

## QUESTION 185

### Things that Pertain to the State of Bishops

Next we have to consider the things that pertain to the state of bishops. And on this topic there are eight questions: (1) Is it permissible to desire the episcopate? (2) Is it permissible to refuse the episcopate definitively (*finaliter recusare*)? (3) Is it required to choose the better man for the episcopate? (4) Can a bishop make a transition to the religious life (*ad religionem*)? (5) Is it permissible for a bishop to abandon his subjects bodily? (6) Can a bishop have his own possessions (*habere proprium*)? (7) Does a bishop commit a mortal sin by not disbursing the Church's goods to the poor? (8) Are religious who are appointed to the episcopate held to the observances of their religious rule (*teneantur ad observantias regulares*)?

#### Article 1

#### Is it permissible to desire the episcopate?

It seems that it is permissible to desire the episcopate:

**Objection 1:** In 1 Timothy 3:1 the Apostle says, "One who desires the episcopate desires a good work." But it is permissible and praiseworthy to desire a good work. Therefore, it is likewise praiseworthy to desire the episcopate.

**Objection 2:** As was established above (q. 184, a. 7), the state of bishops is more perfect than the state of the religious. But it is praiseworthy for an individual to desire to pass into the state of religion. Therefore, it is likewise praiseworthy for an individual to desire to be promoted to the episcopate.

**Objection 3:** Proverbs 11:26 says, "He who hides the harvested corn will be cursed among the people, but he will be a blessing upon the head of the sellers." But he who is fit for the episcopate in both his life and his knowledge seems to be hiding the spiritual corn if he refuses the episcopate, whereas by accepting the episcopate, he is placed in the state of dispensing the spiritual corn. Therefore, it seems that it is praiseworthy to desire the episcopate and blameworthy to refuse it.

**Objection 4:** The deeds of the saints that are narrated in Sacred Scripture are proposed to us as an example—this according to Romans 15:4 ("Whatever has been written was written for our instruction"). But in Isaiah 6:8 we read that Isaiah offered himself for the role of preaching, which belongs in a principal way to bishops. Therefore, it seems that it is praiseworthy to desire the episcopate.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Civitate Dei* 19 Augustine says, "The higher place, without which the people cannot be ruled, even it is being properly administered, is nonetheless improperly desired (*etsi administratur ut decet, tamen indecenter appetitur*)."

**I respond:** In the case of the episcopate there are three things that can be considered:

(a) The first of them is the principal one and the goal (*principale et finale*), viz., the *episcopal operation*, through which the individual intends the *welfare of his neighbors (utilitati proximorum intendit)*—this according to John 21:17 ("Feed my sheep").

(b) The second is the *loftiness of the level (altitudo gradus)*, since the bishop is set over the others—this according to Matthew 24:45 ("The prudent and faithful servant, whom the master set over his household").

(c) The third is what is consequent upon these, viz., *reverence and honor and sufficient temporal means*—this according to 1 Timothy 5:17 ("The priests (*presbyteri*) who rule well should be considered worthy of double honor").

Hence, to desire the episcopate because of good circumstances of this last sort is manifestly impermissible and involves *excessive sentient desire or ambition (pertinet ad cupiditatem vel ambitionem)*. Hence, in Matthew 23:6-7 our Lord says against the Pharisees, "They love the first places at feasts, and the first chairs in the synagogues, and salutations in the marketplace, and to be called

‘Rabbi’ by men.”

As regards the second point, viz., the loftiness of the level (*quantum ad celsitudinem gradus*), it is *presumptuous* to desire the episcopate. Hence, in Matthew 20:25 our Lord rebukes the disciples for seeking the first place, saying, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them”—where Chrysostom comments that He thereby shows that it is Gentile-like to want the first place, and thus by comparing them to the Gentiles, He converts their impetuous soul.”

By contrast, the desire to do good for one’s neighbors is praiseworthy and virtuous in its own right (*secundum se*). But since, insofar as it is an episcopal act, it has the loftiness of the level joined to it, it seems presumptuous for someone to desire to be preeminent in order to do good for those subject to him, unless there is a clear and imminent need. As Gregory explains in *Pastoralis*, “It was praiseworthy to seek the office of bishop when there was no doubt that one would thereby run into more serious dangers,” and for this reason it was not easy to find someone who would assume this burden—especially given that it is by the zeal of charity that one is divinely spurred on to this. As Gregory puts it in *Pastoralis*, “Isaiah, strongly wanting to do good for his neighbors, was praiseworthy for desiring the role of preacher.”

On the other hand, an individual could without presumption desire to do such works, if he already happened to be in such a role or office; he could even desire to be worthy of carrying out such works in such a way that it was the good work that fell under his desire and not the primacy of his high office (*non autem primatus dignitatis*). Hence, in *Super Matthaem* Chrysostom says, “To desire a good work is good, but to crave for a primacy of honor is vanity. For this primacy seeks one who flees from it and abhors one who desires it.”

**Reply to objection 1:** As Gregory says in *Pastoralis*, “The Apostle said this at a time when an individual who presided over the people was the first one to be led to the torments of martyrdom, and so there was nothing that could be desired in the episcopacy except the good work.” Hence, in *De Civitate Dei* 19 Augustine says, “When the Apostle said, ‘One who desires the episcopate desires a good work’, he wanted to explain what the episcopacy is, since ‘episcopate’ is the name of a work and not of an honor. For *skopos* means *seeing*, and so, if we want to, we can render *episkopein* in Latin by *superintendere* (*oversee*), with the result that an individual should understand that a bishop is not someone who loves to preside rather than someone who loves to do good for others.” For, as he had observed shortly before this, “In our actions it is not the honor or the power that should be loved—since all things under the sun are vain—but the work itself which is effected through that same honor or power.” And yet as Gregory says in *Pastoralis*, “While [the Apostle] praises the desire”—viz., the desire for the good work—“he immediately turns what he had praised into a fear when he adds, ‘A bishop should be irreprehensible’, as if to say, ‘I praise what you are seeking, but learn what it is that you are seeking’.”

**Reply to objection 2:** The nature of the state of religion is not the same as the nature of the episcopal state, and this for two reasons.

First, perfection of life is a *prerequisite for the episcopal state*. This is clear from the fact that our Lord asked Peter if he loved Him *more than the others* before committing the pastoral office to him. But perfection of life is *not* a prerequisite for the religious state. Instead, the religious state is a *way to perfection*. Hence, in Matthew 19:21 our Lord does not say, “If you *are* perfect, go and sell all that you have.” Instead, He says, “If you *want to be* perfect ...” And the reason for this difference is that, according to Dionysius, perfection belongs to a bishop *actively* as one who brings about perfection, whereas it belongs to a monk *passively* as one who is being made perfect. Now it is required that an individual be perfect in order for him to be able to lead others to perfection, but this is not demanded as a prerequisite of an individual who needs to be led to perfection. And it is presumptuous for an individual to think of himself as perfect, but it is not presumptuous for an individual to be intent on perfection.

Second, an individual who takes up the religious state *subjects himself to others* in order to grasp

spiritual things, and this is permissible for anyone. Hence, in *De Civitate Dei* 19 Augustine says, “No one is prohibited from striving for cognition of the truth, since his free time involves something praiseworthy.” But an individual who makes the transition to the episcopal state is raised up in order to provide for others. And no one should take up this sort of elevation for himself—this according to Hebrews 5:4 (“No one takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God”). And in *Super Matthaeum* Chrysostom says, “To desire primacy in the Church is neither justified nor useful. For what wise man wills of his own accord to subject himself to such servitude and danger as to have to render an account for a whole Church—unless it is someone who does not fear God’s judgment and abuses ecclesiastical primacy in a secular manner in order to convert it into a secular primacy?”

**Reply to objection 3:** The dispensing of spiritual corn should not be done according to the judgment of just anyone, but mainly according to God’s judgment and disposition and, secondarily, according to the judgment of higher prelates, in whose person 1 Corinthians 4:1 says, “Let a man think of us as ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God.” And so an individual to whom this does not belong either *ex officio* or as enjoined upon him by a superior is not thought of as hiding the spiritual corn. Instead, an individual is thought of as hiding the spiritual corn if he neglects to dispense it when this is incumbent upon him because of his office or because he stubbornly refuses to accept the office when it is enjoined upon him. Hence, in *De Civitate Dei* 19 Augustine says, “Charity with respect to the truth seeks a holy leisure, the demands of charity undertake an honest labor. If no one imposes this burden upon us, we must devote ourselves to perceiving and contemplating the truth. But if it is indeed imposed upon us, we must bear it because of the demands of charity.”

**Reply to objection 4:** As Gregory says in *Pastoralis*, “Isaiah, who wanted to be sent, saw that he had already been cleansed by the live coal from the altar—lest anyone should dare to approach the sacred ministries uncleansed. Therefore, since it is very difficult for anyone to be able to know that he has been cleansed, it is safer to decline the office of preacher.”

## Article 2

### Is an individual permitted to refuse altogether an episcopal appointment?

It seems that an individual is permitted to refuse altogether an episcopal appointment (*liceat episcopatum iniunctum omnino recusare*):

**Objection 1:** As Gregory says in *Pastoralis*, “Isaiah, desiring to do good for his neighbors through the active life, desired the role of preacher, whereas Jeremiah, wanting to cling to the zealous love of his creator through contemplation, said in protest that he should not be sent to preach.” But no one sins by not wanting to abandon better goods in order to adhere to lesser goods. Therefore, since love of God is more excellent than love of neighbor, and since, as is clear from what was said above (q. 26, a. 2 and q. 182, a. 1), the contemplative life is preferable to the active life, it seems that an individual does not sin by refusing the episcopate altogether.

**Objection 2:** As Gregory says, “It is very difficult for anyone to be able to know that he has been cleansed, and no one should approach the sacred ministries uncleansed.” Therefore, if an individual does not think that he has been cleansed, then no matter how much the episcopal office is enjoined upon him, he should not undertake it.

**Objection 3:** In the prologue to *Super Marcum* Jerome says of St. Mark, “It is said that after receiving the faith he cut off his thumb in order to be deemed unworthy of the priesthood.” Similarly, some individuals make a vow never to accept the episcopate. But posing an impediment to something is the same as refusing it altogether. Therefore, it seems that an individual is able without sin to refuse the episcopate altogether.

**But contrary to this:** In *Ad Eudoxium* Augustine says, “If mother Church desires any works from you, you should neither undertake them with avid elation nor refuse with flattering indolence.” Later he adds, “Nor should you prefer you own comfort to the needs of the Church. For if no good men had been willing to assist her in her birth pangs, you would not have found a way to be born of her.”

**I respond:** There are two things that have to be considered in an individual’s assumption to the episcopate: (a) what it is fitting for a man to desire *in accord with his own will*, and (b) what it is fitting for a man to do *in accord with the will of another*.

As regards his own will, it is fitting for a man to dwell mainly on his own salvation, but, as is clear from what was said above (a. 1, ad 3), it is because of the disposition of someone else who has power that it is fitting for a man to look after the salvation of others. Hence, just as it involves a disorder of the will for an individual to be borne by his own movement toward being appointed to the governance of others, so, too, it likewise involves a disorder of the will for an individual to definitively refuse the selfsame office of governing in opposition to the command of his superior—and this for two reasons:

First, because this is incompatible with *charity with respect to one’s neighbors*, for whose good an individual should offer himself at the appropriate time and place. Hence, in *De Civitate Dei* 19 Augustine says, “The demands of charity undertake a just occupation.”

Second, because it is incompatible with *humility*, through which one subjects himself to the mandates of his superiors. Hence, in *Pastoralis* Gregory says, “In God’s eyes the humility is genuine when one is not so obstinate as to refuse to submit to what is usefully prescribed.”

**Reply to objection 1:** Even though, simply and absolutely speaking, the contemplative life is better than the active life, and even though love of God is better than love of neighbor, nonetheless, on the other side, the good of the multitude is to be preferred to the good of a single individual. Hence, in a passage cited above, Augustine says, “Do not put your own comfort before the needs of the Church”—especially given that the love of God involves one’s giving pastoral care to the sheep of Christ. Hence, in commenting on John 21:17 (“Feed my sheep”), Augustine says, “It is the role of love to tend the Lord’s flock, just as it had been a sign of fear to deny the Shepherd.”

Similarly, prelates are not transferred to the active life so that they might abandon the contemplative life. Hence, in *De Civitate Dei* 19 Augustine says, “If the burden of a pastoral office is imposed, the delight in truth”—i.e., the delight that is had in contemplation—“should not be abandoned.”

**Reply to objection 2:** As is clear from what was said above about obedience (q. 104, a. 5), no one is obliged to obey his prelate in what is illicit. Therefore, it can happen that an individual on whom the office of prelate is enjoined is aware of something within himself in light of which it is impermissible for him to accept the office of prelate.

Still, this impediment can sometimes be removed by the very individual on whom pastoral care is being enjoined—for instance, if he has an intention to sin that he can abandon. Because of this, he is not excused from his obligation to obey in the end the prelate who is enjoining him.

However, sometimes he himself cannot remove the impediment in light of which the pastoral office is impermissible for him, but the prelate who is enjoining him can remove it—e.g., if he is irregular or excommunicated. And in such a case he ought to reveal the impediment to the enjoining prelate, and if the latter wills to remove the impediment, then he is obligated to obey him with humility. Hence, in Exodus 4:10, after Moses had said, “I beseech you, Lord, I am not eloquent, either yesterday or the day before,” the Lord replied to him (4:12), “I myself will be in your mouth and I will teach you what to say.”

Then again, sometimes the impediment cannot be removed either by the enjoining prelate or by the one whom he is enjoining—as, for instance, if the archbishop is unable to grant a dispensation for the irregularity. In that case, he is not obligated to obey him by accepting the episcopate—or even by accepting holy orders, if he is irregular.

**Reply to objection 3:** Accepting the episcopate is not *in its own right (de se)* necessary for salvation, but it becomes necessary because of the command of a superior. Now as regards what is

necessary for salvation in *this latter* sense, someone can licitly pose an impediment to it *before* the command is given. (Otherwise, an individual would not be allowed to marry a second time, lest he be thereby impeded from receiving an episcopate or holy orders.) But this would not be permitted in the case of matters that are *in their own right (per se)* necessary for salvation.

Hence, St. Mark did not act contrary to a command when he cut off his finger. (This is granting that he did it at the Holy Spirit's prompting, without which no one is permitted to exercise this sort of power over himself.)

Now as regards an individual who makes a vow not to accept the episcopate, if he intends thereby to bind himself to not accepting it even through obedience to a higher prelate, then his vow is illicit. On the other hand, if he intends to obligate himself, insofar as it is up to him, not to seek the episcopate and not to accept it unless there is some urgent necessity, then his vow is licit, because he is vowing to do what it is fitting for a man to do.

### Article 3

#### Should an individual who is appointed to the episcopate be better than the others?

It seems that an individual who is appointed to the episcopate should be better than the others:

**Objection 1:** Our Lord examined Peter, to whom He was going to entrust the pastoral office, to see if he loved Him more than the others. But someone is better because he loves God more. Therefore, it seems that an individual should not be appointed to the episcopate unless he is better than the others.

**Objection 2:** Pope Symmachus says, "An individual is to be counted as very low if he excels in dignity, unless he also excels in knowledge and holiness." But someone who excels in knowledge and holiness is better. Therefore, an individual should not be appointed to the episcopate unless he is better than the others.

**Objection 3:** In every genus the lesser things are regulated by the greater, in the way that, as Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 3, corporeal things are regulated by spiritual things and lower corporeal things are regulated by the higher ones. But a bishop is appointed to regulate others. Therefore, he should be better than the others.

**But contrary to this:** In *Decretals [of Gregory IX]* it says that it is sufficient to choose a good man and not necessary to choose a better man.

**I respond:** As regards the appointment of an individual to the episcopate, one has to consider something on the part of the one appointed and something on the part of the one who does the appointing.

On the part of the one who does the appointing, either by being an elector or by supervision (*vel eligendo vel providendo*), it is required that he faithfully distribute the divine ministries. These ministries should be distributed for the good of the Church—this according to 1 Corinthians 14:12 ("Strive to abound in building up the Church"). But the divine ministries are not entrusted to men in order to reward them (*propter eorum remunerationem*), since they should look forward to their reward in the future life (*quam expectare debent in futuro*). And so an individual who has to choose someone for the episcopate, or to supervise him, is not obligated to appoint someone who is better absolutely speaking—which has to do with charity—but is instead obligated to choose someone who is better with respect to guiding the Church (*meliolem quoad regimen Ecclesiae*)—more specifically, someone who can build up the Church and defend the Church and govern the Church peacefully. Hence, against certain individuals Jerome says, "Some seek to erect as pillars of the Church not those whom they know will do the Church more good, but those whom they love, or those by whose obsequiousness they have been flattered, or on behalf of whom some higher-up has spoken and who—I pass over in silence what is worse—have succeeded by means of gifts in being made clerics." This involves favoritism or regard for persons (*acceptio*

*personarum*), which in such cases is a grave sin. A Gloss of Augustine's on James 2:1 ("My brothers, show no partiality ...") says, "If we transfer this distance between sitting and standing to the case of ecclesiastical honors, we should not deem it a slight sin to mingle the faith of the Lord of glory with regard for persons. For who would allow a rich man to be chosen for a seat of honor in the Church while holding in contempt a poor man who is better instructed and more saintly?"

On the part of the one who is appointed, it is not required that he think himself better than the others, since this would be proud and presumptuous. Rather, it is sufficient that he find nothing within himself that would render it illicit for him to assume the role of a prelate. Hence, even though Peter had been questioned about whether he loved our Lord more than the others, in his reply he did not place himself ahead of the others, but responded simply that he loved Christ.

**Reply to objection 1:** Our Lord recognized that there existed in Peter, because of his gifts, a fitness in other respects for governing the Church. And so he examined him with respect to his more ample love in order to show that when a man is otherwise fit for leadership in the Church, one should mainly pay attention to the excellence of the love of God in him.

**Reply to objection 2:** This passage should be understood as having to do with the zeal of one who has been set up in dignity. For he should tend toward showing himself to be better than the others in both knowledge and holiness. Hence, in *Pastoralis* Gregory says, "The action of the prelate ought to exceed that of the people by as much as the shepherd's life exceeds that of his flock." However, if he was not more excellent before becoming a prelate, he should not be blamed in the sense that he ought because of this to be thought of [even now] as very low.

**Reply to objection 3:** As 1 Corinthians 12:4ff. says, "There are differences among graces ... and ministries ... and operations." Hence, nothing prevents an individual's being more fit for an office of leadership even though he does not excel in the grace of holiness. But it is different with leadership in the natural order, where what is higher in the order of nature has by that very fact a greater fitness for overseeing lower beings.

#### Article 4

##### Can a bishop licitly abandon episcopal care [of souls] in order to enter religious life?

It seems that a bishop cannot licitly abandon episcopal care [of souls] in order to enter religious life (*episcopus non possit licite curam episcopalem deserere ut ad religionem se transferet*):

**Objection 1:** No one is permitted to go from a more perfect state to a less perfect state. For that is to "look back," which is worthy of damnation—this according to the sentiment of our Lord, who in Luke 9:62 says, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." But as was established above (q. 184, a. 7), the episcopal state is more perfect than the religious state. Therefore, just as it is not permissible to return to the secular state from the religious state, so it is not permissible to go from the episcopal state to the religious state.

**Objection 2:** The order of grace is more well-formed (*decentior*) than the order of nature. But according to nature, the same thing is not moved toward contraries; for instance, if a rock is naturally moving downward, it cannot naturally go from moving downward to moving upward. But according to the order of grace, it is permissible to go from the religious state to the episcopal state. Therefore, contrariwise, it is not permissible to return from the episcopal state to the religious state.

**Objection 3:** Nothing in the works of grace should be ineffectual (*otiosum*). But once an individual is consecrated a bishop, he perpetually retains the spiritual power of conferring holy orders and of doing the other things that pertain to the episcopal office. But this power would, it seems, remain ineffectual in a bishop who set aside the episcopal care [of souls]. Therefore, it seems that a bishop

cannot set aside the care of souls and pass on to the religious state.

**But contrary to this:** No one is forced to do what is illicit in its own right (*secundum se illicitum*). But as is clear from [*Decretals of Gregory IX*], *Extra, De Renuntiatione*, chap. *Quidam*, individuals who seek to withdraw from the episcopal care [of souls] are compelled to withdraw. Therefore, it seems that it is not illicit to abandon episcopal care [of souls].

**I respond:** The perfection of the episcopal state consists in an individual's binding himself out of love for God to pursuing the salvation of his neighbors. And so he is obligated to hold on to this pastoral care for as long as he can contribute to the salvation of the subjects who have been committed to him. He must not neglect this care, either (a) for the sake of the quiet of divine contemplation, since because of the needs of his subjects the Apostle patiently endured being separated even from the contemplation that belongs to the future life—this according to Philippians 1:22-25 (“Behold, I do not know what I shall choose, since I am torn between two things, having the desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, which is far better, whereas remaining in the flesh is necessary for your sake; and being sure of the latter, I know that I shall remain”)—or (b) for the sake of avoiding any hardships or acquiring any riches, since as John 10:11 says, “The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.”

Nonetheless, it sometimes happens that a bishop is prevented from procuring the welfare of his subjects, and this in many ways:

Sometimes *because of some defect of his own*, either a *defect of conscience*, e.g., if he is guilty of homicide or simony; or, again, a *bodily defect*, e.g., if he is old or sick; or, again, a *loss of the knowledge* that is sufficient for tending to his governance; or, again, an *irregularity*, e.g., if he is twice married.

Sometimes *because of a defect on the part of his subjects*, among whom he cannot make progress. Hence, in *Dialogus 2* Gregory says, “Those who are evil must be borne with equanimity when there are some good people who are being helped. But when there is no fruit at all for the good people, labor for those who are evil is sometimes useless. Therefore, when the perfect believe that their labor is without fruit, it sometimes occurs to them to go elsewhere in order to labor with fruit.”

Sometimes it happens *on the part of others*, e.g., when a serious scandal arises concerning someone in authority—since, as the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 8:13, “If food scandalizes my brother, I will never eat meat”—as long as the scandal does not arise from the malice of those who want to trample upon the faith or upon the uprightness of the Church. For the pastoral care of the Church should not be set aside because of a scandal of that sort—this according to Matthew 15:14 (“Leave them alone”—viz., those who were scandalized by the truth of Christ's teaching—“they are the blind leading the blind”).

Still, it is necessary that just as an individual takes on the cares of governance through the oversight of a higher prelate, so, too, for the reasons explained above, he may likewise, through the authority of that higher prelate, abandon the care that he had assumed. Hence, in *Extra, De Renuntiatione*, Innocent III says, “Even if you have the wings with which you are anxious to fly away into solitude, nonetheless, they are tied by the bonds of precepts in such a way that you do not have free flight without our permission.” For the Pope alone is allowed to give a dispensation in the case of the perpetual vow by which an individual who undertakes the episcopate binds himself to the care of his subjects.

**Reply to objection 1:** The perfection of religious and the perfection of bishops are thought of in different ways. For the perfection of [the state of] religion involves an individual's applying his zeal to his own salvation, whereas the perfection of the episcopal state involves applying one's zeal to the salvation of one's neighbors. And so as long as an individual is able to be useful for the salvation of his neighbors, he would be taking a step backward if he wanted to pass into the religious state in order to concentrate on his own salvation alone after having obligated himself to procuring not only his own salvation but the salvation of others as well. Hence, in the decretal cited above Innocent III says, “It is easier to allow a monk to ascend to the episcopate (*ad praesulatum*) than for a bishop (*praesul*) to descend to the monastic life. If, however, he is unable to procure the salvation of others, it is fitting that he should tend to his own salvation.”

**Reply to objection 2:** There is no impediment because of which a man should forego being zealous for his own salvation, and this is relevant to the religious state. However, there can be an impediment to procuring someone else's salvation. And this is why a monk can be appointed to the episcopal state, in which he can also take care for his own salvation.

In addition, if an impediment to procuring the salvation of others intervenes, a bishop can pass into the religious state. And if the impediment disappears, then he can once again be taken up to the episcopate, e.g., through the correction of his subjects, or through the resolution of a scandal, or through the curing of an illness, or through instruction that is sufficient to dispel ignorance—or even, if he had been unknowingly promoted through simony and had transferred himself to life under a rule after resigning his episcopate, he could once again be promoted to another episcopate.

On the other hand, if an individual is deposed from his episcopate through his own fault and is sent off to a monastery to do penance, then he cannot be recalled again to the episcopate. Hence, *Decretals* [of Gregory IX] 7, q. 1 says, “The holy synod commands that anyone who has descended from episcopal dignity to the monastic life and a place of repentance, is by no means to rise again to the episcopate.”

**Reply to objection 3:** Even in the case of natural things, in the face of a supervening impediment the power remains in place without its act, in the way that because of a disease of the eye the act of seeing ceases. And so it is likewise not incongruous if, because of an exterior supervening impediment, the episcopal power remains in place without its act.

## Article 5

### Is a bishop permitted, because of persecution, to abandon bodily the flock that has been committed to him?

It seems that a bishop is not permitted, because of persecution, to abandon bodily the flock that has been committed to him:

**Objection 1:** In John 10:12 our Lord says, “He is a hireling, and not truly a shepherd, who sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and takes flight.” But in a homily Gregory says, “The wolf overtakes the sheep when an unjust and rapacious individual oppresses certain of those who are faithful and humble.” Therefore, if, because of persecution by some tyrant, a bishop abandons bodily the flock that has been committed to him, it seems that he is a hireling and not a shepherd.

**Objection 2:** Proverbs 6:1 says, “My son, if you have made a solemn promise on behalf of your friend, you have given your pledge to a stranger.” And later (v. 3) it adds, “... go, hasten, and rouse your friend.” In expounding this passage Gregory says in *Pastoralis*, “To make a solemn promise on behalf of a friend is to receive the soul of another in a test of your mutual association. And if anyone is put forward as an example of living for others, he is warned not only to watch over but even to rouse his friend.” But he cannot do this if he abandons his flock bodily. Therefore, it seems that a bishop should not, because of persecution, abandon his flock bodily.

**Objection 3:** The perfection of the episcopal state involves the bishop's providing care for his neighbors. But it is not permissible for an individual who has professed the state of perfection to abandon altogether the things that belong to perfection. Therefore, it seems that a bishop is not permitted to remove himself bodily from the execution of his role or office—except, perhaps, in order to make time for the works of perfection in a monastery.

**But contrary to this:** In Matthew 10:23 our Lord gave this command to His apostles, whom the bishops are the successors of: “If you are persecuted in one city, then flee to another.”

**I respond:** In the case of an obligation one has to pay special attention to the purpose of the obligation. Now bishops obligate themselves to execute a pastoral office for the sake of the salvation of



their subjects. And so when the salvation of their subjects requires that the pastor be present in person, the pastor should not in his person abandon his flock either (a) for the sake of some temporal advantage or, again, (b) because of some imminent personal danger. For a good shepherd is obliged to lay down his life for his sheep.

However, if the salvation of the his subjects can be adequately provided for by someone else in the absence of the pastor, then the pastor is permitted to abandon his flock bodily either because of some advantage to the Church or because of some personal danger. Hence, in his letter *Ad Honoratum* Augustine says, “Let the servants of Christ flee from city to city when one of them is being specifically sought by persecutors, as long as the Church is not being deserted by others who are not being sought in that way. However, when there is a common danger to all of them, then those who need others may not be deserted by those whom they need.” As Pope Nicholas I says—and this is found in *Decretals* 7, q. 1—“If it is dangerous for the sailor to leave the ship in calm seas, how much more so in stormy seas.”

**Reply to objection 1:** The individual who flees like a hireling is someone who puts temporal comfort or even bodily safety above the spiritual welfare of his neighbors. Hence, in a homily Gregory says, “An individual who, in a matter in which he has authority over his sheep, is unable to stand fast when his sheep are in danger is someone who does not love the sheep; instead, he is seeking worldly gain and so he fears to put himself up against the danger, lest he should lose what he loves.” By contrast, an individual who, *without detriment to his flock*, withdraws in order to avoid danger is not fleeing like a hireling.

**Reply to objection 2:** If an individual who makes a solemn promise to someone cannot in his own right fulfill the promise, it is sufficient if he fulfills it through someone else. Hence, if a prelate faces an impediment because of which he cannot tend to the care of his subjects in his own person, he satisfies his promise if he provides for them through someone else.

**Reply to objection 3:** An individual who is appointed to the episcopate takes up the state of perfection in accord with *a certain kind of perfection*, and if he is impeded from *this* kind of perfection, he is not obligated to any *other* kind of perfection in the sense that it would be necessary for him to go over to the state of the religious life.

However, he does need to retain the intention of tending to the salvation of his neighbors if the opportunity arises and necessity requires it.

## Article 6

### Is a bishop permitted to have property of his own?

It seems that a bishop is not permitted to have property of his own (*episcopo non liceat aliquid proprium possidere*):

**Objection 1:** In Matthew 19:21 our Lord says, “If you wish to be perfect, go and sell all that you possess and give it to the poor, and come, follow me.” From this it seems that voluntary poverty is required for perfection. But bishops are appointed to the state of perfection. Therefore, it seems that they are not permitted to possess their own property.

**Objection 2:** As a Gloss on Luke 10:1 says, “Bishops in the Church occupy the place of the apostles.” But our Lord commanded the apostles not to possess anything of their own—this according to Matthew 10:9 (“Do not possess gold or silver or money in your purses”). This is why Peter says in Matthew 19:27, on behalf of himself and the other apostles, “Behold, we have left *everything* and followed you”). Therefore, it seems that bishops are obligated to obey the commandment that they possess nothing of their own.

**Objection 3:** In *Ad Nepotianum* Jerome says, “*Kleros* in Greek is *sors* (*portion*) in Latin. They are

called *clerics* because they are a portion of our Lord, or because our Lord Himself is a portion, i.e., a part, of clerics. But if anyone possesses our Lord, then he can have nothing outside of God. And if he has gold, if he has silver, if he has possessions, if he has various household goods, then our Lord does not deign to be a part of him along with those parts.” Therefore, it seems that not only bishops, but also clerics, should lack property.

**But contrary to this:** *Decretals* 12, q. 1 says, “A bishop may leave to his heirs his own things or acquired things, or whatever property he has.”

**I respond:** No one is held to what is supererogatory unless he specifically ties himself to it by a vow. Hence, in his letter *Ad Paulinam et Armentarium* Augustine says, “Since you have already made a vow, you have already tied yourself to it and you are not permitted to do anything else. Prior to being bound by the vow, it was free that you were lower.”

Now it is clear that to live without property is supererogatory, since it falls under a counsel and not under a precept. Hence, once our Lord had said to the young man, “If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17), He afterwards (v. 21) supplemented this by adding, “If you wish to be perfect, go and sell all that you possess and give it to the poor.”

Now bishops do not at their ordination bind themselves to live without property, nor is living without property necessarily required for the pastoral role to which they do bind themselves. And so bishops are not obliged to live without property.

**Reply to objection 1:** As was established above (q. 184, a. 3), the perfection of the Christian life does not consist essentially in voluntary poverty; instead, voluntary poverty operates as an instrument for the perfection of a life. Hence, it does not have to be the case that where there is greater poverty, there is greater perfection. At the very least, the highest perfection can coexist with great opulence. For instance, we read that Abraham, to whom it is said in Genesis 17:1, “Walk in my presence and be perfect,” was rich.

**Reply to objection 2:** There are three ways in which these words of our Lord can be understood:

In the first way, *mystically*, viz., that we are not to possess gold or silver, i.e., as Jerome explains, that preachers are not to rely principally on temporal wisdom and eloquence.

In the second way, as Augustine comments in *De Consensu Evangelistarum*, one should understand that our Lord said this not by way of *commanding* but by way of *permitting*. For he permitted them to go out preaching without gold and silver and other resources, given that they would receive the necessities of life from those to whom they were preaching. Hence, He adds, “For the worker is worth his food.” However, He permitted this in such a way that if an individual used his own resources in preaching the Gospel, this would involve supererogation, as Paul explains concerning himself in 1 Corinthians 9:12-15.

In the third way, as Chrysostom comments, one should understand that our Lord commanded these things *with respect to the particular mission* by which He sent them to preach to the Jews, in order that they might thereby train themselves to trust in the power of Him who would provide for them when they were without resources. However, neither they nor their successors were thereby obligated to preach the Gospel without their own resources. For in 2 Corinthians 11:8 we read even of St. Paul that he received a stipend from other Churches in order to preach to the Corinthians, and so it is clear that he possessed something that had been sent by others. And it seems foolish to claim that so many holy bishops such as Athanasius, Ambrose, and Augustine would have transgressed those commands if they had thought themselves obligated to observe them.

**Reply to objection 3:** Every part is less than the whole. Therefore, the individual who has other parts along with God is someone whose zeal is diminished with respect to what belongs to God as he becomes intent on what belongs to the world. But neither bishops nor clerics should possess property in such a way that as they look after their own things, they fail in those matters that involve the worship of God.

### Article 7

#### **Do bishops commit a mortal sin if they do not distribute to the poor the ecclesiastical goods that they procure?**

It seems that bishops commit a mortal sin if they do not distribute to the poor the ecclesiastical goods that they procure:

**Objection 1:** In commenting on Luke 12:16 (“The land of a certain rich man brought forth an abundance of fruits”) Ambrose says, “Let no man call his own that which is common, that which is over and beyond what suffices for his needs, that which has been obtained by violence.” And later he adds, “It is no less a crime to take from one who has than to refuse those who have not when you are able to help them and have an abundance.” But it is a mortal sin to take by violence what belongs to another. Therefore, bishops commit a mortal sin if the things they abound in are not distributed to the poor.

**Objection 2:** In commenting on Isaiah 3:14 (“The plunder from the poor is in your house”) a Gloss of Jerome’s says that ecclesiastical goods belong to the poor. But if anyone reserves what belongs to another for himself or gives it to someone else, then he commits a mortal sin and is obligated to make restitution. Therefore, if bishops retain surplus ecclesiastical goods for themselves, or distribute them to their relatives or friends, then it seems that they are obligated to make restitution.

**Objection 3:** An individual can receive from the things of the Church what is necessary for him much more than he can accumulate extra things. But in a letter to Pope Damasus Jerome says, “It is appropriate for those clerics who receive nothing from their parents and relatives to be sustained by the Church through stipends. But if they can be sustained by the goods and riches of their parents and if instead they take what belongs to the poor, then they commit a sacrilege.” Hence, in 1 Timothy 5:16 the Apostle says, “If any believing woman has [relatives who are] widows, let her assist them and let the church not be burdened, so that it will have enough for those who are genuine widows.” Therefore, *a fortiori*, bishops commit a mortal sin if they do not distribute to the poor ecclesiastical goods of which they have an overabundance.

**But contrary to this:** Many bishops do not distribute their surplus to the poor, but seem to spend it in a praiseworthy manner in order to increase the Church’s revenue.

**I respond:** What one has to say about the *personal goods* that bishops can possess is different from what one has to say about *ecclesiastical goods*.

For they have genuine control over *their own goods*. Hence, they are not obligated *by the status itself* of these things to give them to others, but instead they can either keep them for themselves or distribute them to others as they choose. Still, they are able to sin with respect to the distribution of their own goods because of disordered affections through which it happens either that they confer more on themselves than is necessary or that they do not assist others in the way required by the debt of charity. Yet a bishop is not obligated to make restitution, since things of the sort in question have been assigned to his control.

By contrast, bishops are the dispensers or administrators (*dispensatores vel procuratores*) of *ecclesiastical goods*. For in *Ad Bonifacium* Augustine says, “If we possess private property that is sufficient for us, then those things belong not to us, but to those for whom we exercise oversight. And let us not claim them as our property by a damnable usurpation.” Instead, good faith is required for an individual who disburses these goods—this according to 1 Corinthians 4:2 (“Moreover, it is required of those who dispense that they be found trustworthy”).

Now ecclesiastical goods are to be expended not only for the use of the poor, but also for divine worship and for the needs of the ministers. Hence, *Decretal 7*, q. 2 says, “From the Church’s revenues or the offerings of the faithful, only one part is to be assigned to the bishop, two parts are to be used by the priest, under pain of suspension, for ecclesiastical fabrics and for the benefit of the poor; the remaining

part is to be divided among the clerics according to the merits of each one.”

Therefore, if the goods that ought to pass into the use of the bishop *are distinct from* the goods that are disbursed to the poor and to the ministers and for the Church’s worship, and if the bishop retains for himself something of what should be disbursed to the poor, or something of what should be expended for the use of the ministers or for divine worship, then there is no doubt that (a) he is acting as an unfaithful dispenser, that (b) he is committing a mortal sin, and that (c) he is obligated to make restitution. And as regards the goods that are specifically allotted for his own use, it seems that the reasoning is the same as for the case of his own proper goods, viz., that he sins through immoderate affection and action (*propter immoderatum affectum et usum*) if he keeps an immoderate amount for himself, and if he does not help others in the way that the debt of charity requires.

On the other hand, if the aforementioned goods are *not distinct from one another*, then their distribution is entrusted to his faithfulness. And if he falls short or goes overboard in moderation, he can do this without detriment to his good faith, since in such matters a man cannot specify precisely what has to be done. On the other hand, if there is a huge excess, then he cannot conceal it, and it seems to be incompatible with good faith. And so this does not happen without a mortal sin; for Matthew 24:48ff. says, “If the wicked servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delayed in coming’—which pertains to a *contempt for God’s judgment*—“and begins to beat his fellow servants”—which pertains to *pride*—“and eats and drinks with the drunkards”—which pertains to *lust*—“the master of that servant will come on a day he does not expect and divide him off”—viz., off from association with good men—“and will put him with the hypocrites”—viz., in hell.

**Reply to objection 1:** This passage from Ambrose should be taken to refer not only to the disbursement of ecclesiastical items, but to the disbursement of any goods whatsoever from which someone is obligated, by a debt of charity, to provide what is necessary for those who are suffering. However, just as with other particulars that are considered in human actions, it is impossible to determine just when that necessity obligates one to the point of mortal sin. For the determination of these things is left to human prudence.

**Reply to objection 2:** As has been explained, the goods of the churches are to be expended not only for the use of the poor, but also for other uses. And as regards what is assigned for the use of the bishop or of some cleric, if an individual wants to take it away from himself and give it to his relatives or others, he does not commit a sin as long as he does this in moderation, i.e., in such a way that they are no longer in need, but not in such a way that they thereby become richer. Hence, in *De Officio* Ambrose says, “Your generosity is to be applauded if you do not look away from your relatives when you know them to be in need, yet not in such a way that you want to make them richer with what you can give to the poor.”

**Reply to objection 3:** Not all the goods of the churches are to be given to the poor—except, perhaps, in a case of dire necessity. For in such a case, even the vessels consecrated for divine worship are sold for the redemption of captives and for other necessities of the poor. And it is in this sort of crisis that a cleric would sin if he wanted to live off of the goods of the Church even while having patrimonial goods that he could live off of.

**Reply to the argument for the contrary:** The goods of the churches should serve the needs of the poor. And so an individual acts in a praiseworthy manner if, when there is no imminent need to provide for the poor, he buys property with the surplus from the Church’s revenue or puts that surplus away as savings for some future use connected with the welfare of the Church or the needs of the poor.

However, if there is some imminent need to make a disbursement to the poor, then someone’s saving the surplus for the future is the sort of excessive and disordered solicitude that our Lord forbids in Matthew 6:34 when He says, “Do not be solicitous about tomorrow.”

## Article 8

### Are religious who are promoted to the episcopate bound to the observances of their religious rule?

It seems that religious who are promoted to the episcopate are not bound to the observances of their religious rule (*non teneantur ad observantias regulares*):

**Objection 1:** *Decretals* 18, q. 1 says, “The canonical election frees a monk from the yoke of the rule of his monastic profession, and holy ordination makes a bishop out of a monk.” But the observances of the rule (*observantiae regulares*) belong to the “yoke of the rule.” Therefore, religious who are appointed to the episcopate are not bound to the observances of their religious rule.

**Objection 2:** An individual who ascends from a lower level to a higher level does not seem to be bound to what belongs to the lower level, just as it was explained above (q. 88, a. 12) that a religious is not bound to observe the vows that he made in the world. But as was established above (q. 184, a. 7), a religious who is appointed to the episcopate ascends to something greater. Therefore, it seems that a bishop will not be bound to those things that he was obligated to observe in the religious state.

**Objection 3:** Religious seem especially obligated to obedience (*ad obedientiam*) and to living without personal property (*et ad hoc quod sine proprio vivant*). But religious who are taken up to the episcopate are not bound to obey the prelates of their religious orders (*non tenentur obedire praelatis suarum religionum*), since they are now superior to those prelates. Nor, again, do they seem bound to poverty, since, as is said in the *Decretal* cited above (Obj. 1), “When holy ordination has made a bishop out of a monk, he has the power by right, as the lawful heir, to claim his paternal inheritance.” Again, they are sometimes allowed to make a will. Therefore, *a fortiori*, they are not bound to the other observances of their religious rule.

**But contrary to this:** *Decretals* 16, q. 1 says, “As regards monks who have lived in their monasteries for a long time, if afterwards they attain to clerical orders, we decree that they should not discard their former plan of life (*non debere eos a priori proposito discedere*).”

**I respond:** As was explained above (a. 1, ad 2), the religious state (*status religionis*) pertains to perfection in the sense of being a *certain way of tending* toward perfection, whereas the episcopal state pertains to perfection in the sense of being a *certain teaching authority* with respect to perfection (*tamquam quoddam perfectionis magisterium*). Hence, the religious state is compared to the episcopal state as the study of a discipline is to the authority to teach it (*disciplina ad magisterium*) or as a disposition is to a perfection. Now the disposition is not destroyed when the perfection arrives, except perhaps with respect to what in the disposition is incompatible with the perfection. But with respect to what in the disposition which is congruent with the perfection, the disposition is instead made stronger—just as when a student arrives at being a teaching authority, it is no longer fitting for him to be an auditor, and yet it is fitting for him to read and meditate, even more than before.

So, then, one should reply that if there are some among the observances of the rule which do not impede the episcopal office (*pontificale officium*) but instead help the individual to safeguard perfection, e.g., celibacy (*continentia*), poverty, and others of this sort, then a religious remains bound to these even after he has become a bishop, and, as a result, he continues to wear his religious habit as a sign of this obligation.

On the other hand, if there are some among the observances of the rule which are incompatible with the episcopal office—e.g., solitude, silence, and certain harsh vigils or instances of abstinence, by which one would be rendered corporally incapable of carrying out the episcopal office—then the individual is not obligated to keep them.

Now as for the other observances, he can give [himself] a dispensation if this is required by the needs of his person or of his office, or if it is required by the manner of life of the men with whom he

lives—in the same way that religious superiors likewise dispense themselves in such cases.

**Reply to objection 1:** As has been explained, an individual who becomes a bishop from having been a monk is absolved from the yoke of his monastic profession not with respect to everything, but with respect to those things that are incompatible with his episcopal office.

**Reply to objection 2:** As was established above (cf. obj. 2), a vow with respect to secular life is related to a religious vow as a particular is related to a universal. But a vow of religion is related to episcopal dignity as a disposition is related to a perfection. Now the particular is superfluous once the universal is had, whereas the disposition is still necessary even after the perfection has been attained.

**Reply to objection 3:** It is incidental (*est per accidens*) that bishops who are religious are not bound to obey the prelates of their religious orders, since they have ceased to be subject to them, just as the prelates themselves of the religious orders have ceased to be their prelates. However, the obligation that goes with the vow still remains virtually, viz., in such a way that if someone were lawfully placed over them, then they would be bound to obey him insofar as they are bound to obey the statutes of the rule in the way explained above, along with their superiors, if they have any.

Moreover, they cannot possess property in any at all. For they make a claim to their paternal inheritance not as something that belongs to them, but as something owed to the Church. Hence, in the same place it is added, “After he has been ordained a bishop, he will restore to the altar for which he is consecrated whatever he has been able to acquire.” Nor can he make a will in any way at all, because the only thing that he is entrusted with is the administration of ecclesiastical goods, and this ends with his death, after which a will comes into force according to the Apostle in Hebrews 9:17. If, however, he makes a will with the Pope’s permission, he is not to be understood to as making the will with respect to his own property. Instead, it is understood as being, by apostolic authority, a prolongation of the power of his administration, so that his administration can remain in force after his death.