

A612 – 618 Feria VI post Laetare Sermo unicus.

St. Vincent Ferrer – Sermon On the Raising of Lazarus
John 11:1-46

He cried with a loud voice," (Jn 11:43) Today we read the gospel of the raising of Lazarus by Christ. This shall be our sermon. But first let us salute the Virgin Mary, etc.

"With a loud voice," etc. (v. 43). The holy gospel today briefly contains three miraculous incidents about the raising of Lazarus:

The first situation is humanly reluctant. [humanitus retractiva]

The second situation is leading to merit. [meritalis inductiva]

The third situation is principally effective. [principaliter effectiva]

And of this third the theme speaks, "He cried out with a loud voice," i.e. Jesus commanding, saying "Lazarus, come forth," (Jn 11:43).

HUMANLY RELUCTANT

The first situation is human reluctance. The apostles were afraid that Christ would try to raise Lazarus, for they all could be stoned in Jerusalem, and so they were discouraging Christ from going to Bethany which is near Jerusalem, where Lazarus had died. The promised land had been divided into three provinces: Judea, Galilee and Samaria. Christ had many enemies in the province of Judea and they frequently wanted to kill him. He had denounced the notorious sins, and vices of the Pharisees, the princes and the priests, and he was proving himself to be divine. But because the hour of his passion had not yet come, he withdrew from the province of Judea and came to the province of Galilee where he was beloved. In the mean time Lazarus died in the province of Judea. So Jesus said to the apostles, "Let us go into Judea again," (Jn 11:7). The apostles, afraid of the situation, said to Christ, "Rabbi, the Jews but now sought to stone you: and you are going there again?" (v.8). See here the human reluctance, but indirectly, because it is human to fear carnal death. Then Christ told them that Lazarus, his friend, had died, so he wanted to go there.

To counter their fear he said to them, "Are there not twelve hours of the day?" If you ask, "And how is this to the point?" I say, very much so, and according to all four of the senses of sacred scripture.

First according to the literal sense. When Christ said these words it was the time of the vernal equinox, which came after the 25th of March. That was the same day he had been conceived. Fifteen days before his passion, Christ said these words, "Are there not twelve..., etc." Literally, a day has twelve hours, as if Christ wished to say to the apostles, "You should know that the rancor or ill will of the Jews against me already has changed, for just as the day and time changes from hour to hour, so also the heart of man changes, because therefore they have already changed [their minds], not only twelve hours ago, but many days ago, therefore, etc. This Christ said by way of rebuking the bad opinion which they had of the Jews, because a man ought always to presume the best about his neighbor, according to that in Luke 6, "Judge not, and you shall not be judged," (v. 37).

"Are there not twelve, etc." is allegorical when the saying or deed is understood to be about that which a man should believe. According to this explanation Christ is called "day." Note, because just as morning and evening make one day, according to Genesis 1: "...and there was evening and morning one day," (v. 5). So God and man make one person of Christ. Morning is the [day's] beginning, so also the divinity is the beginning of all things. I am, "the beginning, who also speak unto you," (Jn 8:25). Christ, as man was the evening and end of all things. Because God made daylight first, second the firmament, third the plants, fourth the sun and stars, fifth the birds and fishes, sixth the beasts, and seventh he made man. When therefore the Son of God took on humanity, then "there was evening and morning one day," i.e. God and man have become one person. Hence the church sings, "Whose wisdom joined in meet array the morn and eve, and named them Day," (Hymn: Lucis creator optime). About this one David says to God the Father, "By your ordinance the day goes on," (Ps 118:91).

This day has twelve hours, namely the twelve apostles, Luke 6, "And when day was come, he called his disciples unto him; and he chose twelve of them (whom also he named apostles)," (v. 13) The first hour was Peter, and so on for the rest. In the same place it is clear in the text when he said, "Are there not twelve hours," i.e. twelve Apostles are for the day, that is of Christ, which is to say just as the hours do not dismiss the natural day, nor days the hours, rather the hours follow the day inseparably, so neither ought you dismiss me, nor I you, rather I defend you. He did just that on the night of the passion, when he said to the Jews, "If therefore you seek me, let these go their way," (Jn 18:8). Behold the day, that is how it defends the hours. So he said to the Father, "Of those whom you have given me, I have not lost any one," (Jn 18:9).

The third explanation is tropological, that is moral. According to this exposition the bright day is penance. Reason: because guilt is called a dark night. Thus grace to which man comes through penitence, is called day. About this the authority: "The night is passed, and the day is at hand," (Rom 13:12). This day has twelve hours, namely twelve works of repentance.

-- The first hour is the acknowledgement of sins. Just as in the first hour the brightness of the day begins, and people can recognize each other, so in the recognition of sins man knows himself.

- The second is the contrition of the heart.
- Third, the purpose of amendment.
- The fourth, the avoidance of occasions [of sin].
- Fifth, oral confession.
- Sixth, bodily penance.
- Seventh, spiritual prayer.
- Eighth, almsgiving.
- Ninth, repayment of debts.
- Tenth, forgiveness of injuries.
- Eleventh, the restoration of [another's] good name.
- Twelfth, eucharistic communion.

About this day and [these] hours Christ says to the Apostles in the gospel, "Are there not twelve hours in the day," namely of penance which you keep, observe and do? Therefore you need not fear from death, and so he adds, "If a man walks in the day, he stumbles not, because he sees the light of this world: But if he walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light," namely, of grace, "is not in him," (v. 9-10).

The fourth explanation is anagogical, from "άνώ" which is above, and "άγώ" I lead, as in "I lead above," when the saying or action is explained as pertaining to hope. And according to this explanation the bright day is celestial glory. Reason: because in that place there is no night or darkness, nor obscurity of ignorance. Rather, when the soul enters paradise, God immediately shows it a book in which all things are revealed and made clear. This book of life is Christ who has two pages, namely divinity and humanity.

About this day of glory the authority in Psalm 83: "For better is one day in thy courts above thousands." (:s 83:11). From which follows this conclusion, that saint stays in paradise for only one day. Our life now has many days because of the interposition of nights. But in paradise there is no night. It is always day, brightly illuminated by the sun of justice. This day has twelve hours, that is twelve beatitudes, namely four of the soul and four of the body, and four of the composite. The first beatitude of the soul is wisdom of divine things. The second, knowledge of creatures. Third, memory of the past. Fourth, the joys of the universe. The first beatitude of the body is invulnerability. The second, clarity. The third, subtlety. The fourth, agility. The first beatitude of the composite or of the blessed life is general harmony. Second, general abundance. Third, full satisfaction. Fourth certain perpetuity. There shall be one day which is noted by the Lord in Zechariah 14: "And there shall be one day, which is known to the Lord, " (v. 7).

Or if you wish according to a second allegorical interpretation, say that the Catholic faith is a bright day, when it is without error, doubt and false opinion, about which the Apostle [Paul] to the Romans, 13: "The night is passed," namely of error, of darkness and of false opinions, "and the day is at hand," namely of the Catholic faith. This day has twelve hours, namely twelve articles of the faith according to the number of the twelve Apostles, all of which are in the "We believe in God..."

-- The first hour is of the creation of the world: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty," etc. The philosophers did not know this hour. They posited that the world was eternal.

-- The second, of the eternal generation of the son of God: "And in Jesus Christ His only Son, Our Lord," who is generated from the Father like a ray from the sun, etc.

-- The third of the incarnation of the Son of God: "Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary," like the rays of the sun passing through a glass window pane which they do not break.

-- Fourth of the passion of Christ: "Suffered under Pontius Pilate was crucified, died and was buried," lest some believing for themselves and obeying, would suffer in the pit of hell.

-- Fifth about the freeing of the holy patriarchs: "He descended into hell," namely to free the holy patriarchs.

-- Sixth on the resurrection of Christ: "On the third day he rose again from the dead."

-- Seventh, about his miraculous ascension: "He ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty."

-- The eight about his coming judgment: "He will come again to judge the living and the dead," that is the good and the bad. Whence he will come, namely from the right hand of God the Father.

-- Ninth, about the spiration of the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, like heat from the sun and its ray: "I believe in the Holy Spirit."

-- Tenth, the universal authority of the church which it is necessary to believe, because the universal church can not err in those things which are of the faith, Christ saying to Peter, "But I have prayed for thee," Peter, "that thy faith fail not, (Lk 22:32). Christ does not say this to Peter

insofar as he was an individual person, but insofar as he was the Pope, a common person: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," that is, universal.

-- Eleven is about the sanctification by the sacraments. By the sacraments the soul is made holy: "The Communion of Saints," that is of the sacraments, "the forgiveness of sins."

-- Twelfth is the general resurrection of all: "The resurrection of the body, and life everlasting."

When therefore Christ says to the Apostles, "Are there not twelve hours of the day?" which is to say, "Why do you fear temporal death since you are strong in the faith?" It is otherwise for those who are dying without faith and in error. Thus Christ says, "If a man walk in the day," that is, in the faith, "he stumbles not," by falling into hell forever. See how there was a remedy against a tucked-in tail [caudam retractativam, i.e. a fearful spirit]. So men are given this advice, to say every day, "I believe....," and "Try your own selves if you be in the faith; prove ye yourselves," (2 Cor 13:5).

LEADING TO MERIT

The second situation was leading to merit. This was the charity or love which Christ had for Lazarus his disciple, and Mary and Martha his sisters, and vice versa. Thus they drew him like a smoking candle which draws to itself the flame of another nearby candle, and this naturally, because since their hearts were like burning lamps, they drew that light. About which John 1: "It was the true light, which enlightens every man who comes into this world," (v. 9). See, this is the motivating reason, and so the Gospel says, "Jesus therefore came," to Bethany, "and found that he had been four days already in the grave (v.17)"....up to ... "he troubled himself and groaned in the spirit," (v. 33) Men do act in such a way, and "he troubled himself," namely by showing sadness in his face, and he wept, not only out of compassion for Mary and Martha, but also for the resurrection of Lazarus himself. He was about to bring [Lazarus] back from the state of sinlessness in which he presently was, to the state of being capable of sinning, for at the passion of Christ he also sinned. He lost faith in Christ. Behold the motivating situation which is called meritorious, because the love of Lazarus and his sisters for Christ was meritorious.

Morally. It must be noted here that in these words when it is said, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus," (v. 5), it is insinuated that this signifies three kinds of people who are loved by Christ. First, persons purely continent; second, persons worthily repentant; and third, persons justly governing.

First Christ loves purely continent persons, which is shown where it says, Jesus loved Martha, who always was a virgin, pure and continent. There are however here noted three grades of continence.

- First conjugal continence, which is between husband and wife, keeping the manner and faithfulness to each other. So Paul says, "Marriage honorable in all," keeping the manner, "and the bed undefiled," that is, keeping faith. "For fornicators and adulterers God will judge," (Heb 13:4).

- The second kind is the continence of widows, and this is better when widows avoid that act, because God wishes it to be only between husband and wife. The Apostle [Paul writes], "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that you should abstain from fornication," (1 Thess 4:3).

- The third grade is virginal purity, and it is better than the others, which is never to have sensed

that experience, neither desiring in the heart, nor speaking of it with the mouth, nor touching upon the deed, etc. And of this kind is Martha, and so she is loved much by Christ. About these three grades, Bede says, "Conjugal chastity is good, better is the continence of widows, but best is virginal purity."

Second the Lord loves repentant persons, which is shown where, "Jesus loved Mary Magdalen who was a penitent, whom the Lord Christ loved more after her repentance than before, according to the parable in Luke 15: "What man of you that hath an hundred sheep: and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders, rejoicing: And coming home, call together his friends and neighbors, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost? I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance," etc. (Lk 15:4-7). Note, he "lay it on his shoulders," and this when he carries the cross on his shoulders, then is fulfilled, "and the government is upon his shoulder," (Isa 9:6).

Third, God loves persons who rule justly, which is shown where, Jesus [loved] Lazarus who was the prefect and lord of one third of the city of Jerusalem. Say how [secular] lords and [churchly] prelates are loved by the Lord when they "enter through the gate." Second, when they live decently after they are in, and they care more for the souls than for their salaries. Third, when they divide their income into three parts, namely, one for themselves, another for their family and a third for the needy. Such men are presiding justly. It is otherwise with those who do not enter through the gate [i.e. legitimately promoted], but leap over, through robbery and simony [i.e. by bribery]. The temporal lords can be saved only by rendering just decisions and giving alms, because in judgment Christ does not ask the lay leaders whether they had said their breviary [literally, hours], or if they had fasted, but he asks of them if they had done justice for criminals, if they kept the people at peace, and if they corrected notorious sins.

But for many lords it happens that stupidly, they cover themselves with a shield, not just from where the arrows are coming, but from other direction. Many lord covers himself with the shield of devotion, but not in that part whence come the arrows of censure. They recite the hours, and hear many masses, but do not care about justice and peace, nor for the correction of sins. For this they will be rejected by Christ. About God's love for good lords, scripture says, "My heart loves the princes [of Israel]," (Judg 5:9).

PRINCIPALLY EFFECTIVE

The third situation, designated principally effective, is about the power and authority of Christ, his precept and command, at the resurrection of Lazarus. This is the theme: "He cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth," (Jn 11:43). The story from the Gospel begins when Jesus "comes to the tomb. Now it was a cave; and a stone was laid over it," etc. and continues to the end. In this raising of Lazarus, Christ performed five ceremonies

The first was when he had the tomb opened, saying, "Take away the stone." (v. 39). Martha said to him, "Lord, by this time he stinks, for it is now four days," wholly covered with worms.

Christ said to her, "Did not I say to you, that if you believe, you shalt see the glory of God?" (v. 40).

The second ceremony when Jesus, "lifted up his eyes said: Father, I give you thanks that you have heard me. And I knew that you always hear me; but because of the people who stand about I have said it, that they may believe that you have sent me," (v. 42). As a man he is less than the Father, and so he was praying, because as God it was not necessary.

The third ceremony: "He cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth," (v. 43). And he was not speaking to a corrupt body, because it hears nothing, but he was speaking to the soul existing in the limbo of the holy fathers, as is believed, because he [Lazarus] was a holy man, and "immediately he came forth." v. 44.

The fourth ceremony was when he said, "Lazarus, come forth" because he was "bound feet and hands with winding bands" according to Jewish custom.

The fifth ceremony was when he said, "Loose him, and let him go." "Many therefore of the Jews,...had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees, and told them the things that Jesus had done." vv. 45-46

Morally. In these five ceremonies Christ showed how a sinner is resuscitated from the death of guilt to the life of grace through penitence .

First the tomb ought to be opened, "Take away the stone," etc. In sacred scripture the body of the sinner is said to be a tomb. Reason: because outside it is a tomb and seems like a burial place, but from within it is filthy and stinking and full of corruption, where the dead soul lies. And so Christ says to the sinners, "Woe to you...because you are like to whitened sepulchers, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness," (Mt 23:27). This first speaks about religious who externally wear the habit of decency, but inwardly are full of all kinds of sorrow. Some of priests, who externally wear their white surplices, but within, corruptibility. Some of laity, both men and women.

The first task to be done, if dead, if the spirit should be raised, is to open the tomb. This happens in oral confession, namely, to roll back the huge and heavy stone of shame. O how many there are who prefer not to remove this stone, nor open the tomb to clearly confess sins, but wish to mitigate their sins, like women, and so many are damned for this. See why Christ said, "Take away the stone."

Martha said, "Lord, by this time he stinks, for it is now four days." He sins by thought, word, deed and omission, and gives forth such a stink that all cover their noses, except Christ who was standing as if he perceived nothing. By this confessors are instructed that when they hear grave and stinking sins, they should not show fastidiousness, nor spit, nor gasp, lest the sinner be shamed and not dare to tell their sins, saying, "What would he do if I were to tell him some even greater sins?" Rather, he should listen, patiently and cover his face, and encourage the penitent to tell his sins and not be ashamed. Thus scripture says to the confessor, Deut. 23: "Thou shalt not abhor the Edomite," i.e. the bloodstained sinner "because he is your brother: nor the

Egyptian," i.e. the gloomy sinner, because you also were a sinner. Thus, "Now we that are stronger, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak," (Rom 15:1). And of those who confess their sins, clearly can be said that, "Their throat is an open grave," (Ps 5:11).

The second ceremony was when Christ prayed after the opening of the tomb, in which he showed that after the confession is done, the confessor ought to pray saying, "May almighty God have mercy on you," etc. and so the heart of the sinner is disposed to contrition and to the good resolve to refrain from sins. James 5: "Confess therefore your sins one to another," that is, the laity to the priests, "and pray one for another, that you may be saved." (Jas 5:16).

Third, Christ "cries out with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth," from the tomb with respect to the body, and out from hell, with respect to the soul. So the sinner as he hears the penance assigned to him ought to come forth, forgiving sins himself, because otherwise he is not absolved, and he should come out of hell to which he was bound through guilt, if he does his penance, otherwise not. Hence, Luke 13: "unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish," (Lk 13:3).

The fourth ceremony. Christ said, "Loose him." This saying is by the confessor when he absolves the sinner by saying, "By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ commissioned to us and granted to you, I absolve you," etc. Thus, about this absolution it is said to confessors, "And whatsoever you shalt loose on earth," namely, you confessors, "it shall be loosed also in heaven, and whatsoever you shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven." (Mt 16:19). This binding is the imposition of the penance.

The fifth ceremony, "... and let him go," so namely if the penitent is not able to bear a large penance, give him a small one, because it is better to make it to purgatory with a small penance than with a large penance to end up in hell, and this is said against those confessors who give exceedingly heavy penances. About which Matthew says, c. 23: " For they bind heavy and insupportable burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders," (v.4). It can also be understood another way, namely that many are absolved by a confessor from the bonds of sins who are prevented from completing their penance, because a husband prevents his wife, and e converso, a friend a friend, a father his son, and e converso. No one should interfere with another doing penance unless it might possibly be hurtful, to whom Christ says, " But woe to you...[who] shut the kingdom of heaven against men, for you yourselves do not enter in; and those that are going in, you suffer not to enter. " (Mt 23:13)

John 11:1-45 Douay translation.

1 Now there was a certain man sick, named Lazarus, of Bethania, of the town of Mary and Martha her sister. 2 (And Mary was she that anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair: whose brother Lazarus was sick.) 3 His sisters therefore sent to him, saying: Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. 4 And Jesus hearing it, said to them: This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God: that the Son of God may be glorified by it. 5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus. 6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he still remained in the same place two days. 7 Then after that, he said to his disciples: Let us go into Judea again. 8 The disciples say to him: Rabbi, the Jews but now sought to stone thee: and goest thou thither again? 9 Jesus answered: Are there not twelve hours of the day? If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world: 10 But if he walk in the night, he

stumbleth, because the light is not in him. 11 These things he said; and after that he said to them: Lazarus our friend sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. 12 His disciples therefore said: Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. 13 But Jesus spoke of his death; and they thought that he spoke of the repose of sleep. 14 Then therefore Jesus said to them plainly: Lazarus is dead. 15 And I am glad, for your sakes, that I was not there, that you may believe: but let us go to him. 16 Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples: Let us also go, that we may die with him. 17 Jesus therefore came, and found that he had been four days already in the grave. 18 (Now Bethania was near Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.) 19 And many of the Jews were come to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. 20 Martha therefore, as soon as she heard that Jesus had come, went to meet him: but Mary sat at home. 21 Martha therefore said to Jesus: Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. 22 But now also I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. 23 Jesus saith to her: Thy brother shall rise again. 24 Martha saith to him: I know that he shall rise again, in the resurrection at the last day. 25 Jesus said to her: I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live: 26 And every one that liveth, and believeth in me, shall not die for ever. Believest thou this? 27 She saith to him: Yea, Lord, I have believed that thou art Christ the Son of the living God, who art come into this world. 28 And when she had said these things, she went, and called her sister Mary secretly, saying: The master is come, and calleth for thee. 29 She, as soon as she heard this, riseth quickly, and cometh to him. 30 For Jesus was not yet come into the town: but he was still in that place where Martha had met him. 31 The Jews therefore, who were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary that she rose up speedily and went out, followed her, saying: She goeth to the grave to weep there. 32 When Mary therefore was come where Jesus was, seeing him, she fell down at his feet, and saith to him: Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. 33 Jesus, therefore, when he saw her weeping, and the Jews that were come with her, weeping, groaned in the spirit, and troubled himself, 34 And said: Where have you laid him? They say to him: Lord, come and see. 35 And Jesus wept. 36 The Jews therefore said: Behold how he loved him. 37 But some of them said: Could not he that opened the eyes of the man born blind, have caused that this man should not die? 38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself, cometh to the sepulchre. Now it was a cave; and a stone was laid over it. 39 Jesus saith: Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith to him: Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he is now of four days. 40 Jesus saith to her: Did not I say to thee, that if thou believe, thou shalt see the glory of God? 41 They took therefore the stone away. And Jesus lifting up his eyes said: Father, I give thee thanks that thou hast heard me. 42 And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people who stand about have I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. 43 When he had said these things, he cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth. 44 And presently he that had been dead came forth, bound feet and hands with winding bands; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said to them: Loose him, and let him go. 45 Many therefore of the Jews, who were come to Mary and Martha, and had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in him. 46 But some of them went to the Pharisees, and told them the things that Jesus had done.