

CISTERCIAN STUDIES SERIES: NUMBER ONE HUNDRED ELEVEN

Bede the Venerable  
**HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS**

Book Two  
Lent to The Dedication of the Church

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## NOTE

1. In this particular instance Bede uses the Latin verb *remitto*, which he may have observed in Gregory the Great's *Hom. in evang.* 2, 27, 8 (PL 76:1209), in place of the word normally found in the Latin Vulgate, *dimitto*, 'forgive'.

## homily 11.15

Luke 24:44-53

Ascension

**W**hen he was about to ascend into heaven, our Lord first took care to instruct his disciples diligently concerning the mystery of faith in him. Thus they might preach it with greater certainty to the world, insofar as they had received it from the mouth of Truth himself, and recognized that it had long ago been foreshadowed by the words of the prophets. When he appeared to them after the triumph of his resurrection, according to what we have heard just now when the gospel was read, he said, *'These are the words which I spoke to you when I was still with you'* (that is, 'when I still had a corruptible and mortal body like yours'), *'since everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled'*. He said that the mysteries<sup>1\*</sup> which Moses, the prophets and the psalms proclaimed had been fulfilled in him. Hence it is perfectly evident that the Church is one in all its saints, that the faith of all the elect is the same—[of all,] namely, who preceded and who followed his coming in the flesh. Just as we are saved through faith in his incarnation, passion and resurrection which have been accomplished, so they, by believing most certainly in his

incarnation, passion and resurrection to come, hoped that they would be saved through the same Author of life.<sup>1</sup>

The two men who carried the cluster of grapes on a pole from the promised land to the waiting people in the desert<sup>2</sup> accurately suggest this.<sup>3\*</sup> The cluster of grapes on the pole is our Lord exalted on the cross, he who said, '*I am the true vine*'.<sup>3</sup> And elsewhere, as he was extending the cup of wine to his disciples, he said: '*This chalice is the New Covenant in my blood, which will be poured out for you*'.<sup>4</sup> The Church says of him: '*My beloved is a cluster of cypros*<sup>3\*</sup> *to me*'.<sup>5</sup> The two men carry a cluster of grapes on a pole: by it they are to give information to the people about the fertility of the promised land. Preachers belonging to each of the two covenants, who learned of the glory of the heavenly fatherland from the Lord's revelation, do not cease telling the people about the hidden mystery of his passion, so that from it they can infer how great are the rewards he is going to give to his people in heaven, he who sent his only-begotten Son to earth to suffer for their salvation.

As to the fact that the two men carrying the cluster were capable of carrying it in like manner, but were not capable of looking at it in like manner, this signifies what the Savior himself said to those of his disciples who were glorified by the gift of seeing him, '*Blessed are the eyes which see what you see. For I say to you that many prophets and kings have wished to see what you see and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear and have not heard it*'.<sup>6</sup> Or [it signifies] that first the prophets and Moses knew and proclaimed one and the same triumph of the Lord's cross as the apostles did; but the prophets did it from time to time, in figurative and cryptic utterances, whereas the apostles and their successors, once the light of the gospel was disclosed, always proclaimed it clearly. Thus the entire Christian people now ought to know and confess the faith which up to that time only some, and those the more perfect, knew—although even then the entire people of God could convey the mysteries of the faith

1. Greg., *Hom. in Ezech.* 2, 5, 2 (CC 142: 276, 56/59)

2. Nb 13:23

3. Jn 15:1

4. Lk 22:20

5. Sg 1:14 (1:13)

6. Lk 10:23-24

typologically in the ceremonies of the law. Hence it is here said that the Lord, when the mysteries of his incarnation had been brought to perfection, opened the minds of his disciples<sup>7</sup> so that they could understand the scriptures. He opened their minds so that they could understand plainly what the prophets had said obscurely, and could hand on to believers what they needed to understand. He opened their minds so that they could understand that whatever he had done or taught when he was in the flesh, these same things the prophets had predicted that he would do and teach.

And he said to them, '*Thus was it written, and thus did Christ have to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins were to be proclaimed in his name among all nations, beginning from Jerusalem*'. As I have said, the faith of the prophets and fathers in times long past, even before his passion and resurrection, knew the name of Christ, as Peter attested when he said of them, '*But we believe that we are saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they also were*'.<sup>8</sup> But once his passion and resurrection, and also his ascension into heaven, were brought to completion, not only was faith in his name proclaimed more widely and clearly to their posterity, namely to the nation of the Jews, but it was revealed by the same compassion from on high to foreign countries too. And so it was necessary for the Christ to come in the flesh, to suffer and to rise, because the human race was not capable of being restored to life, redeemed from death, [and] directed to the hope of its own resurrection, except by his presence, passion and resurrection.

It was opportune that the preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins through confession of Christ's name should have started from Jerusalem. Where the splendor of his teaching and virtues, where the triumph of his passion, where the joy of his resurrection and ascension were accomplished, there the first root of faith in him would be brought forth; [there] the first shoot of the burgeoning

7. Cf. Lk 24:25

8. Ac 15:11

Church, like that of some kind of great vine, would be planted. Just so, by an increase in the spreading of the word, [the Church] would extend the branches of her teaching into the whole wide world. Thus would the oracle of Isaiah be brought to fulfillment in which he said that *the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, and he will judge the nations and convict many peoples*.<sup>9</sup> It was opportune that the preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins, good news to be proclaimed to idolatrous nations and those defiled by various evil deeds, should take its start from Jerusalem, lest any of them, thoroughly terrified by the magnitude of its offenses, should doubt the possibility of obtaining pardon if it performed fruits worthy of repentance,<sup>10</sup> when it was a fact that pardon had been granted even to those at Jerusalem who had blasphemed and crucified the Son of God.

'But you', he said, 'are witnesses of these things. And I send upon you the promise of my Father'. He calls the gift of the Holy Spirit 'the promise of his Father'. He told them many things about him before his passion, [as is recorded] in the Gospel of John, among which is the following: 'But when the Paraclete comes, whom I am sending you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness concerning me, and you will bear witness'.<sup>11</sup> And [as is recorded] in the Acts [of the Apostles], *He commanded them not to withdraw from Jerusalem but to await the promise of the Father, 'which you have heard,' he said, 'from my mouth; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit'*.<sup>12</sup>

Here [something] is added concerning their promised waiting when it is said: 'But do you stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high'. He pledged that power would come down upon them from on high, because although they possessed the Holy Spirit before, yet they received him more fully once he had ascended into heaven. Even before his passion, by the power of the Holy Spirit they were casting out many demons, healing many sick

9. Is 2:3-4  
12. Ac 1:4-5

10. Mt 3:8; Lk 3:8

11. Jn 15:26-27

persons, preaching the word of life to whom they could;<sup>13</sup> and once he had risen from the dead, they were more specially refreshed by the grace of the same Spirit, when, as John writes, *He breathed [on them] and said to them 'Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them'*.<sup>14</sup> But they were clothed with a greater virtue of his from on high, when ten days after the Lord's assumption, they received him in fiery tongues;<sup>15</sup> they were inflamed with such great assurance of strength that they could not be prevented from speaking to all in the name of Jesus by any threats on the part of the rulers.<sup>16</sup>

Then he led them out to Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. Because our Redeemer appeared in the flesh to take away sins, to remove what [humans] deserved as a result of the first curse, [and] to grant believers an inheritance of everlasting blessing, he rightly concluded all that he did in the world with words of blessing, showing that he was the very one of whom it was said, *For indeed he who gave the law will give a blessing*.<sup>17</sup> \* And it is appropriate that he led those whom he blessed out to Bethany, which is interpreted 'house of obedience,'<sup>18</sup> because contempt and pride deserved a curse, obedience a blessing. The Lord himself was made obedient to his Father even unto death,<sup>19</sup> so that he might restore the lost grace of blessing to the world; and the blessing of heavenly life is bestowed only on those who strive in holy Church to comply with the divine commands.

We must not pass over the fact we are told that Bethany is situated on the slope of the Mount of Olives.<sup>20</sup> Just as Bethany represents a Church obedient to the mandates of the Lord, so the Mount of Olives quite fittingly represents the very person of our Lord. Appearing in the flesh, he excels all the saints, who are simply human beings, both by the loftiness of his dignity and the grace of his spiritual power. Hence it is chanted to him in the psalms that *God,*

13. Mt 10:1; Mk 3:15; Lk 9:1-2, 6

14. Jn 20:22-23

17. Ps 84:7 (83:8)

19. Ph 2:8

15. Ac 2:2-3

16. Ac 4:18-21

18. Jer., Nom. (CC 72: 135, 26/27)

20. Jer., Sit. (PL 23:884)

your God, has anointed you with the oil of happiness above your companions.<sup>21</sup> And he himself promised the favor of the same holy anointing to his companions (as the present reading of the holy gospel bears witness), that is, to the faithful; and he sent what he had promised, as we know, not long after.<sup>22</sup>

If it is delightful to hear how the house of obedience, that is, holy Church, is built on the slope of the Mount of Olives, let us read the gospel of John, where it is said that when his suffering on the cross was brought to fulfillment, *One of the soldiers opened his side with a lance, and immediately there came forth blood and water.*<sup>23</sup> These are indeed the sacraments by which the Church is born and nourished in Christ, namely the water of baptism by which she is cleansed from sins, and the blood of the Lord's chalice by which she is confirmed in her gifts.<sup>24</sup> And because she is also signed with the chrism of the Holy Spirit, that she may be capable of being perfected on the day of redemption, the mount on whose slope the holy city is situated, on which the gift of blessing is given, is properly called the Mount of Olives.

*And it came to pass that while he was blessing them he parted from them and was borne into heaven.* We must note that the Savior ascended into heaven after he had given his blessing to his disciples; and at the same time we must commit to memory that, as we read in the Acts [of the Apostles], angels appeared to them as they were watching his ascension and said to them, *'He will come in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.'*<sup>25</sup> And we must labor with all earnestness [to understand] that, just as the Lord will descend to judge [us] in the same form and substance of flesh with which he ascended, so also, since he departed blessing his apostles, he will make us worthy of his blessing when he returns, and will allot us the same status as those to whom he is going to say as they stand at his right hand, *'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, receive the kingdom.'*<sup>26</sup>

21. Ps 45:7 (44:8)

22. Ac 2:2-4

23. Jn 19:34

24. Aug., *Tract. in Ioh.* 9, 10; 120, 2 (CC 36: 96, 34/36; 661, 6/12)

25. Ac 1:11

26. Mt 25:34

*And they, worshipping, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.* It is right that we remember, always, but especially in this place, dearly beloved brothers, our Lord's utterance in which he said, as he was glorifying his disciples (as I have reported just above), *'Blessed are the eyes which see what you see.'*<sup>27</sup> Who indeed is capable of describing, who is capable of worthily imagining, how with blessed compunction they lowered to the earth the eyes with which they had looked at him whom the heavens were worshipping as their king, now that, with the conquered mortal nature that he had assumed, he was returning to the throne of his Father's glory? [Or] how sweet were the tears which they poured forth when, aflame with lively hope and gladness over the prospect of their own entry into the heavenly fatherland, they discerned that their God and Lord was now bringing [thither] part of their own nature? Rightly then [were they] restored by such a sight! After they had worshipped in the place where his feet stood,<sup>28</sup> [and] after they had wet with copious tears the place where he had most recently planted his footsteps, they immediately returned to Jerusalem, where they had been ordered to await the coming of the Holy Spirit.

And so that they might be worthy of the heavenly promises, *they were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God*, being most certainly aware that the Holy Spirit deigns to visit and inhabit only those hearts which he sees are devoted to frequenting the place of prayer and to divine praise and blessing. Hence it is read in their Acts concerning them, *They were all persevering with one accord in prayer.*<sup>29</sup> This testimony to the apostolic work must be meticulously imitated by us: we who have the heavenly promises, [and] are commanded to painstakingly offer supplication to receive them should all come together to pray, and should persist in prayer, and should entreat the Lord with single-minded devotion. And we must not doubt that our benevolent Maker will deign to lend us a hearing if we

27. Lk 10:23

28. Ps 132:7 (131:7)

29. Ac 1:14

pray in this way, and to pour forth the grace of his Spirit into our hearts. [And we must not doubt] that he will cause our eyes also to be blessed, although not in the same way as those of the apostles who merited to see the Lord when he was sojourning in the world, when he was teaching and performing miracles, [and] when after his triumph over death he rose and returned to heaven, but certainly like theirs of whom he said to the apostle Thomas, '*You have believed because you have seen me; blessed are they who have not seen and have believed*'.<sup>30</sup> For indeed all those who believe, whether they be those who by the time of their birth preceded his incarnation, or those who saw him in the flesh, or those who believe after his ascension, share in that most benevolent promise of his, in which it is said, '*Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God*'.<sup>31</sup>

I have completed my explanation of the [details] of the gospel reading to the best of my ability. But because we have heard in this reading that the disciples' minds were opened that they might understand the scriptures, I am disposed to bring to mind some things from the writings of the prophets, and to enlarge upon and develop the joy of the evangelical solemnity by the predictions and assertions of the prophets.

The psalmist spoke of this solemnity [when he said], *God has ascended with a shout of jubilation, and the Lord with the sound of the trumpet*.<sup>32</sup> He ascended with a shout of jubilation, since he sought heaven as the disciples rejoiced in the glory of his being lifted up. He ascended with the sound of the trumpet, since he went up to the throne of his heavenly kingdom as the angels heralded his return to judge the living and the dead.

How God, who is present always and everywhere and does not change from place to place, ascended, the same [prophet] declares elsewhere, saying, *He who makes a cloud his stairway, and walks upon the wings of the winds*.<sup>33</sup> He calls the substance of human weakness with which *the sun of righteousness*<sup>34</sup> clothed himself, that [the sight of him] might

30. Jn 20:29  
33. Ps 104:3 (103:3)

31. Mt 5:8  
34. Mt 4:2

32. Ps 47:5 (46:6)

be borne by human beings, a cloud. Hence Isaiah says, '*Behold, the Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud and will enter Egypt, and the idols of Egypt will be shaken before his face*'.<sup>35</sup> The Lord ascended upon a swift cloud so that when he entered Egypt he might overturn its idols, when *the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*.<sup>36</sup> He took upon himself a body immune from all stains of iniquity, and entered the world in it, so that he might destroy the cult of idolatry, and make clear the true light of divinity to the shadowy and dark hearts of the gentiles.<sup>37</sup> He who is not enclosed in a place willed to go from place to place by means of this cloud, his human nature; in it he who always remains invisible<sup>38</sup> in his divinity willed to suffer mockery, scourging and death; by means of it he who fills the heavens in the power of his divinity ascended into heaven, crowned with the power of his resurrection. He lifted up this earth upon the wings of the wind when he elevated what he had taken from the earth not only above all the whole bulk of the lower air, but even above the entire height of the upper air,<sup>39</sup> and stationed it at the right hand of the majesty of his Father.

Amos too speaks of the glory of the humanity he had assumed: *He who builds a means of ascent in heaven and founds his promise on earth*.<sup>40</sup> He built a means of ascent in heaven when he created for himself a human body and soul in which he would be able to mount up to heaven. He founded his promise on earth when by sending the Spirit from above he filled all the ends of the earth with the gift of his faith, as he had promised. The psalmist, foreseeing in his spirit that the gift of this promise would come, and desiring that it come quickly, said, '*Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be over all the earth*'!<sup>41</sup> Here he clearly means that before our Redeemer assumed a mortal body and demolished the kingdom of death, *God was known only in Judah, and in Israel was his name great*.<sup>42</sup> But when the

35. Is 19:1

36. Jn 1:14

37. See Jer., Nom. (CC 72: 143, 28/29), where he interprets the word Egypt as 'darkness'.

38. *inuisibilis*; var.: 'not subject to suffering' (*impassibilis*)

39. 'lower air' = *aeris*; 'upper air' = *aetheris*

40. Am 9:6

41. Ps 57:5 (56:6)

42. Ps 76:1 (75:2)

God-man rose from the dead and penetrated the heights of heaven, then the glory of his name was proclaimed and believed throughout the whole wide world.

The prophets proclaimed the mystery of the Lord's ascension not only by their words but also by their actions. Both Enoch, the seventh [in the line of descent] from Adam,<sup>43</sup> who was transported from the world,<sup>44</sup> and Elijah, who was taken up into heaven,<sup>45</sup> gave evidence that the Lord would ascend above all the heavens. Enoch, in that he was engendered seventh [in the line of descent] from Adam, prefigured that the Lord would be conceived and born not in the usual way of mortal nature, but by the power of the Holy Spirit; and that the full grace of the Holy Spirit, which is described by the prophet as sevenfold,<sup>46</sup> would come to rest upon [Christ] in a special way when he was about to be born; and that he would baptize in the Holy Spirit,<sup>47</sup> and give the gifts of the Spirit to those who believe in him. In that [Enoch] lived for three hundred and sixty-five years (which is the number of days in the solar year) among human beings before he was transported,<sup>48</sup> he symbolized [Christ's] future way of life in the flesh: he, when on the point of ascending into heaven, pointed out that he was the unique light of the world, saying, *'I am the light of the world; one who follows me does not walk in darkness but will have the light of life'*.<sup>49</sup> Hence he is called *the sun of righteousness* by the prophet,<sup>50</sup> since he deigned to enlighten all parts of the world, from the rising of the sun to its setting,<sup>51</sup> from the north even to the south, by the grace of his faith and truth. Moreover, Enoch, who was transported, means 'dedication',<sup>52</sup> and this indicates that he who rises from the dead and ascends into heaven gives the pledge of his Spirit to consecrate the hearts of the faithful, and in the future [will] bring the Church fully from every part [of the world] to the joy of the resurrection and of an everlasting solemnity.

Elijah presented an image of this festivity of the Lord by a miracle with richer significance. When the time in which

43. Gn 5:6-18

44. Gn 5:24

45. 2 K 2:11

46. Is 11:2-3

47. Mt 3:11

48. Gn 5:23

49. Jn 8:12

50. Mt 4:2

51. Ps 50:1 (49:1)

52. Jer., *Nom.* (CC 72: 65, 17)

he was to be taken away from the world was near, he came to the river Jordan<sup>53</sup> with his disciple Elisha. With his rolled-up cloak he struck the waters, they were divided, and both of them crossed over on dry [land]. And he said to Elisha, *'Ask what you want me to do for you before I am taken away from you'*, and [Elisha] said, *'I entreat you that your spirit may become double in me'*. As they went on conversing together, behold Elijah was suddenly snatched away, and, as the scripture says, *he ascended as if into heaven*. By this action of his soaring aloft<sup>54</sup> it is meant that [Elijah] was not taken up into heaven itself, as was our Lord, but into the height of the air [above the earth], from where he was borne invisibly to the joys of paradise. Elisha took up the cloak of Elijah which had fallen from him; and, coming to the river Jordan, he struck the water with it, and after calling upon God he divided [the water] and crossed over.<sup>55</sup>

Let your love take note, my brothers, how the symbolic event agrees point by point with its fulfillment. Elijah came to the river Jordan, and having laid aside his cloak, he struck the waters and divided them. The Lord came to the stream of death, in which the human race ordinarily was immersed, and laying aside from himself for a time the clothing of flesh which he had assumed, struck down death by dying, and opened up for us the way to life by rising. The change and decline of our mortal life is properly represented by the river Jordan, since the meaning of 'Jordan' in Latin is 'their descent',<sup>56</sup> and since as the river flows into the Dead Sea, it loses there its praiseworthy waters.<sup>57</sup> After [the water of the river] Jordan was divided, Elijah and Elisha crossed over on dry land: by his rising from the dead the Savior bestowed on his faithful ones the hope of rising too. After they had crossed over the river Jordan, Elijah gave Elisha the option of asking for what he wanted. The Lord too, after the glory of his resurrection had been fulfilled, implanted in his disciples a fuller comprehension of what he had promised

53. 2 K 2:6-11

54. *qua euectione*; var.: 'by this reading' (*qua lectione*)

55. 2 K 2:13-14

56. Jer., *Nom.* (CC 72: 67, 20)57. Plin., *Nat. Hist.* 5, 15, 71

previously, that *whatever you ask in my name, I will do [for you]*.<sup>58</sup> Elisha asked that the spirit of Elijah might become double in him. The disciples, thoroughly instructed by the Lord, desired to receive the promised gift of the Spirit, which would make them capable of preaching not only to the single nation of Judah, which he himself taught when he was present in the flesh, but to all countries throughout the globe as well. Did he not pledge the double grace of his Spirit when he said, '*A person who believes in me will himself also do the works which I do, and he will do even greater ones than these*'?<sup>59</sup> As Elijah and Elisha were conversing together, a chariot with fiery horses suddenly snatched Elijah as if into heaven. By the chariot and fiery horses we are to understand the angelic powers, of whom it is written, *He makes the angels his spirits, and his ministers a burning fire*<sup>60</sup> (Elijah, being an ordinary human being, had need of them in order to be raised up from the earth). The Lord too was suddenly taken up as he was speaking with his apostles, and as they were looking on; although he was not assisted by the help of angels, he was served by an angelic band of companions.<sup>61</sup> He was truly assumed into heaven with the angels also bearing witness to it, for they said [to the apostles], '*This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven*'.<sup>62</sup> When Elijah was raised up to the heavens, he let the cloak with which he had been clothed fall to Elisha. When our Lord ascended into heaven, he left the mysteries of the humanity he had assumed to his disciples, to the entire Church in fact, so that it could be sanctified by them, and warmed by the power of his love. Elisha took up Elijah's cloak and struck the waters of the river Jordan with it; and when he called upon the God of Elijah, [the waters] were divided and he crossed over. The apostles and the entire Church took up the sacraments of their Redeemer that had been instituted through [the apostles], so that, spiritually guided by them, and cleansed and consecrated by them, they too learned to overcome death's assault by calling upon the

58. Jn 14:13

59. Jn 14:12

60. Ps 104:4 (103:4)

61. Greg., *Hom. in evang.* 2, 29, 5 (PL 76: 1216)

62. Ac 1:11

name of God the Father, and to cross over to undying life, spurning the obstacle of death.

Let us then, with all devotion, dearly beloved brothers, venerate this glory of the Lord's ascension, which was first expressed by the words and deeds of the prophets, and was afterward brought to fulfillment in our Mediator himself.

And that we ourselves may become worthy of following in his footsteps and ascending to heaven, let us in the meantime become humble on earth for our own good, always mindful that, as Solomon says, *Humiliation follows the proud, and honor follows the humble in spirit*.<sup>63</sup> Behold, we have learned in our Redeemer's ascension whither all our effort should be directed; behold, we have recognized that the entrance to the heavenly fatherland has been opened up to human beings by the ascension into heaven of the Mediator between God and human beings.<sup>64</sup> Let us hurry, with all eagerness, to the perpetual bliss of this fatherland; since we are not yet able to be there in our bodies, let us at least always dwell there by the desire of our minds. In accord with the words of the great preacher, let us *seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God; let us savor the things that are above and not those that are upon the earth*.<sup>65</sup> Let us *seek him and be strengthened*; <sup>66</sup> let us seek him by works of charity, and be strengthened by the hope of finding him. Let us *seek his face always*,<sup>67</sup> so that when he who ascended peacefully returns terrifying, he may find us prepared, and take us with him into the feasts of the city on high, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit throughout all ages. Amen.

63. Pr 29:23

66. Ps 105:4 (104:4)

64. 1 Tm 2:5

67. *ibid.*

65. Col 3:1-2



## NOTES

1. The word *sacramentum* is used frequently by Latin writers to translate the Greek *mysterion* (e.g. Eph 1:9; Rv 1:20) to signify the hidden mystery, i.e., God's secret plan for the salvation of mankind.
2. The allegorical significance of this bunch of grapes goes back as far as Gregory of Nyssa. See Jean Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964), p. 104. The pertinent passage from the writings of Gregory of Nyssa is to be found in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* VII, 1, *De Vita Moysis*, Book II, 125, 16/21, ed. H. Musurillo (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964). No Latin translation of the *Life of Moses* by Gregory of Nyssa extant in the eighth century, to which Bede might have had access, is known.
3. *Cypros*: The usually unimpeachable *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* lists this word at the end of Volume 4, containing after the ordinary words beginning with the letter C the proper words also starting with this letter, in column 798, line 41, with a reference to Sg 1:14, as meaning the name of a tree from which the island of Cyprus was thought to have derived its name. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1982) has the Latin form *cyprus*, s. v., meaning 'the henna-tree or Egyptian privet, *Lawsonia inermis*; also its oil'. Henna oil, of course, is a reddish-brown dye used to tint or color hair. Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural History* 12, 51, 109, describes *cypros* as a tree found in Egypt as well as on the island of Cyprus akin to the thorny or privet-like shrub to be found in Italy—*Lawsonia alba*—and his translator into English in the Loeb Classical Library leaves the word in English, as I have done, 'cypros'. It is interesting, in connection with the passion motif of the juice of the grapes indicative of our Lord's blood, that the word 'Christ's thorn' is applied to small trees or shrubs of this sort with thorns because the legend about our Lord's crown of thorns has it that it was from one of these that it was woven.
4. This verse is found at the beginning of verse 8 of Psalm 83 (Hebrew Psalm 84) in the Old Latin or Roman psalter, but not in the Vulgate version of the psalms. Most of Bede's quotations from the psalms are taken from this older Latin (the so-called Roman translation) of the psalter, not from the Vulgate version (which is sometimes referred to as the Gallican psalter).

## homily II.16

John 15:26 - 16:4

After Ascension

**W**e find from many places in the holy gospel that before the coming of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were less capable of understanding the hidden mysteries of the divine sublimity, and were less brave in tolerating the adversities brought on by human depravity. When the Spirit came upon them with an increase of divine insight, there was given them the constancy [needed] to overcome human persecution as well. Hence it is said to them now, in the Lord's promise, '*When the Paraclete comes, whom I shall send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me; and you too will bear witness*'.

We must first note that the Lord testifies that the Spirit of truth is to be sent by him, and he then adds that the [Spirit] proceeds from the Father. This is not to say that the Spirit is sent by the Son in a different manner from that by which he proceeds from the Father, or that he proceeds from the Father at a different time from that in which he is sent by the Son; the Son says that [the Spirit] is *sent* by him, and *proceeds* from the Father, to indicate that his person is different from that of the Father; he also makes the point in this distinction of persons that his operation and