

S. Agatha to Quintianus, "Why are you so slow? What do you wait for?—scourge, lacerate, burn, cut down, mangle, slay my body, for the more you crucify me, the more good you confer upon me, and the more favour and grace shall I receive from my spouse Jesus Christ." Such were the vows and such the words of SS. Agnes, Lucia, Dorothea, Cœcilia, and other Martyrs.

Ver. 51.—*Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you nay, but rather division.* See what I have said Matt. x. 34.

Ver. 52.—*For there shall be from henceforth five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.* Five, that is—Father, son, mother, daughter, daughter-in-law, for mother-in-law is the same as mother. So S. Ambrose. And this is plain from what follows. In the same house three unbelievers shall rise against two believers, or two unbelieving against three faithful, or father and son, who do not believe in Christ, shall rise against mother, daughter, and daughter-in-law who, do believe in Him, or the contrary.

Ver. 54.—*And He said to the multitudes also, When ye see a cloud rising in the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it cometh to pass.* When you see a cloud from the west you say, It will rain. In the same manner Elijah, in the time of the three years' drought, when he heard from his servant that a cloud had arisen in the west, at once foretold that rain would follow, and it did so. 1. Kings xviii. 44. The cause of this is natural; for Judæa has the Mediterranean on the west, from which by the force of the sun many vapours are exhaled, which, when condensed into clouds by the heat of the sun, produce rain, especially when the sun is also in the west; for it is then too weak to disperse these vapours and prevent them from condensing into clouds and dissolving in rain. But the countries that have the sea equally on the west, the south and the north have, equally, from these quarters, clouds as forerunners of winds, as the English, who have the sea on all sides of them. See Matt. xvi. 3. It is necessary to human life, says S. Basil in the Catena, to watch the heavenly bodies, so that their warnings be not examined into beyond measure. It is of consequence to look out for, and guard against storms, and for the traveller to regard the changes of temperature, for the husbandman to consider the position of the sun and moon for his sowing that he may have an abundant harvest; for God has appointed these things for signs and for seasons.



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CHAPTER 12: 49-59

The Gospel of
Luke

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

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

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

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

Continuation of Luke 12: 49-59

Ver. 49.—*I came to come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I, if it is already kindled?* The Arabic has, "What will I but that it be kindled?" So the Egyptian, Ethiopic, and Persian. It is uncertain whether Christ said this at the same time as the preceding. For S. Luke joins the words of Christ together, although spoken at different times. It may be connected with the preceding and following thus: Christ after much teaching of the Apostles and faithful, may, at last, have stated the primary duty that He was sent into the world by the Father to fulfill, namely, that He should send fire from heaven on the Apostles, that they, when inflamed by it, might kindle it in the rest of the other faithful; for by this the Apostles would fully and efficaciously perform the work that had been given them by Christ of evangelising the whole world and converting it to Him, and the faithful would exactly carry on the instructions of the Apostles.

waters, where the floods overflow me," lxi. 2.

And how am I straitened until it be accomplished? That is, "I am afflicted and tormented by the longing to die for the salvation of men and by My death to kindle this flame." Euthymius: "I am anxious because of its slowness;" and Theophylact: "How am I straitened," that is, how anxious and oppressed am I until it be performed, "for I thirst for death for the good of all men." So S. Ambrose, Bede, and others. The Arabic has, "I am narrowed for its performance." S. Irenæus 1. 18 reads, "I earnestly hasten to it." For the hearts of the anxious are wont to be contracted and as it were compressed by such, whilst those of the joyful are expanded and dilated. De Lyra, therefore, renders it amiss, "I am narrowed," he says, "that is, I am filled with dread, according to the words, 'My soul is of Christ, but He quelled and overcame it when He said, 'Not as I will, but as Thou wilt.'"

Morally. Observe how great was the zeal of Christ, how great His love, how deep His thirst for our salvation. For it was this that raised in Him so great a thirst for His Passion, death, and crucifixion, cruel as they were, so that His heart, between their infliction and the waiting for them, was compressed, as between the two stones of a mill, and brought into the greatest straits; or placed, as it were, in a vice and compressed with anguish, lest what He loved should be refused or delayed. Christ then was urged and, as it were, burnt up by the utmost longing to offer Himself up to God as a holocaust on the altar of the cross, that, as far as in Him lay, He might sanctify, save, and bless all men.

This zeal, His thirst, He impressed upon the Apostles and apostolic men, who thirsted for crosses, labours, pains, torments, and martyrdoms, for the glory of God: that they might propagate the gospel of Christ throughout the whole world and save as many as they could. This is the holiness of the Gospel, this is the perfection of virtue, this is the crown of the Apostleship. S. Andrew's salutations of the cross, and his earnest longing for it, are known. "Hail, precious cross, long desired, and at last ready for my longing soul! Secure and rejoicing I come to thee; do thou with joy accept me, and through Thyself do Thou receive me who by dying for me hast redeemed me." S. Laurence said to the Emperor Valerian, when he showed to him with threats, flames, wheels, scorpions, wild beasts: "For this table I hunger, I thirst. There is no famished man who desires food, there is no one perishing of thirst who craves for water, as greedily as I court and covet all these torments, that I may repay to Christ my Saviour, pain for pain, death for death." S. Vicentius to Dacian: "No one living has conferred on me greater gifts than thou, who torturest and crucifiest me, for with as many tortures as thou afflictest me with—with so many crowns of martyrdom dost thou adorn me." And to the executioners, "How slow are ye, how slothful!"

Virgo, citum cupiens obitum,
Appetit et bibit ore rogum.

For speedy death the Virgin wish'd,
And with a joyful smile
The bitter cup of death she drank,
Upon the funeral pile.

The martyr, in the form of a dove, flew up to heaven.

And what will I if it be already kindled? The Arabic has, "What will I but its kindling?" S. Jerome to Nepotian, "How I long for it to be kindled!" Origen (*Hom. v. on Ezekiel*), "I would it were kindled;" Philaster on the Heresies (*cap. ult.*), "How I wish that it were kindled;" that is, as the Syriac reads, "If now at length it were kindled." SS. Hilary on *Ps. cxx.*, Theophylact, Euthymius, and Cyril in the *Catena*, "I wish nothing but that this fire were at length kindled; if it were, there is nothing else I desire, this is my one only prayer." Both readings amount to the same thing—"I came to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I if it is already kindled?"—that everywhere throughout the world He might kindle the earthly, lukewarm, frigid, nay, rocky, ice-cold, and rigid hearts of men, by His words and example, with the fierce heat of fervour, and turn them into the fire of love. So did our own S. Ignatius, the founder of the Society of Jesus. But to accomplish this there is need of much warmth and zeal. He, therefore, who would inspire others with this fire, must first kindle it strongly in himself.

Ardeat orator qui vult
accendere plebem

Wouldst thou enkindle others' hearts?
—then burn,
O Orator, thyself.

Ver. 50.—*But I have a baptism to be baptized with.* The Arabic says, "I have a baptism, and I shall be baptized with it:" That is, By the decree of God and of My own will and determination I owe (debeo) to be baptized.

And how am I straitened till it be accomplished! "This fire of love and zeal of the Holy Spirit, cannot break forth unless the flint of My body be first struck upon the cross, or rather, until I am baptized in the font of My own blood." This is like some fountains into which if we plunged a torch, by the wonderful power of nature, and an antiperistasis, it is lighted. Such, according to Pliny, is the fountain of Dodona (bk. ii. chap. 103). Our brethren of Coimbra, in *Meteora* (tract. ix. chap. 7), say that there is another in Epirus, and a third in India, the waters of which burn; another, again, which formerly took its name from Jupiter Ammon. This just before the dawn is tepid, at midday it becomes cold, it is warm in the evening, and it boils at midnight. Similar springs are found near Naples, in France, and other places. Our Lord, then, compares His passion to these. This is like a boiling fountain which has aroused, and still arouses, the fire of love in the minds of the faithful. For equally by the merit of the cross and passion of Christ and by His example does this fire burst forth. He calls His death and passion a baptism, because He was clearly sunk and overwhelmed in it, as says the Psalm, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, I am come into deep

Symbolically, S. Ambrose, on *Ps. cxix.* (*Serm. viii.*) says: "God is a light to lighten and a fire to burn up the chaff of men's vices." "He is light," he says, "to shine like a lantern for one who is walking in darkness, so that whoever seeks it in its brightness cannot err. He is fire to consume the straw and chaff of our works, as gold, the more it is refined, is better proved." So Clement of Alexandria in his exhortations to the Gentiles: "The Saviour has many voices and methods of man's salvation. In threatening He admonishes; by prohibitions He converts; with tears He pities; (in songs) He speaks through the cloud; (in songs) by fire He strikes terror. The flame is a mark at once of grace and of fear. If you be obedient it is a light—if disobedient, a consuming fire."

It may be asked—What is this fire? Firstly, Tertullian (*Against Marcion*, IV. xxix.), Maldonatus, and F. Lucas answer that it is hatred dissensions, tribulations, and persecutions by unbelievers of the faith and of the Apostles, and the faithful of Christ. These, indirectly, and occasionally, Christ and the Apostles raised by preaching the Gospel and the new religion of the crucified Saviour. "Christ," says Tertullian, "will better interpret the quality of this fire, ver. 51, 'Think you that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather division, for there shall be from henceforth,' &c. Christ means then the fire of destruction when He refuses peace: such as the conflict was, such will the burning be by which Christ will overthrow idolatry and all (manners of) wickedness, and will reduce them to ashes. Hence He would stir up all the nations that were addicted to their own idols against Himself and the Apostles, to extinguish by every means this new instrument of destruction of their ancient superstition. To this applies all that Christ subjoins in explanation of this fire, verses 50-53."

Secondly, and more fitly, S. Cyril in the *Catena*, and Jansenius think this fire to be the preaching of the Gospel, for Christ directly wished for this, that by its means He might warm the hearts of men by divine fire, as *Ps. cxix. 140*, "Thy Word is very pure" (Vulgate, *ignitum*).

Thirdly, and best, S. Ambrose and Origen on this passage, S. Athanasius on the *Common Essence of Father and Son*, S. Cyril (*Book iv. on Leviticus*), S. Jerome (*Book ii Apol. against Ruffinus*), S. Augustine (*Serm. 108 de Tempore*), S. Gregory (*Hom. 30 in Evang.*), by "fire" understand the Holy Ghost and His gifts, especially charity, devotion, fervour, zeal, which; say Euthymius and Theophylact, "He kindles in the souls of the faithful." This fire also kindles the lamps of the faithful, according to the words, "Love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave, the coals thereof are coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame." *Cant. viii. 6*. See what has been said thereon. The Church so explains it when on the Saturday after the Pentecost she prays thus in the Mass, "We beseech Thee, O Lord, may the Holy Spirit inflame us without fire which our Lord Jesus Christ sent upon earth and earnestly desired might be enkindled."

“By this fire,” says S. Ambrose, “was Cleophas incited when he said, “Did not our heart burn within us, while He spake to us in the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?” Luke xxiv. 32. Thus this fire of love and ardour embraces that of tribulation which has the first place. For this fire, the Apostles, inflamed with the love of Christ, overcame; and so provoked it, for it pressed upon them, as Christ foretold in the following, xii. 49. So said also S. Paul, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . I am persuaded that neither death nor life,” Rom. viii. 35-38. By the same fire was Ignatius urged in his Epistle to the Romans: “I wish,” he said, “that I may enjoy the beasts that await me, which I pray may be swift for my destruction and my punishment, and may be allured to devour me. I am the wheat of Christ, to be ground by the teeth of beasts, that I may be found the bread of the world.” This desire Christ fulfilled when He sent the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and faithful, in the form of tongues of fire at Pentecost, Acts ii. Upon which S. Chrysostom says (*Hom. iv.*). “This fire has burnt up the sins of the world like fire;” and again, as we may suppose: “As a man on fire (*igneus homo*) if he falls into the midst of stubble will not be hurt, but will rather exert his strength, so it happens here,” that the Apostles as men on fire with the Spirit (*homines ignei*) should not be hurt by their persecutors, but rather convert them to the faith of Christ and inflame them. See the gifts of fire which I have counted up—enumerated and applied to the Love of God, Levit. ix. 23, and Acts xxiii. and ii. 3, and Dionysius on the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy xv., where he shows by many analogies that fire is the most apt symbol and hieroglyphic of God and the angels, and most fitly represents their similitude in imitating Him, according to the words of Deuteronomy iv. 24: “Thy God is a consuming fire;” and Heb. i. 7, “Who maketh His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.” With this fire burned Elijah, of whom it is written, “and Elias the prophet stood up as a fire, and his word burnt like a torch,” Eccles. xlvi. 1, and therefore he was carried up into heaven in a chariot of fire; and Elisha cried out, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.” Consumed by this fire the martyrs despised their lives, nay, rather courted the flames, either because they did not feel them, like the three children in the furnace at Babylon, or that they overcame them by their heroic virtue, as did S. Laurence, of whom it is sung, Ps. xvii. 3, “Thou hast visited me in the night (*Vulg.*) with fire.” Hard indeed and bitter was this test of fire, but the love of God conquered the pain; the torments of the Lamb overcame the torment of the fire; the memory of Christ, I mean, who suffered for us still more bitterly. “The fire of love could not be mastered by thy flames, O tyrant,” said S. Leo in his sermon on S. Laurence. “The fire that burnt outwardly was more sluggish than that which burnt within. Thou ragedst, as a persecutor against the Martyr thou ragedst, and increased his palm whilst thou augmented his punishment;” and S. Augustine on Laurence: “The blessed Laurence was consumed by this fire, but he felt not the heat of the flames, and whilst he burnt with the love of Christ, he regarded not the punishment of the persecutor.” So S. Ignatius, writing to the Romans, “Let fire,” he says, “the breaking of my limbs by wild beasts, the dismembering of my body, the breaking to pieces of my whole frame, and all the torments of the devil come upon me, so only that I may have enjoyment of Christ.” Of the same kind were also the Christians in the time of Tertullian, who (in 50 chap. *Apol.*) writes thus to the Gentiles: “Although you now call us Sarmenitii because we are burnt at the stake by a heap of faggots (*sarmenorum*), and Senarii because we are broken on the wheel, yet this is the garment of our

victory, this our robe of glory, in this chariot we triumph.” Are not these terrestrial seraphim more brave and ardent than the celestial? The latter abound with the fire of love only, the former with that of pain and martyrdom also, for they are living holocausts of God. In our own age, in the same fire, were and are consumed the Japanese, who were burnt to death in a slow fire for many hours, and remained in them unsubdued and unconquered like adamant, to death. Many of them were of our society, standard-bearers as it were of (the) faith; among them was R. P. Camillus Constantius of Italy, who remained for three hours in the fire immovable, nay, even joyful and exulting; (continually) crying out to God with a loud voice, or animating his companions to constancy, or stirring up the people, a thing we have not hitherto read of in the lives of the Martyrs, until the flames seized on his inner organs, and deprived him at once of voice and life, that so he might die a glorious victim of a holocaust to God.

Hail, heroes of illustrious souls, champions of the faith, a spectacle to God, to angels, and to men. Burning with divine fire you resigned, for the faith of Christ, your bodies to the flames, and your souls to God; and from amidst those flames, rejoicing with the voice of swans, you covered yourselves with merits, amazed the tyrants, filled and adorned Japan with Christians, your society with heroic virtues, the world with fame, the Church with glory, the heavens with the laurels of fresh champions. For ever live your glory, your unconquered fortitude, your fire and ardour of heart, by which you will have illuminated and inflamed Japan, as long as the course of ages shall endure.

Thus thinking, S. Eulatia, burning with the desire of martyrdom, proceeded, without the knowledge of her parents, to her conflict, and, as Prudentius tells us in his hymn 3, when she was being consumed by the flames, she sang a hymn “On the Crowns:”—

Ergo tortor, adure,
Divide membra coacta luto
Solvere rem fragilem, facile est,
Non penetrabitur, interior,
Exagitante dolore, animus.

Come, thou tormentor, come and burn,
And cut, and wound, and slay,
Dissever thou these limbs of mine,
Joined but by feeble clay.

How easy 'tis, so frail a thing,
Entirely to destroy;
Tormenting pain can never touch
My inner spirit's joy.

And thus, in the thirteenth year of her age, surrounded by flames,