

Peter the Venerable, Sermon 4: “On the Veneration of Relics”

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PETRI VENERABILIS ABBATIS CLUNIACENSIS
SERMO IV. IN VENERATIONE QUARUMLIBET
RELIQUIARUM (PL 189: 998-1006)

1. Solemni, fratres charissimi, et singulari hac die exultate laetitia, quia singularis vobis per eam datur exultandi materia. Est quidem sanctorum omnium memoria cunctorum fidelium veneratione communis; sed his quorum sacris pignoribus praesens Ecclesia ditatur, merito ab ea impenditur devotio specialis. Magnum, inquam, est et magnifice praedicandum supernae munificentiae donum, quo magni et praeclari martyris corpore omni argento praeclarius, omni auro fulgentius, omni margarita pretiosius voluit decorare hoc templum. Jure in hujus beati corporis exceptione olim praesentem Ecclesiam contigit gavisam fuisse, in cujus beatae animae susceptione certum est eam quae sursum est Jerusalem exultasse. Merito etiam hodie ei congratulamur in terris, cui omne supernum collegium sempiternae collaetatur in coelis.

2. Fulget jam, secundum Salvatoris promissum, sicut sol in regno Patris sui (Matth. XIII), illius justi spiritus, cujus haec corporalis fabrica beatos continet artus. Divisit velut aequis partibus divina dignatio martyrem suum, ut ejus sibi animam inter beatorum spirituum agmina retineret, et sacri corporis venerandas reliquias fidelibus adhuc in carne viventibus mirabili largitate donaret. Sed dicet aliquis: Quid prodest exanimata corpora honorare? quid confert ossa sensu carentia hymnis et laudibus frequentare? absit, absit a cordibus fidelium, fratres, hujusmodi cogitatus, recedat a sanctis servorum Dei meditationibus, longe fiat ab animis Deo appropinquare quaerentibus! Fuere quondam impii qui ista meditati sunt et a Christi corpore, hoc est ejus Ecclesia, impietatis suae merito ut membra inutilia praecisi sunt. Unde ut noverit Spiritui sancto praesenti solemnitate unita congregatio vestra quam digne ac salubriter sanctorum corpora seu reliquiae a fidelibus honorentur, Scripturae sanctae auctoritas in medium adducatur.

THE FOURTH SERMON OF PETER THE
VENERABLE, ABBOT OF CLUNY: IN
VENERATION OF RELICS IN GENERAL

1. Dearest brothers, rejoice with joy on this solemn and singular day, because, by means of it, a remarkable subject for rejoicing has been given to you. Of course commemorating all the saints is customary for the veneration of all the faithful; but [this] present church is enriched by their sacred pledges, and special devotion [toward them] is rightly extended by her. This is, I say, a great gift of heavenly munificence, one to be proclaimed magnificently, by which it wishes to decorate this temple with the body of a great and illustrious martyr, more resplendant than silver, more shining than gold, more precious than a pearl. It appropriately moved [this] present church in a former time to have rejoiced in the reception of a holy body, [while] Jerusalem is certain to have exulted in the reception of its blessed soul on high. On this day also we rightly rejoice together on earth in that one for whom the entire eternal celestial company rejoices in heaven.

2. Already the spirit of that just one shines, in accordance with the promise of the Savior, “as the sun in the kingdom of their father” (Matthew 13:43), that spirit whose bodily fabric contains such blessed limbs. Divine honor divides its martyr as if in equal parts, so that it may keep the soul to itself among the flocks of the blessed spirits, and bestow with marvelous generosity the relics of the sacred body on the faithful, who are still living in the flesh, to be venerated. But someone will say: “What advantage is there in honoring lifeless bodies? What is conferred by celebrating, with hymns and praises, bones that lack feeling? May thinking of this type be far from the hearts of the faithful, brothers; may it recede from the holy meditations of the servants of God; may it be done far from the souls seeking proximity to God! In the past there were impious ones who thought these things, and they were, with good reason, cut off for their impiety from the body of Christ—that is, from his church—like useless limbs. Therefore, so that your united congregation may know, with the present solemnity to the Holy Spirit, how worthily and profitably the bodies or relics of the saints are honored by the faithful, may the authority of the holy scripture be brought into the middle [of this discussion].

3. Creator quippe spiritualium et corporalium rerum Deus, cum spiritus angelicos et hanc corpoream mundi molem omnipotenti dextera creavisset, ad ostendendam ineffabilis artificii sui gloriam, humanam creaturam condidit, et eam excellenti operatione ex spiritu rationali et carne compegit, in qua tanto mirabilior ejus demonstrata est sapientia, quanto potentius ex diversis substantiis una hominis est conjuncta persona, quam mirandae conjunctionis unitatem propria et unicuique naturae congruenti felicitate magnificans, et animae justitiam et corpori contulit incorruptionem. Quod ultimum ex primo pendere decrevit, ut libero vigente arbitrio, quandiu a spiritu servaretur justitia, nulla carnem premeret corruptela. At ubi justitiam ille desereret, statim ista corruptionis legibus subjaceret. Abjecit deinde infelix homo hanc quam dixi sibi impositam legem justitiae, et mox subjectus est durissimae quam nostis corruptionis miseriae, et qui a benigno Conditor factus fuerat ad sempiternam gloriam, ad debitam prolapsus est impietatis poenam.

3. When God, the creator of spiritual and bodily things, had created with his omnipotent right hand the angelic spirits and the corporeal mass of the world, he, for the sake of demonstrating the glory of his ineffable workmanship, fashioned a human creature, and assembled it with excellent effect out of rational spirit and flesh—with regard to which [creature], its wisdom was shown to be as marvelous in wisdom as it was powerfully assembled from diverse substances into one person of man, magnifying its unity of wondrous assembly with its own corresponding felicity of nature—and conferred both justice to the soul and incorruptibility to the body. He decreed the latter to depend on the former, so that, as long as justice was preserved by the spirit by [its] vigorous free will, he would oppress the body with no corruption. And when that one [the first man] deserted justice, all at once this [justice] subjected [him] to the laws of corruption. From that point on, unhappy man rejected this (as I said) law of justice imposed on him, and now he is subject to the harshest misery of corruption, as you know; he who had been made by the kind Creator for eternal glory, slid toward the due penalty of impiety.

4. Venit demum tempore ante saecula praeordinato, et humanae reparationi congruo Dei Filius, et nec desertus deserens, nec contemptus contemnens, bonitate qua creaverat hominem, recreavit, et animae justitiam, corpori incorruptionem restituit. Sed quia, ut prius instituerat, ordo hic erat, ut spiritus justitia praeiret, et carnis per spiritum justificatae incorruptio succederet, statuit totius hominis justificationem in hac vita praecedere, et in futura carnis incorruptionem seu immortalitatem differre. Quod et ad fidei meritum conservandum fieri voluit, quod nullum tunc esset, si quod in futuro nobis Christus promisit, in praesenti conferret, nec jam speraremus in supernis promissionem regni coelorum, qui jam eam nobis collatam crederemus in partibus imis terrarum. In aeterna igitur quam per fidem exspectamus vitam, quam promisit ille qui est fidelis in verbis suis spiritus justorum, beate interim vivere novimus, et in eorum corporibus resurrectionem cum immortalitate et omnimoda incorruptione futuram exspectamus. Inde ea causa est, quod eorum corpora, qui in hac vita justitiam coluerunt, non ut exanimata abjicimus, non ut insensata contemnimus, non ut brutorum animalium cadavera conculcamus, sed ut templa Domini veneramur, ut palatia Divinitatis excolimus, ut margaritas aeterni regis coronae adaptandas recondimus, ut resurrectionis vasa beatis animabus iterum coniungenda devotione qua possumus conservamus, non quo ad ea reparanda nostro Deus indigeat adiutorio, sed quo solito benignitatis suae more salutis nostrae avidius nostro erga sanctos suos delectetur obsequio.

4. At last, at a time that had been preordained from before the ages for an appropriate human renewal, the Son of God came—this deserted one not deserting [us], this disdained one not disdaining [us]—and recreated man with the goodness with which he had created him, and restored justice to the soul and incorruption to the body. But because, as he had previously established, this was the order—[that is,] that justice of the spirit should come first, and the incorruption of the flesh justified through the spirit should follow—he established that the justification of the whole man would come first in this life, and the incorruption and immortality of the flesh be put off to the future. He wanted this to be done for the sake of preserving the value of faith, which would be [worth] nothing at that time if what Christ promised us in the future, he [already] conferred [to us] in the present; nor would we now look forward to the promise of the Kingdom of the Heavens above, if we believed [that promise] to already have been conferred in the deepest parts of the earth.¹ Therefore in that eternal life, which we anticipate through faith, [that life] promised by that one who is faithful in his words, we know the spirits of the just live blessedly in the meantime, and we expect a future resurrection in their bodies with immortality and every kind of incorruption. This is the reason why the bodies of those ones who cultivate justice in this life are not rejected by us as lifeless, not disdained by us as insentiate, not trampled on by us as [if they were] the cadavers of brute animals, but so that we might venerate the temples of the Lord, so that we might honor the palaces of Divinity, so that we might store the pearls that are [one day] to be adapted to the crown of the eternal King, so that we may preserve, by whatever devotion we are able, the vessels of resurrection that are to be joined again to the blessed souls. God may not be in need of our assistance for the sake of their repair, but by the accustomed habit of his kindness, he may be more avidly delighted in regards to our salvation, by our attendance to his saints.

¹ A poetic reference to the burial of the bodies?

5. Duplex in tali exhibendo sanctis corporibus honore ratio est, quoniam et per justitiam olim Deo famulantia membra servorum Dei in hac vita famulatu digna esse judicantur, et ad aeternam beatitudinem resurrectura a fidelibus minime dubitantur. Ea spe etiam sancti antiqui corpora sua vel suorum minime contemnenda putarunt. Hac fiducia magni patriarchae Abraham, Isaac et Jacob speluncam duplicem elegerunt. Hoc intuitu Joseph ossa ejus mandato ab Aegypto referentes in repromissionis terra posterius sepelierunt. Nam licet nihil obstaret inter meritis impares sepeliri, placuit tamen a sejunctis fide, a disgregatis moribus ipso quoque corpore separari, in qua discretione corporum varia docebant esse intelligenda pro meritis discrimina animarum. Ostendit et ipse Deus magni apud se pretii esse servorum suorum corpora, quando Veteris Testamenti legislatorem Moysen nequaquam per hominum manus more consueto passus est in sepulcro reponi, sed per semetipsum eum dignatus est sepelire: Mortuus est, ait Scriptura, Moyses servus Domini, et sepelivit eum Dominus (Deut. XXXIV). In quo facto licet, ut quidam sentiunt, idololatriae occasionem populo ad mala proclivi abstulerit, quod tamen in conspectu suo cadaver justus mortui minime viluisset monstravit.

5. Double is the logic in showing such honor to holy bodies, since the bodies of the servants of God who formerly served God in justice are judged to be worthy of being served in this life, and they are not at all doubted by the faithful as being about to be resurrected to eternal blessedness. In this hope, even the holy ancients thought their own bodies and those of their [families] were by no means to be disdained. With this faith, the great patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob chose the double cave [Machpelah].² With this consideration, Joseph's descendants, carrying his bones from Egypt at his command, buried them in the promised land. For, although nothing would have prevented him being buried among those who were unequal [to him] in merit, nonetheless it was pleasing to the body itself to be separated also from those different in faith and from different customs; in making this decision, they showed that the various distinctions [in terms of the handling] of bodies are to be understood in terms of the merits of their souls. God himself shows that the bodies of his servants are precious in his presence, when he by no means allowed Moses, the lawgiver of the Old Testament, to be put into the sepulchre by means of human hands in the customary fashion, but deemed [Moses] worthy to bury by himself: "Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there," says the Scripture, "and the Lord buried him."³ Although in doing this, as certain ones have understood [this passage], [God] removed from the people an occasion for idolatry, inclined [as they were] toward evil, he nevertheless showed the cadaver of that just man be have become not the least bit vile in his presence.

² The Cave of Machpelah in Hebron was the burial place of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Machpelah comes from the Biblical Hebrew: מערת המכפלה (Me'ārat ha-Mmaḵpēlāh) literally the Cave of the Double. Genesis 23:17 (Abraham's purchase of the "double cave").

³ Deuteronomy 34:5-6: "Moses the servant of the Lord died there, in the land of Moab, by the commandment of the Lord: And he buried him in the valley of the land of Moab."

6. Salvator etiam ipse, quem idcirco humanis obsequiis sepeliri oportebat, ut cum eum propriis oculis vere mortuum et sepultum homines cernerent, vere quoque a mortuis resuscitatum minime dubitarent, quid passioni proximus in Bethania dixerit, quid de reverentiae obsequio sanctis corporibus impendendo senserit, sui exemplo edocuit. Venit mulier nardo pretiosa, pedes super angelorum verticem constitutos perunxit, et sic demum ad sacrum caput se erigens, fracto alabastro quo continebatur, in Christi corpus totam summam charissimi liquoris effudit: quo effuso, odore unguenti domus impleta est, et proditoris adhuc occulta impietas palam ostensa est: Ut quid, ait, perditio haec? (Marc. XIV.) Et secundum Joannem: Quare hoc unguentum non veniit trecentis denariis et datum est egenis? (Joan. XII.) Ad quem Dominus: Sine illam, ut in die sepulturae meae servet illud (ibid.). Et juxta Matthaeum sub plurali discipulorum numero: Quid molesti estis huic mulieri? opus bonum operata est in me; nam semper pauperes habetis vobiscum, me autem non semper habebitis; mittens enim unguentum hoc in corpus meum, ad sepeliendum me fecit (Matth. XXVI).

6. Even the Savior himself—whom it was fitting to be buried with human services, so that when men discerned him with their own eyes to be truly dead and buried, they would rightly also not doubt in the least that he was resurrected from the dead—taught this by his example, by what he said right before his passion, and by what he experienced with regard to the due service of reverence for holy bodies. That precious⁴ woman came with nard, anointed those feet that had been created above the summit of the angels, and thus finally elevating herself to the sacred head, she poured the total quantity of the expensive liquid out of the broken alabaster in which it was contained onto the body of Christ. Once it was poured out, the house was filled with the aroma of the unguent, and the hidden impiety of the traitor [Judas] was clearly revealed: “Why,” he said, this waste?⁵ And according to John: “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?” To whom the Lord [said]: “Let her alone, that she may keep it against the day of my burial.”⁶ And according to Matthew, [referring in this case to] a multiple disciples: “Why do you trouble this woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For the poor you have always with you: but me you have not always. For she in pouring this ointment upon my body, hath done it for my burial.”⁷

⁴ Either *pretiosa* is an error or Peter is deliberately playing with the adjective, applying it to the woman when it is normally associated with the unguent.

⁵ Mark 14:3-4.

⁶ John 12:6-7.

⁷ Matthew 26:10-12.

7. Ecce audistis, fratres, beatam mulierem sancta Dominum devotione ungentem, avarum proditorem bono ejus operi detrahentem, benignum Salvatorem bonum opus magnifice praedicantem: Bonum, inquit, opus operata est in me. Quis ultra sentire audeat bonum opus non esse beatorum mortuorum corpora honorare, cum audiat Dominum non mortui, sed post paululum morituri corporis sui unctionis honorem magnificis laudibus commendare? Ad sepeliendum, inquit, me fecit, unguentum quod corpori meo infudit non viventi, sed jamjamque morituro, et sepeliendo impendit, exhibuit ante sepulcrum honorem sepulturae, et quod tunc rebus perturbatis non poterit, moras pati nesciente pietate, praevenit. Timuit ne persecutores mei facultatem perungendi corporis adimant, et eadem invidia qua viventem occisuri sunt, mortuo quoque humanitatis et reverentiae debitum tollant. Et idcirco quod sibi tempore illo non licere timuit, nunc laudanda per orbem devotione, ut potuit, fecit. Ideo sequitur: Amen dico vobis, ubicunque praedicatum fuerit hoc Evangelium in toto mundo, dicetur et quod haec fecit in memoriam ejus (ibid.). Mundus, ait, totus hoc bonum opus mulieris hujus audiens collaudabit, et quia hoc in mei memoriam et honorem fecit, perpetua et ipsa ad sui aedificationem tam beatum opus memoria retinebit. Haec dicens Salvator insipientium ora obstruxit, cogitatus noxios longe etiam post futuros abstulit, reverentiam sacris corporibus exhibendam sui corporis exemplo monstravit, quando reverentes tam egregie collaudavit.

7. Behold, brothers, you have heard about the blessed woman anointing the Lord with holy devotion, the avaricious traitor disparaging her good work, and the benevolent Savior magnificently pronouncing that work as good: "She hath," he said, "wrought a good work upon me."⁸ Who would dare any more not to understand honoring the bodies of the holy dead to be a good work, when he hears the Lord commend with magnificent [words of] praise the honor of anointing not his dead body but his body that was about to die shortly thereafter? "She hath done it," it says, "for my burial," because she poured the unguent not onto my living body but onto my body right before it was to die; she expended it for the sake of burial, and furnished the honor of sepulture before the sepulchre. And because in that time [to come], with things so disturbed, she will not be able to suffer any delays, she did it in advance, with an uninformed piety. She feared lest my persecutors take away the means for anointing the body, and, with the same hatred with which they were about to kill the living one, they might also take away the debt of humanity and reverence owed to the dead one. And therefore what she feared at that [later] time would not be allowed her, she did it right then, to the extent that she was able, with devotion that is to be praised all over the world. Therefore it follows: "Amen I say to you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done, shall be told in memory of her."⁹ The whole world, he says, will, upon hearing about this woman's good work, will praise it, and because she did this in my memory and honor, the same perpetual memory will also keep [in mind] such a blessed deed for her edification. Saying these [words], the Savior obstructed the mouths of the foolish ones, removed the noxious thoughts far into the future, and showed the reverence that was to be shown to sacred bodies by the example of his own body, when he praised the reverent ones so excellently.

⁸ Matthew 26:10.

⁹ Matthew 26:13.

8. Quid mirum vero, si caro spiritui inhaerens unam, ut supra dictum est, unitate sua hominis personam perficiens Creatori pariter deserviens, post abscissum etiam animae honoranda dicitur, cum carnis ipsius tegumenta merito veneranda credantur? Sicut enim subjectum Deo, mediante spiritu, corpus ejusdem beatae subjectionis causa non solum vivens, sed et mortuum veneramur, sic quaelibet extrinsecus eidem corpori adhaerentia, et ipso contactu velut a sancto sanctificata debito cum honore suscipimus.

8. But what would be so surprising if the flesh, clinging to the spirit, bringing about the single person (as was said above) of a human being in its oneness, and serving the Creator together, is said to be honored even after the withdrawal of the soul, when the coverings of the flesh [that is, clothing] itself are believed to be worthily venerated? Indeed, just as we venerate not only the body that is subject to God, with the spirit mediating, living for the sake of the blessed subjection of the flesh [to God], but also the dead body, so we receive with due honor whatever things are adhering to the body itself outside, as if [they were] sanctified by their very contact with the saint.

9. Consuevit et hoc agere pio affectu Ecclesia, et quae aliquando sanctorum corporum reliquias habere non valet, devotionem suam de quantulacunque sacrarum vestium portione exercet. Consolatur tali remedio desiderium suum, ut quae aeternae sanctorum societati toto animi fervore inhiat, esuriem interim suam eorum vestibus sive xeniis pascat. Refertur hoc totum ad gloriam Dei, cujus iudicio in omnibus concordans Ecclesia ejus, multipliciter studet honorare in terris quos ineffabiliter ab illo credit glorificari in coelis. Et, ut totum quod dicitur coelestis oraculi robore confirmetur, audite, charissimi, etiam de his quae neminem fallit sanctam Scripturam, consulite insuper virtutem divinam, agnoscetis absque dubio non solum membra, sed et membrorum esse tegmina veneranda sacrorum, ut sciatis quam pretiosa sint in conspectu Domini etiam post mortem justorum corpora, quando virtus divina ipsa eorum honoranda esse indicat indumenta. Testis est horum quae dicuntur ipsius Domini vestis, cujus fimbriae contactu a sanguinis fluxu mulier sanata est, et per quam divini corporis virtus occulta palam omnibus demonstrata est: de qua virtute ait ipse Dominus: Ego sensi virtutem de me exisse (Luc. VIII). Veniat et apostolus Paulus ad hoc astruendum, a cujus corpore deferebantur super languidos sudaria vel semicinctia, et recedebant, ut Scriptura loquitur, ab eis languores, et spiritus nequam egrediebantur (Act. IX). Quod si et de veteri Scriptura aliquid assumamus, videbitis Eliseum pallium rapuisse Eliae, quod ei, dum in sublime ferretur, ceciderat, secum ferentem, et Jordane eadem veste ter percusso dicentem: Ubi est Deus Eliae etiam nunc? (IV Reg. II.) qua percussione Jordane diviso, et siccum iter prophetae inter fluentia patuit, et sancti illius egregium meritum nobili per vestem ejus miraculo divina potentia declaravit. Sunt igitur vestes vel similia quaeque sanctorum non propter se, sed propter sanctorum ipsorum honorem venerabiles, sicut et ipsi non ex se, sed ex ejus cui obsecuti sunt dono facti sunt in coelo pariter et in terra insignes.

9. The church was accustomed to doing this with pious disposition, and [any church] that was not able to have the relics of holy bodies at any given time, would exercise its devotion on whatever small piece of sacred vestments [it might have]. By such a remedy, its desire is satisfied, so that [any church] that longs after the eternal company of saints with complete fervor of the soul, may in the meantime feed its hunger with the vestments [of the saints], that is, with their gifts. All of this is rendered to the glory of God, by whose judgment his Church, being in harmony [with Him] in all things, strives to honor on earth in many different ways those whom it believes to be ineffably glorified by Him [God] in heaven. And, so that all that is said [here] may be confirmed by the strength of the heavenly oracle, listen also, dear ones, with regard to these matters, to the holy scripture, which fails no one; moreover consult divine power, and you will realize without a doubt that not only the sacred bodies, but also their coverings are to be venerated, so that you may know how precious in the sight of the Lord¹⁰ are the bodies of the just after death, when divine power itself indicates that their clothes themselves are to be honored. Bearing witness to what has just been said of those things is the garment of the Lord himself: by [her] contact with its fringe, the woman was healed from the flow of blood, and through it the hidden power of the divine body was plainly demonstrated to all, concerning which power the Lord himself said: "I sensed that power is gone from me."¹¹ May the Apostle Paul come [forward] for the sake of contributing to this [matter], "for there were brought from his body to the sick handkerchiefs and aprons and," as the scripture says, "the diseases departed from them, and the wicked spirits went out of them."¹² But if we select something from the Old Testament, you will see that Elisha picked up the cloak of Elijah (which had fallen from him when he was carried into the heavens), taking it with him, and saying, after the Jordan had been struck three times by the same vestment, "Where is now the God of Elijah?"¹³ and, upon striking [it again with the cloak], it opened a dry path, with the Jordan now divided, for the prophet [Elisha], in the midst of the flowing [waters]; [thus] divine power declared the excellent merit of that saint [Elijah] by the noble miracle [achieved] by means of his clothing. Accordingly, the garments (or the like) of the saints are venerable not on their own account but on account of the honor of the saints themselves, just as [the saints] themselves are made equally notable in heaven and on earth not from themselves but from the gift of Him whom they obey.

¹⁰ Psalm 115:15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." *Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum ejus.*

¹¹ Luke 8:46: "And Jesus said: Somebody hath touched me; for I know that virtue is gone out from me." *Et dicit Jesus : Tetigit me aliquis : nam ego novi virtutem de me exiisse.*

¹² Acts 19:12.

¹³ 4 Kings 2:13-14.

10. Exinde namque, juxta Scripturam, in praesenti justus vivens in spe, ad coelestia obtinenda se erigens, charitate quod credit ac sperat ex parte jam retinens, facit quod hic fieri potest, et quem nondum in seipso contemplari potest, eum in sanctis suis conspiciat, quosque nec viventes diu retinere praevaluit, eisdem mortuis per eorum quamlibet parvas reliquias vivorum reverentiam impendat. Vivorum, inquam, eis honorem impendat, quos apud Deum sempiternae vivere novit, sicut Salvator in Evangelio ait: Deus non est mortuorum, sed vivorum, omnes enim vivunt ei (Luc. XX). Vivunt quidem mali per propriam quam nunquam perdunt essentiam; sed singulariter Deo vivunt boni per beatam, qua in ipso nunquam carere poterunt vitam. Hanc quandiu in carne vivunt non consequuntur; reconduntur in sinu coelestium atriorum a Deo jam glorificati spiritus, quousque in communi carnis resurrectione, unusquisque proprium ad gloriam recipiat corpus. Quae corporum gloria qualis aut quanta futura sit, ab ipso Domino audiamus. Nam, cum de justorum resurrectione tractaret, inter caetera ait: In resurrectione neque nubent, neque nubentur, sed erunt sicut angeli Dei in coelo (Matth. XXII); et item: Aequales sunt angelis Dei (Luc. XX), et filii Dei sunt, cum sint filii resurrectionis.

10. Therefore, according to Scripture, the just man in the present, living in hope, raising himself up for the sake of obtaining heavenly things, already in part holding with charity to what he believes and hopes, does what is able to be done here, and the one whom he is not yet able to contemplate in himself, he may discern in his saints. And those whom he could no longer retain in living [form], he may express whatever reverence toward them dead through small relics of them when they were living. He may express, I say, the honor of the living toward these ones, whom he knows to be living separately in the presence of God, just as the Savior in the gospel says: "For he is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live to him."¹⁴ Indeed the wicked live through their own essence, which they never lose; but the good live individually in God by means of a blessed life, which they will be incapable of lacking. They do obtain this as long they live in the flesh; for they are hidden in the bosom of the celestial halls, their spirits already glorified by God, until the general resurrection of the flesh, when each and every one will receive his own body to glory. What glory—what kind and how much—of bodies may there be in the future? Let us listen to the Lord himself. For, when he was discussing the resurrection of the just, he said, among other things: "For in the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married; but shall be as the angels of God in heaven;"¹⁵ and again: "for they are equal to the angels of God, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."¹⁶

¹⁴ Luke 20:38.

¹⁵ Matthew 22:30.

¹⁶ Luke 20:36.

11. Eorum quorum corpora, fratres, veneramini, quorum cineribus exsultatis, quorum beatis ossibus aurea sepulcra paratis, filii sunt Dei, aequales sunt angelis, filii sunt resurrectionis. Inde eos ut filios Dei reverenter suscipitis, et angelis aequales paribus laudibus extollitis, ut filios resurrectionis in carne propria resurrecturos speratis. Hac spe omni humana re certiores effecti, praesentis martyris ossa non velut arentia contemnit, sed quasi futura incorruptione jam florentia honoratis, ipsumque voce prophetae exsultantem auditis: Et refluunt caro mea (Psal. XXVII), et eundem prophetam alio loco dicentem: Renovabitur ut aquilae juvenus tua (Psal. CII). Floridam ab ariditate carnem, juventutem a senio reparatam, etsi nondum in martyre vestro conspicitis, his tamen sacris auctoritatibus nullo modo futuram desperatis, unde vobis, ut dictum est, adhuc per fidem, nondum per speciem ambulantes, licet corporalibus vestris oculis vita sanctorum corporum minime pateat, eam tamen consonans utriusque Testamenti auctoritas luce clarius manifestat, quae apud fideles mentes tantam vim obtinere consuevit, ut non indigeat carnis intuitu cernere, quod ipsam audiunt confirmare.

11. Brothers, those whose bodies you venerate, in whose ashes you rejoice, for whose bones you prepare gilded tombs, they are sons of God, they are the equals of the angels, they are the sons of resurrection. Therefore you reverently receive them as sons of God, you extoll them as equal to the angels with equivalent praise, and you expect [them] to be about to be resurrected as sons of resurrection. Made more certain in every human matter by this hope, you do not disdain the bones of the present martyr as things that are dried up, but you honor them as if already flowering with the future incorruption, and you hear the same, rejoicing with the voice of the prophet: "And my flesh hath flourished again," and [you hear] the same prophet saying in another place: "thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's."¹⁷ Although you do not yet observe in your martyr flesh flowering from aridity, youth revived from old age, nevertheless, on the basis of these sacred authorities, you in no way despair of the future; whence, as was said, to [those of] you still wandering by faith and not yet by sight, although the living nature of holy bodies may not be clear to your corporeal eyes, nevertheless the consonant authority of either Testament manifests it most clearly with light, [by means of] which it is customary for faithful minds to obtain such power, that it may not be required to discern with consideration of the flesh, that which they hear the same [authority] confirm.

¹⁷ Psalm 27:7 and 102:5.

12. Habentes igitur, charissimi, auctorem veteris legis ac novae gratiae Jesum Christum prius per antiquos sanctos, et postmodum per ipsum resurrectionem carnis et totius humanae substantiae glorificationem servis suis promittentem, et eam in suo corpore praemonstrantem, hujus beati martyris corpus, licet ut mortuum teneamus, tamen ut resurrecturum et immortalis gloria vestiendum honore debito percolamus. Credamus eum Deo vivere, cui vitam mortemque suam voluit inservire; vivere, inquam, Deo sanctorum corpora mortui quoque prophetae Elisei corpus indicat, quod cum exanimum fuerit consepulto cadaveri attactu vitali vitam quam amiserat reddidit. Vivere illa Deo innumera ubique locorum miracula probant, quae illi frequentissima experti sunt, qui ad eorum veneranda sepulcra devotis mentibus accesserunt. Vivere illa Deo et Apostolus docet, qui fideles contristari de dormientibus prohibet, dormientes ille non mortuos vocat, quos velut a somno evigilatos confirmat dicens. (ib. Haec vobis dicimus in verbo Domini, quia nos qui vivimus, qui relinquimur simul rapiemur cum illis obviam Christo in aera, et sic semper cum Domino erimus (I Thess. IV). Et alibi: Corruptibile hoc induet incorruptionem; mortale hoc induet immortalitatem (I Cor. XV). Et Isaïas: Ossa vestra ut herba germinabunt (Isa. LXVI). Quia ergo praesentis martyris ossa ad vitam aeternam resurgentis ut herba germinabunt, quia corruptibile hoc induet incorruptionem, et mortale hoc immortalitatem, quia hoc justi corpus raptum obviam Christo semper cum ipso permanebit, quis non toto affectu in hac vita ducat honorandum quod in futura credit tanti honoris gloria sublimandum? Non enim Salvator verborum suorum oblitus: Ubi sum ego, illic et minister meus erit (Joan. XII), non frustra et illud Patri dictum est: Volo ut ubi sum ego, et illi sint mecum, ut videant claritatem meam (Joan. XVII). Ad eam quippe videndam, hominem, ut supradictum est, ab initio creavit, ad quam conspiciendam martyrem nostrum per susceptae carnis mediationem, atque per opera justitiae reparavit, quod donec Christo ad judicandum veniente fiat, laetantes audite pretiosum corporis membrum, vocem quondam capitis sibi assumptum, et dicentem: In pace in idipsum dormit martyr et requiescit (Psal. IV); in pace, quam jam spiritus obtinet et in carne sustinet; in idipsum, a quo nec mortuus separat Christum. Dormit expleto mortalitatis somno evigilaturus, requiescit ad requiem sempiternam de praesentibus laboribus transiturus.

12. Therefore, most dear ones, having Jesus Christ—the author of the old law and of the new grace—promising, first through the ancient holy ones and later through his own resurrection, his servants the glorification of the flesh and of all human substance, revealing it in his own body, although we might consider the body of this blessed martyr to be dead, let us cherish it with due honor as [a body] about to be resurrected and dressed in immortal glory. Let us believe him to be living with God, to whom he wished to dedicate his life and his death. The body of the dead prophet Elisha also indicates that the bodies of the saints are, as I say, living with God, because, when [his body] was lifeless, it, with a life-giving touch, restored to a[nother] cadaver (that had been buried along with it) the life that it had lost (IV Kings 13:20-21). Those innumerable miracles [occurring] in [different] places everywhere prove [that they] live with God; those miracles that those who approached the venerable sepulchres [of the holy] with devout minds experienced as being most frequent. The Apostle [also] teaches that they are living with God, when he prohibits the faithful from being discouraged with regard to the sleeping ones—he referred to them as “sleeping” not “dead” (I Thess 4:13-14)—whom he affirms are about to wake up as if from their sleep, saying: “For these things we say unto you in the word of the Lord, that” (I Thessalonians 4:15) “we who are alive, who are left, shall be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet Christ, into the air, and so shall we be always with the Lord.” (I Thessalonians 4:17) And elsewhere: “this corruptible will put on incorruption; and this mortal will put on immortality.” (I Corinthians 15:53); and Isaiah: “and your bones shall flourish like an herb” (Isaiah 66:10-13). Therefore because the bones of the present martyr rising up again to eternal life “shall flourish like an herb,” because “this corruptible will put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality;” because this body of the just man, taken up to meet Christ, will always remain with Him, who would not consider as worthy of being honored with full affection in this life the [body] that he believes is to be raised to the glory of such honor in the future? The Savior is not forgetful of his words: “where I am, there also shall my minister be;” (John 12:26); and that which was said to the Father was not [said] in vane: “I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me, that they may see my glory” (John 17:24). By all means, He created man, as was said above, from the very beginning for the sake of seeing [his glory], and for the sake of observing [it], He restored our martyr, through the mediation of received flesh and works of righteousness, which is done until, with Christ coming for the sake of Judgment, listen, those of you rejoicing over a precious part of the body, to the voice of the head formerly taking [them] up to itself, saying: “In peace in the selfsame” the martyr “sleeps, and ... rests” (Psalm 4:9). “In peace,” which the spirit already possesses and keeps in the flesh; “in the selfsame,” by which the dead body does not separate Christ. He “sleeps,” about-to-be-awakened once the dream of mortality is completed, and he “rests,” about to cross over from the present labors to rest.

Unde et sequitur: Quoniam tu, Domine, singulariter in spe constituisti me (ibid.), quoniam alieni non transibunt per Jerusalem amplius, nec intrabit in illam omne coinquinatum et faciens abominationem in spe resurrectionis, quam secundum Apostolum promisit non mendax Dominus, qui et in Evangelio ait: Venit hora, in qua omnes, qui in monumentis sunt, audient vocem ejus. Et procedent, qui bona fecerint, in resurrectionem vitae; qui mala fecerint, in resurrectionem judicii (Joan. V). In hac spe constitutus martyr singulariter, suo tempore in carne glorificandus, et de corpore suo hoc sentire docuit, et quid de ipsis corporibus vestris sperare debeatis ostendit; ad quam spem per fidei patientiam nutriendam, et apostolus Jacobus vos hortatur dicens: Patientes estote usque ad adventum Domini (Jac. V). Et similitudine subjuncta, ait: Ecce agricola exportat pretiosum fructum tempore, patienter ferens donec accipiat temporaneum et serotinum (ibid.) Qui exponens quod dixerat adjecit: Patientes estote et vos, et confirmate corda vestra, quoniam adventus Domini appropinquabit (ibid).

Whence it follows: "For thou, O Lord, singularly hast established me in hope." (ibid.), because "strangers shall pass through Jerusalem no more," [Joel 3:17], nor will anything polluted enter into it, making an abomination in the hope of resurrection, which, according to the Apostle, the Lord (not a liar) promises, who, in the gospel says: "the hour cometh, wherein all that are in the graves shall hear his voice. And they that have done good things, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment. (John 5:28-29). In this hope, the martyr is "singularly established," to be glorified in the flesh in his time, and he taught to experience this concerning his body, and showed what you ought to hope for with regard to your own bodies. With regard to this hope, through the patient fostering of faith, the apostle James also exhorts us, saying: "Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord." (James 5:7). And with something similar added below, he says: "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the season: patiently bearing till he receive the early and latter rain" (Ibid.). Expounding on what said, [James] added: "Be you therefore also patient, and strengthen your hearts: for the coming of the Lord is at hand." (James 5.8)

13. Hunc adventum Domini et ipsi in corporibus vestris glorificandi securi expectabitis, si cordibus vestris in superni desiderii affectu confirmatis, sicut martyris corpus, sic exempla tenetis. Delectabitur tunc vestro obsequio, cum viderit non deviare vos ab itinere suo. Iter ejus Christus fuit, per quem constanter gradiens, ad ipsum pervenit; ad ipsum, inquam, humilitate ad ejus celsitudinem, laboribus ad requiem, ignominia ad gloriam, morte demigravit ad vitam. Ad hanc vitam et vos martyrem vestrum sequendo ad Christum pervenietis, quem et nunc magnum refugium et singulare praesidium apud ipsum habetis. Amplectitur plenus ea qua jam fruitur charitate Deo, amoris vestri obsequium, cui debita merces deesse non poterit, nisi forte (quod absit!) amor ipse defecerit. Recogitate erga sepulti Domini corpus irrequietum sanctarum mulierum amorem, quia quae mortuo instant obsecutae sunt, resurgentes gloriam primo cernere meruerunt: non terruit eas Judaica feritas, non praesidis potestas, non custodum immanitas, sed per metuendam saevitiam persecutorum ad Domini intrepide pervenire sepulcrum, quibus et visio angelica ex resurrectionis Dominicae ostensa est magnificentia, ut nihilominus perfectam se gaudeant recepisse beatitudinis mercedem, quae perfectam toto cordis affectu exhibuerant servitutem. Haec est enim perfecta sanctorum remuneratio, quando mundis corde sanctorum angelorum societas redditur, et ipsius Domini plena aeternae societatis praesentia exhibetur. Hanc, vos charissimi, sanctarum mulierum exemplo promereri poteritis, si sanctis corporibus, quae a Deo vobis commissa sunt, devote servientes, felicitis servitutis vestrae perseverantiam ad debitum usque finem perducere studueritis. Non erit inferior vestri obsequii remuneratio, si in consimili servitute obsequentium fuerit non impar devotio. Conferet beati corporis beata servitus angelorum consortium, et perducet obsequentes ad aeternam visionem regis coelorum, qui cum Patre et Spiritu sancto vivit et regnat Deus per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen.

13. And you yourselves, secure that you are to be glorified in your bodies, will await this advent of the Lord, if you consider, with your hearts confirmed in the heavenly affection of desire, such models [i.e., the biblical quotations in the previous paragraph] just as [you consider] the body of the martyr. He [the martyr] will at that time delight in your service, when he shall have seen that you have not deviated from his path. Christ was his path: advancing through Him with steadfastness, [the martyr] reached Him; [reached] Him, I say, [in that] he migrated from humility to his height, from labors to rest, from ignominy to glory, and from death to life. And you will also reach this [eternal] life by following your martyr to Christ, [this martyr] whom you also now hold as a great refuge and singular fortress in the presence of [Christ] himself. The one [that is, the martyr] who is full of [eternal life], which he already enjoys in charity, embraces the service of your love to God, for which due reward cannot be lacking, unless perchance (may it not be the case!) that very love shall have been deficient. Consider the restless love of those holy women¹⁸ toward the body of the interred Lord: because they diligently paid homage to that dead [body], they, rising up, deserved to discern the glory first. The savagery of the Jews did not terrify them, nor did the power of the procurator, nor did the brutality of the guards; but by means of the fearsome rage of the persecutors, [they deserved] to arrive undaunted at the tomb of the Lord, [they] to whom the angelic vision was shown from the magnificence of the Lord's resurrection, so that those who had shown perfect servitude with total affection of the heart might likewise rejoice to have received for themselves the perfect reward of beatitude. This is, in fact, the perfect reward of the saints: when the company of the angels is restored to those cleansed in the heart of the saints, and the presence of the Lord himself is shown to be full of this eternal company. You will be able to merit this, you most dear ones, according to the example of the holy women, if, serving devoutly the holy bodies [i.e., the relics] that were committed by you to God [you], you strive to produce the perseverance of your fortunate service up to [your] well-deserved end. The reward of your homage will not not be inferior, if the devotion will not have been unequal in the very similar service of those doing service [to Him]. The blessed servitude of the blessed body will confer the company of angels, and will lead the dutiful ones to the eternal vision of the heavenly King, who lives and reigns with the Father and Holy Spirit for all the ages of ages. Amen.

¹⁸ Matthew 27:62: "And there was there Mary Magdalen, and the other Mary sitting over against the sepulchre."