205 Lily (*Lilium*)

In the lily note the moral purity when a holy man is compared to it, Ose. [14:6]: The just “shall spring as the lily.” Therefore, it is clearly said that the lily is not a reed mobile through adulation, not a nettle pricking to detraction, and not a hemlock hiding by contamination.

Again, in the lily[[1]](#endnote-1) are six leaves of a snowy whiteness and six grains of a golden color. In the first six is the chastity of the mind.

¶ The first leaf[[2]](#endnote-2) is sobriety of nourishments. Wherefore Jerome in *Epistola*,[[3]](#endnote-3) a virgin flees wine as poison, because Prov. 20[:1]: “Wine is a luxurious thing.”

The second leaf[[4]](#endnote-4) is a rugged habit. Wherefore Bernard,[[5]](#endnote-5) the sharper the thistle makes the softer cloth.

The third leaf[[6]](#endnote-6) is activity of labor.

The fourth leaf[[7]](#endnote-7) is guardianship or seeing and hearing to its maximum. The example in “Dina the daughter of Jacob went out to see the women” and she was raped, Gen.34[:1].

The fifth leaf[[8]](#endnote-8) is modesty of words, 1 Cor. 15[:33]: “Be not seduced,” by idle words. “Evil communications corrupt good manners.”

The sixth leaf[[9]](#endnote-9) is fleeing the occasion and opportunity, Gen. 19[:17]: “Neither stay in all the country about” the Jordan, nor in any place around the region. We see that the animals of the forest have more beautiful fur than the domestic animals. And 2 Kings 13[:10] Amnon corrupted his sister Thamar when she was alone in the chamber.

¶ Again, the lily turns pale in its roots, turns green in its leaves, turns white in its flowers, and turns red in its grains. So, the just turns pale through humility, turns green through animosity, turns while through chastity, and turns red through charity. Or so the lily turns pale in its root, turns green in its stalk, and turns white when it begins to blossom, so the just man flourishes in his consideration, turns green in his operation, and turns white in working. Therefore Matt. 6[:28]: “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.” Because the lily by growing is useful, while it is pierced by thorns, while it is surrounded by rocks, and the higher it grows, the deeper it is rooted. And since it does not vindicate itself nor render vice, but it is expanded and turned toward God by the oblation of its heart and it reclines toward its neighbor by the assistance of its operation. Therefore, “Send forth flowers, as the lily,” Eccli. 39[:19]. Regarding chastity because just as the lily it stinks if it is worn out, so chastity if it is violated. And, as regards to patience because just as the lily is healed by its burned-up bodies, so patience by troubled hearts.

Again, note that the lily is better preserved among the thorns than among hands. So, continence is better preserved among works of penance than among kisses, touches, and embraces. Wherefore Ambrose in his *Hexameron*,[[10]](#endnote-10) says that the rose before the sin of Adam did not have a thorn, but among the thorny bushes it grows better, so before the sin of Adam it was not necessary that chastity afflict itself through penance, but now because according to Augustine,[[11]](#endnote-11) chastity is endangered in delights. Wherefore it is experienced that roses can be kept for a long time if enclosed in vases for which the wind or the air cannot enter, so chastity in the flesh cannot, so chastity in humble flesh lacking the wind, in vases of glory, in the air of human solicitude can be preserved.

¶ Otherwise it is easily lost, James 1[:11]: “The flower thereof fell off.” According to Vegetius, *De re militari*,[[12]](#endnote-12) when one part of the army can withdraw the food from other, it conquers it, so if the spirit withdraws the delights from the flesh, it will subjugate it. The example in Claudian, book 6,[[13]](#endnote-13) and in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, book 9,[[14]](#endnote-14) how Hercules conquered Antaeus the giant and son of the earth by holding him up and keeping him from the earth, Prov. 26[:20]: “When the wood fails, the fire shall go out.”

Again, Cant. 2[:2] it is said, “As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters,” that is, so is my soul beloved to me among the souls of the reprobates. For just as a lily among the thorns stretches out its whiteness against the blackness of the thorns, it stretches out its softness against the sharpness of the thorns, so the holy soul offers the delights of virtues against the spines of the vices. Because against the filth of the mind it holds the cleanness of the heart, against the hardness in the mouth it exercises piety in work, against evil bitterness of speech it offers the sweetness of prayer.

On account of the first, as the holy soul is delighted in cleanness, so Christ is delighted in the effects of the world. Therefore, some wishing to have God’s favor, he studies in his state to possess cleanness. Because so it follows in Prov. [22:11]: “He that loves cleanness of heart ... shall have the king for his friend.” And note here that clearly, he ought to love “cleanness of heart,” because man can have this even in the state of marriage, widowhood, and virginity. For it matters little the integrity of the body or the cleanness of the mind. In truth those who sorrow because they are virgins and that they have not been handed over quickly to marriage have neither cleanness of mind nor body, but those who serve each can be called the lilies of heaven because according to Jerome in his *Epistola*,[[15]](#endnote-15) in the flesh, to live beyond the flesh, it is rather the life of an angel than a human. Who therefore cannot be a lily of heaven, that is, a virgin in mind and body, so let her be a lily of the temple here, let her hold herself in clean widowhood. And he who cannot be this, perhaps is a lily of the garden, which is enclosed, because no one is so alien that he should seek to sell that.

Wherefore in a sign of preserving such cleanness a round ring is worn on the finger, as if in the entwining of the lily it is like a wall so now the spouses come to that Cant. [5:1]: “Let my beloved come into his garden,” namely Christ, that he may collect the lilies and in the just woman through cleanness multiplied the state of widowhood can be said as the lily of the temple because the lily of the temple should not be carried away further, nor should widows be any but their own and frequent the church, Because the Apostle prohibits a lily running about, [2] Tim. [4:7]. To this is that circumstance that the lilies enter the temple upon a candelabrum because truly widows ought to provoke others by example. But many of them are with a man just as heliotrope plants, that is, a **rede flour** (rose) because they color their ornaments, more often they are sold and if such ones should be said to be lilies, rather they are to be called lilies of the field than of the temple, because they are open to the running about of the animals. “Consider,” says the evangelist [Matt. 6:28], “the lilies of the field, how they grow, they labor not, neither do they spin.” Lilies are strong by continence of the flesh, but not of the temple through devotion of the mind, they grow in temporal matters, but they do not labor in spiritual matters. Therefore, there are lilies of the field because they expose themselves to a double danger, for some of them which to be true widows, that is, the relict of one man, but nodding to many if they would wed, because nothing of whiteness remains in the flower of this lily except the dried and false fruit.

¶ In truth the virginal state is said to be lily of heaven because in heaven it took its origin and will flower in eternity before the divine. “They shall be,” he says [Matt. 22:30], “as the angels of God in heaven.” And note that the married state began in paradise, the widowed state in the world, and virginal state in heaven. It is for this that Solomon in the temple placed lilies on the capitals of the columns in a sign that virginity excels in dignity the other states. Wherefore also a certain virgin was asked by her mother whether she wished to have a hundred crowns with virginity or thirty years with a husband. She responded that because the weakness of her head and the neck and heaviness of the weight she could not carry so many crowns. Therefore, according to that of Eccli. 39[:19]: “Send forth flowers, as the lily,” that is, serve the world in some approved state, yield a smell,” by provoking the head to weeping, and sorrow for sins by offering goods for the edification of others according to that of the Apostle, 2 Cor. [2:15]: “For we are the good odor of Christ.” Bring forth leaves in grace” [Eccli. 39:19], by generating fruit. And note here that just as in the flower of the lily there are six flowers, and each is formed in the shape of a tongue.

Again, in six ways a man can form his tongue for speaking the good fragrance. First to the commendation of God. Second to the humiliation of the self. Third by reciting the lives of the good. Fourth by informing the ignorant. Fifth by justly defending the absent. Sixth by praying for himself and others. And if these take place in charity, then he has the lily seed in the flower shining with a gold color, but it is to be sorrowed these leaves now have withered in many, because they have agitated just as for the lilies which are heavy with odor, because their horrible oaths blaspheme God. Against the first they boast and extol themselves. Against the second they recite vain things concerning the life of others. Against the third they deride the ignorant by provoking words. Against the fourth they drag down others. Against the fifth they seek nothing by praying unless vindication of others or temporal goods for themselves. Against the sixth and thus they do not give off a fragrance but stink, according to that of Isai. 3[:24]: “Instead of a sweet smell there shall be stench.”

1. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 4.4 (8:288b): Et nota. quod in Lilio sunt sex folia nivei coloris, et sex grana aurei coloris: sex folia nivea significant carnis pudicitiam ; et sex grana aurea signifiant mentis munditiam. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 4.4 (8:288b): Primum folium est cibi et potus sobrietas, unde dicit Hieronymus: « Virgo fugiat vinum, ut venenum.» Nam vinum et adolescentia est duplex incendium voluptatis. Unde in *Proverbiis* dicitur: *Luxuriosa res est vinum;* [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Jerome, *Epistolae secundum ordinem temporum* 22.9 (PL 22:399): ut sponsa Christi vinum fugiat pro veneno. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 4.4 (8:289a): Secundum folium est habitus asperitas; unde dicit Bernardus: « Memento, quod asperior cardo pannum facit leniorem .... [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Bernard, *Epistola* 322.1 (PL 182:527): asperior carduus [al. cardo, male] pannum faciat leniorem. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 4.4 (8:289a): Tertium folium est laboris strenuitas; [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 4.4 (8:289a): Quartum folium est custodia sensuum, et maxime quoad visum et auditum; quia curiositas videndi, vel audiendi , via est ad peccatum. Cujus exemplum patet in Dina filia Jacob, quae ad videndum mulieres regionis illius egressa, a Sichem filio Emor fuit corrupta, ut dicitur in *Genesi.* [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 4.4 (8:289a): Quintum folium est modestia verborum, et   
   maxime immundorum; quia maxime excitatur luxuria per verba dissoluta et inhonesta. Nam   
   dicit Apostolus: *Nolite seduci inanibus verbis: corrumpunt enim bonos mores colloquia prava. ...* [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 4.4 (8:289a): Sextum folium est fuga occasionum, opportunitatum , et maxime raulierum. Dicitur enim in *Genesi*8 : *Ne stes in omni loco circa re-*   
   *gionem.* Videmus enim, quod animalia silvestria pulchriorem pellem habent, quam domestica. Legimus etiamin secundo *Regum,* quod Thamar ab Amon fratre suo fuit corrupta, quia in thalamo fuit sola cum solo. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 3.11.48 (PL 14:175): Surrexerat ante floribus immixta terrenis sine spinis rosa, et pulcherrimus flos sine ulla fraude vernabat: postea spina sepsit gratiam floris, tamquam humanae speculum praeferens vitae, quae suavitatem perfunctionis suae finitimis curarum stimulis saepe compungat. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Augustine, cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *De conversione ad clericos* 21.37 (PL 182:855): Quidni periclitetur castitas in deliciis, humilitas in divitiis, pietas in negotiis, veritas in multiloquio, charitas in hoc saeculo nequam? [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei militaris* 4.27: Oportunitas enim insidiarum aliter non potest inueniri, nisi scias, quibus horis aduersarius a laboris intentione discedat, quibus reddatur incautior, interdum medio die, interdum ad uesperum, saepe nocte, aliquando eo tempore, quo sumitur cibus, cum utriusque partis milites ad requiem aut ad curanda corpora disperguntur. Quod in ciuitate cum coeperit fieri, obsidentes astu se a proelio subtrahunt, ut aduersariorum neglegentiae licentiam tribuant.

    <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/vegetius4.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Claudian, *De raptu Proserpinae* 2 Preface 41 (LCL 137:316-317): non cadere Antaeo

    Vain the falls of Antaeus, [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9.184 (LCL 43:16-17): saevoque alimenta parentis / Antaeo eripui

    that I deprived the dread Antaeus of his mother’s strength. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Jerome, *Epistola* 9.5 (PL 30:126-127): Profecto in carne, praeter carnem vivere, non terrena vita est, sed coelestis: [Col.0127A] Unde in carne angelicam vitam acquirere, majus est meritum, quam habere. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)