305 To Seek (*Querere*)

Some seek divine things and they do not find them. And this is because they did not persevere, just as a monkey in seeking the edible kernel of a nut, or because they have not found the place and the time, just as they who seek flowers in winter, John 7[:34]: “You shall seek me and shall not find me.” And Osee 5[:6]: “With their flocks, they shall go to seek the Lord, and shall not find him.” Like one lazy, Can. 3[:1]: “In my bed,” that is, in the quiet of the flesh, “I sought him whom my soul loves.”

¶ Others do not seek nor find, such as infidels and the slothful, Job 28[:13]: “Neither is it found in the land of them that live in delights.” And Osee 7[:10]: “They have not returned to the Lord, nor have they sought him.” Those seeking seek and find, just as the good Christians in the likeness of the woman seeking her drachma, Luke 15[:8}. And Jer. 29[:13]: “You shall seek me and shall find me.” Thus, the Magi sought, Matt. 2[:1]. And the shepherds, Luke 2[:8]. But how much more man ought to seek the Lord, Deut. 4[:29]: “When you shall seek the Lord your God, thou shall find him: yet so, if you seek him with all your heart.” In this way the parents of Christ sought him and did not find him, Luke 2[:48]. Therefore, the matter ought to be sought diligently, fervently, and perseveringly, so should something lost be sought if it were suitable, so a solder should seek a horse if it were necessary, just as a pauper should seek food. Therefore, the physician should seek a medicine if it were willingly taken, the mother should seek an agreement with her son. So, Mary sought her Son in the temple, although he was taken care of by an angel, Luke 2[:46]. This one will be great and a son in turn.

¶ Again, just as something necessary for the world, Luke 1[:50]: “His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear him.”

Again, as deeply beloved, Luke 2[:35]: “And your own soul a sword shall pierce.”

¶ Again, there should be a search for this name, who would search for the truth for three things. Just as it is said in Matt. 21[:10]: “The whole city was moved, saying: Who is this?” Sometimes for denoting newness just as it is said in Isai. [53:1], What a rarity.[[1]](#endnote-1) Just as it is said in Eccli. 31[:9]: “Who is he, and we will praise him?”

¶ Again, in some ways it happens to seek and ask because of a triple end, to instruct the unlearned, Matt. 16[:13]: “Whom do men say that the Son of man is?” Or that one may deceive the enchanted, Judges 16[:6]: “Tell me, I beseech thee, wherein your greatest strength lies.” And Gen. 3[:1]: “Why has God commanded you, that you should not eat.” So that he may correct the erring, Matt. 22[:20]: “Whose image is this,” etc.

Again, it is to examine prelates, and even the subordinates of the prelates. It is to examine subordinates if they have erred, wherefore Ezech. 34[:2-4, 10]:

¶ The Lord said in speaking, “Son of man, concerning the shepherds of Israel … You ate the milk, and you clothed yourselves with the wool,” and it follows “that which was broken you have not bound up, and that which was driven away you have not brought again, neither have you sought that which was lost.” And therefore, it follows, “I will require my flock at their hand.” The Philosopher, book 8, *De animalibus*,[[2]](#endnote-2) says that the ruler of the bees seeks his lost chicks until he finds them, because he knows them by their smell, so ought a prelate.

¶ The example for this Christ teaches, Luke 19[:10]: “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” This commonly he taught through parable, Luke 15[:4]: “What man that has sheep: and if he shall lose one of them, does he not leave the rest, and go after that which was lost, until he finds it?”

Second, [Luke 15:8] Concerning “a woman having ten groats; if she loses one, does she not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she finds it?” So, mother Church lights the heart of the prelate to seek the subordinate.

¶ The figure, 1 Kings 9[:3], Saul seeking his father’s asses was made king. So, the prelate merits the kingdom of heaven in seeking the asses of men wandering.

¶ For an ass is an animal apt for a burden, so an underling. Wherefore Christ came to Jerusalem upon an ass, Matt. 21[:5]. But in seeking sometimes the prelate falls among adversities, just as is evident concerning Joseph seeking his brothers, Gen. 37[:28], he was captured by them and sold into Egypt. Where after many adversities which he sustained, he was made the lord of Egypt. So, it will be concerning the prelate because he will rejoice in the end.

¶ Again, it is to examine the subordinates and even all the faithful, Psal. [69:5]: “Let all that seek you rejoice in you.” And Luke 11[:10]: “Every one that seeks, finds.” And for seeking more fervently the Lord himself ordained for us his flesh and blood as food and drink. Or perhaps daily to the sense, as a smell drawn more fervently, we seek, just as the hunter gives to the greyhound some of the blood of the beast so that he may more avidly seek or perhaps shows him something to see. But I fear that this is verified exceedingly in John 6[:26]: “You seek me, not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of my loaves.” A boy had prepared in advance of the five thousand men five loaves and a few fish, so ought he who feeds them daily, to seek with diligence. Wherefore Augustine, book 4, *Confessiones*, c. 12,[[3]](#endnote-3) the rest which you seek is not where you seek it. Boethius laments about this, book three, poem 8,[[4]](#endnote-4) men know where to look for things necessary for their bodies, such as they do not look for gold in a tree, nor gems on a vine. But the good which all naturally desire, they do not know where to look. He who has lost something on the road ought to seek it before he has arrived at the end of his journey by returning along the same way, so the sinner who has lost God.

¶ Note here concerning that one who lost a little ball of thread, and the two women each of whom claimed ownership. One said that it was a clod of the fundament. The other said that it was the shell of a tortoise. The judge decreed that the ball had totally evolved, Isai. 21[:12]: “If you seek, seek: return, come.”

Again, Lam. 3[:40]: “Let us search our ways, and seek, and return to the Lord.” 4 Kings 2[:11], those seeking Elias wrapped up in the mountains and in the valleys did not find him. So those seeking Christ, now a dignity on high, in the earthly matters or in the mountains, they do not find him, nor is it a marvel because “Neither is it found in the land of them that live in delights,” Job 28[:13]. Which is true concerning the present life, which the bride shows, Can. 3[:1, 4]: “In my bed by night I sought him,” etc. up to “When I had passed by them, I found him whom my soul loves.” Thus, he who seeks Christ does not find him in a bed of delights, nor in a night of fault.

¶ Therefore he rises up seeking [Can. 3:2]: “In the streets and the broad ways,” that is, by the senses and thoughts, and yet she did not find him until she was found by the guardians and watchmen of the city, that is, by the prelates and guardians of the Church who have to seek us just as the prudent rulers of the bees seeking their chicks, as was said above, because perhaps he does not want to be found unless by the mediating prelates. As a sign of this Christ is not found among the relatives, but in the temple among the teachers, Luke 2[:46]. The Philosopher, book 8, *De animalibus*, c. 3,[[5]](#endnote-5) says that almost all animals sick or wounded know to seek a remedy for themselves. Wherefore also dogs eat the root of some herb for vomiting up their evil, and a goat of the forest seeks dittany and expels an arrow from its body. However, a sick man cannot be cured unless by Christ, John 5[:11-15].

¶ If anyone does not seek the Lord he will die. The onager[[6]](#endnote-6) which is also an ass of the forest seeking its mate ascends into the mountain and by the wind seeks her and finds her. So, he who seeks Christ as a mate of his mind must seek Christ in the mountain and by the spirit of devotion, Matt. [7:8]: “For every one that asks, receives.” Deut. 4[:29]: “When thou shall seek there the Lord your God, you shall find him.” He who seeks one and pays heed to another does not find what he seeks although it may be in front of him. So, it is concerning men whose intention it is concerning temporal matters, they do not find the Lord, although they seem to seek him, Osee 5[:6]: “With their flocks, and with their herds, they shall go to seek the Lord, and shall not find him.” The cause of this is expressed in Eccli. 27[:1] when it is said, “he that seeks to be enriched, turns away his eye,” namely from God to riches, Psal. [104:4]: “Seek the Lord, and be strengthened” in seeking, but afterwards in odor or humor or something else by which he was identified. Then it was confirmed equally thus when we are identified with God by odor, by a kiss, or by faith, by which we will be confirmed through hearing.

Again, it is to be noted that three things ought to be sought: wisdom for living, grace for persevering, and glory for accomplishing.

¶ Concerning the first, the prudent seeks wisdom, just as the pilgrim seeks a guide, and the blind a light, Prov. 15[:14]: “The heart of the wise seeks instruction.” And this triply, because with the heart studying as far as its own finding, just as the first philosophers made gold. By hearing as far as human erudition, just as the disciples of the philosophers made metal. By praying as far as to divine inspiration, just as the saints made holy things.

Second the prudent seek grace in persevering, just as the servant seeks to be continuously pleasing before his lord, or the wife before her husband, Amos 5[:14]: “Seek the good, and not evil.”

Third, glory, just as the pugilist seeks victory, the pilgrim the end of the journey, Matt. 6[:33]: “Seek first the kingdom of God.” And Col. 3[:1]: “Seek the things that are above.” But alas because the imprudent see what is not to be sought, because they seek worldly glory such as pride of life, just like a bear[[7]](#endnote-7) climbing a honey tree, John 5[:44]: “How can you believe who seek glory one from another.” Eccli. 3[:22]: “Seek not the things that are too high for you.” And Eccli. 7[:4]: ““Seek not a pre-eminence” from a man. Others seek abundance as far as the concupiscence of the eyes, just as a mole seeks earth, and fire seeks wood, Psal. [4:3]: “Sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart?” Jer. 45[:4-5]: “Them whom I have planted, I do pluck up … and do you seek great things for yourself?” Others seek carnal pleasure as for the concupiscence of the flesh, just as a scabious person seeks rubbing, a feverish person seeks wine, Phil. 2[:21]: “For all seek the things that are their own.” Therefore, we seek the Lord, but for this quest four things ought to be attended to: place, time, manner, and fruit. Place where it is sought ought to be the world, quiet, and secure. For it ought not be to be sought in the stench of the flesh, Can. 3[:1]: “In my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves and found him not.” But in the place of penance and asperity with the shepherds, Luke 2[:8]. Not in the marketplace where the concupiscence of the eyes stinks, because there is no trader of animals and they do not find, but in the Lord, quiet, and conscience, with the kings, Matt. 2[:9]. Not in the pomp by which the pride of life reigns, because what is found does not go, because it is truth, Luke 2[:44]: “Thinking that he was in the company,” etc., but he is found in the school of truth, amid the teachers.

¶ Again, time is required for seeking the Lord because it is double, because while it is day he ought to be searched, for in the night of death, fault, and nature he is not to be found, Can. 3[:1]: “By night I sought him whom my soul loves I sought him and found him not.” Therefore Isai. 21[:12]: “If you seek,” that is, if you seek many things, “seek,” namely, in the day, not in the night.

Second, he ought to be sought while he is near, Isai. [55:6]: “Seek the Lord, while he may be found; call upon him, while he is near.” For now, he knocks at the door of the heart, Matt. [7:8]: “For every one that asks, receives.” John 7[:36]: [“You shall seek me and shall not find me.”] The manner of seeking is that the tongue asks, Can. 3[:3]: “Have you seen him, whom my soul loves?” This becomes a devout prayer, Eccli. last chapter [51:18].

Second, the eye hurries to understand what happens through right intention, Wis. [1:1]: “Seek him in simplicity of heart.”

Third, the foot for walking because it becomes very warm in affection, John 20[:15]: “Woman, whom do you seek?”

¶ Fourth, the hand for touching because it happens through good work, Psal. [76:3]: “I sought God, with my hands.”

Fifth, strength for continuing because it happens through final perseverance, Psal. [104:4]: “Seek the Lord, and be strengthened, seek his face evermore.”

1. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Isaiam,* liber 14, cap. 53, verse 1 (PL 24:505-506): In eo autem quod dicit: Quis credidit auditui nostro, et brachium [Col.0506A] Domini cui revelatum est? raritatem credentium significat ex Judaeis. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 9.40 626a22-30 (Barnes 1:974): The kings are the least disposed to show anger or to inflict a sting. Bees that die are removed from the hive, and in every way the creature is remarkable for its cleanly habits; in point of fact, they often fly away to a distance to void their excrement because it is malodorous; and, as has been said, they are annoyed by all bad smells and by the scent of perfumes, so much so that they sting people that use perfumes. They perish from a number of accidental causes, and when their kings become too numerous and try each to carry away a portion of the swarm. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine, *Confessions* 4.12.18 (PL 32:701): Non est requies ubi quaeritis eam. Quaerite quod quaeritis: sed ibi non est ubi quaeritis. Beatam vitam quaeritis in regione mortis; non est illic. Quomodo enim beata vita, ubi nec vita? [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae* book 3, meter 8 (PL 63:752-753): Eheu, quae miseros tramite devios

   Abducit ignorantia!

   Non aurum in viridi quaeritis arbore,

   Nec vite gemmas carpitis,

   Non altis laqueos montibus abditis,

   [Col.0753A] Ut pisce ditetis dapes.

   215 Nec vobis capreas si libeat sequi,

   Tyrrhena captatis vada.

   Ipsos quin etiam fluctibus abditos

   Norunt recessus aequoris,

   Quae gemmis niveis unda feracior,

   Vel quae rubentis purpurae,

   Nec non quae tenero pisce, vel asperis

   Praestent echinis littora.

   Sed quonam lateat, quod cupiunt bonum,

   Nescire caeci sustinent,

   Et, quod stelliferum trans abiit polum,

   Tellure demersi petunt.

   Quid dignum stolidis mentibus imprecer?

   [Col.0754A] Opes, honores ambiant,

   Et cum falsa gravi mole paraverint,

   Tum vera cognoscant bona. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Aristotle, *History of Animals*, 9.6 612a3-6 (Barnes 1:954): Many other quadrupeds help themselves in clever ways. Wild goats in Crete are said, when wounded by arrows, to go in search of dittany, which is supposed to have the property of ejecting arrows in the body. Dogs, when they are ill, eat some kind of grass and produce vomiting. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Cf. Bartholomeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* 18.76 (1505, p. 466a): Unde quando amore feruet et nescit vbi eius femina euagatur: rup0em ascendit, et patulis naribus ventum attrahit. Per cuius flatum vbi sit eius femina dijudicat et discernit. In montibus altum et pascuosis herbas virentes quas multum diligit cum diligentia querere consueuit quas cum inuenerit pre gaudio statim resondit. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. Bartholomeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* 18.110 (1505 p. 492a-b): Ursus inquit comedit omnia indifferenter. Comedit enim fructus quando ascendit arbores et frangit alucarie et comedit mel. Et infestant apes oculos eius et pungunt linguam et quandoque fugiunt ipsum. Et comedit cancros et formicas propter medicinam et comedit carnes propter eius magnam fortitudinem. ... Miro modo scit scandere super arbores vsque ad altissimas ipsarum arborum summitates. Solent autem mellificare apes in arboribus cocauis quarum fauos deprehendens vrsus per odorem ascendit vsque ad locum mellis, et faaciens vguibus in arbore aperturam extrahit mel et comedit, ex consuetudine frequenter quando esurit ad locum redit.

   He can wonderly sty upon trees unto the highest tops of them, and oft bees gather honey in hollow trees, and the bear findeth honey by smell, and goeth up to the place that the honey is in, and maketh a way into the tree with his claws, and draweth out the honey and eateth it, and cometh oft by custom unto such a place when he is an-hungered. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)