



LUKE 12: 35-48

The Gospel of Luke

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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.*

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

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

Continuation of Luke 12: 35-48

Verses 35, 36.—*Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord when he will return from the wedding.* The Syriac says, “Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning.” So the Arabic, Egyptian, Æthiopic and Persian. Christ had said that it pleased the Father to give them the kingdom. Sell therefore what you possess, and give alms, that you may, by this means, purchase this kingdom. He now urges them diligently to prepare for it as being at hand, and girding their loins, and casting aside every care, to enter upon and take possession of it. That is, Be you prepared and furnished with all graces, and good works, and merits, especially almsgiving and contempt of riches, that when Christ our Lord from heaven, and His heavenly marriage and joys, returns to you in death to judge your souls, you may meet Him and be found worthy by Him of heaven, and be brought thither by Him. He alludes to the Eastern custom as among the Hebrews and Syrians, of wearing long robes, which they used to tuck up when travelling or at work, that they might not be in their way. (1 Kings xviii. 46; Tobit v. 5.)

the Most High, the Vicar of Christ. Who would not be struck with fear, and tremble, when he heard this, all of which is required of your see?” Thus S. Paul to the Heb. xiii. 17, on which, says S. Chrysostom, “I wonder if any guardian of souls can be saved.” Cardinal Bellarmine said the same of Pontiffs. Hence wise and holy men have avoided prelacies, and have only accepted them by compulsion. S. Cyprian, in his *Epist. 2, lib. iv.*, wrote thus of Cornelius the Pontiff. “He did not demand the popedom for himself, nor seize it by force, as others puffed up by their arrogance and pride have done, but quietly and modestly, and like others who have been divinely called to this office, he endured force lest he should be compelled to accept it.” In like manner, as far as they could, SS. Gregory, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Basil, Nazianzen, Nicholas, Athanasius, shunned the office of Bishops; and in our own times Pius V., when chosen Pontiff, turned pale and almost fell into a faint. When asked the reason he frankly answered, “When I was a Religious of the Order of Benedict, I had very good hope of my salvation; when I was afterwards made a Bishop I began to have a dread about it: now that I am chosen Pontiff I almost despair of it, for how am I to give account to God for so many thousands of souls as are in this whole city, when I can scarcely answer for my own soul?” So it is in his life. Finally, the Council of Trent declares the burthen of a Bishop's office to be one formidable to the shoulders of angels.

beaten with many stripes.”

Ver. 48.—*But he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes.* That is, with fewer than he who knew his lord’s will, according to the measure as well of his ignorance as of his act and fault. There are four degrees of ignorance, the first invincible, which is without blame; the second vincible, but hardly so, which has some fault and is subject to punishment; the third crass, which has more blame; the fourth wilful, which has the most blame and the heaviest punishment. Of this the xxxvi. Psalm speaks, verse 4, “He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good, he abhorreth not evil.” “This man,” says Euthymius, “despised everything; that one was slothful. But contempt is worse than sloth.” For the slothful man knew not when he might have known, and, as Titus says, he neglected to learn and despised, and derided contemptuously. Hence it is plain against Jovinian and modern heretics that there are degrees even of mortal sin, and some are worse than others, and will therefore meet with more heavy punishment in hell, but one of a milder the other of a more severe punishment.

And to whomsoever much is given—a greater knowledge that is, and recognition of his master’s will—*of him shall much be required*, by Christ the judge, and in the particular as well as general judgment. For, as S. Gregory (*Hom.* 9) says, “When gifts are increased the responsibility is increased also,” *and to whom they commit much* (that is, the care and superintendence of souls), *of him will they ask the more.* “Many things,” says Bede, “are entrusted to him, to whom is committed, with his own salvation, the salvation also of the flock of God. From such will Christ, His assessors the Apostles, and the other judges, require the more, not only their own safety and salvation as far as lies in them, but those also of the faithful committed to them. “In the pastor,” says S. Bernard, “is required the care of souls, not the cure (*cura requiritur, non curatio*). The latter may be impossible from the virulence or pertinacity either of the disease or of the patient.” “These things,” says Titus “clearly show the judgment of the surgeons and pastors, whilst that of the rest is not less grave and perilous. Let them not therefore show pride because of their degree and office, but discharge their duties and feed their flocks with the greater humility, zeal, and diligence.” “Each one, therefore,” says S. Gregory, “ought to be the more humble and prompt to serve God, from the office given to him, as he knows himself to be *under the greater obligation of giving account.*”

Again, S. Bernard (*Lib. iv. de Consid.*), lays down forcibly, and point by point, to Pope Eugenius III. what, and how much, God requires from Pontiffs, Bishops, and Prelates. “Consider thyself,” he says, “as the form of justice, the mirror of holiness—the exemplar of piety—the assertor of the truth, the defender of the faith, the doctor of the Gentiles, the leader of Christians, the friend of the bridegroom, the ordainer of the clergy, the pastor of the people, the governor of the unwise, the refuge of the oppressed, the advocate of the poor, the hope of the wretched, the tutor of the young, the judge of widows, the eyes of the blind, the tongue of the dumb, the staff of the aged, the avenger of crimes, the dread of the wicked, the glory of the good, the rod of the powerful, the hammer of tyrants, the father of kings, the judge of the laws, the dispenser of canonries, the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the priest of

Mystically. We gird our loins when we restrain the luxury of the flesh by abstinence (*continentiam*), says S. Gregory (*Hom.* xiii.), and S. Augustine (*Serm.* xxxix. *de Verb. Dom.*), S. Basil on Isa. xv., Bede, and others. Chrysologus (*serm.* xxiv.) says, “He commands us to gird our loins by the belt of purity, and to bind our whole body in the zone of virtue, that we may go forth quickly and expeditiously to meet our Lord at His coming.”

We may either unite the two verses 35 and 36 into one, with Maldonatus, making them contain one and the same parable, or we may disjoin them like Jansenius so as to make them contain two—one, the lamps burning; the other, the servants expecting their lord from the wedding.

Hence this sentence is differently explained by different persons, for those who gird themselves are divers—workmen, ministers, travellers, messengers, soldiers, porters, eremites, and their girdles are divers. Workmen are girt with the girdle of labour—ministers, of their ministry—travellers and messengers, of the road—soldiers, of warfare, whose is the girdle of hardness—porters, of constancy and patience—eremites, of abstinence, mortification, and penance.

Firstly, Of labourers girding their loins to their work, Theophylact speaks thus: “Be your loins girded;” that is, be ye ready in all ways for the work of your Lord, “and your lamps burning in your hands;”—that is, labour not in the dark and without judgment, but take the light of the word, which will show you what is and what is not to be done—for this world is night.” So Euthymius and Titus, meaning, “Be you ready to every good work.”

Secondly, Of those who minister to Christ and those who are poor through almsgiving (to which the words immediately preceding apply) some explain it as follows—Gird up your loins, that you may be swift and nimble to minister to Christ and His poor. On this subject there is related a notable vision in the life of John the almsgiver, who was always very ready to give to any one who asked aims of him (*chap.* xxix.), when a certain noble was slower than usual in giving a loan, he was taught by a vision of a hundred-fold remuneration to be quicker.

Thirdly, Of travellers girding up their loins for a journey. Some explain it thus: Gird up your loins, that you may be expeditious on your journey to heaven, from which the Word has gone before, for a grand way to it remains for you. S. Peter, *Epist.* 1, *chap.* I, 13-15, alludes to the exodus (hence called Pasch) of the Israelites. from Egypt into the promised land, which was a figure of the saints passing from earth into heaven. For God thus commanded and directed the Hebrews in the eating of the paschal lamb which was to be sacrificed for their happy journey. “Thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet and your staff in your hand” (as if girded to begin a journey), “and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the

Lord's passover." The same has to be done by Christians in mystery. See what I have said thereon.

Fourthly, Messengers and legates gird their loins that they may be the swifter in performing their office. The angels who are the messengers of God, are therefore painted with their loins girded to show that they are swift and nimble to perform the commandments of God; according to the words, "Who maketh His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire." Heb. i. 7. Christ therefore says, "O ye apostles and disciples, gird ye your loins, that you may be my messengers throughout the whole world—proclaiming the faith of the Gospel to Greeks, Romans, Italians, Gauls, Spaniards, Indians, Brazilians, Japanese, Chinese, &c. Behold I send you: Go ye therefore, eagerly, swiftly, and ardently like angels," as Isaiah, "Go ye swift messengers to a nation scattered and peeled" xviii. 2, and lii. 7, which S. Paul cites to the Romans, x. 15, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace."

Fifthly, Soldiers and athletes gird their loins that they may fight with more strength and courage. So do you also, O Christians, gird your loins with the girdle of strength and fortitude, that as ministers of Christ you may fight boldly against the devil, the flesh, and the world, and conquer and triumph, as S. Paul to the Ephesians, "Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness." On which I have commented at length. David also: "Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle," Ps. xviii 39 and Job, "Gird up now thy loins like a man" xxxviii. 3; and Ex. xii. 11, "Your loins girded," for they went armed as to take possession of the promised land. Hence Origen (*Hom. ix. in lib. Judic.*) thinks that allusion is here made to the army of Gideon who went up girded against the Midianites (Judg. vii.).

Sixthly, The porters, that they may be strong to carry heavy burthens, gird their loins. So, O ye faithful, do ye gird your loins with the girdle of patience that you may bear all adverse accidents with nobleness. So Cyril, in the *Catena*, "Be ye prompt to bear misfortunes."

Seventhly, The continent, that they may overcome the flesh and resist with success all the wicked incitements of lust, gird themselves with the girdle of continence, that is of self-abnegation and mortification, by which they reject all the wicked desires that are continually arising from concupiscence—and refuse them, and mortify them, and cut them off. So Simeon the Stylite. He tortured himself to such a degree by a knotted cord that the head (præfectus) of his monastery undid it, and dismissed him from the monastery, lest the weaker brethren should endeavour to follow his example, and from their failure become a disgrace. We have this from his disciple S. Antony, and from Theodoret, in their lives of him.

And your lamps burning. Christ, commanded us to be ready, with loins girt, for good works, and for our passage to heaven. He now fitly requires our lamps to be burning, for these are needed by night whether for work or for taking a journey. For this, our life is a mystical night, and is full of ignorance, errors, and the darkness of

future. He checked the bitterness of envy by the sweetness of befitting remedies. He incited martyrs by exhortation from the divine discourses. Confessors who were signed with the mark on their foreheads he animated by the incentive of the heavenly host. The same, especially, and before all others, did Pope Gregory, who kept the names of all the poor of Rome and the neighbourhood in a book, and supplied them with whatever they required. He maintained three thousand nuns in town and very many more who lived beyond the city. Hence we may truly say of him, "All the Church shall declare his alms," *Ecclus. xxxiii.* How great a regard he had for souls, and what precepts he gave fitted for the salvation of each, is seen from his homilies and letters, in which he admonishes the Emperor Maurice not to withdraw soldiers from the Religious life; John the Patriarch of Constantinople not to arrogate to himself the haughty title of Universal Bishop; Venantius the Chancellor of Italy, to resume the monastic habit which he had thrown aside; John the Bishop of Ravenna to lay down the Pallium which he had unlawfully assumed. Add to this the rules he gave and the laws he laid down for Augustine, the Apostle of England, for bringing the English to the faith of Christ; the Irish bishops that he taught not to re-baptize those who had been baptized by heretics in the name of the Trinity, and many other things. Search the iv. vol. of his letters and you will wonder that one man, taken up with so much business, and the subject of so many bodily infirmities, could enter upon so many and such important particulars, and lay down for each person directions to fit them for virtue. For prudence consists not in controlling general acts, but in directing each particular one wisely; for the performance of virtues is singular, and requires a singular direction and teaching.

Ver. 46.—*And shall cut him asunder.* That is, shall separate him from Himself, and His household, the Church triumphant; from the society of the Blessed and from the Beatitude promised to the faithful servants. See St. Jerome on Matt. xxiv.: "Shall cut him asunder, that is, shall separate him from the Communion of Saints." St. Hilary: "Shall separate him from the good promises;" Origen: "Shall cut him off from the gift of the Holy Spirit and from the society and guardianship of the Angels, for Christ will deprive him of all grace, all virtue, all help, and all hope of salvation."

And appoint his position with the unfaithful. That is, shall punish him with the other servants who were unfaithful to him, although they pretended to be the contrary. Hence Matt. xxiv. 51 has "with the hypocrites." These unfaithful are perhaps the unbelieving—they who would not believe in Christ, and of whom it is said, "He that believeth not hath been judged already." S. John iii. 18.

Ver. 47.—*And that servant which knew his lord's will and made not ready.* Did not prepare for the coming of his lord by distributing to his fellow-servants their portions of food in season, but by ill-treating them, and by debauchery, squandered the goods of his master, "he shall be

themselves but others of the faithful as well. And Peter was the steward whom Christ set over His household, that is, His Church, as also the other Apostles, according to the words of S. Paul, "Let a man so account of us as of ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."

That he may give them their measure of wheat in due season. (The Vulgate has *mensuram tritici*, on which Cornelius comments). Our Lord alludes to the custom of the ancients, with whom slavery was common and severe. For servants had in abundance many things that Christians have now need of. They put one of the slaves over the *mancipii*, to distribute, every month, a measure (hence called *demensus*) of provisions and corn, wheat perhaps, or barley, if they were of inferior degree, as I have shown on Hosea iii. 2.

Secondly, wheat (*tritici*) may refer to time. For it is the duty of a good steward, like Joseph, when it is the season of wheat harvest, to dispense it frugally by measure to each head of a family, that it may not be sold or expended on the poor, and so there be an insufficiency for the household. I have explained the rest on S. Matt. xxiv. 45.

Observe the words "steward" and "portion." For a just steward does not give the same measure to all, but to each his own and according to his age, rank, and desert. It is the proper task of a steward to distribute what is appropriate to each. One kind and proportion of food is proper for an infant, and another for a youth, a third, for a full grown man, a fourth, for the aged—one for a man, another for a woman—one for a daughter, another for a servant—one for sons, another for slaves.

From this Christ *moraliter*, teaches, Bishops, Pastors, Confessors, Preachers, that they ought not to set forth the same food of doctrine to all the faithful, nor (in general) speak of virtues to all only in a general way, but in particular they should instil into them such as are fit and proper to their age and position. S. Paul, by his own example, taught the praxis of this parable and sentence when he gave one kind of monition and precept to sons, another to fathers, another to servants, Eph. vi. 1 and following, and when he wrote to Timothy, 1 Tim. v. 1-4; so to Titus, ii. 2, and following.

S. Gregory Thaumaturgus, Bishop of New Cæsarea, followed Christ and S. Paul, as Gregory of Nyssa writes in his life: "A mourner would bear from him what would comfort him; youth were corrected and taught moderation—medicine in fitting conversation was offered to the aged, servants were taught to be well affected to their masters, masters to be kind and gentle to those under their rule; the poor were taught to hold grace the only true riches, the possession of which was in the power of every one; he who boasted himself of his wealth was aptly reminded that he was the steward and not the lord of what he had. Profitable words were given to women, suitable ones to children, and befitting ones to fathers." And S. Cyprian, as Pontius the deacon wrote in his life, used to urge maidens to a becoming rule of modesty and a manner of dress which was adapted to sanctity. He taught the lapsed penitence, heretics truth, schismatics unity, the sons of God peace and the law of evangelical prayer. He comforted Christians under the loss of their relatives with the hope of the

concupiscence; so that we have need of light and lighted lamps, that we travel on in that night and perform our work. He alludes especially to the marriage feast, which was celebrated at night with torches. That is, as in the night-time the servants await their lord on his return from his marriage with lighted torches, and go before him, so do ye watch and await me as I return to you from heaven by death, and go before me with spiritual torches, for you know not the day and hour of your death and the coming of Christ to judgment. If you know this you will be prepared and expect Him every hour, for so the virgins with their lamps lighted await the bridegroom. Matt. xxv. This parable of Luke is mostly the same as that of Matthew.

If it be asked what the lighted lamps signify, Theophylact answers, "Firstly, they signify that we ought to have the light of reason and discretion to distinguish what we ought to do and how we ought to do it; and secondly, we should have faith, burning with love and fervour of spirit, for this will show us what to do and what to avoid, will urge us to lofty acts of virtue and incite us to teach others the way of faith and salvation, and inspire them with the love of God, and not suffer any to live in the darkness of ignorance and sin." So S. Augustine (*serm.* xxxix.) on the words of the Lord; and so S. Jerome, or whoever is the author, on Jeremiah i., who says, "that to hold a lamp in the hand is the same as to preach the Gospel."

Mystically. "These things" says Cœlestine, "have their own mysteries. For in the girding of the loins is shown purity: in the staff, pastoral rule; in the lighted lamps, the brightness of good works" (*Epist.* ii *ad Episc. Gall.*) S. Gregory also, in his 13th homily, understands by the shining lamps, good examples. We hold lighted lamps in our hands, he says, when by our good works we show examples of light to our neighbours. Two things are commanded us, to have our loins girded and our lamps lighted, as are innocence and purity of body, and the light of truth in our actions, for purity is of little value without a good life, or a good act without chastity.

S. Augustine again (*Lib.* ii. *Quæst. Evan.*): "Girt loins means abstinence from secular affairs, lighted lamps, the doing of the same thing with a true object and right intention." "The lighted lamps," says S. Maximus, "are prayer, contemplation, and spiritual love." Lastly, Origen (*Hom.* 9 *on Judges*) thinks that allusion is here made to the torches of the army of Gideon, and that as their sudden discovery terrified the Midianites, so the apostles and martyrs, when their bodies had been shattered and broken by martyrdom, began to shine forth by their miracles, by which the persecutors were put to flight, and thus their doctrine and holiness shone throughout the world. As is clearly explained by Bede in his questions on the book of Judges, and Gregory at length, 30 *Moral. chap.* xxxii, and following; see Judges vii.

In your hands. These words are not found in the Greek, Syriac, and Arabic; nor in the Greek Fathers, Origen, Clement, Cyril, Chrysostom, S. Basil, Titus;

nor in the Latin's, S. Ambrose, Cyprian, Hilary, and Augustine (*Serm.* xxxix.) But S. Gregory has them in his 13th Homily, Irenæus (*lib.* iv. *cap.* 72), and S. Jerome, on Eph. xvi. and Jer. i., as also the codices of the Holy Scriptures, corrected at Rome. "In your hands," therefore, means in your possession, that they may shed light on your works. Again, it means, that with their lamps in their hands they should go as His servants to meet Christ their Lord. From these words of Christ has arisen the custom of placing in the hands of the faithful, when in their last agony, lighted and blessed candles of wax, to show that they are going to meet Christ with faith and burning love and to excite them to it. So Amalarius, Rabanus and others who have written on Ecclesiastical Offices.

S. Cyril adds, in his fourth book on Worshipping in Spirit and in Truth, "Having your feet shod;" but no other has it, and therefore S. Cyril seems to have inadvertently copied it from S. Paul, Eph. vi. 15.

Ver. 36 (Continued).—*And be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord.* This is the third precept of Christ, or rather the third part of the same precept. The first was to have their loins girt, the second to have their lights shining, the third to look for their lord. The first two are referred to this. The meaning is, Be you so prepared and ready as servants who expect their lord by night, that is, watchful, with loins girt and lamps burning. Hence Maldonatus thinks that this parable is one and identical, but consisting of three parts. Jansenius thinks that it is diverse; but it comes to the same thing, for, as I have said, this is another and the third part of the parable to which the other two tend and are directed. "They await their lord" says Toletus, "as those who, thinking themselves strangers, burn with the desire for Christ, and frequently, nay, continually think of Him—have their minds fixed on Him; for His love and hope bear adversity and all kinds of calamities with patience; fear to offend Him as having Him at length come to them, before their eyes; despise without difficulty whatever does not make for His coming; delight in whatever they know to be pleasing to Him; hold temporal things of small account because of their hope of eternal ones."

Symbolically, The above words, "Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord," teach us (1.) That here we are as strangers journeying on to the heavenly kingdom. (2.) That we ought to outshine all others in virtue. (3.) That we should fix our hopes on the heavens, according to the words of 1 S. Peter ii. 11, 12, and 1 i. 13.

Again, S. Augustine (*serm.* 39 *de Verbis Domini*), asserts that these are the three subjects on which S. Paul exhorted Felix (Acts xxiv.) "Paul," he says, "taught continence, justice, and eternal life, for in these is contained the sum of the evangelical life." Secondly, in them are shown the three duties of the apostolic life: Firstly; the loins girded show that the Apostles were sent by Christ to preach the gospel through the whole world, and also to contend against all evil spirits, tyrannical rulers, unbelievers, and vices, according to the words of S. Luke, "I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy." Secondly, The burning lamps shew those who ought to illuminate the world by their doctrine and preaching, according to the words, "Ye are the light of the

marriage so early or so late. The marriages are generally concluded about the middle of the night when the bride is conducted to the marriage chamber. Meanwhile, it teaches us that we ought always to watch even in advanced age and decrepitude, and that it is not enough to watch only for a time, or in youth, or in manhood, but we must persevere as long as this life lasts, because the hour of our death is uncertain, and also the coming of our Lord, even though He be long waited for." So S. Basil in his homily of not regarding secular affairs: "We ought to be prepared daily to depart from this life and to await the unchanged nod of God, that each, when the Lord comes and knocks, may immediately open to Him. Christ, besides, speaks only of the second and third watch, because sleep in them is deeper and more heavy, to show that He would come when men least expected Him; when they were sunk in profound thoughts and cares, and, as it were, were asleep; so that wise servants should then most especially watch and be prepared, that when they seem to themselves most healthful and prosperous they may look for a sudden and treacherous death."

To let us give another reason. "Christ," he says, "does not make mention of the fourth watch because there are very few, who, having put off good works till old age, are then found to be doing them; and He might have made them tardy if He had spoken of the matter." From this S. Gregory concludes (*Hom.* 13), exhorting all men to holy lives, and saying, "Our Lord would not reveal the last hour to us, that it might always be looked for, and whilst we are not able to foresee it, that we should without cessation be prepared for it." Because then the hours fly apace, be careful, O most dear brethren, to be occupied with the traffic of good works. Hear what wise Solomon said: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." Because then we know not the time of our death, and cannot work after it, we ought to seize the time allowed us before its arrival. Thus, by our being always in fear of it will death itself be vanquished.

Ver. 41.—*And Peter said, Lord, speakest Thou this parable unto us or even unto all?* To all men, especially the faithful, as well to those who are now living as to those who shall live hereafter. Peter doubted of this, because Christ was accustomed to give some doctrines to the Apostles alone, others to all the faithful, and He had here said some things which seemed fitted only to the Apostles and men of perfect lives, as verses 32-37. The rest about watching and waiting for the coming of the Lord seemed to apply to all the faithful.

Ver. 42.—*And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward whom his lord shall set over his household to give them their portion of food in due season?* Christ replied to Peter that He spoke indeed to all the faithful, but especially to him and the Apostles. For upon them were incumbent greater watching and care, that they might save not only

slaves, become as lords with whom He may share His marriage feast, that is, the happiness and glory of heaven. Secondly, That He will do it with an endless number of dishes, that is, pleasure and delights both of soul and body. Thirdly, He will see that no one wants anything: not necessaries merely, but even luxuries, and whatever he wants and wishes for. Everything wished for, nay, that can possibly be wished for, shall be supplied in superabundance according to the words "I shall be satisfied when I wake up with Thy likeness," Ps. xvii. 15; and "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house," Ps. xxxvi. 8. Fourthly, That He will give to each according to his merits this delicacy and that, for the words "He shall come" signify that there shall be a supper varied and most abundant according to the merits of each; and (those) "shall serve" (show) that it shall be most honourable, and the words "shall make them sit down," says Toletus, "shows that it shall be eternal."

He shall gird Himself. "God is girded," says Theophylact, "not as giving us the outpouring of all good things, for He moderates them. For who is able to contain all that God is?" This is seen from the seraphim who cover their eyes because of the brightness of the Divine light.

And make them sit down to meat. S. Dionysius the Areopagite, Epistle 9 to Titus, says, "The sitting at meat we consider to be rest from many labours, a life of safety and a divine kind of existence in the light and country of the living, full of all kinds of holy pleasure, with an abundant supply of all kinds of good things by which we are supplied, with Jesus rejoicing over them and placing them at His table and ministering to them and giving them eternal life, fully bestowing upon them and pouring into them all things good."

Symbolically, S. Gregory (*Hom.* 13) says, "He will gird Himself, that is, He will prepare for the recompense and make them sit down—or, be refreshed by everlasting rest. For to sit down is to rest in the kingdom. The Lord again says, "They shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The Lord will come and minister, for He satiates us with the brightness of His light. "Come" is said of Him when He returns to His kingdom for the Judgment; for the Lord has certainly returned to us since the judgment, because from the form of His Humanity He has raised us to the contemplation of His Divinity, and He comes to lead us to the contemplation of His brightness, when Him whom we see in the judgment in His Humanity, we shall behold, after the judgment, in His Divinity.

Ver. 33.—And if He shall come in the second watch, and if in the third, and find them so, blessed are those servants. The first watch begins in the evening at the beginning of night, and lasts three hours. The second then begins and lasts till midnight. Then follows the third, which also lasts for three hours; then the fourth, which lasts till the dawn and the rising of the sun. Christ shows by these watches when we ought to watch and be prepared for the coming of the Lord; for the time of our death is uncertain, nor have we one day or even hour of our life of which we can be sure. The first watch is our childhood, the second our youth, the third our grown manhood, the fourth, our old age. So Titus and S. Gregory. "Christ does not," says F. Lucas, "mention so much the fourth and first watches, because He does not often come from the

world," Matt. v. 14. Thirdly, "Be like unto men looking for their lord." This signifies those who ought to despise and tread under foot this present world and all things belonging to it, and to lead a heavenly and divine life, that their minds and hearts may be fixed on heaven, as in Phil. iii. 20, "Our citizenship is in heaven." S. Paul adds the result, the fruit, and the reward: "From whence also we wait for a Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory." That is, We despise earthly things, we seek for heavenly ones, because we look with a certain hope for Christ, who shall beautify and make us glorious for ever. So Toletus.

These three things the early Christians always kept rooted in their minds, who as strangers upon earth and citizens of heaven willingly poured out their wealth, their honours, their pleasures, their very present life itself for Christ, because they surely looked for the coming of the Lord Christ after this short life, and for a happy and eternal one to be given to them by Him, which indeed is true wisdom and prudence. We may see this in the Pontiffs, Virgins, Roman Martyrs for three hundred years, from S. Peter to Silvester, all of whom rejoiced in ceaseless persecutions, rejoiced to be spoiled of their goods, to be imprisoned, scourged, slain, burnt, that they might enjoy (possess) Christ in heaven. Eminent amongst others was S. Cecilia, who, when flourishing in youth, beauty, wealth, nobility, of her own will most gladly gave up all things for Christ and even her life itself, in the midst of wondering, pitying, and lamenting friends, and went joyfully and exultingly to the place of martyrdom, saying, "This is not to lose my youth but to change it; this is to give clay and receive in return gold; to give a vile and miserable hovel and receive a palace most spacious, lofty, and magnificent, built of precious stones and gold; to give a perishable thing and receive one that knows no end and is subject to no death:" and soon after, "Our Lord Jesus Christ does not give pound for pound, but what He gives as a simple sum He returns a hundredfold, and adds besides eternal life." Thus is it in her Acts.

The life of a Christian then should be nothing but one looking for the coming of Christ, that He may deliver him from this life, which is so vile and miserable and subject to so many fears and perils, and bring him to His own kingdom in the heavens and to eternal life. And hence the prophets and Paul teach everywhere that the faithful ought to live in such holiness and contempt of the things of this world, as to look eagerly and with avidity to the coming of Christ. So the patriarch Jacob when dying and longing for the coming of Christ, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord," Gen. xlix. 18; and Job. "All the days of my appointed time I will wait till my change come," xiv. 14; and the Psalms, "I have waited patiently for the Lord," xl. 1, and "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart, wait, I say, on the Lord," xxvii. i4 (Bib. version). Isa. viii. 17, "I will wait upon the Lord;" and xxv. 9, "We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in

His salvation.” Jeremiah, Lam. iii. 24, “The Lord is my portion, therefore will I wait for Him;” Micah vii. 7, “I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation.” So Joseph of Arimathæa, despising all fear of the Jews, buried Christ because he was looking, for the kingdom of God,” Luke xxiii. 51. S. Paul to the Romans, “The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God,” viii. 19; and 23, “Ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our redemption, to wit, the redemption of our body;” Gal. v. 5, “We wait for the hope of righteousness;” Phil iii. 20, “We wait for a Saviour;” Titus ii. 12, 13, “We should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God;” 2 S. Peter iii. 11, “Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God?” and ver. 13, 14, “But according to His promise we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace without spot and blameless in His sight.” Climacus (*de gradu*) says, “He is righteous who fears not death; he is holy and perfect who daily expects it.” So S. Francis expected the Lord when he recited, as he was dying, the words of the Psalm, “The righteous shall compass me about, for Thou shalt deal righteously with me” (Ps. cxlii 7), and so died. And S. Bernard rejoiced—

Desidero te millies,	A thousand fold I long for Thee,
Mi jesu quando venies,	When, Jesu, wilt Thou come to me?
Me lætum quando facies?	When shall I be, O Lord, set free?
Me de te quando saties?	And with Thyself full sated be?

Memorable and dreadful is the description of S. Bridget in her Fourth Book of Revelations, chap. vii.: “In Purgatory there is a third and higher place where is no other punishment than the desire of coming to God and of His beatific vision. They are there tormented who, in this life, had not a perfect desire of coming to the presence of God and of enjoying the vision of Him.” Bede mentions a like place in Purgatory (*Hist.* v. 13), and S. Gregory (*Dialogues* iv. 36), and Dionysius the Carthusian in his (*Dialogue de Judicio partic. artic. xxxi.*), and Bellarmine (*De Purg.* ii. 6). For there is a sort of unworthy idea and undervaluing of the great vision and glory of God because it is not desired by the faithful and the saints with ardour. This is a sign that they did not sufficiently consider His riches and joys and weigh and ponder them as it to be expected.

Live then, O Christian, to thy Christ, not to the world; live to the Spirit, not to the flesh—live not to time but to eternity.

When He shall return from the marriage feast. This appears to be an addition to the parable, and not to be applied of necessity to what is signified by it. It may be applied thus. Christ in His Incarnation celebrated His espousals with the Church and all the faithful. When He went up into heaven He there consummated His marriage with the same Church, because by the glory of the beatific vision He is intimately and

indivisibly united to all the Blessed through all eternity. When, then, He returns from the heavens to judgment, He appears to return from His heavenly marriage that He may introduce His new bride to it. His marriage then is the highest union and the highest joy that Christ has with the beatified in heaven. So S. Gregory, Bede, Theophylact, Euthymius, Toletus, and others.

That when He cometh and knocketh the they may straightway open unto Him. Christ here shows us that we ought to make our virtues ready in this life, that adorned by them in our death, we may go out with joy and rejoicing to meet Him, for there will be no time then for working, scarcely even for repentance; for the senses will be dulled and the mind oppressed by disease and scarcely able to think of its sins and its salvation. They, then, act with the utmost recklessness who, in this life, indulge in pleasures and say that they will repent on their deathbeds—for their repentance will then be forced and too late, and therefore will seldom be true, sincere, and earnest. “The Lord cometh,” says S. Gregory (*Hom.* xiii.) “when He hastens to judgment; but He knocks (at the door) when by the ills of disease He designs death to be near, and we open to Him at once if we receive Him with love. Whoever dreads his departure from the body is unwilling to open to the judge, and fears to see Him as his judge whom he knows that he has despised. But he who is secure as to his hope and works, immediately opens, for he receives the judge with joy, and when his death is at hand he grows glad in the glory of his reward.”

Ver. 37.—*Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching.* That is, with their loins girt and their lamps in their hands and expecting Him as He goes before, for He will give them their due reward, eternal blessedness, that they may enjoy the vision of God and all glory and joy for ever and ever. Hence the following explanation.

Verily, I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them.

Christ renders like for like—to those of His who are girt in heaven, He will gird Himself in heaven—He will serve His own servants. Those who have laboured in His service He will make to rest, and be at ease, and sup, and to those who minister to Him, He Himself, the King of kings and Lord of lords, will minister with wonderful condescension.

Shall come. The attendants and sponsi used to go round the tables to see if any one needed anything, that he might be supplied. The above words, it is plain, are to be taken as parables not in the letter. For in heaven there are no girdles, nor persons girded, nor tables, nor sittings at meat, nor any who come or minister: Christ only intends to say, Firstly, that he who is pre-eminent before all other good masters, and immeasurably greater, will show honour to His faithful servants in heaven, so as to make them, from