Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

276 Staff (*Virga*)

A staff (*virga*) is said to be Mary.[[1]](#endnote-1) For a staff has tempering, lest it be hard, straightness lest it be curved, length, lest it be short, flexibility, lest it be stiff. So, Mary has virginity without concupiscence, Luke [1:31]: “You shall conceive and shall bring forth a son.” She has humility without pride, Luke 1[:48]: “He has regarded the humility of his handmaid.” She has charity without malice. Wherefore in Can. 2[:5, 4]: “I languish with love.” Again, “He set in order charity in me.” She has affability without obstinacy. About which. Again, a shoot, however much higher, so much slenderer toward the summit. So, Mary, however much more virtuous, so much the humbler.

¶ Again a shoot has few leaves, so Mary had few words. Again, a shoot is midway between the root and its fruit. So, Mary is between humanity and Christ. Therefore, she is compared to Esther who was the mediator between the king and his people. Wherefore the verse:[[2]](#endnote-2) Concerning the staff: Level, folding, slender, measuring, straight, round. She strikes and binds, she is concealed by the shell of the roof.

¶ Again, a shoot without a sensible appearance it produces the flower and the fruit. So a virgin without the male seed conceived. Wherefore Bernard,[[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.

¶ Again 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

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without hands,” Dan. 2[:34].

¶ Again the rod can be called penance because just as by the rod, dogs and insolent children are corrected. So, penance puts demons to flight and holds illicit impulses. And just as Moses if he held the staff in his hand, it performed marvels, [Exod. 17:11]. So as long as penance is observed, 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 on 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.”

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* 5.20.64 (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)