

## Early Ministry

### 16.—Christ's Zeal for the Sanctity of the Temple [A.D. 31]

1. About this time Jesus went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Pasch. Entering the Temple, He found many who were there selling oxen and sheep and doves, while the money-changers sat at their tables. Animated with a holy zeal, He made a whip of cords and drove out those who thus profaned the house of God. No one dared to resist Him, and soon the place was empty.

2. The few who remained asked by what authority He assumed to act as He had done. His only answer was, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He meant His body, but the Jews thought He meant that grand and gorgeous temple that had cost their forefathers forty-six years of labor and an immense treasure of gold and silver.

3. During the celebration of this Paschal feast Jesus wrought a great many miracles in and near Jerusalem. Many, when they saw His works and heard His words, were led to believe in Him.

### 17.—Nicodemus comes to see Jesus.

1. Whilst Jesus was at Jerusalem celebrating this feast of the Pasch, Nicodemus, a member of the great Jewish Council, came to Him in the night-time and said: "Master, we know Thou art a teacher from God, for no man can do what Thou doest if God were not with him."

2. After they had talked together for a while, Nicodemus asked what he must do to be saved. Jesus answered, "He must be born again of water and the Holy Ghost." When Nicodemus heard this he was much puzzled to understand what he had heard; but Christ only repeated His words, and added, "That God had sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that the world might be saved through Him."

3. It was at this interview that Christ taught the necessity of Baptism. The Catholic Church not only teaches this doctrine to-day, but insists that all her children shall be baptized. As the Israelites were saved from the slavery of Egypt by passing through the Red Sea, so are Christians freed from the slavery of sin by the waters of Baptism.

### 18.—Jesus at the Well of Jacob.

1. When the feast of the Pasch was over Jesus passed through Judea, baptizing as He went. On His way to Nazareth He came to a city called Shechem, in the country of Samaria. Being weary, He sat down near a well which formerly Jacob had dug, and which was much visited by the people, because it was near the gate. His disciples, leaving Him, went into the city to buy bread.

2. While Jesus was sitting by the well, a woman came to draw water. Jesus asked her for a drink. Now the Jews so hated the Samaritans that they would have preferred to die rather than ask a favor from them. So, when the woman heard the request, she was very much astonished, and asked how it came that He, who was a Jew, asked her for a drink.

3. Jesus said to her, if she knew who it was that asked her for a drink, maybe she would ask Him for a drink; for He would give her living water. When she heard of living water, and how those who drank of it would not thirst again, she asked for it, that she might be saved the trouble of coming so often to draw water. Then Jesus revealed to her the secret sins of her life. Being struck at the Spirit of God, which she so clearly saw in Him, she said: "Sir, I see Thou art a prophet."

4. The Samaritans had built a temple on Gerizim, a mountain near the city of Shechem, where they were accustomed to offer sacrifice, as the Jews did at Jerusalem. The woman asked, "Who was right, the Jew or the Samaritan?" But Jesus said: "The time will come—nay, was come—when men would worship God neither on Mount Gerizim nor at Jerusalem."

5. Jesus also said to her that He was the Messiah. When she heard this she left her water-pot, and, hastening into the city, told the inhabitants all that had happened. The Samaritans came to Jesus, and asked Him to remain with them. He stayed two days, teaching and instructing them, many believing in Him.

6. The water which Jesus gives is interior light to guide the soul, and grace to overcome the passions. Those who will truly serve God must offer Him not the appearances of piety, but humility, faith, and charity. These are the fountains from which all true religion springs.

## 19.—Jesus preaches at Nazareth.

1. After Jesus left Shechem He returned to Nazareth, His native city. It was His custom to go frequently into the synagogue. One day, while many of the people were assembled, Jesus rose up to read. The book of Isaiah was given Him, and, opening it, He read from the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; He bath anointed Me, and sent Me to preach the Gospel to the poor, and to heal the contrite of heart."

2. Having shut the book, He returned it to the doctors. All eyes were fixed upon Him, and wonder and doubt filled their minds when He began to show them what the prophets had said of the Messiah. But they were confounded when He referred these prophecies to Himself, and clearly proved He was the Messiah.

3. "Is not this," said they, "the son of Joseph the carpenter?" In answer, Jesus said, "It was not wonderful that He was not believed, for a prophet had no honor in his own country. Even," said He, "Elias was rejected by his own, and was forced to confer his favors upon the pagan widow of Sarepta."

4. When the people heard this they were filled with rage, for they saw He referred to them. They finally forbade Him to speak any more, and, thrusting Him out, brought Him to the brow of the mountain on which the city was built, intending to cast Him down. But Jesus, when He saw Himself on the edge of the precipice, turned, and with a calm dignity, that utterly confounded and paralyzed His enemies, passed through their midst.

## 20.—The Miracle of Jesus at Capernaum.

1. From Nazareth Jesus went to Capernaum, where He taught on the Sabbath days. All were in admiration and astonishment at His doctrines; for He spoke as no man had ever spoken, and his words penetrated into the inmost recesses of their hearts.

2. One day, while He was speaking, a man who was possessed by a devil cried out: "Let us alone! What have we to do with Thee? I know Thou art the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked the devil and drove him out of the man. When the people saw this, fear came upon them, and they knew not what to think.

3. Going out of the synagogue, Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew, his brother. Simon's mother-in-law was very sick. Her friends asked Jesus to do something for her. He approached the bed on which she lay, and, taking her by the hand, lifted her up. Immediately the fever left her, and, rising, she began to minister to Him and His disciples.

4. During the evening of this same day the inhabitants of the city came to Peter's house, carrying with them the sick and those that were possessed. Jesus went to the door and cured the sick and drove out the devils. On the next day He went into Galilee, where He also cured the sick and the infirm.

5. Under the Jewish dispensation, the saints and the prophets also wrought miracles, but in the name of God, from whom they had their authority. Jesus, on the contrary, wrought His miracles in His own name, and by His own authority, thus distinguishing Himself from those who went before Him and from those who came after Him.

## 21.—The Miraculous Draught of Fishes.

1. Jesus passed over from Capernaum to the Sea of Galilee. Here the multitude pressed to see Him and to hear His words. By the shore were two vessels; the nearest, Peter's. Into this Jesus entered, and requested Peter to push out a little from the land. Then He sat down and taught the multitude.

2. When Jesus had finished speaking, He told Peter to launch out into the deep and to let down his net. Peter answered that he and his partners had been fishing all the night, but had caught nothing; yet, as He wished it, they would let down the net. Scarce had they done so when the net was filled with such a quantity of fish that it was nearly breaking. They made signs to their partners to come and help them, and both ships were filled, so that they were almost sinking.

3. When Peter saw this he fell at the feet of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." But Jesus answered, "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt be taking men." Having brought the ships to the shore Peter and his companions left all and followed Jesus.

4. Jesus chose Peter's ship from which to teach. In the Roman Catholic Church, of which Peter's ship

was a figure, Jesus Christ continues to teach through the Popes, who are the lawful successors or Peter.

The miraculous draught of fishes was also symbolic. The sea is the world, the net the Church. The fishers are the bishops and priests; the fish are the faithful who voluntarily enter the Church, that thereby they may be saved.

## 22.—The Paralytic.

1. One day, while Jesus taught in a certain house of Capernaum, surrounded by the Pharisees and doctors, who had come from Galilee and the surrounding towns to hear Him, a man sick of the palsy was brought to the door. When those who carried the sick man found, because of the multitude, they could not reach Jesus, they went up on the roof of the house,—which, according to the custom of the East, was flat and had an opening in it,—and let the sick man down into the midst of the crowd.

2. Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the sick man: "Thy sins are forgiven." When the doctors and the Pharisees heard this they said: "This man blasphemes. Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus, who knew the thoughts of their hearts, asked them whether it was easier to forgive sins than to cure the man. "But that you may know," said He, "that the Son of Man has power to forgive sins, I say to this sick man: Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house." And the sick man rose, and took up his bed, and returned to his house, praising God.

3. All those who saw this palpable miracle were confounded and astonished. They had heard Jesus say, "Thy sins are forgiven," and, in proof of His power to forgive sins, they had seen Him cure the man. Hence it was not astonishing that, being unable to explain the mystery, they simply cried out, "We have seen wonderful things to-day!"

## 23.—The Sermon on the Mountain.

1. Jesus, seeing a great multitude come to Him, went up into a mountain and sat down. His disciples came to Him, and the multitude stood round about, on the sides of the mountain, listening in silence. Jesus thus began:

### *The Eight Beatitudes.*

2. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.

3. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

### *The Dignity and Duties of the Apostles.*

4. After Jesus had spoken thus to the people, He turned to His apostles, and told them they were the salt of the earth and the light of the world; and that if the one lost its savor, or the other was put under a bushel, each was equally worthless.

### *The Duties of Christians.*

5. Again turning to the people, Jesus said to them that their "justice should be more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees; neither should they kill, nor call another fool; nor should they offer a gift to God whilst they were in anger with their brother." Besides these grand maxims of justice, He taught them to love their enemies, to do good to those that hated them, and to pray for those that persecuted and calumniated them.

### *The Sanctity of Marriage.*

6. Having thus spoken of the general duties of Christians one to another, Jesus gave the following very clear and decided command concerning the nature and sanctity of marriage, to wit, "Let no man put away his wife; for what God has joined together, let no man put asunder." Then He added that, in all their actions, they should have purity of intention, nor do anything for the applause of men.

### *The Works of a Christian.*

7. After this, Jesus spoke to the multitude of the vanities of life and the folly of laying up treasures on earth. He bade them rather lay up treasures in heaven, where neither the moth nor the rust could consume nor the thief steal. He also told them not

to be anxious for the things of life—how they should be clothed or what they should eat; for the birds neither sowed, nor did they gather into barns, and yet God fed them.

8. "Consider," said He, "the lilies of the field: they labor not, neither do they spin; and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of them." He added: "No man can serve two masters: you cannot serve God and mammon."

#### *The End of the Sermon.*

9. Besides these and many other exhortations, Jesus said: "Swear not: let your words be yea, yea; no, no; do unto others as you wish them to do unto you; judge not, that you be not judged."

10. Then Jesus concluded with that beautiful similitude that has been so often quoted: that those who did as He had commanded "would be like a house built on a rock: the winds blew and the floods came, but the house fell not; but those who kept not His words would be like a house built on the sands: when the winds blew and the floods came, it fell."

11. When the people heard all these words they were in admiration not only at the doctrines they heard, but also with Jesus Himself, for He spoke to them not as the Scribes and Pharisees, but as one having authority.

### 24.—The Centurion's Servant.

1. When Jesus came down from the mountain, a leper came to Him and, adoring, asked to be cleansed. Jesus stretched forth His hand and touched him, and immediately he was cleansed. Then He commanded the leper to go to the priest and offer the gift prescribed by Moses.

2. Among the Jews, when a leper was cured, he was required to show himself to the priest, who, having examined him, declared him cleansed, and removed from him the restrictions imposed by the law of Moses. This declaration of the Jewish priest was a figure of the sacramental absolution of the Christian priest, who, absolving sinners, may be justly said to cleanse them from a *spiritual leprosy*.

3. Jesus came again into Capernaum, where a Roman centurion approached Him and told Him that his servant lay dangerously ill. Jesus offered to go and cure him, but the centurion said: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say only the word, and my servant shall be healed."

4. When Jesus heard this He declared He had not found such faith in Israel; nay, that many would come from the east and the west, and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the Jews themselves would be cast forth, because they would not believe.

5. Then He turned to the centurion and said: "As you have believed, so be it done;" and immediately the servant was cured.

The Jews did not receive Christianity as willingly as the Gentiles; in like manner Joseph's brethren despised him, whilst the Egyptians admired him.

### 25.—The Widow's Son of Naim.

1. Once when Jesus was entering the city of Naim, accompanied by His disciples and a great multitude, He met a funeral procession in which a widow's son was carried out to be buried. Jesus, seeing the great sorrow of the mother, and the many friends that were with her, came and said, "Weep not."

2. Then He approached the bier on which the dead man lay, and, touching the body, said, "Arise;" and the young man rose up and began to speak. Jesus presented the son to the mother. When those who were present saw what was done, great fear came upon them, and they began to glorify God, because "a great prophet had arisen amongst them."

3. This miracle is symbolic of the future resurrection, when God will raise up all men from the grave. Even now it has its fulfilment in the Sacrament of Penance, where Jesus Christ, through His priests, raises up the sinner from the spiritual death of sin.

### 26.—Mary Magdalene.

1. A certain Pharisee, named Simon, invited Jesus to come and eat with him. Jesus went, and, while He was at table, Mary Magdalene came and brought with her an alabaster box filled with precious perfume. Entering the house, she cast herself on her knees, and began to wash the feet of Jesus with her tears, and to wipe them with the hair of her head; then, kissing them, she anointed them with the precious perfume she had brought.

2. When the Pharisee saw this he began to doubt in Jesus; saying to himself: "Were this man a prophet, He would surely know this woman is a sinner."

Jesus, knowing his thoughts, spoke to him as follows: "A certain man had two debtors: one owed him five hundred pence; the other, fifty. As neither could pay him, he forgave them both. Which, do you think, loved him most?" The Pharisee said: "I suppose he to whom he forgave most."

3. "You see this woman," said Jesus. "I entered your house, and you gave Me no water for My feet; yet she has washed them with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. You did not anoint My head, but she has anointed My feet. I say to you many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much."

## 27.—The Messengers of John the Baptist.

1. Owing to the poverty and obscurity of His life, many thought Jesus was not the Son of God, and could not be the Messiah. John the Baptist, not that he doubted, but that he might afford Jesus an opportunity of publicly proclaiming His divinity, sent two of his disciples to ask Him if He were the Messiah or not.

2. Jesus, without saying yes or no, simply referred to the miracles He had wrought and the evils He had cured, and told the messengers to say to John: "The blind see, the deaf hear, the dead rise, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them." These things had been long before prophesied of the Messiah by Isaiah.