

July 17*

MEDITATION FOR THE DAY OF TRANSFER OF HOLY RELICS

On the honor we should pay to the relics of the saints.

184.1 First Point

God invites us to practice this devotion by the infinite number of miracles which he has performed through the holy relics of his servants. We see this at the tombs of the martyrs and of the holy confessors, which are, as the councils say, fountains of salvation which Jesus Christ has left us, from which flow all sorts of relief for the sick, and where we can find a source of healing which cures illnesses and disperses evil sadness and temptations through the power of Jesus Christ which remains in them. We see this happen at the transfer of the relics of Saint Stephen, the first martyr, and of various other saints, so that we cannot doubt that God, according to his word, does indeed honor the ashes and bones of his servants¹⁰¹² who were the living members and the active temples of his Holy Spirit.¹⁰¹³ It was for this same reason that he even sent his angels to bury the body of Saint Catherine and revealed the presence of saints' bodies by miraculous lights, so that they might not remain unknown in a common or undignified burial place, and so that we learn to venerate them for the welfare of our bodies and of our souls.

If God's goodness does so much for our welfare in return for the slight service that we render to these lifeless relics, what grace does he not have in store for those who try to become imitators of these great souls!

184.2 Second Point

The worship of holy relics was practiced in antiquity; it was approved by the councils and by the practice of the holiest persons in recent centuries. The example of the great Saint Charles Borromeo is noteworthy in this regard, as one may see in the history of his life. The saints in glory rightly desire this honor, since in heaven they are the protectors of the living. We see this in the case of Saint Denis, the apostle of France, of Saint Sebastian, of Saint Maurice, and of others who merited honorable burial. Finally, this is an excellent means to win for ourselves their intercession, for since they have reached the state of perfect charity, they abundantly reward the services we do them. When we honor their relics, they by their prayers increase our devotion. They present our prayers to God¹⁰¹⁴ and invite us to be, like them, living holocausts before the face of the Lord.

Adore God who is so admirable in his saints; humble yourself at the feet of his divine majesty, and learn to sanctify yourself. Woe to the one who, after witnessing so many examples of piety, still allows himself thoughts of vanity!

184.3 Third Point

These are the benefits which we should draw from the veneration of the holy relics. First, we entertain a special esteem and very deep sentiments of piety and respect toward all holy relics, especially for those whose transfer we celebrate today. This should give us great confidence in the intercession of the saints whose relics we are happy to have near us.

Second, we become piously ambitious, considering the honors that God pays to his servants. Let us be sure that those who do not strive to become great friends of God by fidelity to his grace and by perseveringly seeking only his glory and the salvation of their souls, do not deserve to bear the name of Christians, much less that of religious and of persons consecrated to God. What blindness it is to wish to be honored with the saints in the next life, when we do not live like the saints now, when we entertain none but earthly thoughts, are unable to distinguish what is precious from what is vile, and seek the pleasures and honors of this world. Would this not be something deserving at once of astonishment and pity for us who wish to share in the happy lot of the saints?¹⁰¹⁵

Let us not act in this way; let us lift our thoughts up to heaven, and may the sight of the holy relics become for us a motive to increase and enlighten in us the spirit of martyrdom, contempt for the world, and ardent love for Our Lord Jesus Christ.

* The six meditations (103,184,168,181,83 and 188) appear, with the short biographies of Saint Yon and Saint Cassian, at the end of CL 12 (and the original Edition of the Meditations). It seems quite clear from the vocabulary and style that they were not written by De La Salle (See CL 47, pp. 539-540). The numbers of the Meditations are those of the 1882 Edition.

1012 Ps 34:21
1013 1 Cor 6:15,19
1014 Tb 12:12
1015 Wis 5:5