

The Commands Of Jesus

Final Scenes From The Gospels

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Command I.

"Go into Galilee."

After the Resurrection, Jesus did not dwell with the Apostles, or remain, at any time, very long in their company. On the evening before His death, Jesus had told His Apostles: "After I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee" (Mark 14:28); and on the Resurrection morning at the Sepulchre, He gave this first Command to the woman: "Go, tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, there they shall see Me." (Math 28:10). Accordingly, when the last days of Paschaltide were over, (and after his dramatic appearances to them on that first and eighth days of that Paschal Week – henceforward to be universally known as Resurrection Week) the Apostles and many of the Disciples returned to their homes in Galilee. There, in that province of Galilee, Jesus had laboured longest; there, He was best known; and there also, they should have proof of His Resurrection, see Him, and hear His familiar voice again, before He ascended to His Father.

I.

THE APOSTLES RETURN TO GALILEE.

— In obedience to the Command of Jesus: "Go into Galilee," the Apostles left Jerusalem, to return to their home province. Jesus was not with them. They passed along the way, its old familiar landmarks and stopping places so reminiscent of the journeys they had made in company with Jesus. The old days could never come back again. Everything was changed. What did the future hold in store for them? Could they return again to their fishing boats, and drag their nets through the waters, in monotonous routine, after the tragic events at the death of Jesus, and the thrilling scenes connected with His Resurrection? We may well believe that there was little conversation, but much deep thought, among the Eleven, as they walked homewards. Homewards! Could home ever be home again to these men, who had been so closely associated with Jesus in His designs, which comprised the salvation of the whole world?

Prayer.

O Jesus, when at times of special devotion, my soul has been thrilled to intense religious fervour, how hard it is to return to the routine of daily toil! But that is a Command from You to me. My soul may faint and long for Your courts, O Lord, and the loveliness of Your Tabernacles, but the proof of my love lies in the keeping of Your commandments, in my own station in life. Help me then, O Jesus, to take courage, and do my duty to myself, my neighbour, and to You. Assist me to keep Your commandments, that I may abide in Your love; as You also did keep Your Father's commandments, and to abide in His love.

II.

THE APOSTLES GO A-FISHING.

— When the Apostles arrived in Galilee, they were short of funds (the common purse had disappeared with Judas) so while they were waiting for Jesus to keep His appointment, they stood one day by the Sea of Galilee. There were seven of them together: Peter, James, John, Thomas, Nathaniel, and two others whose names are not recorded. All of those named, with the possible exception of Nathaniel, were expert fishermen. “Simon Peter says to them: I go a-fishing. They say to him: We also come with you.” So, overhauling one of their long-unused fishing boats, examining their sailing gear, assorting their nets and fishing tackle, they set sail towards evening, for on those sun-dazzled waters, night was the time for fishing. Through the night, they trawled through that sea, whose likeliest planes they knew so well; but as happened on the former occasion (Luke 5:4-5) their efforts proved fruitless; "and that night they caught nothing." (John 21:2-3).

Prayer.

O Jesus, I am a toiler like Your Apostles, and my work often goes all wrong. No matter how I try, I can get no results. I try hard enough, and I know my work, and how to do it; but You seem so far away, that I grow disheartened and fretful, and disappointed with failure; and in my discouragement, I am apt to blame others, and even to say hard things to my good friends. But do You, O Lord, teach me to realize, that "tribulation works patience; and patience, trial; and trial hope; and hope confounds not; because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, Who is given to us."

III.

JESUS APPEARS: THE MIRACULOUS DRAFT.

— At dawn the seven Apostles were still trawling an empty net through the waters near the land, when Jesus appeared, standing on the shore. They did not recognise Him at first; like Mary Magdalene at the Sepulchre, and the two disciples at Emmaus, "they knew not that it was Jesus." The mysterious Figure spoke to them in friendly and familiar solicitude: "Children, have you any meat?" The expression, Children, was in so frequent use among the people as a token of friendliness, that it did not enlighten the Apostles, and in their wearied condition, they failed to recognize the tone of that well-known voice. They replied despondently "No". It was the curt answer of tired men, weary enough of fruitless labour, without having to admit their failure to an inquisitive stranger. Jesus understood, and He had come to help them. “He said 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.” (John 21:4-6).

Prayer.

O Jesus, You come to us in our troubles, but we are so weary with disappointment, and often fruitless endeavour, that we do not realize that You are looking on in sympathy. Some recollection of a sweet gentle inspiration from You in the past, comes to us, but we are so tired and peevish that we put it away irritably, and go on nursing our troubles, pitying ourselves, and rejecting the kindly advances of others as an intrusion. In our dejection, O Lord, treat us as good but wayward children. Help us, in kindly pity; and at Your command, we will begin afresh: and with Your grace, draw good results from our labours.

IV.

"IT IS THE LORD."

— This miraculous draft of fishes recalled to St. John's mind, that other miracle of a similar nature, on that same lake, when Jesus had first called him and his companions. Intuitively, John recognised Jesus, and thrilling with wonder, he said to Peter: "It is the Lord." When Peter heard this startling announcement, he looked more attentively at the mystic figure of Jesus, and was convinced of its reality. Promptly, Peter reached for his coat, for he had been working naked from the waist up, and girding the coat about him, out of respect for his Master, he cast himself into the sea and came to shore. St. Chrysostom sees in this episode, a distinction in the individual characters of Peter and John; the former, more ardent; the latter, more sublime; the former, more prompt to action; the latter, more discerning. "Then the other disciples came in the ship, for they were not far from the land, but as it were two hundred cubits (approximately one hundred yards) dragging the net with fishes." (John 21:7- 8).

Prayer.

O Jesus, when with Your assistance, our labour has been rewarded with a success we had never expected, nor even hoped for, grant us that true gratitude which impels us at once to recognize You in it all, and crying out : "It is the Lord," draws us to You with our thanks. Grant us a burning zeal, and promptness in fulfilling Your commands, and a discerning spirit to recognize the sublime dignity of being under the direction and protection of Your omnipotence.

Command II.

"Feed My Lambs: Feed My Sheep."

This Command of Jesus was given to Peter, the chief of the Apostles, by the Sea of Galilee. By it, Peter was constituted head of the Church on earth, with Authority to teach and govern all the Pastors and the whole Flock of Christ throughout the world. But, as love had been the moving cause of the Redemption ("God so loved the world that He sent His only-begotten Son"); and, as Jesus had told the Apostles on the eve of His death; "A New Commandment I give you: That you love one another, as I have loved you" (John 13:34) and, further, as we cannot truly love one another unless we first love God; so now Jesus required a declaration from Peter, that he loved Him more than did all the others, before He installed him as chief Pastor of His flock, and commanded him: "Feed My, lambs. Feed My sheep." (John 21:16-17).

I.

THE FIRE, AND THE FISH.

— When the Apostles landed from their boat, "they saw hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread." (John 21:9). The Master said to them: "Bring hither of the fishes which you have caught." It should be understood here, that Jesus did not ask for those fishes in order to add them to the one already being cooked; the context in the Greek version of John 21:13 shows that the meal consisted only of the miraculous fish and bread mentioned in the above text. (John 21:9) "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." (John 21:11): "These fishes that Christ called for are not for Himself. They are a symbolical figure of the souls that the Apostles are to win for Him throughout the world. The meat was supplied entirely by our Lord. It expressed the need of divine concurrence

and heavenly graces for the fruitful performance of the duties of mystical fishermen. Without Christ's help, what would the Apostles have been able to accomplish in spite of all their efforts." (Fillion. Life of Christ. III. 592).

Prayer.

O Lord, You need not our help, but we need Yours. You, who have created and redeemed us, provide also for all our needs; and You do even condescend to permit us to do what we can in Your service. You did come to cast fire on the earth, and what will You, but that it be kindled? You work in us, both "to will and accomplish," and although of ourselves we can do nothing, we can do all things in You, Who strengthens us. Grant then O benevolent Lord, that we may always earnestly serve You, and, with Your help, accomplish Your holy Will.

II.

“COME AND DINE.”

— Peter having drawn in the net and fishes, he and the other six Apostles stood on the shore, waiting. Here, they were on familiar ground, and the Master before them as formerly, but they no longer had the old feeling of easy companionship with Him; filled with awe, motionless, they gazed at Jesus, the fire, the cooked fish, and the bread. "Jesus says to them: 'Come and dine'." In dazed wonder, they approached, and sat down to that meal, provided, cooked, and served by the Lord. But they ate in silence; for "none of them dared ask Him: Who are You? knowing that it was the Lord. (John 21:12). They were certain that it was Jesus, but there was something about Him, that withheld them from asking questions. At this meal, Jesus followed His usual custom; He took the bread and gave to them, and the fish in like manner. But there is no reason for supposing that He Himself partook of it.

Prayer.

O Lord, there are times when we are so filled with wonder at Your goodness to us, that when we kneel to thank You, we find ourselves dumb from the intensity of our feelings; and such silence is indeed a prayer of gratitude.

And it is not alone for many spiritual blessings on our souls, that we have to thank You, but also for Your tender solicitude for our temporal wants and comforts. And yet how seldom we thank You for these, even when they appear to be almost miraculously provided for us. O generous Lord, have we ever thanked You as much for the things You gave us, as we have complained to You afterwards when You have withdrawn them!

III.

PETER'S LOVE.

— Jesus had a Most important object in His appearance to the Apostles by the Sea of Galilee: He was about to confirm and complete Peter's installation as Chief Pastor of the Universal Church. But first, Peter must give a public proof of his fitness. Peter had publicly denied his Master, and although Jesus had already forgiven him, He now required of Peter a public confession, not of his fault, but of his love. "When therefore they had dined, Jesus says to Simon Peter: Simon, son of John, love you Me more than these?" More than these, more than those who had not denied Him! More than John, who was listening, and whom Jesus loved! Peter humbly answered: "Yea, Lord, You know that I love You." But this was not enough. Three times, Peter had denied Jesus, so Jesus

persisted with the question, until Peter had three times protested his love. But Peter, not knowing the design of Jesus, "was grieved" by so much questioning, which seemed to imply a doubt of his love, and so his third, answer was: "Lord, You know all things: You know that I love You." (John 21:15-16).

Prayer.

O Jesus, You have said: "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul; and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment." This is the first and greatest commandment because if we keep it, our love for You will lead us to the observance of all the others, and You desire us to keep Your commandments out of love for You, rather than from fear of Your punishment. Grant us, therefore, O Lord, a love that is "charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith," that we may keep all Your commandments, for love of You.

IV.

PETER'S COMMISSION.

— After the two first protestations of Peter's love Jesus had said to him: "Feed My Lambs," but after the third and final one, Jesus commanded him: "Feed My Sheep." From this solemn and impressive dialogue, are drawn the dogmatic conclusions regarding the Primacy and Supremacy in Jurisdiction of Peter and his successors in the Papal Chair. Peter was to feed the whole flock, the Lambs and the Sheep, the parents and the little ones; yea, even the other Pastors, who though Shepherds of a defined area, diocesan, provincial, or natural, are nevertheless, themselves Sheep, under the care and direction of the one supreme Pastor of the whole Church on earth. Jesus, on this same occasion warned Peter: "Amen, Amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you did gird yourself and did walk where you would. But when you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you and lead you whither you would not. And this He said, signifying by what death he should glorify God." (John 21:18-19).

The immense responsibility of this commission involved the complete sacrifice of Peter's personal affections, and freedom, and ended in his martyrdom by crucifixion.

Prayer.

O Jesus, You are the Good Shepherd Who laid down His life for His sheep, and did command Peter and his successors to feed us, Your lambs and sheep, with sound doctrine, and guard us in morals. Like sheep, we have sometimes gone astray, but You and Your pastors have recovered us and brought us back to the fold. And may the God of Peace, who raised from the dead the great Pastor, Jesus Christ, fit us in all goodness, that we may do His Will and may He work in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Command III.

"Going, therefore, Teach ye All Nations."

St. Paul, writing to the Christians in Rome, says: "Faith comes by hearing; and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom. 10:17). And to His faithful Disciple, Timothy, whom he trained to be a proficient preacher (and bishop), he wrote: "Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine." (2 Tim. 4:2).

The Command of Jesus to the Apostles "Going therefore, Teach ye all nations!" (Math, 28:19), places also on the faithful, an obligation of hearing the teaching of the preachers, whose office it is to teach the doctrines of Jesus. "For we preach," said St. Paul, "not ourselves, but Jesus Christ our Lord: and ourselves your servants through Jesus. For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ Jesus." (2 Cor. 4:5-6).

I.

ON THE GALILEAN MOUNTAIN.

— Jesus had promised on the Resurrection morn, that He would manifest Himself to His brethren in Galilee. Accordingly, "the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them." (Math. 28:16). Here assembled, not only the Eleven, but a large number of those who believed in the Resurrection. They had come from Jerusalem, Judea, and Galilee, because the Lord's message had been addressed to the whole body of disciples: "Go, tell My brethren that they go into Galilee. There they shall see Me." (Math. 28:10). It is most probable that this manifestation on the mountain is the one alluded by St. Paul, in 1 Cor. 15:6: "Then was He seen by more the five hundred brethren at once: of whom many remain until this present, and some are fallen asleep." St. Matthew mentions only the Eleven, because they were the chief persons invited, and it was to them specially, that Jesus was about to give His very grave Command. The others were there, that they might be witnesses.

Prayer.

O Jesus, with what forethought You have arranged for the application of Your redemption to each individual soul! Having given Your commission to the Apostles, You now assemble them in presence of the people, that both Shepherds and Flock may hear Your command; the pastors, to execute it; the people, to understand that they must listen to and obey the pastors You have appointed to teach and govern them. We admire the methodical system with which You best provided for us to benefit fully by Your copious Redemption. Oh, fill us with humble submission and reverent obedience to our pastors; and endow our pastors with understanding and fortitude to direct us in the way of Your commands.

II.

SOME DOUBTERS.

— When the eleven Apostles and the large congregation of disciples from Jerusalem, Judea and Galilee were assembled on the mountain in response to the command of Jesus, He appeared suddenly, as was His wont now, since His resurrection. Immediately on seeing Him, the Eleven, and most of the disciples, fell down and adored Him; "but some doubted." (Math 28:17). These doubters could not have been any of the Eleven, nor any of the women who had seen Jesus at the Sepulchre, nor any of the disciples who had seen Him in Jerusalem, they would be of those, who, as yet, had only heard the reports of the Resurrection, and had come to hear and see for themselves. Jesus did not give any attention to the doubters; He knew that, given time, their own judgment, sifting the evidence, would lead them to the certainly of truth. His object here was to give the Apostles their world-wide commission; the disciples and doubters were invited only to be witnesses to the fact, and to testify later to the command which Jesus now gave to the Eleven.

Prayer.

O all-wise and provident Lord Jesus, You know that the wise of heart seek to acquire knowledge, and desire instruction; and that there are many expounders of attractive but unsound doctrines, to lead the unwary astray. Grant then, that when we read or hear condemnation of our Catholic doctrine or practice and when difficulties are presented to us, we may seek enlightenment from Catholic sources; and by the reading of authorized Catholic books, and the hearing of catechetical instructions in Church, have our doubts dispelled and our faith strengthened.

Open, O Lord, the mouths of Your teachers, and the ears of Your people, that being well instructed in our Faith, we may never doubt that the true guide to salvation is the Catholic Church.

III.

"TEACH, ALL YOU, ALL NATION'S."

— While all those congregated on the Galilean mountain were attentively regarding Him, "Jesus coming spoke to them, saying: All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. (Math. 28:18). These words addressed by Jesus to the entire concourse of people, were spoken by Him, not as the Son of God, for as such He had all power in Himself and no more could be given Him; but as Man, He had merited by His sufferings and death, this plenitude of power given Him. In the exercise of this authority, Jesus now gave this command to His Apostles: "Going, therefore, teach, all you, all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Math. 28:19-20). Note here the inexhaustible contents of this Command; He Who issues it has "all power"; its subject is "all things", it is directed to "all nations"; and it is to continue for "all days."

Prayer.

O Jesus, co-equal Son of the Omnipotent Father, and Son, Divine and Human, of the Blessed Virgin, You did merit, in Your humanity, all the extraordinary power given to You; and You did use it to send Your Apostles with delegated power to teach all nations all that You have commanded; and You have promised to remain with them all days, even to the consummation of the world. Grant us then, O Lord, to listen carefully to the teaching of our pastors, and to observe Your Commands in the spirit and meaning which You have enlightened Your Church to explain to us. And be You always with us, strengthening us all with Your power, that we may always keep Your commandments in all their entirety.

IV.

FAITH AND BAPTISM.

— To St. Mathew's account of the Command of Jesus to the Apostles to go teach all nations and baptize them, St. Mark adds the effects which will follow on the hearers: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believes not shall be condemned." (Mark 16:16). This believing does not mean a simple trust in Christ for personal salvation, but a living faith, which not only believes the revealed truths taught by Christ, but is actuated by charity to do good works. St. James, in his Epistle, says: "'Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James 1:22). While Baptism is a condition of salvation, it does not always require a belief in it; for just as infants are born in original sin without any fault of their own, so Baptism cleanses them without any belief of their own. God also grants the justifying grace of Baptism to everyone who,

believing the necessary Christian Truths, sincerely desires Baptism and does his best to procure it, but who dies before he can receive it. This is called Baptism of Desire.

Prayer.

O God, I believe in You, and all Your Church does teach because You have said it, and Your word is true. But I know that "if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, it profits me nothing," for even "the devils believe and tremble." I believe also that "even as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without good works is dead. For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Grant us then, O Lord, that faith which works through charity. "And this is the charity of God, that we keep His commandments." And grant us, "a constant mutual charity among ourselves, for charity covers a multitude of sins."

Command IV.

"Wait for the Promise of the Father."

That the teaching and preaching of the Apostles should be authoritative, accurate, and convincing, Jesus now "opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures." (Luke 24:45). "And eating together with them, He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father, which you have heard (says He) by My mouth." (Acts 1: 4). This promise, Jesus had made to the Apostles on the night of the Eucharistic Supper: "I will not leave you orphans... I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete (this word means Comforter or Adviser or Advocate) that He may abide with you forever... But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you." (John 14, verses 18, 26 and 26).

I.

BACK AGAIN IN THE SUPPER ROOM.

— For forty days after the Resurrection, Jesus comforted and instructed His disciples. At His direction, they left Galilee and returned again to Jerusalem. Here, a few hours before His Ascension, He assembled the Apostles (according to tradition in the Supper Room) to give them His final instructions, and to bid them farewell. For the last time, He took His place at the table consecrated by the Eucharistic Banquet. The surroundings were full of memories: The Washing of the Feet; Peter's protest; Judas, now in a suicide's grave; the Holy Eucharist; Christ's very solemn words; their own defection afterwards in the hours of His humiliation; ultimate triumph of Jesus, which at first, they could not believe. And now they were sitting at table, with Jesus in human form, and for the last time. He was not indeed leaving them, but in future they should see Him only with the eyes of faith. Now, "eating together with them" (Acts 1:4,) Jesus recalled to their memory, words He had spoken before, and instructed them for their future direction.

Prayer.

O Lord, I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not Your commandments from me. Direct my steps according to Your word, and let not iniquity have dominion over me. Show, O Lord, Your way to me, and teach me Your paths. Direct me in Your truth and teach me; and You are God my Saviour, and on You have I waited all the day long. Teach me Your goodness and discipline and knowledge; for I have believed Your commandments. Direct, O Lord, we beseech You, our actions by Your holy

inspirations, and carry them on by Your gracious assistance, that every prayer and work of ours may always begin from You, and by You be happily ended. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

II.

FULFILMENT OF THE PROPHECIES.

— In His final disclosure to the Apostles assembled in Jerusalem, Jesus recalled to their memory how often He had impressed upon them that all the Old Testament prophecies concerning Him should be fulfilled. "He said to them: These are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms, concerning me." (Luke 24:44). The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms; these three great divisions of the Old Testament (according to the Jewish method of dividing the Old Testament) contain all the outstanding prophecies about the Messiah. Jesus had used these scriptures often to prove that He was sent by God, and is Himself God. He instructed from them, and by them confirmed His doctrines; He vindicated them from the calumnies of objectors; He quoted them against Sadducees and Pharisees and against Satan himself when he dared to tempt Him. And now in His last discourse, He expends Himself in explaining them to the Apostles.

Prayer.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who for the perpetual promotion of Your faithful people, did instruct Your Apostles on the early prophecies and their fulfilment in You; we accept, without question, the interpretation of them which You transmit to us, through the Apostles.

St. Peter testified that he himself heard the Father's voice from heaven, (2 Pet. 1:17), declaring of You: "This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him." And as You have said to Your Apostles: "He that hears you, hears me," grant that we may always listen with humble attention and reverent minds, to the explanation of Your words and the lessons drawn from them, by our pastors, Your authorised teachers.

III.

OPENING THEIR UNDERSTANDING.

— Our Divine Lord commanded the Apostles to teach all nations, and as the Scriptures are the very foundation of that teaching, Jesus now "opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." (Luke 24:45). St. Peter warns us of the danger of using the Scriptures without understanding them. Referring specially to the Epistles of St. Paul, he writes: "In which are certain things hard to understand, which the unlearned and the unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction." (2 Peter 3:16.) Jesus, for the preservation of the faithful, opened the understanding of the Apostles, who were to be the future teachers of His doctrines as contained in Holy Scripture; and it follows that, for the explanation of the true meaning of these Scriptures, the successors of the Apostles also have their understanding opened, to interpret with authority the word of God contained therein. Pope Leo XIII, in his Encyclical "Providentissimus Deus" (18th November, 1893), urges upon the laity, as well as on the clergy, the study of Scripture under specified safeguards. This Encyclical is inserted as a preface in our Bibles published since, and should be read carefully by all who study the Scriptures.

Prayer.

With the Psalmist, I pray: "Open my understanding, O Lord, and I will consider the wondrous things of Your law. Your testimonies are justice forever; give me understanding, and I shall live; and I will search Your law; and I will keep it with my whole heart." In the New Testament, (2 Peter 1:19-20), St. Peter writes of the Apostles: "We have the more firm prophetic word; whereunto you do well to attend... Understanding this first: That no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation." We pray You, therefore, O Lord, to confirm us in humble obedience, that while we read the Scriptures, we may always submit our judgment respectfully to the authorised interpretation of Holy Church.

IV.

THE PROMISE OF THE PARACLETE.

— While Jesus was at table with the Apostles, "eating together with them, He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father, which you have heard (says He) by My mouth." (Acts 1:4). Now that He was about to leave them, Jesus recalled to their memory the assurance He had given them, on the night of the Eucharistic Supper "I will ask the Father; and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever: the Spirit of truth, Whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, nor knows Him. But you shall know Him; because He shall abide with you and shall be in you." (John 14:16-17). Continuing, the same discourse, Jesus had assured them "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will teach you all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, He shall speak. And the things that are to come, He shall show you." (John 16:13).

Prayer.

O God, Who by Baptism, regenerated us, that the Holy Ghost might dwell within us, and, by Confirmation, did strengthen our souls with a fuller measure of His gifts; keep us always in the state of grace, that we may be worthy temples of the Holy Ghost, and glorify and bear God in our body.

Come, O Holy Ghost, take possession of our hearts, and kindle within them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your spirit, O Lord, and they shall be created, and You shall renew the face of the earth. O God, Who, by the light of the Holy Ghost does instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that we may be always truly wise, love what is right in all things, and ever rejoice in His holy consolations, thorough Jesus Christ our Lord.

Command V.

"You shall be witnesses unto Me."

Jesus, having opened the understanding of the Apostles, led them out of the Supper Room and walked towards the Mount of Olives. On the way, He said to them: "You shall be witnesses unto Me." (Acts 1:8). When the appointed time came, the Apostles, in obedience to this Command, went forth and preached penance and the remission of sins, in the name of Jesus, unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. St. Peter, addressing the converts at Caesarea, declared: "We are witnesses of all these things that He did in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, Whom they killed, hanging Him upon a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and gave Him to be made manifest. Not to all the people, but to witnesses preordained by God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him, after He arose again from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He Who was appointed by God, to be Judge of the living and of the dead." (Acts 10:39-42).

I.

ON THE WAY TO OLIVET.

— On the way to the Mount of Olives, the Apostles accompanied Jesus, and we may believe they were followed by some disciples and the holy women, among whom would surely be the Blessed Mother of Jesus, since she was with the Apostles in the Supper Room on their return. (Acts 1:14). The Apostles, on the way, seem to have been entertaining bright dreams of earthly glory; thinking, perhaps, of the twelve thrones, Jesus had once promised them, and on which they were to sit and judge the twelve tribes of Israel; for now: "They therefore who had come together asked Him, saying: Lord, will You at this time restore again the Kingdom of Israel? But He said to them: It is not for you to know the times or moments, which the Father has put in His own power." (Acts 1: 6-7). Thus, Jesus checked, with gentle charity, the ever-surging ambitions of His children. But, lest their ardour should be cooled by this reproof, He continued: "But you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth." (Acts 1: 8).

Prayer.

O Jesus, You did hold out, at first, great inducements to encourage Your disciples; and even now, You do not condemn their ambition, but direct it, by unselfish motives, to higher ends. When the Apostles came really to understand You, they laboured zealously, not for worldly advancement, but for the eternal reward in the Kingdom of heaven. O grant, that, while we work and suffer here, as You have appointed us, we may always strive to merit that kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world, and which shall endure forever, world without end. Amen.

II.

BLESSING THE APOSTLES AND DISCIPLES.

— Jesus, with His company, now proceeded up the Mount of Olives. St. Luke says: "He led them out as far as Bethania." (Luke 24:50). This means, as far as the upper boundary of the suburbs of the town. Bethany itself was situated halfway down the farther side of the Mount. Jesus had often passed through it on other journeys, and some of His devoted friends dwelt there, but the best of them would be in His company now; so there could be no reason for Him going down the town, and coming back up again. On the top of the Mount (tradition has preserved the site, and erected a monument on it,) Jesus bade a last brief farewell to the Apostles and the friends who had shared in the joys and sorrows of His earthly life. As yet, they knew not what the future held in store for them; but Jesus knew the void that the departure of His visible and tangible presence would make in their lives; and to sustain them against depression, "lifting up His hands, He blessed them." (Luke 24: 50).

Prayer.

Blessed, O Lord, were they who saw You face to face, and heard Your voice, and received the blessing under Your pierced and glorified hands. And blessed are we, who have not seen, and have believed. Blessed are the poor in spirit, and the meek, and they that mourn, and they that hunger and thirst after justice; and blessed are the merciful, and the clean of heart, and the peacemakers, and they that suffer persecution for justice' sake; for their reward is very great in heaven. "Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

"Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He comes shall find watching... Be ye therefore ready, for at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come."

III.

THE ASCENSION.

— "And it came to pass, whilst Jesus blessed them, He departed from them." (Luke 24:51) "While they looked on, He was raised up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight." (Acts 1:9). The Apostles and Disciples stood awe-stricken, filled with glad wonder, now firmly convinced of the Divinity of Jesus. "And while they were beholding Him going up to heaven, behold two men stood by them in white garments. Who also said: Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus, Who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven." (Acts 1:10-11). As to His coming again, and when that might be, they probably gave little thought just then. His last words and act had been a Divine blessing to cheer and sustain them; and that blessing would remain with them, even in times of such stress that they might not think of it; and it would strengthen them to endure adversity, and carry on successfully the work; He had begun and now confided to them.

Prayer.

O triumphant Jesus, we rejoice with You in Your glorious Ascension, and we are indeed glad, because You are with the Father, Who loves You, and Whom You love. Our hearts are not troubled, nor are we afraid. We know that You have gone to prepare a place for us in Your Father's house, in which there are many mansions, and that You will come again and take us to Yourself, that where You are we also may be with You. We understand, O Lord, that we are yet on trial here, and that we must encounter temptation, and endure disappointment, and suffer pain, and be made sorrowful; but You will come again and turn our sorrow into joy; and our heart shall rejoice, and our joy no man shall take from us.

IV.

ADORATION AND GREAT JOY.

— When Jesus had vanished from their sight, and the angels had told them they need no longer stand looking up to heaven, the Apostles and Disciples, adoring, "went back into Jerusalem with great joy." (Luke 24:52). They returned to the house wherein they had been accustomed to meet, and "went up into an upper room," the abode of Peter, and the other Apostles. Here "all these were persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women and Mary, the Mother of Jesus." (Acts 1:13-14). Here they waited, as Jesus had commanded them, until they should be endowed with power from on high. And their waiting was with joy, remembering the words of Jesus: "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world sees Me no more. But you see Me; because I live, and you shall live. In that day, you shall know that I am in the Father; and you in Me, and I in you. He that has My commandments and keeps them; he it is that loves Me. And he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father." (See John 14:18-21).

Prayer.

O Jesus, You have said that as the Father has loved You, You also have loved us. Grant that we may always abide in Your love. You have said further: "If you keep My commandments you shall abide

in My love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and your joy may be fulfilled".

Help us, O Lord, to keep Your commandments, all the days of our waiting here, that our joy may be filled in eternity, when we all shall see You face to face, and rejoice in the everlasting possession of Your love. Amen.

Conclusion

Jesus entered "into heaven itself, that He may appear now in the presence of God for us." (Heb. 9:24). "For the suffering of death" He was "crowned with glory and honour." (Heb. 2: 9). And in heaven, He is "always living to make intercession for us." (Heb. 7:25).

"He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause, God also has exalted Him and has given Him a name which is above all names: That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow; of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth: And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father." (See Phil. 2:8-11).

"And therefore we also having so great a cloud of witnesses over our head, laying, aside every weight and sin which surrounds us, let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us. Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, Who, having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sits on the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:1-2).

Let us then, having confidence in Jesus, Who has prayed, and still prays for us: "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom You have given Me may be with Me: that they may see My glory which You have given Me, because You have loved Me before the creation of the world." (John 17:24).
