316 To Leave (*Relinquere*)

Many things are to be left, but three according to Chrysostom, *Super Mattheum* homily 7,[[1]](#endnote-1) carnal acts, worldly substance, and natural parents. In the argument of this the disciples left their nets which signify carnal acts, the ship which signifies the substance of the world, and the parents which signify carnal affections, Matt. 10[:21]. And note the order, because first, it is fitting to leave the worldly acts, because they particularly impede spiritual matters. Second, substance, because not only does it harm another as for as riches or a secular act.

About these matters Gregory speaks, *Homilia* for the second Sunday after Trinity,[[2]](#endnote-2) I would admonish you that you leave all things, but I do not presume to do so. If therefore all the things which are of the world, so however through them you are not held back. So therefore, thus a temporal object in use, and on the journey as an eternal object to be possessed. As if it were looked at from the side whatever is done in this world. Also, all things being retained you will leave behind, so thus the temporal matters you do, as you strive for eternity with your whole mind.

Wherefore Jerome in *Epistola* *ad Demetriadem*,[[3]](#endnote-3) although it may seem dangerous to leave the world, however it carries many to salvation. Just as a ship may seem sinking by itself, yet it arrives at the port through its debility. And if in port many perish, however in the deep of the sea many perish. Wherefore Bernard,[[4]](#endnote-4) in the sea of this world out of ten animals hardly one is saved.

¶ Again, one’s own will ought to be left through the vow of obedience. So, a craftsman leaves his own fatherland to be enriched in another, Jer. 12[:7]: “I have forsaken my house,” etc. Matt. 19[:27]: “Behold we have left all things.” But alas because many, like a monkey who does not wish to give up a mirror, they wish to give up their own judgment, 2 Paral. 12[:5], Roboam gave over the counsel of Semeias and consulted with the young men.

¶ Again, transitory felicity ought to be left by the vow of poverty. Just as a bird leaves its eggs and nest because of the sight of a snare. The sailor abandons and throws overboard burdens in danger, Matt. 19[:29]: “And every one that has left house, or father.” And Luke 5[:28]: “Leaving all things, he rose up,” etc. 4 Kings 7[:7]: “They left their tents, and their horses and asses, desiring to save their lives.” But alas because many do not wish to leave their will and utility, Psal. [48:11]: “They shall leave,” involuntarily and uselessly what else, “they shall leave their riches to strangers.”

¶ Again, carnal desire ought to be left through the vow of continence, just as the feverish should leave off wine, Tob. 2[:3]: “He left his dinner and came fasting to the body.” Gen. 39[:12]: “He, leaving the garment in her hand, fled, and went out.” But alas because many left delight, choosing the flesh, just as the body stinking because of the mud, Prov. 2[:13]: “Who leave the right way, and walk by dark ways.”

1. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* homilia 7 ex cap. 4 (PG 56:676): Tria sunt enim generaliter omnia, quae relinquere debet omnis, qui venit ad Christum: actus carnales, substantiam mundialem, parentes carnales. Per retia enim piscationis actus carnales relinquendi significantur: per navim autem substantia: per patrem vero omnes parentes. Et vide, quia prius retia relicta significantur, postea navis, in tertio loco pater: quia convenit actus mundiales relinquere: ipsi sunt enim, qui praecipue nocent ad spiritualia. Secundo, substantiam, quia non tantum nocet aliquid habere in mundo, quandtum agere aliquem actum; tamen et hoc ipsum habere nocet. In novissimo, parentes, qui et ipsi quidem nocent, tamen minus nocent quam divitiae et actus hujus saeculi. Reliquerunt ergo navem, ut fierent ecclesiasticae navis gubernatores, reliquereunt retia, ut jam non pisces apportarent ad civitatem terrenam, sed homines ad civitatem caelestem, reliquerunt unum patrem, ut fierent omnium spiritualium genitores. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Gregory, *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia* 2.36.11 (PL 76:1272): Admonere vos volo ut relinquatis omnia, sed non praesumo. Si ergo cuncta mundi relinquere non potestis, sic tenete quae hujus mundi sunt, ut tamen [Col.1272D] per ea non teneamini in mundo; ut terrena res possideatur, non possideat; ut sub mentis vestrae sit dominio quod habetis, ne si mens vestra terrenarum rerum amore vincitur, a rebus suis ipsa magis possideatur. Sit ergo res temporalis in usu, aeterna in desiderio; sit res temporalis in itinere, desideretur aeterna in perventione. Quasi ex latere respiciatur quidquid in hoc mundo agitur. Ante nos autem tendant mentis oculi, dum tota intentione illa conspiciunt ad quae pervenimus. Exstirpentur funditus [Col.1273A] vitia, non solum ab actu operis, sed etiam a cogitatione cordis evulsa. Non nos voluptas carnis, non sollicitudo curiositatis, non aestus ambitionis a dominica coena praepediat, sed ipsa quoque quae honesta in mundo agimus quasi ex quodam mentis latere tangamus, ut terrena quae libent sic nostro corpori serviant, quatenus cordi minime obsistant. Non ergo, fratres, audemus vobis dicere ut omnia relinquatis; sed tamen, si vultis, omnia etiam retinendo relinquitis, si sic temporalia geritis, ut tamen tota mente ad aeterna tendatis. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Jerome, cf. Leo the Great, *Epistola ad sacram virginem Demetriadem* cap. 4 (PL 55:164-165): viventes quidem in hoc mundo, sed omnes mundi strepitus relinquentes, ut redimant tempus, quia dies mali sunt (Ephes. V, 16). Quo autem pretio quies hujus temporis aptius comparatur, quam ut ipsi mundo omnes divitiae, omnes dignitates et universarum [Col.0165A] cupiditatum materiae refundantur, et sancto beatoque commercio ematur Christiana libertas, fiantque filii Dei de paupertate divites, de patientia fortes, de humilitate sublimes? [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. Bernard, *Epistola* 352 (PL 182:555): Statuimus ut de laboribus, quos vos et totius vestrae congregationis fratres propriis manibus et sumptibus colitis, et de animalibus vestris, a vobis decimas expetere vel recipere nemo praesumat. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)