

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.*

John was writing his eye-witness account of Jesus some thirty years later than the other three accounts, possibly around 95AD. There had been time for growth, reflection and observation. Many thousands of Christians had by then lost their lives for their faith in the Lord Jesus, both in Rome and in Jerusalem. John himself had been in prison and was now in exile, the last of Jesus' twelve apostles to remain alive.

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 John 11: 33-56

Ver. 33.—*When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, &c.* You will ask, of what nature was the groaning and trouble of Christ?

First, Eusebius Emisenus, or rather Gallus: He groaned that He might teach us to groan over sinners. (*Infremuit*) that is, *He groaned*: But the groan is of one who pities, the murmur of one who is indignant. Nonnus translates agitated or disturbed by His fatherly mind. But this is too general, nor does it explain what or of what nature this trouble was.

Secondly, Theophylact by *spirit* understands Divinity; as if it were said, Jesus by His Spirit, *i.e.*, by His Divinity, powerfully and as if by groaning, repressed His tears and the feeling of commiseration which was aroused in Him because of the lamentation of Mary and of the Jews, lest bursting forth into tears; and sobbing like others, He might speak in a voice weak and tearful, such as would be unfitting one so grave and holy.

priests, Pharisees, and of their adherents and assistants, who had determined to apprehend Jesus, and therefore began indignantly to demand: Why has Jesus not come to the feast of the Passover? Is this the way ye neglect the Passover? Will He be thus a contemner and violator of the law, the very charge which we bring against Him? Then why does He not present Himself on these days before the Passover, and purify Himself as all others do, and so prepare Himself for so great a feast?

But went thence, &c. Leontius thinks Ephraim was Bethlehem, in which Christ had been born; but this seems unlikely, because Bethlehem was near to Jerusalem, and Jesus knew that He would be specially sought there by the chief priests. S. Jerome, and after him Jansenius, think it was Ephron (2 Chron. xiii. 19). Others think that Ephraim was situated above Jericho, and beside the desert there; but Adrichomius places it about five miles towards the east from Bethel, about seven hours' [journey] distant from Jerusalem, beside the desert of Hai, not far from the brook Cherith, to which Elijah, flying from Jezebel, withdrew, and was fed there by ravens (1 Kings xvii. 5). Jesus withdrew thither, as well that He might avoid the rage of the chief priests for the time, as that He might have leisure in that retirement for prayer and contemplation, and thus strengthen and arm Himself for His approaching death, for the arduous contest with the chief priests—yea, more, with Lucifer—when He was upon the Cross.

Ephraim is symbolically the type of the Gentile Church. So Origen says: "Jesus was lately dwelling among the Jews, the Divine Word, that is to say, through the prophets; but He departed, He is not among them, for He has entered a hamlet which is almost deserted, of which it is said, 'Many are the sons of the deserted one more than of the married;' for Ephraim is interpreted fertility. But Ephraim was the brother of Manasseh, of an elder people given over to forgetfulness; for after a people devoted to forgetfulness had been passed over, abundance has come forth from the Gentiles. The Lord then, departing from the Jews, came to a land nigh to the desert, a city called *fruitful*, the Church of the whole earth, and there He tarries with His disciples even until now."

Typically, Ephraim, as situated beside the desert, is the symbol of a holy soul which has leisure for solitude and prayer; for this becomes *Ephraim*—that is, *fruitful in good works*: wherefore Jesus tarries in it by His abundant grace.

Ver. 55.—*And the Jews' Passover was nigh at hand: viz.*, the last Passover to Christ, at which He Himself, as the Paschal Lamb, was sacrificed for the salvation of the world; and therefore He eagerly waited for it. The Syrians for *Pascha* say *Pezcho*, which is interpreted *gladness*; because this feast was more joyful than the others, even as to Christians it is so in the highest degree, because of our redemption made upon the Cross, and because of the resurrection.

And many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves; i.e., to cleanse themselves by sacrifices and ceremonies from all actual uncleanness, and to prepare themselves by prayers and sacrifices to celebrate and eat the Passover rightly, as says S. Thomas and Jansen.

Ver. 56.—Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves as they stood in the Temple, What think ye, that He will not come to the feast? Wherefore did Jesus not come, according to His custom, to this common feast of the Passover? Certainly because as God He knew beforehand the snares prepared for Him there by the scribes. S. Augustine, Chrysostom, &c., think that this was the question of the chief

To this agree S. Chrysostom and others, who by "*murmur*" understand the feeling of anger, indignation, and wrath which Christ, putting as it were a force upon Himself, mastered and repressed with a serene and firm countenance His feeling of commiseration and the tears ready to flow: as if it were said, Christ threatened and restrained His spirit and His human nature, that it should not yield to weeping. But against this is, first, that this feeling of compassion had plainly not yet been aroused when Christ groaned, but a little after, when He was troubled. Secondly, because in Christ these passions and affections were not involuntary and violent, but freely and voluntarily assumed, as I shall soon state.

I say then, that Christ here displayed the feeling and act of *murmuring* (A. V. *groaning*), that is, of indignation in spirit or mind and the innermost perceptions of the soul, when by sign and murmur, or indignant voice, He signified outwardly the grief which He felt arising from the death of Lazarus, and from the sobbing of Mary and the Jews: and that by this murmur He, as it were, prepared and animated Himself to the arduous combat with death, that He might signify how difficult would be the raising of Lazarus from the grave after four days' dwelling there. Whence S. Augustine says: In the voice of indignation appears the hope of resurrection; in truth Jesus foresaw that He because of the raising up of Lazarus would be crucified by the envious Pharisees; yet not allowing this to stand in the way, He determined to raise him up; which act of heroic fortitude He allowed to be manifested in this groan. So soldiers groan when battle is near, and excite and sharpen their anger for the difficult and perilous combat that is imminent; for their anger is the whetstone of valour and bravery. Hence also we, when temptation, whether of the devil, the flesh, and the world, threatens, should sharpen our anger against them, that we may overcome the temptation; for by anger is concupiscence overcome, though the difficulty of the task be great. Further, this murmur, that is, indignation, was against death, and the devil, by whose envy death had entered into the world; which had been the cause of such bitter sorrow and lamentation.

And was troubled (Gr. and Vulg. *He troubled Himself*). That is, He permitted freely and willingly to Himself the strong feeling both of indignation, as already mentioned, and of commiseration and tears, because of the common lamentation of Martha, Mary, and the rest; for it would have been inhuman not to grieve and sympathise with them. For them therefore Jesus was troubled.

Note these passions of indignation, sorrow, commiseration, and weeping, were in such a manner in Christ as not to overbear His reason and will, or to arise unbidden as they are aroused with us; but rather to follow His reason, and to be ruled and excited by it. On which account right reason always used to direct and regulate them. Therefore [S. John] says, *He troubled Himself* (*turbavit Seipsum*); not, *He was troubled*. Wherefore these

passions were in Christ not so much passions as feelings in place of passions, freely taken, as divines teach, out of Damascene. For Christ was able as He chose to excite them, to soften, to moderate, to rule, to direct, much more completely than a charioteer does his horses and his chariot.

He troubled therefore himself: putting on the feeling of grief, anger, and compassion, and showing it by a change of voice and countenance because of grief. Therefore the proper cause of this murmur and trouble of Christ was the death of Lazarus, and the weeping of Mary and the Jews, as appears from the verses themselves. The misery therefore of Lazarus and of all men excited the pity of Christ, the pity excited indignation against such troubles, the indignation increased the pity, and at the same time with it aroused zeal, and a purpose of taking away those troubles, even with the casting away of His own life by the death upon the Cross, by which so great a benefit was alone to be purchased, according to what Isaiah says (1xiii. 4), “The day of vengeance is in my heart . . . and my fury it upheld me.”

Ver. 34.—*And said, Where have ye laid him, &c.* Christ knew the place where Lazarus was buried: for, as S. Augustine argues, Didst thou know that he was dead, and art ignorant where he is buried? Yet He asked the question; because He acted with men after a human manner, and by the inquiry prepared Himself, and cleared the way for the raising up of Lazarus; and excited the attention at once of Mary, Martha, and the Jews, so that they should watchfully consider the words and actions of Christ, who was about to raise him.

Symbolically, S. Gregory says: Christ recalling to the women the sin of Eve, says, “I have placed the man in Paradise whom ye have placed in the tomb.”

Come and see. Eagerly they invite Jesus to come and see, hoping that He who had raised up strangers’ dead, would raise up also Lazarus His intimate associate, who was so beloved by Him. Whence, mystically, the Gloss: “See, that is pity;” for, as S. Augustine says, the Lord sees when He pities, according to this, “Look upon my adversity, and forgive me all my sins.” S. Chrysostom, and after him Theophylact: He seemed to them about to go thither that He might weep, not that He might raise up [the dead].

Ver. 35.—*Jesus wept.* At seeing the sepulchre of Lazarus (although Chrysostom supposes that He wept when He groaned and was troubled, which is equally probable), to signify His love for him, and the grief He felt at his death.

Secondly, that He might weep with the sisters and the Jews who were weeping, and teach us to do the same. So S. Augustine. Hear S. Ambrose: “Christ became all things to all men; poor to the poor, rich to the rich, weeping with the weeping, hungering with the hungry, thirsting with the thirsty, full with the abounding; He is in prison with the poor man, with Mary He weeps, with the Apostles He eats, with the Samaritan woman he thirsts.

Thirdly, that adding tears to His speech, He might make it stronger and more

Further, because Caiaphas did not understand this mystery he was not properly a prophet; and Origen observes that the Holy Ghost spoke through his mouth as the angel spoke to the disobedient Balaam by the mouth of the ass (Numb. xxii.). Caiaphas, then, most wickedly twisted the words of the Holy Spirit to the death of Christ. Wherefore S. Chrysostom says that the Holy Spirit moved the tongue of Caiaphas, not his heart.

You will say, Then Caiaphas here erred in the faith. I reply by denying the consequence. Yea he formally declared the true faith, namely, that it was expedient that Christ should die for the salvation of the world, as I have said. And though it be that he himself did not understand this, nor mean to say it—for he intended that Christ should be cut off lest, because of Him, the people (of the Jews) should be destroyed by the Romans—yet herein was his error contrary to justice and piety, and not in a matter pertaining to the faith. His error had to do with a political question, whether, namely, Christ should be put to death for the State, or not. Besides, the Jewish High Priest had not that infallible assistance of the Holy Ghost which the Christian High Priests have from Christ and after Christ. It is, moreover, especially to be borne in mind that at that time, Christ being come, the Jewish Synagogue was beginning to fall, and Christ’s Church to rise up in its place. For shortly after this Caiaphas with the whole council of the Sanhedrin proclaimed Jesus to be guilty of death as a false Messiah. This was an error in the Faith. Wherefore their Synagogue then ceased to be the Church of God, and began to be the synagogue of Satan which denied and slew the Christ which was sent by God.

Ver. 52.—*And not for that nation only, &c.* It is expedient that Christ should die; not only for His and our nation, that is, for the Jews, but also for all the nations dispersed throughout the whole world, and who should believe in Him. For these are called *children of God*, not in actual fact, but in the foreknowledge and predestination of God; because, that is to say, they were hereafter to be, by the grace of God, faithful men and saints, and therefore *sons of God*. So SS. Augustine and Chrysostom. This is what Christ predicted in chap. x. ver. 16: *Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold (not of the Jewish synagogue) them also I must bring, and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd.*

Ver. 53.—*Then from that day forth, &c.* See here plainly appears the unrighteous disposition and meaning of Caiaphas and his associates.

Ver. 54.—*Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews, i.e.,* freely, openly, publicly. S. Cyril says: “As God He knew what the Jews had determined on, though none of them declared it; as man He withdrew Himself, because the hour of His death, decreed by His Father, had not yet come.” He did this to give an example to us, of avoiding peril to life by flight.

is needful to do, ye forward nothing, ye explain nothing, ye suggest no pertinent counsel; but I as high priest am enlightened by God, I set right the matter with a word, I give the best advice, and clear up the whole by saying: "It is expedient that one man, that is, Jesus, although He is accused of no crime, although He is innocent and a Prophet, and the doer of so great a miracle, *should die* (that is, be put to death by you) *for the people*, that is, so that the people because of Him should not be brought into suspicion with the Romans, nor that the Romans, because of Jesus regarded as Messiah and King of the Jews, should take away their place and nation; and thus the entire race will not perish, but when He is taken away, will remain safe and entire." This was therefore the impious, false, and unjust judgment of Caiaphas, that it was expedient for the safety of the people, that, though innocent, Christ should be put to death, so that the Romans might not use severity to Judea and the Jews on His account. His reasoning was, that it was better for one Jesus to die than many; it is better that one should perish, than the whole community; *i.e.*, why then do ye delay? why deliberate? It is not doubtful to me that it is expedient for one to die, Jesus, in place of all the Jews.

Origen says, "They had learned nothing who had not learned Jesus; as it is said, If thou knowest Jesus, it suffices, though thou knowest not other things. If thou knowest not Jesus, it is nought, though thou knowest all things besides."

Ver. 51.—*And this spake he . . . that Jesus should die for that nation: i.e.*, of the Jews. Note, that Caiaphas, with the other chief priests being most hostile to Christ, wished out of private hate towards Him to speak out distinctly the same thing which the others secretly hinted at, but did not expressly state; namely, that Christ must be taken out of the way for the safety of the people, that they might not be attacked by the Romans, as I have said. But the Spirit turned the force of his words, when he wished to speak in this sense, as high priest and head of the Church, to others in which he should express the contrary meaning, and should describe and strengthen a very true faith in Christ; namely, that it was expedient that Christ should die for the people, *i.e.*, for the salvation of the people; and by His death, as if by the payment of a price, should redeem them from sin, from the devil, from death, and from hell, those, I say, who would otherwise perish eternally. For the words of Caiaphas properly and precisely signify this. For otherwise, according to the wicked intention towards Christ in the mind of Caiaphas, he ought rather to have said thus: "It is expedient that one man, Jesus, should die, rather than the whole people:" but now he does not say *rather than* but *for* (in behalf of) the people; which properly signifies *for the salvation of the people*, that He may save the people: and although Caiaphas did not understand this, much less intend it, yet it being wonderfully suggested by the Holy Spirit, S. John here takes notice of it; and as he takes notice of it, so other sincere and honest men who were listening to Caiaphas might have noticed the same thing; and just so may we.

Learn from this the great care which God has of His Church, and how He assists the Pontiff who is her head, especially under the new Law, which Christ her Head and Spouse instituted, sanctioned, and rules, lest at any time the Church which is His bride should go astray from the true faith.

efficacious; for tears are a sign of vehement grief and affliction, and also of desire and longing: wherefore God is accustomed to hear and answer prayers seasoned, and as it were armed, with tears. So Christ on the [eve of the] Cross offering up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, was heard in that He feared. [E. & Heb. V. 7, *pro sua reverentiâ*, Vulg.] So Tobit (xii. 12) heard from S. Raphael, "When thou didst pray with tears [the words "with tears," *cum lacrymis*, are not in the LXX Greek], and didst bring the dead, . . . I brought thy prayer before the Lord." So Jacob, wrestling with the angel, obtained a blessing (Gen. xxxii. 29). Wherefore? because he wept and besought him (Hosea xii. 4). "The tears of penitents," says S. Bernard, "are the wine of angels." For it is the anguish of the mind in prayer which influences, and as it were compels God to pity, according as it is said, "a contrite and humble heart God shall not despise" (Ps. li. 17); just as the tears of an infant influence the mother, and obtain from her what it asks; for God shows toward us the heart of a mother.

Other writers give different causes for the tears of Christ. First, Cyril says that Christ wept for the miseries of the human race brought in by sin. Secondly, Andrew Cretensis says that He wept for the unbelief of the Jews, and because they would not believe in Christ, even after they had seen the miracle of the raising of Lazarus. Thirdly, Isidore of Pelusium and Rupertus think that Christ wept for the very reason that he was about to recall Lazarus out of Limbo, that is, from the haven and state of peace, to the storms, dangers, and sufferings of this life.

Further, we read that Christ wept thrice: here at the death of Lazarus; at the Cross (Heb. v. 7); at the sight of Jerusalem, and its impending ruin (Luke xix. 41). S. Bernard (*Sermon 3, in Die Nativ.*) says, "The tears of Christ cause me shame and grief. . . . Can I still trifle, and deride His tears?" And soon after: The Son of God sympathises (*compatitur*), and He weeps; man suffers (*patitur*), and shall we laugh?" And S. Augustine says: "Christ wept—let man weep for himself: wherefore did Christ weep, unless to teach man to weep? Wherefore did He groan and trouble Himself, except that the faith of man, rightly displeased with himself, should in a manner groan in accusation of his evil works, so that the habit of sinning should yield to the violence of repenting."

Ver. 37.—*And some of them said, Could not this man, &c.* Certainly He was able to do that, but would not, because He had determined to do something far greater, namely, to raise him up when dead and four days buried, which the Jews thought impossible, and therefore wondered that Christ had not hindered the death of Lazarus.

Ver. 38.—*Jesus therefore, again groaning in Himself, &c.* Note that Christ was here thrice greatly distressed, and wept. First, when He sees Mary and the Jews weeping (ver. 33). Secondly, when He saw the sepulchre of Lazarus (ver. 34). Thirdly, here, when He came to it, to show how pitiable

was the lot of Lazarus when dead, and typically of sinners spiritually dead by their sins, and hereafter to die perpetually in the torments of hell. For it was they who drew forth from Him in the agony of His Passion tears of blood (Luke xxii. 44).

It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. For the more noble of the Jews were buried in caves or underground chambers, as appears in the case of the sepulchre of Abraham (Gen. xxiii. 9), Isaac and Jacob (Gen. xlix. 31), Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. xxvii. 60). Mystically, S. Augustine says: "This stone denotes the Mosaic Law, which was written on tables of stone, and included all under sin."

Typically, the same says (*Serm. 44, on S. John*) "That mass placed on the sepulchre is the force of evil custom with which the soul is weighed down, nor permitted to rise up nor breathe."

Ver. 39.—*Jesus said: Take ye away the stone.* Jesus commanded this, first, that when the stone was taken away the Jews might both see the body of Lazarus, and smell that it was corrupted, and so think his raising a work of more power. Secondly, that He might speak in the presence of the body of Lazarus, and bringing it dead before God should obtain of Him that it be raised up.

Typically, S. Bernard (*Serm. 4, De Assump.*): "Let the stone be taken away, but let penitence remain, no longer weighing down and burdening the mind, but confirming and rendering it living and strong; yes, let its food be to do the will of the Lord, which before it knew not." So also training does not now constrain him who is free, as it is said, "The law is not made for the righteous; but rules and directs one who pays it a voluntary obedience into the way of peace."

Martha, the sister of him that was dead, &c. Mystically, S. Augustine says: "Lazarus four days dead signifies a sinner buried in the habit of sin, and as it were despaired of. The Lord then came, to whom in truth all things were easy, and yet made manifest a difficulty."

He groaned in spirit. He showed there was need of blame and loud reproof to those who have become hardened by custom. Yet at the loud voice of the Lord the bonds of necessity have been broken; the tyranny of hell trembled; Lazarus is restored living. Truly the Lord frees also those who are four days dead by evil habit; for Lazarus was sleeping to Christ when He willed to raise him.

Ver. 40.—*Jesus said unto her, &c.* This is the same as "Thou shalt see My glory, I who am God and the Son of God." So Leontius and Euthymius.

But where did Christ say this to Martha? We answer, Christ said that not in precise words, but virtually and in effect He said it when the messengers were sent by Martha (ver. 4), when He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." So S. Chrysostom. Again, and more clearly, to Martha herself, in verses 23 and 25.

chief priests wishing to obscure the glory of Christ, display it the more, in saying that all men will believe on Him.

And the Romans shall come and take away our place and nation. Some are of opinion that they thought this, viz., If all believe on Jesus, all will depart from us, our Judaism, synagogue, and state, to Him; and so there will be none to contend for us against the Roman attempts to subjugate us.

But others more probably, If all believe Jesus to be the King and Messiah of the Jews, they will irritate against us the Romans, the lords of Judea, because we have made for ourselves a new King and Messiah, and fallen away from Tiberius Cæsar to Him; wherefore armed men will come and take away, that is, capture, ravage, and destroy Jerusalem and Judea and the entire Jewish race and nation. So Chrysostom. "They wished," he says, "to excite the people, so as to bring Him under the risk of being suspected to be a pretender to royalty; *i.e.*, if the Romans shall see Jesus heading throngs of people, they will suspect a pretender, and destroy the state. But what armed men and horsemen did Christ ever take about with Him? Only envy and hate blinded them, so that they plainly erred, and reasoned wrongly."

Ver. 49.—*And one of them named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them.* While the rest were consulting and not grasping the case nor finding what it was needful to do, Caiaphas as high priest proffers advice, and clearly defines the matter. It is said, *high priest that year*, because, although according to the law in Exodus (xxix. 29) the high priesthood ought to last for life, and after that to devolve upon the eldest son, according to the law of birth, the Roman rulers used to change the high priests frequently, either according to their own will, or for a price received from those who sought the office (*Josephus, Antiq., lib. xviii. cap. 2*), When Tiberius succeeded Augustus Cæsar in the empire, "by him," he says, "Valerius Gratus was sent to succeed Annius Rufus as procurator of Judea. This man deprived Ananus of the high priesthood, and appointed Ismael the son of Tabus to be high priest. He also deposed him in a little time, and transferred the honour to Eleazar the son of Ananus, the former high priest, and when he had held it for a year, Gratus deprived him of it, and assigned it to Simon the son of Camithus; and he also having completed a year in the dignity, was made to yield it to Joseph, who was surnamed Caiaphas."

The high priesthood was not therefore an annual office among the Jews, as S. Augustine infers from this place; but was changed sometimes in fewer years, sometimes in more, and sometimes in the course of the same year.

Ye know nothing at all, &c. Ye, as if you were common and humble people, are foolish, ye do not understand the matter at all, ye do not grasp what it

Finally, there is no doubt (though John is silent upon it) that Lazarus rendered great thanks to Christ; and that he dedicated his life to Him from whom he had received it. He became a disciple, a preacher, and the Bishop of Marseilles.

Ver. 45.—*Then many of the Jews . . . believed on Him.* For they were convinced by the evidence of the miraculous raising of Lazarus, so great and wonderful, that Jesus was a prophet, yea, more, the Messiah, as He professed.

Ver. 46.—*But some of them went their ways, &c.* S. Augustine doubts whether they did this with good or evil intention; whether to announce to them that they might believe, or to betray Him that they might use severity, as says the Gloss. For they might do this with a good intention, namely, in order that the Pharisees, if they could not bring themselves to believe in Christ, should at least have a milder disposition towards Him, as Origen is of opinion. But all others think that they did it with an evil intention. Theophilus and Leontius add that they intended to accuse Christ as being sacrilegious, and even so far as that He had dug up the body of a dead person. Great then was their malice and malignity, with which they repaid Christ for so great a benefit, [inflicting on Him] so great an outrage—for a miracle blasphemy, for life death; since they denounced Him to the Pharisees to be condemned to the cross.

Ver. 47.—*Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, &c.*

What do we? (What does it behoove us to do? Syriac, *What shall we do?*) For this man doeth many miracles. It behooved them to be convinced by so many signs and miracles of Jesus, and to believe Him to be Messiah, the Son of God; but blinded by hate and envy, they say and do the contrary, and studiously avoid condescending even to name Him, but say, *This man*, as if He were a common and worthless person (“They still call Him man,” says Chrysostom, “who had received so great a proof of His Godhead”), and consult concerning His murder, and propose to bereave of life Him who had restored life to Lazarus, and from whom they ought to seek and hope for life eternal. They did not say “Let us believe,” says S. Augustine, “but, lost men as they were, thought more of how they might injure Him, and destroy Him, than of how they might consult for their own safety, that they perish not. Their foolish heart was darkened, so that they forced on the destruction, present and lasting, of themselves and their whole nation.” “What foolishness and blindness,” says Origen, “that they should think themselves able to effect anything against Him whom they testify to have done many miracles, as if He were not able to deliver Himself out of their snares!”

Ver. 48.—*If we let Him thus alone, &c. i.e.,* the Romans will destroy Judea and the whole Jewish race. S. Chrysostom and Theophylact by *place understand Jerusalem*, the metropolis of Judea, and thence the whole realm. But Maldonatus understands the Temple; for the chief priests feared that this with its victims and temporal gains should be taken from them by the Romans.

All will believe on Him. See here the genius of envy, and an effect worthy of it: the

If thou wouldst believe. Christ arouses the wavering faith and hope of Martha; for although she when she met Christ before had said, “I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God” (vers. 22 and 27), yet when it came to the point, when I say, Christ, just about to raise up Lazarus, ordered the sepulchre to be opened, Martha began to totter; wherefore she said, “Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days.” She had therefore alternate impulses of grace and nature, of faith and distrust, of hope and despair, concerning the resurrection of Lazarus, such as we experience in ourselves: when looking to God we hope that we shall overcome all things, however difficult; but when looking to our own infirmity, when we ought to advance against some difficulty, we hesitate, we tremble, and almost disbelieve that it can be accomplished by us. So recruits before a battle show great boldness, but when the battle commences, at the first onset of the enemy they fear and fly. Whence it is said: “In peace lions, in battle stags.” But veteran soldiers before the battle tremble as stags, but in the battle they stand and fight as lions. By this difference you may distinguish the veteran from the tyro.

Ver. 41.—*Then they took away the stone.* Which being taken away, the corpse of Lazarus, fetid and decaying, appeared; so that it was evident to all that he was really dead, and that Christ brought his very body, just as it was, before God by prayers, and presented it to be raised up.

And Jesus lifted up His eyes. To God the Father, that He might teach us to raise our eyes and still more hearts to God in heaven when we pray. S. John Damascene (*in Cantenâ*) adds, that Christ looked up to heaven, as to His own land, to signify that He had come thence upon earth.

And said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. Hence some think that Christ when He groaned in spirit (Yer. 33) besought the Father, mentally, to raise up Lazarus, and received an answer from Him that Lazarus was to be raised up by Him; and that therefore Christ says here, *I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me.* This is probable.

But evidently it is as if He had said: I thank Thee, O Father, because Thou hast always and constantly hitherto heard Me when I prayed, and especially now, when, though silently and in the mind, I invoke and beseech Thee for the raising up of Lazarus; for Thou didst grant to Me, that soon I shall raise him up. Hence Christ teaches us how to pray, that in the beginning of prayer we should surely thank God for benefits received. This giving of thanks conciliates God’s favour to us, and inclines Him to bestow the new blessings which we beg for. For he who is grateful for the lesser gifts, merits to receive the greater. This is the faithful prayer of sons, whence Christ adds:

Ver. 42.—*And I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because, &c., i.e.,* what I said aloud (ver. 41).

Ver. 43.—*And when He had thus spoken, &c.* First, to show this voice to have great and prevailing authority, by which He was raising up Lazarus from death, as God ruling nature and death. Whence Cyril says, His command is kingly, and worthy of God: *Lazarus, come forth.* For He said this not as praying, but as bidding and commanding. A *loud voice*, then, signifies the great force and power which recalled Lazarus from death to life. For this was a most difficult work, and therefore required supreme and Divine power, as also a fitting voice. Symbolically and mystically, the cause was, to represent with this loud voice the trumpet-voice of the Archangel in the day of judgment, by which all the dead shall be raised. Whence SS. Chrysostom, Cyril, Theophilus, Euthymius, assert that Christ here willed to show in action what He had said in v. 25, “The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they who hear shall live.” Hear S. Ambrose (*De Fide Resur.*): The Lord shows thee in what manner thou shalt rise. For He did not raise up one Lazarus only, but the faith of all; and if, when thou readest, thou believest this, thy mind also, which was dead, receives life with that Lazarus. For what means it that the Lord drew near to the tomb, and cried with a loud voice: *Lazarus, come forth*,—unless that He might afford us a specimen, might give us an example, of the future resurrection? Why did He cry aloud with His voice, as if He were not accustomed by His Spirit alone to perform [mighty works], as if He were not accustomed to command without speech? but that He might show what is written, “In the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the dead shall be raised. incorruptible” (1 Cor. xv. 52).

Typically, the loud voice of Christ signifies the great impulse of arousing grace, by which the sinner needs to be called forth from the custom of evil in which he lies buried, to grace and a new life. So S. Augustine. Hence Eph. v. 14, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life.”

Lazarus. He calls him by his proper name: lest, as says S. Ambrose, he might seem as one raised up for another, or his resurrection more by chance than by command. Again, He addresses the dead man as living, because all the dead live unto God, says S. Chrysostom.

Come forth. Not as if thou wert already risen, and only now wast to show thyself beyond the sepulchre, as Origen wrongly infers from hence: but, Rise, return from the dark and hidden caves of death and Hades; return, O soul of Lazarus, from the farthest limits of *the Limbus Patrum* into this body, and thence into the life, air, and light common to all living beings.

Ver. 44.—*And he that was dead came forth, &c.* The power of the voice of Christ is made manifest, which instantly raised up the dead man, so that the things spoken might be done.

Grave-clothes, bindings for the sepulchre, with which the hands and feet of the dead man are bound, so that they may be inserted and decently composed in a narrow receptacle. The Arabic translates *linen cloths*; Nonnus, “he had his whole body from foot to head bound with manifold wrappings for the grave.”

And his face was bound about with a napkin: in the manner of the Jews, that the fact of death might be signified, and the pale and fearful visage of the dead might strike no one with horror.

You will ask, Why did Christ, in raising the dead man, not at the same time unloose his bonds?

SS. Augustine, Chrysostom, Cyril, Leontius, and others reply that the Jews might see that the same Lazarus was raised up, who a little before had been swathed as dead, by themselves, with those bands and napkin, and was not a phantom, or some other man hidden in the sepulchre, to make a feigned appearance.

Secondly, that the miracle was twofold: that the first was the raising up the dead man; the second that he when raised up should immediately walk with his feet bound and his face covered, and come forth from his sepulchre straight to Jesus.

Typically, S. Gregory: Our Redeemer raised up a maiden in the house, a young man outside the gate [of the city], but Lazarus in the sepulchre. So he lies as it were still dead in the house, who is secretly sunk in sin. He is, as it were, brought outside the gate, whose iniquity reveals itself even to the shamelessness of public commission. But he is weighed down with the mound of the grave, who in the committing of wickedness is loaded with the weight of habit. But these He pities and recalls to life, in that very often by Divine grace He enlightens with the brightness of His countenance those dead not only in secret but even in open sins, and oppressed by the weight of evil custom.

S. Augustine says: Lazarus going forth from the sepulchre is the soul drawing back from carnal vices, but bound, that is, not yet freed from pains and troubles of the flesh, while it dwells in the body; the face is covered with a napkin, for we cannot have full understanding of things in this life; but it is said, “Loose him,” for after this life the veilings are taken away, that we may see face to face.

Jesus saith unto them, Loose him and let him go. To his home. Jesus addressed this command to the Jews, that they, handling Lazarus, might as it were touch and handle with their hands the miracle that was wrought by Him, and [see] that he was raised up.

Symbolically, Christ sends sinners bound with the bands of their sins to bishops and priests, that they may be released and absolved, saying, *Whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven* (Matt. xviii. 18). So also S. Augustine. “What is it,” he says, “to loose and let him go? What ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.”