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61. To the lady his sister, dearer than life and eyes, a brother
 (June 20, 386)

Ordinarily, I do not leave your Holiness unacquainted with the events taking place here in your absence. You should know, then, that we have found some holy martyrs. When I had consecrated the basilica, many persons with one accord began appealing to me, saying: 'Consecrate this as you did the Roman basilica.' 'I will,' I said, 'if I find relics of martyrs.' And at once I was seized, as it were, with a great presentiment of some sort of divine sign.¹

In short, the Lord bestowed His favor. Even the clergy were afraid when I bade them clear away the ground in the spot before the grating of Sts. Felix and Nabor. I found encouraging signs. And when certain persons were brought forward to have my hands laid on them [in blessing], the holy martyrs began driving away [the evil spirit], so that before I had said anything one woman² was seized and thrown forward at the holy burial place. We found two men of wondrous stature, such as ancient ages bore. The bones were all intact and there was much blood.³ A great throng of people was there during these two days. In short, we arranged everything in orderly fashion. As it was close to evening, we transferred them to the basilica of Fausta. All that night watch was kept and blessings were given. The next day we transferred them to that which is called the Ambrosian Basilica. While they were being transferred a blind man was cured. My sermon to the people was as follows:

When I consider the overflowing and unprecedented number in this gathering of yours, and the gift of divine grace

¹ Augustine also describes this event (*Conf.* 9.7; *De civ. Dei* 22.8). See also Paulinus, *Vita Ambros.* 14.

² The editors read *una*, not *urna* as in the mss.

³ Some rationalists maintain that Ambrose found prehistoric burials in which bones were often covered with red ochre. Cf. Dudden, *op. cit.* 1 306-307.

which has shone forth in the holy martyrs, I confess I feel unequal to this task, nor can we express with words what we can scarcely understand with the mind or grasp with the eye. But when the regular reading of the holy Scriptures began, the Holy Spirit who spoke by the Prophets bestowed His gift so that we might utter something worthy of so great a throng and your hopes and the merits of the holy martyrs.

'The heavens declare the glory of God.'⁴ When this psalm is read, the thought occurs that it is not the material elements but heavenly graces which seem to offer worthy praise to God. Yet, today, it is evident from the chance reading of the lesson what heavens declare the glory of God. See on my right hand, see on my left, these most sacred relics! See these men of heavenly manner of life! Look at the rewards of a great soul! These are the heavens which declare the glory of God; these are the works of His hands which the firmament proclaims. It was not the charm of the world but the grace of God at work which brought them to the firmament of the most holy passion. In fact, long ago, their characters and virtues were tested and bore witness of them because they remained firm against the hazards of this world.

Paul was a heaven when he said: 'Our citizenship is in heaven.' James and John were heavens, and for this reason they are called 'Sons of Thunder.'⁵ In fact, John, like heaven, saw the Word with God.⁶ The Lord Jesus Himself was a heaven of everlasting light when He revealed the glory of God, but a glory which no one had beheld before. And so He said: 'No one has at any time seen God. The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has revealed him.'⁷ If you also are seeking for the works of God's hands, hear Job when he says: 'The spirit of God who made me.'⁸ Thus

⁴ Ps. 18.2.

⁵ Phil. 3.20.

⁶ Mark 3.17.

⁷ Cf. John 1.1.

⁸ John 1.18.

⁹ Job 33.4.

strengthened against the temptations of the Devil, he held the path of constancy without stumbling. But let us proceed to the remaining verses.

'Day,' it is said, 'unto day heralds the message.'¹⁰ See the true days which no mist of night makes false. See the true days of full light and brilliance everlasting which herald the work of God, not with foolish talk, but firm in the confession of Him from the innermost heart, persevering in martyrdom.

Another psalm which was read says:¹¹ 'Who is as the Lord our God who dwelleth on high, and looketh down on the low things in heaven and in earth?' God, no doubt, casts His eyes on the lowly, He who laid bare the relics of the holy martyrs of His Church, lying hid under the lowly turf, their souls in heaven, their bodies in the earth: 'Raising up the needy man out of the dust, lifting up the poor man out of the dunghill,' placing him, as you see, with the princes of his people. Whom are we to think of as the princes of his people if not the holy martyrs in whose number long ago the unknown Protase and Gervase were given place? They now cause the Church at Milan, barren of martyrs, now the mother of many children, to rejoice in the glory and examples of their suffering.

This should not be unlike the true faith: 'Day unto day heralds the message,'¹² soul unto soul, life unto life, resurrection unto resurrection. 'And night unto night makes it known,'—that is, flesh unto flesh whose suffering reveals to all its true knowledge of faith. Those nights are good, those nights are clear in which there are stars, 'For as star differs from star in glory, so also with the resurrection of the dead.'¹³

With good reason do people call this the resurrection of the martyrs. But I will see whether the martyrs arose for

10 Ps. 18.3.

11 Ps. 112.5-8.

12 Ps. 18.2.

13 1 Cor. 15.41,42.

their advantage or for ours. You know, and, in fact, have seen many persons cleansed of the evil spirits. And many who touched the clothing of the saints with their hands were rid of sicknesses which troubled them. Miracles from times past are beginning anew as when at the coming of the Lord Jesus great grace poured itself upon the earth. You have seen how many have been healed by the mere shadow of the bodies of the saints. How many handkerchiefs have been passed about! How many garments which were laid upon the sacred relics are now said to possess healing power in their very touch! Everyone is glad to touch the outer cloth and touching it he will be cured.

Thanks be to you, O Lord Jesus, for having aroused the spirit of the martyrs at this time when Your Church needs greater protection. Let everyone know the kind of defenders I need, those who can fight back but are not wont to attack. These I have secured for you, O holy people, so that they will bring help to all and harm to none. I am soliciting defenders like these, I do not have soldiers like these—soldiers, that is, who are not of the world, but soldiers of Christ.¹⁴ With such as these, I fear no ill-will; the greater the number of them, the safer are my defenses. And I hope for the protection from them for the very ones who grudge them to me. Let them come and see my bodyguards. I do not deny that I am surrounded with such arms: 'Those are strong in chariots, these in horses, but we will be great in the name of the Lord our God.'¹⁵

The text of holy Scripture tells how Eliseus spoke to his servant who was afraid when he was surrounded by the army of the Syrians and bade him not to fear: 'Because,' he

14 St. Charles Borromeo inscribed Ambrose's words, '*Tales ego ambio defensores*,' on a banner of Sts. Gervase and Protase, which was carried through the streets of Milan during the great plague of 1576-1577. This is but one instance of many, illustrating Charles' devotion to his saintly predecessor in the see of Milan.

15 Ps. 19.8.

said, 'there are more with us than against us.'¹⁶ To prove this he prayed that the eyes of Giezi be opened, and, when they were opened, he [Giezi] saw countless hosts of angels. Although we cannot see them, we feel that they are present. Our eyes were closed as long as the bodies of the saints lay hidden under cover. The Lord has opened our eyes; we have seen His troops which have so often protected us. Formerly, we did not see them, although we had them. Then, because we were afraid, the Lord said, as it were: "Behold the great martyrs whom I have given you." So with our eyes unsealed we look upon the glory of the Lord which took place in the past in the sufferings of the martyrs and is present in their works. Brethren, we have escaped no slight load of shame, for we had patrons and did not know it. We have found this one thing in which we appear to surpass our elders—we have regained the knowledge of the saintly martyrs which they had lost.

The glorious relics are rescued from an inglorious tomb; the trophies are exhibited to heaven; the tomb drips with blood; the marks of the bleeding triumph appear; the undisturbed relics are found on the spot in perfect order, with the head torn from the shoulders. Old men say now that they used to hear other names given to these martyrs and that they have read their inscription. The city which had carried off the martyrs of others had lost her own. Although this is the gift of God, I cannot deny the grace which the Lord Jesus has granted in the time of my bishopric. And because I myself am not worthy to be a martyr, I have secured these martyrs for you.

Let the triumphant victims take their place where Christ is the victim. Let Him be above the altar who suffered for all; let them be beneath the altar who were redeemed by His suffering. This is the spot that I had destined for myself, because it is fitting that a bishop rest where he was wont to

offer the Holy Sacrifice. But I yield the right-hand portion to the sacred victims, that place is owed the martyrs. Let us therefore bury the sacred relics, carrying them to worthy resting places, and let us celebrate the entire day with the worship of faith.

The people shouted that the burial of the martyrs should be postponed to the Lord's day. Finally, however, it was agreed to have it take place the following day. On that day the sermon which I gave to the people was like this:

Yesterday I explained the verse: 'Day unto day heralds the message,' in so far as the range of my ability carried me. Today, holy Scripture seems not only to have prophesied in the past but also to be doing so in the present. For, when I see the throngs of your Holiness continuing day and night, the words of the Prophet's song declare that these days, yesterday and today, are those of which it is most fittingly said: 'Day unto day heralds the message,' and those nights of which it is very suitably calculated that 'night unto night makes it known.' For what except the Word of God have you heralded for two days from the bottom of your hearts and given proof that you have a knowledge of the faith?

Yet, the usual ones grudge you this celebration. And because they cannot understand your celebration with their envious minds they hate the reason for it. They reach such folly as to say that there are no merits in the martyrs, although even the evil spirits admit them. But this is not strange. Indeed, so great is the lack of faith of the unbelieving that the confession of the Devil is more tolerable. For the Devil said: 'Jesus, Son of the living God, why have you come to torment us before the time?'¹⁷ And when the Jews heard this they still denied that He was the Son of God. Now, you have also heard the demons crying out and admitting to the martyrs that they cannot bear their punishment, saying: 'Why have you come to torment us so severely?' And the

¹⁶ 4 Kings 6.16.

¹⁷ Matt. 8.29.

Arians say: 'These are not martyrs, nor can they torment the Devil, nor free anyone,' although the torments are attested by the words of the demons themselves, and the benefits of the martyrs are disclosed by the cures of those who were healed and the testimony of those who were set free.

They say that the blind man has not been given his sight, but he does not say he was not healed. He says: 'I see, I who did not see.' He says: 'I have ceased to be blind,' and he proves it by the fact. They deny the benefit who cannot deny the fact. This man is well known,¹⁸ for he was an employee of the state when he was well, a man named Severus, a butcher by trade. He gave up his employment when his affliction befell him. He calls to witness the men whose kindness formerly supported him; he summons those as witnesses of his healing whom he used to have as witnesses and judges of his blindness. He cries out, saying that when he touched the hem of the martyrs' garment in which the sacred relics were covered light was restored to him.

Does this not resemble the account we read in the Gospel? We praise the power of the one Author; it makes no difference whether it is a work or a gift, since He gives a gift in His work and He works in His gift. What He enjoins others to do, this His name works in the works of others. We read, therefore, in the Gospel that the Jews, when they saw the restoration of health in the blind man, asked proof from his parents. They asked them: 'How is it your son sees?' when he said: 'Whereas I was blind, now I see.'¹⁹ In this case, too, the man says: 'I was blind and now I see. Ask others if you do not believe me. Ask strangers so that you will not think that my parents are under agreement to me.' Their obstinacy is more hateful than that of the Jews. When they were in

¹⁸ See Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 22.8; *Serm.* 381.1; *Retr.* 13.7.

¹⁹ John 9.25.

doubt, they asked the parents. These ask in secret and openly deny. No longer do they disbelieve the work, but the Author.

But what is it, I ask, which they do not believe? Is it whether persons can be healed by martyrs? This is to fail to believe in Christ, for He Himself said: 'And greater than these you will do.'²⁰ Or [do they ask whether persons can be healed] by those martyrs whose merits for a long time were vigorous, whose bodies were found long ago? Here now I ask: Do they grudge me or the holy martyrs? Can I perform any miracles? Can anything be done by my work, in my name? Why, then, do they grudge me what is not mine? If they grudge the martyrs (for it still remains that, if they do not grudge me, they seem to grudge the martyrs), they show that the martyrs were of another faith than what they believe. For no other reason would they envy their works unless they realized that the faith in them was other than their own, that faith which was established by the tradition of the fathers, which the devils themselves cannot deny, although the Arians do so.

We have heard those who had hands laid on them say today that no one can be saved unless he believes in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that he is dead and buried who denies the Holy Spirit and does not believe in the omnipotence of the Trinity. The Devil admits this, but the Arians do not wish to profess it. The Devil says: 'Let him who denies the Godhead of the Holy Spirit be tormented as he was by the martyrs.'

I do not accept the Devil's testimony, but I do accept his confession. The Devil spoke unwillingly under duress and torment. Torture exacts that which wickedness suppresses. Although the Devil yielded to blows, the Arians do not know how to yield. How like Pharaoh have they suffered many

²⁰ John 14.12.

misfortunes and are hardened by their misfortunes! The Devil said those words which we read: 'I know who thou art, thou art the Son of the living God.'²¹ The Jews said: 'We do not know who he is.'²² The devils said today and yesterday and last night: 'We know that you are martyrs.' And the Arians say: 'We do not know, we do not want to know, we do not want to believe.' The devils say to the martyrs: 'You have come to destroy us.' The Arians say: 'The torments of the devils are not real; they are feigned and empty mockery.' I have heard of many things being imagined, but no one could ever feign this and pretend that he was a devil. What is it which we see so disturbs them on whom a hand is laid? Where is there room for deceit? Where is there a trace of pretense?

Yet I do not make use of the statement of the demons as a support for the martyrs. Their holy suffering is proved by its benefits. It has judges, but they are those who have been cleansed; it has witnesses, but they are those who were set free. The proof of those who came here ill is worth more, for their healing attests it. The proof which blood sends forth is stronger, for blood has a piercing voice which reaches from earth to heaven, as you read that God said: 'The blood of your brother cries out to me.'²³ Here blood cries out by disclosing its color; blood cries out by publishing its work; blood cries out by the triumph of its suffering. Your petition has been granted to postpone until today yesterday's burial of relics.

²¹ Mark 1.24.

²² John 9.29.

²³ Gen. 4.10.

and so make the single peril that, whichever is saved, the other must be lost? Which, then, must be preferred? For, of course, if the people of Saguntum had preferred to live, they would have had to betray their loyalty; and if they chose fidelity, as they did, they had to lose their civic life.

How different is the safety in the case of the City of God! It is salvation and not merely safety. Safety can be maintained, or, rather, achieved along with faith and by means of faith.⁴ But, once faith is lost, there is no road to return to this City's life. It was this reflection that gave to the hearts of so many martyrs a firmness to resist and a patience to endure, the like of which appears nowhere in the whole history of devotion to the divinity of Romulus.

Chapter 7

But enough of this pseudo-divinity. It is, in fact, rather ridiculous even to mention Romulus in the same breath with Christ. However, one point is interesting. If it is true that, as far back as 600 years before Cicero,¹ the age of Romulus was so advanced in culture that anything counter to verifiable facts would be rejected as fable, how much more so was this the case 600 years later, in the time of Cicero, and still more so under Augustus and Tiberius. In such a period of critical scholarship, how could possibilities so counter to experience as the Resurrection of Christ's flesh and His Ascension into heaven have found entrance into men's ears and hearts and minds, unless the possibility had been realized

⁴ In Latin, of course, *salus* means both 'safety' and 'salvation,' just as *fides* means both 'fidelity' and 'faith.' *Salus autem civitatis Dei talis est, ut cum fide ac per fidem teneri vel potius adquiri possit.*

¹ Cf. above, 22.6 n. 1.

in fact and a proof had been found in the divinity of the fact involved, namely, the fact of the divinity, not to mention the corroboration of manifest miracles? The fact is that, in spite of the terrors and attacks inspired by a series of fierce persecutions, not only was the Resurrection of Christ loyally believed and fearlessly proclaimed, but also the resurrection and immortality of the bodies of His followers in the world to come. And the seeds of this hope scattered throughout the world were watered by the blood of martyrs. Not only did men read the earlier prophecies of these future realities, but they saw the miracles that occurred, and were soon convinced that the reality, new as it was in experience, was not counter to reason. The result was that the truth that the world once rejected with all the fury of hate it now sought with the fervor of faith.

Chapter 8

It is sometimes objected that the miracles, which Christians claim to have occurred, no longer happen. One answer might be that they are no longer needed as they once were to help an unbelieving world to believe. As things now are, any lone believer looking for a miracle to help him to believe, in the midst of a world in which practically everyone already believes, is surely himself a marvel of no mean magnitude. However, the malice of the objection is in the insinuation that not even the earlier miracles ought to be believed. It is an insinuation that leaves our friends with two facts unexplained: How do they explain that the Ascension of Christ into heaven has come to be everywhere proclaimed with so firm a faith; and how do they explain that our world, which is so advanced in culture and so critical in mentality, has come, without benefit of miracles, to believe so miraculously in realities so incredible? Perhaps they will say: 'Well,

the tales were not wholly incredible and so people came to believe them.' In that case, our friends have still to explain why they themselves have remained incredulous.

Perhaps it is better to meet such irresponsible skepticism in a summary dilemma which would run as follows: Either the world has founded its faith in an unseen and incredible occurrence on the fact that no less incredible occurrences not merely took place but were seen to take place; or else the original occurrence was so palpably credible that it needed no additional miracles to convince men's minds of its truth. In either case, our friends are left with no justification of their own wilful skepticism. It is simply undeniable that, as a fact, there have been any number of miracles attesting the one, sublime, and saving miracle of Christ's Ascension into heaven with the flesh in which He arose from the dead. The books which record these miracles are absolutely trustworthy and, what is more, they record not merely the attesting miracles but the ultimate object of our faith which the miracles were meant to confirm. The miracles were made known to help men's faith and, of course, they are now still better known on account of the faith which the world has embraced. The miracles are read to our people in our churches to nourish their faith, although the people would not be in the churches to hear them read unless the miracles were already believed.

The truth is that even today miracles are being wrought in the name of Christ, sometimes through His sacraments and sometimes through the intercession of the relics of His saints. Only, such miracles do not strike the imagination with the same flashing brilliance as the earlier miracles, and so they do not get the same flashing publicity as the others did. The fact that the canon of our Scriptures is definitively closed brings it about that the original miracles are everywhere repeated and are fixed in people's memory, whereas contem-

porary miracles which happen here or there seldom become known even to the whole of the local population in and around the place where they occur. Especially is this the case in the more populous cities, where relatively few learn the facts while most of the people remain uninformed. And when the news does spread from mouth to mouth, even in the case of Christians reporting to Christians, it is too unauthoritative to be received without some difficulty or doubt.

This, however, was not the case with a miracle that took place in Milan while I was there. A great many people managed to hear of a blind man whose sight was restored because the city is big and, besides, the Emperor was there at the time and an immense multitude of people was gathered to venerate the relics of the martyrs, Protasius and Gervasius, and so witnessed what took place. The relics had been hidden, and no one knew where they were until the hiding place was revealed in a dream to Bishop Ambrose, who thereupon went and found them. It was on that occasion that the long-enduring darkness dropped from the blind man's eyes and he saw the light of day.

On the other hand, only a handful of people have ever heard of a cure that occurred in Carthage when I was there and which I witnessed with my own eyes. It happened to Innocent, a former advocate in the office of deputy prefect, at the time when my fellow bishop, Alypius, and I (neither of us yet ordained, but both already dedicated to God) had just returned from Italy. Innocent, along with his whole household, was a remarkably devout Catholic and he welcomed us into his home. He was just then undergoing medical care in connection with a complicated case of multiple rectal fistula.¹ The doctors had already incised and were now following up with applied medications. The cutting had caused

¹ For several technical medical expressions the translators are indebted to John Madigan, M.D., of Houlton, Maine.

very acute pains and these continued day after day, the trouble being that one of the sinuses that should have been opened was so recessed that it had escaped the scrutiny of the surgeons. Long after all the other sinuses were healed, this single one remained, and all efforts to relieve the patient's pain were unavailing.

Naturally, he became afraid that a second operation would be called for, particularly since his family doctor, who had not been allowed even to watch the original operation, had told Innocent that this would be the case. On that occasion, Innocent had become so annoyed that he dismissed the doctor from his service. His anxiety, however, continued. One day, in fact, he turned to his surgeons and burst out: 'Do you mean to cut me again? Don't tell me that the man you refused to admit to the operation was right after all!' The surgeons, however, merely scoffed at the family doctor's naivete and tried to calm their patient and, in their best bedside manner, made soothing promises.

But, as day after day dragged on, nothing came of all their medications. The surgeons kept saying that there was no need to operate and that all would respond to treatment. However, they called in for consultation Ammonius, a very old and famous practitioner, who has since died. He examined the patient's rectum and, on the basis of the other surgeons' technique and aftercare, gave the same prognosis as they. Innocent, for the moment, was so assured by the weight of this authority that he began to talk as though he were already cured. He even indulged in cheerful banter at the expense of the poor family doctor who had predicted that more cutting was to come.

Well, to make a long story short, so many days passed to no purpose that the worn-out and humbled surgeons confessed, at last, that nothing short of the scalpel would effect a cure. Poor Innocent turned pale with fear and nearly

fainted. As soon as he was sufficiently calm to talk, he told them to get out and never come back again. Worn out with weeping and with no other recourse, he thought that the best thing he could do would be to call in an extremely skillful surgeon from Alexandria, and have him do what he was too angry to let the other surgeons do. This world-famous specialist came, and examined with his trained eye the excellent work the others had done, as was clear from the healthy residual scar tissue. Whereupon, the specialist behaved like a man of principle and persuaded Innocent to allow the surgeons to have the satisfaction of terminating a case on which they had obviously worked so well and so long. He admitted that no cure was possible without a second operation, but protested that it would be utterly against his professional ethics to deprive others of the satisfaction of completing an operation in which so little remained to be done and, especially, to deprive men whose skillful work and careful handling of the patient he so much admired. So the surgeons returned to the good graces of Innocent, and it was agreed that they should incise the remaining sinus in the presence of the Alexandrian specialist. The operation was set for the next day, all the doctors admitting that it was the only way to heal the trouble.

Once they were gone, the whole household set up a wail of grief for their master that was worse than a funeral, and we had the hardest time keeping them calm. Among Innocent's habitual visitors who happened to be there that day were that holy man of blessed memory, Saturninus, then Bishop of Uzalum, and Gulosus, a holy priest, and some deacons of the church at Carthage, one of whom was my highly esteemed friend and now colleague in the episcopate, Aurelius. He is the sole survivor of that group of guests, and I have often compared notes with him regarding this remarkable mercy of God and have found that his memory of the

events corresponds with my own. Their visit, as usual, was in the evening, and Innocent begged them, with tearfulness in his voice, to please come the next day to what, he was sure, would be not merely his agony but his death. The very thought of the previous pains filled him with fear, and he was certain that he would die under the hands of the surgeons. Everyone tried to comfort him, and to exhort him to put his trust in God, and face His will unflinchingly.

Then we all began to pray. The rest of us prayed, as we usually do, on our knees and prostrate on the floor, but Innocent literally threw himself flat as though he had been violently struck by some powerful blow, and then burst into prayer so vehemently, so feelingly, so pathetically and wept with such indescribable groaning and sobbing that he shook in every fiber of his being and all but choked. How any of the others could pray, with all this pitiable petitioning to distract them, I do not know. As for myself, no formula of prayer was possible. All I could do was let my heart repeat this short refrain: 'Lord, if Thou dost not hear such prayers, what prayers of any saints can move Thee?' It seemed to me that, with one more sigh, the poor man would have prayed himself to death.

At last, we all arose and, when the bishop had given us his blessing, left. There was one final request that all would be present in the morning and, on our part, one last exhortation for the sufferer to have fortitude.

The dreaded day had hardly dawned when all these men of God were at the door to keep their promises. The doctors entered. The needed preparations were immediately under way. As each piece of frightening metal flashed, we gasped and held our breath. Then, while the patient's body was being properly disposed for the hand of the operating surgeon,

Innocent's closest friends² stood by, whispering words of comfort to cheer his drooping spirit. The bandages were removed. The site was exposed. The surgeon took a look. With the scalpel in one hand, he palpated for the offending sinus. He searched once more with his eye. He probed again with his fingers. He exhausted every means of medical examination. But there was nothing to be found except perfectly healthy tissue!

Imagine the burst of joy and the flood of grateful tears, the praise and thanks to the God of mercy and of power, that broke from every one there present. It was a scene too much for any pen to tell. I can only leave it to the meditation of my readers.

There was the case, also in Carthage, of Innocentia, a woman of the highest social standing, and, at the same time, deeply religious. She was suffering from cancer of the breast; a malady, as the profession holds, that yields to no known medical treatment. In the case of cancer, all that is usually done is to excise completely the portion of the body where the trouble begins, or else, following the supposed opinion of Hippocrates, to attempt no treatment whatever and so prolong somewhat a life that is already doomed. Innocentia, accepting the second alternative, on the advice of an eminent doctor who was a close friend of the family, betook herself solely to God in prayer. However, just before Easter, she had a dream, in which she was told to wait on the women's side of the baptistry until the first of the newly baptized women should approach and then to ask her to make the sign of

² *Eis . . . quorum erat maior auctoritas defectum animi eius consolando erigentibus. Cf. Cicero, Familiares 6.6.2.: animum . . . amicissimi hominis auctoritate confirmandum.*

Christ on the affected breast. This she did, and she was immediately cured.

The doctor who had told her to dispense with all treatment if she cared to live a little longer now examined the patient and found her completely cured, though his previous examination showed that she was suffering from cancer. Of course, he was all curiosity, and insisted on her telling him what medication she had used. He was dying to find out, if he could, a treatment that would upset the theory of Hippocrates. When he heard her story, his lips and face expressed nothing but contempt, and she was dreadfully afraid that he was going to break out into some blasphemy against Christ. However, he maintained a religious urbanity and merely observed: 'I had hoped that you might have told me something significant.' Innocentia was shocked by his indifference, but promptly replied: 'Well, for Christ to heal a cancer after He raised to life a man four days dead is not, I suppose, particularly significant.'

Now when the facts reached my ears, I was positively angry that so great a miracle, wrought on a person who was so far from being of no consequence, could happen in a city like Carthage and not be publicized. In fact, I felt it my duty to administer to her an emphatic protest. She replied that she had not been wholly silent on the matter. However, when I made inquiries among her closest acquaintances, they confessed that they had heard nothing of the affair. I turned on Innocentia and complained: 'This is what you mean, then, by not being wholly silent. You have not mentioned the miracle even to your most intimate friends.' Then, since she had told me only the outlines of the story, I made her retell it in every detail just as it happened, while her friends, who were there, listened in immense amazement and, when she was done, glorified God.

Then there is the story of a doctor in Carthage who was

afflicted by the gout. He was enrolled among those who were to be baptized, but on the night before his baptism he dreamed that some demons, as he imagined, in the guise of crinkly-haired Negro youths, forbade him to be baptized that year. When he refused to obey, they trampled on his gouty foot, causing him the most excruciating pain he had ever felt. When he awoke, he was all the more eager to defeat the demons and refused to put off the laver of regeneration. He was baptized and, in that very moment, not only did the extraordinary pain he then felt disappear, but the malady itself left him, never to return for the rest of his long life. Yet, practically no one has ever heard of this except myself and a few of the faithful who had an opportunity to learn the facts.

There was an ex-showman of Curubis who was suffering from paralysis and a bad case of hernia in the scrotum. As soon as he was baptized, both troubles disappeared and he was restored to health. He left the font as sound in body as though he had never been afflicted. Yet, outside of Curubis, hardly more than a handful of people ever heard of the facts which could so easily have been learned. As for myself, as soon as word reached me, I arranged to have Bishop Aurelius send this man to Carthage, even though I had no reason whatever for doubting those who first told me the story.

One of my neighbors, named Hesperius, of a family of government officials, owns a farm in the village of Zubedi, in the district of Fussala. Realizing that the diseases of his cattle and the sickness of his servants and other troubles were traceable to the influence of evil spirits, he came, in my absence, to ask if one of the priests would come out to Zubedi to drive away the spirits by prayer. One of the priests went, offered there the Sacrifice of the Body of Christ and prayed as fervently as he could for relief from these molestations. By the mercy of God, they all suddenly ceased.

This man, Hesperius, had been given a piece of holy soil brought by a friend from near the place in Jerusalem where Christ was buried and rose from the dead on the third day. This soil Hesperius kept suspended in his room as a protection against diabolical incursions. But, once the exorcism had been successful, he was worried to know what he should do with the holy soil. He felt guilty of a certain irreverence in keeping it any longer in his own room. Now, about this time, a fellow bishop, Maximinus of Synita, and I happened to be in the neighborhood of Zubedi and, being invited, called on Hesperius. He told us his story and his scruples and asked us to have the holy soil buried in a place where a sanctuary might be built and prayers said and Christians assemble for the celebration of the divine Mysteries. We made no objection and so it was done. Now, one of the neighboring peasants was paralyzed. Hearing of the shrine, he begged his parents to bring him to that holy place without delay. He was taken; he prayed; his legs were suddenly made sound; he was able to walk home without help.

There is an estate in the country less than thirty miles from Hippo Regius, called Victoriana. The shrine there is dedicated to the martyrs of Milan, Protasius and Gervasius. To this shrine there was brought a youth who had become possessed by a devil, one summer's day at noon, when he was cooling his horse in the flowing waters of a river. This demoniac was lying near the altar of the shrine as though he were as dead as a corpse, when the lady of the villa came to vespers and evening prayers, as was her wont, along with her maids and some nuns. As soon as they began to sing, the demoniac, as though struck by the sound, came to and, trembling all over, took hold of the altar. Unable or not daring to move, there he remained, as though he had been tied or fastened to the altar. The demon, crying out at the top of his voice, began to beg for mercy, and to confess where

and when he had taken possession of the young man. Finally, the demon declared that he would depart. He did so, but not before threatening to work havoc with certain parts of the young man's body. These parts the demon named. Thereupon, an eye was found torn from its socket, resting on the cheek and hanging by a tiny vein as by a root. The pupil, which was black, turned white.

Those who had witnessed all this, and others who had been attracted by the screaming, prostrated themselves in prayer. They were overjoyed by the youth's return to sanity, but grieved by the dislocation of the eye. Some insisted that a doctor be called, but the youth's brother-in-law, who had brought him to the shrine, said simply: 'God who put this demon to flight is able, through the prayers of His saints, to restore the sight of this eye.' Thereupon, as best he could, he pushed the eye back into its socket, bandaged it with his handkerchief, and said that the bandage must not be removed for at least a week. A week later, the bandage was removed. The eye was found to be in perfect condition. Many other miracles occurred at that shrine, but I need not mention them here.

I know of another demoniac, a young girl of Hippo, who was freed from possession as soon as she anointed herself with some oil into which the tears of a priest who was praying for her had fallen. I also know of a bishop who prayed for a demoniac, a young man whom he had never seen, but who was at once delivered from the devil.

There is a good story of the poor old man, Florentius, who lived here in Hippo. He was a man of prayer who eked out a living by repairing old clothes, but when he lost his own cloak he had no money to buy another. So, he betook himself to the Shrine of the Twenty Martyrs, the most famous shrine in these parts, and there, in a loud voice, he prayed for a new cloak. Of course, some of the young

people who were there could not help laughing; and, even when the old man left, they went after him, teasing him for asking the martyrs to give him fifty *folles* to buy a cloak. The old man said nothing. He just went along the beach. What should he see there but an immense fish, tossed up by the waves and still squirming. The good-natured young fellows helped the old man to catch it, and he went right off to Catosus, a good Christian and the cook at the Restaurant Conditaria, told him what happened, and sold him the fish for 300 *folles*. Florentius had in mind to buy enough wool to have his wife make him a complete outfit. In the meantime, however, the cook, while cutting up the fish, found in its gullet a gold ring. Partly out of pity and partly out of religious scruples, he gave the ring to the old man, saying: 'Look, this is the way the Twenty Martyrs have put a suit on your back!'

At Aquae Tibilitanae, there was once a procession in which Bishop Praejectus was carrying a relic of the glorious martyr, St. Stephen, and, while an immense crowd was milling around him, a blind woman begged to be led to the bishop. She handed him the flowers she had in her hand. He took them and applied them to her eyes. Immediately she was able to see. Full of joy, she took her place in the procession, needing no one to lead her, and the people followed in amazement behind her.

There is a relic of the same martyr reserved in the township of Synita, not far from the city of Hippo. Once it was being carried by Bishop Lucillus of Synita in a procession, with the line of people stretching out before him and behind him. The bishop was suffering—as he had been for a long time—from a fistula, and had already arranged for an operation to be performed by a doctor who was a great friend of his. Suddenly, during the procession of the relic,

the fistula dried up and not a trace of it was ever after found on his body.

Here is another miracle wrought by a relic of the same saint. Eucharius, a Spanish priest stationed in Calama, had long been suffering from stone. Bishop Possidius applied the relic and the priest was cured. Sometime later, however, he fell a victim to another sickness and was so near death that they had already bound his hands. Then his tunic was taken to touch the relic of the saint. It was brought back and placed over the apparently dead body. The priest was at once restored to life.

In the same town of Calama, there lived a man of the highest social distinction, named Martial. He was elderly, a pagan, and strongly opposed to Christianity, although his daughter was a Catholic and his son-in-law was a recent convert. Martial fell sick. The two young people begged him, with tears in their eyes, to turn Christian. He refused emphatically and indignantly dismissed them from his presence. The son-in-law decided to go to the shrine of St. Stephen, and there he prayed with his whole soul that God might give Martial the grace not to put off his conversion to Christ. He prayed and prayed, with groans and tears and the deepest feelings of ardent piety. As he left, he took a few flowers from the altar and, at night when Martial was asleep, put the flowers on his pillow. Sure enough, before dawn the next day, Martial called out for someone to run for the bishop, who, as it happened, was visiting me in Hippo. Martial then asked for the priests. They arrived. He said: 'I believe.' To the joy and astonishment of all, he was baptized. He continued to live for some time, but never did he stop from repeating the words: 'Christ, receive my spirit,' although he had never heard that these were the last words of the blessed

Stephen as he was being stoned to death.³ These were the last words of Martial, too, for, before long, he died.

It was also in Calama that three victims of the gout were healed through the intercession of the same martyr, Stephen. Two were natives and another had come there on pilgrimage. The natives were at once cured, but the pilgrim heard a voice telling him what means he should take when the pain was acute. He followed the instruction and he, too, was at once cured.

There is another shrine of St. Stephen in a village called Audurus. Once, when a child was playing in the square before the church, a cart drawn by oxen left the road and one of the wheels ran over the child. While he was breathing his last, his mother snatched him up and placed him on the altar of the relic. The child not only returned to consciousness, but showed no sign of the crushing he had suffered.

Near Audurus, there is an estate called Villa Caspaliana. There, a consecrated virgin fell sick and was on the brink of death. Her parents took her habit to touch the relic, but, before they could return, she died. However, the moment the corpse was clothed with the habit, the breath of life returned and the nun was restored to health.

There was a Syrian named Bassus living in Hippo. He had a sick daughter in danger of death. So he took her robe to touch the relic of St. Stephen. There at the shrine he prayed for the health of his daughter. He was still praying when some of his servants came running from his home to tell him that the girl was dead. However, some of his friends who were also praying there received the news first, and forbade the servants to tell the father for fear he might break down in public. However, when he reached home, he found the house filled with wailing. He threw the girl's dress on the corpse. Her life was restored.

³ Cf. Acts 7.59.

It was in Hippo, too, that the son of a neighbor of mine, Irenaeus, a tax collector, died. The corpse was laid out; the funeral was arranged; everyone was grieving and sorrowing. One of the friends who had come to console the family suggested that the body be anointed with oil from the shrine of St. Stephen. This was no sooner done than the boy came back to life.

Here I am in a fix. I promised to hurry on with the writing of this work. How can I delay to tell all the miracles I know? On the other hand, I know that many of my fellow Catholics, when they come to read what I have written, will complain that I have left out any number of miracles which they happen to know as well as I do. All I can do is to ask them now to forgive me, and to remember how long a task it would be to tell them and how impossible it would be to do both that and also my duty of bringing this work to an end. Actually, if I kept merely to miracles of healing and omitted all others, and if I told only those wrought by this one martyr, the glorious St. Stephen, and if I limited myself to those that happened here at Hippo and Calama, I should have to fill several volumes and, even then, I could do no more than tell those cases that have been officially recorded and attested for public reading in our churches.

This recording and attesting, in fact, is what I took care to have done, once I realized how many miracles were occurring in our own day and which were so like the miracles of old and also how wrong it would be to allow the memory of these marvels of divine power to perish from among our people. It is only two years ago that the keeping of records was begun here in Hippo, and already, at this writing, we have nearly seventy attested miracles. I know with certain knowledge of many others which have not, so far, been officially recorded. And, of course, at Calama, where the recording began much earlier and where miracles are more

frequent, the number of attested cases is incomparably greater.

So, too, at Uzalum, a town near the city of Utica, there have been, to my knowledge, many notable miracles wrought through this same martyr. Thanks to Bishop Evodius, there was a shrine there dedicated to St. Stephen long before ours was established. But the custom of taking formal depositions from witnesses was not there in vogue, nor is it now—unless, perhaps, it has been very recently introduced. Not long ago when I was there, a lady of great social distinction, Petronia by name, was miraculously cured of a serious and long-standing sickness which had baffled the doctors. I urged her, with Bishop Evodius concurring, to have a written deposition drawn up which could be read in church to the people, and she obediently accepted the suggestion.

One detail of this deposition I must mention here, in spite of the urgency to return to the main theme of this work. It is this. Petronia states that she had been persuaded by a certain Jew to wear, as a remedy for her complaint, under her clothes and next to her skin, a belt made of braided hair on which was to be strung a ring. Underneath the jewel of this ring, she was to place a stone, taken from the kidney of an ox. Thus begirdled, she set out on pilgrimage from Carthage to the shrine of the martyr. She rested for a while at her villa on the river Bagrada, but, on rising one morning to resume her journey, what was her astonishment to find the ring lying on the floor at her feet. She at once felt for the braided belt she was wearing and there it was tied as firmly as ever. Then she thought that the ring must have snapped and fallen off, but it was perfectly solid as before. This she took as a miraculous token that she was to be cured at the shrine. So, she tore off the belt and threw it, along with the ring, into the river.

Perhaps it may be too much to expect that people will believe this who refuse to believe that the Lord Jesus was

born without any lesion in the maidenhead of His mother and that He passed through closed doors into the presence of His disciples. But, at least, such people should investigate facts and, if they find them true, should accept them. The lady in question is of the highest distinction both by birth and by marriage and she lives in Carthage. In regard to a person so outstanding, living in a city so important, anyone who really wants to find out the facts can do so. And as for the martyr by whose intercession the lady was restored to health, certainly he believed in the Son of the Virgin Mother, and believed in Him who passed through closed doors to reach His disciples, and believed in Him who ascended into heaven with the flesh in which He rose from the dead—and this is the miracle on account of which I have been relating all these attesting miracles. Moreover, the reason why so many miracles are wrought through this blessed martyr is that he laid down his life for this faith.

It is a simple fact, then, that there is no lack of miracles even in our day. And the God who works the miracles we read of in the Scripture uses any means and manner He chooses. The only trouble is that these modern miracles are not so well known as the earlier ones, nor are they sufficiently pounded into people's memory by constant reading, so that they may stick, as it were, like gravel in cement.⁴ Even where pains are taken, as is now the case in Hippo, to have the written depositions of the beneficiaries of these graces read to the people, only those in church hear the stories, and that only once, and the many who are not present hear nothing, and those who have listened forget in a day or so, and you hardly ever hear of a person who has heard a deposition telling it to someone else who was not in church for the reading.

However, this is not the case with one miracle that hap-

⁴ . . . neque, ut non excidant animo, quasi glarea memoriae, crebra lectione tunduntur.

pened here in Hippo. It was no more remarkable than others I have mentioned, but it was so clear and obvious to everyone that no one who lives here could have failed to see it or, at least, to hear about it, and certainly no one could ever forget it. It involved seven brothers and three sisters belonging to a noble family of Caesarea in Cappodocia. When their father died, they did some injustice to their widowed mother. This was so bitterly resented that she put a curse on them. Whereupon, God so punished the children that all of them were afflicted by a dreadful convulsion of their whole bodies. The humiliation in the eyes of their neighbors became unbearable, and all of them scattered in different directions and began to wander throughout the Roman world. Of these ten, two, Paul and Palladia, turned up at Hippo, after their plight had made them notorious in ever so many other places. They arrived here about two weeks before Easter, and day after day they came to church to pray before the shrine of the glorious martyr, St. Stephen. They prayed that God would forgive their sins and give them back their health. Both in church and wherever they went throughout the city they were a spectacle for all to see. Some of our people had seen them in other cities and knew the cause of the convulsions and told their friends the story.

Well, Holy Week passed; Easter Sunday dawned. The basilica was crowded. There at the shrine, grasping the bars of the latticework around the reliquary, stood the young man, praying. Of a sudden, he fell prostrate and lay there as if in a trance. However, the convulsions, that ordinarily continued even in his sleep, stopped. The crowd around him were filled with awe and fear. Many wept. Some wanted to lift him to his feet, but others prevented this, thinking it better to wait for him to die. Just as suddenly, he arose. The trembling had stopped. He was cured. There he stood, perfectly normal, looking at the crowd who kept gazing at him. Then everyone

burst into a prayer of thankfulness to God. The whole church soon rang with the clamor of rejoicing. One after another, people rushed to where I was sitting, ready to begin the processional entrance into the basilica. Each of them told me again the news I had just been told. Then, as I was rejoicing and thanking God, the young man himself, followed by the rest of the crowd, broke in upon me. He knelt down before me, then rose to receive the kiss of peace.

In the crowded church, cries of joy rose up everywhere: 'Thanks be to God.' 'Praise be to God.' No tongue was silent. When I held up my hand in salutation, the cries broke out afresh, louder than ever. Only when silence was finally restored could the Scriptural selections appointed for Easter be read. When the time came for the sermon, I said very little, in spite of the joyousness of what had happened. I wanted to allow the people to meditate in their own minds on the divine eloquence of the divine deed rather than to listen to any mere words of mine.

The man stayed for dinner, and told me the whole tragic story both of his mother and of his brothers and sisters. Next day, after my sermon, I announced that, on the following day, the written record of the miracle would be read in public. And so, on the third day after Easter, I had the brother and sister stand on the steps of the choir, where I was accustomed to speak, and there listen to a reading of the deposition. Every eye of every man and woman in the audience was fixed on the pair—the sister still shaken by convulsions and the brother perfectly calm. Thus, those who had not seen the brother before the cure could gauge the measure of God's mercy by looking at his sister. They saw in him so much to thank God for, and in her so much that called for prayer. When the recital⁵ was finished, I asked the brother

⁵ This deposition can be found among the Sermons (No. 322) of St. Augustine.

and sister to remove themselves from the gaze of the congregation. Then I began to speak at length of the whole affair.⁶ I was still speaking when, all of a sudden, from the shrine of the martyr, new cries of rejoicing could be heard. The people who were listening to me first turned in that direction, and then began rushing to the shrine. What the girl had done when she left the choir was, in fact, to go straight to the shrine to pray to the holy martyr. And as soon as she touched the metal grating she collapsed, just as her brother had done, into a kind of trance. From this she rose up cured.

I was just asking what had happened to cause all this hubbub and happiness when in came the people bringing the recovered girl back from the shrine to the basilica. Such a clamor of wonderment then went up and such sobbing for joy that I thought it would never end. She was led to the very spot where just before she had stood full of convulsions. They hailed her now for being like her brother, just as they had grieved for her when she was so unlike him. They had hardly had time to utter a prayer for her, and here she was, with the prayer of their hearts already answered. The exultation continued, and the wordless praise to God was shouted so loud that my ears could scarcely stand the din. But, of course, the main point was that, in the hearts of all this clamoring crowd, there burned that faith in Christ for which the martyr Stephen shed his blood.

Chapter 9

Now, the faith to which all these miracles bear witness is the faith that holds that Christ rose bodily from the dead and ascended with His flesh into heaven, because, of course, the martyrs were witnesses. That, in fact, is what the word

⁶ What he said can be found in Sermons 323 and 324.

'martyr' means. The martyrs were witnesses to this faith. It was because they bore witness to this faith that they found the world hostile and cruel. Yet, they overcame the world, not by defending themselves, but by preferring to die for Christ. Those whose intercession has the power from the Lord to work these miracles were killed on account of His name and died for faith in Him. First came the miracle of their fortitude in dying for this faith, and then came, as a consequence, the power revealed in these miracles.

This question, then, calls for an answer: If the resurrection of the flesh into eternal life did not occur in the case of Christ and is not to occur hereafter in our case, in accordance with the promises made by Christ and those in the Old Testament which likewise foretold the coming of Christ, then how explain these great wonders wrought by dead martyrs? For, they were put to death precisely for that faith which proclaims this resurrection. It makes no difference whether we say that it is God Himself who works these miracles in the marvelous way that the Eternal operates in the temporal order, or whether we say that God works these miracles through His servants. And, in regard to what He does through His servants, it is all one whether He does these things through the spirits of martyrs, as though they were still living in their bodies, or whether He uses angels and effects His purposes by His orders, which are given invisibly, inaudibly, immutably. In that case, miracles which we think are done by martyrs are the result, rather, of their prayers and intercession, and not of their actions. Or God may have varying means to His different ends and these means may be altogether incomprehensible to the minds of men. But the main point is that all miracles are witnesses to that faith which proclaims the supreme miracle of the resurrection of the flesh into life everlasting.

till she brought forth her firstborn son,'¹⁶ one must know that the first child to be born is the firstborn, even though it may also be the only-begotten. Firstborn means having been born first, and does not by any means imply the birth of others; on the other hand, the 'till' signifies the fulfillment of the appointed time, without excluding the time after that. Thus, the Lord says: 'And behold I am with you all days, even till the consummation of the world,'¹⁷ without meaning that He is to be separated after the consummation of the world. The divine Apostle certainly says: 'And so shall we be always with the Lord,'¹⁸ meaning after the general resurrection.

How, indeed, would she have given birth to God and have known the miracle from the experience of subsequent events and then have allowed intercourse with a husband? Far be it! The thinking of such things is beyond the bounds of prudent thought, let alone the doing of them.

However, this blessed one, who had been found worthy of gifts surpassing nature, did at the time of the Passion suffer the pangs which she had escaped at childbirth. For, when she saw Him put to the death as a criminal, whom she knew to be God when she gave birth to Him, her heart was torn from maternal compassion and she was rent by her thoughts as by a sword. This is the meaning of 'And thy own soul a sword shall pierce.'¹⁹ But her grief gave way to the joy of the resurrection, the resurrection which proclaimed Him to be God who had died in the flesh.

¹⁶ Matt. 1.25.

¹⁷ Matt. 28.20.

¹⁸ 1 Thess. 4.16.

¹⁹ Luke 2.35.

The Orthodox Faith, in Saint John Damascene: a study, by Frs. F. A. Chase, Jr. The Fathers of the Church, vol. 37. Washington: Cath. U. of Am. 1958

Chapter 15

The saints must be honored as friends of Christ and children and heirs of God, as John the Theologian and Evangelist says: 'But as many as received him, he gave them the power to be made the sons of God.'¹ 'Therefore they are no longer servants, but sons: and if sons, heirs also, heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ.'² And again, in the holy Gospels the Lord says to the Apostles: 'You are my friends. . . I will not now call you servants: for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth.'³ Furthermore, if the Creator and Lord of all is called both King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods,⁴ then most certainly the saints, too, are both gods and lords and kings. God both is and is said to be their God and Lord and King. 'For I am,' He said to Moses, 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,' and God appointed Moses the God of Pharaoh.⁵ However, I say that they are gods, lords, and kings not by nature, but because they have ruled over and dominated sufferings, and because they have kept undebased the likeness of the divine image to which they were made—for the image of the king is also called a king, and, finally, because they have freely been united to God and receiving Him as a dweller within themselves have through association with Him become by grace what He is by nature. How, then, should these not be honored who have been accounted servants, friends, and sons of God? For the honor shown the more sensible of one's fellow servants gives proof of one's love for the common Master.

These are become repositories and pure dwelling places of God, for 'I will dwell in them and walk among them,'

¹ John 1.12.

² Gal. 4.7; Rom. 8.17.

³ John 15.14,15.

⁴ Apoc. 19.16; Ps. 49.1.

⁵ Exod. 3.6; 7.1.

says God, 'and I will be their God.'⁶ So, indeed, sacred Scripture says that 'the souls of the just are in the hand of God: and death shall not touch them.'⁷ For the death of the saints is rather sleep than death, since 'they have labored unto eternity and shall live unto the end,' and 'precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.'⁸ What then is more precious than to be in the hand of God? For God is life and light, and they that are in the hand of God abide in life and light.

Moreover, because through their mind God has also dwelt in their bodies, the Apostle says: 'Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you?'; 'Now the Lord is the Spirit'; and again: 'If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy.'⁹ How, then, should they not be honored, who are the living temples of God, the living tabernacles of God. These in life openly took their stand with God.

In the relics of the saints the Lord Christ has provided us with saving fountains which in many ways pour out benefactions and gush with fragrant ointment.¹⁰ And let no one disbelieve. For, if by the will of God water poured out of the precipitous living rock in the desert, and for the thirsty Sampson from the jawbone of an ass,¹¹ is it unbelievable that fragrant ointment should flow from the relics of the martyrs? Certainly not, at least for such as know the power of God and the honor which the saints have from Him.

In the Law, anyone who touched a corpse was accounted unclean.¹² But these of whom we speak are not dead. Because Life itself and the Author of life was reckoned amongst the

⁶ 2 Cor. 6.16; Lev. 26.12.

⁷ Wisd. 3.1.

⁸ Ps. 48.9,10; 115.15.

⁹ 1 Cor. 6.19; 2 Cor. 3.17; 1 Cor. 3.17.

¹⁰ The special epithet *myroblytus*, or 'gushing ointment,' is applied to certain saints whose relics exude a fragrant oil. The two most famous *myroblytae* are St. Demetrius of Salonica and St. Nicholas of Bari.

¹¹ Cf. Exod. 17.6; Judges 15.19.

¹² Cf. Num. 19.11.

dead, we do not call these dead who have fallen asleep in the hope of resurrection and in the faith in Him. For how can a dead body work miracles? How, then, through them are demons put to flight, diseases driven out, the sick cured, the blind restored to sight, lepers cleansed, temptation and trouble driven away; and how through them does 'every best gift come down from the Father of lights'¹³ to them who ask with undoubting faith? What would you not do to find a patron to present you to a mortal king and intercede with him in your behalf? Are not the patrons of the entire race to be honored who make petitions to God in our behalf? Yes, indeed; we must honor them by raising churches to God in their name, by making fruit-offerings, and by celebrating their anniversaries and taking spiritual joy in these, such as will be the very joy of our hosts, but taking care lest in endeavoring to do them honor we may give them annoyance instead. For by some things honor is given to God and they who serve Him rejoice in them, whereas by others He is offended and so, too, are His shield-bearers. 'In psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles,'¹⁴ in compunction, and in compassion for the needy let us faithful do honor to the saints, through whom most especially is honor rendered to God. Let us set up monuments to them, and visible images, and let us ourselves by the imitation of their virtues become their living monuments and images. Let us honor the Mother of God as really and truly God's Mother. Let us honor the Prophet John as precursor and baptist, apostle and martyr, for 'there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John,'¹⁵ as the Lord said, and he was the first herald of the kingdom. Let us honor the Apostles as brethren of the Lord, as eye-witnesses and attendants to His sufferings, whom God the Father 'foreknew and predestinated

¹³ James 1.17.

¹⁴ Eph. 5.19.

¹⁵ Matt. 11.11.

to be made conformable to the image of his Son,¹⁶ 'first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly shepherds and teachers.'¹⁷ And let us honor the holy martyrs of the Lord who have been picked from every rank and whose corps commander is Christ's archdeacon, apostle, and protomartyr Stephen; let us honor them as soldiers of Christ who have drunk of His chalice and have then been baptized with the baptism of His life-giving death, and as participants in His sufferings and His glory. Let us also honor those sainted fathers of ours, the God-bearing ascetics who have struggled through the more drawn-out and laborious martyrdom of the conscience, 'who wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being in want, distressed, afflicted: wandering in deserts, in mountains and in dens and in caves of the earth: of whom the world was not worthy.'¹⁸ Let us honor the Prophets who preceded the Grace, the patriarchs and just men who announced beforehand the advent of the Lord. Let us carefully observe the manner of life of all these and let us emulate their faith, charity, hope, zeal, life, patience under suffering, and perseverance unto death, so that we may also share their crowns of glory.

Chapter 16

Since there are certain people who find great fault with us for adoring and honoring both the image of the Saviour and that of our Lady, as well as those of the rest of the saints and servants of Christ, let them hear how from the beginning God made man to His own image.¹ For what reason, then, do we adore one another, except because we have been made to the image of God? As the inspired Basil, who is deeply learned in theology, says: 'the honor paid to the

¹⁶ Rom. 8.29.

¹⁷ 1 Cor. 12.28.

¹⁸ Heb. 11.37,38.

¹ Cf. Gen. 1.26.

image redounds to the original,² and the original is the thing imaged from which the copy is made. For what reason did the people of Moses adore from round about the tabernacle which bore an image and pattern of heavenly things, or rather, of all creation?³ Indeed, God had said to Moses: 'See that thou make all things according to the pattern which was shewn thee on the mount.' And the Cherubim, too, that overshadowed the propitiatory, were they not the handiwork of men?⁴ And what was the celebrated temple in Jerusalem? Was it not built and furnished by human hands and skill?⁵

Now, sacred Scripture condemns those who adore graven things, and also those who sacrifice to the demons. The Greeks used to sacrifice and the Jews also used to sacrifice; but the Greeks sacrifice to the demons, whereas the Jews sacrificed to God. And the sacrifice of the Greeks was rejected and condemned, while the sacrifice of the just was acceptable to God. Thus, Noe sacrificed 'and the Lord smelled a sweet savor'⁶ of the good intention and accepted the fragrance of the gift offered to Him. And thus the statues of the Greeks happen to be rejected and condemned, because they were representations of demons.

But, furthermore, who can make a copy of the invisible, incorporeal, uncircumscribed, and unportrayable God? It is, then, highly insane and impious to give a form to the God-head. For this reason it was not the practice in the Old Testament to use images. However, through the bowels of His mercy God for our salvation was made man in truth, not in the appearance of man, as He was seen by Abraham or the Prophets, but really made man in substance. Then He

² Basil, *On the Holy Ghost* 18.45 (PG 32.149C).

³ Cf. Exod. 33.10.

⁴ Cf. Heb. 8.5; Exod. 25.40,20.

⁵ Cf. 3 Kings 6.

⁶ Gen. 8.21.