

Saint Thomas on the 5th Sunday after Pentecost

*For I tell you, that unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill. And whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council. And whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath any thing against thee; Leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother: and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift.*

GLOSS. Having now exhorted His bearers to undergo all things for righteousness' sake, and also not to hide what they should receive, but to learn more for others' sake, that at they may teach others, He now goes on to tell them what they should teach, as though he had been asked, What is this which you would not have hid; and for which you would have all things endured? Are you about to speak any thing beyond what is written in the Law and the Prophets; hence it is he says, Think not that I am come to subvert the Law or the Prophets.

CHRYS. And that for two reasons. First, that by these words he might admonish His disciples, that as he fulfilled the Law, so they should strive to fulfill it. Secondly, because the Jews would falsely accuse them as subverting the Law, therefore he answers the calumny beforehand, but in such a manner as that He should not be thought to come simply to preach the Law as the Prophets had done.

REMIG. He here asserts two things; He denies that he was come to subvert the Law, and affirms that he was come to fulfill it.

AUG. In this last sentence again there is a double sense; to fulfill the Law, either by adding something which it had not, or by doing what it commands.

CHRYS. Christ then fulfilled the Prophets by accomplishing what was therein foretold concerning Himself - and the Law, first, by transgressing none of its precepts; secondly, by justifying by faith, which the Law could not do by the letter.

AUG. And lastly, because even for them who were under grace, it was hard in this mortal life to fulfill that of the Law, You shall not lust, He being made a Priest by the sacrifice of His flesh, obtained for us this indulgence, even in this fulfilling the Law, that where through our infirmity we could not, we should be strengthened through His perfection, of whom as our head we all are members. For so I think must be taken these words, to fulfill the Law, by adding to it, that is, such things as either contribute to the explanation of the old laws, or to enable to keep them. For the Lord has showed us that even a wicked motion of the thoughts to the wrong of a brother is to be accounted a kind of murder. The Lord also teaches us, that it is better to keep near to the truth without swearing, than with a true oath to come near to blasphemy. But how, you Manichaeans,

do you not receive the Law and the Prophets, seeing Christ here says, that He is come not to subvert but to fulfill them? To this the heretic Faustus replies, Whose testimony is there that Christ spoke this? That of Matthew. How was it then that John does not give this saying, who was with Him in the mount, but only Matthew, who did not follow Jesus till after He had come down from the mount? To this Augustine replies, If none can speak truth concerning Christ, but who saw and heard Him, there is no one at this day who speaks truth concerning Him. Why then could not Matthew hear from John's mouth the truth as Christ had spoken, as well as we who are born so long after can speak the truth out of John's book? In the same manner also it is, that not Matthew's Gospel, but also these of Luke and Mark are received by us, and on no inferior authority. Add, that the Lord Himself might have told Matthew the things He had done before He called him. But speak out and say that you do not believe the Gospel, for they who believe nothing in the Gospel but what they wish to believe, believe themselves rather than the Gospel. To this Faustus rejoins, We will prove that this was not written by Matthew, but by some other hand, unknown, in his name. For below he says, Jesus saw a man sitting at the toll-office, Matthew by name. Who writing of himself says, 'saw a man,' and not rather 'saw me?'

AUG; Matthew does no more than John does, when he says, Peter turning round saw that other disciple whom Jesus loved; and it is well known that his is the common manner of Scripture writers, when writing their own actions. Faustus again, But what say you to this, that the very assurance that He was not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets was the direct way to rouse their suspicions that He was? For He had yet done nothing that could lead the Jews to think that this was His object.

AUG; This is a very weak objection, for we do not deny that to the Jews who had no understanding, Christ might have appeared as threatening the destruction of the Law and the Prophets. Faustus; But what if the Law and the Prophets do not accept this fulfillment, according to that in Deuteronomy, These commandments that I give to you, you shall keep, you shall not add anything to them, nor take away.

AUG; Here Faustus does not understand what it is to fulfill the Law, When he supposes that it must be taken of adding words to it. The fulfillment of the Law is love, which the Lord has given in sending His Holy Spirit. The Law is fulfilled either when the things there commanded are done, or when the things there prophesied come to pass. Faustus; But in that we confess that Jesus was author of a New Testament, what else is it than to confess that He has done away with the Old?

AUG; in that Old Testament were figures of things to come, which when the things themselves were brought in by Christ, ought to have been taken away, that in that very taking away the Law and the Prophets might be fulfilled wherein it was written that God gave a New Testament. Faustus; Therefore if Christ did say this thing, he either said it with some other meaning, or he spoke falsely, (which God forbid,) or we must take that other alternative, he did not speak it at all. But that Jesus spoke falsely none will aver, therefore he either spoke it with another meaning, or he spoke it not at all. For myself I am rescued from the necessity of this alternative by the Manichaeian belief, which from the first taught

me not to believe all those things which are read in Jesus' name as having been spoken by Him; for that there be many tares which to corrupt the good seed some nightly sower has scattered up and down through nearly the whole of Scripture.

AUG; Manicheus taught an impious error, that you should receive only so much of the Gospel as does not conflict with your heresy, and not receive whatever does conflict with it. We have learned of the Apostle that religious caution, Whoever preaches to you another Gospel than that we have preached, let him be accursed. The Lord also has explained what the tares signify, not things false mixed with the true Scriptures, as you interpret, but men who are children of the wicked one. Faustus; Should a Jew then inquire of you why you do not keep the precepts of the Law and the prophets which Christ here declares he came not to destroy but to fulfill, you will be driven either to accept an empty superstition, or to repudiate this chapter as false, or to deny that you are Christ's disciple.

AUG; The Catholics are not in any difficulty on account of this chapter as though they did not observe the Law and the Prophets; for they do cherish love to God and their neighbor, on which hang all the Law and the Prophets. And whatever in the Law and the Prophets was foreshown, whether in things done, in the celebration of sacramental rites, or in forms of speech, all these they know to be fulfilled in Christ and the Church. Wherefore we neither submit to a false superstition, nor reject the chapter, nor deny ourselves to be Christ's disciples. He then who says, that unless Christ had destroyed the Law and the Prophets, the Mosaic rites would have continued along with the Christian ordinances, may further affirm, that unless Christ had destroyed the Law and the Prophets, he would yet be only professional as to be honor, to suffer, to rise again. But inasmuch as He did not destroy, but rather fulfill them, His birth, passion, and resurrection, are now no more promised as things future, which were signified by the Sacraments of the Law; but he is preached as already born, crucified, and risen, which are signified by the Sacraments now celebrated by Christians. It is clear then how great is the error of those who suppose, that when the signs or sacraments are changed, the things themselves are different, whereas the same things which the Prophetic ordinance had held forth as promises, the Evangelic ordinance points to as completed. Faustus; Supposing these to be Christ's genuine words, we should inquire what was His motive for speaking thus, whether to soften the blind hostility of the Jews, who when they saw their Holy things trodden under foot by Him, would not have so much as given Him a hearing; or whether he really said them to instruct us, who of the Gentiles should believe, to submit to the yoke of the Law. If this last were not His design, then the first must have been; nor was there any deceit or fraud in such purpose. For of laws there be three sorts. The first that of the Hebrews, called the law of sin and death, by Paul; the second that of the Gentiles, which he calls the law of nature, saying, By nature the Gentiles do the deeds of the law; the third, the law of truth, which he names, The law of the Spirit of life. Also there are Prophets some of the Jews, such as are, well-known; others of the Gentiles as Paul speaks, A prophet of their own had said; and others of the truth, of whom Jesus speaks, I send to you wise men and prophets. Now had Jesus in the following part of this sermon brought forward any of the Hebrew observances

to show how he had fulfilled that, no one would have doubted that it was of the Jewish Law and Prophets that he was now speaking; but when he brings forward in this way only those more ancient precepts, You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, which were promulgated of old to Enoch, Seth, and the other righteous men, who does not see that he is here speaking of the Law and Prophets of truth? Wherever He has occasion to speak of anything merely Jewish, He plucks it up by the very roots, giving precepts directly the contrary; for example, in the case of that precept, An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

AUG; Which was the Law and which the Prophets, that Christ came not to subvert but to fulfill, is manifest, to wit, the Law given by Moses. And the distinction which Faustus draws between the precepts of the righteous men before Moses, and the Mosaic Law, arming that Christ fulfilled the one but annulled the other, is not so. We affirm that the Law of Moses was both well suited to its temporary purpose, and was now not subverted, but fulfilled by Christ, as will be seen in each particular. This was not understood by those who continued in such obstinate error, that they compelled the Gentiles to Judaize - those heretics, I mean, who were called Nazarenes.

CHRYS. But since all things which should befall from the very beginning of the world to the end of it, were in type and figure foreshown in the Law, that God may not be thought to be ignorant of any of those things that take place, he therefore here declares, that heaven and earth should not pass till all things thus foreshown in the Law should have their actual accomplishment.

REMIG. Amen is a Hebrew word, and may be rendered in Latin, 'vere,' 'fidenter,' or 'fiat;' that is, 'truly,' 'faithfully,' or 'so be it.' The Lord uses it either because of the hardness of heart of those who were slow to believe, or to attract more particularly the attention of those that did believe.

HILARY; From the expression here used pass, we may suppose that the constituting elements of heaven and earth shall not be annihilated.

REMIG. But shall abide in their essence, but pass through renewal.

AUG. By the words, one iota or one point shall not pass from the Law, we must understand only a strong metaphor of completeness, drawn from the letters of writing, iota being the least of the letters, made with one stroke of the pen, and a point being a slight dot at the end of the same letter. The words there show that the Law shall be completed to the very least matter.

RABAN. He fitly mentions the Greek iota, and not the Hebrew jot, because the iota stands in Greek for the number ten, and so there is an allusion to the Decalogue of which the Gospel is the point and perfection.

CHRYS. If even an honorable man blushes to be found in a falsehood, and a wise man lets not fall empty any word he has once spoken, how could it be that the words of heaven should fall to the ground empty? Hence He concludes, Whoever breaks the least of these commandments, &c. And, I suppose, the Lord goes on to reply Himself to the question, Which are the least commandments? Namely, these which I am now about to speak.

CHRYS. He speaks not this of the old laws, but of those which He was now going to enact, of which he says, the least, though they were all great. For as he so oft spoke humbly of Himself, so does he now speak humbly of His precepts.

CHRYS. Otherwise; the precepts of Moses are easy to obey; You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. The very greatness of the crime is a check upon the desire of committing it; therefore the reward of observance is small, the sin of transgression great. But Christ's precepts, You shall not be angry, You shall not lust, are hard to obey, and therefore in their reward they are great, in their transgression, 'least.' It is thus he speaks of these precepts of Christ, such as You shall not be angry, You shall not lust, as 'the least;' and they who commit these lesser sins, are the least in the kingdom of God; that is, he who has been angry and not sinned grievously is secure from the punishment of eternal damnation; yet he does not attain that glory which they attain who fulfill even these least.

AUG. Or, the precepts of the Law are called 'the least,' as opposed to Christ's precepts which are great. The least commandments are signified by the iota and the point. He, therefore, who breaks them, and teaches men so, that is, to do as he does, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Hence we may perhaps conclude, that it is not true that there shall none be there except they be great.

GLOSS. By 'break,' is meant, that not doing what one understands rightly, or the not understanding what one has corrupted, or the destroying the perfectness of Christ's additions.

CHRYS. Or, when you hear the words, least in the kingdom of heaven, imagine nothing less than the punishment of hell. For He oft uses the word 'kingdom,' not only of the joys of heaven, but of the resurrection and of the terrible coming of Christ.

GREG. Or, by the kingdom of heaven is to be understood the Church, in which that teacher who breaks a commandment is called least, because he whose life is despised, it remains that his preaching be also despised.

HILARY; Or, He calls the passion, and the cross, the least, which if one shall not confess openly, but be ashamed of them, he shall be least, that is, last, and as it were no man; but to him that confesses it He promises the great glory of a heavenly calling.

JEROME; This had is closely connected with the preceding. It is directed against the Pharisees, who, despising the commandments of God, set up traditions of their own, and means that their teaching the people would not avail themselves, if they destroyed the very least commandments in the Law. We may take it in another sense. The learning of the master if joined with sin however small, loses him the highest place, nor does it avail any to teach righteousness, if he destroys it in his life. Perfect bliss is for him who fulfills in deed what he teaches in word.

AUG. Otherwise; he who breaks the least of these commandments, that is, of Moses' Law, and teaches men so, shall be called the least; but he who shall do (these least), and so teach, shall not indeed be esteemed great, yet not so little as he who breaks them. That he should be great, he ought to do and to teach the things which Christ now teaches.

HILARY; Beautiful entrance He here makes to a teaching beyond the works of the Law, declaring to the Apostles that they should have no admission to the kingdom of heaven without a righteousness beyond that of Pharisees.

CHRYS. By righteousness is here meant universal virtue. But observe the superior power of grace, in that he requires of His disciples who were yet uninstructed to be better than those who were masters under the Old Testament. Thus He does not call the Scribes and Pharisees unrighteous, but speaks of their righteousness. And see how even herein he confirms the Old Testament that He compares it with the New, for the greater and the less are always of the same kind.

CHRYS. The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees are the commandments of Moses; but the commandments of Christ are the fulfillment of that Law. This then is His meaning; Whosoever in addition to the commandments of the Law shall not fulfill My commandments, shall not enter into to the kingdom of heaven. For those indeed save from the punishment due to transgressions of the Law, but do not bringing into the kingdom; but My commandments both deliver from punishment, and bring into the kingdom. But seeing that to break the least commandments and not to keep them are one and the same, why does He say above of him that breaks the commandments, that he shall be the least in the kingdom of heaven, and here of him who keeps them not, that he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven? See now to be these least into the kingdom is the same with not entering into the kingdom. For a man to be in the kingdom is not to reign with Christ, but only to be numbered among Christ's people; what he says then of him that breaks the commandments is, that he shall indeed be reckoned among Christians yet the least of them. But he who enters into the kingdom, becomes partaker of His kingdom with Christ. Therefore he who does not enter into the kingdom of heaven, shall not indeed have a part of Christ's glory, yet shall he be in the kingdom of heaven, that is, in the number of those over whom Christ reigns as King of heaven.

AUG. Otherwise, unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, that is, exceed that of those who break what themselves teach, as it is elsewhere said of them, they say, and do not; just as if he had said, Unless your righteousness exceed in this way that you do what you teach, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. We must therefore understand something other than usual by the kingdom of heaven here, in which are to be both he who breaks what he teaches, and he who does it, but the one least, the other great; this kingdom of heaven is the present Church. In another sense is the kingdom of heaven spoken of that place where none enters but he who does what he teaches, and this is the Church as it shall be hereafter. This expression, the kingdom of heaven, so often used by our Lord, I know not whether anyone would find in the books of the Old Testament. It belongs properly to the New Testament revelation, kept for His mouth whom the Old Testament figured as a King that should come to reign over His servants. This end, to which its precepts were to be referred, was hidden in the Old Testament, though even that had its saints who looked forward to the revelation that should be made.

GLOSS. Or, we may explain by referring to the way in which the Scribes and Pharisees understood the Law, not to the actual contents of the Law.

AUG. For almost all the precepts which the Lord gave, saying, But I say to you, are found in those ancient books. But because they knew not of any murder, besides the destruction of the body, the Lord shows them that every evil thought to the hurt of a brother is to be held for a kind of murder.

CHRYS. Christ willing to show that he is the same God who spoke of old in the Law, and who now gives commandments in grace, now puts first of all his commandments, that one which was the first in the Law, first, at least, of all those that forbade injury to our neighbor.

AUG. We do not, because we have heard that, You shall not kill, deem it therefore unlawful to pluck a twig, according to the error of the Manichees, nor consider it to extend to irrational brutes; by the most righteous ordinance of the Creator their life and death is subservient to our needs. There remains, therefore, only man of whom we can understand it, and that not any other man, nor you only; for he who kills himself does nothing else but kill a man. Yet have not they in any way done contrary to this commandment who have waged wars under God's authority, or they who charged with the administration of civil power have by most just and reasonable orders inflicted death upon criminals. Also Abraham was not charged with cruelty, but even received the praise of piety, for that he was willing to obey God in slaying his son. Those are to be excepted from this command whom God commands to be put to death, either by general law given, or by particular admonition at any special time. For he is not the slayer who ministers to the command, like a hilt to one smiting with a sword, nor is Samson otherwise to be acquitted for destroying himself along with his enemies, than because he was so instructed privately of the Holy Spirit, who through him wrought the miracles.

CHRYS. This, it was said by then; of old time, shows that it was long ago that they had received this precept. He says this that he might rouse His sluggish hearers to proceed to more sublime precepts, as a teacher might say to an indolent boy, Know you not how long time you have spent already in merely learning to spell? In that, I say to you, mark the authority of the legislator, none of the old Prophets spoke thus; but rather, Thus said the Lord. They as servants repeated the commands of their Lord; He as a Son declared the will of His Father, which was also His own. They preached to their fellow servants; He as master ordained a law for his slaves.

AUG. There are two different opinions among philosophers concerning the passions of the mind: the Stoics do not allow that any passion is incident to the wise man; the Peripatetics affirm that they are incident to the wise man but in a moderate degree and subject to reason; as, for example, when mercy is shown in such a manner that justice is preserved. But in the Christian rule we do not inquire whether the mind is first affected with anger or with sorrow, but whence.

CHRYS. He who is angry without cause shall be judged; but he who is angry with cause shall not be judged. For if there were no anger, neither teaching would profit, nor

judgments hold, nor crimes be controlled. So that he who on just cause is not angry, is in sin; for an unreasonable patience sows vices, breeds carelessness, and invites the good as well as the bad to do evil.

JEROME; Some people add here the words, without cause; but by the true reading the precept is made unconditional, and anger altogether forbidden. For when we are told to pray for them that persecute us, all occasion of anger is taken away. The words without cause then must be erased, for the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God.

CHRYS. Yet that anger which arises from just cause is indeed not anger, but a sentence of judgment. For anger properly means a feeling of passion; but he whose anger arises from just cause does not suffer any passion, and is rightly said to sentence, not to be angry with.

AUG. This also we affirm should be taken into consideration, what is being angry with a brother; for he is not angry with a brother who is angry at his offense. He then it is who is angry without cause, who is angry with his brother, and not with the offense. But to be angry with a brother to the end that he may be corrected, there is no man of sound mind who forbids. Such sort of motions as come of love of good and of holy charity, are not to be called vices when they follow right reason.

CHRYS. But I think that Christ does not speak of anger of the flesh, but anger of the heart; for the flesh cannot be so disciplined as not to feel the passion. When then a man is angry but refrains from doing what his anger prompts him, his flesh is angry, but his heart is free from anger.

AUG. And there is this same distinction between the first case here put by the Savior and the second: in the first case there is one thing, the passion; in the second two, anger and speech following thereupon, He who says to his brother, Raca, is in danger of the council. Some seek the interpretation of this word in the Greek, and think that Raca means ragged, from the Greek paxos, a rag. But more probably it is not a word of any meaning, but a mere sound expressing the passion of the mind, which grammarians call an interjection, such as the cry of pain, 'heu.'

CHRYS. Or, Racha is a word signifying contempt and worthlessness. For where we in speaking to servants or children say, Go thou, or, Tell you him, in Syriac they would say Racha for 'thou.' For the Lord descends to the smallest trifles even of our behavior, and bids us treat one another with mutual respect.

JEROME; Or, Racha is a Hebrew word signifying, 'empty,' 'vain'; as we might say in the common phrase of reproach, 'empty-pate.' Observe that he says brother; for who is our brother, but he who has the same Father as ourselves?

CHRYS. And it were an unworthy reproach to him who has in him the Holy Spirit to call him 'empty.'

AUG. In the third case are three things: anger, the voice expressive of anger, and a word of reproach, You fool. Thus here are three different degrees of sin; in the first when one is angry, but keeps the passion in his heart without giving any sign of it. If again he suffers any sound expressive of the passion to escape him, it is more than had he silently



suppressed the rising anger; and if he speaks a word which conveys a direct reproach, it is a yet greater sin.

CHRYS. But as none is empty who has the Holy Spirit, so none is a fool who has the knowledge of Christ; and if Racha signifies 'empty,' it is one and the same thing, as far as the meaning of the word goes, to say Racha, or 'thou fool.' But there is a difference in the meaning of the speaker; for Racha was a word in common use among the Jews, not expressing wrath or hate, but rather in a light careless way expressing confident familiarity, not anger. But you will perhaps say, if Racha is not an expression of wrath, how is it then a sin? Because it is said for contention, not for edification; and if we ought not to speak even good words but for the sake of edification, how much more not such as are in themselves bad?

AUG. Here we have three arraignments: the judgment, the council, and hell-fire, being different stages ascending from the lesser to the greater. For in the judgment there is yet opportunity for defense; to the council belongs the respite of the sentence, what time the judges confer among themselves what sentence ought to be inflicted; in the third, hell-fire, condemnation is certain, and the punishment fixed. Hence is seen what a difference is between the righteousness of the Pharisees and Christ; in the first, murder subjects a man to judgment; in the second, anger alone, which is the least of the three degrees of sin.

RABAN. The Savior here names the torments of hell, Gehenna, a name thought to be derived from a valley consecrated to idols near Jerusalem, and filled of old with dead bodies, and defiled by Josiah, as we read in the Book of Kings.

CHRYS. This is the first mention of hell, though the kingdom of Heaven had been mentioned some time before, which shows that the gifts of the one comes of His love, the condemnation of the other of our sloth. Many thinking this a punishment too severe for a mere word, say that this was said figuratively. But I fear that if we thus cheat ourselves with words here, we shall suffer punishment in deed there. Think not then this too heavy a punishment, when so many sufferings and sins have their beginning in a word; a little word has often begotten a murder, and overturned whole cities. And yet it is not to be thought a little word that denies a brother reason and understanding by which we are men, and differ from the brutes.

CHRYS. In danger of the council; that is (according to the interpretation given by the Apostles in their Constitutions), in danger of being one of that Council which condemned Christ.

HILARY; Or, he who reproaches with emptiness one full of the Holy Spirit, will be arraigned in the assembly of the Saints, and by their sentence will be punished for an affront against that Holy Spirit Himself.

AUG. Should any ask what greater punishment is reserved for murder, if evil-speaking is visited with hell-fire? This obliges us to understand, that there are degrees in hell.

CHRYS. Or, the judgment and the council denote punishment in this word: hell fire future punishment. He denounces punishment against anger, yet does not mention any special punishment, showing therein that it is not possible that a man should be altogether

free from the passion. The Council here means the Jewish senate, for He would not seem to be always superseding all their established institutions, and introducing foreign.

AUG. In all these three sentences there are some words understood. In the first indeed, as many copies read without cause, there is nothing to be supplied. In the second, He who says to his brother, Racha, we must supply the words, without cause, and again, in He who says, You fool, two things are understood: to his brother, and, without cause. And this forms the defense of the Apostle, when he calls the Galatians fools, though he considers them his brethren; for he did it not without cause.

AUG. If it be not lawful to be angry with a brother, or to say to him Racha, or You Fool, much less is it lawful to keep in the memory anything which might convert anger into hate.

JEROME; It is not, if you have anything against your brother, but, If your brother has anything against you, that the necessity of reconciliation may be more imperative.

AUG. And he has somewhat against us when we have wronged him; and we have somewhat against him when he has wronged us, in which case there were no need to go to be reconciled to him, seeing we had only to forgive him, as we desire the Lord to forgive us.

PSEUDO-CHRYS. But if it is he that has done you the wrong, and yet you be the first to seek reconciliation, you shall have a great reward.

CHRYS. If love alone is not enough to induce us to be reconciled to our neighbor, the desire that our work should not remain imperfect, and especially in the holy place, should induce us.

GREG. Lo, He is not willing to accept sacrifice at the hands of those who are at variance. Hence then consider how great an evil is strife, which throws away what should be the means of remission of sin.

PSEUDO-CHRYS See the mercy of God, that He thinks rather of man's benefit than of His own honor; He loves concord in the faithful more than offerings at His altar; for so long as there are dissensions among the faithful, their gift is not looked upon, their prayer is not heard. For no one can be a true friend at the same time to two who are enemies to each other. In like manner, we do not keep our fealty to God, if we do not love His friends and hate His enemies. But such as was the offense, such should also be the reconciliation. If you have offended in thought, be reconciled in thought; if in words, be reconciled in words; if in deeds, in deeds be reconciled. For so it is in every sin, in whatsoever kind it was committed, in that kind is the penance done.

HILARY; He bids us when peace with our fellow men is restored, then to return to peace with God, passing from the love of men to the love of God; then go and offer your gift.

AUG. If this direction be taken literally, it might lead some to suppose that this ought indeed to be so done if our brother is present, for that no long time can be meant when we are bid to leave our offering there before the altar. For if he be absent, or possibly beyond sea, it is absurd to suppose that the offering must be left before the altar, to be offered after we have gone over land and sea to seek him. Wherefore we must embrace an inward, spiritual sense of the whole, if we would understand it without involving any absurdity.

The gift which we offer to God, whether learning, or speech, or whatever it be, cannot be accepted of God unless it be supported by faith. If then we have in anything harmed a brother, we must go and be reconciled with him, not with the bodily feet, but in thoughts of the heart, when in humble contrition you may cast yourself at your brother's feet in sight of Him whose offering you are about to offer. For thus in the same manner as though He were present, you may with unfeigned heart seek His Forgiveness; and returning thence, that is, bringing back again your thoughts to what you had first begun to do, may make your offering.

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