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978-1-107-69483-5 - Thirteen Homilies of St Augustine on St John XIV:

IN IOH. EV. Tractatus LXVII–LXXIX: Second Edition

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Excerpt

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# TEXT AND TRANSLATION.

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## TRACTATUS LXVII.

De eo quod Dominus dicit : *Non turbetur cor vestrum*, usque ad id : *Iterum venio, accipiam vos ad me ipsum* (Ioan. xiv. 1–3).

1. Erigenda est nobis, fratres, ad Deum major intentio, ut verba sancti Evangelii, quae modo in nostris auribus sonuerunt, etiam mente capere utcunque possimus. Ait enim Dominus Iesus : *Non turbetur cor vestrum, credite\* in Deum, et in me credite*. Ne mortem tamquam homines timerent, et ideo turbarentur, consolatur eos, etiam se Deum esse contestans. *Credite*, inquit, *in Deum, et in me credite*. Consequens est enim, ut si in Deum creditis, et in me credere debeatis : quod non esset consequens, si Christus non esset Deus. *Credite in Deum, et in eum credite*, cui natura est, non rapina, esse aequalem Deo : semetipsum enim exinanivit ; non tamen formam Dei amittens, sed formam servi accipiens (Phil. ii. 6, 7). Mortem metuitis huic formae servi ? *Non turbetur cor vestrum*, suscitabit illam forma Dei.

2. Sed quid est quod sequitur : *In domo Patris mei mansiones multae sunt*, nisi quia et sibi metuebant ? Unde audire debuerunt : *Non turbetur cor vestrum*. Quis enim eorum non metueret, cum Petro dictum esset fidentiori

\* pauciores MSS. *creditis*.

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## HOMILY LXVII.

From the Lord's words, *Let not your heart be troubled, as far as, I come again and will receive you unto Myself* (Jn. xiv. 1–3).

1. We have need, brethren, to lift up our hearts to God with more than usual attention, if we are to find the power, not only of hearing, but also in some measure of apprehending, the words of the Holy Gospel which have just sounded in our ears. For the Lord Jesus says: *Let not your heart be troubled, believe in God, believe also in Me.* Being men, the mention of death was likely to terrify and so trouble them; therefore He comforts them by the further affirmation that He is God. *Believe in God, He says, believe also in Me.* For it must follow that, if ye believe in God, ye ought to believe also in Me: it would not so follow, if Christ were not God. *Believe in God, believe also in Him, who, not by usurpation but by right of nature, is equal with God; for He emptied Himself, not indeed by surrendering the form of God, but by taking the form of a servant (Phil. ii. 6, 7).* Do ye fear death for this form of a servant? *Let not your heart be troubled, the form of a servant shall be raised to life by the form of God.*

2. But why were the next words spoken: *In my Father's house are many mansions*, but because they were also fearful for themselves? This is why He had to say to them: *Let not your heart be troubled.* For which of them would not be fearful, after that Peter, the boldest and most zealous of them,

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atque promptiori: *Non cantabit gallus donec ter me neges* (Ioan. xiii. 38)? Tamquam ergo essent ab illo perituri, merito turbabantur; sed cum audiunt: *In domo Patris mei mansiones multae sunt: si quo minus, dixissem vobis quia vado parare vobis locum*: a perturbatione recreantur, certi ac fidentes etiam post pericula tentationum se apud Deum cum Christo esse mansuros. Quia etsi alius est alio fortior, alius alio sapientior, alius alio iustior, alius alio sanctior, *in domo Patris mansiones multae sunt*; nullus eorum alienabitur ab illa domo, ubi mansionem pro suo quisque accepturus est merito. Denarius quidem ille aequalis est omnibus, quem paterfamilias eis qui operati sunt in vinea iubet dari omnibus, non in eo discernens qui minus et qui amplius laborarunt (Matth. xx. 9): quo utique denario vita significatur aeterna, ubi amplius alio nemo vivit, quoniam vivendi non est diversa in aeternitate mensura. Sed multae mansiones diversas meritorum in una vita aeterna significant dignitates. *Alia est enim gloria solis, alia gloria lunae, alia gloria stellarum: stella enim ab stella differt in gloria; sic et resurrectio mortuorum* (1 Cor. xv. 41). Tamquam stellae sancti diversas mansiones diversae claritatis, tamquam in caelo, sortiuntur in regno; sed propter unum denarium nullus separatur a regno: atque ita Deus erit omnia in omnibus (ib. xv. 28), ut, quoniam Deus caritas est, per caritatem fiat, ut quod habent singuli, commune sit omnibus. Sic enim quisque etiam ipse habet, cum amat in altero quod ipse non habet. Non erit itaque aliqua invidia impari claritatis, quoniam regnabit in omnibus unitas caritatis.

3. Proinde respuendi sunt a corde christiano, qui putant ideo dictum multas esse mansiones, quia extra regnum caelorum erit aliquid, ubi maneant beati innocentes, qui sine

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## HOMILY LXVII.

5

had been told : *The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice* (Jn. xiii. 38) ? They were naturally troubled, for they feared they were about to perish from Him ; but upon hearing, *in My Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you that I go to prepare a place for you*, they are raised from their distress, in sure and certain hope that, notwithstanding the dangers and temptations that lay before them, there was a home in store for them with Christ in the house of God. For although one man is bolder than another, another wiser, another juster, another holier, yet *in My Father's house are many mansions* ; no one of them shall be removed from that house, wherein each is to obtain a dwelling after his deserts. The penny no doubt which the householder bids be given to all those who wrought in his vineyard (Mt. xx. 9) is the same for all ; in respect of it he makes no difference between who laboured less, who more ; and it of course signifies eternal life, where none lives longer than another, for there are no varying measures of life in eternity. The many mansions on the other hand mean varying degrees of dignity in the one eternal life. *For there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, another glory of the stars ; for as star differs from star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead* (1 Cor. xv. 41). Like the stars in the sky, the saints in the kingdom have various mansions of varying glory allotted them ; but because the penny is the same for all, none is dissevered from the kingdom, and so completely will God be all in all (ib. xv. 28), that, since God is love, love shall bring it to pass that what each has shall be the common property of all. For when a man loves to see his neighbour in possession of some thing that he lacks himself, he then possesses it himself. Thus there will be no carping at inequality of glory, for unity of love shall reign in all.

3. They therefore are to be rejected with loathing by the Christian soul who take these words about the many mansions to mean that there will be some state outside the kingdom

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baptismo ex hac vita emigrarunt, quia sine illo in regnum caelorum intrare non poterunt. Haec fides non est fides, quoniam non est vera et catholica fides. Itane tandem stulti homines et carnalibus cogitationibus excaecati, cum reprobandi essetis, si mansionem, non dico Petri et Pauli vel cuiuslibet apostolorum, sed cuiuscunque parvuli baptizati a regno caelorum separaretis; non vos putatis esse reprobandos, qui domum Dei Patris inde separatis? Non enim ait Dominus: In universo mundo, aut in universa creatura, aut in vita vel beatitudine sempiterna mansiones multae sunt; sed *in domo*, inquit, *Patris mei mansiones multae sunt*. Nonne ista est domus ubi *aedificationem habemus ex Deo, domum non manufactam aeternam in caelis* (2 Cor. v. 1)? Nonne ista est domus de qua cantamus Domino: *Beati qui habitant in domo tua, in secula seculorum laudabunt te* (Psal. lxxxiii. 5)? Ergone vos non domum cuiusque baptizati fratris, sed Domum ipsius Dei Patris, cui omnes fratres dicimus: *Pater noster qui es in caelis* (Matth. vi. 9), a regno separare caelorum, aut eam sic dividere audebitis, ut aliquae mansiones ejus sint in regno caelorum, aliquae autem extra regnum caelorum? Absit, absit, ut qui volunt habitare in regno caelorum, in hac stultitia velint habitare vobiscum; absit, inquam, ut cum omnis domus regnantium filiorum non sit alibi nisi in regno, ipsius regiae domus pars aliqua non sit in regno.

4. *Et si abiero*, inquit, *et praeparavero vobis locum, iterum venio et accipiam vos ad me ipsum, ut ubi sum ego et vos sitis. Et quo ego vado scitis, et viam scitis*. O Domine Iesu, quomodo vadis parare locum, si iam multae mansiones sunt in domo Patris tui, ubi tecum habitabunt tui? Aut si accipis eos ad te ipsum, quomodo iterum venis qui non

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## HOMILY LXVII.

7

of heaven where the innocents, who have departed this life without baptism, may dwell in blessedness, since without baptism they can never enter the kingdom. Such a faith is not the true and catholic faith, and so no faith at all. Are ye then men so foolish and so utterly blinded by carnal imaginations—ye who would be condemned if ye sundered from the kingdom of heaven, I do not say the dwelling-place of Peter or Paul or of any apostle, but that of even the least baptized infant—think ye to escape condemnation if ye sunder from it the house of God the Father? For the Lord does not say “in the whole world,” or “in the whole creation,” or “in everlasting life or bliss are many mansions,” but, *in My Father’s house are many mansions*. Is not this the house in which *we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens* (2 Cor. v. 1)? Is not this the house concerning which we sing unto the Lord, *Blessed are they who dwell in Thy house, they will be always praising Thee* (Ps. lxxxiv. 4)? Will ye then dare dissever from the kingdom of heaven, not the house of any baptized brother, but the house of God the Father Himself, whom all we that are brethren call *Our Father which art in heaven* (Mt. vi. 9); or will ye dare so divide up that house that some of its mansions shall be within the kingdom, and some without? God forbid, God forbid that they who wish to dwell in the kingdom of heaven, should wish, while still sunk in such folly as this, to dwell with you. God forbid, I say, that, while every house of every son who has come to his throne cannot but be in the kingdom, any part of the royal house itself should not be there.

4. *And if I go away, He says, and provide a place for you, I come again and will receive you to Myself, that where I am, ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.* O Lord Jesus, how goest Thou to prepare a place, if there are already many mansions in Thy Father’s house where Thine own shall dwell with Thee? Or how comest Thou again, if Thou dost never leave them, but dost receive

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recedis? Ista, carissimi, si breviter explicare conemur, quantum videtur hodierno satis esse sermoni, coarctata utique non clarebunt; et erit ipsa brevitatis altera obscuritas; proinde hoc debitum differamus, quod opportunius vobis patrefamilias nostro largiente reddamus.

## TRACTATUS LXVIII.

In eandem lectionem (xiv. 1—3).

1. Deberi vobis, fratres carissimi, iamque esse reddendum quod distuleramus, agnoscimus, quomodo intelligi possint non esse inter se ista duo contraria, quod cum dixisset Dominus, *in domo Patris mei mansiones multae sunt: si quo minus, dixissem vobis quia vado parare vobis locum*; ubi satis ostendit, ideo se hoc illis dixisse, quia iam ibi sunt mansiones multae, et non est opus aliquam praeparare; rursus dicit: *Et si abiero et praeparavero vobis locum, iterum venio et accipiam vos ad me ipsum, ut ubi ego sum et vos sitis*. Quomodo vadit et parat locum, si iam multae mansiones sunt? Si quo minus, dixisset, *vado parare*. Aut si adhuc parandus est, cur non merito dixisset, *vado parare*? An istae mansiones et sunt et parandae sunt? Si quo minus enim essent, dixisset *vado parare*. Et tamen quia ita sunt ut parandae sint, non eas vadit parare sicut sunt: sed si abierit

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## HOMILY LXVIII.

9

them unto Thee? If we try to explain all these things shortly, dearly beloved, in the space at our disposal in to-day's discourse, they will surely suffer in clearness from compression, and brevity will prove but fresh obscurity; so let us postpone the debt and pay it to you at a more convenient season as the Head of our Household shall vouchsafe us opportunity.

## HOMILY LXVIII.

On the same lection (xiv. 1—3).

1. We admit, beloved brethren, that you have a debt against us, and that the time has come to pay you what we had deferred, I mean the explanation how these two statements may be understood to be not contradictory; that whereas the Lord had said: *In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you that I go to prepare a place for you* (whereby He clearly shewed that He had said this to them just because there are already many mansions there and so no need of providing any), He then saith on the other hand: *And if I go and provide a place for you, I come again and will receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also.* How can He go and prepare a place, if there are already many mansions? If it were not so, He would have said, *I go to prepare.* Or if the place still needed to be prepared, why should He not have said with perfect propriety, *I go to prepare it?* Can it be that those mansions in one sense are in existence, in another have yet to be prepared? For if they had not been in existence, He would have said, *I go to prepare them.* And yet, because their present state is such that they still need to be prepared, He does not go to prepare them in the sense in which they already are; but if

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et paraverit sicut futurae sunt, iterum veniens accipiet suos ad se ipsum, ut ubi est ipse sint etiam ipsi. Quomodo ergo mansiones in domo Patris non aliae, sed ipsae, et sine dubio iam sunt sicut parandae non sunt, et nondum sunt sicut parandae sunt? Quomodo putamus, nisi quomodo etiam propheta praedicat Deum, quia *fecit quae futura sunt* (Isai. xlv. 11)? Non enim ait: Qui facturus est quae futura sunt; sed, *qui fecit quae futura sunt*. Ergo et fecit ea, et facturus est ea. Nam neque facta sunt, si ipse non fecit: neque futura sunt, si ipse non fecerit. Fecit ergo ea praedestinando, facturus est operando. Sicut discipulos quando elegerit, satis indicat Evangelium, tunc utique quando eos vocavit: et tamen ait Apostolus: *Elegit nos ante mundi constitutionem* (Ephes. i. 4): praedestinando utique, non vocando. *Quos autem praedestinavit, illos et vocavit* (Rom. viii. 30); elegerit praedestinando ante mundi constitutionem, elegerit vocando ante mundi consummationem. Sic et mansiones praeparavit et praeparat; nec alias, sed quas praeparavit, has praeparat, *qui fecit quae futura sunt*: quas praeparavit praedestinando, praeparat operando. Iam ergo sunt in praedestinatione: si quominus, dixisset, *ibo et parabo*, id est, praedestinabo. Sed quia nondum sunt in operatione, *et si abiero*, inquit, *et praeparavero vobis locum, iterum venio et accipiam vos ad me ipsum*.