

Saint John Chrysostom

## Homily XII, On Colossians (4:12-18)

«Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, salutes you, always striving for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness, that he has much zeal for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis.»

In the commencement of this Epistle also, he commended this man for his love; for even to praise is a sign of love; thus in the beginning he said, «Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.» (Colossians 1:8) To pray for one is also a sign of love, and causes love again. He commends him moreover in order to open a door to his teachings, for reverendness in the teacher is the disciples' advantage; and so again is his saying, «one of you,» in order that they might pride themselves upon the man, as producing such men. And he says, «always striving for you in prayers.» He said not simply «praying,» but «striving,» trembling and fearing. «For I bear him witness,» he says, «that he has much zeal for you.» A trustworthy witness. «That he has,» he says, «much zeal for you,» that is, that he loves you exceedingly; and burns with passionate affection for you. «And them in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.» He commends him to those also. But whence were they to know this? They would assuredly have heard; however, they would also learn it when the Epistle was read. For he said, «Cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans.» «That ye may stand perfect,» he says. At once he both accuses them, and without offensiveness gives them advice and counsel. For it is possible both to be perfect, and withal not to stand, as if one were to know all, and still be wavering; it is possible also not to be perfect, and yet to stand, as if one were to know a part, and stand [not ] firmly. But this man prays for both: «That ye may stand perfect,» he says. See how again he has reminded them of what he said about the Angels, and about life. «And fully assured,» he says, «in all the will of God.» It is not enough, simply to do His will. He that is «filled,» suffers not any other will to be within him, for if so, he is not wholly filled. «For I bear him witness,» he says, «that he has much zeal.» Both «zeal,» and «great»; both are intensitive. As he says himself, when writing to the Corinthians, «For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy.» (2 Corinthians 11:2)

Ver. 14. «Luke, the beloved physician, salutes you.» This is the Evangelist. It is not to lower this man that he places him after, but to raise the other, viz. Epaphroditus. It is probable that there were others called by this name. «And Demas,» he says. After saying, «Luke, the physician, salutes you,» he added, «the beloved.» And no small praise is this, but even great exceedingly, to be beloved of Paul.

Ver. 15. «Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the Church that is in their house.»

See how he cements, and knits them together with one another, not by salutation only, but also by interchanging his Epistles. Then again he pays a compliment by addressing him individually. And this he does not without a reason, but in order to lead the others also to emulate his zeal. For it is not a small thing not to be numbered with the rest. Mark further how he shows the man to be great, seeing his house was a church.

Ver. 14. «And when this Epistle has been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans.» I suppose there are some of the things therein written, which it was needful that those also should hear. And they would have the greater advantage of recognizing their own errors in the charges brought against others.

«And that you also read the Epistle from Laodicea.» Some say that this is not Paul's to them, but theirs to Paul, for he said not that to the Laodiceans, but that written «from Laodicea.»

Ver. 17. «And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it.» Wherefore does he not write to him? Perhaps he needed it not, but only a bare reminding, so as to be more diligent.

Ver. 18. «The salutation of me, Paul, with my own hand.» This is a proof of their sincerity and affection; that they both looked at his handwriting, and that with emotion. «Remember my bonds.» Wonderful! How great the consolation! For this is enough to cheer them on to all things, and make them bear themselves more nobly in their trials; but he made them not only the braver, but also the more nearly interested. «Grace be with you. Amen.»

It is great praise, and greater than all the rest, his saying of Epaphras, «who is [one] of you, a servant of Christ.» And he calls him a minister for them, like as he terms himself also a minister of the Church, as when he says, «Whereof I Paul was made a minister.» (Colossians 1:23) To the same dignity he advances this man; and above he calls him a «fellow-servant» (Colossians 1:7), and here, «a servant.» «Who is of you,» he says, as if speaking to a mother, and saying, «who is of your womb.» But this praise might have gendered envy; therefore he commends him not from these things only, but also from what had regard to themselves; and so he does away with envy, both in the former place, and here. «Always,» he says, «striving for you,» not now only, while with us, to make a display; nor yet only while with you, to make a display before you. By saying, «striving,» he has showed his great earnestness. Then, that he might not seem to be flattering them, he added, «that he has much zeal for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis.» And the words, «that you may stand perfect,» are not words of flattery, but of a reverend teacher. Both «fully assured» he says, «and perfect.» The one he granted them, the other he said was lacking. And he said not, «that you be not shaken,» but, «that you may stand.» Their being saluted, however, by many, is refreshing to them, seeing that not only their friends from among themselves; but others also, remember them.

«And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord.» His chief aim is to subject them to him entirely. For they could no more have complaint against him for rebuking them, when they themselves had taken it all upon them; for it is not reasonable to talk to the disciples about the teacher. But to stop their mouths, he writes thus to them; «Say to Archippus,» he says, «Take heed.» This word is everywhere used to alarm; as when he says, «Take heed of dogs.» (Philippians 3:2) «Take heed lest there shall be any one that makes spoil of you.» (Colossians 2:8) «Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to the weak.» (1 Corinthians 8:9) And he always so expresses himself when he would terrify. «Take heed,» he says, «to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it.» He does not even allow him the power of choosing, as he says himself, «For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward: but if not of my own will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.» (1 Corinthians 9:17) «That thou fulfill it,» continually using diligence. «Which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it.» Again, the word «in» means «through the Lord.» He gave it you, says he, not we. He subjects them also to him, when he shows that they had been committed to his hands by God.

«Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.» He has released their terror. For although their teacher be in bonds, yet «grace» releases him. This too is of grace, the granting him to be put in bonds. For hear Luke saying, The Apostles returned «from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name.» (Acts 5:41) For both to suffer shame, and to be put in bonds, is indeed to be «counted worthy.» For, if he that has one whom he loves, deems it gain to suffer anything for his sake, much rather than it so to suffer for the sake of Christ. Repine we not then at our tribulations for Christ's sake, but let us also remember Paul's bonds, and be this our incitement. For instance: do you exhort any to give to the poor for Christ's sake? Remind them of Paul's bonds, and bemoan your misery and theirs, seeing that he indeed gave up even his body to bonds for His sake, but you will not give a portion even of your food. Are you lifted up because of your good deeds? Remember Paul's bonds, that you have

suffered nought of that kind, and you will be lifted up no more. Covetest thou any of the things that are your neighbor's? Remember Paul's bonds, and you will see how unreasonable it is, that while he was in perils, you should be in delights. Again, is your heart set upon self-indulgence? Picture to your mind Paul's prison-house; you are his disciple, his fellow-soldier. How is it reasonable, that your fellow-soldier should be in bonds, and thou in luxury? Are you in affliction? Do you deem yourself forsaken? Hear Paul's bonds, and you will see, that to be in affliction is no proof of being forsaken. Would you wear silken robes? Remember Paul's bonds; and these things will appear to you more worthless than the filth-bespattered rags of her that sits apart. Would you array you with golden trinkets? Picture to your mind Paul's bonds, and these things will seem to you no better than a withered bulrush. Would you tire your hair, and be beautiful to see? Think of Paul's squalidness within that prison-house, and you will burn for that beauty, and deem this the extreme of ugliness, and wilt groan bitterly through longing for those bonds. Would you daub you with pastes and pigments, and such like things? Think of his tears: a three-years space, night and day, he ceased not to weep. Acts 20:31 With this adorning deck your cheek; these tears do make it bright. I say not, that you weep for others, (I wish indeed it could be even so, but this is too high for you,) but for your own sins I advise you to do this. Have you ordered your slave to be put in bonds, and were you angry, and exasperated? Remember Paul's bonds, and you will straightway stay your anger; remember that we are of the bound, not the binders, of the bruised in heart, not the bruisers. Have you lost self-control, and shouted loud in laughter? Think of his lamentations, and you will groan; such tears will show you brighter far. Do you see any persons rioting and dancing? Remember his tears. What fountain has gushed forth so great streams as those eyes did tears? «Remember my tears» (Acts 20:31), he says, as here «bonds.» And with reason he spoke thus to them, when he sent for them from Ephesus to Miletus. For he was then speaking to teachers. He demands of those therefore, that they should sympathize also, but of these that they should only encounter dangers.

What fountain will you compare to these tears? That in Paradise, which waters the whole earth? But you will have mentioned nothing like it. For this fount of tears watered souls, not earth. If one were to show us Paul bathed in tears, and groaning, would not this be better far to see, than countless choirs gayly crowned? I am not now speaking of you; but, if one, having pulled away from the theater and the stage some wanton fellow, burning and drunken with carnal love, were to show him a young virgin in the very flower of her age, surpassing her fellows, both in other respects, and in her face more than the rest of her person, having an eye, tender and soft, that gently rests, and gently rolls, moist, mild, calmly smiling, and arrayed in much modesty and much grace, fringed with dark lashes both under and over, having an eyeball, so to speak, alive, a forehead radiant; underneath, again, a cheek shaded to exact redness, lying smooth as marble, and even; and then any one should show me Paul weeping; leaving that maiden, I would have eagerly sprung away to the sight of him; for from his eyes there beamed spiritual beauty. For that other transports the souls of youths, it scorches and inflames them; but this, on the contrary, subdues them. This makes the eyes of the soul more beauteous, it curbs the belly: it fills with the love of wisdom, with much sympathy: and it is able to soften even a soul of adamant. With these tears the Church is watered, with these souls are planted; yea, though there be fire sensible and substantial, yet can these tears quench it; these tears quench the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Remember we then these tears of his, and we shall laugh to scorn all present things. These tears did Christ pronounce blessed, saying, «Blessed are they that mourn, and blessed are they that weep, for they shall laugh.» (Matthew 5:4; Luke 6:21) Such tears did Isaiah too, and Jeremiah weep; and the former said, «Leave me alone, I will weep bitterly» (Isaiah 22:4), Septuagint: and the latter, «Who will give my head water, and my eyes fountains of tears?» (Jeremiah 9:1); as though the natural fount were not enough.

Nothing is sweeter than these tears; sweeter are they than any laughter. They that mourn, know how great consolation it possesses. Let us not think this a thing to be deprecated, but one to be even exceedingly prayed for; not that others may sin, but that, when they sin, we may be heart-broken for them. Remember we these tears, these bonds. Surely too upon those bonds tears descended; but the death of the perishing, of those that had bound him in them, suffered him not to taste the pleasure of the bonds. For in their behalf he grieved, being a disciple of Him that bewept the priests of the Jews; not because they were going

to crucify Him, but because they were themselves perishing. And He does not this Himself alone, but He thus exhorts others also, saying, «Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me.» (Luke 23:28) These eyes saw Paradise, saw the third heaven: but I count not them so blessed because of this sight, as because of those tears, through which they saw Christ. Blessed, indeed, was that sight; for he himself even glories in it, saying, «Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?» (1 Corinthians 9:1); but more blessed so to weep.

In that sight many have been partakers, and those who have not so been, Christ the rather calls blessed, saying, «Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed» (John 20:29); but unto this not many have attained. For if to stay here for Christ's sake were more needful than to depart to Him (Philippians 1:23-24), for the sake of the salvation of others; surely then to groan for others' sakes, is more needful even than to see Him. For if for His sake to be in hell, is rather to be desired, than to be with Him; and to be separated from Him for His sake more to be desired than to be with Him, (for this is what he said, «For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ» (Romans 9:3), much more is weeping for His sake. «I ceased not,» he says, «to admonish everyone with tears.» (Acts 20:31) Wherefore? Not fearing the dangers; no; but as if one sitting by a sick man's side, and not knowing what would be the end, should weep for affection, fearing lest he should lose his life; so too did he; when he saw any one diseased, and could not prevail by rebuke, he thenceforward wept. So did Christ also, that happily they might reverence His tears: thus, one sinned, He rebuked him; the rebuked spat upon Him, and sprang aloof; He wept, that haply He might win him even so.

Remember we these tears: thus let us bring up our daughters, thus our sons; weeping when we see them in evil. As many women as wish to be loved, let them remember Paul's tears, and groan: as many of you as are counted blest, as many as are in bridal chambers, as many as are in pleasure, remember these; as many as are in mourning, exchange tears for tears. He mourned not for the dead; but for those that were perishing while alive. Shall I tell of other tears? Timothy also wept; for he was this man's disciple; wherefore also when writing to him he said, «Remembering your tears, that I may be filled with joy.» (2 Timothy 1:4) Many weep even from pleasure. So it is also a matter of pleasure, and that of the utmost intensity. So the tears are not painful: yea, the tears that flow from such sorrow are even better far than those due to worldly pleasure. Hear the Prophet saying, «The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping, he has heard the voice of my supplication.» (Psalm 6:8) For where is the tear not useful? In prayers? In exhortations? We get them an ill name, by using them not to what they are given us for. When we entreat a sinning brother, we ought to weep, grieving and groaning; when we exhort any one, and he gives us no heed, but goes on perishing, we ought to weep. These are the tears of heavenly wisdom. When however one is in poverty, or bodily disease, or dead, not so; for these are not things worthy of tears.

As then we gain an ill name for laughter also, when we use it out of season; so too do we for tears, by having recourse to them unseasonably. For the virtue of each thing then discovers itself when it is brought to its own fitting work, but when to one that is alien, it does no longer so. For instance, wine is given for cheerfulness, not drunkenness, bread for nourishment, sexual intercourse for the procreation of children. As then these things have gained an ill name, so also have tears. Be there a law laid down, that they be used in prayers and exhortations only, and see how desirable a thing they will become. Nothing does so wipe out sins, as tears. Tears show even this bodily countenance beautiful; for they win the spectator to pity, they make it respected in our eyes. Nothing is sweeter than tearful eyes. For this is the noblest member we have, and the most beautiful, and the soul's own. And therefore we are so bowed therewith, as though we saw the soul itself lamenting.

I have not spoken these things without a reason; but in order that you may cease your attendance at weddings, at dancings, at Satanical performances. For see what the devil has invented. Since nature itself has withheld women from the stage, and the disgraceful things enacted there, he has introduced into the women's apartment the furniture of the theater, I mean, wanton men and harlots. This pestilence the custom of marriages has introduced, or rather, not of marriages, far be it, but of our own silliness. What is it you do, O man? Do you not know what you are at? Thou marriest a wife for chastity, and procreation of children; what then mean these harlots? That there may be, one answers, greater gladness. And yet is not

this rather madness? Thou insultest your bride, you insult the women that are invited. For if they are delighted with such proceedings, the thing is an insult. If to see harlots acting indecorously confers any honor, wherefore do you not drag your bride also there, that she too may see? It is quite indecent and disgraceful to introduce into one's house lewd fellows and dancers, and all that Satanic pomp.

«Remember,» he says, «my bonds.» Marriage is a bond, a bond ordained of God, a harlot is a severing and a dissolving. It is permitted you to embellish marriage with other things, such as full tables, and apparel. I do not cut off these things, lest I should seem to be clownish to an extreme; and yet Rebecca was content with her veil only (Genesis 24:65); still I do not cut them off. It is permitted you to embellish and set off marriage with apparel, with the presence of reverend men and reverend women. Why do you introduce those mockeries? why those monsters? Tell us what it is you hear from them? What? Do you blush to tell? Do you blush, and yet force them to do it? If it is honorable, wherefore do you not do it yourself as well? But if disgraceful, wherefore do you compel another? Everything should be full of chasteness, of gravity, of orderliness; but I see the reverse, people frisking like camels and mules. For the virgin, her chamber is the only befitting place. «But,» says one, «she is poor.» Because she is poor, she ought to be modest also; let her have her character in the place of a fortune. Has she no dowry to give with herself? Then why do you make her otherwise contemptible through her life and manners? I praise the custom, that virgins attend to do honor to their fellow; matrons attend to do honor to her who is made one of their order. Rightly has this been ordered. For these are two companies, one of virgins, the other of the married; the one are giving her up, the other receiving her. The bride is between them, neither virgin, nor wife, for she is coming forth from those, and entering into the fellowship of these. But those harlots, what mean they? They ought to hide their faces when marriage is celebrated; they ought to be dug into the earth, (for harlotry is the corruption of marriage,) but we introduce them at our marriages. And, when you are engaged in any work, you count it ill-omened to speak even a syllable of what is adverse to it; for instance, when you sow, when you draw off the wine from your vats, you would not, even if asked, utter a syllable about vinegar; but here, where the object is chasteness, introduce ye the vinegar? For such is an harlot. When you are preparing sweet ointment, you suffer nought ill-scented to be near. Marriage is a sweet ointment. Why then do you introduce the foul stench of the dunghill into the preparation of your ointment? What do you say? Shall the virgin dance, and yet feel no shame before her fellow? For she ought to have more gravity than the other; she has at least come forth from the [nurse's] arm, and not from the palæstra. For the virgin ought not to appear publicly at all at a marriage.

Do you see not how in kings' houses, the honored are within, about the king, the unhonored without? Do thou too be within about the bride. But remain in the house in chasteness, expose not your virginity. Either company is standing by, the one to show of what sort she is whom they are giving up, the other in order that they may guard her. Why do you disgrace the virgin estate? For if you are such as this, the same will the bridegroom suspect her to be. If you wish to have men in love with you, this is the part of saleswomen, green-grocers, and handicrafts-people. Is not this a shame? To act unseemly is a shame even though it be a king's daughter. For does her poverty stand in the way? Or her course of life? Even if a virgin be a slave, let her abide in modesty. «For in Christ Jesus there can be neither bond nor free.» (Galatians 3:28)

What? Is marriage a theater? It is a mystery and a type of a mighty thing; and even if you reverence not it, reverence that whose type it is. «This mystery,» says he, «is great, but I speak in regard of Christ and of the Church.» (Ephesians 5:32) It is a type of the Church, and of Christ, and do you introduce harlots at it? If then, says one, neither virgins dance, nor the married, who is to dance? No one, for what need is there of dancing? In the Grecian mysteries there are dancings, but in ours, silence and decency, modesty, and bashfulness. A great mystery is being celebrated: forth with the harlots! Forth with the profane! How is it a mystery? They come together, and the two make one. Wherefore is it that at his entrance indeed, there was no dancing, no cymbals, but great silence, great stillness; but when they come together, making not a lifeless image, nor yet the image of anything upon earth, but of God Himself, and after his likeness, you introduce so great an uproar, and disturbest those that are there, and putteth the soul to shame, and confoundest it? They come, about to be made one body. See again a mystery of love! If the two become not one, so long as they continue two, they make not many, but when they have come into oneness, they

then make many. What do we learn from this? That great is the power of union. The wise counsel of God at the beginning divided the one into two; and being desirous of showing that even after division it remains still one, He suffered not that the one should be of itself enough for procreation. For he is not one who is not yet [united, ] but the half of one; and it is evident from this, that he begets no offspring, as was the case also beforetime. Do you see the mystery of marriage? He made of one, one; and again, having made these two, one, He so makes one, so that now also man is produced of one. For man and wife are not two men, but one Man. And this may be confirmed from many sources; for instance, from James, from Mary the Mother of Christ, from the words, «He made them male and female.» (Genesis 1:27) If he be the head, and she the body, how are they two? Therefore the one holds the rank of a disciple, the other of a teacher, the one of a ruler, the other of a subject. Moreover, from the very fashioning of her body, one may see that they are one, for she was made from his side, and they are, as it were, two halves.

For this cause He also calls her a help, to show that they are one (Genesis 2:18); for this cause He honors their cohabitation beyond both father and mother, to show that they are one. (Genesis 2:24) And in like manner a father rejoices both when son and daughter marry, as though the body were hastening to join a member of its own; and though so great a charge and expenditure of money is incurred still he cannot bear with indifference to see her unmarried. For as though her own flesh itself were severed from her, each one separately is imperfect for the procreation of children, each one is imperfect as regards the constitution of this present life. Wherefore also the Prophet says, «the residue of your spirit.» (Malachi 2:15), Septuagint And how become they one flesh? As if you should take away the purest part of gold, and mingle it with other gold; so in truth here also the woman as it were receiving the richest part fused by pleasure, nourishes it and cherishes it, and withal contributing her own share, restores it back a Man. And the child is a sort of bridge, so that the three become one flesh, the child connecting, on either side, each to other. For like as two cities, which a river divides throughout, become one, if a bridge connect them on both sides, so is it in this case; and yet more, when the very bridge in this case is formed of the substance of each. As the body and the head are one body; for they are divided by the neck; but not divided more than connected, for it, lying between them brings together each with the other. And it is the same as if a chorus that had been severed should, by taking one part of itself from this quarter, and the other again from the right, make one; or as these when come into close rank, and extending hands, become one; for the hands extended admit not of their being two. Therefore to wit He said with accuracy of expression, not «they shall be one flesh» but joined together «into one flesh» (Genesis 2:2), Septuagint, namely, that of the child. What then? When there is no child, will they not be two? Nay, for their coming together has this effect, it diffuses and commingles the bodies of both. And as one who has cast ointment into oil, has made the whole one; so in truth is it also here.

I know that many are ashamed at what is said, and the cause of this is what I spoke of, your own lasciviousness, and unchasteness. The fact of marriages being thus performed, thus depraved, has gained the thing an ill name: for «marriage is honorable, and the bed undefiled.» (Hebrews 13:4) Why are you ashamed of the honorable, why do you blush at the undefiled? This is for heretics, this is for such as introduce harlots there. For this cause I am desirous of having it thoroughly purified, so as to bring it back again to its proper nobleness, so as to stop the mouths of the heretics. The gift of God is insulted, the root of our generation; for about that root there is much dung and filth. This then let us cleanse away by our discourse. Endure then a little while, for he that holds filth must endure the stench. I wish to show you that you ought not to be ashamed at these things, but at those which you do; but thou, passing by all shame at those, art ashamed at these; surely then you condemn God who has thus decreed.

Shall I tell how marriage is also a mystery of the Church? As Christ came into the Church, and she was made of him, and he united with her in a spiritual intercourse, «for,» says one, «I have espoused you to one husband, a pure virgin.» (2 Corinthians 11:2) And that we are of Him, he says, of His members, «and of His flesh.» Thinking then on all these things, let us not cast shame upon so great a mystery. Marriage is a type of the presence of Christ, and are you drunken at it? Tell me; if you saw an image of the king, would you dishonor it? By no means.

Now the practices at marriages seem to be a matter of indifference, but they are the causes of great mischiefs. All is full of lawlessness. «Filthiness, and foolish talking, and jesting, let it not proceed,» says he, «out of your mouth.» (Ephesians 5:4; 4:29) Now all these things are filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting; and not these simply, but with aggravation, for the thing has become an art, and there are great praises for those that pursue it. Sins have become an art! We pursue them not in any chance way, but with earnestness, with science, and thenceforth the devil takes the command of his own array. For where drunkenness is, there is unchasteness: where filthy talking, there the devil is at hand bringing in his own contributions; with such an entertainment, tell me, do you celebrate the mystery of Christ? And do you invite the devil?

I dare say you consider me offensive. For this too is a property of extreme pervertedness, that even one that rebukes you incurs your ridicule as one that is austere. Hear ye not Paul, saying, «Whatsoever ye do, whether you eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God»? (1 Corinthians 10:31) But ye do all to ill report and dishonor. Hear ye not the Prophet, saying, «Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with trembling?» (Psalm 2:11) But you are wholly without restraint. Is it not possible both to enjoy pleasure, and to do so with safety? Are you desirous of hearing beautiful songs? Best of all indeed, you ought not; nevertheless, I condescend if you will have it so: do not hear those Satanic ones, but the spiritual. Are you desirous of seeing choirs of dancers? Behold the choir of Angels. And how is it possible, says one, to see them? If you drive away all these things, even Christ will come to such a marriage, and Christ being present, the choir of Angels is present also. If you will, He will even now work miracles as He did then; He will make even now the water, wine (John 2); and what is much more wonderful, He will convert this unstable and dissolving pleasure, this cold desire, and change it into the spiritual. This is to make of water, wine. Where pipers are, by no means there is Christ; but even if He should have entered, He first casts these forth, and then He works His wonders. What can be more disagreeable than this Satanic pomp? Where everything is inarticulate, everything without significancy; and if there be anything articulate, again all is shameful, all is noisome.

Nothing is more pleasurable than virtue, nothing sweeter than orderliness, nothing more amiable than gravity. Let any celebrate such a marriage as I speak of; and he shall find the pleasure; but what sort of marriages these are, take heed. First seek a husband for the virgin, who will be truly a husband, and a protector; as though thou were intending to place a head upon a body; as though about to give not a slave, but a daughter into his hands. Seek not money, nor splendor of family, nor greatness of country; all these things are superfluous; but piety of soul, gentleness, the true understanding, the fear of God, if you wish your darling to live with pleasure. For if you seek a wealthier husband, not only will you not benefit her, but you will even harm her, by making her a slave instead of free. For the pleasure she will reap from her golden trinkets will not be so great as will be the annoyance that comes of her slavery. I pray you, seek not these things, but most of all, one of equal condition; if however this cannot be, rather one poorer than in better circumstances; if at least thou be desirous not of selling your daughter to a master, but of giving her to a husband. When you have thoroughly investigated the virtue of the man, and art about to give her to him, beseech Christ to be present: for He will not be ashamed to be so; it is the mystery of His presence. Yea rather beseech Him even in the first instance, to grant her such a suitor. Be not worse than the servant of Abraham, who, when sent on a pilgrimage so important, saw whither he ought to have recourse; wherefore also he obtained everything. When you are taking anxious pains, and seeking a husband for her, pray; say unto God, «whomsoever You will do Thou provide:» into His hands commit the matter; and He, honored in this way by you, will requite you with honor.

Two things indeed it is necessary to do; to commit the thing into His hands, and to seek such an orderly person as He Himself approves.

When then you make a marriage, go not round from house to house borrowing mirrors and dresses; for the matter is not one of display, nor do you lead your daughter to a pageant; but decking out your house with what is in it, invite your neighbors, and friends, and kindred. As many as you know to be of a good character, those invite, and bid them be content with what there is. Let no one from the orchestra be

present, for such expense is superfluous, and unbecoming. Before all the rest, invite Christ. Do you know whereby you will invite Him? Whosoever, says He, «has done it to one of these least, has done it to Me.» (Matthew 25:40) And think it not an annoying thing to invite the poor for Christ's sake; to invite harlots is an annoyance. For to invite the poor is a means of wealth, the other of ruin. Adorn the bride not with these ornaments that are made of gold, but with gentleness and modesty, and the customary robes; in place of all golden ornament and braiding, arraying her in blushes, and shamefacedness, and the not desiring such things. Let there be no uproar, no confusion; let the bridegroom be called, let him receive the virgin. The dinners and suppers, let them not be full of drunkenness, but of abundance and pleasure. See how many good things will result, whenever we see such marriages as those; but from the marriages that are now celebrated, (if at least one ought to call them marriages and not pageants,) how many are the evils! The banquet hall is no sooner broken up, than straightway comes care and fear, lest anything that is borrowed should have been lost, and there succeeds to the pleasure melancholy intolerable. But this distress belongs to the mother-in-law,— nay, rather not even is the bride herself free; all that follows at least belongs to the bride herself. For to see all broken up, is a ground for sadness, to see the house desolate.

There is Christ, here is Satan; there is cheerfulness, here anxious care; there pleasure, here pain; there expense, here nothing of the kind; there indecency, here modesty; there envy, here no envy; there drunkenness, here soberness, here health, here temperance. Bearing in mind all these things, let us stay the evil at this point, that we may please God, and be counted worthy to obtain the good things promised to them that love Him, through the grace and love toward man of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom, to the Father, together with the Holy Ghost, be glory, power, honor, now and for ever, and world without end. Amen.