199 Leprosy (*Lepra*)

It designates sin because it is an illness that is contagious, dangerous, and odious. Concerning the first for just as a leprous person generates a leprous offspring bodily, so a sinner generates a sinner spiritually, 1 Cor. 15[:33]: “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” The healthy mutually conserve the healthy, but the leprous contaminate the leprous more. But the leprous among the healthy contaminate those of us more than the contrary, wherefore there is more danger for the healthy. So spiritually the good next to the good provokes one to the good, as namely from this person one learns humility, from that person patience, and so for the remaining, Prov. 27[:17]: “Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” However, when the evil ones are with the evil they stain each other mutually, Psal. [18:3]: “Night to night shews knowledge,” namely, evil, and thus they become worse, Apo. 22[:11]: “He that hurts, let him hurt still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.” When some matters are mixed, evil with the good, then it is not a danger to the evil to the good itself, Prov. 13[:20]: “He that walks with the wise, shall be wise.” Psal. [17:27]: “and with the perverse you will be perverted.” Therefore, the Lord did not say to the Chaldeans that they should withdraw from the midst of his people, that on the contrary he said to this people that they should withdraw from the midst of the Chaldeans, Jer. 50[:8]: “Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans.”

Second, leprosy designates sin because it is a dangerous illness. For the other illnesses corrupt part of the body but leprosy the whole, thus sin corrupts the body and the soul, Eccli. 21[:2]: “Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent.” His teeth as if those of a lion killing souls.

Third, leprosy designates sin because it is an odious illness. Therefore, the leprous are separated from the community of the healthy, just as sinners are separated from the just in regards to three reasons: in regards to place, in regards to merit, and in regards to society.

¶ Regarding the first, note that there are four places, namely heaven where he expelled the angels above, paradise where he expelled man by the leprosy of gluttony, and the world where the sinner cannot long stay, Psal. [17:43]: “I shall beat them as small as the dust before the wind.” and therefore only hell remains for them, Isai. 24[:22]: “They shall be gathered together as in the gathering of one bundle into the pit, and they shall be shut up there in prison.”

Second, sinners are separated from the good in respect to merit because sinners do not partake of the treasury of the Church. Therefore, they cannot resist, lest falling they be revealed, Eccle. 4[:9]: “It is better therefore that two should be together, than one.”

¶ Third, regarding society as it will be evident in the final judgment, Matt. 13[:49]: “The angels shall go out and shall separate the wicked from among the just.” In regards to society also they send them out for cause, behold the separation in regards to place there will be weeping, behold in regards to merit.

Again, just as leprosy is universal corruption in the body, so sin in the soul and in its strength. For it corrupts the affective in seeking, the collective in knowing, and the operative in persevering. Wherefore note that a leprous person is thin and with a bald forehead. Second of the skin. Third of the head.

Concerning the first, 1 Cor. 11[:11]: “The man without the woman.” From whose head the hair flows, he will be bald and unclean. It therefore the leper has a bald forehead, there is error in the faith so that he senses wrongly concerning Christ who is the head of the Church.

Concerning the second, the beard is the sign of virtue. Wherefore whoever blasphemes the teaching of the saints carries leprosy in his beard.

¶ Concerning the third, Lev. 13[:2]: “The man in whose skin or flesh shall arise a different color or a blister,” etc. A diverse color alters the skin, the blister corrupts the flesh. Therefore, by skin and color conversation is designated, by which the evil ones are discerned from the good. By the flesh which is inside the skin is designated the conscience, for example, the color of holiness lacking in action or conversation corruption of conscience is indicated. And this leprosy ought to be judged according to the judgment of the priest.