

## De sancto Augustino.

amicicia rpi p martiriale afflictoz. Per mar-  
tiriu ei ho acqrit amicicia dei. p. n. Abba  
repar. est r p mltas tribulacioz pbat. ami-  
cus dei efficit. est. Iudith. viij. **M**ora qtu-  
or martiria beati bartholomei q ponitur a  
qutuor aurencis doctoribz. Dicat pmo qm  
post persione Polemij regis. astrages frater  
polemij misit mille hoies armoz ad capien-  
du bñm Bartholomeu. **P**rimu tormentu qd  
sibi dedit fuit fustiu cesio. adeo foris q mi-  
raculu erat qz no moriebat. et in qlibet ictu  
dicebat ihs. optima medicina est ista. **S**tu-  
d tormentu ponit beatus Ambrosius. **S**ecu-  
ndu tormentu ad maiore sui pena fuit. qz cruci-  
fix. pñs peditu in altu. Et isto poit Dor-  
thei mgr. **T**ertiu postu fuit a cruce deposi-  
tus fuit excoziat. **R**ogitate pena. **S**tu-  
d tormentu ponit Theodor. intm dicit aliq q  
cu pelle in collo pdecabat. **Q**uartu tormen-  
tu est q fuit decapitat. **P**ñs tormentu poit  
bikoria. Si q ex martiriali afflictioe qd effi-  
cit amic. dei. igit maxime beatus Bartholo-  
me. **M**oraliter si volum. intrare paradisu  
oz q in his qtuor tormentis sim. filius beato  
Bartholomeo. **P**rimo vultu sim. fustibus cesi.  
Nam qñ aliq in aliq statu malo diu vixit r  
emendat se. statim p oblocutionibz fustibz ce-  
dit. Dicat de quolibet. qñ aliq couertit ad  
deu r incipit bona vitastatim veniat fustibz  
cefores. De h ait ap. **O**mnes q pueroluri-  
uere i xpo ihs psecutoz patiet. h. ad Thy. iij.  
**S**eco oz vt sim. crucifigi. **A** rug figt pñam  
quaz dem. sustinere. ad Gal. v. Qui rpi sunt  
carne sua crucifigerunt. **T**ertio oz vt sim. ex-  
coziari. Si habet pelle leonina supbie r va-  
nitatis builem. **I**de de auar. Si bñt pelles  
vulpina. oz excoziari restituendo vsuras. et  
illis dolor. est. h. oz restituere vsuras. zc. **J**ob  
ij. Pelles. s. male vite vsure. luxurie. zc. p pelle  
s. aie. et cuncta q bz homo dabit p aia sua. zc.  
**Q**uarto oz decapitari. **L**apuri venit omne  
malu est supbia r psumptio. qñ ho supbit r  
psumit de vanitate sua scientia vel ingenio. q  
opozer decapitari. qñ iniciu omis peccati  
est supbia. **E**cc. x.

De sancto Augustino.

**I**ncerne ardentel  
in manu vñs. Verbu istud habe-  
tur ex eualiter Au. xij. **E**t officiali-  
ter in euangelio pñs solentia. **E**t scis bo-  
die p totu mñm in ecclia dei fit festu illi ma-  
gni r gloriosissimi doctor. b. Augustini epi

etia de eo erit pmo nñ pñs. **M**axie qd si placz  
in sua vita inuenim. mltas bonas materias  
speculatiuas et morales. **P**rv de. **D**ec nob  
sua gram abundatissime. saluter pgo ma. zc.  
**P**ro breui declaracione p b ppositi r materie  
pdicade introductoe sciendu q i sacra scri-  
ptura ptutes infuse qbz de dotoz virtutum  
sanctificat aias huanas. pñs lucerne ardē-  
tes. **R**o. qz sicut camera obscura et tenebro-  
sa illuminat r pulcrificat lucernis ardētibz.  
**S**ic camera pñs hūane illuminat r pulcri-  
ficat tenebras turpitudines pctoz pñs rñs  
a deo infusis. **Q**uadiu ar ho est in pctis r in  
malavita dom. pñs est obscura r tenebro-  
sa. h. qñ de accedit in ea lucerna pñs effi-  
ciat clara r pulcra. r tñc deo camvult in babi-  
tare. **U**n ait. Delicie mee esse cu filijs hoim.  
scz in pñs illuminat. **P**rouer. viij. **S**ic pñs  
grā. **C**onficia pñs evane r pompose r supbe  
tenebrosa est r habitatio demonu. **S**ed qñ  
placet creatori q illuminat lucerna virtutis  
cordialis dimittit dō pñs r vanitates. zc.  
tñc est pulcra r clara. r est habitatio dei. **I**de  
pñs avara camera pñs obscura plena  
pulveribz. qñ n curat nisi de terreois bonis.  
h. qñ a deo accedit in ea lucerna pñs pau-  
perat spūalis efficiat clara r pulcra. qz h ba-  
beat multas pecunias de bono iusto. nñ m  
ponit in eis spem hec cor. h. man. r pñs  
necessaria alia distribuit egenis. **I**de de pñs  
na luxuriosa. camera ei pñs nñ est nisi do-  
mus porcoz. h. qñ a deo accedit lucerna pñs  
tis castitatis cor pal. est clara r pulcra. zc. **I**de  
pñs inuidiosa vt hēat officiu regimē. zc.  
ei pñs est camera dyaboli. qz inuidia dy-  
boli mors intrauit in orbē tñs. h. qñ accen-  
dit lucerna pñs dilectionis frater nals efficiat  
pulcra r clara. **I**de de pñs gulosa. excessi-  
ue comedet r bibet. in iungia ecclie frāgen-  
do. is pñs missa audiedo. **S**z qñ acceditur  
lucerna pñs abstinentie pñs. etia tñc effici-  
tur clara. **I**de de pñs iracunda. qñ nō vult  
remitte iniurias h. tener i corde cu oñs odio  
vindictē. **S**z qñ accedit pñs lucerna pati-  
entia. camera cōscie efficiat clara r pulcra. qd  
hic dñs nñ r rex ihs xps fuit paties remitte-  
dorē. qñto magis nos q sum. pñs zc. **I**des  
de pñs accidiosa. h. em laborer ad cōgre-  
gadu bñs spūalia. s. pñs r merita accidio-  
si est. **S**z mō illi q laborat p bonis frenis  
p gregadis diligētes dicit. **Q**ui ar in bonis  
spūalibz dicit negligēs. h. in fine parbit  
qñ tales veniat corā pñs nullu lucz potat

## A MEDIEVAL SERMON ON ST. AUGUSTINE<sup>1</sup>

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PHILIP EMMANS, O.P.



FEW years ago the attention of Catholic preachers was called, especially by Popes Leo XIII and Benedict XV, to the need of a revision in the method to be employed in the instruction of the faithful. For a long time the primary purpose of the sermon, namely, to instruct, had been lost sight of; modern preaching had become, in the words of the first named pontiff, "either contemptible or barren and unprofitable." The value and beauty of the sermons of the preachers of the early Church, with their frequent appeals to the Scripture and the lives of holy men, were no longer appreciated by modern preachers. Mental gymnastics, debates, civil affairs, exerted a far greater appeal. "In 1894 the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars pointed out those great abuses (of the preacher of that day) as including the choice of 'themes,' which bring them the reputations which satisfy their ambition, in pompous discourses, treating of speculative rather than practical arguments, discourses more secular than religious, more showy than fruitful, such as are perhaps not out of place in journalism or debating clubs, but are out of place in the sacred edifice."<sup>2</sup>

The preachers of the Middle Ages can also be accused of treating of speculative arguments, but never of placing them above the practical in importance. They lived in an age when speculative thought had reached its height. It would be expecting too much of preachers of such an age to leave speculation out of their sermons. Nor can they be accused of having lost sight of the value of the scriptural sermon. Their entire sermon was based upon a scriptural text, their assertions were supported by texts. This is perhaps the greatest difference between the

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<sup>1</sup> The material for this study was obtained from "*Sermones S. Vincentii Ferr. de Tempore et de Sanctis; de Sancto Augustino*" Tom. I (Strasburg, 1489), a copy of which is now in the library of the Dominican House of Studies, Washington, D. C. The transliteration was made by Casimir Zvirblis, O.P. See opposite page for facsimile.

<sup>2</sup> Schulz, *Sacred Eloquence*, p. 1.

modern sermon and that of the Middle Ages. Today the tendency is to suit the text to the sermon, while then the sermon was about the text chosen.

Among the great preachers of the close of the Middle Ages St. Vincent Ferrer ranks very high. He was an indefatigable preacher. What he said of St. Augustine may be said of himself, "He went his way preaching, converting sinners to penance, and infidels, Jews, and pagans to the Catholic faith."

The sermon for our study has been chosen, not so much because it better portrays the method and style of St. Vincent, but rather because at this time St. Augustine should prove a subject of absorbing interest to Catholic readers and scholars. It may well be considered, however, a typical sermon of St. Vincent. While it is intended as a panegyric on St. Augustine, the preacher does not lose sight of the primary aim of all sermons, to instruct. Only at times in the course of this one does he become the "Angel of the Apocalypse," thundering forth warnings and denunciations against evil-doers.

The entire sermon is based upon the scriptural text, "Lamps burning in your hands."<sup>3</sup> The plan is simple. After a short introduction, in which "burning lamps" are interpreted as virtues infused into the soul by God, he proceeds to show how the soul is made hideous and displeasing to God when it is stained by sin, in this case by one of the seven capital sins, but which becomes cleansed and beautiful, "clara et pulchra," by the infusion of the virtues to which these seven sins are opposed. The second, and by far the much longer part is devoted to a portrayal of these virtues as possessed by St. Augustine. A conclusion of but a few lines describes the death of St. Augustine and his entrance into heaven.

St. Vincent begins his sermons with a declaration of his purpose. The sermon was preached on the feast of St. Augustine, who is held up before the audience as a model whom all should follow.

As you know, to-day throughout the entire Christian world, is celebrated the feast of the great and glorious doctor, the blessed Augustine, bishop. Our sermon will be of him also, especially because in his life we find many things about which we might meditate and which we should practice.

He first explains in a few sentences just what is meant by "burning lamps." The soul is compared to a hall which, being

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<sup>3</sup> Luke, XII, 36.

darkened by sin, is finally illuminated by the lamps of virtues, that is, by infused virtues, thus becoming cleansed and beautiful.

As a short declaration of the text, and as an introduction to the matter about which we propose to preach, it should be borne in mind that the infused virtues, by which God, the Giver of virtues, sanctifies holy souls, are called "burning lamps." The reason (for this is) because, just as an obscure and dark hall is lighted and made beautiful by burning lamps, so is the hall of human knowledge brightened and made beautiful against the dark evils of the heart by the virtues infused by God. As long as man lives in the state of sin and leads an evil life, the hall of knowledge is obscure and dark. But as soon as God lights in him the lamps of virtue, it becomes cleansed and is made beautiful; and then God desires to dwell in his soul. Whence He says, "My delight is to be with the children of men," namely, in an enlightened knowledge of Him. And He dwells there by means of grace.

Then follows in order a list of the seven capital sins which darken the soul, and the virtues by which the soul is illuminated and made beautiful. To the modern congregation the bare enumeration of the sins and the virtues would be as interesting and as instructive as the recitation of the multiplication table. Seven times a sin is mentioned, with the explanation that the soul stained by it is darkened and obscured; and seven times there follows the name of the virtue, the lamp of which is lighted in the soul by God. "Then it is cleansed and made beautiful." To illuminate the soul darkened by pride, God infuses the virtue of humility, by covetousness the virtue of spiritual poverty, by lust the virtue of chastity, by envy the virtue of fraternal love, by gluttony the virtue of abstinence from food, by anger the virtue of patience, and by sloth the virtue of diligence.

In each case the virtue is a lamp lighted in the soul by Jesus Christ, Who Himself burned brightly. He proves this assertion by an allusion to the Old Testament:

The infused virtues by which souls are justified are called "burning lamps." In proof of this we have what God said allegorically of His Son, Jesus Christ; "Thou shalt make seven lamps, and set them upon the candlestick, to give light over against." What was actually said to Moses, is here allegorically said to Christ. The seven lamps are the seven virtues already mentioned. Note that it is said, "you will make seven lamps," that is, seven virtues, because Christ Himself produces them in the soul by infusion. David calls Christ the "Lord of virtues."

It is not enough, however, only to know about the virtues, or to study them, or to preach about them. In order that they may produce fruit they must be put in practice.

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<sup>4</sup> Ex. XXV, 37.

Many have these virtues only in the eyes, inasmuch as they read about them; they study them and know about them, but their life is a sinful one. Others have them only on the tongue; they preach about them, they dispute learnedly about them, but their life is a scandalous one. Of such as these it is said, "Lamps burning in your eyes or on your tongue." Still others have these virtues only in their ears; and they are like those who listen to sermons, but who, having heard, act not as if they had heard. Of these it is said, "Lamps burning in your ears." It is not enough, however, that these virtues be only in the eyes or in the ears or in the tongue, but also in the hands, so that, just as they read or hear or preach about them, so they might take and put them into practice.

St. Vincent now approaches nearer to his subject and asserts that Augustine had these virtues in his hands.

And this was so with the blessed Augustine. We can say of him, "Lamps, that is, virtues beautifying the soul, in your hands," not only in the eyes by speculating and meditating upon them, or only in the ears by hearing about them, or only on the tongue by preaching about them, but in the hands by producing acts of virtue. We can apply to him a prophecy of Zacharias, whom an angel awoke saying, "What seest thou? And he said; I have looked and behold, a candlestick all of gold and its lamp upon the top of it and the seven lights thereof upon it."<sup>5</sup>

Augustine, because he possessed these virtues to a remarkable degree, is the "candlestick all of gold." It is from him that all the doctors of the Church after him have derived their light.

Note that the "candlestick all of gold" is said of the blessed Augustine. Other doctors are called "lamps." "No one lights a lamp and places it in a hidden place, nor under a bushel. Christ calls every doctor a lamp; but it is placed upon a candlestick, namely, upon the blessed Augustine. I make bold to say that every doctor who came after him rested upon his doctrine, upon his holy, pure, Catholic doctrine, upon his doctrine which was of the purest gold, without any error of false opinion.

St. Vincent then notes that the lamp upon the top of the candlestick is the lamp of wisdom, and the seven lights the seven virtues. He proposes to speak of each of these virtues as they are manifested in the life of St. Augustine.

The first virtue that he considers is humility. Starting with St. Paul's "knowledge puffeth up," he shows how Augustine, while being the most noted of all men because of his knowledge and wisdom, nevertheless did not become "puffed up." To this humble opinion of himself, together with the prayers of his mother, is attributed his conversion to the Catholic Church.

Whenever we find a famous doctor in some village or community, he is wholly puffed up with the wind of pride; but the blessed

<sup>5</sup> Zach. IV, 2.

Augustine, the most famous in the whole world, and the greatest of all men, knew himself to be nothing. While he was still a boy, he mastered the seven liberal arts by himself, without the aid of a master. Usually it takes a man seven years to learn these. Nevertheless, with all this, he remained humble of heart, he despised no one, nor did he seek to confound anyone in disputations. Because of this humility and by the prayers of his mother, he was converted. . . . After his conversion he desired not to dwell in cities or in villages, because being so famous he feared he might be tempted to vainglory.

St. Vincent next describes how Augustine visited the city of Hippo at the request of a certain rich man, a usurer, who desired his guidance in changing his mode of life. Valerianus (Valerius)<sup>6</sup> bishop of Hippo, hearing of his presence in the city, persuaded him to remain, and finally overcame his unwillingness to being ordained to the priesthood. Similar cases of the unwillingness of three saints are compared with St. Augustine's, as is likewise compared the attitude of the aspirants to the priesthood in the days of the preacher. He does not fear to denounce the latter in unmincing terms.

Hearing of this (Augustine's presence in the city of Hippo), the bishop Valerianus detained him, and, even though he was unwilling, he was ordained to the priesthood. He deemed himself unworthy of so great an office. He said, "Never shall my mouth be worthy to open heaven, nor my hands to touch Christ, my God, nor my body that it be a resting place of Christ." But today young men are ordained who are not of the required age, who have not enough knowledge, or virtue, conscience, devotion. They are ribald, lustful. The blessed Francis wished to be ordained, and he was made a deacon. But then he said, "It is enough that I am a deacon. I do not think myself worthy of the office of a priest, unless when I shall have reached the heights of sanctity." The same of the blessed Vincent and Lawrence.

The discussion of Augustine's humility ends with a short account of his rapid rise in the bishop's favor, his appointment to preach before the bishop, and his persistent refusal to accept the bishopric of Hippo, which he was finally compelled to accept. Valerianus even resigned his see so that Hippo might have the advantage of Augustine's administration.

With regard to the second virtue of which St. Vincent treats, that is, St. Augustine's poverty, he describes how the latter expended the entire revenues of his diocese in charitable works. Although he was entitled to one third of them for his own use, this also he used to relieve the distress of the needy. And when

<sup>6</sup> The text sometimes has Valerianus, and sometimes Valerius as Augustine's predecessor in the bishopric of Hippo.



this sum was found to be insufficient, he resorted to other means to secure money. The condition of the poor of St. Vincent's time is unfavorably compared with that of the poor of the days of St. Augustine. He rebukes the people for their extravagance.

Although his see was large, he spent the whole of the revenues. For himself he did not care for that rule which said that the revenues of a diocese should be divided into three parts, one to be used for the repairing of churches, the second for the relief of the poor, and the third for himself. He retained scarcely any of that part which was for his own use.

And if by any chance the citizens made a costly garment for him, he would accept it; but afterwards he would sell it and make a cheaper one for himself, and the rest of the money he would give to the poor. It is read that he himself said, "I confess that I am ashamed of costly garments, and whenever one is given to me, I sell it." . . . History tells us that he distributed his revenues to the poor, to widows, to orphans, to those who had been imprisoned for debt, etc. And whenever his own money was not enough, he sold superfluous chalices. . . . And today the poor die of hunger; captives deny their faith. So much is spent on vain and unnecessary things that there is not enough for other things. Women spend large sums for ornaments, perfumes, sleeves, etc. So do the men spend large sums for vain ornaments. And for unnecessary things in the churches. God has more regard for virtuous priests than for beautiful buildings. Augustine did not permit that too costly buildings be erected in his diocese, nor that any benefice be received from usurers.

The preacher holds up Augustine's regard for the virtue of chastity as a model for priests and bishops. St. Augustine would not even permit his sister or neices to visit him at his palace; for though no suspicion could arise from their visiting him, others might also demand entrance to his residence on this account, upon whom suspicion might fall. St. Vincent quotes St. Paul: "It behooveth a bishop to . . . have a good testimony of them who are without; lest they fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."<sup>7</sup>

Of St. Augustine's charity he says:

He was so inflamed with the love of God that whenever he celebrated the Sacred Mystery he wept. Just as wax melts when it is brought near a fire, just so was his soul made like water. The same with regard to his neighbor; he diligently visited his see two or three times in the year. He went his way preaching, converting sinners to penance, infidels, Jews, and pagans to the Catholic faith. So great was the charity in his heart that he desired to serve all, remembering these words of the Apostle, "I pray that your charity may more and more abound in knowledge and in all understanding, that you may approve the better things, that you may be sincere

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<sup>7</sup> I Tim. III, 7.

and without offence unto the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of justice, through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.<sup>18</sup>

St. Augustine's frugality with regard to eating and drinking is compared with the excessive drinking and eating of the ecclesiastics of the preacher's own times.

He did not eat meat; and only once in the day did he eat at all. The time was always Lent for him. . . . It is not said that he ate during the meal itself, for he loved readings and disputations better than feasting. He says that he learned three things from St. Ambrose, . . . and third, never to go unwillingly to a banquet, lest perchance he lose the mean of temperance. Why are there so many evil religious and clerics today who have no regard for the virtue of temperance, but who eat and drink (to excess)?

In speaking of St. Augustine's patience St. Vincent hints that Augustine's life as a bishop was not an easy one. Even by his own priests he was misunderstood. They accused him of hypocrisy in his dealings with his subjects. Augustine exercised his patience by disregarding the accusations and insinuations of his enemies, although he might easily have cast them into prison.

The last virtue to be considered is diligence.

He spent his whole time in performing good works. During the night he slept but for a little while; he spent the night in watching, praying, writing, meditating, and the day in celebrating (Mass) and in preaching. And because of this God gave him many graces to work miracles.

St. Vincent concludes his sermon with an account of the last days and death of St. Augustine.

Even as an old man of seventy-six years he did not cease from preaching. . . . And when he was sick with a fever, knowing the dissolution of his body to be imminent, he commanded that the seven penitential psalms be written for him and placed on the wall near his bed. Lying on his bed, he read them. If anyone should say because of this that he did not know them by heart, I would reply that he knew the whole psalter, and indeed the whole Bible. But while reading them, meditating upon them and weeping over them he remained on one verse longer than anyone else remained on all the seven psalms. And so, in order that he might know which was the following verse, he had them written for him. . . . Ten days before his death he commanded that no one come in to him, unless the physicians came or when food was brought to him. Finally, having confessed his few sins, he very devoutly received the sacraments of Communion and Extreme Unction; and having bid his canons and clerics farewell, he migrated in peace.

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<sup>18</sup> Philip. I, 9-11.