4 To approach (*Accedere*)

It is necessary to approach Christ.

First, for contemplating the example of sanctity, just as one learning to be an artist, Ps. [33:6]: “Come you to him.” And that of Heb. 12[:22-24]: “You are come to the mediator of the new testament.” Eccli. 6[:27]: “Come to him with all your mind.” For in Christ you will find the lily of cleanness, the rose of patience, the violet of obedience, the palm of victory, the olive of the messenger, James 4[:8]: “Draw nigh to God,” through imitation, “and he will draw nigh to you.” But many refuse, like the owl[[1]](#endnote-1) flees the light.

Second, one must approach Christ for listening to the teaching of truth, just as a pupil goes to school, Exod. 20[:21]: “Moses went to the dark cloud wherein God was.” Thus, the disciples more often approach Christ, Deut. 33[:3]: “They that approach to his feet, shall receive of his doctrine.” But there are many such as the thief who does not wish to hear the approach of the judge.

Third, one must approach Christ for obtaining the favor of sanctification. Like the sick man to the physician,[[2]](#endnote-2) the one who is muddy to the water, Matt. 9[:20]: “Behold a woman who was troubled with an issue of blood, came behind him.” Thus, they approached Jesus, the centurion for healing his servant, the ruler for his daughter, Matt. 8[:5; 9:18]. But many are like the mangy horse that does not want to approach to be healed, or to receive his burden, Jer. 2[:27]: “They have turned their back to me, and not their face.”

Fourth, one must approach Christ for repaying owed service, just as a monk to the church, a tributary to the prince, a farmer to the vine, the sun to its place of rising or setting, Exod. 19[:22]: “The priests also that come to the Lord, let them be sanctified.” Eccli. 2[:1]: “Son, when you come to the service of God, stand in fear,” etc. Thus “angels came and ministered to him,” Matt. 4[:11].

Fifth, for partaking of the sacrament of love, just as the famished to the dish, Ezech. 44[:16], the priests “shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table.” But not many cider drinkers refresh themselves at the feast of the lion,[[3]](#endnote-3) because there is no food for dogs there. Against that is that of Lev. 21[:21], everyone who “has a blemish, he shall not approach to offer sacrifices to the Lord.”

Sixth, for guarding against the danger of temptation, just as the infirm approach the castle, Heb. 10[:22]: “Let us draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith.” Thus, the disciples approached to Christ, “Lord, save us, we perish,” Matt. 8[:25]. But there are many who are not roused to approach for no misfortune.

Seventh, for having the reward of their labor, just as the worker to the steward for his wages, Eph. 2[:18]: “For by him,” that is, Christ, “we have access to the Father.” Thus, the servants approached Christ after the negotiation of the talents, Matt. 25[:14-30]. But the evil servant approached without the light and was damned.

1. Cf. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 12.7.40 (PL 82:464): Noctua dicitur, pro eo quod nocte circumvolat, et per diem non possit videre. Nam exorto splendore solis visus illius habetatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 31 Enarratio 2.16 (PL 36:268): Ego dixi, Domine, miserere mei: clamat aeger ad medicum, Ego dixi. Quare, Ego dixi? Sufficeret, dixi. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Odo of Cheriton, *The Fables* 50. “The Banquet of the Lion, Cat, and Some Others” trans. John C. Jacobs (Syracuse: University Press, 1985) p. 109: It happened that the lion invited the animals to a great dinner. A mouser was one of the recipients of this invitation. And the lion, wanting to satisfy each guest, asked the mouser what he liked to eat. And his reply? “Rats and mice.” The lion thought this over and decided it would be degrading—unless everyone were served the same course. So after a while, he had a common course of rats brought in; and the cat ate it up with relish. The rest of the animals murmured among themselves, saying: “Fi! Fi!! What *are* we being served?” And because of this, the entire banquet was defiled.

Thus do many men plan great banquets. Certain cats, so it always turns out, are present. Nothing pleases them unless they get to have the degradations of drunkenness. And the civility of these banqueters holds up (and I mean the civility of all of them, willing and unwilling alike) until nightfall—when everyone can guzzle. Can fill his belly with drink and his soul with the Devil. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)