of Christ: “His will is in the law of the Lord and he meditates on His law day and night.”⁴⁶ Therefore Francis thus became the most perfect disciple of Christ, and became as well a distinguished master and teacher of Christian perfection. Indeed he was unique in that Christ himself personally appointed him teacher, and Francis received his doctoral privilege and insignia from Him.⁴⁷

But how did Christ speak of himself as gentle and humble in heart if humility is contempt for one's self from the knowledge of one's own worthlessness? What is worthless in Christ, in the knowledge of which he is humble and, in fact, as nothing in his own eyes? But is he is not equal to God in all things and through all things? However Christ is called humble because he claims nothing for himself and attributes nothing to Himself. Everything is for the Father. Many take pride in the gifts of God and become boastful. “What do you have” man “which you have not received? If you have received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?”⁴⁸ And indeed Christ clearly says today, “All things have been given to me by my Father.” Christ attributed nothing to himself. He recognised all things as from the Father. Hence He did not seek nor was he concerned for his own honour, but that of the Father. Hence He led a humble life in the world without pride or arrogance, rather, He humbly conformed with everyone. He despised no one, rejected no one. He was “humble in heart” since being equal to God “He humbled himself, having become obedient even unto death, moreover, death of the cross.”⁴⁹ Moreover, he proposes humility and kindness, which in are most evident his life, so that we may imitate them. For humility and kindness

⁴⁴ Cf. Dt 29:2-6

⁴⁵ *exemplar*

⁴⁶ Ps 1:2

⁴⁷ *ab ipsomet Crhsito personaliter institutus doctor, ab ipso acceperit privilegium et insignia doctoratus*

⁴⁸ 1 Cor 4:7

⁴⁹ Phil 2:8

are just like supports and foundations for all the virtues, just as all the vices spring from arrogance and the ferocity of soul: ambition, cupidity, which is the root of all evils, vengefulness, lust, anger, quarrelsomeness, envy, etc.

Saint Francis cultivated these two virtues the most so that he might be most like Christ in kindness and humility.

(V) Finally, the fourth mystery. “Those whom... he justified, he magnified “ both in the present age and in the future. “You will find rest for you souls”: rest in the present, because “my yoke is easy,” gentle, “and my burden light.” Hence Jeremiah says, “It is good for a man who bore the yoke from his youth.”⁵⁰ “It is good: Say to the just man ‘Well!’ פִּיטוֹב, or “Good!”⁵¹ Hence Peter on the high mountain, seeing the glory of the Transfiguration, says, “Lord, it is good that we are here.”⁵² Hence again Jeremiah says, “The Lord says this: ‘Stand on your streets and see and ask of the ancient paths which is the good way, and walk in it, and you will find refreshment,’ that is, rest, “for your souls”⁵³. And as well as rest in the future life, for “Happy the dead who die in the Lord; indeed, the spirit says that they may rest from their labours, for their works follow them.”⁵⁴ Hence paradise is called eternal rest. Furthermore it was prefigured in the law about the Sabbath in which no one could do work or carry any burden.

(VI) “I praise you Father ... etc.” In all there are three things that emerge from the Holy Scriptures: mysteries to be believed, promises to be hoped in, and precepts to be carried out. So in today's gospel we have them all together: mysteries, promises, commandments- to be believed, to be hoped in and to be done. In these things we may know that Francis ascended into heaven because he believe the mysteries, hoped in the promises, and observed the precepts.

In today's gospel there are many mysteries to be believed: that God is uniquely⁵⁵ the Father of Christ, because Christ alone is the natural son of God; that He is Lord of all things because he is the governor and make of all things; that the judgements of God are incomprehensible. “You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent.” “Oh sublime wisdom of the riches and knowledge of God! How incomprehensible his ways, etc;”⁵⁶ that Christ has been appointed Lord of the universe by the Father. “All things have been given to me by my Father;”⁵⁷ “All power in heaven and earth has been given to me;”⁵⁸ “You have subjected all things under his feet;”⁵⁹ that the person of Christ is unfathomable. “No one knows the Son except the Father” just as the nature of God is unfathomable. “Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son” by

⁵⁰ Lam 3:27

⁵¹ Cf. Is 3:10. VC: *Dicite iusto quoniam bene*; VN: *Dicite iusto:«Bene!»*

⁵² Mt 14:4; Mk 9:4; Lk 9:33.

⁵³ Jer 6:6

⁵⁴ Apoc 14:13

⁵⁵ *singulariter*

⁵⁶ Rom 11:23

⁵⁷ Mt 11:27

⁵⁸ Mt 28:18

⁵⁹ Ps 8:8

the knowledge of understanding especially; that Christ is the revealer of the mysteries of God, “To whom the Son wishes to reveal Him;”⁶⁰ that Christ is gentle and humble in heart, that is, entirely holy, pious and kind; that the gospel law is not only possible, but that it is even very easy and pleasant. “My yoke is easy and my burden light.”⁶¹

The promises in today's gospel are, “I will refresh you... and you will find rest for your souls.” These are certainly not the least promises and they contain a twofold consolation: in the present and in the future, a twofold paradise. “How great is your sweetness Lord, which you have hidden.”⁶² “I shall give to them hidden manna.”⁶³ “I shall give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God.”⁶⁴

Finally the precepts are: “Come to me all of you. Take my yoke upon you...Learn from me because I am gentle.” Francis observed these precepts, because he left the world for the sake of Christ, He took up the yoke of Christ. He learned the virtues of Christ, becoming Christ's perfect imitator, so that in all things he might become like Christ in holiness and virtue. Given this divine philosophy and science, “Learn from me because I am gentle and humble in heart” Francis put it carefully into practice. And so promoted by Christ to the height and apex of Christian perfection, he would become like Him in every kind of the divine virtue. Thus by a special heavenly prerogative he merited to become configured to the Crucified, even in the externals of the flesh. For all Saints are like Christ: “Those whom he foreknew and predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son.” However by singular privilege he did so in soul and body, virtue, dignities and works, and moreover by that divine holiness of life in him, as if he always dwelt in heaven and he is even renowned by many miracles.

⁶⁰ Mt 11:27

⁶¹ Mt 11:30

⁶² Ps 30:20

⁶³ Apoc 2:17

⁶⁴ Apoc 2:7

THE THIRD

(I) The little ones have always pleased God, since God delights very much in humility, innocence and purity of heart.¹ Therefore Francis pleased God and was most acceptable and dear to Him, since he was most humble and had the purest heart. God exalted him since He who humbles the proud raises the humble on high. “I God have taken down the tall wood and have exalted the low wood.”² “Everyone who humbles himself will be exalted.”³ Since Francis was humble among men on earth, he is exalted therefore among the angels in heaven. God exalted him in paradise because he humbled himself in the world. He is great before God since he was small in the world before men. “You have revealed these things to little ones.” “Be little ones in evil,”⁴) “just as new born infants, long for milk without guile.”⁵ Today, that child Francis has been given to his true mother by Solomon: “that Jerusalem above, which is our mother, is free.”⁶

It seems to me that today something similar happened as when the two women appeared before Solomon disputing about the child. Each was saying that the infant was hers. Solomon, recognising the true mother, gave the son to her, and not to her who while asleep had killed or suffocated the sleeping child.⁷ Saint Pauli teaches there are two men in each person. One is the external, carnal, corruptible man. The other instead is interior, spiritual, immortal and incorruptible. Thus he says in 2Cor 4 “Although that which is external is corrupted, nevertheless, what is internal is renewed from day to day.”⁸ The exterior man is that earthly, carnal and animal body. But the interior man is the heavenly, spiritual, angelic, divine soul. The mother of the exterior man is earthly nature, while the mother of the interior man is heavenly grace. Hence Baptism. is called the sacrament of rebirth. As Christ said, “Unless one has been reborn from water and the Holy Spirit.”⁹

Today the mother of the exterior man, earthly nature, killed her son in Francis, who according to the flesh merely died in the body in the eyes of the world, but who - immortal - lives forever with God. But on the other hand, in the spirit by which he is the son of the heavenly Jerusalem, he did not die at all, but lives Immortal with God forever. And in fact nature often attributes the divine virtues to itself, to its own constitution, education, industriousness, diligence and human strength, and not to the heavenly divine grace. Earthly nature said that Francis was her son, since she had generated him. She conceived him. She gave him birth. She fed and raised him and gave him life, awareness¹⁰ and reason. “Who doesn’t know,” she says, “that man is

¹ *animique puritate*

² Ez 17:24

³ Lk 14:11

⁴ 1 Cor 14:20

⁵ 1 Pet. 2:3

⁶ Gal 4:26

⁷ 1Kings 3:16-26

⁸ 2Cor 4:16

⁹ Jn 3:5

¹⁰ *sensum*

formed by God from my womb?” “The Lord God formed man from the dust of earth.”¹¹ Francis is a man, and so my son. Why then should one born to me, his true mother, be given to heaven?

But says to the contrary, “In his soul, virtues, morals, life and conversation Francis is totally heavenly. Therefore he is my son, for “He who is of the earth... speaks of the earth,”¹² thinks about the earth and desires earthly things. In fact, Francis’ thoughts, desires, affection, virtues, efforts, words and all his works are heavenly just as the countless miracles done by heavenly power demonstrate. These cannot happen except by divine power. Therefore, how is Francis an earthly man and not heavenly? I admit that according to the flesh he is your son. Nor do I question the way he was according to the flesh, for you have killed him according to the flesh. He also died in the body, but he lives in the spirit. However you did not give him the spirit. You did not conceive him, give him birth, or raise him. I did. Predestination, election, vocation, sanctification and the perfection of the divine virtues are not works of nature, but of heavenly grace. Francis was predestined, chosen, made holy and magnified and become most like God and Christ in his life and virtues. Therefore he is not earthly but a heavenly man. He is not a son of nature, but a son of grace according to the inner man. Don't you see how Francis is like Christ? From such a likeness and reciprocal mutual love who can deny that Francis is the very dear brother to Christ? Like Benjamin who turned out to be the most beloved brother of Joseph, prince of Egypt. Although by birth he was the least of all the brothers, yet before all the brothers he received the best gifts from Joseph. Joseph gave two robes to each of the other brothers, but gave five to Benjamin and a further three hundred pieces of silver.¹³ And in the banquet, he gave a portion to each of the brothers, but to Benjamin he gave a much larger portion that exceeded by five times the other single portions of the brothers. Only in Benjamin's bag did Joseph order his silver wine cup to be placed as a sign of his singular love. Benjamin was his dearest brother, born from the same father and mother.

So I maintain that as a sign of his most special love Christ gave Francis’ body the five stigmata, signs of our redemption and of a much greater abundant grace and charity. Surely you are not saying that Christ the only begotten Son of God is not my Son? So if Christ is my true Son and Francis is the brother most like Christ and dearest to Him, therefore he is my son. So then, let the Lord judge between us, since he is the judge of truth and justice.

Hence the son has been given to the heavenly Jerusalem as to his true mother.

So today the heavenly Jerusalem is taking up and embracing the spirit of Francis with the great escorting multitude of Angels leading him into heaven, to the eternal delights of paradise, to the glory of the heavenly kingdom, just like Lazarus. When the beggar died he was carried by Angels to the bosom of Abraham, to the place of perpetual consolation.¹⁴ And so with the deceased Blessed Francis. His most holy

¹¹ Gen 2:7

¹² Jn 3:31

¹³ Cf. Gen 45:23

¹⁴ Cf. Lk 16:22

spirit was born away by the Angels of paradise into the bosom of the heavenly God the Father, who is the Father of souls and “the God of all consolation.”¹⁵ One with the blessed spirits may he also praise God forever. “Blessed are those who dwell in your house, Lord. They will praise you forever and ever.”¹⁶ Thus, close to death, the Blessed Father said, “Lead my soul out prison to bless your name. The just await me while you reward me.” The Hebrew has, “Lead my soul out from enclosure,” or from prison, “to praise your name. The just will surround me since you reward me,” or “in me” or either “on my account the just will girdle themselves¹⁷ when you reward me.”¹⁸ For Francis this world was like a prison. Therefore he desired death by which he would exit this world, just like someone who has been detained a long time naturally desires freedom above all else, or as a bird desires to fly away from a cage or a very. “I long to be released¹⁹ and be with Christ.”²⁰ And although his body was like a sacred temple of the Holy Spirit - its door was the wound on his side and the stigmata in his hands and feet truly like four windows of this temple - nevertheless for his spirit his body seemed to be a gloomy and dark prison. “Lead my soul out from prison to praise your name” with the holy angels and blessed spirits. “The just await me” and all the saints in heaven and all the holy religious of my Order make of me a crown of honour and glory for themselves, since they boast to have such a Father and Patriarch, since you reward me with such glory on earth and in heaven, in the world and in paradise.

(II) “Come to me all you who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, etc.” Because of the merit of his virtue and without the intervention of death God took holy Enoch from this world to a better and more beautiful life. In accordance with his name Enoch dedicated himself wholly to God and walked with God in the way of justice and holiness and pleased God. Therefore we do not read of him as dead, but as have been taken across by God to a better life.²¹ As Chrysostom²² notes this is to indicate that immortality and eternal life are due for virtue, just as death is due for sin. For as the Apostles says, “The wages of sin are death.”²³ and death entered the world through sin.²⁴ So because of the merit of holiness, Francis today is led across from this world into heaven, from this earthly world into the most heavenly paradise; since he had dedicated himself totally, inwardly and outwardly, to a holy way of life. And just as Moses, the leader of the Hebrews, ascended to the summit of the high mountain at the end of his pilgrimage to contemplate from there the blessed land of the promise, so today Francis ascended into heaven to contemplate the Divinity itself, for the blessedness and glory of all the saints consists in this contemplation. Finally, just as Elias had been carried off into

¹⁵ 2 Cor 1:3

¹⁶ Ps 83:5

¹⁷ *coronabunt se*

¹⁸ Ps 141:8, VC: *Educ de custodia animam meam, ad confitendum nomini tuo: me expectant iusti donec retribuas mihi.* Ps 142:8, VN: *Educ de custodia animam meam ad confitendum nomini tuo; me circumdabunt iusti, cum retribuieris mihi.*

¹⁹ *dissolvi*

²⁰ Phil 1:23

²¹ Cf. Gen 5:21-24; Ecclesiasticus. 44:16.

²² *In Genesim* Hom 21,24 (PG 53,180-181).

²³ Rom 6:23

²⁴ Rom 5:12

heaven by a fiery carriage, so too Francis today. In the world he had been filled to overflowing with the twofold spirit of Elias. Behold the carriage: “Take my yoke upon you.” It is said that the ox connected to the yoke as he pulls the carriage is under the yoke. The fiery carriage is the gospel law, since it consists in total charity. “The fiery law in his right hand;”²⁵ since really nothing is lighter or smoother than fire when the cold presses upon us. He rightly says, “My yoke is easy and burden light.”²⁶ This fire does not burn, but it illuminates and warms nicely like the sun and like the burning bush of Moses.

The fiery carriage is the Gospel of Christ, and has four wheels- the four cardinal virtues, by which the endowed soul easily observes the divine law, just as the ox easily draws the light carriage that has good wheels. Therefore, since two oxen draw the carriage and not just one, so it is necessary to observe the divine law by a twofold spirit: by human training in all the virtues, and by divine training, without which the human spirit - although endowed with all the cardinal and theological virtues - cannot observe the divine law. Just like the eye. Even though it may rejoice in the perfect sense of vision nevertheless, without external light it can see nothing. Therefore in order to see a twofold light is necessary. So to observe the divine law a double spirit is needed. That twofold spirit, human and divine, easily pulls this carriage very well. This spirit not only makes the carriage run, but makes it fly. This is why we read about “Fiery carriage and fiery horses.”²⁷ The fiery horses are these two spirits: the human and the divine. Therefore in this way Saint Francis bore this easy and light burden. He pulled this fiery carriage helped by the Holy Spirit, that took him up and carried him into to the paradise of God.



²⁵ Dt 33:2

²⁶ Mt 11:30

²⁷ 2Kings 2:11

