

The Jubilee and devout practises for visiting churches. Dialogue

Saint John Bosco fully understood the importance of Jubilees in the life of the Church. If, in 1850, due to various historical events, it had not been possible to celebrate the Jubilee, Pope Pius IX proclaimed an extraordinary one on the occasion of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (December 8, 1854). This Jubilee lasted six months, from December 8, 1854, to June 8, 1855. Don Bosco did not miss the opportunity and published, precisely in 1854, the volume "The Jubilee and Devout Practises for Visiting Churches".

With the promulgation of the Encyclical "Quanta Cura" and the "Syllabus of Errors" Pope Pius IX proclaimed another extraordinary Jubilee, again lasting six months, from December 8, 1864, to June 8, 1865. On that occasion, Don Bosco proposed, in the Catholic Readings, the "Dialogues on the Institution of the Jubilee".

In view of the ordinary Jubilee of 1875, Don Bosco republished his text under the title "The Jubilee of 1875, its Institution and Devout Practises for Visiting Churches," always attentive to offering the faithful a guide for these celebrations rich with extraordinary graces.

Here follows the latest version, dated 1875.

DIALOGUE I. About the Jubilee in general

Giuliano – I greet you, Mr. Provost, I am here to ask you to practise a bit of patience.

Provost – Welcome, dear Giuliano, I am always pleased when you come to see me, and, as I have said several times, I am always at your beck and call in everything I can do for the spiritual benefit of all my parishioners and especially for you, who, having recently approached the Catholic faith, have a greater need to be instructed on many

things.

Giul. – I have been told that the Pope has granted the Jubilee. I have never done it before, and I would like to be instructed on how to do it well.

Prov. – You wisely thought to seek being instructed in time, because since you became a Catholic, no Jubilee has ever taken place. In the circumstance of your renunciation, since you have never spoken about this practise of the Catholic Church, there is great concern that you have quite a few errors in your mind. Therefore, tell me what you want to know most, and I will try to satisfy you by making any observations that I think will be useful for your spiritual benefit.

Giul. – First of all, I would need you to tell me in an easy and clear manner what the word Jubilee means and what sense Catholics give to it, because unfortunately when I was Protestant, I heard all kinds of things being said against the Jubilee and against Indulgences.

Prov. – Two things, dear Giuliano, you desire from me: the explanation of the word Jubilee, and in what sense it is perceived by us as a religious practise proposed by the Catholic Church.

As for the meaning of the word, I do not need to dwell too long, for it is sufficient for us to know, what is intended with this term. However, I will cite the main explanations given by our holy Fathers.

St. Jerome and others say that the word Jubilee derives from *Iubal*, the inventor of musical instruments, or from *Iobel*, which means horn, because the year of Jubilee among the Jews was proclaimed with a trumpet made in the shape of a ram's horn.

Some others claim Jubilee originates from the word *Habil*, which means to restore with joy, because in that year the things bought, lent, or pawned were returned to the first owner, and this brought great joy.

Others say that the word Jubilee derives from *Iobil*, which also means joy, because on these occasions good

Christians have serious reasons to rejoice for the spiritual treasures they can enrich themselves with.

Giul. – This is the explanation of the word Jubilee in general, but I would like to know how it is defined by the Church as a practise of piety, to which Indulgences are attached.

Prov. – I will gladly satisfy you. The Jubilee, recognised as a practise established by the Church, is a plenary Indulgence granted by the Supreme Pontiff to the universal Church with full remission of all sins to those who worthily acquire it by fulfilling the prescribed actions.

First of all, *Plenary Indulgence*, is called as such to distinguish it from partial Indulgence, which is usually granted by the Supreme Pontiffs for certain practises of Christian piety, certain prayers, and certain acts of religion.

This Indulgence is called extraordinary because it is usually granted only rarely and in serious cases, such as when wars, plagues, and earthquakes threaten. The Supreme Pontiff Pius IX grants in this year the ordinary Jubilee, which usually occurs every twenty-five years, in order to encourage Christian faithful from all over the world to pray for the present needs of religion and especially for the conversion of sinners, for the uprooting of heresies, and to remove many errors that some seek to spread among the faithful through writings, books, or other means that, sadly, the devil knows how to suggest to the detriment of souls.

Giul. – I am very pleased with the definition you have given me of the Jubilee, but it is called by such a variety of names that I remain quite confused – Holy Year, centenary year, secular, jubilar, particular Jubilee, universal Jubilee, great Jubilee, Indulgence in the form of Jubilee – these are the names by which I hear the Jubilee called promiscuously. Please be kind enough to explain them to me.

Prov. – These names, although sometimes used to express the same thing, nevertheless have meanings that are

somewhat different from one another. – I will give you a brief explanation.

The Jubilee is called Jubilar Year, Holy Year because in that year (as I will tell you later) the Jews were to cease from all kinds of work and occupy themselves exclusively in works of virtue and holiness. So, all Christian faithful are equally invited, without being obliged to abandon their ordinary temporal occupations. It is also called centenary or hundredth year because for its first institution, it was celebrated every one hundred years.

The Jubilee is called partial when it is granted only in certain designated places, as would be in Rome, or in Santiago de Compostela in Spain. This Jubilee is also called general when it is granted to the faithful in every place of Christendom.

Yet, it is properly called General Jubilee or Great Jubilee when it is celebrated in the year fixed by the Church. For the Jews, it occurred every fifty years. Among Christians, in the beginning, it was every hundred years, then every fifty, and now every twenty-five.

The Jubilee is called extraordinary and also Indulgence in the form of Jubilee when, for some serious reason, it is granted outside the holy year.

The Supreme Pontiffs, when they are elevated to their dignity, usually solemnise this event with a plenary Indulgence, or an extraordinary Jubilee.

The difference between the great Jubilee and the particular Jubilee lies in the fact that the former lasts a whole year, while the latter lasts only part of the year. For example, the one that reigning Pius IX granted in 1865 lasted only three months, but the same favours of the present Jubilee, which lasts for the whole year of 1875, were attached to it.

The brief explanation I have given you of these words, I believe will be even better clarified by the other things that I hope to be able to present to you in other discussions. In the meantime, oh beloved Giuliano, rest

assured that the Jubilee is a great treasure for Christians, so much so that the learned Cardinal Gaetani in his treatise on the Jubilee (c. 15) wrote these beautiful words: "Blessed is that people which knows what the Jubilee is; wretched are those who, through negligence or inconsideration, neglect it with the hope of reaching another one." (Those who wish for more detailed information on what has been briefly mentioned above may consult: MORONI: Holy Year and Jubilee – BERGIER article Jubilee – The work: *Magnum theatrum vitae humanae article Iubileum*. – NAVARRO *de Iubileo* note 1° Benzonio book 3, chap 4. Vittorelli – Turrecremata – Sarnelli tom. X. St. Isidore in the *Origins* book 5.).

DIALOGUE II. The Jubilee among the Jews

Giul. – I have listened with pleasure to what you have told me about the various meanings that are usually given to the word Jubilee, and about the great advantages that can derive from it. But this is not enough for me, if I have to give a response to my former companions in religion. This is because, using the Bible alone as the norm of their faith, they are set in asserting that the Jubilee is a novelty in the Church, of which there is no trace in the Bible. Therefore, I would like to be instructed on this matter.

Prov. – When your ancient ministers and companions in religion asserted that the sacred Scripture does not speak of Jubilee, they sought to hide the truth from you, or they themselves were unaware of it.

However, before I explain to you what the Bible says about the Jubilee, I must point out to you how there is in the Catholic Church an infallible authority that comes from God and is directed by God Himself. This is evident from many texts of Sacred Scripture and especially from the words spoken by the Saviour to Saint Peter when he established him as head of the Church, saying: – "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (*St. Matthew* 18). Therefore, we can confidently accept everything that this authority establishes for the good of

Christians without fear of error. Moreover, it is a maxim accepted by all Catholics that when we encounter some truth believed and practised at all times in the Church, and there is no time or place in which it has been instituted, we must believe it as revealed by God Himself and transmitted in words or in writings from the beginning of the Church to our days.

Giul. – I believe this too. This is because, given the infallible authority of the Church, it does not matter whether it proposes things written in the Bible or transmitted by tradition. However, I would greatly like to know what is in the Bible regarding the Jubilee, and I desire this all the more because a short time ago an old Protestant friend of mine began to mock me about the novelty of the Jubilee, of which, he said, there is no mention in the Bible.

Prov. – I am ready to satisfy this just desire of yours. Let us open the Bible together and read here in the book of Leviticus in Chapter XXV, and we will find the institution of the Jubilee, as it was practised among the Jews.

The sacred text says this:

“You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, that gives forty-nine years; and on the tenth day of the seventh month –on the day of atonement– you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you: you shall not sow, or reap the aftergrowth, or harvest the unpruned vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you: you shall eat only what the field itself produces. In this year of jubilee, you shall return, every one of you, to your property”.

To this point these are the words of Leviticus, concerning which I believe that no lengthy explanation is needed to make you understand how ancient the institution of the Jubilee is, that is, since the earliest times when the

Jews were about to enter the Promised Land, around the year 2500 of that world.

The Jubilee is also mentioned in many other places in the Bible; as in the same book of Leviticus, in Chapter XXVII; in the book of Numbers, in Chapter XXXVI, in that of Joshua in Chapter VI. But let it suffice what we have said, which is extremely clear in itself.

Giul. – I was very pleased to see these words from the Bible, and I rejoice greatly that the Bible not only speaks of the Jubilee, but commands its observance to all the Jews. I would like you to explain to me somewhat extensively the words of the sacred text, to know what purpose God had in commanding the Jubilee.

Prov. – From the Bible it is clear what purpose God had in commanding Moses to observe the Jubilee. First of all, God, who is all charity, wanted that people to become accustomed to being kind and merciful to their neighbours. Therefore, in the year of Jubilee, all debts were forgiven. Those who had sold or mortgaged houses, vineyards, fields, or other things, in that year regained everything as first owners. Exiles returned to their homeland, and slaves were set free without any ransom. In this way, the rich were prevented from making excessive purchases, the poor could preserve the inheritance of their ancestors, and slavery, so practised in those times among pagan nations, was prevented. Moreover, since the people had to cease from temporal occupations, they could freely devote an entire year to matters concerning divine worship, and thus rich and poor, slaves and masters united in one heart and one soul to bless and thank the Lord for the benefits received.

Giul. – Perhaps this is not appropriate, but I have a doubt: if in the year of Jubilee no sowing was done, nor were the fruits of the fields gathered, what could the people eat?

Prov. – On that occasion, that is, in the year of Jubilee, an extraordinary event occurred, which is a true miracle. In the previous year, the Lord made the earth produce

such an abundance of all kinds of fruits that was enough for the entire year 49 and 50 and part of 51. In this, we must admire the goodness of God, who, while commanding us to occupy ourselves with things concerning His divine worship, thinks of everything we may need for our bodies. This maxim was later confirmed several times in the Gospel, especially when Jesus Christ said: Do not worry about tomorrow, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' Rather, strive first for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well".

Giul. – Another doubt arises in this moment: is the year of Jubilee still preceded by that abundance in some place on earth?

Prov. – No, oh Giuliano, the material abundance of the Jewish Jubilee lasted among that people only until the coming of the Messiah. From then on, having fulfilled what the ancient Jubilee foreshadowed, that material abundance ceased to give way to the abundance of graces and blessings that Christians can enjoy in the holy Catholic Religion.

Giul. – I am very satisfied with what you have told me. (On this matter, one can consult CALMET DELL' AQUILA Great Dictionary of the Holy Bible under the article Jubilee. – MENOCHIO: On the fiftieth year of the Jubilee of the Jews).

DIALOGUE III. The Jubilee among Christians

Giul. – I will try to remember how the Jubilee was practised among the Jews, and how it is a source of heavenly blessings in determined times. Now I would also like to know if there is mention of Jubilee in the New Testament, because if there is any text on this matter, the Protestants are in a bind and will have to agree that Catholics practise the Jubilee according to the Gospel.

Prov. – Although it should suffice for every Christian that a truth is recorded anywhere in the Bible for it to be a rule of faith for him or her, in this case we can be abundantly satisfied with the authority of the Old and the

New Testaments.

St. Luke in Chapter four (v. 19) recounts the following event about the Saviour. When Jesus went to Nazareth, His homeland, the Bible was presented to Him so that He could explain some passages to the people. He opened the book of the prophet Isaiah and among other things applied the following words to Himself: The Spirit of the Lord has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance.

From these words, oh Giuliano, you know how the Saviour recalls the ancient Jubilee, which was entirely material, and dignifies it in a moral sense, saying that He proclaimed the true year of retribution, a pleasant year in which through His miracles, with His passion and death, He would give true freedom to the peoples enslaved by sin with the abundance of graces and blessings that are found in the Christian religion (see MARTINI in St. Luke).

Also, St. Paul in his Second Letter to the Corinthians speaks of this acceptable time, the time of salvation and sanctification (c. 6, 2).

From these words and from other facts of the New Testament, we conclude: 1) that the ancient Jubilee, which was entirely material, has in fact passed into the new law, as entirely spiritual; 2) the freedom that the people of God granted to the slaves symbolised the complete liberation that we will acquire by the grace of God, by which we are freed from the harsh slavery of the devil; 3) that the year of retribution, or Jubilee, was confirmed in the Gospel, received by the Church and practised according to the needs of the faithful, and as the opportunities of the times allowed.

Giul. – I am increasingly convinced of a truth that I firmly believe, because it is recorded in the Old and the New Testaments. Now I would like to know how this religious practise has been preserved in the Catholic Church.

Prov. – This is a matter of great importance, and I will try to satisfy you. Since the year of Jubilee among the

Jews was a year of remission and forgiveness, so it was also established the year of Jubilee among Christians, in which great indulgences, that is, remission and forgiveness of sins, are granted. Hence, it happened that the year of Jubilee among Christians was called a *holy year*, both for the many works of piety that Christians usually perform in that year as well as for the great heavenly favours that in such a circumstance everyone can procure.

Giul. – That is not what I meant to say. I would like to hear about the way in which this Jubilee was introduced among Christians.

Prov. – To understand how the Jubilee was introduced and preserved among Christians, I must point out a religious belief followed since the early days of the Church. It consisted of a great veneration that in the Jubilee year – called in the Gospel as the year of retribution, and by St. Paul as the acceptable year, the time of salvation, one could obtain a plenary indulgence, or the remission of all gratification due to God for sins. It is believed that the first Jubilee was granted by the holy Apostles themselves in the year 50 of the common era (see Scaligero and Petavius).

The first Popes, who succeeded St. Peter in governing the Church, continued to keep this religious practise alive, granting great favours to those who at certain times went to Rome to visit the Church where the body of St. Peter was buried (see Rutilius, *De Iubileo*. Laurea, Navarro, Vittorelli and others).

For it was always the belief among Christians, even in the early centuries, that by visiting the Church of St. Peter in the Vatican, where the body of that Prince of the Apostles was buried, one could gain extraordinary spiritual favours, which we call indulgences.

The heavenly favours that were hoped for, the great respect that all Catholics had for the glorious St. Peter, the desire to visit the Church, the chains, and the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles, drew people from all parts of the world. In certain years, one could see old, young,

rich, and poor departing from very distant lands, overcoming the greatest hardships of the roads to get to Rome, fully convinced of obtaining great indulgences.

St. Gregory the Great, wishing to support the religious spirit among Christians, and at the same time wanting to regulate their frequent gatherings in Rome, in the Sixth Century established that every hundred years one could gain the plenary indulgence, or Jubilee, from all those who in the secular year, also called the holy year, went to Rome to visit the Vatican Basilica, where the Prince of the Apostles was buried.

Giul. – Here I encounter a difficulty. I have read in some small books that the Jubilee was instituted only in the year 1300 by a Pope named Boniface VIII, and according to what you say, it would be much further back in time.

Prov. – I also know that there are some printed booklets which assert that Boniface VIII was the originator of the Jubilee. However, what they say is inaccurate, because this Pope was rather the first to publish the holy year with a Bull, that is, the plenary indulgence of the Jubilee. Yet, in this very Bull, he assures that he did nothing but establish in writing what was already universally practised among Christians.

DIALOGUE IV. First solemn publication of the Jubilee, or holy year

Giul. – This first publication of the Jubilee or the holy year is such a serious and solemn matter that I would like to hear it recounted with the most notable circumstances.

Prov. – Since you like stories, I think it appropriate to explain the reasons that led Pope Boniface VIII to solemnly publish a Bull regarding the first solemn Jubilee. – It was the year 1300 when an extraordinary number of people from the Roman State and abroad flocked to Rome in such large numbers that it seemed as if the gates of Heaven had opened there. At the beginning of January, there was such a crowd of people in the streets of that city that one could hardly walk.

Moved by this fact, the Pope commanded that everything possible be sought regarding this in ancient records. Then he called some of the oldest people who had come there to find out what had moved them. Among these was a noble and wealthy Savoyard aged one hundred and seven years. The Pope himself, in the presence of several Cardinals, wanted to question him accordingly: How old are you? – One hundred and seven. – Why have you come to Rome? – To gain the great Indulgences. – Who told you? – My father. – When? – One hundred years ago my father took me with him to Rome, and told me that every hundred years in Rome one could obtain great Indulgences, and that if I were still alive a hundred years later, I should not neglect to visit the Basilica of the Prince of the Apostles.

After this man, others, both old and young from various nations, were also brought in, who, when questioned by the same Supreme Pontiff, all agreed in asserting that they had always understood that by visiting the Basilica of St. Peter every secular year, they would earn great Indulgences with the remission of all sins. In view of that universal and constant belief, the Pope promulgated a Bull confirming what had been practised until then by oral tradition. A writer of those times, familiar with Pope Boniface, assures that he heard that Pope say that he was moved to publish his Bull by the belief spread and accepted throughout the Christian world, namely that since the birth of Christ, a great Indulgence was usually granted every secular year (Cardinal John Monaco).

Giul. – Since I see that you have read a lot, bring me some excerpts from that Bull, so that I can be well-instructed about this universal practise of the Church.

Prov. – It would be too long to report it all. I will convey to you the beginning, and I believe that will suffice for you. Here are the words of the Pope: “An ancient and faithful tradition of men who lived a long time ago assures that to those who come to visit the honourable Basilica of the Prince of the Apostles in Rome, great Indulgences and remission of sins are granted. We therefore, who by the duty of our office desire and strive with all our

heart to procure the salvation of souls, by our apostolic authority approve and confirm all the mentioned Indulgences, and renew them by authenticating them with this our writing". After this, the Pope explains the reasons that led him to grant such Indulgences, and what obligations must be fulfilled by those who wish to acquire them.

Once the Bull of the Pope was known, it is incredible the enthusiasm that arose from every place to make the pilgrimage to Rome. From France, from England, from Spain, from Germany, pilgrims of every age and condition, nobles and sovereigns came in crowds. The number of foreigners in Rome reached up to two million at the same time. This would have caused a serious famine if the Pope had not provided in a timely manner for the needs by bringing food from other countries.

Giul. – Now I understand very well how ancient the practise of the Jubilee is in the Church, but what we celebrate today seems very different to me, both because it is spoken of more often, and because one no longer goes to Rome to acquire it.

Prov. – You make an appropriate observation. In this regard, I will tell you that the Jubilee, according to the Bull of Pope Boniface, was to take place every hundred years. But since such a span of time is too long and human life is too short for everyone to benefit from it, it was reduced by a Pope named Clement VI to every fifty years, just as it was for the Jews. Then another Pope named Gregory XI restricted it to every thirty-three years in memory of the thirty-three years of the Saviour's life. Finally, Pope Paul II, to ensure that even those who die young could acquire the Indulgence of the Jubilee, established that it should take place every twenty-five years. Hence, it has been practised accordingly in the Church until today. Furthermore, the obligation to go to Rome prevented many from benefiting from the spiritual favours of the Jubilee, either due to distance, age, or illness. For this reason, the Roman Pontiffs granted the same Indulgence, but instead of the obligation of going to

Rome, they usually impose some obligations to be fulfilled by those who wish to make the holy Jubilee.

We have already recorded 20 holy years throughout ecclesiastical history, that is, twenty years in which the favour of the Jubilee was published by the Popes at different times.

The last of these was celebrated by Leo XII in the year 1825. It was also supposed to be published in the year 1850, but the public turmoil of that time did not allow it to be done. Now we are celebrating that of the Supreme Pontiff Pius IX, which is truly the holy year of 1875.

Giul. – Why was the present Jubilee granted by the Pope?

Prov. – What the Pope has granted at present is an ordinary Jubilee. The reasons for this Jubilee are the conversion of sinners, particularly heretics, peace among Christian princes and the triumph of the holy Catholic Religion over heresy. In addition, the Holy Father has also proposed the goal of obtaining from God particular insights for understanding many erroneous propositions that have been spreading among the faithful for some time, gravely damaging faith and having the danger of eternal damnation for many. The Pope in his Encyclical explains the reasons for his actions. Finally, he prescribes the works to be performed to acquire the holy Indulgences.

Giul. – Do you think, Mr. Provost, that religious matters are going so badly? Heretics convert from time to time in large numbers to the Catholic Religion. Catholicism triumphs and progresses greatly in foreign missions.

Prov. – This is true, my good Giuliano, that the Catholic Religion prospers greatly in foreign missions. It is also true that in recent years, many Jews, heretics, particularly Protestants, have renounced their errors to embrace the holy Catholic Religion, and precisely for these advances, the devil makes all his efforts to sustain and spread heresy and impiety. Moreover, in so many ways religion is despised today in public and private, in speeches, in

newspapers, in books! There is no holy and venerable thing that is not targeted and criticised and mocked. Take this: I give you the letter that the Pope writes to all the Bishops of Christendom. Read it at your convenience. In it, the efforts that hell makes against the Church in these times are mentioned, what favours can be enjoyed in the circumstance of the Jubilee, and what things must be done to acquire them. In the meantime, you should keep in mind that the Jubilee was a divine institution. It was God who commanded it to Moses. This institution passed on to Christians and was practised in the early days of the Church with some modifications, until Boniface VIII established it regularly with a Bull. Other Popes then reduced it to the form in which it is observed today. Therefore, we practise something commanded by God, and we do it because it is ordained by the Church for our particular needs. Thus, we should be eager to take advantage of it and profess feelings of utmost gratitude towards God, who in so many ways shows His lively desire that we take advantage of His favours and think of the salvation of our souls. Plus, at the same time, we must profess a lively veneration for the Vicar of Jesus Christ, fulfilling with the utmost diligence what He prescribes, in order to procure for ourselves the heavenly favours (For more extensive information on the aforementioned, see Cardinal GAETANI: *Dell'anno centesimo* [On the Hundredth Year]. – MANNI: *Storia dell'anno santo* [History of the Holy Year] – ZACCARIA: *Dell'Anno Santo Trattato* [On the Holy Year]).

DIALOGUE V. On Indulgences

Giul. – We are at a difficult point, of which I have always heard my ancient heretic companions speak ill, I mean, that of Indulgences. Therefore, I would like to be instructed about them, smoothing out those difficulties that will present themselves to my mind.

Prov. – I am not surprised that your ancient companions in heresy have spoken and still speak with disdain of the Indulgences, because the Protestants used the

Indulgences as a pretext to separate from the Catholic Church. When you, my Julian, have a proper understanding of the Indulgences, you will certainly be satisfied, and you will bless divine mercy, which offers us such an easy means to gain divine treasures.

Giul. – Please explain to me what these Indulgences are, and I will strive to derive benefit from them.

Prov. – To help you understand what Indulgence means, it is good to remember how sin produces two bitter effects in our soul: the *guilt* that deprives us of grace and friendship with God, and the *punishment* that follows, which prevents entry into paradise. This punishment is of two kinds: eternal and temporal. Guilt, together with eternal punishment, is totally remitted through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of Penance, provided that we approach it with the right dispositions. Since the temporal punishment is not always completely remitted in the abovementioned Sacrament, it remains to be satisfied in this life through good works and penance, or in the next life through the fire of purgatory. It is on this truth that the severe canonical penances were founded, which the Church imposed on repentant sinners in the early centuries. Three, seven, ten, up to fifteen and twenty years of fasting on bread and water, of deprivations and humiliations, sometimes for an entire lifetime. This is what the Church imposed for a single sin, and it did not believe that those satisfactions exceeded the measure of what the sinner owed to the justice of God. And who can measure the injury that guilt does to the supreme God and the malice of sin? Who can penetrate the profound eternal secrets and know how much divine justice requires from us in this life to satisfy our debts? How long will we have to stay in the fire of purgatory? In order to shorten the time we would have to remain in that place of purification and alleviate the penance we should do in the present life, there are the treasures of holy Indulgences. And these are like a substitute for the severe canonical penances which, for many

years, and sometimes for an entire lifetime, as I said, the Church used to inflict on repentant sinners.

Giul. – It seems reasonable to me that after the forgiveness of sin, divine justice still requires satisfaction through some penance; but what exactly are the Indulgences?

Prov. – Indulgences are the remission of the temporal punishment due for our sins, which is done through the spiritual treasures entrusted by God to the Church.

Giul. – What are these spiritual treasures of the Church?

Prov. – These spiritual treasures are the infinite merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, those of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints, as we profess in the Apostles' Creed when we say: *I believe in the Communion of Saints*. Since the merits of Jesus Christ are infinite, the merits of the Most Holy Mary, who, conceived without sin and lived without sin, owed nothing to divine justice for her sins. Also, there are Martyrs and other Saints, who satisfied more than was necessary for their own account through their sufferings, in union with those of Jesus Christ. All these satisfactions before God are like an inexhaustible treasure, which the Roman Pontiff dispenses according to the opportunity of the times and according to the needs of Christians.

Giul. – Here we reach a great difficulty: Sacred Scripture does not speak to us of Indulgences. Who then can grant Indulgences?

Prov. – The faculty to dispense holy Indulgences resides in the Supreme Pontiff. Since in every society, in every government, one of the most noble prerogatives of the Head of State is the right to grant pardons and to commute punishments. Now the Supreme Pontiff, representative of Jesus Christ on Earth, Head of the great Christian society, undoubtedly has the right to give grace, to commute, remit in whole or in part the punishment incurred for sin, in favour of those who sincerely return to God.

Giul. – On what basis is this power of the Supreme Pontiff founded?

Prov. – This power, or authority of the Supreme Pontiff in dispensing Indulgences, is based on the very words of Jesus Christ. In the act of appointing Saint Peter to govern the Church, he said these words: “I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”. This faculty undoubtedly encompasses a right to grant Christians everything that can contribute to the good of their souls.

Giul. – These words seem magical to me. They establish Saint Peter as the head of the Church, give him the faculty to remit sins, the faculty to make precepts, to grant Indulgences, and all this in those few words!

Prov. – The words spoken by Jesus Christ to Saint Peter confer a full and absolute power, and this full and absolute power constitutes Saint Peter as the Head of the Church, Vicar of Jesus Christ, dispenser of all heavenly favours, therefore also of holy Indulgences. This is evident since the Lord gave him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: *Tibi dabo claves regni coelorum*; and from the words with which he commanded Saint Peter to be a shepherd, that is, to dispense to Christians what people and times would require from him for their spiritual and eternal good. These words of the Saviour conclude that the power given to Saint Peter and his successors excludes any doubt about the faculty to grant Indulgences.

Giul. – I understand very well that with these words the Saviour gave great powers especially to Saint Peter, among which the faculty to remit sins. However, I cannot understand that the faculty to dispense Indulgences was given.

Prov. – If you understand very well that with those words the Saviour gave especially to Saint Peter (as with other similar ones he also gave to the other Apostles) the faculty to remit sins, that is, to forgive eternal punishment, must we then say that the faculty to remit temporal punishment through Indulgences, which in comparison to that can be said to be infinitely lesser, was not given?

Giul. – This is true; this is true. Just tell me if those words were understood in this sense by the Apostles.

Prov. – This is certain, and I can present you with more facts noted in the Bible. I will limit myself to mentioning just one. This is from Saint Paul, and it concerns the faithful of Corinth. Among those fervent Christians, a young man had committed a grave sin for which he deserved to be excommunicated. He soon showed that he was repentant, expressing a strong desire to fulfil the penance due. Then the Corinthians prayed Saint Paul to absolve him. This Apostle used indulgence, that is, he freed him from excommunication and restored him to the bosom of the Church, although, due to the gravity of the sin, and according to the discipline in force at that time, he should have remained separated from the Church for a long time. From these words and others of the same Saint Paul, it appears that he himself bound and loosed, that is, used rigor and indulgence, depending on how he judged it would be more beneficial for souls.

Giul. – I am very pleased with what you have narrated to me about Indulgences, as is included in Sacred Scripture. I am completely sure and at peace in believing that God has given the Church the faculty to dispense Indulgences. I would also be very pleased if you could tell me whether the dispensing of these has always taken place in the Church, because the Protestants say that in the early times there was no talk of Indulgences.

Prov. – Even in this, the Protestants are mistaken, and ecclesiastical history is full of facts that demonstrate the divine institution of Indulgences and their constant use since the early times of the Church. And since I know that you like facts very much, I want to recount some to confirm what I am saying.

Giul. – I like facts very much, even more than reasons, and if many are recounted, I will be very pleased.

Prov. – After the time of the Apostles, the use of Indulgences continued. In the first century of the Common Era, we have mention of this fact. In the second century, we read

that during the persecution, when a sinner returned to the Church, they were first obliged to confess their sins. Then a time was imposed upon them, during which, if they fervently engaged in works of penance, they would obtain Indulgence, that is, their time of penance would be shortened. To obtain this more easily, it was recommended to those who were led to martyrdom to pray to the bishop, or to write him a note, begging him to grant them indulgence in view of the sufferings of the martyrs and thus, grant them peace with God and with the Church (Tertullian, *Ad maj.* 1, I).

In the third century, Saint Cyprian, writing to the faithful detained in prison, warns them not to intercede too easily for Indulgence for those who ask for it, but to wait until they show sufficient signs of sorrow and repentance for their own faults. From these words, it appears that in the times of Saint Cyprian, Indulgences were in use, and that the Saint recommended to the martyrs to be cautious not to intercede with the Bishops except for those who showed sincere repentance (Ep. 21, 22, 23).

In the fourth century, in the year 325, a general Council was convened in the city of Nicaea, in which many matters concerning the universal good of the Church were discussed. When the time came to speak of Indulgences, it was established that those who do penance could obtain Indulgence from the Bishop and that those most negligent should do their penance within the established time. This means nothing other than granting Indulgence to some and denying it to others (Council of Nicaea, Canon 11, 12).

In later times, the facts are countless. Saint Gregory the Great, in a letter written to the King of the Visigoths, sent a small key that had touched the body of Saint Peter, and contained a bit of filings from the chains with which that holy Apostle had been bound, so *that*, says the Pope, *what had served to bind the Apostle's neck when he went to martyrdom, may absolve you from all your sins.* This is how the Holy Fathers interpret the sense of plenary Indulgence, which the Pope sent along with that blessed key.

In the year 803, Saint Leo the Great, having travelled with a large assembly of cardinals, archbishops and prelates to the court of the Emperor Charlemagne, was received by the pious sovereign with the utmost honours. That monarch asked for and obtained, as a particular favour, that he dedicate the royal palace of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) to the Blessed Virgin, and that he enrich it with many indulgences to be gained by those who went to visit it. If you want me to recount other facts, I could recite almost the entire ecclesiastical history, especially the history of the Crusades, the circumstances during which the Popes granted plenary Indulgence to those who enlisted to go to Palestine to liberate the Holy Places.

In conclusion and confirmation of what I have said so far, I present here the Doctrine of the Catholic Church regarding Indulgences as defined in the Council of Trent:

“Having been granted by Christ to the Church, the faculty to dispense Indulgences has been used by the Church since very remote times; therefore, the sacred Council commands and teaches that it should be held that Indulgences are useful for the salvation of Christians, as proven by the authority of the Councils. Whoever says that Indulgences are useless, or denies that there is the faculty to dispense them in the Church, let him be anathema: let him be excommunicated (Sess. 25, chap. 21)”.

Giul. – Enough, enough, if the faculty to dispense Indulgences was given by God to the Church, was practised by the Apostles and has always been in use in the Church in every century up to our days, we must say plainly that the Protestants are in grave error when they criticise the Catholic Church for dispensing holy Indulgences, as if the use of them had not been practised in the early times of the Church.

DIALOGUE VI. Acquisition of Indulgences

Prov. – While we admire God’s goodness in dispensing the holy Indulgences, in granting heavenly

treasures that do not diminish, nor will they ever, if anything they spread, like an immense ocean that does not become reduced no matter how much water is drawn from it, we must, however, fulfil certain obligations for the acquisition of the same. First of all, it is good to emphasise that it is not within the freedom of each Christian to use these divine treasures at will. One will enjoy them only when, how, and in that greater or lesser quantity, that the holy Church and the Supreme Pontiff determine. Thus, Indulgences are commonly distinguished into two classes: partial, that is, of some days, months, or years, and plenary. For example, by saying: My Jesus, mercy, one earns a hundred days of Indulgence. When one says: Mary, help of Christians, pray for us, one earns 300 days. Every time one accompanies the Viaticum to a sick person, one can earn seven years of Indulgence. These indulgences are partial. The plenary Indulgence is that for which all the punishment, for which we are indebted to God for our sins, is remitted. This is precisely what the Pope grants on the occasion of this Jubilee. By earning this indulgence, you return to be before God, as you were when you were born, that is, when you were baptised, so that, if one were to die after earning the Jubilee Indulgence, they would go to heaven without touching the pains of purgatory.

Giul. – I wholeheartedly desire to earn this plenary Indulgence. Just let me know what I must do.

Prov. – To earn this, as with any other Indulgence, it is first required that one be in a state of grace with God, because one who is guilty of a grave sin and eternal punishment before God is certainly not, nor can be, capable of receiving the remission of temporal punishment. It is therefore excellent advice that every Christian who wishes to acquire indulgences when and how they are granted should approach the Sacrament of Confession, striving to excite true sorrow within themselves, and make a firm resolution not to offend God any more in the future.

The second condition is the fulfilment of what the Roman Pontiff prescribes. In opening the treasure of holy

Indulgences, the holy Church always obliges the faithful to some good work to be done at a determined time and place. This is to prepare our hearts to receive those extraordinary favours that God's mercy has prepared for us. Thus, to acquire the Indulgence of this Jubilee, the supreme Pontiff wants everyone to approach the Sacraments of Confession and Communion, to devoutly visit four churches for 15 consecutive times or alternately, praying according to their intention, for the exaltation and prosperity of our holy mother Church, for the eradication of heresy, for the peace and concord of Christian principles, for the peace and unity of all Christian people.

Giul. – Are these things enough to earn the Jubilee Indulgence?

Prov. – These two things are not enough, there is still one more, which is the main one. It is required that all sins, even venial ones, be detested, and moreover, that one renounce affection for all and each of them. And we will certainly do this if we prepare ourselves to practise those things that the confessor will impose on us, but above all if we make a firm and effective resolution never to commit any sin again, if we avoid the occasions and practise the means to not fall back. The Supreme Pontiff Clement VI, to encourage Christians all over the world to acquire the Jubilee, said: "Jesus Christ, with His grace and the overflowing merits of His passion, left to the Church militant here on earth an infinite treasure not hidden within a sheet, nor buried in a field, rather entrusted to be healthily dispensed to the faithful, entrusted to blessed Peter, who holds the keys of Heaven, and to his successors, Vicars of Jesus Christ on earth; to which treasure the merits of the blessed Mother of God and of all the elect contribute".

Now, my dear Giuliano, you have learned what is necessary to acquire this plenary Indulgence, and since among other things it is prescribed to make a visit to four churches, I will now provide you with the necessary devotional practises that may serve you in each of these visits (Those

who wish to learn more about the holy indulgences may consult MORONI article: *Indulgences. Magnum Theatrum vitae humanae. Artic. Indulgentia.* – BERGIER *Indulgences.* – FERRARI in *Biblioteca* [Library]).

For greater convenience, the intentions of the Church in promulgating this Jubilee, the favours granted during it, and the conditions for acquiring the Plenary Indulgence are summarised here.

INTENTIONS OF THE CHURCH IN PROMULGATING THE JUBILEE

The intentions of the Church in inviting us to participate in the Jubilee are: 1) to renew the memory of our Redemption and to excite us to a dynamic gratitude towards the Divine Saviour; 2) to revive in us the sentiments of faith, religion, and piety; 3) to prepare ourselves through the most abundant lights that the Lord grants in this time of salvation, against errors, impiety, corruption, and scandals that surround us from all sides; 4) to awaken and increase the spirit of prayer, which is the weapon of the Christian; 5) to excite us to heartfelt penance, to amend our ways, and to redeem with good works the sins that have drawn down God's wrath upon us; 6) to obtain through this conversion of sinners and the greater perfection of the just, that God may hasten in His mercy the triumph of the Church amidst the cruel war waged against her by her enemies. To these intentions, we must also associate ourselves in our prayers.

SPECIAL FAVOURS GRANTED DURING THE JUBILEE

To encourage sinners to participate in the Jubilee, this holy year every confessor is given the faculty to absolve from any sin, even those reserved to the Bishop or the Pope, as well as to commute into other works of piety the vows of almost every kind, which one may have made and cannot observe.

Moreover, everyone, fulfilling the conditions indicated below, can in this circumstance acquire not only the

remission of all their sins but also the *Plenary Indulgence*, that is, the remission of all the temporal punishment that would still remain to be expiated in this world or in purgatory.

Such indulgence is applicable to the souls in Purgatory, but it can be acquired only once during the Jubilee.

The time of the Jubilee began on January 1st and ends on December 31st, 1875.

CONDITIONS FOR ACQUIRING THE JUBILEE INDULGENCE

1st *Going to confession with the proper dispositions*, earning absolution with true repentance.

2nd *Approaching Communion worthily*: those who have not yet been admitted may have it commuted through a pious work by the confessor. A single Communion is not enough to satisfy both the Easter precept and to acquire the Jubilee at the same time.

3rd *Visiting four Churches for fifteen consecutive days or intermittently* with the intention of attaining the Jubilee. It is sufficient to make this intention once at the beginning. The visit must be made to all four Churches (For Turin, the Churches of St. John, the Consolata, the Holy Martyrs, and St. Philip are designated. In other places, each should consult their own parish priest or director) on the same day. However, the time from the first Vespers of one day until the end of the following day can be counted as one day. Thus, for example, from noon today to the end of tomorrow can be counted as one day. It would not be sufficient to visit one Church per day. However, in case of serious impediment, confessors have the faculty to modify the visits or even commute them into other pious works. The visits can be made before or after Confession and Communion, or even in between. It is not necessary, but it is highly desirable that they be made in a state of grace, that is, without mortal sin on one's conscience.

No special prayers are prescribed when making these visits, and it may suffice for one to remain for about a quarter of an hour in each Church reciting the *Acts of Faith, Hope*, etc., with five *Our Fathers, Hail Marys*, and *Glorias*, praying according to the intention of the Church and the Pope.

For the convenience of the devout, some considerations are provided here that may serve as reading material during these visits.

VISIT TO THE FIRST CHURCH. Confession

A great aspect of God's mercy towards sinners is found in the Sacrament of Confession. If God had said to forgive our sins only through Baptism, and not those that, unfortunately, would be committed after receiving this Sacrament, oh! how many Christians would go to eternal perdition! But God, knowing our misery, established another Sacrament, through which sins committed after Baptism are forgiven. This is the Sacrament of Confession. Here is what the Gospel says: Eight days after His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples and said to them: Peace be with you. As the heavenly Father sent me, so I send you, that is, the authority given to me by the Heavenly Father to do what is good for the salvation of souls, I give to you. Then the Saviour, breathing on them, said: Receive the Holy Spirit; those whose sins you forgive are forgiven; those whose sins you retain are retained. Everyone understands that the words retain or not retain mean *to give* or *not give absolution*. This is the great authority given by God to His Apostles and their successors in the administration of the Holy Sacraments.

From these words of the Saviour arises an obligation for the sacred Ministers to listen to confessions, and equally the obligation for Christians to confess their sins arises, so that it is known when to give or not give absolution, what advice to suggest to remedy the evil done, in short, to give all those paternal warnings that are necessary to repair the evils of the past life and not to commit them

again in the future.

Confession too was not something practised only at some time and in some place. As soon as the Apostles began to preach the Gospel, the Sacrament of Penance began to be practised. We read that when St. Paul preached in Ephesus, many faithful, who had already embraced the faith came to the feet of the Apostles and confessed their sins. *Confitentes et annunciantes actus suos*. [Confessing and announcing their deeds]. From the time of the Apostles until now, the practise of this venerable Sacrament has always been observed. Throughout the ages the Catholic Church has condemned as heretical anyone who dared to deny this truth. Nor is there anyone who has been able to do without it. Rich and poor, servants and masters, kings, monarchs, emperors, priests, bishops, the same Supreme Pontiffs, all must kneel at the feet of a sacred minister to obtain forgiveness for those sins they may have committed after Baptism. But alas! How many Christians take poor advantage of this Sacrament! Some approach it without preparing themselves, others confess indifferently, without sorrow or resolution; others tend to leave out important things in confession, or do not fulfil the obligations imposed by the confessor. These people take the most holy and useful thing to use it for their own ruin. St. Teresa had a tremendous revelation on this matter. She saw that souls were falling into hell like snow falls in winter on the slopes of the mountains. Frightened by that vision, she asked Jesus Christ for an explanation, and received in response that they were going to perdition because of poorly made confessions in their lives.

To encourage us to go to confess with complete sincerity, let us consider that the priest, who awaits us in the tribunal of Penance, awaits us in the name of God and in the name of God he forgives the sins of men. If there were a condemned criminal sentenced to death for a serious crime, and at the moment of being led to the gallows, the minister of the king presented himself saying: Your guilt is forgiven; the king grants you mercy for your life, and welcomes you among

his friends, and so that you do not doubt what I say, here is the decree that authorises me to revoke your death sentence, what feelings of gratitude and love this guilty person would express towards the king and his minister! This is exactly what happens to us. We are the true guilty ones who, by sinning, have deserved the eternal punishment of hell. The minister of the King of kings, in the name of God in the tribunal of Penance, tells us: God sends me to you to absolve you from your sins, to close hell to you, to open Paradise for you, to restore you to friendship with God. And so that you not doubt the authority given to me, here is a decree signed by the same Jesus Christ, which authorises me to recall from you the death sentence. The decree is expressed as follows: Those whose sins you forgive are forgiven; those whose sins you retain are retained. *Quorum remisieritis peccata, remittuntur eis, quorum retinueritis, retenta sunt.* With what esteem and reverence must we approach a minister who, in the name of God, can do us so much good and prevent us from so much evil!

There must be a special reason that encourages us to tell every sin to the confessor, and that is that on the occasion of Jubilee he has the authority to absolve from any sin, even reserved ones. Anyone who has incurred censures, excommunications, and other ecclesiastical penalties can be absolved by any confessor without resorting to the Bishop or the Pope.

Nor should the fear that the confessor will reveal to others the things heard in confession keep us away from confession. No, this has never been the case in the past, nor will it ever be so in the future. A good father undoubtedly keeps the confidences of his children secret. The confessor is a true spiritual father; therefore, even speaking humanly, he keeps under strict secrecy what we reveal to him. But there is more. An absolute, natural, ecclesiastical, and divine precept binds the confessor to silence about anything heard in confession. Even if it were to prevent a serious evil, to free himself and the whole world from death, he cannot use

information obtained in confession, unless the penitent expressly gives him the authority to speak about it. Therefore, go, oh Christian, go often to this friend. The more often you go to him, the more you will ensure that you walk the path to Heaven. The more often you go to Him, the more you will be assured of the forgiveness of your sins, and you will be assured of that eternal happiness promised by the same Jesus Christ, who gave such great power to His ministers. Do not let the multitude or the seriousness of your sins hold you back. The priest is a minister of God's mercy, which is infinite. Therefore, He can absolve any number of sins, no matter how serious they are. Let us only present a humbled and contrite heart, and then we will certainly have forgiveness. *Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies:*

PRAYER

O my Jesus, who died on the cross for me, I thank you with all my heart that you did not let me die in sin. From this moment I turn to you. I promise to leave sin and to faithfully observe your commandments for all the time you allow me to live. I am sorry for having offended you. In the future, I want to love and serve you until death. Holy Virgin, my Mother, help me in that last moment of life. Jesus, Joseph, Mary, may my soul rest in peace with you! – Three *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys*, and *Glorias*.

VISIT TO THE SECOND CHURCH. Holy Communion

Do you understand, oh Christian, what it means to receive Holy Communion? It means approaching the table of angels to receive the body, blood, soul, and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is given as food to our soul under the appearances of consecrated bread and wine. At Mass, during the moment the priest pronounces the words of consecration over the bread and wine, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The words used by our Divine Saviour in instituting this Sacrament are: This is my Body, this is my Blood: *Hoc est corpus meum, hic est calix sanguinis mei.*

These words are used by priests in the name of Jesus Christ in the sacrifice of the Holy Mass. Therefore, when we go to receive Communion, we receive the same Jesus Christ in body, blood, soul, and divinity, that is, true God and true man, alive as He is in Heaven. It is not His image, nor His figure, as is a statue, a crucifix, but it is Jesus Christ Himself as He was born of the Immaculate Virgin Mary and died for us on the Cross. Jesus Christ Himself assured us of this real presence in the Holy Eucharist when He said: This is my Body, which will be given for the salvation of men: *Corpus quod pro vobis tradetur*. This is the living bread that came down from Heaven: *Hic est panis vivus qui de coelo descendit*. The bread that I will give is my flesh. The drink that I will give is my true blood. Whoever does not eat of this body and does not drink of this blood has no life in him/her.

Having instituted this Sacrament for the good of our souls, Jesus desires that we approach it often. Here are the words with which He invites us: "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest: *Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos*. Elsewhere He said to the Hebrews: Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and died, but whoever eats the food represented by the manna, that food which I give, that food which is my Body and my Blood, he/she will not die. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him; for my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink". Who could resist these loving invitations from the divine Saviour? To respond to these invitations, the Christians of the early days went every day to listen to the Word of God and every day they approached Holy Communion. It is in this sacrament that the martyrs found their strength, the virgins their fervour, the saints their courage.

And we, how often do we approach this heavenly food? If we examine the desires of Jesus Christ and our needs, we must receive Communion very often. Just as the manna served as daily food for the Hebrews throughout the time they lived

in the desert until they were led into the Promised Land, so Holy Communion should be our comfort, our daily food in the dangers of this world to guide us to the true promised land of Paradise. St. Augustine says: If every day we ask God for bodily bread, why do we not also strive to nourish ourselves every day with spiritual bread through Holy Communion? St. Philip Neri encouraged Christians to confess every eight days and to communicate even more often according to the advice of the confessor. Finally, the holy Church expresses the living desire for frequent Communion in the Council of Trent, where it says: "It would be highly desirable for every faithful Christian to maintain such a state of conscience that he/she could receive Holy Communion not only spiritually but sacramentally every time he/she attends holy Mass".

Some people would say: I am too sinful. If you are a sinner, try to put yourself in grace with the Sacrament of Confession, and then approach Holy Communion, and you will receive great help. Another would say: I take communion rarely to have greater fervour. And this is a deception. Things that are done rarely are mostly done poorly. On the other hand, since your needs are frequent, the help for your soul must be frequent. Some add: I am full of spiritual infirmities and do not dare to take communion often. Jesus Christ replies: Those who are well do not need a doctor. Therefore, those who are most subject to discomfort need to be visited often by the doctor. Courage then, oh Christian, if you want to perform the most glorious action for God, the most pleasing to all the saints in Heaven, the most effective for overcoming temptations, the most secure for making you persevere in good, it is certainly Holy Communion.

PRAYER

Why, oh my Jesus, does your Church, my mother, want me to rejoice this year? Is there perhaps a reason for joy more than at other times? Ah! Your being here on earth, being able to unite with You in Holy Communion, is it not a reason above all others to make us rejoice continuously? For me, I see nothing

else that brings joy to my heart outside of You, true Spouse of the triumphant Church, only consoler and fortifier of the militant Church. But how then was it established to designate a year in particular for rejoicing? Ah, too sadly, oh my Jesus, we do not make enough fuss of this great good of Communion that we should! Too sadly, we easily forget this incomprehensible treasure, for which your spouse, our dearest Mother, is forced from time to time to awaken our attention to bring us back to you. Here, here is why she wants me to rejoice. She does not want me to rejoice only this year, but through this means she wants to call me back to You, whom I should never have lost and from whom I should never have distanced myself. Oh! Bind me to You in Holy Communion with such a bond that it may never be dissolved for all eternity. Three *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys* and *Glorias*.

VISIT TO THE THIRD CHURCH. Almsgiving

A very effective means, yet greatly neglected by people to gain paradise, is almsgiving. By almsgiving, I mean any act of mercy exercised towards one's neighbour for the love of God. God says in the Holy Scripture that almsgiving obtains the forgiveness of sins, even if they are in great multitude: *Charitas operit multitudinem peccatorum*. The divine Saviour says in the Gospel: "*Quod superest date pauperibus*". What exceeds your needs, give to the poor. Whoever has two coats should give one to the needy, and whoever has more than necessary should share with those who are hungry (*Lk 3*). God assures us that whatever we do for the poor, He considers it as done to Himself: "All that you do to one of my least brothers, you have done to me" (*Mt 25*). Do you then desire that God forgive your sins and free you from eternal death? Give alms. "*Eleemosyna ab omni peccato et a morte liberat*". Do you want to prevent your soul from going to the darkness of hell? Give alms. "*Eleemosyna non partietur animam ire ad tenebras*" (*Tb 4*). Thus, God assures us that almsgiving is a very effective means to obtain the forgiveness of our sins, to find mercy in His eyes, and to lead us to eternal life.

"Eleemosyna est quae purgat a peccato, facit invenire misericordiam et vitam aeternam".

If you desire that God show mercy to you, begin to show it to the poor. You would say: I do what I can. But be careful that the Lord tells you to give to the poor all that is superfluous: *"Quod superest date pauperibus"*. Therefore, I say to you that those purchases and increases in riches that you make year after year are superfluous. It is superfluous that exquisiteness you seek for tableware, meals, carpets, and clothing that could serve those who are hungry, those who are thirsty, and to cover the naked. Superfluous is that luxury in travels, theatres, dances, and other entertainments where it can be said that the wealth of the poor is being squandered.

It seems appropriate to note here the interpretation that some give to the precept of the superfluous, certainly not according to the words of Jesus Christ: It is a counsel, they say, therefore, having given a part of the superfluous in almsgiving, we can spend the rest as we please. I respond that the Saviour did not designate any percentage. His words are positive, clear, and without distinction: *"Quod superest date pauperibus"*. Give the superfluous to the poor. This was done so that everyone would be persuaded that the severity of His command was motivated by the abuse that many make of it and for which they run a serious risk of being eternally lost. He wanted to add these other words: "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved", thus condemning the vain pretexts with which those who possess temporal goods try to excuse themselves from giving the superfluous to the poor.

Some then truthfully say: I have no riches. If you have no riches, give what you can. Moreover, you do not lack means and ways to give alms. Are there not the sick to visit, to assist, to watch over? Are there not abandoned youth to welcome, instruct, shelter in your home, if you can, or at least take them where they can learn the science of salvation? Are there not sinners to admonish, the doubtful to counsel,

the afflicted to console, quarrels to calm, injuries to forgive? See how many means you have to give alms and earn eternal life! Moreover, can you not say some prayers, make some confessions, receive communion, recite a rosary, listen to a Mass in suffrage for the souls in purgatory, for the conversion of sinners, or that the infidels may be enlightened and come to the faith? Is it not also a great almsgiving to burn perverse books, spread good books, and speak as much as you can in honour of our holy Catholic Religion?

Another reason that should urge you to give alms is what the Saviour mentions in the Holy Gospel. He says: "You will not give the poor a glass of fresh water without the heavenly Father giving you the reward". Of all that you give to the poor, you will receive a hundredfold in this life and a reward in eternal life. Thus, giving something to the poor in this present life is a multiplication. In other words, it means giving a hundred to one loan even in this present life, with a full reward that God reserves for us in the other life.

Here is the reason why we see so many families giving abundant alms from all over and continually growing in wealth and prosperity. The reason is given by God: give to the poor, and it will be given to you: "*date, et dabitur vobis*". You will be given a hundredfold in this life, and eternal life in the other: "*centuplum accipiet in hac vita et vitam aeternam possidebit*".

PRAYER

Oh my Jesus, I am fully convinced of the necessity I have to give alms, but how will I do it, when I have such a scarcity of true goods, that is, spiritual ones, that I can barely live? How will I pray for the infidels and for the heretics if I barely believe in the truths taught by your holy Church? How will I pray for sinners if I myself love sin? How will I pray for Your Church, for Your Vicar, if I hardly notice that they are persecuted, so blinded am I by worldly occupations? Ah, Lord! By your sacred Heart, I implore you to grant me a little almsgiving, to give me a bit of that charity that animated

your original disciples, of that charity that burned in the hearts of Saint John the Almsgiver, Francis Xavier, Vincent de Paul. Then indeed all that I have will be for all my brothers, and, as far as it depends on me, I will truly celebrate the Year of Jubilee, sharing with those who are without the goods received from You, so that I may rejoice and celebrate with them in your riches. Three *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys* and *Glorias*.

VISIT TO THE FOURTH CHURCH. Thoughts of salvation

In the eyes of faith, the thought of salvation is most essential, but in the face of the world, it is the most neglected. Therefore, while you are in this Church, oh Christian, direct your gaze upon a Crucifix, and listen to what Jesus tells you. He loosens His tongue and speaks to you thus: one thing alone, oh man, is necessary: to save your soul: "*unum est necessarium*". If you acquire honours, glory, riches, knowledge, and then do not save your soul, all is lost for you. "*Quid prodest homini si mundum universum lucretur, animae vero suae detrimentum patiatur?*" (Mt 16:26).

This thought has determined many young people to leave the world, many rich to distribute their wealth to the poor, many missionaries to abandon their homeland, to go to faraway lands, many martyrs to give their lives for the faith. All these thought that if they lost their souls, nothing would benefit them from all the goods of the world for eternal life. For this reason, St. Paul urged Christians to think seriously about the issue of salvation: "We urge you," he writes, "Oh brothers, to pay attention to the great affairs of salvation" (1 Thess 10,4).

But of what affairs is St. Paul speaking here? He spoke, says St. Jerome, of the affairs that include everything, affairs that if unsuccessful, the eternal kingdom of Paradise is lost, and nothing remains but to be thrown into a pit of torments that will have no end.

Therefore, St. Philip Neri was right to call all those, who in this life attend to procuring honours and

lucrative positions, riches, and pay little attention to saving their souls, fools. Every loss of property, reputation, relatives, health, even life, can be repaired in this world. But with what good of the world, with what fortune can one repair the loss of the soul? Listen, Oh Christian, it is Jesus Christ who calls you: listen to His voice. He wants to grant you mercy or forgiveness for your sins, and the remission of the penalty due for those same sins. However, keep firmly in mind that he who today does not think of saving himself runs a serious risk of being tomorrow with the damned in hell and being lost for all eternity.

But consider that at this moment, while you are in church thinking about your soul, many are dying and perhaps going to hell. How many from the beginning of the world until our days have died of every age and condition and have gone eternally lost! It may be that they had the will to be damned? I do not believe that any of them had this intention. The deception was in deferring their conversion. They died in sin, and now they are damned. Keep this maxim well in mind: a man in this world does much if he saves himself, and knows much if he has the knowledge of salvation. But he does nothing if he loses his soul, and knows nothing if he ignores those things that can eternally save him.

PRAYER

Oh my Redeemer, you have shed your blood to obtain my soul, and I have lost it so many times through sin! I thank you for giving me time to put myself in your grace. Oh my God, I am sorry for having offended you. I wish I had died before and never displeased a God as good as you are. Yes, my God, I offer you all of myself, I hide my iniquities in your most sacred wounds, and I know with certainty, oh my God, that you do not despise a heart that humbles and repents. Oh Mary, refuge of sinners, help a sinner who commends himself to you and trusts in you. – Three *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys* and *Glorias*, with the exclamation: Jesus my, mercy.

With the permission of the ecclesiastical authority.