

St. Vincent Ferrer -- Sermon for Holy Saturday
Colossians 3

"For you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with him in glory."(Col 3:3-4)

At Colossians 3:3 and in today's epistle. Yesterday, the end of the sermon was the burial of the body of Christ, but about his soul where did it go, or what it did do, nothing was said. So now I wish to preach on this matter. But first we salute the Virgin Mary, etc. Already we can wish her joy and happiness, because soon the glorious resurrection of her son will happen, so we can greet her humbly and devoutly saying to her, Hail Mary. etc.

"Your life," etc. For introducing the declaration of this word and preaching this matter it must be understood that sacred doctrine is general and certain to the Christian faith, that after the bodily death of Christ, his soul descended into hell, and it is an article of the faith saying, "died and was buried," with respect to the body, "he descended into hell," with respect to the soul, although he could have immediately ascended into heaven if he had wished, but he chose not to, rather he wished to be so humbled, because he wished to descend principally to comfort the holy fathers, for liberating them. Just as a king, having a battlefield victory wishes to enter the city in person, so Christ. And as long as his body was in the tomb, that long was his soul in limbo, and the next day the soul of Christ, together with the holy fathers would come out of limbo and assuming his glorious body resurrected. This is the true teaching of Christian faith, confirmed by the authority of Christ saying, "For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights: so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights," (Mt 12:40). Tell briefly the story of Jonah the prophet, as is found Jonah 1 and 2. And how he was a figure of the passion of Christ. The ship in which Christ sailed is human nature. Reason, because like the way a ship is made, namely narrow in the beginning, wide in the middle etc., likewise in the time of Christ, Gal 4: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent his Son," (Gal 4:4). Now it is trimmed off like a stern. In the middle of the deck is placed the cross of Christ [Malus huius vanis in medio positus fuit crux Christi]. The sail is the body of Christ. "She is like the merchant's ship," (Prov 31:14). This ship is battered by great waves and dangers of sinking into hell, nor was there another remedy of escaping but only that Jonah, i.e. Christ, be thrown into the sea, namely into the bitterness of suffering and death. And the whale, i.e. hell, opened its mouth and received him and held him three days and three nights, but on the next day he spit him up, and although the body of Christ and the soul on that day were divided and separated, nevertheless divinity never was separated nor divided, neither from the body nor from the soul, but all was with the body in the tomb, and all was with the soul in limbo, as St. Thomas says in the [Third Part, q. 50, a. 2 & 3](#).

If it is asked how is this possible. I shall give you two comparisons for your eyes to strengthen your understanding. First the apple, one part white and the other part red. which if it is cut by a knife into two parts, its odor remains with both divided parts. The same with the humanity of Christ. Think that the humanity of Christ is like an apple, whose white part is the soul of Christ, purest without any defect, the red part his flesh, bloodied from the passion. About which

Solomon, Canticle 5 in the person of the virgin Mary saying, "My beloved is white and ruddy,," (Song 5:10). The eternal divinity is united to the body and soul of Christ before the passion and death, like smell is joined and united to an apple. But the humanity of Christ, by the sword of death was divided and separated into two principal parts, but nevertheless, the odor, i.e. the eternal divinity always remained with both part inseparably.

A second image is more beautiful and clear, of a piece of crystal to the ray of sun which completely is filled with light and the brightness of the sun. For which reason if it is divided into two parts, the whole clarity of the sun remains with each divided part. So too with the humility of Christ, purer than crystal, illumined by the light and brightness of divinity, which broken in death, the whole divinity remains inseparably with each divided part, hidden, namely with the body in the grave, and with the soul in limbo or in hell. "His brightness shall be as the light; horns are in his hands: There is his strength hid: Death shall go before his face.," (Hab 3:4f). In which is found three times of Christ, namely the time of his preaching, where " His brightness shall be as the light,". Second is the time of his bitter passion, " horns are in his hands," namely of the nails in his hands. And [third] the time of his death, where, " There is his strength hid," namely his divinity, which was hidden with his body in the tomb and with his soul in limbo. Note, " Death shall go before his face " Before the passion of Christ death itself followed from the persecution of the Jews, not that death would have something in Christ, and Christ was followed until it caught him. But after his resurrection death went before him. So he says "Death shall go before his face," Of this hiding Isaiah also speaks: "Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel the savior.," (Isa 45:15). Of this hiding speaks the theme, " your life," that is divinity is hidden with Christ.

Note for continuing of the sermon that although divinity is eternal, then it was hidden to those who were in the world, nevertheless then it was shown and manifested to those from hell, not that all from hell would see it, but all who were in hell and who knew Christ to be true God and true man. And divinity was shown to them and manifested in four ways, according that there were four places in hell

- First, the lowest place is the prison of the damned.
- Second, is the limbo of the fathers.
- Third is the limbo of those being purified,
- Fourth is the bosom of the holy fathers.

In each of these four the divinity of Christ was manifested in some way, because he descended to all, as the article of faith says, "died and was buried, and descended into hell [inferos]. Note the plural, "hells" [inferos]. But they did not see the divinity but only those who were in the bosom of the holy fathers, although he descended to all. So the Apostle, Ephesians 4: "he also descended first," that is before he rose, "into the lower parts of the earth ,," (Eph 4:9). So it is good to know what he did there.

HELL

The first place, and the lowest, is the place of hell, the prison of the damned, filled with inextinguishable fire, which by divine power, tortures demons and damned souls. The soul of Christ descended to this place and there showed his divinity by rigorous reproaches, not

according to its essence but according to effect, as St. Thomas says, [\[Summa theologica\] III, q. 55, a. 2.](#)

For two reasons the soul of Christ descended to these. First to bind Lucifer, who from the beginning of the world up to this time captured souls for one of the aforesaid four places. But yesterday, while Christ was on the cross with such a painful passion, abandoned by the apostles, disciples and friends, Lucifer, who first doubted whether he was the son of God, saying to himself, to the extent that this man is a holy prophet, nevertheless I shall lead him with me to hell, also came to Christ, and sat himself on the arms of the cross awaiting the soul of Christ. This is the image which St. Bede tells of this purpose, and it is also touched upon in the Gloss. It is said, briefly, the story of the son of Tobias going with Raphael, who wished to wash his feet in the river, and suddenly an immense fish, the biggest, lurched out to eat him. However he grabbed it by the gills and dragged it on shore etc., Tob. 6. Bede explains, that the river, quick and turbulent signified the sudden and turbulent death of Christ, because it came without due legal process. Christ wished to wash his feet, which are ourselves, we who touch the earth and are dirtied by sin. But suddenly a great fish, namely Lucifer or Satan came to devour Christ, and he seized it by the gills, etc. He was not seen by anyone, only by Christ, who said, "O Traitor, in this evil hour you have come here." But when the soul of Christ separated from his body, Lucifer knew that he was God, and he wished to flee, but he could not, because Christ seized him. He who wished to capture Christ, was captured by Christ, like the fish by Tobias. That the devil came to Christ, Authority: "For the prince of this world comes," namely, Lucifer who like a tyrant was ruling the world, "and in me he has not any thing.," (Jn 14:30). And that he was captured by Christ, Scripture: "Now is the judgment of the world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.," (Jn 12:31). Furthermore, it was Christ himself who seized and bound him in the prison of the damned, until the time of the antichrist, then he will be let loose for a time. And so Christ showed himself to be the Lord of hell, whose brass gates and barred windows he shattered.

The second reason why the soul of Christ descended was for rigorous rebuking. After he bound Lucifer, he scolded and reprovved the damned. About this Peter seems to write in his epistle saying "Christ also died once for our sins," (1 Pet 3:18f). And it follows "In which," at the time of death, "also coming he preached to those spirits that were in prison:," (v. 19). St. Thomas says in [III, q. 52, a.2 ad 3](#) that this preaching was not instructive, but rebuking [inrepativa], because as John Damascene says (De Fide Orth. iii): "As He evangelized them who are upon the earth, so did He those who were in hell"; not in order to convert unbelievers unto belief, but to put them to shame for their unbelief, since preaching cannot be understood otherwise than as the open manifesting of His Godhead to the hell-dwellers and in the descent of Christ to hell. This Thomas has in the same place.

Practically what was he saying to the evil emperors, kings and lords damned from their wicked lives and tyrannical rule, like Nero who was first who wished to have dominion, and Alexander and others wicked [strubis], that is accursed. "If you had used the good things I had given to you, gifts, for your lord, now you would have been saved." And he scolded the great philosophers, Plato, Aristotle and others about which Jerome says that they were damned, Christ says, "O Stupid ones, you were teaching and legislating and disputing about the one first principle and prime mover and first cause, in your schools, and in the temple you adored idols.

You had great knowledge and bad conscience." Also he scolded the proud, saying, "O wretched ones, if you had been humble, now you would have had glory." And the greedy, etc, priests, false prophets, the simoniacal. And the lustful, saying "O you who lived like pigs, see now you will not have the delights of glory," etc. So too the gluttons, the wrathful, the envious, like Cain. So the blasphemers, saying to the condemned thief, "O wretched one, did you not today blaspheme me on the cross?" So he reproached Judas, "O traitor, behold what you have bought, for such a cheap price." Think how many tears, cries wailings of those damned, despairing of salvation. See how Christ manifested his divinity there, rigorously confounding them.

LIMBO

The second place is called the place of children, as we say one place [porta, door] where all the children are who died with only original sin. Original sin is not committed by them, but received, like a painting falling into the mud, etc. Therefore that sin is not called actual, but original, because that stain is received in bodily generation. And so because it is not an actual sin, they do not have physical pain there, but they are said to have fire from the fact that they shall never see the face of God. And the wrath of God, in which they are born, is seen to be fire. According to Deuteronomy 32: "A fire is kindled in my wrath, and shall burn even to the lowest hell:," etc. (Deut 32:22). Holy scripture says, because they do not sleep bodily, so, like those who sleep are unaware of pain, so neither do these children sense pain [poenam]. Moreover Job says in the person of someone damned: "Why did I not die in the womb, why did I not perish when I came out of the belly? Why received upon the knees? why suckled at the breasts? For now I should have been asleep and still, and should have rest in my sleep, " (Job 3:11-13). St. Thomas says II Sent., dist. 34, a. 1 and see there the good doctor, that when they see the glory of the blessed, that they do not grieve nor are saddened, because that it is not relevant for them, just as you are not saddened because you do not have a kingdom, which doesn't pertain to you. But the son of a king a prince, to whom the kingdom pertains, grieves about this. Neither are you saddened when you see an eagle flying, because you do not have wings. So neither do these children grieve.

To these the soul of Christ descends for glorious consolation. Practically, imagine how as the soul of Christ appeared at the gate of limbo, those children immediately knew Christ to be the savior. Seeing his soul and adoring him, saying: "Glory be to you, Lord, who have died for mankind," etc. To whom he said, 'How are you?' They replied, "Lord it is good with us. We have great natural understanding and many graces and virtues," -- although they do not have sanctifying grace, "We debate with each other and we love each other." Christ said, "Therefore give thanks to God who freed you from the fire of hell," -- he showed them the place of the damned-- "and praise the Lord, and you will rest in peace."

PURGATORY

The third place is called the place of purgation. About which it must be known that some people die without original sin, therefore they do not go with those children dying without the sacrament of baptism in limbo [literally, at the border of hell, ad inferni limbum], and they are without mortal sin, so they do not go with the damned. But because they had not made appropriate penance for sins committed after they had been washed from original sin, according to the quality and quantity of sins, such people, because of the fact that they have contrition, do not go with the damned, but into another world. Divine mercy ordained a place which is called

purgatory, where souls are purified, where there is fire but there are no demons there, because no one there enters unless he was in the grace of God. This fire of purgatory lasts until judgment day. It burns souls by divine power, which our physical fire cannot do. If your soul would be thrown into the pit of a furnace, that fire would not harm it. But after the day of judgment the fire of purgatory will be extinguished. You might ask what if someone who on the day of judgment has not completed his penance, was not purged, what happens to him? Response: God shall increase the intensity of his punishment, etc. Of this place holy scripture says: "For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation.," (Sir 2:5).

To these Christ descends and visits with abundant liberation. The Doctors ask the question, and St. Thomas in [III, q. 52, a. 8](#): Whether Christ liberated all the souls which were then in purgatory? To that question it must be answered with a distinction. We can speak about this matter in two ways, either with the rigor of justice, or with the sweetness of mercy. If we speak in the first way, he liberated only those who had completed their time of penance, and this path St. Thomas follows in III Pars. If however we speak from the sweetness of mercy, we can say that he liberated all. And for this I will offer you two comparisons.

The first image is that of a newly crowned king, entering his city, who frees all the prisoners, unless they were captured for being between sides [? pro interesse partis]. Thus the king of glory, Christ, newly crowned with the crown of thorns, enters purgatory. All the souls in purgatory cried out to him, "Lord, free us." And Christ questioned, although he already knew, how long had they been there. They replied, "Lord we have been here already for a month, for a year," etc. Therefore, it is piously believed that Christ freed all. Authority: Isaiah reciting the word of God the father to his son, saying: "I have given you to be a covenant," that is peace, "of the people, that you might raise up the earth, and possess the inheritances that were destroyed: That you might say to them who are bound: Come forth: and to them who are in darkness: Show yourselves," (Isa 49:8f) There are four phrases [clausulae], of which two are about the life of Christ, the others about his death. First where, "I have given you to be a covenant of the people, that you might raise up," namely those who were sleeping in sins, whom Christ awakens by preaching. Second where, "and possess the inheritances that were destroyed," namely the rational souls which are the inheritance of God, destroyed through sin. Third where, "That you mightest say to them who are bound: Come forth." He does not speak there of those who are in the hell of the damned, because no one escapes from there, but about those in purgatory. Fourth where, "and to them who are in darkness: Shew yourselves,"

A second comparison is with a newly created Pope, who then grants great indulgences and numerous graces. How much greater Pope Jesus who is the Lord of graces and indulgences, because the Pope, his vicar, is not the lord of the church, but dispenser and manager [dispensator et procurator]. Since therefore the Pope can be so liberal, how much more so Christ, who is Lord. Authority, Isaiah 61: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me: he has sent me to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart, and to preach a release to the captives, and deliverance to who are shut up," (Isa 61:1). Note: the Spirit of the Lord, namely the Holy Spirit, is over me, Christ speaks insofar as he is man, because, insofar as he is God the Holy Spirit is not over him but equal, and one God. "He has sent me to preach to the meek," namely in this world for preaching and after death he says, "and to preach a release to the captives." Say how before the passion of Christ, after a soul had completed its purgatory, it

would go forth from there and go to the place of the holy fathers, which is called the bosom of Abraham. Authority, Lk 16: "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.," (Lk 16:22), because those fittingly repentant used to go there, but now they ascend to heaven and even after they leave purgatory. Say how the time assessed by God for staying in purgatory, can be reduced by suffrages of the living. So inheritors are bound to fulfill the last will and testament of the deceased, otherwise Christ says, Lk 18: "And will not God revenge his elect who cry to him day and night: ," (Lk 18:7).

BOSOM OF ABRAHAM

The fourth place is called the bosom of Abraham. Here the souls of the holy fathers were staying, who had been there from the beginning of the world until the resurrection of Christ. The first of those who entered it was Abel, and when Christ arose all came out of there with Christ. None there suffered punishment, but they did not yet have glory. Into this home the soul of Christ entered. Augustine says that just as the soul of Christ entered through this home, all those holy patriarchs beheld the divinity of Christ and experienced glory and paradise. About which Christ had said to the thief, "This you shall be with me in paradise.," (Lk 23:43). Augustine says that all the other souls of the holy fathers adored Christ, saying: "You have come, redeemer, you have come, whom we had expected every day. Now our joy is complete." Christ greeted them saying, "Peace be to you." Adam with all his sons and daughters humbly adored Christ, with all the patriarchs. Then Moses with the Prophets. Next Aaron with all the Priests, David with all the Kings. John the Baptist with all the Holy Innocents. Then, Eve with all the Holy Women. And Christ stayed with them until the resurrection. Authority, Mt 12: "For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights: so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights," (Mt 12:40). Also, the authority of Wisdom in the person of Christ: "I will penetrate to all the lower parts of the earth, and will behold all that sleep, and will enlighten all that hope in the Lord. ," (Sir 24:45). Note: " I will behold all that sleep," that is all the dead, "and will enlighten all that hope in the Lord," supply, with the light of divine glory.

Now there remains tomorrow the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. To which may he lead us, etc.

A752 The most fruitful sermons of winter time, of the spokesman and preacher of the divine word, professor of sacred Theology, the distinguished saint Vincent, confessor, of the divine Order of Preachers, are finished.