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CHAPTER 16: 19-28

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.

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

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 Matthew 16: 19-28

Verse 19- *And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven.* Thee—who art one person—namely, Bar-jona, or the son of Jona, as is plain from everything which precedes and follows. Not therefore in this place were the keys of Heaven promised to Peter in the person of the Church, or primarily to the Church herself, as the heretics take it, but to Peter himself as the head of the Church; and through him to the Church and her ministers, in like manner as to the same Peter they were specially given and consigned by Christ after His resurrection, when He said: "Feed My sheep." Thus the Greek and Latin Fathers explain, *passim*, whose words Bellarmine recites (*l. 1 de Pontiff, c. 12*), where in like manner he proves at length that this is the meaning of S. Augustine, when he says that Peter bore the figure of the Church because indeed Peter was a representative of the Church as a king of a kingdom: for so indeed S. Augustine explains himself (*Tract. ult. upon S. John*), where he says: "Of this Church the Apostle Peter, on account of the primacy of his Apostleship, was a kind of general representative." And on Psalm 109, "Of which Church he is acknowledged to be the representative, on account of the primacy which was his

Apostles a specimen of the glory, the joy and the happiness which the Saints shall obtain in the Heavenly Kingdom, that He might thereby animate them to Evangelical labours and sorrows, and that they might animate others to the same. After the same manner S. Jerome animates Eustochium. "Go forth," he saith, "for a little space from thy prison, and picture to thine eyes the reward of thy present labours, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man. What sort of day will that be when Mary the mother of the Lord shall meet thee with choirs of virgins? When after Pharaoh with his host has been drowned in the Red Sea, she shall sing the antiphon to the responsive choirs, as she bears the timbrel. Let us sing to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. Then shall Thecla joyfully fly to embrace thee. Then too the Spouse Himself shall meet thee, and shall say, Arise and come, My kinswoman, and My fair one, for lo the winter is passed, the rain is over. Then the angels shall wonder and say, who is this that looketh forth as the morning, beautiful as the moon, chosen as the sun? Then the little ones, lifting up the palms of victory, shall sing with concordant voice, 'Hosanna in the Highest! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest!' Then the hundred and forty and four thousand before the Throne, and before the Elders shall hold their harps, and shall chant the new song."

The construction of this passage is somewhat involved, and the thought obscure. What appears, however, to be meant is this. First, that there were some early heretics who held that the *primary* or *chief object* of our Lord's Passion was to procure certain rewards and advantages to Himself, rather than to reconcile man to God, and obtain the salvation of the human race. Secondly, that our Lord's rebuke was given to Peter, on the ground that if he followed Peter's advice, and shrank from His coming Passion, He would by so doing deprive *Himself* of the benefits flowing from it.

The anathema of the Council, which is referred to in the text, seems therefore to be directed against those who would consider our Lord's rebuke to Peter as springing from the thought that, listening to S. Peter's advice would deprive Himself of the benefits of His Passion.

The heretical idea condemned by the Council is the very subtle one, that our Lord was actuated by a regard to self-interest in His voluntary submission to suffering and death.

him of Paradise,” says S. Bernard.

Verse 27- *The Son of Man, &c.—according to his works, i.e., according to what he hath wrought, not according to what he hath known, understood, believed.*

Shall come in the glory of His Father. This is the incentive with which Christ stirs up all to heroic acts of self-denial, of the cross, and of virtue. Hear what S. Jerome says (*Epist. 1, ad Heliodorum*): Thus he invites him to a solitary life, and to take up his cross—“Dost thou fear poverty? Christ calls the poor blessed. Art thou terrified at labour? But no athlete is crowned without sweat. Dost thou think about food? But faith is not afraid of famine. Dost thou fear to wear out thy limbs upon the bare ground? But the Lord lieth with thee. Does the infinite vastness of the desert affright thee? But do thou walk in Paradise in thy mind. That day will come, it will surely come, in which this corruptible and this mortal shall put on incorruption and immortality. Blessed is the servant whom the Lord shall find watching. Then when the earth with its inhabitants shall tremble at the sound of the trumpet, thou shalt rejoice. Then shall the most mighty kings tremble in their nakedness. Plato, with his disciples, shall be found a fool. The arguments of Aristotle shall not profit. But then shalt thou, a rustic and poor, exult. Thou shalt laugh, and say, Behold my crucified God, behold the Judge, who, wrapped in swathing-bands, cried in the manger.” Thus S. Jerome, pathetically but truly.

Verse 28- *Verily I say unto you, &c., in His kingdom. Syriac, into His kingdom.* Christ promised that a reward in the heavenly kingdom should be given for good works of self-denial and the cross. Now, lest any one should find fault that it was to be put off for many ages, He shows that it was in reality near; He shows that very kingdom in the transfiguration, after a few days, to some yet alive.

Shall not taste of death, i.e., shall not die. It is a metaphor taken from the deadly cup which was given to persons condemned to die.

In His Kingdom. You will ask what was this kingdom of Christ; and when some of the Apostles standing there beheld it? S. Gregory answers (*Hom. 32, in Evang.*), and Bede, that this kingdom of Christ was the Church, and its diffusion throughout all nations, which verily the Apostles beheld, yea, brought about. Christ says this, says S. Gregory, that from the spread of the Church’s kingdom, which they were about to behold, they might learn how great would be their future glory in the heavenly kingdom, which in this life is invisible. For God, by the visible things, which He sets forth, confirms the hope of the invisible promises. And, 2. Some think that it was to take place at the resurrection, and in the day of judgment, of which Christ spake in the preceding verse. But I say it took place in the Transfiguration of Christ. For in it they beheld Christ’s glorious kingdom as in a glass. Three of the Apostles, namely, Peter, James, and John, had a foretaste of this kingdom. This view is plain from what follows. All the three Evangelists who relate the Transfiguration, place it immediately after this promise, as though it were the fulfilment of it. Thus SS. Hilary, Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrose, Theophylact, and others, *passim*. Whence S. Leo says (*de Transfig.*). *In the kingdom*, that is in royal splendour. For in His Transfiguration Christ gave to His

among the disciples.” Wherefore for the good of the Church Peter, as her head, received the keys from Christ; from which it is also plain that Christ promised the keys to Peter as a future Pontiff, and consequently promised the same keys to the other Roman Pontiffs, successors of Peter. For Christ in this place had regard to a most necessary matter, and of the highest moment to His ever-abiding Church—that is to say, to its perpetual head; and He ordained the best and most abiding constitution for her, namely, the monarchical, that the one Church of Christ should be ruled by the one Roman Pontiff, as S. Cyprian teaches on *the Unity of the Church*; S. Jerome (*l. 1, contra Jovin.*), and others, *passim*. Our Gretzer, and after him Adam Contsen, ably refute the cavils of Calvin and his followers about this passage. *The keys*—you will ask what *the keys* here signify. Calvin answers (*l. 4, Inst. c. 6, sec. 3*), that they signify both the power to preach the Gospel, as well as the forgiveness of sins to him who believes the Gospel which promises forgiveness. But this is a jejune and worthless explanation. For by *keys* doors are opened, not the mouths of preachers. Whence *keys* specially belong to kings and rulers; not to doctors, and teachers, and preachers; wherefore *the keys* here signify properly the right to rule; whereunto pertains not only power to preach the Gospel, but also to absolve sins, to admonish, to ordain priests, to interpret Holy Scripture, to excommunicate, and to do all other things which pertain to the good government of the Church.

I say therefore, by *the keys* is here signified the chief power, both of order and jurisdiction, over the whole Church, promised and delivered in this place by Christ to Peter. For with such an object in view the keys of the cities are delivered to kings and princes. And Christ thus explains *the keys* in what follows, when He says: *whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, &c.* For he who hath the keys of a house, or of a city is its lord, to open or shut it at his pleasure: to admit into it, and to shut out of it whom he will. There is an allusion to Is. c. xxii., where God promising the principality of the synagogue to Eliakim, the Pontiff of the Old Testament, says: “And I will lay upon his shoulder the key of the house of David, so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut and none shall open.” Moreover, Eliakim was a type of Christ as a priest, of whom it is said (Rev. xxi.), “I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” The sense then is this—I, Christ, will give to thee, Peter, as a Pontiff, and consequently to all the other Popes who come after thee, *the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, by which I mean supreme authority to rule the universal Church dispersed throughout the whole world, that by *the keys, i.e.,* by thy power in opening or shutting the Church to men, thou mayest open or shut heaven to them. Where observe Christ said not, I will give to thee *the keys* of the kingdom of earth, lest an earthly and temporal power should be thought to be meant, but of *the kingdom of heaven*, that this power might be properly and

directly exercised in spiritual things, which are those that pertain to *the kingdom of heaven*; but that it should be exercised only indirectly with reference to temporal things, being such as are necessary, or at least very profitable to spiritual matters. Thus S. Chrysostom (*Hom.* 55) teaches that by the delivery of these *keys* by Christ to Peter there was committed to him the care and government of the whole world, and that he was created pastor and head of the entire Church. Thus also S. Gregory (*l.* 4, *ep.* 32) says: “It is plain to all who know the Gospel that by the Lord’s voice the care of the whole Church has been committed to S. Peter, the chief of all the Apostles.” And he immediately adds the reason, “for to him it is said, *I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*” Thus also S. Hilary on this passage, and S. Leo, (*Serm.* 2 in *Anniv. Assum.*), and others, *passim*. Listen also to S. Augustine (*Serm.* 28 de *Sanct.*) “Peter alone among the Apostles had grace to hear, *thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church.*” Worthy indeed was he to be a foundation stone for building up the people in the house of God; to be a pillar to support them, a key for the kingdom. Hence also S. Ambrose (*l.* 2, *ep.* 13) to his sister Marcellina—when he records the contest which he had with the Arians, who had demanded that the keys of the Cathedral of Milan, over which he presided should be delivered to them, and that by the command of the Emperor Valentinian the younger, who was ruled by his mother Justina, an Arian—said: “The order is given,— ‘Deliver up the Cathedral.’ I answer, it is neither lawful for me to deliver it, nor is it fitting for thee, O Emperor, to receive it. Thou hast no right to intrude upon the house of a private person, dost thou think, that God’s house may be taken away? It is alleged, all things are lawful to the Emperor, for all things are his. I answer, Do not burden thyself, O Emperor, to think that thou hast any imperial right over those things which are Divine. Do not lift up thyself, but if thou wouldst reign long, be subject to God, for it is written, Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s. To the Emperor pertain palaces, but churches to the priesthood. To him has been committed the power over the public fortifications, not of sacred buildings.” Thus Hosius, bishop of Cordova, president of the Nicene Counsel, steadfastly replied to the Arian Emperor Constantius, when he made a similar demand; that to him belonged the keys of the cities, but the keys of the church to the Pontiff alone. “To thee” he says, “God has committed the empire, to us he has entrusted what belongs to the Church.”

Tropologically, the keys denote the industry, skill and wisdom in ruling which ought to exist in a Pontiff; for a key ought to be skilfully placed, fitted to, and turned in the lock, that the door may be opened; so “the art of arts is the government of souls,” says S. Gregory in his *Pastoral*.

And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven. Whatsoever, i.e., whomsoever, but he says *whatsoever*, because the neuter gender is fuller and of more universal application than the masculine. For the Pontiff binds and looses not men only, but sins, vows, oaths, &c. There is a transition from the metaphor of the keys to the kindred metaphor of binding and loosing; for to open and shut, to bind and loose, are akin. Whence, by it, he signifies the same thing—that by *the keys* and by *the rock* are meant the supreme authority of Peter and the Pontiffs in ruling the Church. The

loosest it; if thou sowest it, thou renewest it. For who does not know that the corn, which decays in the dust, springs up from the same dust in a renewed form?” Origen explains this verse in two ways. 1. Thus: If any man (being a lover of life present) spares his soul through fear of death, and thinking that his soul will perish by that death, he shall lose it, withdrawing it from life eternal. But if any one (despising life present) shall contend for the truth even until death, he shall lose indeed his soul so far as pertains to this life; but since he shall lose it for Christ’s sake, he shall make it safe for the life eternal. The other explanation is as follows: If any one understands what true safety is, and wishes to gain it for the salvation of his soul, he, by denying himself, loses his soul (so far as carnal pleasures are concerned) for Christ’s sake; and losing his soul in this way, he saves it through works of piety. Thus far Origen. The former explanation seems to be the more correct, and may be amplified thus. He who in this life, fleeing from the cross and self-denial, wishes to preserve his soul—that is, his life—and therefore denies Me and My faith in persecution; or wishes to save his soul—that is, the desires of his soul—he shall lose his soul in the life to come, in hell. But he who shall lose his soul in this life for Christ’s sake—either by dying for Him in persecution, or by denying his lusts for His sake—he shall find his soul, which he lost in this life, in the life to come. He shall find it in eternal glory, in the bosom of Christ, Who shall raise and glorify the soul which was exposed to death for His sake. The antithesis between *lose* and *save* requires this meaning.

Verse 26- *For what does it profit, &c. Lose*—Greek, *ζημιωθῆ*, i.e., *make loss, be fined*. The meaning is, What assistance shall it be to thee—for this is the meaning of the Greek *ώφελει*—to have gained all the riches, honours, and pleasures of the whole world, if on account of them you destroy yourself, and be fined as to your soul with the eternal torments of hell? According to the words, “If you lose all things, remember to save your soul.” For wealth and pleasure, if you lose, you may recover! but the soul once lost, is lost for ever. O foolish children of Adam, why do ye so love these fleeting things, that for them ye lose your souls, and deliver them to everlasting burnings? O insensate, who for a drop of pleasure purchase eternal pains.

Or what shall a man, &c., exchange; Greek, *ἀντάλλαγμα*, i.e., *compensation, exchange, price, ransom*. For thy soul is above all price, all compensation; because it has been purchased and redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ, the Lord our God. Wherefore the whole world is an insufficient price for the soul of one man. For if once thou shalt lose it, by no price canst thou redeem it, nor be able to buy back thy soul with any other soul, because thou hast but one. Here, indeed, the soul is able to redeem her falls by repentance, by tears, and by good works: but in the Day of Judgment there will be no longer place for repentance and redemption. Behold, therefore, the deceit of Satan and the folly of man. Satan buys the soul of a sinner from him at the cheapest rate, for the brief pleasure of gluttony, of luxury, and so on. “He offers an apple, and deprives

alacrity Me, Christ, as it were the first cross bearer, and the Standard Bearer and Captain of the cross bearers—I who bore My cross, on which I was to be crucified, on My shoulders to Mount Calvary. Luke adds the word *daily*, to signify that every day, and sometimes every hour, some trouble will come to every one, which he ought to bear bravely and patiently; and that throughout his whole life; and thus must every one live upon the cross, and die upon the cross with Christ. “He takes up his cross” says S. Jerome, “who is crucified to the world, to whom also the world is crucified, who follows a crucified Lord.” This cross is, 1. persecution and martyrdom; 2. any affliction or tribulation sent by God; 3. temptation of the devil, permitted by God for our probation and humiliation, and to increase our reward; 4. self denial and the mortification of our lusts.

His own cross, i.e., every one has his peculiar cross; one has it from wife, or children, or relations; another from character; a third from rivals; a fourth from misfortunes; a fifth from poverty; a sixth from exile, bonds, and so on.

2. *His own cross, i.e.*, commensurate with his strength. For God does not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, says S. Paul. He gives to every one a cross as a sort of medicine suitable to the vice from which he suffers. Thus to him who is inclined to pride, God gives some despite, or temptation of the flesh, such as He permitted to come upon S. Paul. The cross He gives to the covetous is loss of goods. To the learned, a fall into some mistake, or bad repute, lest he should be puffed up, and think too highly of himself.

3. *His own cross, i.e.*, decreed by God from eternity for his good. When therefore thou feelest the cross, think upon God, and say, “O Lord, I willingly accept this cross from thy Fatherly hand, for this is the cross which has been appointed to me from eternity, and decreed by Thee for the destruction of my faults; wherefore I render unto Thee boundless thanks. For I know and believe that by it Thou wouldst make me like unto thy well beloved Son, here in patience, and hereafter in glory. ‘For, whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.’” (Rom. viii. 29.)

4. As S. Gregory says (*Hom. 32. in Evang.*), “The cross is taken up in two ways, when either by abstinence the body is affected, or by compassion for our neighbour the mind is afflicted. Let us consider how in both ways Paul bore his cross. For he said, “I chastise my body and reduce it to servitude, lest perchance preaching to others, I myself should be made reprobate.” (*Vulg.*) Next let us hear his mind’s cross through compassion for his neighbour. For he said, “Who is Weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?” Behold how the perfect preacher carried the cross in his body, to give an example of abstinence. And forasmuch as He took upon Himself the failings of other men’s infirmity, He carried the cross in His heart.”

Verse 25- *For he that will save his life, &c.* Greek and Vulgate, *his soul*. Forasmuch as the cross is bitter and gives pain, “Christ,” says S. Chrysostom, “here animates believers to take it up, by the great reward and the crown of glory which it brings. It is as though one should say to a husbandman: ‘If thou shouldst keep thy corn, thou

power therefore of *binding* is a very ample one, and is exercised by Peter and the Pontiff in various ways. First, by not absolving but retaining sins and offences, and by refusing sacramental absolution in the sacrament of penance to such as are unworthy, and without the proper dispositions, so likewise by refusing the Eucharist and other sacraments. (S. John xx. 23.) Second, by enjoining penance to the lapsed. Third, by binding such as are guilty with excommunication and other ecclesiastical censures. Fourth, by enjoining laws and precepts with respect to feasts, fasts, tithes, &c., upon the faithful. Fifth, by binding Christians with definitions of faith, when the Pontiff, *ex cathedra*, defines and declares what is to be believed, what is to be rejected, as erroneous and heretical, what monastic orders are good, what are not—what estate of life is honourable and lawful—what is not, &c. Hence, from the contraries, it is plain what is meant by *loosing*; namely, to absolve and to release from the aforesaid obligations. Christ therefore here explains the power of *the keys* through the metaphor, not of opening and shutting, which are the two proper offices of keys, but by one more powerful, that is of chains, by binding men with them, or loosing those that are bound; which power S. Peter and the Roman Pontiffs, his successors, have received from Christ over all men whatsoever, throughout the whole world. The Pontiffs, nevertheless, give a share of this power, as they think good, to bishops and pastors and other ministers of the Church subordinate to them; and therefore Christ said to the other Apostles also (Matthew xviii. 18): *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven*; by which words the same power is given to the Apostles by Christ over the whole world which is here given to Peter; but the same power is here given in an especial manner to Peter only, to signify that he has the primacy and the principality in this power, so as to be able by it to be direct, constrain, correct the other Apostles, as it were subordinate to him, and committed to his care, and hence that he might, if indeed it were needful, deprive them of it. Whence the Synod of Alexandria, over which S. Athanasius presided, agreeable to the council of Nice, writes to Pope Felix that the power of binding and loosing has been, by a special privilege granted, above others, to the Roman See by the Lord Himself.

Upon earth: (Following upon these words à Lapidè enters upon a discussion as to how far, and in what manner the jurisdiction of the Supreme Pontiff extends over souls in hell or purgatory. He gives various opinions of theologians, not apparently of the very highest authority, which it would be wearisome to translate, and then concludes the discussion, summing up as follows: *Translator.*) In fine it is more agreeable to truth that the Pope possesses judicial power to bind and loose those only who are living upon the earth, but not the dead. When therefore he gives indulgences applicable to the departed, it is not in the way of judicial absolution, because the dead are no longer under his jurisdiction, but by way of suffrages, as he is accustomed fully to express in his Bulls—namely, by expending for the dead so much of the treasure of the Church, of which he is the steward,

as the departed owe of penalties to God. For this treasure is upon earth, and is at the disposal of the Pontiff. This is the opinion of S. Thomas, Bonaventura, Alensis, Gabriel, Major, Richardus, Cajetan, D. Soto, Navarre, and Bellarmine (*Tract. de Indul.*), whom Suarez cites and follows (*de Pœnit: Disp. 53, s. 2. n. et seq.*), who also adds, that properly and directly the Pontiff can neither excommunicate the dead, nor absolve them from excommunication, but only indirectly, in so far as he may directly forbid, or permit the living to pray for one who is dead, and by so doing may deprive the dead indirectly of the suffrages of the Church, as though they had been excommunicated—or, on the other hand, may give them a share in those suffrages, in the same manner as if he absolved them from excommunication. When, therefore, Christ saith here to Peter *Whatsoever thou shall loose, &c.*, by *loosing* is to be understood not only judicial absolution, but every dispensation, favour and grace as well, which, by the efficacy of that power, has been conferred upon him by Christ, and of this kind is that dispensing of the treasure of the Church which, by way of suffrages, the Pontiff expends and applies for the benefit of the faithful departed. This then is the meaning of the words *upon earth*.

Verse 20- *Then He commanded . . . Jesus the Christ.* Some Greek MSS. and the Syriac omit the word *Jesus*. Then the sentence flows more clearly; for all men knew that He was called Jesus, but they did not know that He was Messiah, or Christ, the true Son of God. Christ did not wish the Apostles to preach this doctrine to others, for two reasons; first, because they themselves were not as yet sufficiently instructed and confirmed in it. Secondly, because Christ was about to be put to death by the Jews. Wherefore the Jews would have been scandalised if the Apostles had preached that He was Messiah and God, and would have said to them, Away with your Christ to destruction, Who would make us Deicides—even as the Jews say to Christians now; wherefore, had they once cast away faith in Christ, they would not have hearkened to it any more, even though it had been attested afterwards by miracles. Thus they were to wait for the death, the glory, and the resurrection of Christ; that then they might proclaim Him to be Messiah and the Son of God, and confirm this doctrine by miracles, and persuade the people, as they did at Pentecost (Acts ii.), according to the words: “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.” (Phil. ii. 9, 10.) Thus S. Jerome: “Preach Me when I shall have suffered those things, since it is not expedient that Christ should be publicly proclaimed, and His majesty made commonly known among the people, when they are about shortly to behold Him scourged and crucified.”

Verse 21- *From that time forth began Jesus, &c.* Gr. *ἀπὸ τότε, i.e.*, from this time in which He had made known to them His Divinity, He began to teach them concerning His Passion and Death. For there are two chief points of faith—namely, Christ’s Divinity, and His Humanity, together with His Cross and Passion, by which He redeemed the world. There was also another reason—lest when the Apostles beheld Christ put to death, they should doubt concerning His Divinity; and He would show them that the two things were not inconsistent. For in this way only could He make perfect satisfaction to the justice of God for the sins of Adam and his posterity. Lastly,

death may every day seem to be very nigh unto thee.” S. Agidius, a companion of S. Francis, a very holy man, and enlightened by God, was wont to give these paradoxes of self denial which follow:

“If thou wilt see clearly, pluck out thine eyes, and become blind.
 “If thou wilt hear well, be thou deaf.
 “If thou wouldst speak well, become dumb.
 “If thou wouldst walk well, cut off thy feet.
 “If thou wouldst work well, cut off thine hands.
 “If thou wouldst love well, hate thyself.
 “If thou wouldst live well, make thyself die.
 “If thou wouldst gain, learn to lose.
 “If thou wouldst be rich, become poor.
 “If thou wouldst live in pleasure, afflict thyself.
 “If thou wouldst be secure, have perpetual fear.
 “If thou wouldst be exalted, humble thyself.
 “If thou wouldst be honoured, despise thyself, and honour those who despise thee.
 “If thou wouldst have what is good, bear evil.
 “If thou wouldst be at rest, work.
 “If thou wouldst be blessed, desire to be evil spoken of.
 “Oh how great is this wisdom, to know how to do these things! and because they are great, they are not given unto all men.”
 “The same Agidius gives the following as the way of salvation, and perfection through self denial:
 “If thou wilt be saved, do not ask of any human creature the reason wherefore anything befalls thee.
 “If thou wilt be saved, make it thy business to rise superior to every consolation and honour which a creature can give thee.
 “Woe to those who desire to be honoured for their wickedness.
 “If any one contendeth with thee and thou wishest to overcome, be overcome; for when thou thinkest thou hast won, thou has lost.
 “If thou lovest, thou shalt be loved.
 “If thou fearest, thou shalt be feared.
 “If thou doest service, service shall be done unto thee.
 “If thou actest well to others, others shall behave well towards thee.
 “Blessed is he who loves, and seeks not to be loved again.
 “Blessed is he who serves, and seeketh not to be served. And forasmuch as these things are great, fools cannot attain unto them.”

There are three things which ought more especially to cleave to thy mind. The first is to bear willingly all tribulations. The second, to be more and more humble on account of everything which thou doest, or receivest. The third, faithfully to love those good things which cannot be seen with bodily eyes.

Let him take up his cross. That as I have borne Mine, he may follow with

God, and to please God, and not to give satisfaction to my carnal appetites.

S. Gregory observes, (*Hom. 32 in Evang.*) Christ does not say, Let him deny his riches, but *let him deny himself*, so that a man should go away from himself, and become a stranger to himself, yea that he should leave off to be what he was and begin to be what he was not, and become as it were a new and another man. “It is less,” he says, “to deny what a man *has*; but it is far more to deny what *he is*. It sufficeth not to relinquish what is *our* sunless we leave also *ourselves*.” S. Gregory then asks the question, “Whither shall we go out of ourselves?” And he answers, “We have become something different through our fall into sin from that which we were made. Let us leave therefore ourselves, as we have made ourselves by sinning: and let us remain ourselves such as we have been made by grace. Behold, he who was proud, if he has been converted to Christ, has been made humble; he has left himself.” He shows us the same thing by the example of Paul, “Let us consider how Paul had denied himself, when he said, ‘I live, yet not I’; forasmuch as that cruel persecutor was dead and the pious preacher had begun to live, I Christ indeed liveth in me.” It is as though he said plainly, I indeed am dead to myself, because I live not after the flesh. Nevertheless I am not dead essentially, because I live in Christ spiritually. Therefore let the Truth say, let It say, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself*; because except a man cease from himself, he cannot draw nigh to Him who is above himself: nor is he able to apprehend that which is beyond himself, if he knows not how to slay that which he is.

S. Chrysostom (*Hom. 56.*) illustrates the same principle by a similitude. “If thou understandest what it is to deny another, then wilt thou rightly perceive what it is to deny thyself. He who has denied another, if he see him beaten with rods, if cast into chains, he does not assist him, he is altogether unmoved, as one who is wholly apart from him. Thus too He wills us by no means to spare our own body, that not even though it be beaten, nor burnt, nor suffer any other thing, we should spare it.” Victor of Antioch adds, “He hath not said, a man must not be too self indulgent; or that he should not spare his own flesh too much; but rising to a very lofty height, *let him deny himself*, He says, or abjure himself, that is, let him have no commerce with himself, or with his own flesh, but let him so conduct himself, as though it were not he himself who bears the cross but some other person.” Note this word *abjure*. For as in baptism we renounce Satan, and as it were abjure him, so ought we fully to deny, and as it were abjure ourselves, that is our lusts. For these are more the enemies of our salvation than the devils themselves. For we dread the devil, but our lusts flatter and deceive us, and profess to be our friends. For there is greater danger from one who secretly lies in wait than from an open enemy.

In the Lives of the Fathers (*l. 5, libello 1, de profectu patrum, num. 7*) the Abbot John gives the following proofs of self-denial and a holy life: “Be patient under injuries, and not soon angry: be a peacemaker, and not rendering evil for evil: not looking at the faults of others, nor exalting thyself; but be subject with humility unto every one: renouncing all fleshly pleasures, and the things which are after the flesh, in humility of spirit in fasting, in patience, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, and in labours, shutting thyself up in a sepulchre, as though thou wast already dead, that

He wished to instruct men how to imitate Him and bear His cross.

Verse 22- *And Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him. Took Him*—that is to say, apart—as though more familiarly and secretly he would chide Him out of vehement love, which before the others he did not dare to do. So S. Chrysostom, and Euthymius; and S. Jerome, who comments thus: “Peter did not wish that his confession should be brought to nought, as he had said, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,’ for he did not think that it was possible that the Son of God should be put to death; and so he takes Him into connexion with himself, or leads Him apart that he might not appear to reprove his teacher in the presence of his fellow-disciples, and began to rebuke Him with loving affection, and to say to Him with desire, ‘Be it far from Thee, O Lord;’ or—as it is better—in the Greek, ‘Be propitious to Thyself, O Lord.’” It will not be, says S. Thomas, that this should have, as it were, a necessary propitiation. And Christ indeed accepted the affection, but reproved the ignorance. Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee. So shameful a death shall not befall Thee; for who can endure that the Son of God should be crucified and put to death? The Greek is *ἰλεώς σοι*, i.e., *mayest thou be, or may God be propitious to thee*. So the LXX usually translates the Hebrew, *hali-la-lach*, i.e., let there be prohibition to Thee—as formerly people were wont to say “the gods forbid”—“the gods send better things.” The Syriac is *spare Thyself*. Peter speaks out of human prudence and affection, not by Divine inspiration as when he said a little before, “Thou art Christ the Son of the Living God,” for here being left to himself he fails, and therefore he is reproved by Christ.

Verse 23- *But He turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan—thou art an offence unto Me* (Syriac, *thou art a stumbling-block unto Me*), *for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men*. S. Hilary refers the *Get thee behind Me* to Peter, but the words *Satan, thou art an offence unto Me* he refers not to Peter, but to the devil, who had suggested to Peter to say, *be it far from Thee, O Lord*. S. Hilary writes thus: “For the Lord, knowing the suggestion of the Satanic craft, saith to Peter, ‘Go thou backward after Me’—i.e., that he should follow the example of His Passion. But He adds against him by whom this speech had been suggested, *Thou art an offence unto Me, Satan*: for we must not think that the name of Satan and the offence of the stumbling-block are to be applied to Peter after such great words of blessedness and power had been applied to him.” But all other writers join Satan with *Get thee behind Me*, and consider that the whole was spoken to Peter. Christ therefore saith unto Peter, *Get thee behind leave Me*—i.e., leave Me, depart hence, get out of My sight; for in this matter thou art not a friend unto Me, but Satan—that is, an adversary (for this is the meaning of the Hebrew “Satan,” and so the Vulgate has it; 2 Sam. xix, 22, and 1 Kings v. 4)—and a scandal, that is, a stumbling-block and hindrance to Me; for thou wouldst hinder My Passion, and consequently the redemption and salvation of man, which by

My Passion I am about to merit and obtain. So S. Chrysostom, Euthymius, and S. Jerome, who says: "It is My own and My Father's good pleasure that I should die for the salvation of man, thou considerest only thine own will, and wouldst not that the grain of wheat should fall into the earth so as to bring forth much fruit." "And therefore," says S. Thomas, "because thou art contrary to My will thou oughtest to be called an adversary, for Satan is interpreted *adversary*, or *contrary*; not, however—as many think—that Satan and Peter are condemned by the same sentence, for to Peter it is said, *Get thee behind Me, Satan, i.e.*, thou who art contrary to My will, follow thou Me. But to Satan it is said, *Get thee hence, Satan*; and it is not said to him 'behind me,' that it may be understood, Go away into everlasting fire." Calvin and his followers object that Christ here calls Peter *Satan*; therefore He a little previously did not call him *the rock*, nor appoint him the head of the Church. S. Jerome answers that Peter was called *Satan* (that is, an adversary) only for the particular time in which he withstood Christ, who was willing to suffer and be crucified, but that he was appointed *a rock*, not for the time then present, but for the future; namely, that after Christ's death and resurrection he should become the rock and head of the Church. Secondly, S. Augustine (*Serm. 13, de Verb. Dom. secundum Matth.*) and Theophylact reply, that Peter is called *blessed*, and constituted the rock of the Church, inasmuch as being enlightened by the revelation of God, he had confessed Christ the Son of the Living God, and therefore had been by Him appointed *the rock* of the Church; but that he is here called *Satan* so far as he, departing from God and God's decree (of which he was ignorant), followed human affection, on account of which he was unwilling that Christ—whom he loved so much—should die. Moreover, the fifth Œcumenical Council of Constantinople, in a constitution of Pope Vigilius, pronounces an anathema against those who explain the words of Christ (*Get thee behind Me, Satan*) to have been spoken to Peter, lest the mind of Christ, being perturbed by his dissuasion, should avoid the Passion, so that by His Passion He might be profitable to Himself, and who therefore do not believe that His death purchased the rewards of eternal life for us. In a similar way, blessed Peter Damian (*l. 1, Epist. xvi. to Pope Alex. II*) calls Cardinal Hildebrand, who afterwards became Pope Gregory VII., "his holy Satan." Satan, because he opposed his refusing the cardinalate and returning to his Camaldolese hermitage; holy, because he did it with a holy purpose, namely, because he saw that the work of Peter was very useful to the Church.

For thou savourest not, &c.; Arab. *thou thinkest not*; Gr. *οὐ Φρονεῖς, i.e., thou understandest not*, thou dost not receive, nor approve with thine intellect and thine affections the things which are pleasing to God, but the things which human prudence, that is to say, flesh and blood, suggests. This was the fount and the cause of Peter's error, and of all other men, *that Thou savourest not*. For thou wouldst consider My body and My life, and wouldst provide for human consolation contrary to God's decree, whereby He has most wisely appointed that I should die for the salvation of men. Thus men sin when they prefer the weak judgment of the flesh to the wise and lofty judgment of God. For, "the animal man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him, and he cannot understand them." (i. *Cor.* ii. 14).

Verse 24- *Then Jesus said, &c.* This medicine of self-denial and the cross Christ opposes to natural love, which Peter had shown to Christ when he would have hindered His Passion. Therefore He spake this not to Peter only, but to the other Apostles, yea even to the multitude, as Mark says (viii. 34). This is a sort of axiom of Christ's school, *if any one will come after Me, &c.* It means, says Chrysostom, "Thou, O Peter, suggestest unto Me, spare Thy life, be propitious to Thyself, but I say to thee that not only is it hurtful to thee to keep Me from My Passion, but not even thyself canst be saved, unless thou shalt suffer and renounce thy life. Christ gives three commands, first, *let a man deny himself*; second, *let him take up the cross*; third, *let him follow Me.*"

If any man will, &c. Christ does not compel, nor use violence, says S. Chrysostom, but invites the willing, and kindly allures and draws them. For who would not long and burn to follow Christ, the Son of God? But as God bids all follow Christ, so likewise He bids them freely choose and embrace self denial. Again Christ draws all men, when He says "come after Me." He means, ye will not be the first in the cross, in death, in martyrdom. I, your Captain, will go before you; wherefore follow Me because I will precede you, not only by My example, but by My help, and I will make you certain of victory and the crown, if only ye will follow Me and earnestly co-operate with My grace. Thus Cato going before his soldiers through the sands of Lybia, said, "Have experience of your perils by mine. I will command nothing except what I do myself first."

Let him deny himself: i.e., Let him put away from him his own judgment, and human affection. For this is the dearest to a man of all things, by which man is delighted and fed, so that he thinks it is man himself. For man is that which flourishes and lives in man. He bids therefore that every one should mortify his natural affections, so far as they are repugnant to the will of God.

Christ, as it were, says to Peter, Be thou willing to act in all thy judgments, desires, affections, and notably in the death of the cross as God hath appointed for thee, that thou mayest embrace that will, although nature and natural affection would dread it, and flee from it according to the words, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not" (*John* xxi. 18). Whence Origen explains *let him deny himself* to mean, Let him deny his life by undergoing death for the sake of faith in Me, even as I undergo the death of the cross for God's sake. After a like manner let every believer *deny himself, i.e.,* his own desires, his own imaginations, his own human reasonings, his own will; and let him conform it in all things to the will of God. So too with regard to his senses, so far as they desire things forbidden by God, let him say, I will not see, or hear, or taste those things, because I wish to follow the law of