112 House (*Domus*)

When I consider the house of God, I find something below me, something above me, something within me, and something outside of me. According to this in Sacred Scripture the house of God is hardly distinguished in which the exterior house is found, which is the entirety of creatures. The interior house, which is the purity of conscience. The lower house, which is the unity of the church militant. The house above, which is the immensity of the church triumphant.

¶ Concerning the first house, it is said in Bar. 3[:24]: “O Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast is the place of his possession!”

¶ In this house it is to be inhabited and prudently lest we be endangered, such as one navigating in perilous water, just as one walking on a thorny path, Psal. [83:11]: “I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners.” The example concerning blessed Anthony[[1]](#endnote-1) who saw the world full of snares.

¶ Again, it is to be walked in this house united so that we may be fortified. For united virtue is more forceful than those spread out, Psal. [54:15]: “In the house of God we walked with consent.” Again, innocently so that we may merit, just as the cleric when he awaits his support, Psal. [100:2]: “I walked in the innocence of my heart, in the midst of my house.”

¶ Concerning the second house, which is conscience or the soul, it is said, Heb. 3[:6], he “is as the Son in his own house,” that is, Christ. This house ought to be clean from filth, just as a temple from material dirt, Psal. [92:5]: “Holiness becomes your house. It ought to be opulent with virtues, Psal. [111:3]: “Glory and wealth shall be in his house.” Constant through faith, Matt. 7[:24]: “A wise man that built his house upon a rock.”

¶ However, how this house ought to be prepared is said, Eccli. 32[:15-16]: “Be first to run home to your house, and there withdraw yourself, and do what you have a mind.” Abraham, Gen. 18[:6], ran ahead to receive the angels in his house; Zacheus to receive Christ, and therefore he heard from the man concerning this house, which was made well by God, Luke 19[:5].

¶ Again, Aristotle, book 8, *De animalibus,* c. 6.,[[2]](#endnote-2) says that bees prepare the home of their king, from which they throw out all filth, where sometimes a worm appears, which if it is permitted to grow, makes a web similar to the spider, and dominates over the whole hive and putrefies the honey, thus it is concerning the worm of conscience. But note here that many are more willing in the homes of others than in their own homes. Just as the actors are indicating the feelings of others and not their own, Eccli. 21[:25]: “The foot of a fool is soon in his neighbor’s house.”

Again, Eccli. 29[:31]: “It is a miserable life to go as a guest from house to house,” it follows, “there withdraw yourself,” [Eccli. 32:15]. Prov. last chapter [31:27]: “She has looked well to the paths of her house.” Isboseth, son of Saul, slept in his house, and thieves falling upon his house killed him, 2 Reg. 2[:16]. In a house not well used spiders spring up; the air is corrupted. Therefore, a fire is lit in such a house, so ought the Son in your conscience, because the fire of the Holy Spirit ought to be kindled in it.

¶ For thieves do not willingly approach where they see a fire in the house.

¶ David by playing a game did not introduce the ark of the Lord into his house, because he had made it for him, Eccli. 32[:16]: “Do what you have a mind,” that is, clean thoughts.

Concerning the third house, which is the Church militant, it is said in Psal. [67:7]: “Who makes men of one manner to dwell in a house.” And again, [Psal. 92:5]: “Holiness becomes your house.” And Luke 19[:46]: “My house is the house of prayer,” as it will be called. And Prov. 9[:1]: “Wisdom has built herself a house; she has hewn her out seven pillars.” These seven columns are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit or they are the seven virtues: three theological and four cardinal. From which a house is well built, because they are strong being set on a good foundation which is Christ. Another foundation is ruinous, namely because it is verified on earthly things.

Wherefore it is read concerning Ludwig, King of the Franks, when it was said to him by his doctors that he would die on that day, he said to those standing about, The King of France, among all these riches, the man does not know in which house he ought to be received. But there are many who do not build themselves homes except from branches and mud, just as crows which are scattered by the wind. Such was the house of Saul, which was daily decreasing, [1] Reg. 18[:10]. But the house of David was increasing, 1 Pet. 2[:5]: “As living stones built up, a spiritual house.”

And this is the fourth house, namely, the church triumphant about which Ezech. [43:2], I have seen, “And behold the glory of God.” And in Psal. [83:5]: “Blessed are they that dwell in your house, O Lord.” And John 14[:2]: “In my Father's house there are many mansions.” And [2] Cor. 5[:1]: “We know, if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven.”

To these things some add that there is a fifth house, the infernal ditch, about which Job 17[:13]: “If I wait hell is my house.” But this one is to be fled, because there is want of the delightful good, just as a man flees a prison, Job 15[:28]: “He has dwelt in desert houses.” Because there is the presence of the gloomy evil, Mich. 6[:10]: “As yet there is a fire in the house of the wicked.”

¶ Again, the sixth house is said to be that of the Virgin Mary. Wherefore, we sing,[[3]](#endnote-3) The house of the pure breast suddenly became the temple of God. And Prov. 9[:1]: “Wisdom has built herself a house.” This house is above others, of a marvelous capacity, because,[[4]](#endnote-4) Whom the whole world did not enclose, in your womb he enclosed himself and was made man. [2] Paral. 6[:34], this “house which I have built,” [2 Paral. 2:9]: “which I desire to build, is to be exceeding great.” Therefore, one must run to this because there is God.

Second because uplifted by sanctity, Isai. 2[:2]: “In the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared.”

¶ Again, because it is useful for protection, Psal. [30:3]: “Be thou unto me a God, a protector, and a house of refuge.”

¶ Again, some distinguish, thus there is another house, but universal, which is the plan of the world. It is the house, and that is the Church. It is the spiritual house, and that is the Virgin Mary. It is the singular house of God, and that is assumed humanity. His house above is the celestial court. The house below is the basilica of prayer. The interior house is the conscience of man. The exterior house is Sacred Scripture.

¶ Again, it is the house of divinity, the house of man, the house of the devil, or thus it is the house of God, the house of the soul, the house of the Prince of Darkness. Of which the first is built through grace, the second through nature, the third through fault, about which it is said in Psal. [92:5]: “Holiness becomes your house.”

¶ Concerning the second, Job 4[:19]: “They that dwell in houses of clay, who have an earthly foundation.” Concerning the third, [Matt. 12:44]: “I will return into my house,” the first one. Again, in the house of fault the foundation is cupidity, which is said [1 Tim. 6:10]: “The root of all evils.” The roof is above, which is said [Eccli. 10:15]: “Pride is the beginning of all sin.” The door is concupiscence of the flesh militating against the soul. The pavement is avarice which is said to be the servitude of idols. The four side walls are four kinds of vices, namely, the sin of simplicity through dishonor, the sin of fragility through impatience, the sin of security through negligence, the sin of malignity through envy. In the house of nature, the foundation is reason, the roof is memory, the door is the intellect, the pavement is the will. The four walls are the four natural effects: fear, hope, sorrow, and joy.

¶ In the house of grace the foundation is faith. The roof is charity, about which [1] Pet. [4:8]: “Charity covers a multitude of sins.” The door is obedience, about which Matt. [19:17]: “If you would enter into life, keep the commandments.” The pavement is humility, about which in Psal. [118:25]: “My soul has cleaved to the pavement.” The four sides are the four cardinal virtues. These are in Apoc. [21:16], the four equal sides of the city. The windows are hospitality with cheerfulness, the soul with liberality.

¶ Again, the house is said abominable if it is dusty through dirty thoughts; if it is filthy through loquacity; if it is disgusting through an evil will; if it is stinking through evil opinion; if it is ruinous through the frequency of sinning; if laid bare through ill repute.

1. Antonio, cf. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend* 21 (Ryan 1:94): Once when he was rapt in ecstasy, he saw the whole world covered with snares connected one to the other, and exclaimed: “Oh, how can anyone escape these traps.” And he heard a voice say: “Humility!” [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 5.22, 553b24-27 (Barnes 1:873): The bees first work at the honeycomb, and then put the pupae in it: by the mouth, say those who hold the theory of their bringing them from elsewhere. After putting in the pupae they put in the honey for subsistence, and this they do in the summer and autumn; and, by the way, the autumn honey is the better of the two. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. In Vigilia Epiphaniae, Ad Matutinum, Lectio 5, Versus, in *Breviarium Romanum: Ex decreto SS. Concilii Tridentini restitutum* (Ratisbonae: Sumptibus et typis Friderici Pustet, 1952), Hiemalis:494a: Domus pudici pectoris templum repente fit Dei: intacta nesciens virum, verbo concepit Filium. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. The Little Office of the Virgin, [Lauds], Hymnus 1, in Margot E. Fassler and Rebecca A. Baltzer, *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages: Methodology and Source Studies* (Oxford: University Press, 2000), p. 476: Virgo Dei genitrix, Quem totus non capit orbis in tua se clausit viscera factus homo. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)