385 Staff (*Virga*)

A staff (*virga*) is said to be the Blessed Virgin.[[1]](#endnote-1) For just as a staff has boldness, yet it is not hard, length, yet it is not short, flexibility, yet it is stiff. Just so Maria has virginity without carnal concupiscence, Luke [1:31]: “You shall conceive in your womb and shall bring forth a son.” Humility without pride, Luke 1[:48]: “He has regarded the humility of his handmaid.” She has charity without malice, Can. 2[:4]: “He set in order charity in me.” She has affability without obstinacy.

Again, a branch is between the root and its fruit, so Mary is between humanity and Christ. Therefore, she compared to Esther who was a mediatory between the king and his people. Wherefore the verse:[[2]](#endnote-2)

¶ Level, folding, slender, measuring, straight, round.

¶ She strikes and binds, she is concealed by the shell of the roof.

¶ Again the rod can be called penance because just as with the rod dogs and insolent children are corrected. So, penance puts demons to flight and holds illicit impulses. And just as Moses as long as he held the staff in his hand it performed marvels, [Exod. 17:11], so as long as penance is observed, but if it is thrown from the hand it is turned into a snake, [Exod. 7:10].

¶ Again, a staff can be said to be a prelate one account of rectitude because he ought to have correct operation as for himself, correct intention as for God, and modest correction as for his neighbor, Isai. 11[:1]: “There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse.”

¶ Again, just as without a sensible appearance it produces the flower and the fruit, so a virgin without the male seed conceived. Wherefore Bernard, *Super missus est*,[[3]](#endnote-3) neither did the sending forth of the flower damage the integrity of the rod, nor the bringing forth of the sacred birth damage the chastity of the virgin. Wherefore Ambrose in the *Hexameron*,[[4]](#endnote-4) the vulture sometimes conceives without the male, but after conception she seeks a stone in Judea upon which at the time of the birth she sits and thus she delivers without pain, so the virgin without the male conceived, but she did not need to seek for a stone. Because she carried in her womb that one who “is a stone cut out of a mountain without hands,” Dan. 2[:34].

¶ Again, the staff of Moses was placed in the ark of the covenant, Heb. 9[:4]. Because hardness ought to be in the Church so that they who do not want to be corrected are punished. A wagon cannot be driven well unless the driver has a pole in his hand, so it is for us who ought to be driven to heaven, Psal. [44:7]: “The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness.” Christ sent out his disciples on the way without a staff, Matt. 10[:10] because he did not want them to carry instruments of vengeance according to Ambrose.[[5]](#endnote-5) For anger these rods are placed in the canals before the eyes of all in the time of Jacob. The conceptions produced various births as a result, Gen. 30[:40], Isidore, *Etymologia*, book 12, the last chapter,[[6]](#endnote-6) that if the flesh of a calf is moderately beaten with a stick, bees will arise from it.

¶ Thus if the lascivious flesh is discreetly beaten, it produces honeyed works, Prov. 22[:15]: “Folly” will collect him.

Concerning this, see more above in the chapter [23] To Accuse (*Arguere*).

Again, Zach. 11[:7]: “I took unto me two rods, one I called Beauty, and the other I called a Cord, and I fed the flock.” For the rod of discipline and the cord of penance are within anyone who ought to feed the flock of the Lord. So, as discipline is for another, the cord or penance for oneself, the father beats his son with a stick which afterwards he throws into the fire, and the son preserves his heredity for himself. God is this one who beats his elect for evils, Isai. 10[:5]: “Woe to the Assyrian, he is the rod and the staff of my anger.” The Assyrians were the enemies to the people of God, Isai. 11[:1-2]: “There shall come forth a rod out of the root, etc., up to “the spirit of the Lord.” Because the rod of correction has the flower of leniency, at its end also the whip. Roboam lacked this flower who wanted to flog the people not with a rod, but with whips, 3 Reg. 12[:14].

1. Cf. Richard of St. Victor, *De comparatione Christi ad florem et Mariae ad virgam* (PL 196:1031-1032): Virgo Dei genitrix virga est, flos Filius ejus; quia recte dicitur virga beata Virgo Maria, virga recta, [Col.1031B]virga erecta et in coelum usque porrecta, virga gracilis, virga flexibilis, virga florigera, virga fructifera. Recta per fidem, erecta per speciem, procera per longanimitatem; per humilitatem gracilis, per compassionem flexibilis, per virginalem conceptionem florigera, per partum salutis fructifera. Virgo Dei Genitrix virga est, flos Filius ejus. O quam bene, quam recte flos dicitur, qui ex virga virginali producitur!  [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Paul Perdrizet *La Vierge de Misericorde: etude d’un theme iconographique* (Paris: Albert Fontemoing, 1908), p. 218: *Virga dicitur Beata Virgo*, ecrit le dominicain Hugues de Saint-Cher, *baculus, crux. Haec duo vere consolantur nos in omni tribulatione nostra. Et dicitur B. Virgo virga, quia habet has proprietates virgae:*

   *Plana, plicans, gracilis, mensurans, recta, rotunda;*

   *Percutit, irritat, cortice tecta canet.* [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Bernard, *De laudibus Virginis Matris* 2.6 (PL 183:64): Nec virgae virorem floris laesit emissio, nec virginis pudorem sacri partus editio. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Ambrose*,* *HexameronexH* 20.64 (PL 14:233): Negantur enim vultures indulgere concubitu, et conjugali quodam usu nuptialisque copulae sorte misceri, atque ita sine ullo masculorum concipere semine, et sine conjunctione generare, natosque ex his in multam aetatem longaevitate procedere; ut usque ad centum annos vitae eorum series producatur, nec facile eos angusti aevi finis excipiat. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Ambrose, *De Cain et Abel* 2.4.15 (PL 14:348): Siquidem lex ait de eo: Quia Deus dedit eum in manus ejus (Exod. XXI, 13). Manus ergo ejus instrumenti modo divinae ultioni ministerium praebuerunt. Levites igitur minister remissionis est: percussor autem qui tamen non ex dispositione, sed praeter voluntatem fecerit homicidium, divinae minister est ultionis. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 12.8.2 (PL 82:470): Nam pro his creandis, vitulorum occisorum carnes verberantur, ut ex putrefacto cruore vermes creentur, qui postea efficiuntur apes. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)