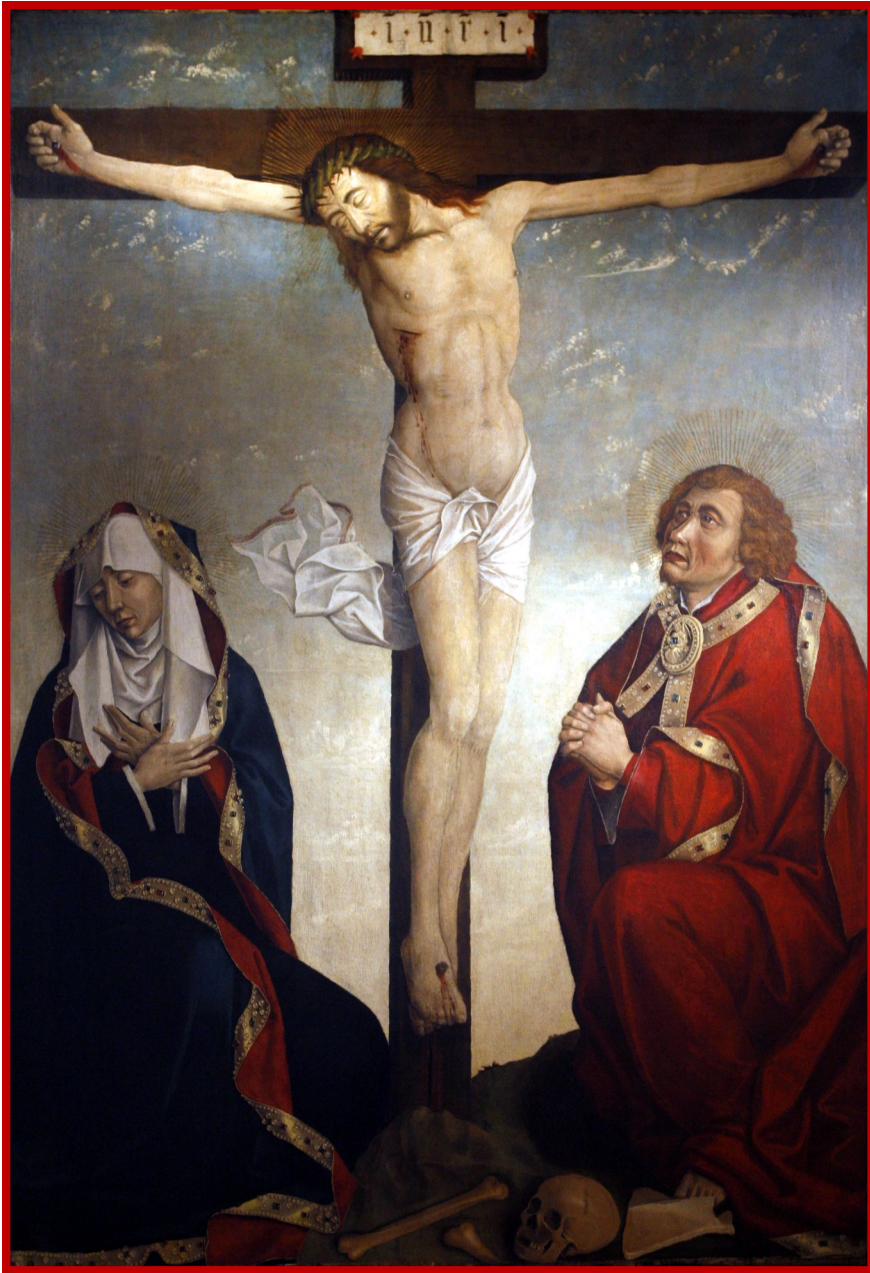


it would afford me the highest, consolation if only I might no more hear Him reviled, with love of Whom I so greatly burn.”



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IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE
WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH
GOD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH
HIM, AND HE WAS WITH HIM, AND
ALL
THINGS CAME INTO BEING BY HIM.
HE WAS WITH HIM AT THE BEGINNING
OF THE WORLD, AND THE WORLD
WAS MADE BY HIM, AND WITHOUT
HIM, THE DARKNESS EXISTED,
AND THE DARKNESS HAS NOT
UNDERSTOOD IT.

the gospel of JOHN

CHAPTER 21: 1-17

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.

John 21: 1-17

Douay Rheims Version

*Christ manifests himself to his disciples by the sea side
and gives Peter the charge of his sheep.*

1. After this, Jesus shewed himself to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias. And he shewed himself after this manner.
2. There were together: Simon Peter and Thomas, who is called Didymus, and Nathanael, who was of Cana of Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee and two others of his disciples.
3. Simon Peter saith to them: I go a fishing. They say to him: We also come with thee. And they went forth and entered into the ship: and that night they caught nothing.
4. But when the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore: yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

spirit, be carried about with every wind of doctrine, thou, I say, who hast such an opinion of thine own self in what pertains to thine own self, by what madness, I ask, art thou ambitious to have the care of others, or even acquiesce in having it?"

Thirdly—that He may show that pastors ought to feed their sheep, as it were, in a threefold manner—viz., by the word of truth, by example of life, and by temporal assistance (*see S. Greg.*). And S. Bernard (*Ser. 2 on the Resurr.*) says, that *feed* was repeated by Christ thrice, in order that a pastor may feed his sheep by mind, by tongue, and by hand. "*Feed*," he says, "by mind, *feed* by mouth, *feed* by works. *Feed* by mental prayer, by verbal exhortation, by showing example." The same (*Ep. 210*) says, "*Feed* by word, *feed* by example, *feed* by the fruit of holy prayers." Hence that wonderful love and zeal for souls in S. Peter, as well as in S. John, who in his Gospel, and his Epistles, everywhere breathes love and Divine fire. A memorable instance of this was that young man who had been converted by S. John and committed to a certain bishop by whom he had been neglected, and so had become a chief of robbers, whom S. John, when an old man, brought back to repentance and a holy life. Eusebius (*L. 3, Hist. c. 23*) gives a full account of this matter from Clemens Alexandrinus. Also S. Chrysostom (*Ep. 5, to Theodorus, a lapsed person*).

Peter was grieved—because from the thrice-repeated question it seemed to him as if his love for Christ were suspected, or verily he was afraid that he had no part in the Passion; and like as he then denied, so now also he did not love Christ. So S. Chrysostom, &c. Whence the Lord consoles him in his grief, and says that Peter, from the love and example of Christ, should, like a true shepherd, be crucified for the sheep.

Feed My sheep, as Mine, not as thine; seek My glory in them, not thine; My profit, not thine. Hear S. Augustine: "Let us not therefore love ourselves but Him, and in feeding His sheep let us seek the things of Christ, not our own: he who loves himself, not God, does not really love himself; for he who is not able to live by himself, dies by loving himself: when He is loved from whom is life, by not loving himself a man the more loves himself, forasmuch as he loveth not himself in order that he may love Him by whom he liveth." Such a shepherd was S. Paul, the colleague of S. Peter, who said, "for I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh" (*Rom. ix. 3*). Where S. Chrysostom says, "Broader than any sea, more vehement than any flame was this love, and no speech can worthily express it." In the first place, this *I myself* is emphatic. What does this *I myself* mean? Says S. Chrysostom, 'It is I who have been made a teacher of all, I who have collected offices and merits infinite, I who expect infinite crowns.' And then some remarks intervening, he thus explains S. Paul's wish of anathema: "Willingly would I lose the kingdom of heaven, and be cut off from the hidden glory, considering that

Ver. 16.—*He saith to him the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.* Hear S. Chrysostom: “Again he dreads the former things, lest perchance, thinking himself to love, he should be corrected if he did not love, like as before he was corrected for thinking himself strong, and therefore he takes refuge in Christ Himself.”

He saith unto him the second time, Feed My lambs. Thus the Arabic has it. But the Greek and Syriac instead of *lambs* have *sheep*, but it is very probable that the Vulgate, together with the Arabic, read the Greek *πζοβατία* inserting *iota*, i.e., *little sheep*, or *lambs*: because the shepherd’s chief care must be for them; and therefore Christ repeats and doubles His injunction concerning them.

As S. Augustine says, “Let it be love’s office to feed the Lord’s flock, like as it was the mark of fear to deny the Shepherd.” Hence S. Gregory (1 *Part. Pastor. c. v.*) says, “He who is strong in virtue and refuses to feed the flock of God is proved not to love his Pastor.”

Ver. 17.—*He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time lovest thou Me, and he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My sheep* (Syriac, *My lambs*). Why does Christ thrice ask Peter if he loved Him, and thrice repeat, *Feed My sheep*? I answer, the first reason is, that Peter, by a triple and constant profession, of his singular love, might expiate and change his three-fold denial of Christ. So Cyril, Leontius, Theophylact, Bede, and S. Augustine, which last thus writes (*Tract. 123*): “For a threefold denial a threefold confession is rendered, that the tongue might not seem to serve love less than fear, and that impending death might not seem to elicit more speech than Present Life. Let it be the office of love to feed the Lord’s flock, if it was the mark of fear to deny the Shepherd. If any feed Christ’s sheep with this disposition, that they wish them to be their own sheep rather than His, they are proved to love not Christ but themselves, either from the desire of boasting, or ruling, or acquiring, not from the love of obeying, and helping, and pleasing God. Against such, therefore, the Word of Christ, many times enjoined, gives warning, and of them the Apostle complains that they seek their own, not the things which be of Jesus Christ. For to say, ‘If thou lovest Me, feed My sheep,’ what else is it but to say, If thou lovest Me, do not study to feed thyself, but My sheep; feed them as Mine, not as thine: seek My glory in them, not thine: My dominion, not thine own?” From hence let bishops learn to examine suspended priests and others a second and third time, concerning their amendment, that they may be safe in restoring them to their office.

The second cause is that Christ might show what a value He set upon His sheep, and how in the day of judgment He will examine bishops and pastors as to their care for, but especially as to their love for, the sheep. Wherefore S. Bernard (*Ser. 18 in Cant.*) inveighs against those who, though having little love, are ambitious of being set over others, and so lose themselves and others; or if they save those under them, lose themselves. “Thou, brother,” he says, “whose salvation is not yet strong, who as yet hast not love, or that so weak and like a reed as to yield to every blast, believe every

5. Jesus therefore said to them: Children, have you any meat? They answered him: No.
6. He saith to them: Cast the net on the right side of the ship; and you shall find. They cast therefore: and now they were not able to draw it, for the multitude of fishes.
7. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved said to Peter: It is the Lord. Simon Peter, when he heard that it was the Lord, girt his coat about him (for he was naked) and cast himself into the sea.
8. But the other disciples came in the ship (for they were not far from the land, but as it were two hundred cubits) dragging the net with fishes.
9. As soon then as they came to land they saw hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread.
10. Jesus saith to them: Bring hither of the fishes which you have now caught.
11. Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, one hundred and fifty-three. And although there were so many, the net was not broken.
12. Jesus saith to them: Come and dine. And none of them who were at meat, durst ask him: Who art thou? Knowing that it was the Lord.
13. And Jesus cometh and taketh bread and giveth them: and fish in like manner.
14. This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to his disciples, after he was risen from the dead.
15. When therefore they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him: Feed my lambs.
16. He saith to him again: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him: yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him: Feed my lambs.
17. He said to him the third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he had said to him the third time: Lovest thou me? And he said to him: Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee. He said to him: Feed my sheep.
18. Amen, amen, I say to thee, When thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not.
19. And this he said, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had said this, he saith to him: Follow me.
20. Peter turning about, saw that disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also leaned on his breast at supper and said: Lord, who is he that shall betray thee?
21. Him therefore when Peter had seen, he saith to Jesus: Lord, and what shall this man do?
22. Jesus saith to him: So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou me.

23. This saying therefore went abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die. And Jesus did not say to him: He should not die; but: So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee?

24. This is that disciple who giveth testimony of these things and hath written these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

25. But there are also many other things which Jesus did which, if they were written every one, the world itself. I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written.

Ver. 1.—*After these things*, &c. From this it appears that Peter and the other Apostles had gone from Judea into Galilee, as Christ had bidden them (*S. Matt. xxiii. 10*). For this appearance of Christ took place in Galilee, when He, being about to go into heaven, in order that He might provide for the government of the faithful, appointed Peter to be the Head of the Church, and His Vicar upon earth. This is why S. John subjoins these things, and so concludes his Gospel.

Ver. 2.—*He manifested Himself thus*, &c. Christ wished a larger number, and the more honourable of His disciples, to be gathered together, in order that His manifestation might be so much the more glorious, and that before them as princes He might declare Peter to be His Vicar on earth, that so the Apostles and the rest of the faithful might acknowledge him to be such.

Ver. 3.—*Simon Peter saith unto them*, &c. Different writers give different reasons for this fishing. S. Chrysostom says, “Because the Lord was not always with them, neither had any (ministry) been committed to them, they employed themselves in fishing.” S. Gregory (*Hom. 24.*) says, “An employment which was without sin before their conversion was blameless after their conversion. Therefore Peter returned to his fishing, but Matthew did not return to his receipt of custom. For there are many employments which it is impossible, or scarcely possible, to follow without sin. To such a man must not return after he is converted.” Let us add, that this fishing took place before Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Ghost, by whom they were bidden to preach the Gospel. Wherefore, because the Apostles had nothing to occupy them at this time in the way of preaching, and they were at once poor and fishermen, they properly went back to their fishing, in order to supply themselves with sustenance. But after the advent of the Holy Spirit we do not read that they employed themselves in fishing, for they were wholly occupied in preaching the Gospel, and in guiding the faithful in the way of all perfection. Whilst the faithful, being studious of evangelical poverty, brought all their property to the feet of the Apostles, that they might distribute it amongst themselves and the rest of the believers. At any time, however, of necessity or want, they might lawfully have returned to their fishing, just as Paul returned to his tent-making, that he might not be burdensome to others for his livelihood. For this indeed is a matter of greater perfection, and therefore an evangelical counsel, that one should preach the Gospel free of charge (to the hearers), and provide for his own sustenance by the labour of his hands. Lastly, the disciples went a-fishing to avoid idleness, and as a relaxation. Cassian relates the following story concerning a certain hunter who went to visit S.

Church of Christ and one chief See;” and S. Jerome says, “Among twelve, one is chosen, that unity might be preserved.” Hear also S. Leontius (*Ser. 3, de Assum.*): “From the whole world, one Peter is chosen, who is set over the Church, called out of all nations, and over all the Apostles, and all the Fathers of the Church, that although there be in the people of God many priests and many pastors, still Peter may rightly rule all whom Christ also rules in the chief place. A great and wonderful association in His own power, beloved brethren, the Divine condescension gave to this man, and if He wished that anything should be common with him to the other princes of the church, He only gave through him that which He denied not to the rest.”

Hear likewise S. Bernard (*L. 3, de Consid. to Pope Eugen: towards the end*): “They,” *i.e.*, bishops, “have each their own flocks assigned to them, to thee all have been entrusted,—one shepherd for one flock; nor art thou only the one shepherd of all the sheep, but of all the shepherds. Do you ask how I prove this?—from the word of the Lord: for to whom were absolutely and without distinction all the sheep—I say not merely of Bishops, but of Apostles, committed? ‘If thou lovest Me, O Peter, feed My sheep;’ which?—the people of this or that city or region or kingdom? ‘My sheep,’ He saith: to what man is it not plain that He did not indicate some only, but assigned all? Nothing is excepted where no distinction is made;” and (*III. Cap. Solit. De Major. et Obed.*) he says, “Now to us the sheep of Christ were committed through Blessed Peter, as the Lord saith, ‘Feed my sheep,’ making no distinction between these sheep and others, that He might show that that sheep-fold which did not recognise Peter and his successors as pastors and masters, did not belong to Him.” See what has been said on S. Matt. xvi.; see also Bellarmine, who teaches that Christ, by this precept which He gave to Peter, saying, “Feed My sheep,” at the same time founded the Popedom as the Ecclesiastical Head, and gave it to S. Peter and his successors the Bishops of Rome. In chap. xiv. *de Pont.*, he proves that these words were spoken by Christ to Peter only. In chap. xv. he proves that the word—*feed*—signifies *government* and *power of ruling*. In chap. xvi. that *sheep* signify all the faithful, even the Apostles, and the whole Church: all which things Calvin, Luther, and the heretics deny.

From this passage theologians generally, and especially Suarez on *Indulgences*, show that the power of granting Indulgences was given by Christ to Peter and the Pontiffs who succeed him. For under that word—*feed*—is included every act of jurisdiction which may pertain to shutting or opening the kingdom of heaven, that so the gift may be equal to the promise; but the remission of penalties by means of *Indulgences* is one of the acts by which the kingdom of heaven is opened; it therefore is also comprehended under the general charge of feeding the sheep of Christ.

raa, the Greek *ποιμαίνω*, and the Latin *pasco*, signify 'to rule,' as may be seen from Mic. v. 2; Act. xx. 28; Rev. ii. 7, and xii. 5, xix. 15. Thus Homer calls the Grecian king Agamemnon *ποιμένα λαῶν*—a shepherd of the people."

My lambs. Christ, as the first Shepherd of the sheep, calls here His faithful people at one time sheep, at another, more tenderly, lambs. And that—Firstly, because of the newness of their life, for being regenerate by Baptism they are made as it were young lambs of God. Secondly, because of their lamblike innocence, which by baptism they have obtained, and also on account of their following Christ, who was called by John the Baptist, "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." Therefore the word *sheep* signifies that Christ is the Shepherd of Christians; the word—*lambs*—signifies that Christ is their Father, yea indeed their Mother, forasmuch as they are those whom He hath by baptism begotten unto God, and adopted as His own children. Jansen says *lambs* and *sheep*, are the same. Whence the Æthiopic version, instead of *lambs*, has *sheep*, repeating *sheep* thrice. Theophylact adds that they are called *lambs* in order that the very name might indicate those recently converted, and who were tenderer in the faith, of whom there was about to be a great multitude, when the Apostles began to preach. And because these would require greater care, and must be brought up and nourished with greater labour, therefore the Lord saith twice (according to the Vulgate), "feed My lambs," that by this repetition He might show that He wished Peter to bestow the very greatest care upon them: but those who were stronger in the faith He calls *sheep*. Again, by *lambs* He understands simple, faithful souls; by *sheep*—teachers, pastors, bishops, and apostles, who are, as it were, mothers of the faithful. Thus Bellarmine.

From this place then it is plain that S. Peter and his successor, the Roman Pontiff, is the head and prince of the Church, and that all the faithful, even bishops, patriarchs, and apostles, are subject to him, and ought by him to be fed and ruled. We gather this, first because Christ here interrogates Peter only, and this thrice, as the chief and mouth of the Apostles. So SS. Chrysostom, Theophylact, Euthymius. Moreover Christ here tacitly signifies that Peter loved Him more than the other Apostles, and therefore that he was worthy to succeed Him in the love and care of the flock—that is, of the Church and the faithful. For that power which is not founded upon love comes to naught.

Secondly—this is plain from the word *feed*, i.e., *rule*, as I have shown, and from the terms *lambs* and *sheep*, for by these words Christ signifies all the members of the Church as it were subject to Himself, the chief Shepherd, for He excepts no one. They therefore who are the sheep of Christ, are likewise the sheep of Peter, for Christ here commits them to him, to be fed and ruled. They therefore who are not Peter's sheep—namely, heretics—neither are they the sheep of Christ. So all the other Apostles, forasmuch as they were Christ's sheep, so likewise are they also Peter's sheep. From whence it was Peter's right to direct them, to compose their differences, and to govern them in all things. For Christ instituted the most excellent government in His Church, that is the monarchic, both that there might be one Church, and that occasions of schism might be cut off, as S. Cyprian teaches in his book on the unity of the Church. "The primacy," he says, "is given to Peter, to show that there is one

John, whom he found employed in gently stroking a partridge. Being surprised at this sight, S. John asked him, "What is that in your hand? "A bow," he replied. "Why do you not keep it always bent?" He answered, "It would be inexpedient to do so, lest by the continual curvature the strength of the bow should be destroyed, and it should come to pass that when I am shooting a strong arrow at some quarry, the stiffness of the bow being lost through its constant tension, it should not be able to discharge a powerful shaft." "In like manner," replied the Blessed John, "let not this brief relaxation of my mind offend you, O my young friend; for unless I afforded some moderate relief to its excessive tension it would lose its vigour, and would not be able to obey when need should call upon it to make some strenuous effort."

Night: For night is the most suitable time for fishing. For during the day the fish hide themselves in the depths of the sea.

Mystically, Theophylact says, *by night*, that is, before the presence of Christ the Sun, the prophets caught nothing, because although they attempted to correct but a single nation, it was continually falling into idolatry.

They took nothing: because they were fishing without Jesus, that they might learn that all their success in fishing for souls depended wholly upon Christ, and therefore that they ought to seek for success from Him, according to the words of the Psalmist, "Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it."

Ver. 4.—*When the morning was come*, &c. To show that this capture of fish was the result of His grace, not of their own industry. For (naturally) in the morning fish flee away from the light and the noise into the depths of the sea.

They knew not. Because He appeared to them in another form, as He did to the Magdalene (*cap.* xx. 14). In sooth Christ desired to be recognised rather by the miraculous draught of the fish than by His (human) form; for this was more befitting incarnate God.

Mystically: S. Gregory says, "The sea signifies this present world, which, in the tumults of affairs and the corruptible waves of life, dashes against itself. But the solidity of the shore signifies the perpetuity of the everlasting rest. The disciples therefore as yet were engaged in the waves of this mortal life. But the Lord was now standing on the shore, towards which Peter, to whom the Church was specially committed, draws the fishes, showing to the faithful the stability of eternal peace. This he did by his preaching and his epistles. This he does still by daily signs and miracles.

Ver. 5.—*Jesus therefore*, &c. As though He said, O fishermen, have ye any fish to sell Me? For Christ here appeared to His disciples in an unknown

form, like a grave merchantman, wishing to purchase fish. So S. Chrysostom. Wherefore He addresses them as boys (*pueros*), as though they were labourers. Or “little boys” (*παιδία*), addressing them as His children out of love.

Any meat: Greek *πρῶσφάγιον*, Vulgate *pulmentarium*, meaning any food which is eaten with bread, as we use seasoning. Also by this word *pulmentarium*, Christ meant *fish*. For, as Plutarch says, although there are many sorts of seasoning, fish is especially so called, because by the nutriment which it affords, and the facility with which it can be cooked, it surpasses other kinds. Also because most of the ancients, indeed all men before the Deluge, as I have shown upon Gen. ix., fed not upon flesh, but upon fish.

Ver. 6.—*He saith unto them*, &c. For indeed Jesus by His hidden power had collected this multitude of fishes on the right side of the boat, and so the Apostles who had been fishing all night at the left side had taken nothing. From thence we learn, *moraliter*, that we often toil and labour in vain because we fish at the left side without Jesus, instead of at the right with Jesus.

Hearken now to S. Augustine (*Tract.* 122): “In the capture of the fish is set forth a sacrament of the Church, to wit, what shall be at the last resurrection: to set forth which it is signified that it is as it were the end of a book, which should be, as it were, the proëmium of a narrative which is to follow. And the seven disciples by their number signify the end of time. For all time is included in seven days. The shore signifies the end of the world, for it is the boundary of the sea. And as the Church, such as it shall be at the end of the world, is here meant, so by another fishing is signified the Church such as it is now. Therefore on that occasion Jesus did not stand upon the shore, but went up into the ship. Then the nets were not cast at the right side, in order not to denote the good only; nor yet at the left not to denote the bad only: but indifferently on both sides, to signify that the good were mingled with the bad. But now the net is cast on the right side, to signify the good only, who are reserved for the resurrection of life. And they will appear on the shore, that is, in the end of the world when they arise. For the Church possesses them at the end of this life in the sleep of peace, lying hid as it were in the deep, until the net shall come to the shore. And what was signified in the first fishing by the two ships in this place is figured by the 153, namely the elect of the two dispensations, the circumcision and the un-circumcision.”

They cast therefore, &c. Behold the reward and fruit of ready obedience, and that obedience to one unknown, and as it seemed, a stranger. But Christ had inwardly inclined their hearts to do this. This multitude of fishes mystically represents the multitude of the faithful which Peter and the Apostles afterwards caught by the net of evangelical preaching, and converted to Christ. So SS. Augustine, Gregory, Chrysostom, &c.

Ver. 7.—*Therefore that disciple*, &c. You will ask, how was it that John was the first to recognise Christ? Cyril attributes it to the keenness of his intellect. So does S. Chrysostom. Peter, he says, was the more fervent, but John had more sagacity, and

gains for us the divine favour is the care of our neighbour. Now the Lord, passing over the others, speaks to Peter concerning such things, for he was the chief of the Apostles, and the mouth of the disciples, and the head of the college. Whence also He commits to him precedence over his brethren, as much as to say, The life which thou saidst thou wouldst lay down for Me, this give for My sheep.

Thirdly, because Peter, a little before, had thrice denied Christ, and this triple denial had been forgiven him on his repentance by Christ; hence He rightly demands greater love from him on whom He had bestowed greater indulgence. “For to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little:” Luke vii. 47. So Cyril.

Moreover, Jesus asks, though He knew that Peter loved Him more than they all, says S. Augustine, for although John loved Jesus more tenderly, yet Peter loved Him with a stronger and more ardent love, as is plain from all his deeds and words about Jesus. Thus parents love their little children with a tender love, but those who are youths, or grown up, with a stronger and more solid love; whence also they give greater gifts to them than to the little ones. Listen to S. Augustine (*Serm. on the Passion*): “When the Lord died, Peter feared and denied; the risen Lord rekindled his love, drove away his fear. He denied fearing to die—when the Lord had risen again why should he fear? Since in Him he found death had died.”

He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. “Hence it is plain,” says S. Augustine, “‘*amo*’ and ‘*diligo*’ here signify the same thing, although in Latin *amo* means more than *diligo*. Peter does not dare to say, I love Thee more than the others do, but I love Thee; both because he did not know the hearts of the others—secondly, because his fall had made him more modest and cautious. For he had put himself before the others when he said, I Lord, although all should be offended in Thee, yet will I never be offended;’ and yet a little afterwards he fell more shamefully than the others, and denied Christ, which they did not. *He saith unto him, ‘Feed My lambs.’ Feed*, like as a shepherd feeds sheep by leading them to pasture, and by feeding them, rules and guides them that they may not stray from the flock, nor approach noxious pastures, nor be seized by the wolf. Hence to *feed* in Scripture signifies to *rule*, and *kings* are called *shepherds*, because, if they would rightly rule their subjects, they ought to do what shepherds do when they feed their sheep. Whence—Psalm xxiii. 1—where the Vulgate has ‘the Lord rules me,’ the Hebrew is ‘*Adonai roi*,’ i.e., *the Lord is my shepherd, or feedeth me*. Wherefore it goes on, ‘He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.’ Thus David, from a keeper of sheep, was made by God a king of men—to *feed*, i.e., to *rule*, Jacob His servant, and Israel His inheritance. (Ps. lxxviii. 71.) Thus Cyrus is called a *shepherd*, i.e. a prince and king appointed by God—Is xliv. 28—that saith of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd.’ And Ps. ii. 9, ‘Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron.’ Hebrew *Tirem*, i.e. *thou shalt feed them*. And generally speaking, the Hebrew

written, That ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom (Luke xxii. 30).

And none of them that sat at meat: Gr. μαθητων, i.e., of His disciples. Whence Jansen thinks we ought to read *discumbentium, those who sat at meat:* but the Roman copies read *discum.*, which seems more suitable to the context.

Durst ask Him, &c. Because, as Chrysostom observes (*Hom. 86*), Christ was not, as yet, presenting Himself to them in His own proper appearance and form, but in one more august, from which they were hesitating whether it were really Jesus Himself, and were wishing to ask Him, *Who art Thou?* Yet from His features, from what He did and said, they recognised that it was Jesus Himself, so that at length they could no longer doubt. Wherefore, partly from reverence for Christ, and partly from the confidence of their recognition, they dared not to ask Him.

Less happily, S. Augustine interprets the expression *to ask by to doubt.* For these differ as effect and cause.

Ver. 13.—*And Jesus came and took bread, &c.* That is, when the disciples by the command of Jesus had sat down at the table, He also came, and sat down with them.

Ver. 14.—*This is now the third time, &c.* That is to say, reckoning those appearances which took place when several of the Apostles were present, for of such only S. John here makes mention. For of such this was the third. Otherwise, if we enumerate all the other appearances of which the other Evangelists make mention, this was the seventh in order, as I have shown on Matt. xxviii. 10, where I have enumerated them all in order.

Ver. 15.—*When therefore they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter—“Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?”* When Christ was about to go away into heaven, He here appoints Peter His vicar upon earth, and creates him Chief Pontiff, that the one church might be ruled by one shepherd. Christ had promised the same thing to Peter—Matt. xvi. 18—but in this place He confers the gift, and constitutes him prince and ruler of the whole Church, lest any one, on account of Peter’s threefold denial, should say that Christ had changed His decree concerning him. So Cyril. Mystically, Alcuin here says the Hebrew Simon means—obedient. John is grace. Peter is thus spoken of as obeying the grace of God; because, indeed, he embraces Him with a burning love—the effect, not of human merit, but of a Divine gift.

Lovest thou Me more than these?

First, because this office of feeding and ruling all the faithful which I design to confer upon thee demands the very greatest love of Christ and of the faithful. “Love,” says S. Augustine, “is asked, and labour is commanded, because where love is there is no labour.”

Secondly, that Christ may show how greatly He loved His sheep, forasmuch as He was unwilling to entrust them to any but to one who loved Himself, and consequently His sheep, with a supreme love. Thus S. Chrysostom, *Hom. 87*, “That which especially

therefore was the first to recognise Christ. But I reply that, whilst Peter was occupied in drawing up the net full of great fishes, John more carefully looked at Jesus, and Jesus first presented His appearance to S. John, because He most chiefly loved him, and because he was most pure. Wherefore S. Jerome rightly says (*Epist. ad Pammach.*), “First is John’s virginity to recognise the virgin form of Christ. ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’”

Mystically: the more familiar and intimate any one is with God by prayer, the more does he perceive, penetrate, contemplate, and admire God, and the attributes of God. In fine, as John because of his virginity was dear to Christ, so also he himself wonderfully loves those who are chaste and virgins. Hear what the Abbot Adelred writes in his life of King Edward the Confessor. “S. Edward never denied the petition of any one who asked in the name of S. John, for him after the Prince of the Apostles he chiefly loved. Once it happened that in the absence of the chamberlain a certain foreigner importunately asked the king for alms in the name of S. John. So the king gave him a precious ring, because he had nothing else at hand. After this it happened that two Englishmen went to Jerusalem to worship the tomb of the Saviour. One day it came to pass that they missed the high road, and were wandering out of the way when the sun went down, and all was dark. Not knowing what to do, or whither to turn, a certain venerable old man appeared to them, and led them to the city. There they were hospitably entertained; a table was spread, and their weary limbs were refreshed with sleep. When the morning was come, as they went out of the city, the old man said to them, ‘My brethren, doubt not that you will return to your own country in the greatest prosperity, for God will make your way prosperous. And for love of your king I will keep my eyes upon you in all the way by which ye go. I am John, the Apostle of Christ, who entertain the utmost love for your king because of the merit of his chastity. Take back to him this ring which he once gave me in the habit of a pilgrim. Tell him that the day of his departure draws nigh. Within six months I will visit him, that with me he may follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.’ When he had said thus he disappeared.” For this reason those who love virginity and purity are wont to ask S. John to be their patron, and to invoke his aid, especially when they are troubled with assaults of the flesh: and they experience his help. To give a single example out of many: S. Colette, a virgin of wonderful austerity and sanctity, the reformer of the Order of S. Clare, that she might keep her virginity spotless, chose S. John as her patron. And not in vain: for S. John appeared to her, and by a golden ring betrothed her as a virgin spouse to himself.

When Simon Peter heard, &c., he girt, &c. Greek τὸν ἐπενδύτην διεξώσατο, *he put on his tunic over his clothes.* Whence it is plain that he was not before wholly naked, but only, after the fashion of work-men, stripped of his outer garment.

And cast himself into the sea: either swimming, as Chrysostom and others think, or by wading through the sea, as Bede and Maldonatus say. For the shore was near. Peter being the more fervent, came to Christ more promptly than the others. It is improbable that Peter upon this occasion walked upon the waters. For this would have been rash, since Christ did not now bid him do it.

Two hundred cubits: Mystically, Bede says, by the 200 cubits is expressed the twofold power of charity. For by love of God and our neighbour we draw nigh to Christ.

Ver. 10.—*As soon as they were come to land, &c.* Here was another miracle of Christ, that He for His disciples suddenly coming to Him cooked fish, and prepared a dinner. Cyril thinks that this fish had been speedily drawn from the depths of the sea. But Chrysostom thinks that it had been created out of nothing. With greater probability, Leontius and others say that Christ produced the fish, the coals, the fire, and the bread out of the atmosphere, or some other substance, as He did the loaves when He multiplied them. Christ did this to show (1.) that the great draught of fishes was His own work, and that it was He who had collected all those fishes at the right side of the ship. (2.) That He had no need of them for Himself, but had done it for the sake of His Apostles. Mystically, saith Bede, out of S. Augustine. The broiled fish is Christ in His Passion. He Himself (deigned to lie hid in the waters of our human nature. He willed to be taken with the hook of a death like ours. And He who was made a fish in His Humanity, became the Bread that feeds us by His Divinity.

Ver. 11.—*Jesus saith . . . bring of the fish, &c.* This He did that they all might perceive the multitude of the fish and the greatness of the miracle.

Mystically, S. Augustine (*Tract.* 123) says, “The broiled fish is Christ in His Passion. He is the Bread which came down from heaven. With Him the Church is incorporated for the attainment of everlasting bliss, according as it is said, *Bring of the fish which ye have taken*, that all we who have this hope through that seven-fold number of disciples, by which the whole company of the faithful is figured, might know that we have a share in so great a sacrament, and are partakers of the same blessedness.”

Simon Peter went up, i.e., into the ship, &c. Peter is mentioned as the leader of the rest. For he could not have drawn the net laden with so many great fishes (to land) by himself. Though indeed S. Gregory and Rupertus think that he did do this alone, though not by his own strength, but by Divine assistance. And thereby Peter’s Primacy is intimated. For he is the first to call his companions to fish. He first came to Christ. He was the first also to draw up the net, that it might be signified that all fishes, that is to say, all the faithful, ought to be drawn and ruled by Peter. John therefore was the more beloved, but Peter the more honoured by Christ, and by Him set over the rest. So subjects (spiritual) are now and again more holy than their rulers, but rulers are more exalted, and more eminent in authority than their subjects.

Fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: Why were there exactly one hundred and fifty-three? S. Jerome gives (in Ezek. xlvi. 9) the literal reason; because there are just that number of different kinds of fish. This is what he says, “Those who have written

about animated nature say that there are an hundred and fifty-three kinds of fish. One of each of these kinds was caught by the Apostle, and more remained uncaught. For noble and ignoble, rich and poor, all sorts and conditions of men, are drawn out of the sea of this world to salvation.” You must, however, understand the matter thus, that only the chief *genera* of fishes are included in this number, for, speaking strictly, there are many more kinds. Therefore by this number, or symbol, Christ signified that all nations were to be gathered up into the net of the Church, whose head and prince is Peter, and his successors, the Roman Pontiffs.

Symbolically, Cyril says the number one hundred signifies the fulness of the Gentiles which was about to enter into the net of Peter and the Church: the fifty signifies the smaller number of the Jews, who would be saved: the three represents the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, by the faith and worship of Whom both Jews and Gentiles are gathered together and saved. But S. Augustine (*Tract.* 122) says, “This number is made up of three times fifty plus three, because of the mystery of the Trinity. The fiftieth was the year of jubilee in which all the people rested from all their labours. The year of jubilee represented the state of Gospel grace.

More particularly and plainly Rupertus and Maldonatus explain thus. By those three numbers is signified the three-fold race of men who are saved. The hundred denotes those who are married, ‘for these are the most numerous. The fifty denotes the widows and the continent, for these are fewer in number. The three denotes virgins, the fewest of all.

And although there were so many, &c. Chrysostom says that in this miracle three miracles were included, by which Christ proved His resurrection and omnipotence. The first was in the taking of the fish. The second, in the production of His own fish, the bread, and the burning coals. The third, in the integrity of the net, which signifies the unity and integrity of the Church, which cannot be broken, or rent by any schism. For they who make a schism separate themselves *ipso facto* from the Church, and consequently leave the Church to its own unity and integrity.

Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. It is probable that some of the fish which the Apostles caught were placed by Christ’s command upon the red-hot coals, when He said, *Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.*

Observe also that it is probable that Christ upon this occasion dined with His disciples, a thing which He had been accustomed to do, in order to confirm the truth of His resurrection.

Anagogically, S. Cyril says, In like manner after the labours of this life, by which we fish souls for God, Christ will prepare a heavenly dinner, in which we shall eternally feast with Him in Divine delights, according as it is