MEDITATION
ON the PASSION
Compiled from Various Sources, with an Introduction by
REV. REGINALD WALSH, O.P.

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INTRODUCTION

Among the many subjects proposed by the Church to us for mental prayer, there is none more profitable than the sublime mystery of Calvary. For even where everything is supremely holy—namely, in the actions of Him Who is the way, and the truth, and the life—the Passion is the culmination of sanctity, the highest exercise of virtue, the greatest cause of merit. Hence devout meditation on it produces most abundant fruit in souls. And for this reason, Saints and Doctors of the Church—those who are specially enlightened, those who spoke from experience, those who are our best guides in the spiritual life—with one accord praise and glorify it.

For instance, St. Jerome says: "In the Passion all the other mysteries are contained." St. Augustine speaks as follows: "There is nothing more advantageous, nothing better adapted to ensure our eternal salvation, than daily to contemplate the sufferings which Jesus Christ bore for our sake." And St. Leo the Great expresses himself thus: "The cross of Christ is the source of every blessing, the fountain of all merit: to the faithful it gives strength from His weakness, glory from His shame, and life from His death."

If at the present day countless human beings live as thoughtlessly and carelessly as if their souls had not been redeemed, as if they had not been bought at a great price, surely it becomes our duty to make reparation for their indifference and ingratitude. In proportion to the world's forgetfulness should be our remembrance. This solemn obligation rests on us all as Catholics. We must not be heedless, we who are familiar with the words: "In the cross is salvation; in the cross is life; in the cross is protection from thy enemies. In the cross is the infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the cross is strength of mind; in the cross is joy of spirit."

It is hoped that they who love to contemplate and consider what the Word Incarnate suffered for their salvation will find this work useful. Here, in passing, we may say that the Meditation now presented to all was in its first shape designed and destined for private circulation only.

A Member of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who, as Mistress of Novices for about thirty years, had gained great experience in the formation of religious as well as in the varied requirements of conventual life, proposed by means of this book to impart to her Sisters the fruit of her own reflections on the Passion, which one so spiritual and enlightened was exceptionally fitted to compile.

As might have been anticipated, the excellence of the work, which she had intended for the use of her Sisters, in course of time became known to several persons, in one or other way connected with the Institute of the Blessed Virgin. And among them, some are of opinion that this treasure should no longer be allowed to remain almost hidden.
in the cloister. They have represented that outside the convents of the Institute there are many devout souls to whom the Meditation would be most acceptable. In accordance with their suggestion, and in compliance with their wish, it is now reprinted.

But in order to increase its utility, so far as persons living in the world are concerned, many passages in the work, as it appeared at first, have been omitted—those, namely, which were addressed to nuns as such; also some other incidental clauses have been either omitted or else slightly changed. This remark will suffice to explain the difference which, as any person who compares them cannot fail to observe, exists here and there between the original and the revised edition.

That the book may continue to be a help to advancement in the spiritual life, and become an abundant source of blessings to a still wider circle of readers, is the earnest desire of those who have had to do with its reissue.

REGINALD WALSH, O.P.
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MEDITATION ON THE PASSION

"In the Cross is height of virtue, in the Cross is perfection of sanctity."

I

IMPORTANCE OF MEDITATION ON THE PASSION

No aspect of our Blessed Lord's life is made so much of by the Saints as His Passion; and at the same time nothing is so neglected, or indeed condemned, by unbelievers and by the worldly Christian. All the Saints, says St. Alphonsus, cherished a tender devotion towards Jesus Christ in His Passion; this is the only means by which they sanctified themselves. He who desires, says St. Bonaventure, to go on advancing from virtue to virtue, from grace to grace, should meditate continually on the Passion of Jesus. Indeed, the sufferings of the God-man are the most mysterious part of the mystery of the Incarnation. Why did our Lord choose to suffer and suffer so intensely in soul and body? The reason—as we learn from the Saints—is, that suffering gives a certain intensity to acts of the will, which nothing else can give. Our Lord chose it to prove the reality and depth of His love for us. St. Thomas says: "He wished it to be known how much God loved man."

An act of the will or of the heart may be strong and intense; but unless it is done under stress of pain, it is wanting in a certain species of intensity. We may test this in our own experience. There is a moment when, let us say, we kneel before our Lord, happy, contented, peaceful, full of joy; our heart lifts itself up to God in sweet and earnest prayer; we experience the feeling that to love God, and to belong to Him, is indeed the only delight we crave. Then suppose we suddenly experience some suffering, annoyance, humiliation, darkness, contempt, grief or physical pain, observe what happens: up to that moment we were unconscious of self; things ran smoothly, peacefully, pleasantly; we seemed to have merged our weak nature in God and God's love, and, as far as it went, adhesion to God's will was genuine. Now there starts up into sight, self, with all its susceptibilities and selfishness—self, which stands importunate beside us, protesting, crying, wailing, resisting. Then one of two things happens: either our adhesion and fidelity to God is broken, our recollection is scattered, and our loving attention and activity stopped dead by attention to that hurt and smarting self, or we refuse to be turned from God even by interior or exterior pain, we seize the pain or trouble or bitterness, and offer it, turning it into
Meditation on the Passion

fuel to feed the flame of our heart, and so we intensify the act of our union and love.

One of these two effects, suffering, of whatever kind or form, always has. Suffering spoils many people. There are numbers of pious souls who turn away from God through suffering. Self and its claims to attention are too strong—and then, love and devotion or fidelity to our Lord give way to self-pity, murmuring, resistance, bitterness. Punishment and purification too frequently embitter the heart where self prevails, turn it from its end—from its Divine Master and Lover—and harden it in perversity. . . . But if under sufferings, humiliations, trials, and repugnances, we have the light, grace, and courage to accept them in submission, in resignation, and self-humiliation, and with a closer movement to the bosom of our Heavenly Father, our loving Lord and Master, then never, never has our love of that Father in heaven, that blessed Master, been more thorough, more effective, and more intensely sincere.

The history of the Sacred Passion and Death of our Lord contains excellencies and advantages of its own above all other subjects on which we can exercise ourselves in meditation. Meditation on the Passion of our Lord is good for all persons and for all conditions of men. It has power to turn sinners from evil and rouse them to sorrow for their sins and abhorrence of them. It gives strength and a most powerful example of virtue to those who are making progress, and it is the most forcible incentive to love for the perfect.

Again, as the Passion of our Lord was the last act of His life, so also it contains all that is highest and most complete in perfection; all our Lord’s examples of virtue, which were scattered over the whole of His life, shine forth still more highly in the Passion; all the instruction contained in His discourses, all His doctrine, and all His most excellent counsels are preached in His Passion. All the depth of suffering that anyone can undergo, all the extremities of misery to which anyone may be brought—all are in the Passion: all deliverance from illusion and all learning of the truth are in the Passion; all knowledge, understanding, and heavenly wisdom are to be found in the Passion. The great Apostle of the Gentiles said that he knew nothing but Christ crucified, and because of the greatness of the treasure herein hidden, we find that the Saints occupied themselves continually in the thought of it, as may be proved from their works and treatises.

The love of Jesus crucified! O believe that this transforming and ennobling love, though it be a divine gift, and therefore not ours to command, is yet within the reach of anyone who will dispose himself for it by resolutely carrying out that simple yet comprehensive programme which is so often set before us—generosity and confidence. There is abundant room for the exercise of generosity in that process of purification—the purification of past sin, and the purification of those inordinate inclinations that beset us—and that are the chief obstacles to the increase of Christ’s love in our hearts. But above all there is
room for generosity in the matter of unselfish charity. How strongly and eloquently the Crucifix preaches charity in all its branches—love of Him and love of those He died to save. "This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Abide in my love. . . . You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you." We cannot surely expect our Lord to admit us to the intimacy of a sensible and conscious love, so long as we hurt Him by unkindness, or lack of kindness to those who are dear to Him. And, on the other hand, there is no better and surer means, whereby we may fit ourselves to receive His choicest gifts and blessings, than that of self-sacrificing charity—"He that loveth not," says St. John, "knoweth not God, for God is charity." If God hath so loved us, we ought also to love one another. If we love one another, God abideth in us and His love is perfected in us. As the root of all our modern evils is selfishness, which is eating like a cancer at the heart of modern civilization, so if we desire, out of love of our Lord, to help to remedy the evils that flow from selfishness, we must school our own character to a consistent and a persevering practice of unselfishness, after the pattern of our Divine Master and Model.

Love of the Saints for the Passion

A certain devout solitary prayed to God to teach him what he could do in order to love Him perfectly. Our Lord revealed to him that there was no more efficient way to arrive at the perfect love of Him than to meditate constantly on His Passion. St. Teresa lamented and complained of certain books which had taught her to leave off meditating on the Passion of our Lord, because this might be an impediment to the contemplation of His Divinity; and the Saint exclaimed: "O Lord of my soul, O my Jesus Crucified, my treasure, I never remember this opinion without thinking that I have been guilty of very great treachery. And is it possible, Thou, my Lord, couldst be an obstacle to me in the way of a greater good? Whence, then, do all good things come to me, but from Thee?" And she added: "I have seen, that in order to please God, and to induce Him to grant us great graces, He wills that they should all pass through the hands of this most Sacred Humanity, in which His Divine Majesty declared He took pleasure" (Life, ch. xxii.).

For this reason, Father Balthazar Alvarez said, that ignorance of the treasures we possess in Jesus was the ruin of Christians; and therefore his most favourite and usual meditation was on the Passion of Jesus Christ. He meditated especially on three of the sufferings of Jesus—in poverty, in contempt, and pain; he exhorted his penitents to meditate often on the Passion of our Redeemer, telling them that they should not consider that they had done anything at all, until they had arrived at retaining Jesus Crucified continually present in their hearts. "He who desires," says St. Bonaventure, "to go on advancing from virtue to virtue, from grace to grace, should meditate continually on the Passion of Jesus. And," he adds, "that there is no practice more profitable
Meditation on the Passion

for the entire sanctification of the soul than the frequent meditation on the sufferings of Jesus Christ."

St. Augustine tells us that a single tear shed at the remembrance of the Passion of Jesus is worth more than a Pilgrimage to Jerusalem, or a year of fasting on bread and water. Because it was for this end that our Lord suffered so much, in order that we should think of His sufferings; for, if we think on them, it is impossible not to be inflamed with divine love: "The charity of Christ presseth us," says St. Paul (2 Cor. v. 14). Our Lord is loved by so few, because few consider the pains He has suffered for us; but He that frequently considers them cannot live without loving Jesus. "The charity of Christ presseth us"—we shall find ourselves so constrained by His love that we shall not find it possible to refrain from loving a God so full of love, who has suffered so much to win our love.

Therefore St. Paul said that he desired nothing but Jesus, and Jesus Crucified—that is, the love that our Lord has shown us on the Cross: "I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2). And, in truth, from what book can we better learn the Science of the Saints—that is, the science of loving God—than from Jesus Crucified! That great servant of God, Brother Bernard of Corleone, the Capuchin, not being able to read, his brother religious wanted to teach him, upon which he went to consult his crucifix; but Jesus answered him from the Cross: "What is reading? What are books? Behold I am the book wherein thou mayest continually read the love I have borne thee." O great subject to be considered during our whole life; and during all eternity. A God dead for love of me! A God dead for love of me! O wonderful subject!

St. Thomas Aquinas was one day visiting St. Bonaventure, and asked him from what book he had drawn all the beautiful lessons he had written. St. Bonaventure showed him the image of the Crucified, which was completely blackened by all the kisses that he had given it, and said: "This is my book whence I receive everything that I write; and it has taught me whatever little I know." It was this sweet study of the crucifix which made St. Francis become a great seraph. He wept so continually in meditating on the sufferings of Jesus Christ, that he almost entirely lost his sight. We fancy sometimes as we read the Lives of the Saints, that it was easy enough for them to have an intense devotion to the Passion, since they were, at least many of them, favoured with such sensible graces and miraculous favours. Take, for example, Blessed James of Bevagna, from whose crucifix flowed a stream of miraculous blood, as he knelt before it, while a voice issued from it, giving him the assurance of his salvation. How could he ever again have looked upon his crucifix without realizing the love of his Divine Master in pouring out that Precious Blood for the salvation of the human race? Or again, when the crucifix spoke to St. Peter Martyr, in his hour of trial, and said: "And I, Peter, what had I done?" How easy for him to draw the lesson of patience and resignation under calumny! But we forget
that these and other similar favours were but exterior signs of God's grace and love; and that, before the Saints received them, they had long practised devotion. Look at the life of any Saint you like, and you will find an extraordinary devotion to the Passion. It was the distinguishing mark of the Saints; they would not have been Saints without it.

But apart from the miraculous graces vouchsafed to the chosen servants of God, something of the same kind has happened to ourselves hundreds of times in the course of our lives. Who can say that the crucifix has never spoken to him?—spoken in times of trial, or temptation, of difficulty?—I will not say calumny, but when a breath has risen up against us, and we have been tempted to maintain our dignity, stand up for our rights and what we thought was due to us?—as we cast our eyes upon the crucifix, has it not spoken to our hearts; has it not reproved us; and said almost in an audible voice: I did not act thus! Does it not teach us the same lessons it taught the Saints, only not in the same sensible way? Oh, how many times the crucifix has spoken to us and given us courage and grace which have enabled us to bear the trials that surround us. It is not necessary for us to see, and hear, and feel these things as the Saints did. We need not desire to see with St. Catherine and many of the Saints the scenes of the Passion in a sensible form in our imagination, or wish to go in spirit with the venerable Anne Emerich to the spot where our Divine Lord suffered and died; for we have all these things and more than this. Though they were miraculous graces, they were but representations; we have the reality. Every morning at Mass, we assist, not at the representation, but at the renewal of the tremendous sacrifice on Calvary and the mystic outpouring of that Most Precious Blood. The blood which flowed from Bl. James's crucifix was only miraculous blood; but in the Mass we have the same Precious Blood poured out anew as on Calvary itself; the Sacred Body is broken again for us, and in Holy Communion, which we receive so often, is given into our very hearts, while our lips are dyed with the most Precious Blood of the Crucified.

In order, then, that we may understand and reverence and love the Sacred Passion of our Lord, let us, with an ever-increasing love, fervour and attention, apply ourselves to the study and contemplation of each mystery of His suffering life—strive to attain closer union with our Lord through His Passion. Let us make our hearing of Holy Mass an act of special devotion to the Passion—such as it would have been actually on Mount Calvary with Mary, the Mother of Sorrows. When receiving Holy Communion let us approach with greatest love the Sacrament of love, that, becoming more and more united with Jesus, our dear Lord, we may be able to share also in His sufferings. St. Gertrude says beautifully, that, "as no one can handle flour without carrying some of it about with her, so no one can meditate devoutly and assiduously on the Passion without deriving great fruit therefrom." As Gertrude was on one occasion occupied in considering the Passion of our Lord it was made known to her that there is infinitely more merit in meditating on
the Passion of Jesus than in any other exercise. And when anyone reads anything concerning the Passion they at least dispose their souls to receive the fruit of it, as it is more meritorious to meditate on it than on any other subject. Let us therefore endeavour to reflect on it constantly that it may be honey to our lips, music to our ears, and joy to our hearts.

II

METHOD TO BE OBSERVED IN MEDITATING ON THE PASSION

Whoever desires to be recollected for some considerable time every day, e.g., in meditation, should avoid being altogether distracted—dissipation of mind being a great obstacle to mental prayer. To keep imagination quiet, and to fix our attention on heavenly things, we must never altogether let our senses wander at random over the things of earth, but must guard our heart and thoughts if we desire to find them when we will, for very true indeed is the proverb: “He that keeps, finds.” Let us be convinced that the best disposition for meditating with profit, is to keep the soul daily in peace and quietness of spirit, not allowing entrance to thoughts or passions which may disturb it.

Before making our preparatory prayer, St. Ignatius tells us when we are a pace or two from the place where the meditation is to be made, to stand for the space of a Pater Noster, lifting up our mind and considering how God our Lord sees us, and then to make an act of reverence or self-humiliation. We begin, therefore, by seeing our Lord watching us and reading our hearts as we go to pray. This act of faith makes an act of adoration easy, as we kneel down reverently. The preparatory prayer is always the same, and consists of the following acts: Adoration, Humiliation, Contrition, Oblation, Petition:—O Almighty and Eternal God, I firmly believe that I am in Thy Divine Presence; I believe that Thou seest me; that, at this moment, Thou beholdest the very inmost recesses of my being. I adore Thee with all the powers of my soul. I am utterly unworthy of appearing in Thy Divine Presence, much less that Thou shouldst hold communion with me. I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee. I beseech of Thee, O my Jesus, to pardon me my sins, offences, and negligences, that they may not now stand between Thee and me. Give me grace to make a good and fruitful meditation. Grant, Lord Jesus, that all my intentions, actions, and operations may tend solely, through the most pure heart of Mary, to the praise and service of Thy Divine Majesty, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

We now come to the Preludes.

The first Prelude is a brief summary of the history or passage on which we are to meditate.

The second Prelude is the Composition of Place. To view the scene of the mystery as in a living picture; to be there ourselves; to hear the words spoken with our own ears; to see the actions with our own eyes; to be actually present in the midst of those who listened or beheld
Method to be Observed in Meditating on the Passion

what belongs to us as much as to them. Those actions, those words, those sufferings, are immortal. It is our Jesus who came, that we might have life and have it more abundantly—always, always.

The third Prelude consists of a petition for fruit. 1. To know the love of His Sacred Heart in this mystery of His Passion, an intimate knowledge that I may see and know the love of our Lord in this mystery, and be urged to deeper devotion to Him, and a closer imitation. 2. I will ask for grief, affliction, and confusion, because for my sins Jesus, my Divine Master and Lord, is going to His Passion.

The compassion St. Ignatius wishes us to ask for in every meditation on the sufferings of Jesus is not only the compassion of the heart and eyes, the compassion of feelings and of tears, but a real effective compassion—the compassion of a will resigned and resolved to suffer with Jesus; a compassion that will enable us to say with St. Paul: “I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh for His body, which is the Church” (Col. i. 24). We can also ask a special fruit for our own present need: fervour in prayer; patience in trouble; conformity to the Divine Will in adversity; courage in embracing mortifications and humiliations; and all that is necessary to be eminent in the Master’s service.

We now come to the body of the meditation in contemplation on the Life and Sufferings of our Lord:

1. Look at the persons. We look at our Lord or His Blessed Mother, consider their demeanour, and try to read their inmost thoughts, then reflect on ourselves, and see what we can gain.

2. Listen to the words spoken. We weigh them well, and reflect on ourselves, and see what spiritual fruit we can gain from them.

3. Watch the actions. We watch what is done to our Lord or by Him, and reflect on ourselves to see what we must do, etc. Observe well that it is an essential part of St. Ignatius’ method of contemplation to look carefully at the scene selected, and to listen to the words spoken, before we begin to reflect upon ourselves. If instead of looking at our Lord and listening to Him, we begin at once to look at our miserable selves and brood over our wretchedness, virtue cannot come out from Him to us.

4. To consider how much our Lord suffers and wishes to suffer for us. Try to realize how much, and in how many different ways, our Lord is suffering, e.g., in His head, eyes, mouth, etc.: In His honour; in the feelings of His heart: from enemies; from weak friends; from strangers; and from His own; from the devil, etc.; and then try, with great earnestness, to rouse ourselves to grief and sorrow, and to lament with Him.

5. We may spend the time in thinking how voluntary our Lord’s sufferings are, how His Divinity is hidden in the background, in order that He may suffer; how He could instantly set Himself free and destroy His enemies, and will not, but allows His sacred soul and body to suffer so cruelly. This thought brings out the courage and strength of our
Lord's love. Many holy persons when enduring pain—though they are resigned, yet if they can by any lawful remedy get relief, gladly do so. Our Blessed Saviour goes much beyond this. He chooses and prefers to suffer, when he could at once deliver Himself.

6. We may fix our minds and hearts on this great and overwhelming truth. My Lord is suffering all this for me and for my sins. What ought I to do and suffer for Him? "He loved me and delivered Himself up for me" (Gal. ii. 20). A great servant of God says that the day on which we begin to believe firmly and realize that our Lord loved us personally, and suffered and died for us personally, is a blessed day in our Calendar—a new birthday; yet it ought not to be so difficult to believe and realize this truth, for the Blessed Eucharist brings home how our Blessed Lord gives Himself and all His life and death to each of us. As our Lord is in the Blessed Eucharist whole and entire for each of us, so in His Sacred Passion He is all for me—to atone for my sins, to move His Father to forgive my sins. For me—to rescue me from all that would come upon me in eternity if I were to give myself up to be the slave of Satan. For me—to make it clear to me what an evil sin is, and to move me to do penance for past sins and strive earnestly to avoid future sins. For me—to give me great hope and courage, to draw me to thanksgiving, and to love for Him, for His Sacred Heart, and His Blessed Mother. For me—to open my eyes as to the worth of a soul, to rouse within me a zeal to help poor sinners.

Spiritual writers call these six points of St. Ignatius, "points of method," and the historical scenes, "points of matter."

Colloquy.—As in ordinary social life at an entertainment or any other assembly of our neighbours, studying some person—listening to his words, or watching some action, we often break silence ourselves, and address some words to those near us, so we must also do in our contemplations of our Lord's life and bitter death. We must speak from our hearts either to our Lord, our Blessed Lady, or our Father in Heaven; at times also to some of the Saints whose help we desire. In these we may speak, St. Ignatius says, sometimes as a friend to a Friend, as a servant with a Master, as a subject with his King, as a patient with his Physician, as a disciple with his Teacher, as a criminal with his Judge, as one redeemed with his Redeemer, as a soldier with his Captain, as a child with his Father—sometimes reasoning with our Lord as to the difficulties we find in our weakness, sometimes begging for grace—the grace we see to be the most necessary; grace to overcome some bad habit and acquire this or that virtue; grace to know how to dispose of ourselves and set our lives in order; sometimes confessing our sins and blaming ourselves; sometimes asking counsel.

The Colloquy naturally varies according as we find ourselves in consolation, or in desolation and tempted; or again, according as the scene we are studying suggests joy or sorrow. We may make colloquies whenever so inclined during the contemplation, but we ought never to omit a colloquy, at least at the end. We can either make one colloquy
Method to be Observed in Meditating on the Passion

to our Lady, or to our Lord, or to God our Father; or if we desire any
grace very earnestly, we may use a triple colloquy, addressing first our
Lady, ending with an Ave Maria; then our Lord, and ending with the
Anima Christi; lastly with the eternal Father, ending with the Pater
Noster. St. Ignatius adds this most useful advice with regard to collo-
quies—that whenever we find ourselves reluctant to make some sacrifice,
we should ask of God earnestly not to yield to our reluctance, but in
His mercy to require the sacrifice from us. We are not telling a lie by
making this prayer; we are saying to God: "With my lower nature I
dislike exceedingly this sacrifice, but still I have, through my faith, sense
enough to see that what Thou wishest, O my God, is better than what
I wish, and therefore if it is Thy Will that I make the offering, I say
with our Lord in the Garden, 'My Father, not as I will, but as Thou
wilt.'" And we ought to persevere in this cry till we can mean it
thoroughly; for it is a terrible calamity if God in His displeasure allows
our will to prevail against His.

Father Roothaan's comments on the colloquies are: (1) That we are
to think more of the feelings of the heart than of the words in which they
are expressed. (2) That in them we must ask grace to fulfil our resolu-
tions. (3) That in them we may add other petitions, not suggested by
our meditation, as intentions that have been recommended to us, general
intentions of our own, or any other pressing necessity. (4) That we
may vary the vocal prayers by which St. Ignatius proposes to us that we
should end our colloquies. With this the meditation or contemplation
ends, and Father Roothaan subjoins the judicious warning—that we must
rise with reverence from the audience that God has given us, and be
careful not to lose by dissipation the fruit that we have collected in the
hour that is just passed.

Reflection.—St. Ignatius prescribes after the contemplation a little
time for Reflection: during retreat, a quarter of an hour; out of retreat,
if we can get even five minutes it will be useful.

1. Reflection is simply turning back to see whether we have done our
work well or ill. A tailor sewing looks back occasionally to see if the
stitches are all rightly made. A painter turns back to see if the drawing
and colouring is well done. A careful man, after writing an important
letter, turns back, and reads it over again to see if the wording and spelling
and punctuation are all correct. Even so it is well worth our while to
turn back at the end of a contemplation to see whether we have done
our work well, if we have followed the method carefully, the preparation
overnight and in the morning, the Preparatory Prayer and Preludes;
Additions; if we have contemplated rightly the persons, words, actions;
if we have availed ourselves in contemplating the Sacred Passion of the
other three points—How much He is suffering, and desires to suffer;
how the Divinity conceals itself; how this is all for me. We must also
examine whether we have during the contemplation turned back upon
ourselves, and tried to gain some fruit for our souls: whether we roused our
will to good resolutions, and whether we have made fervent colloquies.
2. If we find that by God’s blessing we have done all carefully and gained fruit, we must take care to give God thanks, and resolve to follow the same method faithfully the next time. If we find that we have committed faults, or made mistakes, and not been successful, we must be sorry and beg grace to do better.

3. St. Francis Xavier used to advise those whom he trained to keep a little diary of their contemplations, noting briefly some thought that made impression. This practice has many advantages. By writing down a thought in this way, we impress it on our memory, and it may remain with us during the day, serving much the same purpose as a little lavender which we carry with us out of a garden. The morning of the contemplation or meditation often gives a colour to the rest of the day. It puts new life into Holy Mass and Holy Communion; and the thought that we have laid up may help very much to recollection during the day, and prove a good antidote against temptation. Holy David says: “Thy words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin.” In after time, if the eye chances to rest on the entries in such a diary, a valuable thought that has been forgotten is brought back to the mind, and thoughts that have once impressed us in the past may more easily affect us now than a new thought. Moreover, if in looking back we find that our contemplations used heretofore to succeed better than they are doing now, the discovery may act as a valuable stimulus. The very fact of examining each day whether we have gained some fruit, and taking a note of it, helps to keep us alive to the necessity of getting some profit every day out of contemplation.

I.—EXCELLENCE AND ADVANTAGES OF MEDITATION ON THE PASSION

1st Prelude: Subject Matter.—How profitable and how pleasing to God it is to meditate on the Passion of our Lord. . . . Meditation on the Passion will help us to understand this truth—“He loved me and delivered Himself for me.” St. Augustine tells us that nothing conduces more to salvation, and therefore to perfection, than always to think what the God-Man has suffered for us, and he assures us of this from his own experience. “I found not in all my necessities a more efficacious remedy than the Wounds of Christ.” St. Bonaventure also tells us, “that he who devoutly applies himself to meditate upon the life and death of Jesus Christ finds there very abundantly all things he stands in need of, and needs to seek for nothing out of Jesus Christ.” “Nothing,” says St. Bernard, “is more efficacious for curing the wounds of our conscience and purifying our souls, than continually to meditate on the sufferings of Jesus Christ.” All the Saints applied themselves to meditation on the Passion, and it was by this means they attained so great a degree of sanctity and perfection.
Excellence and Advantages of Meditation on the Passion

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—The Feet of Jesus Crucified. It was revealed to St. Gertrude that as often as anyone looked devoutly upon an image of Jesus Crucified, so often he would draw upon himself the eyes of the Divine Mercy.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—Light to understand the mystery of the Cross. To know our Lord always more intimately, to know the depth of His love for me, that my heart may be drawn strongly to Him in His Passion. Ask our Lady’s help in contemplating the Passion, “O Mother, I have need of thee.”

Points:  
I. Motives for meditating on the Passion.  
II. Advantages of meditating on the Passion.  
III. The conditions for meditating with fruit.

I

MOTIVES FOR MEDITATING ON THE PASSION

There are three principal motives for meditating on our dear Lord’s Passion.

1. Its Sublimity.—Everything about our Lord, every word and deed of His is great and glorious beyond all measure; but this is especially the case with the mysteries of His Sacred Passion, for they are the last steps in the life of the God-Man. Hitherto He had set an example of virtue in ordinary life, and then of apostolic zeal by His teaching and miracles; now He completes the Redemption by His Passion and Death. Others also taught and worked miracles, but only our Lord could redeem the world by His Death. The mysteries of His Passion and Death are the end and climax of His life, the summary and seal of His work on earth. Never was there a work so full of grace and dignity, as the Sacrifice that our Lord offered of Himself on Calvary. By reason of His Sacred Passion, our Lord’s Body has the highest dignity in the Court of Heaven. Truly there is no dignity on earth so great as suffering for God, and he who has suffered most for Him will have the highest place in Heaven.

It will be well to understand that the dignity of suffering depends not only on the intensity, but on the natural dignity of the person who suffers. The sufferings of Jesus Christ were the sufferings of a person of infinite dignity. That He, who was the King of Glory, should submit to the insults of His creatures, conferred upon His Sacred Body a dignity without end, and a dignity which, as Man, He would not have had unless He had suffered.

Again, the dignity of suffering depends also on the end for which we suffer. If it is for a selfish end, or through our own fault, there is little or no dignity in our suffering; if for a noble end, it corresponds to the nobility of the end aimed at. Jesus suffered in order to win for sinful men an eternity of happiness: what end more glorious than this, more unselfish, more worthy of a God? O Jesus, my Lord, grant that I may watch Thy sacred sufferings, and learn to appreciate the true dignity
of suffering with Thee. The Heart of our loving Lord and Master, our Jesus, says to each of us: "Remember Me: forget not the kindness of thy surety, for He hath given His life for thee."

The Passion of Christ is most attractive to us because we know that it is the model of what our lives ought to be if we are to obtain a high place in Heaven. If we have been conformed to the likeness of His Death, we shall also be conformed to the likeness of His Resurrection. The Passion of Jesus Christ is the most wonderful tragedy the world has ever seen. In it we witness the agony and death of a God tortured and murdered by His own creatures. Ah, grant Lord, that I may never forget Thine infinite love, that I may always trust in Thee and love Thee with my whole heart and soul. O, sacred, crucified Heart of my Jesus, in Thee I trust!

2. A second motive for meditating on the Passion is justice. It is most just that we should think of our Lord’s Passion and meditate lovingly upon it; first because it cost Him His most precious life, and amid what pain and anguish He gave it up. Surely it is not too much for us to think at least of what He suffered for us. People pay so little heed to the Passion of our Lord. The thoroughfares of the world are crowded with people; but how few tread the Way of the Cross! How often our Lord complains by the mouth of the prophets that He is left solitary, without comfort or sympathy (Is. lxiii. 5)!

3. A third motive is our own interest. The Passion is holy, and makes us holy. All the characteristics and blessings of a holy life spring from this source; above all, hatred and horror of sin. The merits and graces of Jesus Christ are the means of atonement for sin. If a soul be tempted to discouragement or despair, the Passion of Jesus will give new courage, and show the value of the soul and of what love and sacrifice God and His Divine Son consider it worthy.

Holiness of life consists in overcoming irregular passions. Nothing proves their terrible power more clearly than Christ’s Death, of which they are the accursed instruments. If the Passion of Christ is the sublimest tragedy, the passions are the actors who stage and perform it; therefore there is nothing that more powerfully incites us to fight against our evil passions than the example of our suffering Lord and Saviour. Strength and zeal to work and suffer for God and His holy Kingdom are other constituents of holiness of life. Under this heading we may place that precious heritage, the spirit of the cross—love of the cross, generosity, and the desire to promote the Kingdom of God’s glory and the salvation of souls. And is not that the very spirit with which the Passion of Christ so powerfully inspires and fills us? The Saints employed no means of becoming Saints oftener and more effectively than meditation upon the Passion of Christ. Thence they drew the spirit that made them what they became. “In the cross is height of virtue; in the cross is perfection of sanctity.”

These are some of the motives that may induce us to enter lovingly upon the meditation of our Lord’s suffering life—His Sacred Passion.
II
THE ADVANTAGES OF MEDITATING ON THE PASSION

"Look to Me, be ye saved all the ends of the earth" (Is. xlv. 22).

1. The Passion of Jesus Christ, our dear Lord, is the shortest way to justifying grace. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, and all who looked on it with faith were saved, so was the Son of man lifted up, that all who believe in Him with faith, that carries with it supernatural charity, moving them to true sorrow, may receive remission of their sins through faith in His blood—"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Me." Do I look upon the crucifix with repentant love? If so, I may have all confidence that my sins will be all washed away by His Precious Blood.

2. The Passion of Jesus Christ is the means to obtain from God all that we want. The Sacred Passion is an argument that He, the Almighty, cannot withstand. If, says St. Paul, God gave us His well-beloved Son, He gave us all else with Him. "He that spared not His only Son, but delivered Him up for us all, hath He not with Him also freely given us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32). Do I urge this all-powerful argument before the throne of God?

3. The Passion of Jesus Christ is the surest means of kindling love. We love Him because He first loved us, and showed His love by shedding His Precious Blood for us. We see in His Sacred Passion what the forgiveness of our sins cost Him, and how much He has forgiven us. We see how His love was so great that He suffered, not for His friends alone, but for sinners; for those who neglected, outraged, and insulted Him, that He might win them to God. Then how can we fail to love Him, who loved us and gave Himself for us? Meditation on Jesus suffering is a subject well calculated to hearten and encourage us; to make us ashamed of our moral weakness and spiritual cowardice in the past; to stir us up to high aspirations, and help us to set before ourselves noble ideals for the future.

We have a sort of instinctive consciousness that suffering is necessary to purify us and prepare us for Heaven, and that in the Passion of Christ we have the type and pattern of what human nature must suffer in order that it may be rendered fit for the Presence of God. We understand that we must all suffer as we pass through this valley of tears, and we are desirous to know how we should behave under the inevitable lot that is in store for us. Where are we to look for strength to endure? Where are we to seek consolation? Who will sympathize with us and help us when sorrow seems to overwhelm? To all these questions we find an answer as we gaze upon the scene of Calvary. O Jesus, may we look to Thee in every trial and sorrow.

O Jesus, my Divine Master, inflame my soul with love for Thee, grant that I may grow daily in greater love for Thee, that with St. Paul I may be able to say: "Who, then, shall separate me from the love of
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Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword? (For Thy sake we are put to death all day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) But in these things we overcome because of Him that hath loved us."

III

WAYS OF HONOURING THE PASSION, AND THE CONDITIONS FOR MEDITATING ON IT WITH FRUIT

"Jesus hath now many lovers of His Heavenly Kingdom, but few bearers of His Cross."

Set thyself, then, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the Cross of thy Lord, for the love of Him who was crucified for thee.

The Christian, and above all the Religious life, offers us many ways of practising devotion to the Passion of Christ. In the first place there is devout and loving reflection upon the mysteries of the Passion. In order to practise this effectually, it is well to make ourselves acquainted with the dispositions of our Lord with regard to His Passion, and try to make them our own. Jesus regarded His Passion as His life-work—"The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a redemption for many (Matt. xx. 28). He always bore it in mind from the first moment of His life. Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith: "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not; but a body thou hast fitted to me; holocausts for sin did not please Thee. Then said I: Behold I come; in the head of the book it is written of me that I should do Thy will, O God." Jesus longed for His Passion unceasingly: "I have a baptism, wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." It often formed the subject of His conversations with His disciples; He regarded it as the chalice that His heavenly Father had prepared for Him—"The chalice which my heavenly Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

When He wishes to give us an idea of His love to the heavenly Father, He says: "That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father hath given me commandment, so do I; Arise, let us go hence." He always points to His Passion to give us an idea of His love for us—"Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." When He wishes to show the greatness of the glory that is in store for Him and for us with the Father, He speaks of His Passion and death as the price of it: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?" And if ever His displeasure is excited, it is certainly when Peter wishes to deprive Him of the cross: "Go behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto me; because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men."

These are the sentiments of our Lord's Heart with regard to the Passion—sentiments of reverence and desire. We must endeavour to have these same dispositions. Let us strive to enter upon the meditation
of the different mysteries of the Passion in a spirit of love and gratitude; try to picture them to ourselves, as in a living picture; to live them through with our Lord, with hearts full of loving sympathy for His great sufferings. Reflect how His Godhead—His Divinity, withdraws its protecting and beatifying effects, and permits His sacred humanity to suffer in its faculties of soul and body, and remember that He suffers all this voluntarily, and for us, for each one of us in particular.

**Other Practices of Devotion to the Passion of Christ are:**
The sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, in which we take our Lady’s heart as a mirror and consider the Passion as reflected there. Another practice of devotion to the Passion is the Way of the Cross—the Stations, that beautiful and popular devotion in which we follow in particular the last steps of our Lord, and as it were accompany Him; and lastly, the Sacrifice of the Mass, which is the crown of all devotions to the Passion of Jesus, because its very essence is the renewal, real representation, and actual continuation of the Sacrifice of the Cross.

A last and very important manner of honouring the Passion of Christ is the practical imitation of the virtues and dispositions that are disclosed to us in the various mysteries. Thus we really suffer with our Lord, and gain a far stronger and more vivid impression of all that He took upon Himself and went through for us. The virtues and good works that the meditation of the Passion thus produces in us are so many flowers and tokens of love that we strew in His path to Calvary, and with which we rejoice His heart. Will He not be grateful to us, if we walk thus at His side? Steep is the path and narrow the way; but it is His way: the King’s Highway of the Holy Cross. Jesus is my King, my Lord and my God, my model, my heart’s love; and He bids me follow Him. He bids all of us follow Him in our measure and degree. Our cross may be lighter or it may be heavier, but, if we would enter into life everlasting, some kind of cross we must all carry, and bear it faithfully to the end.

St. Bonaventure tells us that if we desire to meditate with fruit on the Passion of Jesus Christ, three conditions are necessary. Our meditation must be:

1. **Humble;** for the Passion is unlike anything else in the world: it is unfathomable to human reason—a bottomless ocean of mystery. Reason must bow its head, confess its inability to grasp the mysteries that even Faith sees only darkly and through a glass. The story of Christ’s humiliation is a sealed book to the proud; they see nothing attractive in it. Christ suffering has no beauty that they should admire Him. It must therefore begin by praying humbly.

2. **Full of Confidence;** since the Passion is the source of all our confidence. It is the proof of the exceeding love wherewith Christ loved us. How can I fear with the sight before me of Christ suffering for love of me? It is, too, a medicine for every possible evil, for every temptation, for every sin; whatever the malady of my soul, the Passion of Christ can cure it. At the foot of the Cross each mortal wound will be made whole.
3. Persevering; the beauty of the Passion does not appear all at once. The world considers it a degradation, the careless and the indifferent pass it by unmoved; even the faithful scarcely penetrate beneath the surface of that Divine Mystery, unless they pray earnestly and continually to appreciate it, and frequently meditate on the mysteries of the Passion. Only gradually, and by degrees, we are drawn by the sacred attractiveness of the Cross. Oh, how much is the love of Jesus able to do, when it is not mixed with self-interest or self-love.

Colloquy.—With Jesus going so deliberately and lovingly to His Passion. Beg light to understand the mystery of the Cross—strength of will to appreciate it, and love to follow my Divine Lord closely. With our Lady—that I may begin now to love Jesus in earnest and understand the mystery of the Cross.

II.—ANTICIPATION OF THE PASSION
(Matt. xx. 18, 19; xxvii. 21, 22.)

1st Prelude: History.—“From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the ancients and scribes, and chief priests, and be put to death, and the third day rise again.”

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—Our Lord surrounded by His disciples, about to set out for Jerusalem for the offering of the Great Sacrifice. Try to realize the feelings of our Lord’s Heart, and read His thoughts—see His devotion to the Father and to us.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To know and realize the love of the Sacred human Heart of Jesus in going to death for me. “He loved me and delivered Himself for me.” Ah, Jesus, my Master, my dear Lord, help me to realize in some way what the anticipation of Thy terrible Passion must have been to Thee. Mary, Mother of Jesus, I have need of thee.

Points: I. Anticipation of the Passion—“My sorrow is continually before Me.”

II. Fortitude and joy with which Jesus went forth to suffer for us—the Evangelist tells us: “And Jesus steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.”

III. Ardent desire of Jesus to suffer for us—“I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.”

I

ANTICIPATION OF THE PASSION
“My sorrow is continually before me.”

To the external observer, the interval between the sufferings of Christ’s Nativity and the ignominies of His Passion, seems to have passed partly in the calm repose of domestic seclusion, and partly in the won-
drous triumphs of His public mission. But to the reflecting mind which penetrates beyond the surface, the life of Jesus Christ, from its beginning to its close, presents but one continued martyrdom. His divine Heart was ever “mourning within Him, its sorrow above all human sorrow” (Jer. viii. 18). “The whole life of Christ was a cross and martyrdom; and dost thou seek for thyself rest and joy?”

From the first moment of His Incarnation our Blessed Lord had ever before His eyes the prospect of His approaching Agony and Death. It was present to Him, not vaguely and uncertainly—as future pain and suffering are to us now—but vividly and distinctly, as at the actual time when He suffered. Never for a single moment was it absent from His thoughts. O wondrous love of our Incarnate God, who thus employed His divine power to protract His sufferings by this continual prospect! Every moment of His human life will Jesus suffer and merit grace and help for us—“He loved me and delivered Himself up for me.” “Forget not the kindness of thy Surety, for He hath given His life for thee,” is a word addressed to us by the Holy Spirit. Jesus loves us to recognize and realize His love for us. It is in His Sacred Passion that He specially desires to be remembered by us.

How do I look at the difficulties to be encountered in His service? Do I count the cost, grudge the difficulties, or rather the effort to conquer difficulties to be encountered in the service of my Master? Do I make reserves? How have I acted in the past? What shall I do for our Lord to-day? What have I to say to Him now? O most loving Jesus! O Thou fire that consumest what is defective; destroy in me every evil and inordinate will or desire; enkindle and nourish in me, dear Lord, a good and well-ordered will, that may deem itself happy in all things, even though they be adverse, to follow Thy divine pleasure. May my one desire be—and may I ever bear it in mind—to spend myself, and be spent in Thy holy service; to give without reserve, to serve Thee, Lord Jesus, with entire self-devotion. May I never shrink or be frightened or discouraged by the prospect of difficulties or hard things, but steadfastly set my heart on following Thee with love, courage and perseverance.

II

THE FORTITUDE AND JOY WITH WHICH JESUS GOES FORTH TO SUFFER FOR US

The Evangelist says: “And Jesus steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.”

God was under no obligation to assume our nature and to save us. He became man of His own free will, and of His own free will Jesus gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity.

What are my interior and exterior dispositions in regard to the Cross of Christ? Shall I not embrace the Cross? Shall I not devote myself, without stint or reserve, to the service of my Lord and Master, sparing no effort, however irksome and fatiguing, that will fit me to work more
Meditation on the Passion

efficiently for Him; to work—work till the night cometh wherein a man can work no more? Such devotion will do great things for our Lord, and will discover the secret of the best and highest kind of happiness which is attainable upon the earth. There never was a greater need and opportunity for showing devotion, and proving our love for our Lord.

Colloquy.—O Jesus, most bountiful and tender Master, I resolve with Thy grace to strive ever to follow Thee, how much soever nature may resist; and I know, dear Lord, that I shall have to undergo nothing which has not first passed through Thy Heart. O that I might look into Thine eyes, and read there the tender pleading of Thy Sacred Heart; read there its appeal to disengage and disentangle myself from the bondage of a worldly spirit—a spirit of vanity and lies—that I may follow Thee, the Truth and the Life, along Thine own way, the King’s Highway of the Holy Cross. Inflame my heart with Thy holy love; then, dear Lord, all fear of the Cross will vanish. Help me, dear Jesus, to begin to love Thee with a truly generous heart, for, if I love Thee, live with Thee and for Thee, what have I to fear? O Mother, I have need of thee.

III

ARDENT DESIRE OF JESUS TO SUFFER FOR US

"I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished."

Our Blessed Lord not only was not depressed and cast down by His approaching Passion, He actually longed for it. "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." Jesus' love for me was such that He rejoiced in the thought of suffering for me. How can I ever thank Him as I ought? How can I show my love for Him as I ought, He who loved with so great a love? "The charity of Christ presseth us." Love, says St. Francis de Sales, naturally and instinctively inspires reciprocal affection. The impulse which prompts all men to return love for love, acquires additional strength when the object beloved is far inferior to the one who loves. If a powerful monarch were to bestow his affections on a poor peasant, would he not endeavour to requite the gift by the unreserved devotion of his whole heart to his benefactor?

Our Jesus, our dear Lord, the Lord of angels and Ruler of men, Jesus Christ, the immortal King of glory, the eternal, infinite, the all-holy, so loved us, His wretched, sinful creatures, as to die on a cross of ignominy for our salvation. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Prompted by His love, Jesus has given Himself entirely to us; He has exhausted His liberality to enrich us; oh, can I be insensible to such goodness? Can I refuse to love Him, who so loves me? Ah, dear Lord Jesus, may the fire of Thy charity consume my heart, so that nothing of self may remain in
me, but all I am and have be thine for ever! Shall I not bravely conquer all repugnances that I may be true to my Divine Master, who through love for me, "set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem," to die and so save me from eternal death? What proof do I give of my love for Jesus? He says: "If you love Me, abide in My love." It is clear Jesus looks for love—everything from love; the Heart of Jesus is a loving human Heart.

C OLLOQUY.—What have I to say to my Divine Master? Sweet Jesus, Saviour of my soul! deign in Thy Goodness to hear my petitions, strengthen my will to give Thee my best, and give it fearlessly and with all the love of my heart. Mother of God, my Mother, be propitious to me, help me to remember that "a valiant lover standeth his ground in temptation and yieldeth not to the crafty persuasions of the enemy."

III.—PRELIMINARIES OF THE PASSION

(Luke xxii. 1-6).

1st Prelude: History.—The feast of the unleavened bread, the Pasch, was at hand. The chief priests and scribes sought how they might put Jesus to death; but they feared the people. And Satan entered into Judas, who was surnamed Iscariot—one of the twelve; and he went and discoursed with the chief priests and the magistrates, how he might betray Jesus to them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And Judas promised. And he sought opportunity to betray Jesus in the absence of the world.

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—Mark how Judas absents himself from our Lord's company and the Apostles. Note his frequent visits to the city to hold intercourse with the enemies of Jesus—the world, and this to better himself for worldly gain.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To know our Lord intimately—best security for fidelity to Him. The soul that knows Him, loves Him ardently, and will face and conquer every difficulty to be true to Him. Light to know myself and fear myself, for I am capable of any treason. Grace to love, appreciate, and follow faithfully common life—best safeguard against the spirit of the world.

Points: I. The Great Council decided on the arrest of Jesus—"They sought how they might by some wile lay hold on Him" (Mark xiv. 1).

II. Judas sells our Lord—"What will you give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?" (Matt. xxvi. 15).

III. The enemies of Jesus immediately decide to kill Him—"And they consulted together how they might apprehend Jesus and put him to death" (Matt. xxvi. 4).
Meditation on the Passion

I

THE GREAT COUNCIL DECIDES ON THE ARREST OF JESUS

"They sought how they might by some wile lay hold on Him."

See the persons—hear the words—study the actions, circumstances, etc. Reflect. The circumstances under which the Council decided on the arrest of Jesus were as follows:

As regards the time, it was probably on Wednesday that the Council assembled, and probably at the hour when our Lord assured His disciples that He would be crucified, on the Feast of the Pasch. "You know that after two days shall be the Pasch, and the Son of Man shall be delivered up to be crucified." The meeting-place of the Council was not, it would appear, the assembly-room in the Temple, but the palace of Caiphas the High Priest, because the decision was kept secret, and all care taken to avoid attracting attention. Nevertheless the Sanhedrin seemed to have been represented in every essential point, for the three classes—chief priests, ancients, and scribes—of which it is composed, are mentioned. It was therefore an official session. The subject of the deliberations was no longer the putting to death of Jesus—that had been decided upon long ago, but the manner in which it was to be accomplished—whether openly by force, or secretly by crafty surprise. The occurrences of the last few days, the complete defeats by which our Lord had put His enemies to shame; His increasing influence—all this urged them to sudden action.

The decision was—the arrest to be made secretly, by craft. Our Lord to be surprised and taken, when and how they could best do it. His execution was not to take place on the feast-day, but after the Pasch was over. This was because they feared the people. At the Paschal season there were great multitudes of people in Jerusalem, and the crowds were much inclined to disturbances and tumult; our Lord had many adherents among them, especially among the excitable Galileans. So the Sanhedrin feared resistance and risk, as in that case the Romans would have been forced to interfere. For this reason the arrest must be made whenever it could be done best, but secretly, and the sentence was not to be passed until after the feast-days, when the people had dispersed. Such was the decision of the Council—and such their dispositions for the great feast. They feared—not God, but the people.

What a terrible thing for a Christian to be the slave of worldly principles, of a selfish spirit, of human respect! Our Lord declares expressly and positively that He will die on the feast, and by a violent death. He knows the counsels of God and the hearts of men. No one can work against God. His Providence guards His own. His faithful servants—not a hair of their head can be touched without His permission. Nothing can happen without the permission of God. What a motive to live by faith and absolute confidence—Jesus knows all. Let me be
upright and sincere before God—live under His eye and fear nothing. How far am I doing this?

COLLOQUIY.—Open my heart to Thee, my dear Master; give me courage to be fearless in Thy service. Thou art a Master worth serving! O good Jesus! how great is the love of Thy Heart for me! How unselfish Thy love! How great Thy solicitude for my happiness! Can I ever forget Thee? Can I ever love Thee enough, dear Jesus? Mother, I have need of thee! Help me to be like thee, always true to Jesus.

II

JUDAS SELLS OUR LORD

"What will you give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?"

What will you give me? What a terrible question! To put Jesus into competition with self! Judas entertained the thought of the betrayal of our Lord for a long time. No one falls away from nearness to Jesus on a sudden: neglect in little things gradually leads to a serious fall.

Let us consider how Judas came to take such a resolution. What were the causes?

1. The fundamental cause was probably the shallowness, untrustworthiness, and superficiality of his character. He seems to have been a man of no depth or moral stamina.

2. The second cause was his worldliness, ambition, and avarice. One can scarcely conceive of his ever having had any idea of the Kingdom of the Messiah other than that which the majority of the Jews entertained—a temporal king, a temporal kingdom. Judas was wholly under the influence of the worldly spirit; that spirit which is so directly opposed to the Spirit of Jesus Christ, that St. John declares, "If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him" (1 John ii. 15). The world is the enemy of Jesus Christ and His Gospel. It is composed of those who centre their happiness in earthly things, detest and shun poverty, suffering, and humiliation: while they love, nay, worship wealth, pleasure, and dignity, esteeming these the only treasures worthy of man's ambition; pursuing them with unrelenting ardour and deliberately sacrificing their souls to attain them.

Our Lord Himself formally excluded the world from His last solemn prayer for His disciples on the night of His Passion. He predicted, too, that as it had hated and persecuted Him, so would it persecute and hate His followers. If we really desire a place near our Lord, we must, like our dear Master, engage in an unceasing conflict with His mortal foe. Jesus Christ is light, and the world is darkness; and as light and darkness cannot exist together—one casts out the other—so neither can our Lord and the world be one. When the spirit of the world gets entrance to our heart, our Lord is cast out, rejected; and in proportion as the Spirit of our Lord gains ground in the soul, the spirit of the world is cast out.
Meditation on the Passion

Judas’ downfall is a sad confirmation of this great principle—Jesus Christ and the world are mortal enemies. By generous, persevering efforts to rid myself of everything savouring of the worldly spirit shall I make solid, genuine advance in sanctity. Perfectly to triumph over the world is not the work of a moment; therefore I must follow faithfully in the footsteps of God’s servants—the Saints, by generous fidelity in lesser trials, and so I shall merit divine help in more severe conflicts. Does not our dear Lord encourage and exhort us: “In the world you shall have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world.” “Let us,” says Père Grou of the Society of Jesus, “beg of our Divine Lord and Master to overcome it with and in us, destroying its reign in our hearts, to establish His own dominion there for ever.”

3. The third cause of Judas’ fall was unbelief; gradually he lost the faith he had had at first. Loss of faith is the usual result of worldliness.

4. The fourth cause was the discomfort of the life led by our Lord and His disciples. Judas loved his own ease and comfort. He grew tired of the poverty of Jesus, the constant labour and journeying of Jesus, and also the disinterestedness of Jesus. Judas was absolutely selfish and acquired the habit of thieving from the purse that our Lord had entrusted to him; he tried to make use of his position for temporal ends. The private admonitions which our Lord gave Judas, our Lord’s earnest, tender training of His Apostles, must have grown burdensome and intolerable to Judas. Indeed one can well imagine how the enthusiastic love and devotion of the other Apostles and friends of our Lord must have annoyed him. How exaggerated and extravagant they must have appeared to him, until at last he took a positive dislike to the presence and Person of Jesus. This dislike to the Person of Jesus showed itself plainly, when Magdalen anointed His sacred feet at Bethany. The unbelief, irreverence, and callousness of Judas on this occasion almost stun us.

A last cause—which, however, was at work in all the other influences—was the influence and seduction of the devil, which grew more and more powerful the more Judas gave way to unbelief and passion, and thus it was that his diabolical resolution matured. Under these circumstances Judas wished to see Jesus’ plans thwarted and the company of the Apostles dissolved, that he might be freed from his trammels—and he thought he might as well gain something by it too, if possible.

How mean, cowardly, and disgraceful this act of Judas—he, an apostle, a friend of Jesus, a member of His family. Judas’ conduct meant no small slight shame, and no small pain to the tender, loving heart of our Lord—and Judas took this step quite of his own accord. He hastens to the Priests himself, and asks, in the most shameless and unblushing manner, what they will give him for his treachery. Judas knew well the men he had to deal with, and promised to deliver our Lord—Jesus, his Master—his Benefactor, Lord—his God and greatest good—into their hands. And for what? For thirty pieces of silver—the price paid for killing a slave! And to whom does Judas sell his
God? To His worst and most bitter enemies who lie in wait to devour Him. Judas delivers our Lord to all the tortures of His Passion and Death. Self-interest, avarice, ingratitude, cowardice, faithlessness, hard-heartedness, and cruelty are all included in this act of Judas. And oh, what pain, what deep humiliation, it brought to our dear Lord and Saviour!

Here we have serious matter for reflection—we must get to know ourselves. Self-knowledge is a most necessary step to the knowledge and love of Jesus—no one is safe until well grounded in self-knowledge. If Judas had known his own evil nature, he might have been saved. He would have distrusted and dreaded himself and clung to Jesus who would have saved him, for He loved Judas and called him to be His disciple with the sole view of saving him. But Judas used his free-will to thwart the tender, merciful designs of Jesus—and no one will be saved against his will. What a terrible lesson is here given! Like Judas, we too have our evil dispositions—our weaknesses, which, unless known and fought against, will lead to very serious consequences.

What have I to say to my Divine Master? What grace to ask? What thanksgiving to make? What reparation, sympathy, and love to offer to the loving, patient Heart of Jesus? O most sweet Jesus, what is there for me outside Thee? or what do I desire upon earth but Thee? God of my heart, Thou art my love. Thou art my blessedness. Thee alone shall I serve. I entreat Thee, O Lord, suffer nothing which is not Thine in my heart; if there be anything there in opposition to Thy most Holy Will, pluck it out even against my will. Keep Thy hand on me, dear Jesus my Lord and my God, lest I, too, like Thy faithless disciple, betray Thee. I wish Thee alone to possess my whole heart; Thou art my Father, my last End. O sweet Jesus, fountain of love and grace, rouse me, help me to understand how sinful and ungrateful I have been to Thee. Have pity on me, Lord Jesus, have pity on me according to the mercy of Thy loving Heart. The thought that I can yet be made holy, that I can yet become a true and loyal disciple of Thy Heart, encourages me. Help me, O Jesus most merciful, help me, give me courage; behold, dear Lord, now I begin! O Mother, I have need of thee!

III

THE ENEMIES OF JESUS IMMEDIATELY DECIDE TO KILL HIM

"And they consulted together how they might apprehend Jesus and put Him to death" (Matt. xxvi. 4).

Judas’ proposal was just what the enemies of our Lord desired. They are very pleased to find a traitor amongst His chosen disciples; this circumstance lowered the opinion they had of our Lord. They decided at once to act and proceed to extreme measures. Judas was now bound to help them. He did so, and tried to find an opportunity to make our
Lord fall into His enemies' hands quietly and without attracting attention. So he followed Jesus like a thief, dogging His steps, spying out all He did, and informing His enemies of everything—all the time simulating fidelity, sympathy, readiness to oblige, and the most cordial friendship. Thus our Lord had in very truth the devil at His side. Jesus read Judas' heart—knew everything—and endured all without complaint, in spite of His repugnance. He tried to warn Judas—to win him—and offers all He suffers in this particular suffering of heart for those who will in future ages have to suffer ingratitude, faithlessness, and treachery on the part of friends and relatives.

The prophets have described to us the emotions of Jesus' Heart at this time: If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it. And if he that hated me had spoken great things against me, I would have perhaps hidden myself from him. But thou a man of one mind, my guide, and my familiar, who didst take sweet meats together with me: in the house of God we walked with consent. The threads of the cruel plot are spun, the tragedy is about to begin. The prophecies of Jesus and the counsels of God are fulfilled, and our Lord's enemies are the instruments to carry them out. The type foreshown in the Paschal Lamb must be fulfilled; with what calm majesty our Lord sees this terrible fulfilment approaching and becoming a reality! Jesus, my Blessed Master, strengthen my will to embrace firmly and lovingly the cross in whatever shape Thy Providence provides and deems it necessary to make me Thy true and devoted servant and companion.

Who can understand Judas? Who does not look with horror on his crime, his base treachery? Can this accursed tool be an Apostle? The sight of this unhappy disciple a traitor, an apostate, at the side of Jesus is surely calculated to fill us, (1) with the fear of God; and (2) with distrust of ourselves; (3) to strengthen us in the resolution to avoid all dangerous occasions of sin or unfaithfulness to a vocation; (4) to make us persevere in humble prayer, and in the exact observance of our Catholic duties; (5) to urge us to overcome our evil passions and inordinate inclinations by generous self-conquest. If we neglect the mortification of our evil tendencies, we have much reason to fear—for we are capable of anything—no sin, no meanness, is beyond the range of possibility for us. Our safety lies in humble, close companionship with our Lord and our Immaculate Mother—near her we shall be true to Jesus. At any cost we must root out inordinate inclinations—"Blessed is he who understands what it is to love Jesus and to despise himself for the love of Jesus!"

COLLOQUIY.—With the suffering Heart of Jesus. Pray to be faithful under every circumstance—"to give and not to count the cost." Love is proved by deeds, therefore let nothing come between me and my Divine Master. In difficulties, desolation, failures, temptations, "stand by our Lord"—cling to Him. O my dear Jesus, how wretchedly unfaithful I have been to Thee! Pardon me, I entreat Thee, ah, pardon all my ingratitude, all the evil I have done—give me grace, O Jesus,
Saviour, to redeem lost time and repair the past. Enkindle my heart with that fire of love with which Thy Heart is burning. This most hallowed flame will utterly destroy my offences and urge me to be prompt and diligent in Thy holy service. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me. Take, Lord, take and receive my entire liberty, all that I have, all that I am—everything. Give me Thy love and Thy grace and I am rich enough—I have nothing more to ask. O my Mother, I have need of thee—Mother, give me to Jesus—O Mary, be propitious to me.

IV.—THE SUPPER AT SIMON’S HOUSE

(Mark xiv. 3-11. John xi. 55.)

1st Prelude: History.—St. John gives us the circumstances in detail: Feast of Pasch at hand; roads thronged with pilgrims; much talk and inquiry about our Lord, and even search for Him before His arrival at Bethany, especially on the part of the ill-disposed. The disturbance was increased by the High Priests’ secret orders—that whoever became acquainted with the whereabouts of Jesus was to give information of it in order that they might arrest Him. The Pharisees took care to make known this measure of the authorities—“They sought therefore for Jesus; and they discoursed one with another standing in the Temple: what think you, that He is not come to the festival day? And the Chief Priests and Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any man knew where He was, he should tell, that they might apprehend Him” (John xi. 56).

Thus all preparations were made, and snares set. Jesus’ obedience to the law was to lead Him into the trap. In spite of all these circumstances, clearly known to Jesus, He came to Bethany six days before the Feast of the Pasch—that is, on the Friday before His Passion.

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—Bethany, the house of our Lord’s true friends. He knew He was always welcome there. (Bethany means the house of obedience—the soul where true supernatural obedience reigns is always open to receive our Lord.) Let us keep close to our Lord and note all present—who are for, and who against Jesus. Mark the love of our Lord for Magdalen. And why?

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—Intimate knowledge. Never weary of asking this priceless grace. Ask courage to be most faithful to our dear Lord; to conquer determinately and perseveringly human respect and every difficulty I may meet in His Divine service.

Points: I. The supper at Bethany.
II. Disgraceful conduct of Judas.
III. Gratitude of Jesus.
Meditation on the Passion

I

THE SUPPER AT BETHANY

"The noble love of Jesus impelleth us to do great things, and exciteth us always to desire that which is the more perfect."

See the persons; hear the words; note the actions. Reflect and draw profit from all.

First, Our dear Lord and Master. Probably Jesus went to stay with Lazarus and spent the Sabbath there. On this Sabbath, however, He received an invitation to dine at the house of Simon the leper, who was probably a friend and neighbour of Lazarus' family, and a disciple of our Lord's. It was there then that the banquet was held. Lazarus was amongst the guests. Martha and Mary and their attendants undertook to wait on them.

There are three important points about this feast or supper: (1) The beautiful act of Mary; (2) the disgraceful conduct of Judas; and (3) our Lord's behaviour to them both.

See Magdalen. This supper at Simon's house was remarkable for Mary's act of devotion to our Divine Lord. She brought an alabaster box of ointment of precious spikenard, and poured it on His head as He sat at table, then on His feet. Her gift was very pleasing to our Lord for three reasons: (a) She gave of her best; (b) she gave out of pure love; (c) she gave in presence of the assembled guests, fearlessly, and knowing that men would ridicule and blame her.

Let us study this action of Mary—"Love often knoweth no measure, but grows fervent above all measure. It can achieve anything; and it doth perform and effect many things, where he that loveth not fainteth and falleth prostrate." In Mary's act we note three qualities of special beauty:

1. Her generosity. She reserved for herself the privilege of showing honour to the Divine Guest, and had bought for this purpose a pound of the purest and most costly spikenard in an alabaster box for three hundred pence—about ten pounds or fifty dollars—as Judas, the expert, had rightly estimated. These boxes, or rather vases, were generally made with a long, slender neck sealed up, which had to be broken off when using the ointment. So Mary broke the vase, poured some on Jesus' head, and anointed His feet with the remainder. She did all that generosity could do.

2. She reveals her loving humility, washing Jesus' feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair. She shows by this not only humility, generosity, gratitude, and reverence, but her deep faith and religious veneration for Jesus. One does not treat a mere man in this manner, but God alone.

3. It was an act of homage shown to Him as God—Who can fathom the fervour, love, and devotion with which she did it? The house, St. John tells us, was filled with the odour of the ointment—a figure of
the effect of love and generosity on the soul. I can model my daily life on this example—"Love when wearied is not tired; when straitened is not constrained; when frightened is not disturbed; but like a vivid flame and a burning torch, it mounts upwards, and securely passes through all." It says, O my God, my Love, Thou art all mine, and I am all Thine. Lord Jesus, enlarge Thou me in love, that I may learn to taste with the interior mouth of the heart how sweet it is to love, and to be dissolved and to bathe in love. O Jesus, my dear Master, what marvellous, what divine mercy and love Thou dost show to me! How good Thou art to look on me and permit me to belong to Thee. And—lest, perhaps, I might doubt whether it be allowed to me, a wretched creature, to aspire to a place in Thy Divine Heart—Thou hast commanded me to love Thee. And shall I not, O most sweet Jesus, love Thee? Shall I not hold Thee supremely dear? Yes, O dear Lord, with all my heart will I love Thee; with all my strength will I live for Thee. All that I am, all I possess, all I desire in this world, is Thy love and Thy grace, and I am rich enough, I have nothing more to ask—Amorem Tui solum!

Mary, Mother of Divine love, Mother of Jesus, turn thine eyes of mercy towards me. O Mary Immaculate! make my heart like unto thine, then I shall be able to see Jesus, and from seeing Him, to know and love Him. Mother, I have need of thee. Give me to Jesus!

II

DISGRACEFUL CONDUCT OF JUDAS

"Where a man seeketh himself, there he falleth from love."

Note the behaviour of Judas. His conduct on this occasion forms an unworthy, nay a disgraceful contrast to Mary’s. The love and religious veneration shown by her to our Lord annoys him, he considers it unfounded and excessive. It is nothing but hypocrisy, when he says that the ointment would have procured alms for the poor—"Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" "Now, he said this, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and having the purse, carried the things that were put therein" (John xii. 5-6). Judas’ words were prompted by a low, mean disposition, indifference, unbelief, and aversion to our Saviour; he murmurs, reproves, and calls it senseless waste: "To what purpose was this waste?" (Matt. xxvi. 8). It was pure covetousness and a desire of theft. Judas kept the money given to our Lord and His disciples for the poor, and stole from the bag; he only wished Mary had given the price of the ointment, because he might have kept a part or the whole of it for himself. Judas makes himself the mouthpiece of discontent, and disguises his ill-humour under a hypocritical semblance of charity. Mercenary, covetous, crafty, coarse and selfish, his heart had remained impervious to the teachings and the influence of Jesus; all the holiness
and love of Jesus had not altered him—he hardened his heart against grace and remained unsubdued by the goodness of God.

Our Lord cannot bear anyone to be unjustly accused, and now He takes Magdalen's part: "Let her alone," He says, "she has wrought a good work upon Me. For the poor you have always with you; but Me you have not always. She is come beforehand to anoint My body for the burial." Did Magdalen understand our Lord's words? It is certain she did not. For she and the other holy women went to the Tomb in order to anoint the body of Jesus. Did she know that the Sacred body of our Lord would be dead before the fragrance of her spikenard had left it? A penitent like Mary gets very near the Sacred Heart—"Blessed is he who," like her, "knows what it is to love Jesus, and to despise himself for the love of Jesus."

Picture to yourself our Lord's feelings as Judas uttered these words: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" See the indignation of Peter, John, and the other disciples, as they hear the words of Judas. What would I have felt had I been present, and known and loved our Lord as these faithful, devoted servants loved Him? What would I have done? I do well to ask, have I ever acted in a like disloyal manner towards my Divine Master? What atonement have I made—what loving reparation for my insincerity in His service? What ought I to do? What have I to say to Him now?

Colloquy.—O my dear Lord, how often I have been disloyal and most ungrateful to Thee. Have pity on me, my Jesus, pardon the past. Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me Thy true and devoted servant—that is my one desire. O Jesus, Master, kindle in my heart the fire which Thou camest to cast on earth, that I may love Thee more ardently, that I may be more perfectly conformed to Thee, that I may follow Thee more closely.

O Mother of Jesus, I implore of thee to cover me with the mantle of thy Immaculate purity, that so I may be able to love thy Divine Son more absolutely. Renew me wholly, I entreat thee, my dear Mother; help me to get rid of my slothful, ungenerous, cowardly spirit; win for me, O my Mother, a fulness of the Holy Spirit, that He may cleanse my heart, and inflame it with an ever-increasing, an ever-glowing love—ever cheerful—a love that will never suffer me to grow sluggish; but urge me on strongly and gently to a more perfect imitation of thyself, who art the Mother of divine love, and my own dear Mother too. O Mother, be propitious to me—give me Jesus.

Enlighten me, O good Jesus, with the brightness of internal light, and cast out all darkness from the dwelling of my heart. Lift up my heart to Thee, and suffer me not to wander from Thee. Be Thou, my Jesus, my Blessed Lord and Master; be Thou alone pleasing to me, henceforth for evermore. Turn into bitterness for me all carnal consolation; make me, Lord Jesus, a true and loyal servant—ready to suffer and die for Thee.
The Supper at Simon’s House

III

GRATITUDE OF JESUS

“... I know Mine and Mine know Me.”

Notice the gratitude of the Heart of Jesus. A little box of ointment poured on His feet earns for the donor a commemoration of her gift wherever the Gospel shall be preached in the whole world—“Amen I say to you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done shall be told for a memory of her” (Matt. xxvi. 13).

And not only this: it obtains for her also many graces on earth and great glory in Heaven. There is no one so grateful as Jesus Christ: no one who will reward with such divine generosity everything done from love of Him. Nothing will be forgotten, nothing is too small to be noticed and richly recompensed by Him—our dear Lord! Let me watch and try to understand our Lord's love for souls wholly devoted to Him.

Jesus first takes Mary’s part against Judas: “Let her alone, why do you molest her?” (John xii. 7). “Our God is a faithful God”—He will always stand by those who are devoted to Him. I have nothing to fear from my enemies—the devil, the world, or my own evil inclinations, if I am devoted to Him like Mary.

Secondly, Jesus expressly declares that she has “wrought a good work upon Him,” and proves it by refuting the objection made on behalf of the poor—“The poor you have always with you; but Me you have not always.” Jesus is poor and stands far above all other poor; indeed, it is only for His sake that people do good to them, and now it is the very time to perform good works for Him, since He is about to go away, whilst the poor never leave us. Jesus develops from this last thought a very touching motive to account for Mary’s action in His regard. She has anointed Him for His burial as the Evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Mark, plainly tell us.

It appears that Mary did not know the deep meaning of this anointing beforehand. At all events her loving heart in this matter obeyed the inspiration of Providence.

The manner in which Mary and Judas are represented in this incident affords us matter for deep thought and earnest consideration. How different, how entirely opposite, are the paths they tread! Where did they both begin and where do they end? Judas, the Apostle, chosen friend and companion of Jesus—now an unbeliever, a thief, and a traitor. Magdalen, a poor sinner notorious for her evil life—now the generous disciple of Jesus, glowing with love for Him! Alas, how often it happens that whilst some rise from the lowest depth to holiness, others fall from Heaven to hell! How great reason we all have to dread and distrust our own inconstant nature, and to strive earnestly to keep close to our Lord and our Immaculate Mother. See how gently, calmly, and with
what moderation Jesus defends His own cause and Mary's against this base man and his reproach.

What did Judas deserve? Yet how quietly and tenderly Jesus speaks! Calvary and the sepulchre are ever present to Him, and yet how patient, how loving, how large-hearted Jesus is in His dealings with the traitor! Oh, tender, compassionate Heart of Jesus, make my heart like to Thine! What precious lessons Jesus, my Divine Master, here gives me.

Colloquy.—What have I to say to our Lord? What would I have said and done had I been present? Let me offer Jesus all the love and sympathy of my heart and beg courage, strength of will, and fidelity to Him, under all circumstances, till death. Remember, love is proved by deeds. How true a friend Jesus is to His own! Shall I not, like Magdalen, be true to Him—give of my best; give fearlessly and from purest love?

Ask this grace from the loving Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary—"Mother, I have need of thee!"

V.—EATING OF THE PASCHAL LAMB

(Luke xxii. 14-18.)

1st Prelude: History.—"And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him. And He said to them: with desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer."

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—The Cenacle situated on Mount Sion, in the highest part of the upper city. A large room divided into two parts by a couple of pillars. The inhabitants of the city were wont to arrange every available room at the time of the Pasch, to enable the stranger pilgrims to celebrate the feast in a becoming manner.

Probably the man to whom Peter and John were sent was a disciple of Jesus—according to early writers (illatively) he was the father of St. Mark the Evangelist. See the room prepared and furnished—tables, utensils, couches, etc. It was indeed the first church that Peter and John were arranging and decorating—see them making preparations so gladly and lovingly. When all was in readiness, see how eagerly they watch for the Master.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To know our Lord—to know and realize the love of the Sacred Heart for me. To understand the desire He has to come to me in Holy Communion. Grace to labour earnestly and perseveringly to prepare my heart for Him. Courage to use the most efficacious means to attain purity of heart. Ask our Lady for it. Mother, I have need of thee! O Mary, be propitious to me.

Points: I. The Paschal lamb a figure of the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.

II. The Paschal Supper.

III. Virtues practised by our Lord at the Paschal Supper.
I

THE PASchal LAMB A FIGURE OF THE LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKETH AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD

Consider first the likeness between the type and reality:—Our Blessed Lord, before He suffered, celebrated the Jewish rite which above all the rest foreshadowed His own sacred sufferings. The Paschal lamb was an exact type of Him, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.

The Paschal lamb was the means employed by Almighty God to deliver His people from Egypt. It was the sprinkling of its blood on the posts of the door which caused the avenging Angel to pass by and leave the inmates unharmed. So the Blood of Jesus sprinkled on our souls saves us from the vengeance that would otherwise fall upon us. O Jesus! sprinkle me with one drop of Thy Precious Blood, and I shall be free from sin.

The Paschal lamb had to be drained of the last drop of its blood. So the Lamb of God shed for us the last drop of His Precious Blood. He was not satisfied with merely giving His life for us, but He must needs endure all the intense agony, the burning thirst which came of this draining of His whole body for love of us. How can I ever thank Him as I ought?

The lamb endures uncomplainingly. It never murmurs against its lot, or struggles against those who lead it here and there; unlike swine, who grunt and grumble at every attempt to control them. None was ever so submissive as the Lamb of God—"Lo, I come to do Thy will, O my God." I am ready to do it—I long to do it! Can I echo these words?

All names given in Scripture by Divine inspiration are exactly descriptive of those on whom they are conferred. The name by which St. John first greeted Jesus was that of "Lamb of God." From this we learn the prominent features in our dear Lord's character—the gentleness, meekness, simplicity, guilelessness of the Lamb. This is what made Him so attractive. His sweetness drew all to Him. Our Jesus is just the same now. In Heaven He is still the Lamb: still gentle and loving as ever. With what confidence, then, ought I to approach Him and tell Him all my difficulties, etc.

Let me remind myself, that Jesus is not only the Lamb, but the Lamb of God. That winning gentleness and sweetness of His is not merely natural. It is the divine charity manifesting itself in the Sacred Humanity. This must be the sweetness and gentleness at which, as Spouses and Apostles of Jesus, we must aim. Mary's children must excel in these virtues, since they are bound to be close imitators of Christ. God will give them to us if we persevere in seeking them. Even though by nature harsh, God's almighty grace can make us gentle and meek.
Meditation on the Passion

The office of the Lamb of God—the work He was sent to do, St. John tells us, was to take away the sins of the world. Meekness has a wonderful power—"the meek shall possess the land." Meekness takes away sin. To bear reproaches meekly is one of the best means of extirpating our own sins and those of others, and of winning for sinners the grace of repentance. Meekness obtains peace for our souls. Contrast my heart with the Heart of Jesus—the Lamb of God. Am I trying, as St. Ignatius directs, to copy Him to the best of my power? Ask light and grace to understand the obligation of following closely in the footsteps of my Master. Ask assistance from my Mother—the "Mother of Christ." O Mother, I have need of thee!

II

THE PASCHAL SUPPER

(1) Preparation for the Supper. (2) Our Lord's walk to Jerusalem. (3) The Supper.

See the persons—watch the actions—hear the words. Reflect and draw fruit from all.

See Jesus speaking to His disciples about the supper. It was on Thursday morning that our Lord called the disciples and told them to prepare the Paschal Lamb. In reply to their questions as to where He wished to celebrate the Pasch, He mysteriously told them of a man, who would meet them near the city gate; him they were to follow into his house, and there prepare the meal. This was on the fourteenth of the month, the first day of unleavened bread. (On this day all leaven and leavened bread had to be taken out of the house.) In this command of our Lord’s we have three beautiful virtues upon which to meditate:

1. His loving and willing obedience. Wherever there is law to be kept, the day and hour find Him ready. He Himself gives the Apostles the order to go and prepare the Pasch. Do I yield the same loving, willing obedience to the precepts of the Church—our Lord’s rule for His own?

2. The second virtue that Jesus practises in making this arrangement is wise and prudent caution. He chooses Peter and John to go and make the preparations, not Judas, who may have performed such functions as a rule. Neither does Jesus name the man in whose house He intends to celebrate the Pasch, but only describes him mysteriously, saying that the two disciples would be met on entering the city by someone carrying a pitcher of water, whom they were to follow. Our Lord acted thus in order not to give Judas an opportunity of betraying Him, because Judas might have informed the enemies of Jesus of the time and place of the meal, and the arrest would have been made in the Cenaculum, and thus the Sacred Mysteries would have been disturbed and the host troubled. Our Lord willed that this should not happen. Probably the man to whom the disciples were sent was a disciple of Jesus—there is reason to think that he was the father of the Evangelist St. Mark.
3. We may see here another instance of our Lord's poverty. He is now about to institute the great Mystery of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, and He has no house or room of His own in which to do it. He must appeal to the charity of men for every great thing that He does for the good of the world. How touchingly He asks the host to grant Him admittance, in order to institute the mystery that is to be such a blessing to the whole world! Jesus had had no cradle, and was to have no grave of His own; and now He has no church in which to institute and deposit the chief Sacrament of the Church.

(a) Preparation of the Paschal meal. Peter and John went and found everything as our Lord had predicted. The man met them, and showed them a large furnished room, and there they made all preparations.

Tradition says that the Cœnaculum in which our Lord celebrated the Pasch was on Mount Sion, in the highest part of the upper city. It is a large room, twenty yards long and eleven broad, divided into two parts by a couple of pillars. The Apostles saw that all was in readiness for the Master—tables, utensils, couches. The lamb was bought and prepared. There were also cakes of unleavened bread, bitter herbs, a thick, brick-coloured pottage made of dates, almonds, figs, and cinnamon, and lastly wine and water.

The Apostles made all these preparations gladly and lovingly. SS. Peter and John are the representatives of faith and love—thus everything was done well. Our Lord's command sufficed to inspire them with zeal. For it was the first church that they were arranging and decorating.

(b) Our Lord's walk to Jerusalem. In the evening Jesus went with His disciples from Bethany to the dining-room in the upper city where Peter and John had everything in readiness.

Before Jesus and His disciples set out He must have bidden farewell to the dear friends who had shown Him so much love and reverence, and whose hospitality He had so often enjoyed. It was His last visit to the house of Lazarus and his sisters in the beautiful little hamlet under the shade of the fig, olive, and almond trees. Jesus was never to return thither in this life. The Saints who have meditated upon this mystery draw us a touching picture of this farewell of Jesus to Lazarus and many of His other friends. Such a parting is painful to every grateful and feeling heart, and so it must surely have been to our Lord.

We do not know whether the leave-taking took place in public, or in presence of only a few; but there can be no doubt it was loving, touching, and sorrowful on both sides.

Contemplate our Lord as He walks to the supper-room. The walk itself over the Mount of Olives and down the Vale of Cedron, through Ophel, up to the Cenacle in the upper city, probably was very silent and sorrowful. Try to realize the feelings of the Human Heart of Jesus as He goes to the Passion. There in the gloaming lay the city with its towers and walls, dark and threatening, like a mighty prison-house or place of execution, ready to receive Him and put Him to a cruel death.
O faithful Heart of Jesus, in Thee I trust! Jesus walks on with firmness and decision, and neither the clear consciousness that His hour has come nor the shrinking fear that fills His Heart can delay His steps for a moment. O dear Jesus, strengthen my will to go forward with love, courage, and perseverance in Thy service—"To give and not to count the cost—to fight and not to heed the wounds."

This farewell to Bethany and walk to Jerusalem is a very profitable as well as a touching subject for meditation. Our Lord was human like ourselves, and susceptible to all natural feelings, as far as His will was concerned. It must have cost Him much to leave such faithful and loving friends—and caused sorrow to them as well as to Himself. Jesus would remember how greatly they desired His welfare—how heartily they loved Him, and how happily He might have lived with them. He would think, too, of where He was going—He was about to deliver Himself into the hands of His enemies, and oh! what a terrible fate was in store for Him.

How hard it must have seemed to Jesus at that moment to fulfil His vocation. But He overcame all His pain and repugnance—for me—to set me an example, and gain for me the graces I need, when called upon to face pain, humiliation, and separation from those dear to me. "He loved me, and delivered Himself to death for me." When difficulties and trials surround us, let us call to mind how our Lord went through His Sacred Passion with all its attendant ignominies and sufferings—and how His sacrifice calls for ours in return. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, make our hearts like Thine!

(c) The Paschal Supper. "And when the hour was come, He sat down and the twelve Apostles with Him." See the Apostles take their places at table—the number should not be less than ten nor more than twenty. See them arranged at the table—arrayed as for a journey, girded, and with staves in their hands. Our Lord said the prayer and performed the ceremony of washing His hands. All the ceremonies prescribed were faithfully fulfilled.

Hear the conversation between our Lord and His Apostles. It turned upon these topics: (1) The signification of this peculiar Pasch. Whilst the second chalice was being passed round, amongst other things He said: 'With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer. For I say to you, that from this time I will not eat it, till it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. . . . I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, till the Kingdom of God come" (Luke xxii. 15-18).

This Supper, combining the ceremonies of the Old Testament with the reality of the New, is the last meal of Jesus before His farewell to His loved disciples and to the world; it is the type and the introduction to the eternal banquet in Heaven. It is the intensest love of the Man-God shown in the mysteries; this Supper was to witness the washing of the feet, the Institution of the Blessed Eucharist, and Jesus' parting discourse to His own, so that we may truly say of it: "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end"—that is, to the
very utmost, giving them on this occasion an extraordinary proof of His love.

(2) The second subject was the impending Passion—this He meant when He said the words, "before I suffer"—but Jesus speaks more fully of the Passion in the prediction of His betrayal by Judas. Our Lord desired to save Judas, and His reasons for speaking of the betrayal were to show that He knew everything and that He suffered voluntarily—to warn the unhappy Apostle and deter him from committing his sin; and to show how this treachery pained Him—"Amen, amen, I say to you, that one of you is about to betray Me." This prediction brought great consternation and sorrow upon the Apostles, as we may well imagine; and though every one of them, except Judas, was convinced that such a thought had never entered his head, still they grew sad and bewildered, and fearing their own weakness, anxiously look at Jesus and appealingly ask: "Is it I, Lord?" See their distress—hear them ask each other who it could possibly be. (Luke xxii. 23.) (And they began to inquire among themselves, "which of them it was that should do such a thing.")

(3) The third subject of conversation was a dispute about precedence. Each may have claimed to be more attached to our Lord; or the mention of His departure revived the old jealousy about places in the Kingdom; whatever it was, a dispute arose among the bewildered, anxious, and troubled hearts of His own.

It will be well to sound my heart, and see if there be any weakness which might lead me to be disloyal to our Lord. Ask light to see how I stand with our Lord. Can He trust me under all circumstances?

Colloquy.—O most loving Jesus, draw me entirely to Thyself. Grant that I may henceforth love Thee with all the tenderness, devotion, and love of my heart. Lord Jesus, take me out of life rather than permit me to be unfaithful to Thee. Mother, I have need of thee!

III

VIRTUES PRACTISED BY JESUS AT THE PASchal SUPPER

"In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do Thy will."

Our Lord is our model from first to last—here in the first part of the Last Supper He gives us an example of many beautiful virtues:

1. He shows great exactitude in the performance of all the legal ceremonies. Even the day was exactly in accordance with the legal regulation.

2. Note the piety, the deep recollection, calmness, and dignity with which He performs each. He recognized as no other could do the meaning of them, and rejoiced that He was able to fulfill the typical meaning by the reality. The Paschal Supper preceded the institution of the Blessed Eucharist as no type symbolized the Eucharist as sacrifice and sacrament so minutely as the Paschal Lamb, which was at once a
sacrifice and communion; and the Eucharist itself is a type and memorial of His Passion and Death.

3. Jesus displays wonderful serenity and unselfishness at this Paschal Supper. His Passion was near, and everything reminded Him vividly of it—His surroundings, Judas, the Paschal lamb which lay there pierced by a spit in the form of a cross, the terrible instrument of His death; and even the Eucharist. Jesus' mind and heart were besieged by these terrifying figures of death, and yet He is calmness and serenity, friendliness, love, and tenderness itself. He rejoices over His Last Supper, and has longed for it, because He can do us such infinite good by the mysteries that He now institutes.

4. Jesus sets us an example of the most magnanimous love of enemies. Judas, the traitor, sits at His table—even at His side. Our Lord knows his thoughts and his devilish plans, and yet, how He loves him! He is not angry with him, does not expose him, trying by every means to save him, His unhappy disciple and Apostle, at any cost. Is not this a love of surpassing generosity?

To be a loyal disciple and Apostle was the only means that would have secured Judas from his evil inclinations, and Jesus called him—but he trifled with the grace of his vocation—and in spite of all the love and solicitude of his Divine Master to help and save him, he refused to cooperate with grace, and set his will against our Lord's.

How great reason we have to fear all trifling with grace and opportunities of showing fidelity to our Lord. What a terrible misfortune to lose a vocation—to let the spirit of the world get entrance to our heart after we have given it to our Lord. Nothing on earth could ever make up to a fervent soul for the loss of that precious pearl of vocation—"Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, they tear you" (Matt. vii. 6). Let us leave nothing undone that we may be wholly pleasing to our Lord. Take heed of His word to St. Teresa: "I will that you no longer converse with men but with angels." It is our Lord's will and desire in calling persons to any special vocation that they live the supernatural, interior life—not the natural, material, carnal life of worldly people. St. Ignatius tells us to imitate the Angels—we are to be God's angels on earth, so, like the Angels and the religious, we must, in the occupations of daily life, keep our will closely united to the will of the Heavenly Father and seek in all His greater glory.

Colloquy.—With the suffering Heart of Jesus. Ah, Lord Jesus! make me know the greatness of Thy love for me, that I may cease to be ungrateful. Jesus, loving Master, suffer me not to wander from Thee, but strengthen me against my weak inconstant nature, that I may be true to Thee till death. Ah, if I loved Thee, my Jesus, in reality, I should find it most sweet to suffer for Thy sake. And I would rather be taken out of life than disappoint Thy Sacred Heart. O loving Jesus, keep me near Thee, and true to Thee. Mother, I have need of thee!
VI.—JESUS’ DESIRE FOR HIS SUFFERINGS

(Luke xii. 49-50).

1st Prelude: History.—“I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled.” “And I have a baptism, wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.” The Passion of Christ is called a baptism, because we are washed clean in His Precious Blood.

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—See our Lord surrounded by His disciples. Jesus has just been impressing on them the necessity of being wise and watchful servants—always looking out for the coming of their Lord—and that “unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required.” Then Jesus utters these words showing the love of His Sacred Heart for His own: “I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled.”

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To know Jesus—the boundless love of His Sacred Heart which came to light up in my soul the fire of divine love, and that had no other desire but to see this holy flame enkindled in all hearts. Grace to use every means in my power to grow daily in love of my Divine Master. Ask the Mother of divine love to help me.

Points: I. How are we to account for Christ’s desire to suffer?
   II. “I have given you an example, that as I have done, so you do also.”
   III. Do I recognize the necessity, the dignity, and the happiness of suffering with and for Jesus Christ?

I

HOW ARE WE TO ACCOUNT FOR CHRIST’S DESIRE TO SUFFER

The secret of our Lord’s desire to suffer was love—“Love knoweth no measure, but grows fervent above all measure.” O Sacred Heart of Jesus, give us some share of that love which is strong as death. St. Paul pray for us that we may know what you tell us, namely that the measure of Christ’s love for us passes knowledge. . . . The Saints knew it, and in a sense grasped it and comprehended it too. For nothing sanctifies us half so soon, nothing so sweetens and attunes our souls into harmony with the breathings of God’s spirit, as an insight into the Heart of Jesus, a glimpse of the fire that burns there. “I have come to cast fire on earth, and what will I but that it be kindled”; then He added: “I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.” Ah, dear Lord, who burnest for the love of Thy creatures, what more couldst Thou say or do to place us under the necessity of loving Thee? Lord Jesus, how can we live without loving, with all the love of our hearts, so good and devoted a
Meditation on the Passion

Lord and Master? Dear Jesus, inflame our hearts with a strong, generous, ardent love of Thee.

"Jesus, knowing that His hour was come," writes St. John, "and that He should pass out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Jesus calls the hour of His Passion, "His hour," because this was the moment of His life that was most earnestly longed for by our dear Lord, the hour in which He can manifest His love by sacrifice.

Oh, if we could but know the Heart of our Lord—the more we know, the more we shall long to know—"They who drink shall thirst again." It is in consideration on the Passion that we come to understand what love means—"He loved me, and delivered Himself for me." Human nature shrinks from suffering and dreads it, and none of the sons of men was ever so sensitive as He, or had sufferings to look forward to in any way comparable to His. Yet in spite of this, Jesus longed for His sufferings. O wondrous love, that not only suffered for us, but longed for the time when His Passion should come!

Was it the suffering in itself for which Christ longed? Impossible! It was for the result of that suffering, for the joy that was set before Him, that He endured the Cross and despised the shame. Even Christ could not work without the prospect of some reward. So we should encourage ourselves with the thought of the glorious recompense which God will give to all who suffer for Him, and who unite their sufferings to the sacred sufferings of the Son of God.

But what sort of reward was that to which the Son of God looked forward? Next to the glorification of His own Humanity, it was the joy of seeing others happy, of knowing that by all He was to endure, millions of mankind would be freed from the eternal misery of hell, and raised to the eternal and unspeakable joy of the Beatific Vision. He knew that it was by sufferings that graces must be won for others. This lesson, too, the Saints learned from their Master. How have I learned it? Do I recognize the necessity, the dignity, the happiness of suffering?

Wherein hast Thou loved me, dear Lord? "Unto death, even unto the death of the cross"—love is always proved by deeds. Shall I refuse any longer to take up my cross and follow Jesus? Ah, dear Lord, I bring Thee my cross whatever it may be, I lay it at Thy feet as a love offering. With Thy help I will take it up and bear it patiently, lovingly, fearlessly, perseveringly. But I want more than this. I want my offering to be a return in kind—a token of grateful love to Thee for that love of me which filled Thy Heart when Thou didst go to Thy Passion for me. Ah, Lord Jesus, I will never forsake Thee. In what place soever Thou shalt be, O Lord, my King, there will Thy servant be. Thou art my Spouse, my place is at Thy side. O Mary, my Mother, help me to be faithful unto death, like Thee. Mother, I have need of thee!
Jesus' Desire for His Sufferings

II

"I HAVE GIVEN YOU AN EXAMPLE, THAT AS I HAVE DONE SO YOU DO ALSO" (John xiii.).

How did Jesus regard the cross when it was presented to Him? How does He teach me to receive it?

1. He accepts His cross at the time, in the shape it is presented to Him.

2. Jesus does not examine, but embraces it.

3. He does not consider the cruelty or unkindness of those who lay it upon Him, but the love of the Father who has chosen it for Him.

4. Jesus does not complain of the weight of the cross, or seek to cast it upon others, but summons all His strength to bear it.

5. Our Lord accepts not only the cross itself, but all the painful circumstances that accompany it. If He is relieved of His burden for a time, it is not by His own act. He is grateful for the relief, but readily accepts the load when it is laid on Him anew.

6. Jesus' heavy cross does not make Him unmindful of the lesser sorrows of others, or unsympathizing, or ungracious. He will stop on the road to Calvary to speak to the women of Jerusalem, to greet His holy Mother, to reward Veronica, to thank the Cyrenian.

7. Our Lord will not come down from His cross when defied by His enemies, but only at the bidding of His Father. He will be taken down by the hands of others when His work is finished; the last pang endured; the will of Him who sent Him fully accomplished.

Does my way of accepting and bearing my cross show that I have known and studied my Master on His way to Calvary? "Hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown"—is an injunction we all need. Patience is needed to resist the constant pressure upon us of exterior difficulties, and that traitor within who is always ready to make common cause with the enemy without. It would ill become us indeed to be cowardly in following our Blessed Master on the road to Calvary. What we have undertaken to do for Him let us do heartily, lovingly, fearlessly, perseveringly.

When hope and courage are at their lowest, and the irksomeness of effort presses heaviest, what comfort and strength there is in the thought that our dear Lord and Master knows all—sees all—understands all. To hold on in spite of monotony and failure and no seeming progress, is hard even to the bravest. But the loving Heart of Jesus sees our effort to prove that we do indeed love Him and do not shrink from bearing our cross with Him and for Him. Jesus takes into account every little effort to be faithful. "I know thy works and thy labour, and thy patience—that thou hast endured for Me and not fainted. Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life. Behold I come quickly and my reward is with Me. Fear not, it is I, I am thy protector, and thy reward exceeding great."
Meditation on the Passion

Make anew the offering of our life and love to the loving Heart of our God, Father, and Saviour. My Lord and my God, make me true to Thee till death. Each day, dear Jesus, may I grow in fidelity and love for Thee, my Lord and God. Ah, my Divine Master, what other being but Thou, who art infinite goodness, would suffer and die for Thy poor sinful creature? But because Thou art God, Thou lovest like God, with a love that knows no equal. Thou, O Lord, Thou alone art most faithful in all things, and besides Thee there is no other.

III

DO WE RECOGNIZE THE NECESSITY, THE DIGNITY, AND THE HAPPINESS OF SUFFERING WITH AND FOR JESUS CHRIST?

"Know for certain that thou must lead a dying life; and the more a man dieth to himself, the more doth he begin to live unto God." "Drink of the chalice of thy Lord lovingly, if thou desirest to be His friend, and to have part with Him. Set thyself, then, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the cross of thy Lord, for the love of Him who was crucified for thee. No one is fit to comprehend heavenly things who hath not resigned himself to suffer adversities for Christ."

The essential element in the love of our Lord is—as we cannot too often remind ourselves—service—and the service of one ready to renounce everything in order to devote oneself, without stint, and without reserve, to love and suffer, and labour in the interest and cause of our Divine Lord and Master. It is well to remember that the question that will be asked of us when we meet our dear Lord in judgment, when we have to give an account of our stewardship, is not how we have felt towards Him, but what we have done for Him, what we have tried to do for Him, what we have wished to do for Him—what we have given up for Him, what we have endured for Him; and moreover that the measure of our reward will be, not the material value of the things we have renounced, or the actual amount of pain or suffering or sorrow which we have endured, but the fulness and completeness of the sacrifice in relation to our means, our capacities, our opportunities.

Let us dispose our hearts for the gift of that fervent love of Christ Crucified which is the one thing that is most for our peace both in this world and in the next. O love of Jesus Crucified! I believe that this transforming and ennobling love, though it be a divine gift, and therefore not ours to command, is yet within reach of anyone who will become disposed for it by resolutely carrying out that simple yet comprehensive programme which is so often set before us—generosity and confidence.

It is in vain then to search for various means of arriving at perfection and to change them often; they are to be found in Jesus Crucified, who
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changes not. Without Him we can do nothing. We go to Jesus by the good use of created things, but without His grace we may be hurt but can never be helped by them. We go to our Crucified Lord by suffering patiently and joyfully. It is His grace that has sanctified suffering, His example that makes it sweet to suffer. By taking suffering on Himself He defied it. We go to Jesus Crucified by the practice of virtues; He is our Model and gives us grace. O dear Jesus, may I never be separated from Thee. Thou art the Way, which, if I quit, I am lost; Thou art the Truth, which, if I leave, I am in the darkness of error; Thou art the Life, which if I give up, I shall fall into death.

"Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her Beloved?" Think how the soul that truly loves Jesus Crucified goes up the mountain of holiness leaning on her Beloved, and we shall learn how to go to Jesus by means of Jesus, leaning on Him, and at the same time this will teach us our faults.

The true Spouse, leaning on Jesus Crucified, mounts with sweet alacrity; she ascends constantly; she goes straight on, because she turns not round and round in the circle of her imperfections and futile wishes. She ascends without interruption; she ascends with marvellous speed, because she leans on her Beloved and avails herself of His favours.

O Jesus, I will lean on Thee! Be Thou my support. Draw me, O Lord; I am Thine own, I adore Thee, I thank Thee for making me Thine own, Thy very own. Ah, Lord Jesus, I hate all that stands between me and Thee. I want to love—O make me love Thee at any cost.

Colloquy.—Let us ask grace to understand the mystery of the Cross. O Jesus, my King, my God, who didst die for me, and hadst so great a desire to die in order to obtain my love, grant me this grace—to value and love the cross—increase my confidence in Thee, strengthen my will to follow Thee faithfully and constantly. Yes, dear Lord, I do wish to follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest—I do not wish to live any longer for myself, but for Thee alone, and for Thy love. O dear Jesus, assist me by Thy grace. "Passion of Christ strengthen me!" "Holy Mary, imprint deeply in my heart the wounds of thy Crucified Son."

VII.—THE WASHING OF THE FEET

(John xiii. 2-20.)

1st Prelude: History.—"And when supper was done, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him: knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came from God, and goeth to God: He riseth from Supper, and layeth aside His garments; and having taken a towel, girded Himself. After that he putteth water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of His disciples, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith
Mediation on the Passion

He was girded.” After the washing of the feet Jesus explained His reason for so doing.

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—The supper room. Make a living picture—take my place amongst the disciples that I may share in this great mystery.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To know the Heart of Jesus—His spirit—that I may be of one mind with Him. Dear Jesus, wash me yet more and more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sins. Create a clean heart in me, Jesus, my dear Master, and renew a right spirit with me. Give me grace and light to understand the lessons Thou teachest me in this mystery.

Points: I. Our Lord’s object in washing His disciples’ feet.
   II. The washing of the feet.
   III. The great and important lesson Jesus gives us by washing His disciples’ feet.

I

OUR LORD’S OBJECT IN WASHING HIS DISCIPLES’ FEET

Jesus had a twofold aim in view in performing this unusual action at the Last Supper.

1. He intended to give the Apostles a significant answer to their dispute about the order of their rank. Jesus wishes to teach them humility and charity—that the aim of those in authority is not to be the gratification of selfishness and love of authority, but the welfare of those under them—that the exercise of their office is a service—rendered not as a mark of gracious condescension and kindness, but as a matter of duty: a service of loving humility and humble charity. This is the lesson our Lord wished to inculcate upon all His Apostles.

2. The second aim or object of our Lord was undoubtedly a mystical one—viz., to impart to His Apostles purity and conformity with Himself—that they might perform their Apostolic work worthily and perseveringly: possibly too, the ceremony was to be their immediate preparation, by an increase of purity and faith, for the reception of the Blessed Sacrament, as Jesus Himself mysteriously hints. Our Lord prepares even the wretched Judas, in the way best suited to him. He warns him once more by predicting his evil deed plainly and positively, and points out the hideousness of the crime in all its blackness, ingratitude, and callousness,—for Judas turns against the hand that gives him food, like a brute beast. Lastly, Jesus shows that it is an offence against God Himself, for whoever receives or ill-treats our Lord, receives or ill-treats Him that sent Him.

Jesus seems to have been most anxious to impress this lesson deeply upon the minds of His Apostles. This is shown in the way in which He gives it. In the first place—He does so more strikingly than on any previous occasion. He had already taught the Apostles this lesson twice before, but never in such an earnest and impressive manner. Secondly,
The Washing of the Feet

He does this just before His death, and so that the lesson forms, so to speak, a part of His last will. Thirdly, Jesus uses every means to impress this lesson upon His Apostles, by word and deed, first, by washing their feet, and, then, explaining why He did so.

II

THE WASHING OF THE FEET

Let us see the persons—listen to the words—consider the actions—then reflect and draw fruit for our souls.

As Jesus looks round on those faithful friends who have remained with Him in all the troubles of His public life, He reads their hearts. They are honest, upright hearts, without guile or malice, all, except one. He longs to be more closely united with them. But He misses a virtue in them which of all others is dearest to Him—one that is not always a very great favourite with us perhaps—but is very dear to our Lord, and has a wonderful power over His Heart wheresoever He finds it—that virtue is humility. Mary’s humility drew Him down from Heaven—we can never have too much for Him.

But the Apostles had little love for humility—they liked outward show and honour, they liked working miracles, casting out devils, preaching to an adoring crowd. They turned against the mere mention or thought of shame, humiliation, suffering. Jesus had tried for the last three years to humble them, to keep them in their place. This very night even, they had been again disputing and aiming at the highest places. Now they must learn their lesson—for He cannot give Himself to the proud. He exalts the humble, but the proud He sends empty away. Jesus will Himself give them an example of the spirit He looks for in His own.

Rising from table, He lays aside His upper garment, takes water in a basin, girds Himself with a towel, and kneels before Peter to wash his feet. Peter, with wide open eyes, has watched our Lord make the preparations. He cannot believe his senses. Jesus! his Master and Lord—the Son of the Living God!—wash his feet!

Completely bewildered, Peter cries out: “Lord, dost Thou wash my feet!” “What I do thou knowest not now, Jesus answered, but thou shalt know hereafter.” Jesus was so calm, so meek, so resolute. But Peter could not bring himself to obey, and answered in his rough loyal-hearted way: “Thou shalt never wash my feet”—Jesus knows Peter, one word will overcome him, one threatening word: “If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me.”

Away went Peter’s wilfulness—bowing his head and stretching out his hands he cried out: “Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head!” Jesus said: “He that is washed, needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly. And you are clean, but not all.” Jesus knew their hearts: they were all true but Judas—and He was using all means, every opportunity, to draw the unhappy man from the misery
of his crime. Kneeling before each Apostle, Jesus washed his feet. Try to realize their feelings of humiliation, reverence, and love, as Jesus, their Blessed Master, occupied himself with each. How He spoke to their hearts, purified them from defects, urged them to the practice of humility and charity—those virtues so dear to His Sacred Heart, and so necessary, as without them there can be no close union with Himself. The more earnestly we endeavour to excel in humility and charity, the more pure we shall become. Our Lord will then be able to say to us, "ye are clean." We have always need of the purification that these virtues will effect, for as long as we dwell in these corruptible bodies we shall contract stains which may be instantly effaced by self-humiliation, contrition, and love.

The Saints of God were clean of heart, but still as they walked through life they contracted some little dust of this world, and this they carefully washed away by their daily acts of humiliation and love. And so pleasing to God is the practice of these virtues, that He suffers these human frailties to remain in His faithful servants that their continual humility might gladden Him, for these proceed from love and win for them ever new graces and light. "A soul that truly loves its own abjection will never want God's pity." "A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." Let us strive to merit these words from the lips of Jesus, ye are clean. What a pain it must have been to the faithful Heart of Jesus to add, but not all. To have loved His own, and that even to the end, as St. John tells us, and yet to be repulsed, despised, and betrayed by that one soul was an agony to the human Heart of Jesus that we shall never fathom in this life.

Judas' turn came. With exceeding great love our Lord bathed that poor sinner's feet and, tender as a mother, wiped them. How tenderly Jesus handles these feet that have wandered far from Him. How much Jesus longs to make him clean, but Judas hardens his heart still more. No sign of sorrow, no passing gleam of hope softened the traitor's heart—he will not co-operate with the abundance of light and grace offered. Jesus turns sadly away! How many times and in how many ways Jesus tried to move this hardened heart. But He will never constrain the free will of His creatures. The Apostles were humble now: for nothing humbles us so much as seeing the humiliation of one we venerate and love. They had seen their Lord and Master kneel before them, lose the latchet of their shoes, and wash their dust-stained feet. A great remedy for a great evil. Oh, let us learn the great lesson here.

Colloquy.—O Infinite Goodness, I love you, and I want to love you with all my strength; I wish to do everything in my power to please you. Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like to Thine. Help me, dear Lord, to understand the value of humiliations; strengthen my will to embrace them generously when the opportunity offers, and so in some little way, and through love, to imitate Thee. O infinite love, my God, I believe in Thee. I love Thee. O Mary, my Mother, intercede for me.
The Washing of the Feet

III

THE GREAT AND "IMPORTANT" LESSON JESUS GIVES US BY WASHING HIS DISCIPLES' FEET

There was silence in the room. Having resumed His garments and re-seated Himself in their midst, Jesus again addressed them: "Know you what I have done for you?" Look at the rapt attention of the Apostles as they gather closer to their dear Master. Jesus looks with love on each and all, and asks so tenderly: "Know you what I have done to you? When I created you, when I died for you? When I forgave you, not seven times, but seventy times seven times, and much more? When I planned My Blessed Eucharist for you, and gave you My Blessed Mother to be a Mother to you? When I called you to follow me, to be my intimate companion, friend, apostle? Know you what I intend to do for you, when you have fought the good fight, and when your work here on earth is done?

"You call Me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that as I have done, so you do also. Amen, amen, I say to you, the servant is not greater than his Lord, neither is the Apostle greater than He that sent Him. If you know these things, you shall be blessed if you do them."

This act of washing with His Sacred Hands the feet of His disciples is intended by our Lord to teach us the happiness of performing menial services for those around us. To wait on others, especially on our inferiors, for Christ's sake, is far more honourable than to be waited on by them; to make ourselves the servants of others is far more noble than to be served by them. Is this the principle on which I act? Again, this act combines the two virtues which are most prominent in our Lord's life on earth, charity and humility. Charity takes pleasure in everything that promotes the happiness or comfort of others and of all with whom we live, because they are the brothers and sisters of Christ. Humility takes pleasure in whatever puts us into an inferior position. Jesus gives us powerful motives to overcome selfishness and pride, and to acquire the virtues of charity and humility.

1. His own example, which we learn to comprehend in some measure, when we reflect who He is. Great stress is laid upon this in the words of St. John, that our Lord did this "knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands, and that He came from God, and goeth to God," that is, in the full possession and consciousness of His dignity as God-Man. Our Lord calls Himself a little later "Master and Lord," and draws the special attention of His disciples to the position in which He stands to them: "You call me Master and Lord: and you say well, for so I am. If I then, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so do you also."
—adding that "the servant is not greater than his Lord; neither is the Apostle greater than He that sent Him."

Who can compare himself to our Lord? And yet Jesus performs in person this office of love and humility. And upon whom? Upon His Apostles and servants. And in what does this service consist? In washing their feet—that is, performing the lowest and most servile office that was usually done by slaves. What, then, ought we not be ready to do for our fellow-men? What may we consider beneath our dignity?

2. The second motive is our Lord's express wish. He says He has given us this example, in order that we may imitate it.

3. The third motive is the reward that our Lord promises for this humility and charity: "If you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." How happy the house in which this spirit prevails. On the other hand, our Lord, in His words to Peter, gives us to understand, that whoever will not accept this lesson will have no part with Him—no part in His spirit, His character, or His life. Our Lord also points to the future reward in Heaven: "And there shall come from the east and the west and the north and the south; and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God. And behold, they are last that shall be first, and they are first that shall be last." In heaven service and sacrifice cease, and are replaced by rest, abundance, and dominion, even special power and glory. Even on earth the humble and charitable earn honour and respect.

This is the great and important lesson that our Lord gives us all by washing His Disciples' feet—charity and humility: loving humility and humble charity. We must have both. Humility without charity is like the bright but cold light of the moon; charity without humility is but a transient flame that soon expires. It is the union of these two virtues that characterizes the Church and Christianity. The Church, the Saints, and all our Lord's true servants and Apostles have always borne this character of His Sacred Heart.

Have I the dispositions with which Jesus washed His Disciples' feet? What progress have I made in these virtues? "Look and do according to the pattern" (Exod. xxv.) is a word that our dear Master is always silently saying to us as we contemplate His sacred life and Passion. He says to each of us: "If you know these things, you shall be blessed if you do them." When, therefore, we have an inward perception of a Gospel truth, then we must, with our will, labour earnestly to obtain grace to do what we have learned, remembering always that even when "the spirit is willing the flesh is weak."

Christ's words are true: "The disciple is not greater than his master." If our Divine Master was glorious in the sight of the Angels as He stooped to wash the Apostles' feet, our road to glory must be by stooping, by ministering in all humility to others. We never can be as great as our Master. We must take care lest our selfishness and pride place us in direct contrast with the Son of God. "He that is the
greater among you, let him become as the younger: and he that is the
tleader, as he that serveth. For who is the greater, he that sitteth at
table or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at table? But I am
in the midst of you as he that serveth.” Jesus, looking at His dear
disciples with an emotion of joy, added, with a thrill of tenderness and
love: “And you are they who have continued with Me in my tempta-
tions; and I will dispose to you, as My Father hath disposed to Me, a
kingdom.” The courageous fidelity of His own will not be in vain.
The Son of Man will not always be in the wine-press of tribulation;
the days of triumph will come. “And I say to you, that you shall eat
and drink at My table in My kingdom: and shall sit upon thrones judg-
ing the tribes of Israel.” “Our God is a faithful God.”

COLLOQUY.—With the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He says to me:
If through Divine love thou exercisest humility and charity towards
all, whosoever they may be, thou, My child, wilt assuredly be the good
odour of My Heart for all who shall see thy example. And, although
others should not profit by thy example, thou shalt be no less dear to
My Heart. Blessed is the soul who, by the example of a humble
charity, shall so shine before others as to show that the goodness of
My Heart is to be loved and imitated!

O meek and humble Jesus, my blessed Lord and Master, I need Thy
powerful grace to do the things which Thou teachest me. I beseech
Thee, dear Jesus, to help me with Thy most efficacious aid. O Sacred
Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me. Dear Jesus, grant me to
follow Thee faithfully and to imitate Thee closely—make me a perfect
disciple of Thy Heart. Free me, dear Lord, from the selfishness and
bitterness of pride and self-love; render my heart like Thine, always
kind, and ever animated with humble charity towards all. “Virgin
Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.”

VIII.—THE INSTITUTION OF THE BLESSED
EUCARIST
(Mark xiv.; Matt. xxvi.; Luke xxii.)

1st Prelude: History.—After our Lord had washed the feet of His
Apostles, He proceeded to institute the Holy Eucharist. This is the
centre and soul of all that takes place at the Last Supper, and the fulfil-
ment of the great promise made by Jesus about a year before in the
Synagogue of Capharnaum; it is a mystery of the highest importance
and widest range for the whole Church and Christian religion. “And
whilst they were at supper Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke
and gave to His disciples, and said: ‘Take ye, and eat: this is My Body
And taking the chalice He gave thanks; and gave to them, sayin’
‘Drink ye all of this. For this is My Blood of the New Testam
which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins. And I
Meditation on the Passion

I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I shall drink it with you in the Kingdom of My Father." (Matt. xxvi. 26-29).

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—The Supper-room, where I shall be present and observe all that is said and done. Note the silence, awe, reverence, the rapt attention with which every eye follows the Master. Oh, let us give heed now, and watch with our eyes, and with our ears listen; for the time that the blessed Angels have been spending in expecting ecstasy is past—the moment chosen by the Eternal Father has arrived: and Jesus, holding the bread in His Sacred Hands, is about to pronounce that word—more wonderful than the word which created all things in the beginning—"This is My Body."

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To see, and know, and realize the love of Jesus in giving Himself to me in the Holy Eucharist. Ah, dear Lord, give me that intimate knowledge which will fill my heart with a strong, enthusiastic overmastering, personal love of Thee. Draw me closer and closer to Thee, dear Jesus; this is my whole desire, that my heart may be united to Thee.


II. The Institution of the Blessed Eucharist.

III. How the Apostles received the Holy Eucharist.

I

WHAT OUR LORD DOES IN THE INSTITUTION OF THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

St. Paul tells us with pointed emphasis that it was on the very night in which He was betrayed that our Lord instituted the Mystery of Mysteries, the Sacrament of His Love. It was worthy of His love and Divine generosity to choose the occasion when He was to be outraged, insulted, betrayed, and scourged, and crucified, to invent this wondrous Sacrament of Love. To forgive is always generous, but what shall we say of the generosity of One who not only forgives the most horrible insults and cruelty, but chooses the very day on which He is to suffer them for giving to His enemies a gift compared to which all other gifts are small and insignificant—a gift, too, which is none other than Himself.

By instituting the Holy Eucharist Jesus does three very important things:

1. He founded quite a new form of His existence and Personal Presence in this world. This new existence of His has four qualities: (a) It is a real, true and essential presence of Jesus, although He is visible, concealed under the appearances of bread and wine. This grows from the simple words by which it is instituted; from its object, our Lord decrees, in accordance with His wisdom, power, and love, "unto last wü and to leave us a memorial of Himself; and from the
teaching and belief of the Church in all ages. (b) This presence of Jesus is most marvellous as regards His Body as well as the continuance of the outward appearances; indeed, it is entirely produced and maintained by a miracle. (c) Jesus’ Presence is continual, never-ending, and multiplied a countless number of times, so that He is now in all parts of the world, which He has promised never to forsake. (d) The Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is most efficacious, because it elevates the Church and makes her the true Bride and mystical Body of Christ, and comforts her in the exile of this life.

2. Jesus institutes in the Holy Eucharist the Sacrifice of the New Testament. Christ has instituted the Holy Eucharist by a sacrifice, or made a sacrifice by instituting it, and has ordained that this sacrifice should be continued throughout all ages. The very words He used denote a sacrifice, and not merely a sacrament. He says: “This is My Body, which is given for you. My Blood which shall be shed for you” (Luke xxii. 19-20). To shed blood for the remission of sins is, in other words, to sacrifice. The Holy Mass is precisely the sacrifice of the Last Supper—a sacrifice of the greatest efficacy and of infinite value. And this on account of the High Priest who is Christ Himself; on account of the sacramental gift which is again Christ, under the appearances of bread and wine; and on account of its effects on the whole Church—militant, suffering, glorious or triumphant.

3. Jesus appoints and defines the essence of the Sacrament—its effects—commands us to receive it—and ordains the Catholic Priesthood. The essence of this Sacrament—the Body and Blood of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. Its effects—the most intimate union with Christ under the form of food. The Eucharist is the Sacrament of Life—it preserves and increases the life of sanctifying grace, and marvellously develops it, especially through the actual graces it bestows for the extirpation of sinful concupiscence and the increase of love, joy, zeal, and courage. Jesus commands us to receive this Sacrament: “Take ye and eat . . . drink ye all of this” (Matt. xxvi., Mark xiv.). The Eucharist is the greatest and most glorious Sacrament, the end, crown, perfection, and seal of all Sacraments, by virtue of what it contains—CHRIST HIMSELF—and of its glorious effects.

Lastly, Jesus founds with the Institution of the Holy Eucharist the Catholic Priesthood, which is to perpetuate this Sacrament and Sacrifice. It is certain that in the words, “Do this for commemoration of Me,” He made the Apostles priests of the New Covenant. All the power of the priesthood has its source in the Eucharist—its power over the true Body of Christ—its power over the mystical Body of Christ—the faithful. The priesthood derives its influence and honour among the Catholic people, and also its purity, holiness, strength and invincible might from this most holy Sacrament—from which, indeed, all graces come. In this Sacrament of the Altar our Lord has poured out upon us all the riches of His love. St. Thomas had good reason to call this Sacrament
the Sacrament of Love, and a pledge of the most wonderful love which God could bestow upon man. St. Bernard calls it "Love of loves."

Colloquy.—Ah, God of Infinite Goodness, enlighten me and make me comprehend the excess of goodness which induced Thee to become my food. Dear Lord Jesus, Thou hast given Thyself wholly to me, it is just I should give myself all to Thee. Yes, dear Lord, I do give myself to Thee entirely and for ever. Come, Lord Jesus, come, take entire possession of me.

II

THE INSTITUTION OF THE MOST BLESSED EUCHARIST

The moment for giving the gift has come. Our Lord’s love can wait no longer. He must come nearer and nearer to those friends of His; they must feel within them the throb of His Sacred Heart, His Blood must flow in their veins, His strength support them when the hour of temptation comes. When death is about to interpose an insurmountable barrier between those whom the bonds of friendship had long united, their love seems to acquire additional vehemence, and they eagerly avail of the last opportunity left them to testify its ardour and solidarity.

The mortal life of Jesus had been but one uninterrupted manifestation of charity towards men, but not satisfied with this, not contented with shedding the last drop of His Blood for our salvation, He determined when the last hour of His mortal life had come, and the hour of His return to the Father had arrived, to leave us yet another and a stronger pledge of His devoted love. A stronger pledge!—and could there be a more substantial proof of love than the sacrifice of life? Ah! what is impossible to man is not impossible to the love of a God.

Awe-struck at the unparalleled humility of their Divine Master, the Apostles awaited in deep silence the development of some new and yet more wondrous mystery; they read in the impressive majesty of the Saviour’s countenance a revelation of something greater, grander, and holier than had been disclosed to them yet. Jesus took bread into His holy and venerable hands, and, with His eyes lifted up to Heaven, returning thanks to God, His Father, He blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to His Disciples, saying: “Take ye, and eat: this is My Body, which shall be delivered for you; this do for the commemoration of Me.” “And taking the chalice, giving thanks He gave it to them. And they drank of it. And He said to them: ‘This is My Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for you.’”

See and contemplate our Jesus, full of love for His own even to the last. See Him as He takes the bread into His sacred and venerable hands, and lifting up His eyes to His Heavenly Father, becomes transfigured, His countenance shining like the sun, and His Heart on fire with love for us; He blesses the bread and transsubstantiates it into His own most Blessed Body, leaving it to His Church in memory of His charity towards men. Taking the chalice, He did in like manner. Oh, the
charity, the power, and wisdom of our Lord. He gives us Himself. He could do no more. He gives Himself under the form of bread and wine, that He may be our food, and that we may be intimately united and one with Him, He changing us into Himself, not we changing Him into ourselves.

Bending low in adoration, the Apostles received their Lord, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. As simply as Simeon took the Infant God from His Mother's arms, do they take Him from Himself. They hear His word and believe. They receive Him and adore. O prodigy! At the moment the words, "This is My Body; this is My Blood," were pronounced, the substance of bread and wine were changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ Himself—Jesus Christ, the Joy of Angels, the terror of devils, the Redeemer of men—"Jesus Christ, the Judge of the living and the dead"—"Jesus Christ, in whose name every knee should bow, of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (Phil. ii. 10). And Jesus our loving God and Saviour gives Himself in the Sacrament of love at the very time when man's ingratitude was plotting how to invent the utmost efforts of its malice against Him. Oh, the infinite goodness, liberality, meekness and love of our dear Lord!

And Judas, as he bent his knee and received the Living Bread and the Consecrated Chalice, did he think of another Feast to which one came not having on the wedding garment? Did he think of the weeping and gnashing of teeth reserved for those who receive unworthily? Another chance thrown away, and with his heart more hardened still, he leaves the supper-room and goes out into the exterior darkness. O loving, outraged Heart of Jesus, defend me against myself—never let me be unfaithful to Thee. May my life henceforth be one of loyal, loving devotion to Thee—"Amorem tui solum."

In the Holy Eucharist Jesus gives the most precious gift which even His omnipotence and liberality can bestow—His SACRED HEART—the very source and centre of love. In exchange for so invaluable a gift, Jesus asks our whole heart, that He may unite us to Himself—that He may heal and purify us; that He may enlighten us with His truth, and inflame us with His love. Shall I not give Him my heart without delay and without reserve? Love is self-sacrifice, and the Eucharist is a sacrifice, a constant and never-ending sacrifice. It is the Sacrament of love—the supreme act of Jesus' love. Love is the communication of oneself; and our Lord could not give more than He gives us in the Eucharist, nor could He do it in a more gracious and loving way. How completely our Jesus lays aside all His glory here, and how lowly and familiar He makes Himself! We cannot imagine our Lord instituting this great mystery of love otherwise than with the most intense love—the very words with which He began His Last Supper, "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you," point to this.

Our Lord instituted the Eucharist with great joy, on account of the glorious results that were to proceed from it. It is itself a great and glorious world of grace and holiness. Jesus saw all the Masses, all the
Communions, all the altars that would make His thrones; all the moments that He would pass in this world; all those who would approach to the Holy Eucharist. He saw all the streams of grace, sanctification, comfort, and zeal that they would draw from this source; all the honour and glory that God would derive from its nature and use. What a grand and wonderful institution—an act of infinite love! How can we ever make reserves with so good and loving a Master! The Eucharist is a continuation of the Incarnation. In it Jesus communicates Himself to every human heart, and becomes in very truth the vine that bears God's plants, sending the sap of His Divine life into all their branches and shoots, and causing them to blossom and bear the fruit of eternal life.

Is not the Blessed Sacrament the magnet and force by which our Lord draws all souls—particularly Religious—to Himself, and makes them one with Himself? Jesus saw all this, and His Sacred, loving, human Heart rejoiced unspeakably over it. But if it was with great love and joy Jesus instituted the most Blessed Eucharist, it was also with feelings of pain and sorrow, for our dear Lord saw this Eucharistic life surrounded and clouded by dark and terrible shadows of ingratitude, unbelief, and outrage. The precursor of those who would make Him this unworthy return—a living example of this unbelief, callousness, and ingratitude—was sitting by His side in the person of Judas. In him our Lord saw the terrible future of His Eucharistic existence. It was a bitter chalice in return for the chalice of sweetness and salvation that He was offering to those human hearts He so loved and longed to benefit. Surely His Heart must have shuddered at it. But these tempestuous waves of sorrow did not terrify Him; His love unhesitatingly pursued its way to our heart.

Shall I not offer to that adorable Heart the only return it desires or values—the unreserved love of my own heart—a generous, sincere, fervent, faithful love, a love as worthy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as I can make it? O Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, I adore Thee: reign over me, possess me, dwell with me always, encompass me. I want to be ruled by Thee, O my dear Jesus, to obey Thy injunctions with prompt docility, to conform my will to Thy will, and follow Thy inspirations with punctual fidelity. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me: "Take O Lord, take and receive my entire liberty! Give me Thy love—'Amorem tui solum'—Rabboni, Jesus, Thou alone art my Master."

III

HOW THE APOSTLES RECEIVED THE HOLY EUCHARIST

The Apostles made their First Communion (1) with the most childlike, simple faith. The Holy Eucharist is above all things a mystery of faith. Probably our Lord gave a full instruction, explaining everything, telling the Apostles that He was now about to put into actual execution what He had promised sometime previously in the synagogue at Capernaum. And they receive our Lord's words with the same childlike
The Institution of the Blessed Eucharist

faith now as they had done then, because He, their dear Master, Teacher and God, speaks to them: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (John vi. 69-70).

(2) The Apostles received the Body of our Lord with great purity of heart. Our Lord Himself affirmed this, saying that they were all pure except Judas, and only needed to be cleansed from slight stains. This cleansing was accomplished by means of the washing of their feet, in consequence of the heartfelt acts of humility and love that our Lord's example evoked in them.

(3) They received the Holy Communion with a great desire to participate in the marvellous treasures and graces that our Lord had promised them. How the hearts of Peter and John must have burned at the reception of the wondrous food.

Lastly, the Apostles received the Body of our Lord with heartfelt gratitude and ardent love. Love is the best thanksgiving and the most beautiful effect of Holy Communion. And they remained faithful to His love, in the main, even in the most terrible hours of His Passion, which were just coming upon them. Such was the celebration of the first Holy Communion and the first Mass. What great things our Lord does in this one mystery! Without the Eucharist, we should have suddenly lost our Lord from this earth nineteen centuries ago. What could earth offer us without the Blessed Sacrament? Our souls would pine away and die in spite of all abundance of temporal things. For everything we find on earth is perishable except this Bread of life.

And what a happiness, what an honour it is, for so many thousands of men, that they can now participate in the true and glorious priesthood of Christ! The institution of the Holy Eucharist was indeed the dawn of a new life and happiness for Heaven and earth. How shall we ever be able to thank our Lord enough for it? This most holy of all the Sacraments ought in very truth to be the centre and magnet of our thoughts and hearts, indeed of our whole lives.

"O precious, magnificent, saving banquet, replete with every delight! By it sins are cleansed away, virtues increased, the mind is enriched with the abundance of all graces" (St. Antoninus). A spiritual and interior person finds in the partaking of the Body of Christ Jesus twelve excellent fruits: fortitude to forsake easily earthly and perishable things; progress in things relating to salvation and perfection; elevation of the soul above whatever is outside of God; strength to practise good; enlightenment of the understanding more perfectly to know God and all things which are seen in the mirror of eternity; fervour of love for God; fulfilment of those things which beget happiness; a treasure of wealth; a constant cheerfulness of spirit; a certain secure firmness; perfect peace; union of the soul with God (Tauler).

Colloquy.—Enliven and increase my faith, most loving Jesus, increase it unceasingly; strengthen my hope and confidence. Enkindle and inflame my love. O Jesus, the life and delight of my soul! how
unutterable is the love wherewith Thou didst love me! Who am I, and who art Thou, that Thou dealest with so great love and mercy towards me? O love incomprehensible! O most sweet Jesus, how shall I live, if I live not for Thee? O Lord, the principle, the support, the end of my life! Grant, I beseech Thee, dear Jesus, that I may live for Thee alone—"Amorem tui solum"—that I may live from this day, henceforth, united to Thee, that I may live through Thee and for Thee, to the glory and joy of Thy Sacred Heart.

Assist me, most kind Lord, that I may prove my love for Thee indeed, and may ever derive from Holy Communion abundant fruit of sanctification. This is my whole desire, that my heart may be united to Thee. O that with Thy Presence Thou wouldst set me all on fire, burn and transform me into Thyself, that I may be made one spirit with Thee by the grace of internal union and by the melting of ardent love.

IX.—LAST WARNING AND DISMISSAL OF JUDAS

(John xiii.; Matt. xxvi.; Luke xxii.)

1st Prelude: History.—"When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit; and He testified, and said: Amen, Amen, I say to you: one of you shall betray Me. The disciples therefore looked upon one another, doubting of whom He spoke. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, and said to him: 'Who is it, of whom He speaketh?' He therefore leaning on the breast of Jesus saith to Him: 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus answered: 'He it is to whom I shall reach bread dipped.' And when He had dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the morsel, Satan entered into him. And Jesus said to him: 'That which thou dost, do quickly. . . . He therefore having received the morsel, went out immediately. And it was night.'"

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—Supper-room—living picture—look at Jesus—at each Apostle—let me draw very close to Jesus, be actually present.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To know the Heart of Jesus; to realize how unfaithfulness and cowardice on the part of His own, pain His loving Heart—that Sacred human Heart of Jesus. Grace never to be mean and niggardly in the service of such a Master—never to turn my back on Him for any consideration.

Points: I. Once more Jesus predicts the treachery of Judas, and warns him.

II. Jesus reveals the traitor.

III. Jesus dismisses the traitor.
Once More Jesus Predicts the Treachery of Judas, and Warns Him

Jesus was troubled in spirit—"Amen, Amen, I say to you: one of you is about to betray Me." Let me draw closer to my dear Master as He utters these words; see the tender, troubled look of each Apostle as they look at Jesus, seeking light—anguish indeed in each heart at the possibility of such a treason. "Master, is it I?" they say in turn. When they looked into the Master's face the glow of love and exultation with which He had made them and us the greatest of His gifts had passed away, and once more there had settled on His brow the anguish of a friend betrayed.

Three times Jesus disclosed the terrible secret, which is an oppressive sorrow weighing down His Heart. We can hardly conceive the anguish of the wound left in the tender and grateful loving Heart of Jesus by the ingratitude and treachery and apostacy of one of His own chosen Twelve. To Judas He could say as truly as to the rest: "You have not chosen Me but I have chosen you—I have called you friend, because all things whatsoever I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." To Judas as to the rest He gave power to work miracles, power over all devils, and to preach the Kingdom of God. And in a special way He could call Judas "My friend and My familiar."

"What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard and have not done it? Yet I planted thee a chosen vineyard, all true seed: how then art thou turned unto Me that which is good for nothing, O strange vineyard!" These words find in the Heart of Jesus, that faithful, loving, compassionate Heart, their most intense expression. We can picture to ourselves the insolent scoffing of Lucifer, his blasphemous triumphing when he tears away from Jesus Christ one specially chosen, one whom Jesus has been endeavouring to keep—"as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wing."

"One of you is about to betray Me." Alas! how often in the past have I parted with my Blessed Master for some carnal, worldly satisfaction. Even if I had never sinned, I ought to work out my salvation with fear and trembling, lest I should ever come to betray Jesus, my Lord and my God, and fall under the terrible power of Lucifer. One reason why the Holy Spirit gives us that most necessary advice: Be not without fear about sins forgiven—because all the damage done is not thoroughly repaired. There is left behind a predisposition to relapse. Therefore spiritual guides like Father Alvarez teach their children not only to look back at past sins, to foster abiding sorrow and maintain the soul in humility, but also to make the examination of foresight—to look forward with care and solicitude to see what dangers are ahead.

"One of you is about to betray Me." "But yet," our Lord seems sadly to say—in spite of the touching love and magnanimity
that He has shown him in the mystery of the Eucharist, Judas yet entertains the project of betraying Him—"But yet the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table." Jesus would show Judas his criminal project in all its baseness and shamefulness, by referring to the great benefit of the Eucharist that had been vouchsafed to him, and against which he had sinned.

Our Lord again lays stress upon the terrible punishment in store for him, saying: "Woe to the man by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed!" "They began every one to say one by one—Is it I, Lord?" Every one, one by one—for each soul is a distinct and separate world. What profit is it to us that our nearest neighbour is good and faithful if we are not. Man, each man, is created to save his soul—his own soul. No one can do that for us. Each stands out clear and distinct before our Lord—"Is it I, Lord?" Jesus was troubled in spirit, He gives outward expression to the emotions of His Heart—grief, compassion, and horror of the deed and its punishment. Watch well Jesus' sorrowful face, and listen to His every word.

This is the third time He has allowed His overwhelming sorrow at Judas' treason to show itself. Perhaps Jesus sees Satan making a desperate struggle to secure his prey. We have here an exact picture of our Lord's way of dealing with our own souls. He has given us free-will, and will not take it away, nor coerce us; but He will kneel to us, as He did to Judas, and again and again speak words to soften our stony hearts. Ah! let us not wait for the long leisure of Purgatory to multiply acts of grief for the times without number when we hardened our hearts against our Blessed Lord's voice speaking within: "I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, and you have not obeyed Me. And I have sent you all My servants the Prophets, rising early and sending, and you have not inclined your ear or hearkened to Me" (Jer. xxxv.).

What have I to say to my Divine Master? How have I treated Him? O sweet Jesus! grant that the fervour of my future fidelity and love may at least equal my past ingratitude. O Lord, deal not with me according to my sins—pardon me, Lord Jesus, I most heartily regret my past infidelity which has grieved and wounded Thy adorable Heart. Mother of God, my Mother, plead for me with Thy most pure and faithful heart. Mother, I have need of thee!

II

**Jesus Reveals the Traitor**

"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved."

Look attentively—see and contemplate this living picture. St. Ignatius tells us to pray at each scene or mystery of our Lord's life, that we may know Him better and love Him ardently; and from knowledge will result a close imitation. For if we know well the loveliness of our Lord's character—all His tenderness, and true, affectionate
Last Warning and Dismissal of Judas

friendship—how can we fail to love Him and to follow Him? The enemy—the father of lies—is for ever poisoning our minds with calumnies against our Lord which estrange us from Him. Let us be wise, then, and study, and learn to know our dear Master, our Jesus, most intimately—look at Him attentively, and know from our own experience how loving and merciful He is.

Let us watch Him on this last night of His life—with all the horrors of His Passion present to Him—finding consolation in the loyal love of His dear disciples, particularly the disciple whom He loves with especial love. Dwell long on the scenes and words that reveal to us the charity and compassion of the Sacred Heart; let us cry to Him with the utmost confidence—"Wash me yet more and more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sins"—that at last I, too, may be among those whom Thou, my dear Lord, lovest with a special love.

The effect of the words "One of you shall betray Me" upon the disciples, was still more marked than had been the case with the other predictions, and thrilled them with anguish and sorrow. They looked on one another with grief and amazement, questioning among themselves who could be the traitor. Each feared for himself, and looking at Jesus asked: "Is it I, Lord?" Peter, always accustomed to act on the spur of the moment, made a sign to John, who was sitting where he could lean his head on our Lord's breast, and told him to ask who it was. So John inclined his head towards our Lord and said: "Lord, who is it?"

Then Jesus revealed the traitor. He did this to prove clearly that He knew everything, and suffered of His own free will. He did not make the revelation openly, however, but only to St. John, by means of a sign, saying: "It is he to whom I shall reach bread dipped." Our Lord acted thus to spare the traitor, to protect his honour and perhaps his life, for the disciples might very likely have laid violent hands on him; and lastly, in order not to hinder his own Passion and Death. What a marvellous example of gentleness, charity, and love of the Cross He again gives us here! All which prove Jesus' great love for me. Now let me reflect. What does our dear Lord teach me here? What have I been to our Lord in the past? What am I doing for Him now? What shall I do for Him, and be to Him?

III

JESUS DISMISSES THE TRAITOR

"And when He had dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas."

Oh, let us not fail to contemplate this new effort of our Blessed Lord's Heart to subdue the malice of Judas. With what infinite delight would Jesus forgive all the past if Judas would humbly say: I have sinned! "After the morsel Satan entered into him." Satan had long ago found entrance into the heart of Judas; but now, as the
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tempter persuaded him to reject every effort of the Divine Master to win him back, each resistance to grace produced an increase of hardness, blindness, and malice. As grace after grace is refused, Satan’s mastery becomes more complete, so that by this time the sin of Judas is already in thought fully committed and consummated; the father of lies is now undisputed master.

Our Lord gave the morsel to Judas—an action which in itself was a sign of special love and tenderness—and replied in an undertone to his question whether He had meant him in speaking of the traitor: “Thou hast said it.” Yes, it is you. Our Lord then added that, if he was determined to betray Him, he should do it at once. This was not a command to commit the sin, but rather a confirmation of His statement that Judas was the traitor; it was an expression of free consent, an acceptance of His death, and at the same time another form of dissuasion and reproach for Judas. Perhaps, too, the latter may have intended to wait until our Lord left the Cenaculum. But our Lord wished to be alone with His disciples now, so He apparently gave Judas an opportunity to get away, since the disciples did not understand what He meant, and only thought He was giving Judas a commission to procure something for the feast, or to perform some act of charity for the poor, as He seems to have been accustomed to do.

Judas, on the other hand, maintained all his callousness and hardness of heart; indeed, he had gone so far in his shamelessness as to ask our Lord to His face, Is it I, Lord? probably in order to keep up appearances before the other Apostles, who had put the question in all simplicity. At length his hardened impenitence led him to commit the deed. The giving of the morsel seems to have enraged him; perhaps he thought himself exposed now, or at all events did not feel quite safe among the Apostles any longer, after our Lord’s disclosures; so he rose and hurried away, at the same instant falling deeper and deeper into the power of Satan, who urged him on to the black deed. And, as St. John remarks, it was already dark outside—the right time for such a hideous crime. It was dark, too, in the heart of the wretched Apostle; never-ending night and the power of darkness reigned there.

Scarcely had Judas departed, when our Lord exclaimed: “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God also will glorify Him in Himself, and immediately will He glorify Him.” The betrayal was the last step which led to the Passion; and God is glorified by the Passion, because it is the victory over the world and the devil, and the revelation of His own justice and mercy. And God in His turn will immediately glorify our Lord and Saviour by various miracles during His Passion and Resurrection. What an insight into the Sacred Heart this mystery once more affords us! With what touching fidelity the Good Shepherd pursues the lost sheep and tries by every possible means to recover it. How carefully and conscientiously He protects the good name and ensures the safety of the reprobate Apostle.
Jesus discloses no more of the mystery of wickedness than higher considerations require Him to do. And we can see from His grieved and troubled spirit what pain the treason, wretchedness, impenitence, and very presence of Judas were to Him. Jesus exults with joy and relief when the traitor has gone. It is a Divine and wondrous joy, the cause of which, naturally speaking, could only pain, depress, and terrify a human heart. He sends away the traitor, and thus draws the meshes of the net more closely round Him. He will not escape from it again. Freely and joyfully Jesus enters the precincts of His Passion, because this is the glorification of His Father and the beginning of His own glorification. How marvellous are the sentiments and dispositions of the Sacred Heart of our Jesus—our dear Lord and Master.

Colloquy.—With the suffering Heart of Jesus. What has been my loyalty and fidelity in the past—am I a consolation to Him now? What shall I do to repair my past ingratitude? Prostrate at Thy Sacred feet, O Divine Jesus, I most heartily regret the many infidelities by which I have wounded Thy adorable, loving Heart. How repeatedly have I forsaken Thee, even after Thou hadst restored me to Thy grace and friendship! Mother, I have need of thee! Help me to repair the past, and to love and serve Jesus ever with renewed fervour.

X.—FAREWELL DISCOURSE OF JESUS

1st Prelude: History.—"Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me. If I shall go and prepare a place for you, I shall come again, and will take you to myself, that where I am you also may be." After the departure of Judas, Jesus addressed His Apostles in words of consolation and encouragement. He strengthens their faith, promises to send the Holy Spirit, and leaves them His peace.

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—The Supper-room—Jesus surrounded by His Apostles; the traitor is gone, so the atmosphere is pure, and the surroundings safe. Jesus is not among cold, indifferent, unbelieving souls, but surrounded by pure, childlike, loving hearts sincerely devoted to Him. Now He can speak heart to heart with His own. I shall keep close to my Lord and my God.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—Ah! more and more must I ask, and entreat and long for that grace of graces—the intimate knowledge of my Jesus. O Mother, I have need of thee. Teach me to know and love thy Son.

Points: I. Our Lord’s word of encouragement.

II. Proof of love.

III. "My peace I give to you.”
Meditation on the Passion

I

OUR LORD'S WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

As Judas went out the white light of the Paschal moon shone into the room and fell full on the Master's face. It was pale and troubled, and its trouble was reflected on all the faces round. The disciples were so accustomed to lean on Him that they could only see with blank dismay the cloud upon that brow hitherto serene in every storm. A dim apprehension of coming sorrow, of parting from Him who was all in all to them, weighed heavily on them, and they looked at Him helplessly for comfort.

He did not disappoint them. Never before had His words been so tender. Now Jesus can lay aside all reserve and open His Heart to His own, giving them confidence for confidence and love for love. He can now communicate unreservedly the deepest secrets of His Heart. Little children, He said, looking around upon them—they are His loved little ones whom Satan hates. "Yet a little while I am with you, you shall seek Me, but whither I go, you cannot come." Peter said to Him, "Lord, whither goest Thou?" Peter, though not sufficiently grounded in humility and mistrust of himself, has a strong love of our Lord, and is distressed at that word Jesus has spoken—"Whither I go you cannot come." Ah, blessed Apostle, obtain for me some share in thy love for Jesus, and in thy desire to be ever near to Him, and a great sorrow if I am not where He is.

Jesus said: "Thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me hereafter." "Why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thee." Peter presumes rashly that even now he can die for the beloved Master. Jesus answered him: "Wilt thou lay down thy life for Me? Amen, Amen, I say to thee, the cock shall not crow till thou deny Me thrice."

Peter deny the Master! The disciples are filled with apprehension. Of all the surprises to-night this was the greatest. Our Lord went on: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, and thou being once converted confirm thy brethren." From St. John's narrative we gather that our Lord uttered this sad warning before the celebration of the Holy Mysteries. After the Institution of the Blessed Eucharist, Jesus again repeated the warning, wishing to check in Peter his presumption and self-reliance.

Every act, every word of our Lord's speak of love. Jesus is about to leave His dear disciples, and must now give them His farewell instructions, which begin and end with words of loving encouragement. Jesus knew the importance of courage and confidence, and that without these they would never do great things for God. He knew, too, how liable we are to be discouraged and cast down when troubles and trials arise; how hard it is to struggle on when all seems dark around.
To us, as well as to the Twelve, He says: "Let not your hearts be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me." Why do we not believe more in Christ—the loving Heart of Jesus, our Master—trust Him more, appeal more to Him in times of desolation and darkness? He is always loving us, always pleading for us. O Jesus, make Thyself to me a living bright reality. He is the same Jesus yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He will always have a word of comfort for us—"Let not your heart be troubled, I go to prepare a place for you. Be not afraid, it is I. Arise, and fear not."

The Apostles were in some trouble of mind, and not without reason. Why? (1) Because Jesus, their dear Master, had told them that He was going. (2) And that He was going whither they could not follow. (3) Because He had said that Peter would follow later, and had not given any assurance to the rest. (4) Because He had told them that one of them was about to betray Him. (5) And lastly, because He had said that Peter would deny Him before the cock-crow. Therefore Jesus begins to prepare them by saying: "Let not your heart be troubled—you believe in God, believe also in Me." This is one of the many sentences whereby Jesus teaches that He is God, equal to the Father.

Our Lord wants to restore peace to their souls—they must be in peace whilst He speaks to them. He begins by helping them to an increase of faith—to believe in God and in Jesus means to believe in His omnipotent goodness. "Let not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a place for you. And I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you also may be."—the separation will be only for a time—all His own will rejoin Him.

It was by His Death, Resurrection, and Ascension that Jesus made all quite ready and opened the gates of Heaven. "And if I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you also may be." (1) I will come again after My Resurrection. (2) I will come again in the Holy Eucharist. (3) I will come again and take you to Myself at the hour of your death—if you are then ready.

"That where I am you also may be." This word comes from the very depth of our Lord's Heart. All His suffering life and His bitter death will be offered for this end. For this He took our human nature—for this He gives us His Body and His Precious Blood in the Blessed Eucharist. To this end, too, our Lady will devote herself—Our Lord might easily create as our eternal reward a Paradise unspeakably beautiful. But nothing can content His loving Heart but this—"that where I am you also may be."

If this is our Lord's wish that throughout eternity, "where I am you also may be," how fervently we ought to answer in the words of Ethai to David: "In what place soever thou shalt be, lord my king, either in death or in life, there shall thy servant be." Look into the eyes of Jesus—read there the love of His Heart for us—each one—dwell on this thought, that, if He wishes us to be with Him now in poverty,
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in labour, in lowliness, it is only that the union may be eternal in His Father’s home.

O Passion of Christ, strengthen me, that I may with courage and a cheerful heart deny myself, take up my cross, and follow Thee, Lord Jesus. Let me pray earnestly for courage to die to myself and the world for my Blessed Master. Rabboni! Take and receive my entire liberty. Mother, I have need of thee!

II

PROOF OF LOVE—RABBONI!

"He that hath My Commandments and keepeth them: he it is that loveth Me. And he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

Here Jesus carefully teaches us how true love shows itself. If you love Me keep My Commandments—do My will. Love is proved by deeds! In all the circumstances of life, from its most important events to its least details, the will of our Lord must be my actuating principle. How happy I am as a Catholic, especially if a religious, for I can never be in doubt as to God’s will—that will is always made clear to me by obedience. By giving myself up to perfect obedience I prove my love for Jesus, for then, indeed, do I keep His Commandments—do His blessed will.

Our Lord then adds this most powerful argument to move us to increase love in our hearts: “He that loveth Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him.” If our poor, small, miserable hearts will love the infinite loveliness and goodness of God, then the Eternal Father and His only Son will, with all their boundless power of loving, love us.

“I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.” Is it not then our want of love that keeps us in darkness and blindness; and hinders our Blessed Lord from manifesting Himself to us? Cleanse me, O God, O most kind and Merciful Jesus, from those hidden sins that deaden love in my soul. Mother of God, my mother, turn thine eyes of mercy towards me.

"Judas, not the traitor"—St. Jude—says to our Lord: “How is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself to us and not to the world?” The Apostle does not understand that our Lord, when He speaks of manifesting Himself, does not mean that He will render Himself visible to the eye, but through a lively faith, known to the soul. “Judas, not the traitor”—happy, thrice happy the religious the Apostle of Jesus after whose name the blessed Angels can add, “not the traitor,” not the sinner, or if once a sinner—now quite contrite.

Jesus answers and corrects the mistake of His Apostle. “If any one love Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will love him; and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him. He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My words.” Jesus will not only manifest Himself
to every soul that loves Him, but His Eternal Father will come with Him, and both will abide in that soul.

Here Jesus brings clearly before His own the doctrine of the Trinity, mentioning distinctly the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost. Let me recall with sorrow those hours in the past in which I may have driven God, my Father, my Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost my Comforter, out of my heart and given admittance to the enemy. Mother of God, pray for me a sinner now and at the hour of my death—"Know thou and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God" (Jer. ii.).

"He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My words." If we love anyone very much, we not only do what he commands, but we watch every sign of his will. If love grows cold, we become less keen to do our Lord's will. If there is no love of our Lord we break rules without difficulty—we drink iniquity like water. Therefore, our great effort must be to increase in love—study earnestly and constantly the life of our Lord—be generous—from knowledge springs love. Love is the greatest commandment of the Law—therefore, God requires it, and we can love—for God never requires impossibilities.

Let each of us remember that—"The beginning of wisdom is the most true desire of discipline, and the care of discipline is love: and love is the keeping of the laws: and the keeping of the laws is the foundation of incorruption: and incorruption bringeth near to God. Therefore the desire of wisdom bringeth to the everlasting kingdom" (Wisdom).

Love is the best separation for our past want of love. Remember our Lord's word to Magdalen: "Many sins are forgiven thee because thou hast loved much." Ah, Jesus, my Divine Master, shall I not love Thee, and love Thee always and ardently—and live for Thee only. Help me, dear Lord, to prove my love for Thee. Renew me wholly, I entreat Thee; create a clean heart in me, and renew a right spirit within me. Enliven me with Thy Spirit which will urge me strongly and gently to a more perfect imitation of Thee. Dearest Jesus, may all in me express my love for Thee. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me. O may my heart be disposed to offer Thee every sacrifice—"Veni, Domine Jesu." Mother, I have need of thee. Ah, show me Jesus, give me to Jesus. Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

III

"My peace I give you."

See the persons—listen to the words—consider the actions. Reflect! Our Blessed Lord is disposing and strengthening the souls of the Apostles more and more; raising them out of despondency, and increasing their faith, hope, and love—"I am going, but I leave My peace with you; not a false peace, such as the world gives, but true and real peace."

"My peace!" Peace was our Lord's first promise to men on the
night of His birth—peace to men of good will. And now that His last hour is at hand, He repeats His promise: "My peace I give you."

"Not as the world giveth." The peace which the world offers is that false, delusive peace which the Holy Ghost speaks of (Ecclus. 41), that peace which a man has in his possessions—a peace of the most fragile nature and entirely insecure; the moth can consume it, the thief can at any moment steal it. Our Lord gives a peace which the moth cannot spoil, nor the thief steal away from us. Jesus, our good Master, effects by His grace a thorough and complete cure, and deadens within us all the disturbing passions. The peace which our Lord gives is like a hardy evergreen which stands through all the blasts of winter. St. Paul was sure that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, could ever take this heavenly peace from him. Even death, which has such irresistible power to strip and consume, cannot deprive a servant of God of the peace of Christ. The first martyr’s face was bright as an Angel’s with joy when they were dragging him to death.

Amid all the troubles that our Lord foretells to His Apostles, He promises them one gift that will enable them to rise above all their difficulties and all their sorrows. He promises to leave with them His peace. What gift in the world is there which is like this? If we are at peace, we can bid defiance to all our foes; if we are not at peace, we might be lords of the universe, yet we should be miserable.

No wonder in Holy Mass we pray—"Dona nobis pacem" (Give us peace). Then remember the peace our Lord promises is His peace—"My peace I give unto you." What sort of peace is this? It is the peace He enjoyed all through His life—the peace of perfect union of His will with the Father’s. If we are thus united to God by perfect resignation, we too shall have unutterable and eternal peace.

Colloquy.—Dear Lord, say to my soul, "Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid"—let these blessed words sink into my soul and bring me courage and strength to conquer myself and be true till death; help me to prove to the world that I do indeed love Thee. Pour forth Thy grace, water my heart with the dew of Heaven; supply fresh waters of devotion, to wash the face of the earth of my heart, and to bring forth good and perfect fruit. Snatch me away, and rescue me from all fleeting consolation of creatures, for no created thing can fully quiet or satisfy my desire. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me. O Mother, I have need of thee!

XI.—ON THE ROAD TO GETHSEMANI

(Mark xiv. 26-34.)

1st Prelude: History.—"And when they had said a hymn, they went forth to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them: 'You will all be scandalized in my regard this night; for it is written: "I
will strike the shepherd, and the sheep shall be dispersed.” But, after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.’” The Apostles, still in some degree animated by the spirit of enthusiasm and devotion with which their reception of the Blessed Eucharist and the solemn and affecting words of Jesus had inspired them, eagerly press around our Lord, earnestly protesting that they will never abandon Him.

As Jesus continued to speak in the same strain, Peter exclaimed: “Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, I will never be scandalized!” Our Lord answered: “Amen, I say to thee, that in this night, before the cock-crow, thou wilt deny Me thrice.” But Peter still insisted, saying: “Yea, though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee.” And the others all said the same. They walked onwards and stopped, by turns, for the sadness of our Lord continued to increase.

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—Jesus and the eleven leaving the Cenacle—they cross the Cedron—walk along the left side of the brook, and make their way to the garden of Gethsemani. Let it be a living picture. Keep close to our Lord that I may hear Him, see Him, understand His spirit, realize His love.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To know Thee, Lord Jesus, and the greatness of Thy sufferings—Love is proved by Deeds—Sacrifice.

Points: I. Jesus leaves the Cenacle.
II. Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives.
III. Jesus enters the garden of Gethsemani.

I

JESUS LEAVES THE CENACLE

See the persons—hear the words—note the actions. Reflect! How much Jesus suffers here and how much He wishes to suffer. How the Divinity hides itself. And all for me—for my sins. What am I doing for Him? What shall I do?

After the sublime and glorious mysteries of the Last Supper had been accomplished, our Lord rose, and quitted the house in which He had celebrated the feast. The hour of the great conflict is now close at hand; let us watch and listen. We can contemplate during the short moments of preparation for departure how Jesus, rising, looks with great tenderness on the eleven, and says: “That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given Me command so do I; arise, let us go hence.”

What a lesson our Lord gives us here. Ah, Lord Jesus, may all know that I love Thee by the fervent, generous, persevering obedience I give Thee in Thy representatives. Like Thee, my Jesus, may these words, Thy very own, be always in my heart and on my lips: “Not my will, O Blessed Master, but Thine be done in every detail and circumstance of my life.” May Thy will be my actuating principle—may it rule every moment, dispose every step. May it be the object of
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my life, so that I may be able to say: "I do always the things that please Thee."

We can well imagine that before setting out our Lord would go aside with His Blessed Mother to say a parting word to her; to ask her to repeat once more her consent to all that He is about to do and to suffer. For still Jesus’ wish is to be to the end most filial, most reverent, most lovingly subject to her. "Say once again, my Mother, the word you said to the faithful Archangel, St. Gabriel: the word you have never retracted." We can contemplate how the Immaculate Mother would say now in quite a new sense, and with quite a new fervour, and filled with quite a new grace: "O my Son, O my God, behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word."

"They went forth." Why did our Lord not wish to be arrested in the Cenacle? There were probably three reasons. (1) Jesus wished to go to His Passion and Death of His own free will, and to avoid even the semblance of an involuntary surprise. In this respect no cloud was to be cast upon the majesty of His Passion. This was one of the points upon which His nobility of character made Him keenly sensitive.

(2) Our Lord did not wish His kind host to incur the annoyance, disturbance, or damage to property, which would have been inevitable in the case of a sudden armed attack.

(3) Jesus would not have the last hour of leave-taking, the quiet solemnity of the Paschal meal, the first celebration of the Sacred Mysteries, and His last familiar disclosures, warnings, and words of comfort disturbed and broken off by the violence of His enemies. The last hours of His freedom were to be passed in His wonted tranquility and majesty. That is why our Lord did not rise until He had completed all that He intended to do, and then quitted with His disciples the Cenacle on the heights of the upper city—Sion.

Note the kindness, consideration for others, care, Jesus takes of His own. What a devoted Master we serve! Why need any fear to follow Him? Let us ask for true devotion to our Blessed Lord and Master—to Mary our Mother. How is it, Lord Jesus, that I can persevere in being so ungrateful towards Thee? Do not suffer it any longer, O my Jesus—put an end to my cowardice in Thy holy service. For the rest of my life, dear Jesus, I wish to fix all the love of my heart on Thee, and to study to please Thee as much as I can. O my Jesus, come to my assistance and do not abandon me. "Do with me, O Lord, what Thou wilt, for I know that Thou lovest me. O my Mother, be propitious to me—Mother, how great need I have of thee."

II

JESUS GOES WITH THE ELEVEN TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

Let us see the spirit of the Sacred Heart and note the love with which He goes to His Passion. "They went forth." After singing one of the paschal hymns, Jesus and the eleven went forth to the Mount of Olives.
On the Road to Gethsemani

See the Apostles, as they gather closely around their dear Master, ready to go forth with Him to Gethsemani. According to one opinion, Holy Thursday fell on the 24th of March. It was nine o'clock when Jesus left the Supper-room. At this season in Jerusalem, a chill evening and a cold night succeed to the warmth and bright sunshine of the midday. The full moon is shedding its tranquil light on Mount Sion, Mount Olivet, Mount Moriah, Mount Calvary. This still moonlight suggests peace and repose, and gives no sign or indication whatsoever that the fiercest, greatest, most stupendous death-struggle that shall ever be decided in this world is about to begin—or rather has begun. Death and life, light and darkness are to meet in a contest that the blessed Angels shall gaze on in silent wonder.

The fight is commencing. Jesus, who has been pouring out His Heart so abundantly in farewell words of comfort and love, walks in deep silence, and His own are close round Him. Let me in spirit follow my dear Jesus—my Master! Let me watch carefully, listen attentively, and try reverently to read His thoughts—"Soul of Christ, sanctify me!"

A strange sorrow spreads over the countenance of Jesus. His unfailing cheerfulness forsakes Him. The disciples wonder at the sudden change. It was the shadow of His Sacred Passion which fell upon Him, the beginning of the black darkness which was to envelop His Sacred Heart. When the shadow of desolation falls on me, may I remember Thee, O dear Lord, thus downcast on the road to Gethsemani!

In mournful words Jesus addresses the Apostles: "You will all be scandalized in My regard this night." You will all fly like cowards when the danger comes. One of you will betray Me, another will deny Me thrice, all will forsake Me. How this thought pierced with anguish the sensitive Heart of Jesus! Of all who for three years had been His chosen friends and companions, who had seen His miracles, and listened to His Divine words, not one would be found faithful. My God, how often have I been unfaithful to Thee.

I shall consider our Lord's emotions, and the conversation He holds with His disciples during this walk. (1) He is full of gratitude to God; for we are expressly told that He had caused a hymn to be sung. His Heart was full of joy and gratitude for the many and great mysteries He had instituted which were to have so many glorious results for God and for us. And certainly Jesus did not omit to thank His host also, on taking leave of him. What is my gratitude? How have I shown it in the past? What shall I render to the Lord for all He has done for me?

(2) The second emotion our Lord experienced was sadness. Everything contributed to make Him sorrowful. His Passion was approaching with giant strides. It was His last walk. Probably His path led through the suburb of Ophel, on the south side of the Temple hill into the valley of Josaphat. There is scarcely a gloomier or more
sombre place in the world than this valley. It was a dreary walk in the dark. David had once trodden the same path, with covered head and bare feet on his flight from Absalom, his rebellious son. Was not Jesus hunted by another rebellious son, an apostate Apostle, who was at this moment busy collecting officials and soldiers for the perpetration of his mysterious crime?

The nearer our Lord came to Gethsemani, the more His sorrow and anxiety increased; hence, one might see the outward signs of what was passing in His heart. The disciples, too, are very downcast as they walk by His side and listen to His words. But note, no matter what sadness oppressed our Lord, His will never faltered, never wavered in its fortitude and determination, nor did He for a moment delay His steps as He drew near to the fatal scene of His agony and arrest.

Reflect! Can I doubt the love of Jesus for me! “All that I have undertaken to do for thee,” He says to each one of us, “I will do. I will not go back!” What have I to say to my dear Lord, my Jesus? What consolation have I to offer? “Love is proved by deeds.”

Listen to the conversation of Jesus on the way to Gethsemani. It turned upon His Passion and Death and the flight of the disciples. Peter again asserts that, although all the others should forsake Him, he will never be scandalized in Him. Although Peter’s words imply undue estimation of himself, and self-exaltation over the other Apostles, yet they show also heartfelt love and sincere resolution, and probably the endeavour to inspire our Lord and the other Apostles with courage.

Jesus, though so sorely in need of comfort, comforts the Apostles by referring to the Scriptures, and promising that the trial will be but transient, and that He will not abandon His plans for them. Truly does He show Himself the Good Shepherd! Who will not appreciate His words of comfort, spoken under such circumstances?

O Jesus! O good Jesus! Thou wouldst assume our timidity to communicate to us Thy courage. Blessed for ever be Thy tender compassion! May all hearts love Thee, my own above all, as much as is possible, as much as Thou desirest, and as much as Thou deservest!

III

**JESUS ENTERS THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANI**

Gethsemani was about a mile and a half distant from the Supper-room. It was a bright and cheering little spot in the midst of the dreary, sepulchral valley of Josaphat. The place called Gethsemani, where latterly Jesus had several times passed the night with His disciples, was a large garden, surrounded by a hedge, and containing only some fruit-trees and flowers—this place was sometimes used as a pleasure ground, and sometimes as a place of retirement for prayer.

The Garden of Olives was separated by a road from that of Gethsemani, and was open, surrounded only by an earthen wall, and smaller than the Garden of Gethsemani. There were caverns, terraces, and
many olive-trees to be seen in this garden, and it was easy to find there a suitable spot for prayer and meditation. It was to the wildest part that Jesus went to pray. This was the place our Lord chose to begin His Passion.

And why did He wish His Passion to begin in this garden, and with prayer? The fall of our first Parents had taken place in a garden, under the trees of Eden; and therefore the reparation of this fall was also to be made in a garden. That question of Almighty God, “Adam, where art thou?” that had once resounded through the garden, demanding satisfaction from the first Adam, had hitherto remained unanswered. No one appeared to offer the required expiation. But now our Lord and Saviour, the second Adam, comes and offers Himself to make full satisfaction, saying: “Behold I come.”

In the second place, it was from Mount Olivet that our Lord was to make His Ascension to the throne of His glory, and in the valley of Josaphat He will hereafter judge mankind; how fitting, therefore, that His Passion, too, should begin there.

Lastly, no more majestic, worthy introduction to the Passion can be imagined than prayer. There was not a single important undertaking in the public life of our Lord that He did not begin with prayer; how much more, then, His blessed and saving Passion! The prayer on Mount Olivet is the gate and vestibule of the sanctuary of His Passion, the first station of the Passion itself. Jesus well knew that this very prayer was to cost Him unspeakable anguish and the sacrifice of His life. But He does not waver—no hesitation. He does not forbear to make it. Oh, the love of Jesus for us all. He will never fail us. What He has undertaken to do for us He will do. The darkness was gathering round Him, was even then like the darkness of death. “My soul,” He says, “is sorrowful even unto death.” He began to fear and to be very heavy. He could hardly endure the misery which by His own decree even then began to fall on Him.

Shall I not offer generously to stand by our Lord always and in all things? Is He not a King to live for—a King to die for? O God, I love Thee.

Colloquy.—O my Divine Master, my Lord and my God, hear me through that undying love of Thy Sacred human Heart. O Jesus, grant me, I conjure Thee, a heart capable of loving Thee. Whom should I love in Heaven or on earth if not Thee? O my God! I do love Thee, and my only regret is that I cannot every moment love Thee more. Strengthen me, good Jesus, to live, labour, suffer, and die for Thee. O Lord Jesus, blot out, I implore Thee, my multiplied iniquities, which I detest from my heart because they have grieved Thee. Grant me pardon, absolution, and full remission of all my sins—let them not stand between me and Thee. I want to love Thee with all my heart. O Jesus, open wide Thy Heart and let me rest therein. Take, Lord Jesus, everything, let me live to Thee alone. O my Mother, I have need of thee.
XII.—THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

(Matt. xxvi. 30-40)

1st Prelude: History.—"Then Jesus came into a country place which is called Gethsemani, and said to His disciples: Sit you here till I go yonder and pray. And taking Peter, James, and John, He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad. Then He saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay you here, and watch with Me. And going a little further, He fell upon His face, praying and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—A garden on the western slope of Olivet, close to the brook Cedron that flows through the valley of Josaphat. Olive-trees all about. The moon at the full, but the darkness beneath the trees impenetrable. Our Lord prostrate there—eight of the Apostles near the garden gate. Peter, James, and John a stone's-throw from the scene of the Agony.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To know the Heart of love—the Heart of Jesus. Its sorrow unto death, fear, heaviness, agony, and all for me! Our Lord's words are the words of Truth itself; hence we understand them literally when speaking of Himself, He says, "sorrowful unto death." Ah, my dear Lord Jesus, give me light and grace to realize the anguish and agony of Thy loving Heart, and how great a share I had in Thy sufferings. O Mother of Jesus, I have need of thee, O make me feel as thou hast felt. O make my soul to glow and melt with the love of Christ my Lord.

Points: I. The Sacred Agony of Jesus.

II. "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

III. Like to us in all things.

I

THE SACRED AGONY OF JESUS

See the persons—listen to the words—consider the actions. Reflect! How the Divinity hides itself. How much Jesus suffers in this mystery, how much He wishes to suffer. And all is for me, for my sins.

Contemplate the thoughtful and compassionate care of Jesus for His disciples. On entering the Garden He said to eight of them: "Sit you here till I go yonder and pray." He knows that their weakness could not bear the sight of His infirmity; they would be overmuch scandalized and shaken. In spite of His own trouble, He is full of solicitude for them. Dear Lord, help me to learn this lesson, never to allow personal sorrow or trouble to render me selfish or deaden my sympathy for others. I see that sorrow cannot conquer either hope,
or love, or compassion in the Heart of Jesus. "Many waters cannot quench charity: neither can floods drown it" (Cant. viii.).

Jesus exhorts the eight to pray lest they should enter into temptation, then going on a little further with Peter, James, and John, He entered the Garden of Olives. No words can describe the sorrow which then oppressed Jesus' soul, for the time of the trial was near. See the distress of the three as John asks Jesus how it is that He, who had hitherto always consoled them, could now be so weighed down with fear and sorrow. Jesus answers: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." In their presence Jesus' Passion has already begun—agony of heart. "He began to fear and to be heavy; to grow sorrowful and to be sad."

It was from the three chosen witnesses that the Evangelists learned what they wrote down for us. Peter, James, and John told what their eyes had seen and their ears had heard. For in the moonlight they could see that the paleness of death had overspread the Sacred Face of Jesus, and that a look of inexpressible distress and anguish had overcast the beauty of His countenance. The three were dismayed, horror-stricken and scandalized; they saw His tears, His strength apparently gone from His wasted body, His faltering footsteps, His trembling limbs as He turned to say with a choked and broken voice, "My soul is sorrowful unto death"—the heavy night of desolation came down upon His loving Heart. O Jesus, sorrowful unto death for me, penetrate my soul with the truth of Thy word: "Blessed are they that mourn."

Jesus speaks: "Stay you here and watch with Me; pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Note how sorrow and sadness and fear in all their intensity can never turn our Lord's soul one hair's-breadth from perfect love. Jesus' sorrow is a sorrow unto death. A sorrow strong enough to break His heart and cause death. But it will not conquer His charity, which is strong as death and stronger. And the one sole motive or cause why He is in this extremity of anguish is because "He loved me and delivered Himself up for me."

When the winds and the waves were raging on the lake of Galilee, one word from Him commanded them all. So it is now. The passion of fear is strong; sadness is strong; sorrow is strong; but these passions, though they may rise to their topmost height, shall never conquer the charity in Jesus' Heart—the voice of His love will ever be dominant and supreme over them. "What I have undertaken to do for them I will do." Ah, Lord Jesus, strengthen me to be true to Thee till death, to stand by Thee under all circumstances. O Mother, I have need of thee.

"Pray," Jesus says, "lest ye enter into temptation." Note He does not tell us to pray not to be tempted. For our life must be a warfare, and we must be soldiers, and must fight a good fight. But oh! how earnestly He desires that when Satan comes to tempt, and so to allure us away from our God, our Lord, our Creator, our loving Father and most loving and merciful Redeemer, we shall not listen to the tempta-
Meditation on the Passion

tion, Satan's foul treason, or go over to the side of Satan, and agree with him, and make ourselves his subjects and slaves.

St. Ignatius teaches us in contemplation to study not only the outward person, but also the inward thoughts; we are allowed to try in our poor way to find out, if we can, what are the chief objects that are presented to our Lord's soul to awaken fear and sadness and heaviness of heart.

Spiritual writers answer: (1) Fear is awakened by His coming death and the terrible circumstances of His death. (2) Oppression and most weary tediousness, by the sight of all the opposition which He shall encounter from men and devils in His work of redeeming those He loves so much. (3) Sorrow unto death is caused by the sight of sin; sin past, sin present, sin to come; the offence, the displeasure, the dishonour, the ingratitude, the treason, and treachery, and malice, all heaped upon Himself by sin.

During the Agony in the Garden our Lord anticipated all the coming agony of His Passion. He allowed His human soul to feel in all its intensity each detail of the unspeakable suffering that was now close at hand. Hitherto it had indeed been distinctly present to Him, but now it was not only permitted, but commanded to take possession of His own soul. Now it was a mortal fear, resulting from a clear, vivid realization of all that He had to endure. When darkness invades our souls, we should remember that none is like the deep, black darkness that spread over the Sacred Soul of Jesus.

Where should we have gone in our hours of weakness had there been no Gethsemani! What consolation is wanting to us now that we see the Mighty God-man stricken with fear, sickening like us at the sight of failure, treachery, ingratitude. How practical, how generous is Christ's love for us! "All that I can do I will do for them" was His motto through life. And so when His hour came, it was not what befitted His Majesty, but what would help us most, that determined the way in which He would meet suffering and death. To be like us in all things, this was His rule from first to last: that having shown Himself like us, He might win us to be like Him, ready to say in the hour of trial: "Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy will be done."

COLLOQUIY.—With the suffering Heart of Jesus. O good Jesus! how great is Thy love for me—how unselshless Thy love! What sorrow and agony Thou didst endure, and all for me, to help me, teach me, console me, to draw me to Thyself! Can I ever forget Thee? Can I ever love Thee enough? Ah, dear Jesus, I do love Thee, and I want to love Thee with an ever-increasing love. Deep in Thy Sacred Heart let me abide.

"Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee;
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me!"

Mother of Jesus, my Mother, make me true to thy Divine Son.
II

JESUS’ PRAYER IN THE GARDEN

"My Father, if it be possible let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

See the persons, listen to the words, consider the actions. See our Lord, keep close to Him in His bitter anguish of spirit. His hour has come, the hour to which He offered Himself, when as a Babe He was presented in the Temple and offered as an atonement for the sins of man. He sinks down upon His knees, and then falls prostrate on the ground, with His Sacred Face pressed against the earth—call to mind once more that word just uttered: "My soul is sorrowful even to death."

As we watch our dear Lord in anguish, let us desire to compassionate and offer heartfelt sympathy to the agonizing Heart of Jesus. Let us look at Him attentively; listen to the words, watch the movements, read as well as we can His secret thoughts, measure as far as we are able the length and breadth, and height and depth, of His distress, and to think in wonder as we watch Him, that in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, He can, if He please, entirely deliver Himself, and shake off at once all suffering, all sorrow, and anguish of spirit, and rise up in happiness ineffable—for He is the great God. But with all His Heart He chooses and resolves to be overwhelmed in an ocean of sorrow, because He has taken my sins upon Him, and will offer the fullest expiation and reparation to the offended Majesty of God, and so deliver me from eternal death. Most truly Jesus "loved me and delivered Himself for me."

As we kneel, let us contemplate most reverently this "Almighty weakness of His goodness." "He began to fear and to be heavy"; only an hour ago Jesus said to His disciples: "Have confidence, I have overcome the world." He now wishes to say to all His followers in time to come: "Have confidence in the hour of trial, of temptation, for I have overcome the tempter." Jesus wills us to know that He has resolved to be tempted in all things as we are, but without sin (Heb. iv.)—that is, to experience in Himself the effect of human passions; to cause human passions to rise within Him, like a sea-storm; but still to conquer them all by His love, strong as death. There never was on earth another so fitted for extreme suffering as Jesus. His most perfect sensitive nature suffered more acutely and intensely than the nature of finite persons can suffer. No other heart on earth ever felt kindness or unkindness as did the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We know of course that next to His Heart in exquisite tenderness and sensibility comes the heart of His Mother. The Blessed Virgin suffered as no other creature could.

Jesus was offered as a victim, because He Himself willed it. He was offered to death and exposed to all the raging of a sea of sorrow,
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because He Himself willed to be tempted in all things as we are. Holy writers tell us that not only on Calvary did Jesus taste all the bitterness of death, but that in the Garden, when He uttered the words, “My soul is sorrowful unto death,” He was already going through all the anguish that death causes—and so Jesus went to seek relief in this agony of terror that has come over Him.

And what was the relief? The relief was prayer. He knew that in all desolation and distress the best plan, the only plan, is to throw ourselves upon the almighty and all-tender Mercy of God. There is no imperfection in asking to be delivered from something that we can hardly endure, whether the present agony, or the anticipation of it, else Christ would not have prayed: “My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me! Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

Here is the impeccable all-holy human will swaying in the tempest, and clinging ever to the Divine—“Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” In our darkest hours, we, too, with Jesus can at least repeat these sacred words—remembering His Divine instruction: “As I have done, so do you also.” Yes, we must remember the act of resignation which leaves all in the hands of God. “Not as I will, but as Thou wilt!” These words spoken from our heart will always give us strength to bear what seems unbearable, and will take the bitterness out of our pains.

COLLOQUY.—Jesus, my dear Master, I do say now and always: “Not my will, but Thine be done.” Lord, I would be near Thee at any cost. Bid me to come to Thee, bid me come close to Thee. With Thy help I will drink the chalice; Thy lips have wellnigh drained it. I will take it from Thee, from Thy hand. Ah, Lord Jesus, give me to drink. Oh, my Mother, help me to be true to Jesus.

III

LIKE TO US IN ALL THINGS

By the Agony in the Garden we mean the throes that must have wrenched asunder soul and body had Jesus not reserved Himself for the death of the Cross. When His hour of other physical torments and of a shameful death, the hour of humiliation and blasphemy, of triumph for His enemies, of agony for His Mother and His friends, had come, it found Him ready. In the agony of the strife between the flesh and the spirit, He sweated blood, for He was truly man. But in spite of repugnance, and darkness, and desolation, He was ready. See our Lord, our Jesus, as He stretches out His hands for His chalice. Hear Him as He proves His love for us: “I do not resist; I have not gone back. My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready.” He hesitated not—never entered into a moment’s deliberation about it; took it as a matter of course—and this for me!

Jesus says to me: “I have given you an example that as I have
done, so you do also. Can you drink of the chalice I shall drink? Would you like to be very near Me in Heaven, to be among My dearest and most intimate friends for ever and ever? Can you drink of My chalice then? There is no other way. To be close to Me in My Kingdom there must be close companionship with Me here."

How much of Jesus’ oblation can I make my own? How deep can I drink of His chalice? He will not ask me to do more than taste what He drained to the dregs. Has not my dear Lord proved that He loves me dearly? He has shown me that I may trust Him. Shall I not abandon myself to Him, and let Him who knows me through and through do with me what He wills!

Colloquy.—O Divine Saviour, my Jesus, I say to Thee, with all the love of my heart: Take, take, Lord, and receive my entire liberty—all that I have, all that I am. Do with me what Thou wilt, Thou only art my Master, my Lord and my God! Thou art my best friend. I abandon myself to Thy loving Providence and mercy. I commit my lot into Thy hands, knowing that Thou lovest me and wilt do what is best. If Thou wilt have me to be in darkness, be Thou blessed; if Thou wilt have me to be in light, be Thou again blessed. If Thou vouchsafe to comfort me, be Thou blessed; and if it be Thy will that I should be afflicted, be Thou always equally blessed. Dearest Jesus, my Master, I will suffer willingly whatever Thou pleasest. I will receive with indifference from Thy hand good and evil, sweet and bitter, joy and sorrow, and will give Thee thanks for all.

Lord Jesus, keep me only faithful to Thee, keep me from sin, from everything that could grieve or disappoint Thee, and I will fear neither death nor hell. Provided, my dear Jesus, I love and serve Thee, all else is to me a matter of indifference—Amorem Tui Solum! Rabboni! Oh, grant me Thy love and grace and I am rich enough—I have nothing more to ask.

"O thou Mother, fount of love,
Touch my spirit from above,
Make my heart with Thine accord."

Mother of God, my Mother, be propitious to me.

XIII.—THE INTENSITY OF THE AGONY

(Mark xiv.)

1st Prelude: History.—"Stay you here and watch with Me. And when He had gone forward a little He fell flat on the ground; and He prayed that if it could be, the hour might pass from Him. And He saith: Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee, remove this chalice from Me, but not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—As Jesus uttered these words, "Stay you here and watch with Me," He pointed to a spot where
the bright beams of the Paschal moon fell. Then a stone's-throw further on He went out of the brightness into the shadow thrown by the Temple mount. Looking back He can see His own—Peter, with his sword at his feet, ready in case of alarm; John's young head shining in the white light; and James, with his sad, upturned face. They strain their eyes, but cannot pierce the darkness that surrounds their dear Master, and sick with anguish and dread of coming sorrow, they sink on the ground. Jesus is alone in His Agony.

3rd Prelude: *Ask what I want.*—Intimate knowledge of the Heart of Jesus—of His love for me—courage and love to cling closely to Him unto death, so that nothing of self or earth will take me from Him.

Points: I. First cause of the intensity of the Sacred Agony.
   II. Second cause of Jesus' sorrow unto death.
   III. Third cause of the sorrow unto death.

**I FIRST CAUSE OF THE SACRED AGONY**

See Jesus prostrate in Agony. With all the strength of my soul I will contemplate and meditate on the interior Passion of Jesus.

*Jesus is alone*—Ah, dear Lord, permit me to stay with Thee—Jesus! my Jesus! May I share with Thee in sorrow; help me, my dear Lord, to understand in some way the interior anguish of Thy Divine, loving Heart. Dear Lord, let me be some consolation to Thee, permit me to stay with Thee and watch with Thee. Ah, Lord Jesus, may I never more grieve Thee, never, never again put Thee into competition with self or any other creature—never, never permit me to be separated from Thee.

**First Cause of Jesus' Sorrow unto Death.**—His clear knowledge of the ignominies and tortures of His Passion, their near approach. His whole Passion is vividly before Him—the traitor's kiss, the blow on the cheek, the unjust sentence, the blows, the kicks, vile spittle, scourging, crowning with thorns, the mocking of the white robe, insults, blasphemies, shouts of the rabble—Away with Him, crucify Him, crucify Him! The painful, laborious comings and goings from one tribunal to another, Pilate's unjust condemnation, the way of the Cross, His Mother's anguish, Calvary, the terrible crucifixion. He felt the pain, heard the shouts, saw the hideous faces of the rabble round the Cross. He saw the soul of His dear Peter after his sin, the soul of the traitor Judas, the souls of those in succeeding ages who would ignore His love, trifle with it, renounce Him. He saw all this and cried in anguish: "O, My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Over and over again He says the words, as one by one the scenes of His sufferings pass before His mind—"Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

Nearly an hour went by. Then He rises and goes to the three Apostles. Still and unconscious they lie upon the ground, their
garments drawn tightly around them, for the night is chill. They are asleep, and do not hear the faltering footsteps. Jesus looks upon them—His chosen ones, the stoutest hearts and most generous natures in the little band. They have left Him alone in His Agony. How often we leave Him alone when there is anything to be done or borne repugnant to nature, and show ourselves unwilling to suffer with Him.

Jesus looks on them. Will He wake them?—or will He let them sleep on? There is no hesitation in our Lord’s mind. It would be kind to let them sleep, but kinder to rouse them and let them feel how little they can trust themselves—trust in their own strength. Jesus bends over them—“Simon, couldst thou not watch one hour with Me?” How often Jesus whispers these self-same words to His own: “Couldst thou not watch, be vigilant, loyal, true to Me? One hour—the short hour of this life—suffer with Me if you will be crowned with Me.”

With a start, Peter came to himself, and looking into Jesus’ sorrowful face, has nothing to answer. The day is not far off when we, too, shall look into the Divine and loving face of Jesus. Will His first words be a reproach, “You could not watch the short hour of life with Me?” He will call us by name, too—He knows His own—knows what He has done for each—for me. How He has loved me!

Rousing the other two, Jesus says gently: “Pray, lest you enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” The three determine to do better—they rouse themselves and begin to pray. They are humbled and sad at the sight of their Master; His face so pale, His limbs trembling, His breathing short. His terrified glance wandered from Heaven to earth, and then to the Apostles, as a dying man turns his gaze, first on one then upon another. Ah, the anguish of the suffering Heart of Jesus! Much more intense is the suffering of soul than bodily pain, for the very reason that it is interior, mental, and it often communicates itself to the body as in our Lord’s case. One mental suffering can make us unhappy enough. Here it was not one, but many; the waves of affliction came surging in upon the Sacred Heart of our loving Lord and Saviour from all sides. There is no conceivable form of mental suffering that He did not go through in His Agony.

And then the depth and violence of these sufferings. We can form some idea of their terrible intensity from the changes in our Lord’s outward behaviour. Now He shuns the company of His Apostles, now He goes to seek them, now He prays, now complains of His abandonment. His whole nature is in a tumult of agitation and intense anguish. “O my Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Not my will, but Thine be done.” And being in an agony, He prayed the longer.

Colloquy.—What can I do for my suffering Saviour? He thinks of me, loves me, delivers Himself up to this interior passion for me. What have I to give Him in return? How can I bring Him comfort?
Lord Jesus, my Master, I want to love Thee. I want to live only to Thee—make my will always one with Thine. O Lord, O Thou the consolation of men, and the joy of Angels; Who in Thy Agony didst seek relief in prayer, grant, I beg of Thee, dear Jesus, that, after Thy example, I may fly to Thee in every tribulation and trouble. Help me to conform my will wholly to Thine, to say with all my heart—"Not my will, but Thine be done." In Thy Sacred Heart let me find strength and courage to suffer with and for Thee. O sweet Jesus, my love and my only good! I beg and implore of Thee to give me grace never to seek rest or satisfaction out of Thee. "Thou art my God and my Eternal King!" Virgin Mary, Mother of God, my Mother, pray to Jesus for me!

II

SECOND CAUSE OF JESUS' SORROW UNTO DEATH

Again the second time He went and prayed, saying: "My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy will be done!"

Jesus had offered Himself to take away the sins of the world, and now they all came distinctly before Him, every sin and every sinner. The second cause of His sorrow unto death—the sins of the whole human race with which He had clothed Himself. The sins of all men are upon Him. He feels their number, their shamefulness, their malice—and He is to be punished as if He had done all those wicked things—they are all His now. He has taken them upon Himself, and is going to answer for each one. All the penalty of sin He must bear, all the shame, all the horror. Oh, if we only knew what sin is to God—what it is to our Lord! But we cannot. There is nothing we can compare it with—there are things we loathe, and fear, and hate, but not as our Lord hated, and loathed, and feared sin. Like a burden it lay upon Him, yet, if He did not carry it, we should die and be lost for ever. It was either the Cross for Him, or hell for me.

Jesus writhed, and trembled, and shook at the magnitude of the atoning suffering that Divine Justice required of Him for each soul. The repugnance, disgust, and aversion experienced by our Lord arose from the knowledge of the sins for which He was to suffer so much and so terribly. He saw and recognized them in all their dreadful multiplicity—the sins of all men and ages and races. He saw them in their shocking contradiction of God’s supreme authority, justice, beauty, and goodness; saw their fearful ravages among the human race, and their fatal effects upon men for time and eternity.

What a mingled torrent of sinful filth of all ages and races now poured down upon Jesus as He lay prostrate in agony, and every single drop of it must have filled His sensitive Sacred Heart with unutterable repugnance and horror. And all these sins call for bitter expiation. Once again Jesus cries and prays: "O my Father, if this chalice may not pass away, Thy will be done!" They were His, those sins of ours. He had charged Himself with their payment, and the punishment for
The Intensity of the Agony

each will be scored upon His most Sacred Body—Father! Thy will be done!

The anguish of this second hour was most intense. See what it cost Him. Red drops of blood stood upon His forehead and trickled down upon the ground. The mossy roots of the olive-trees were watered with it, His garments were wet with it. What must have been the anguish of our Blessed Lord that night, when from every pore of His Sacred Flesh there issued drops of blood—a sweat so copious that, after soaking His garments, trickled down upon the ground. Jesus was given up to a horror and dismay, which God in His mercy has spared the vilest sinner. The guilt of our sins He could not take, but He took the result of that guilt. "He was made sin for us," says St. Paul. O suffering Sacred Soul, what was my share in Thy intolerable anguish! what has been my return of love to Thee for bearing so much for me!

Again a second time Jesus seeks His chosen three—"And He cometh again and findeth them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy, and they knew not what to answer Him." How often Jesus meets with disappointment, even from His own specially favoured ones. "He findeth them sleeping." We complain sometimes that we pray, and that no answer comes. Little we know how often our Lord comes to give us the answer in abundant graces, and finds us sleeping—that is, careless in little things, negligent in attending to our rules and religious duties, and, therefore, incapable of hearing Him or of speaking to Him.

We do not gather that our Lord did more this second time when He came to the three than awaken them. No words of His are recorded. So it is when our Lord has spoken to us already sufficiently and clearly, and we do not listen, charity sometimes compels Him to grow silent, lest we abuse more grace. "They knew not what to answer Him." Watch the distress of the disciples, not knowing what answer to give their dear Master. They are awake enough to know that they have not carried out His injunction, but are still oppressed with heaviness of heart and drowsy sadness.

Colloquy.—What shall I answer if I have not responded to the love of Jesus—and not given Him the whole love of my heart—and not spent myself for Him Who loved me unto death, even unto the death of the Cross? What shall I answer when I find out that throughout my life, every hour of the day and night, Jesus was for me imprisoned in the tabernacle, pleading for me with the Father—wishing for me to visit Him, to unite Himself to me, and to be to me my faithful, my own God? What shall I answer when I see Him on the eternal shore, and read in those eyes of infinite tenderness that He is indeed my Jesus, my Master, "Who loved me and delivered Himself up for me." O Sacred Heart of Jesus, what shall I render Thee! Turn into bitterness for me all carnal consolation. O Jesus, open wide Thy Heart and let me rest therein. Inflame my heart with the fire of Thy love. Create a clean heart in me, O Jesus, and renew a right spirit within me. Make me wholly Thine!
Meditation on the Passion

III

THIRD CAUSE OF JESUS’ SORROW UNTO DEATH

"And leaving them, He went again, and He prayed the third time."

Let us contemplate our suffering Saviour going now for the third time with feeble and faltering steps down the rugged path, back to the Grotto of the Agony. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him," Lord Jesus? Why toil, why go painfully backwards and forwards seeking in vain to win me? Dear Lord, Thou wert travelling a search of me when Thou didst sit weary by the well. But here Thou art seeking me, and never sitting down to rest; seeking me, O so painfully, and returning back to pray for me in agony. Ah, Lord Jesus, let me share Thy prayer and agony. May Thy toil not fruitless be! Holy Mother of God, be propitious to me. O Mother, I have need of thee, show me the Blessed Fruit of thy womb, that all His labour for me may not be in vain.

See how the patient, loving, meek Heart of Jesus conquers by enduring. In the end He will possess and will gather His disciples, and through them many more to His Heart. The fire that Jesus came to cast on the earth will from His enter theirs. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, Thou lovest, Thou art not loved, would that Thou wert loved! O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me! O Sacred Heart of Jesus, what shall I render Thee?

If it is difficult to suffer, it is far more difficult to suffer willingly for those who show no gratitude for what we endure for them. Romans v. 6, 7, 8, and 9, bears on this point, and may well be quoted. But most difficult, nay, impossible, save to one who shares the Divine charity of the Son of God, to suffer for those who require love with hatred, the favours won for them by outrage and insults. It was this crushed to the earth the Son of God. Alas! how ungrateful I am to Him!

Pain is assuaged by the thought that it will profit those whom we love. Our Lord saw that for a multitude of souls what He was going to suffer would avail nothing; that they would be lost in spite of all He could do for them. And of those whom His pain would profit, how many were a drop in His bitter chalice! They would be saved indeed, but how poorly! They would not be obdurate, but they would be mean, niggardly. His self-sacrifice and unstinted generosity would awaken in their souls only the very faintest response. Whilst His constant thought in life and in death had been what more He could do for them, their study would be how little they could do for Him compatible with their own salvation.

Are there not Christians who stand up in crowds against Him, as His personal enemies, full of ferocity and hate? Do they not persecute Him in the souls of men, in His Church, His Doctrine, His Sacraments, His representative—the Pope, and His own Person? How well He deserves our love and reverence as our Lord and our God! How good
was His will towards us all! And yet, what does He see? Throughout all the centuries, whole troops of Christ-haters drawn up in battle array, and raging against Him with all the weapons at their command. How small the handful of our Lord's faithful followers looks against his army of foes. And how does it stand even with these trusty soldiers? Which of us can say that we do all that we can, that we give of our best, give fearlessly, and with all the love of our heart. That we serve so good and loving a Master, "He who loved us unto death," with all the zeal, constancy, unselfishness, and generosity in our power?

Oh, how soon we all tire! How we grudge and weigh our service—how soon it is too much and too hard! We chafe and haggle over every sacrifice, and how often our Lord gets the worst of the bargain! Jesus saw all this, saw, too, His own Divine Person and all its claims to our service, loyalty, love and generosity, and saw that in return He would receive indiffERENCE, callousness, and unbounded selfishness. Is it any wonder His human nature should experience unspeakable repugnance, disgust, and aversion to suffer for those who would do nothing for Him? He saw countless souls saved but by a hair's-breadth, and many souls, so precious in His eyes—nay, whole nations—torn from His mystical Body for ever, to wander astray and go to their eternal ruin. He gave His infinitely precious Life and Blood for all, and saw so many perish.

The loss of every soul gave Him infinite pain; He felt the loss of each one acutely. Oh, the grief it caused Him! How many were to perish even on account of His bitter Passion, because they despised and reviled it. All these terrible pictures rose before Him in endless array, and cut Him to the very heart. He mourned and prayed in His agony and distress, bathed in perspiration and blood. It seemed as if all the horrors of earth and hell crowded round Him. This is what made Him come to the Apostles so often, to flee from these oppressors to seek comfort. But there was no comfort for Him; He always found them overcome with weariness, anxiety, drowsiness. Gethsemani was truly a press in which His precious Blood was forced from His veins.

There was a last drop in that chalice, one that surpassed in bitterness all that had gone before. If Jerusalem had deserted Him, His own people, His priests: if one Apostle was about to betray Him, another to deny Him, and all to forsake Him, He had still the Father's love to make amends for all, the Father's bosom into which to climb. Who could assail Him there? Who could drive Him thence? Oh, mystery the more impenetrable the more we search into it, that when He was making to the Divine Majesty an infinite satisfaction, acceptable, and accepted, the Father should forsake—it is His own word—and treat as a sinner the Son of His love! Because He was made sin for us, because we had deserved to be abandoned by God, Christ was abandoned, a word we should never have dared to use had He not used it first to reveal to us the darkness that gathered round His human Soul, and caused Him anguish beyond which there was nothing left for Him to bear. This is what we mean by the Agony in the Garden—throes that must
have wrenched asunder soul and body had He not reserved Himself for the "Death of the Cross."

COLLOQUIY.—Our agony, O dear Lord, is but the faintest shadow of Thine. 

"What drop was mine, O Jesus, in Thy cup of woe,
Bringing its brimming bitterness to overflow:
What sin of mine oppressed Thy Soul with anguish sore,
Draining a sweat of death and blood from every pore?"

Ah, Lord Jesus, where should I have gone in my hour of weakness had there been no Gethsemani? What help and consolation is wanting to me now that I can draw near and cling to Thee in Thy Agony, and gain light and strength from Thee, "Who loved me and delivered Thyself for me."

O suffering, agonizing Heart of Jesus, plead for me, defend me against my own weakness, help me to be true to Thee till death, help me to die for Thee. Help me, dear Jesus, to echo Thy motto all through the short period of my exile here: "All that I can do I will do for Thee." And so in the hour of trial and difficulty, let me meet it with love and courage, and give Thee a manifest proof that I am Thy servant —may the one ambition of my life be "to be like Thee, Jesus, my Master, in all things."

O Mary, my Mother, help me to love Jesus, thy Divine Son, with a strong, personal love. Therefore, Mother, teach me to know Him intimately.

"Make me feel as thou hast felt;
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ, my Lord."

O Mother, be propitious to me!

XIV.—THE CONSOLATIONS OF THE SACRED AGONY

(Luke xxii.)

1st Prelude: History.—"And there appeared to Him an Angel from Heaven to strengthen Him." Fortified by the Angel and having regained His strength and composure, Jesus goes to His Apostles.

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—Under the olive-trees, where our Divine Lord and Master has for three long hours prayed and agonized, "And being in an agony He prayed the longer."

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—Always to know Jesus, my Divine Master, more intimately; light to realize how much He loved me, and the price He had to pay for my redemption. Ask courage to be true and loyal to Him unto death, to renounce all, to give and not to count the cost.

Points: I. Consolations of the Sacred Agony.

II. Helps for us in the Sacred Agony.

III. The sequel of the Sacred Agony.
The Consolations of the Sacred Agony

CONSOLATIONS OF THE SACRED AGONY

"And there appeared to Him an Angel from heaven strengthening Him."

While I contemplate my Jesus in His great sorrow, I must remember that it is for me He is enduring this extreme anguish. For me He is offering reparation to the infinite Majesty of God, outraged by my sins. Look well and strive to share in His great Agony, for He is ready to join His great Agony to the light and trivial sorrow for sin that passes over the surface of my soul. Look well, till some glimmer of light comes to show what sin must be. Look well, till a strong faith manifests that if the innocent, all-holy soul of Jesus suffers in this way for sin, my sin, how great should be my sorrow and strong determination never again to commit so great an evil. How great, too, and deep my gratitude to the loving Heart of Jesus, "Who so loved and delivered Himself for me." "O Sacred Heart of Jesus, what shall I render Thee for all the love Thou hast bestowed on me?"

No words can tell, no human heart can conceive, the intensity of the Sacred Agony of Jesus. It would have crushed Him out of His very life had He not by means of His Divinity supported His Sacred Humanity and so enabled it to suffer more. See Him, as the third hour draws to a close, pale, haggard, scarce to be recognized in His abasement and terror! See the sweat of blood pouring from His Sacred Limbs! Can this be the well-beloved Son of God? My God, my Jesus, make me daily more contrite at the thought that I, Thy chosen one, have taken part in bringing Thee to this. O Jesus, my dear Lord and Master, in order that I shall never sin again, help in Thy infinite goodness and mercy my weakness and defend me against myself. My Mother, I have need of Thee.

But Jesus was not without consolations in His bitter Agony. "And there appeared to Him an Angel from Heaven strengthening Him." An Angel was sent to comfort Him. Holy writers ask: how could an Angel comfort our suffering Lord? And they answer, that the Blessed Angel, who comforted Jesus, had no power to work any internal change in His Soul, but could only spread out before His mind certain thoughts or facts which He had permitted the thick veil of desolation to hide for the time. In thus deigning to be comforted by an Angel, our Lord submitted to the fulfilment of the Psalmist's words: "Thou hast made Him a little less than the Angels." We are at least allowed to think that the Angel who comforted our Lord was Gabriel, "the Angel of the Incarnation." The hymn for Lauds on his feast (in the Dominican Breviary) says so. The Angel presented before our Lord's vision the innumerable company of Saints won by His precious Blood. Jesus saw their joy and happiness to be won by His Sacred Passion, by the labour of His Soul, and seeing it He was satisfied to bear it all. O pure, generous joy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus! O joy surpassing all
other joys! The joy of seeing others happy was the promised reward which supported Jesus in His Agony.

But He had a still greater and stronger support than this. Jesus beheld the honour and glory that would accrue to His Eternal Father. He saw that all the glory God would reap from His works would be nothing in comparison with this greatest work to be wrought by His Eternal Son, and seeing this, Jesus was satisfied, and more than satisfied. "In the head of the Book it is written of Him: Behold, I come to do Thy will, O my God." I am ready to do it. O that I had the glory of our Lord at heart as the first and foremost and only motive of my actions.

The worst of the crisis past, Jesus, strengthened by God through the Angel, rises and comes to His sleeping disciples. They were overcome with weariness, heavy with sorrow and suspense; they had not the courage to persevere in prayer, yet they were about to enter into temptation. They slept and the hour of temptation was at hand.

See our Lord as He freely accepts the chalice of His terrible Passion and Death, and returns thanks to His heavenly Father. Jesus is still in deep affliction of spirit, but supernaturally comforted to such a degree as to be able to go to His disciples, without tottering as He walked, or bending beneath the weight of His sufferings. Note his countenance is still pale and altered, but His step is firm and determined. He has wiped His face and rearranged His hair.

When Satan had tempted our Lord in the desert, he showed Him from the mountain top "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." So now the Angel was empowered to put before His soul certain words of Holy Scripture containing promises which counteract the depressing fears and the heaviness which Satan has been labouring to increase. "What profit is there in Thy Blood," urged the tempter. But now the Angel baffles the tempter by recalling glorious promises. "If He shall lay down His life for sin, He shall see a long-lived seed, and the will of the Lord shall be prosperous in His hand." "Because His soul hath laboured, He shall see and be filled. Therefore, will I distribute to Him very many, and He shall divide the spoils of the strong, because He hath delivered His soul unto death" (Isa. liii.).

Contemplate the heavenly choirs looking on with ineffable delight and satisfaction, while their privileged companion is exercising his wonderful office. Shall I not offer all the consolation in my power to my Jesus, my dear Master? Shall I not long and pray that henceforth I may be faithful and devoted to my Blessed Lord and Master?

"Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee;
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me."

I need not envy the Blessed Angel, since I, too, am so blessed during my short stay here on earth that every hour I can comfort the Heart of my Saviour, my dear Jesus. . . . We comfort Him when we show loyalty, courage, generosity, and perseverance in His service,
The Consolations of the Sacred Agony

when we follow our King and Master bravely, fearing no difficulty or hardship to be encountered in furthering His interests in our own souls and in the souls of others.

And He cometh the third time, and saith to them: "Sleep ye now, and take your rest." Some commentators think that when our Lord comes His coming wakes the Apostles, and He bids them sleep on and take their rest, and waits by their side, watching and praying till the soldiers are near, and that then He says, "It is enough"; and with these words awakens them thoroughly, "The hour is come: behold the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners."

Colloquy.—O the tender, compassionate, self-sacrificing spirit of the Heart of Jesus! O Sacred and adorable Heart of Jesus, I ask Thee, through Thy love for Thy Mother, to draw me out of myself and close to Thee, that I may come to know Thee most intimately, love Thee ardently and imitate Thee closely; thus, and only thus, can I be a comfort and consolation to Thy devoted, loving Heart, "Which loved me and delivered itself for me."

II

HELP FOR US IN THE SACRED AGONY

I shall keep my eyes lovingly fixed on my Jesus whilst I consider in His Divine Presence the manner in which He suffered His interior Passion; His generous love in suffering this agony; and the helps for His servants in the Sacred Agony.

The manner in which Jesus suffered. The circumstances of the Passion lead us to consider the manner in which our dear Lord suffered on Mount Olivet.

In the first place, He suffered voluntarily. He was absolute master of His emotions. If He suffered, and suffered so much and so terribly, it was of His own free will and choice. Jesus Himself opened the floodgates of the bitter waters of affliction that surged over His Heart; He immersed Himself of His own accord in their terrible depths. He was like one who, though suffering intensely, will not make use of a remedy that is certain to ease the pain, because he wishes to suffer. There is a deep mystery in this mental suffering of our Lord on Mount Olivet.

How was it possible that, in spite of the clear vision of God that shed a beatific light upon His Passion, He could yet be sorrowful, not merely in His Body and sensitive or organic faculties, but also in His higher purely spiritual Will? It was as though the same object gave at the same time light and joy, and yet frightened Him by its darkness. Indeed, it cannot be denied that the clear vision of God itself increased the pain, horror, and aversion to sin in His higher Will. Our Lord's free will to suffer makes the sacrifice doubly dear and deserving of our love and reverence.

How glad we feel when the load of some oppressive sorrow is at last removed from us, and how great should we consider the sacrifice if we were asked to bear this state of suffering still longer, and even inflict it
on ourselves. But this is exactly what our Lord does. He sheds His first blood Himself, and how copiously! Truly, "Jesus has trodden the winepress Himself and alone" (Isa. lxxxiii. 3), and He continues to suffer until He can say, "It is consummated." How noble, how lovable, precious and Divine this free and voluntary endurance renders His Passion.

How can I refuse the love of my whole heart, the service of my whole life to such a Master? How can I shirk the hardships and labours in the service of such a King? What have I done for my Jesus? How have I proved my love? How may I now prove that He is and always will be my Lord and my God?

Secondly, Jesus suffers with deepest, truest humility. This suffering of the Agony was in the eyes of men a state of great weakness; yet He allows His disciples to witness it; not all of them, because they could not all have borne it, but the three who had witnessed His Transfiguration, and Jesus shows the same touching humility in His prayer, for in His distress He takes refuge in prayer. He prays most fervently and with most touching words, crying again and again: "Father! My Father!"... He prays repeatedly, and with perfect resignation to His Father's Will. However hard it is to His human nature to acquiesce in His Passion and Death, still He protests that the Will of the Father, His heavenly Father, shall be done! What a lesson of love and filial devotion! Ah, Jesus, make me all that to Thee, my dear Lord. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, help me to live for Thee and to die for Thee! Ah, Lord, never let me shirk the Cross! Jesus also shows His humility by not aspiring to the greatest and loftiest flight of generosity in His petitions and asking for suffering, but contenting Himself with lowly submission to the Will of God. In this our Lord had compassion for my weakness. Lastly, Jesus shows loving solicitude for the Apostles, constantly going to watch over them, warning them, encouraging them to pray, and excusing their slowness to respond—"Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour with Me? Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Thirdly, Jesus suffers with constancy and perseverance, and triumphs gloriously. The battle was indeed a hard one, and the fear, repugnance, and sadness of His inmost nature unutterable; and so His higher Will had a long and hard siege to sustain, and a terrible charge to repulse, but He stood firm and won the victory! Jesus kept fast to the Father's Will—that He should redeem us by His Passion and Death—and so He was comforted. "There appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him" (Luke xxii. 43). Indeed, such a degree of self-sacrifice and humiliation as Jesus showed in His Agony at the foot of Mount Olivet deserved an outward sign from Heaven.

This was often the case in our Lord's life—e.g., at His Nativity, after His fast in the desert, and again here. Jesus did not absolutely need this comfort, it is true, but still it was consoling to His Sacred Humanity
to see a messenger from His heavenly Father approach Him in visible form, and in His touching humility and gracious condescension He deigned to accept an external consolation of this kind. Comforted and encouraged, and freed from the inward struggle and the anxiety of His lower nature, Jesus could now enter upon the work of the Redemption.

What consolation is wanting to us now that we see the mighty God sickening like us at the sight of failure, treachery, ingratitude. Jesus suffered that having shown Himself like us He may win us to be like Him, ready to say in the hour of trial, "All that I can do I will do for them." What is my motto? How do I regard the Cross? Does our Lord look for any change in my way of looking at trials and difficulties? How do I bear the daily crosses?

Colloquy.—Ah, Lord Jesus, inflame my heart with the fire of Thy love, then shall I understand the Mystery of the Cross, and love it as the secure way to Thee. Blessed is the soul that, enkindled and enraptured with love of Thee, follows Thee, O Jesus, love of love, Divine charm of the heart! Bid me to come to Thee; take, O Lord, take my whole liberty, my life, everything; draw me to Thee. Ah, dear Lord, I must be Thine, and Thine only; do with me as Thou dost please, but give me Thy love: "Thou art my God and my eternal King!"

III

THE SEQUEL OF THE SACRED AGONY

I shall now contemplate Jesus after His terrible struggle and Agony unto death. Our Blessed Lord was not content with taking upon Himself the sins of the world; in His Divine mercy and compassion He added to this a further sacrifice of Himself. He also took upon Himself all the suffering of the just, and especially all that His Saints and Martyrs would have to suffer for Him. Jesus endured beforehand the thousand forms of agony to which they would be subjected for His sake. Not only would He, in His love and mercy, redeem them, but "He bore their infirmities and carried their sorrows."

What sufficient thanksgiving and generosity in our Lord's service can we ever show Him for His unbounded goodness? . . . This it is which enabled the Martyrs to despise their torments, and made the Apostles rejoice to suffer shame for His sake. This it is which makes anguish tolerable which otherwise would be intolerable; for if it be borne patiently for love of Jesus, He has already in Himself, if not exhausted its bitterness, at least taken the main part of it on Himself. Every pang, every struggle, every throb of pain or agony which should fall to the lot of His servants till the end of the world, Jesus, our loving Lord, made His own on our behalf.

For this reason we are taught to unite our sufferings with those of our Lord; for what else does this mean except that Jesus desires to share them with us? In point of fact, the more we do, the more we bear our troubles with a supernatural motive, the lighter will they become, or
rather, the greater will be our power and willingness to bear them. Ah, Jesus, my Lord and my God, I will be more resigned, more patient, for Thy dear sake; to Thee, Lord Jesus, I will heartily offer all my sufferings and unite them to Thine!

At length our Lord’s mental agony in the Garden is over; He had accepted the chalice which His heavenly Father had given Him to drink. Now Jesus is no longer sad and downcast: see Him as He returns to His Apostles full of vigour and courage; note that He encounters His Passion almost with eagerness. He who had said: “I have a baptism whereby I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.” Hear Him as He says to the Apostles: “It is enough, the hour is come; behold the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go. Behold he is at hand that will betray Me.”

Such courage and resolution are always the result of perfect submission to the Will of God, and absolute confidence in Him. Our Lord will always give His faithful servants the courage to meet every trial, and when the time comes He will impart strength and light-heartedness that make it easy to face the trial.

There is another cause for the change in our Lord. It was won by prayer; or rather, our Lord, as our Divine example, imparted for our sakes to His human nature grace such as earnest prayer alone can obtain from God. This is the secret of all spiritual victories; all are won by persevering prayer. Prayer changes the poor, timid, frightened, shrinking soul to one brave and courageous, and ready to do great things for God. Without prayer we are sure to fail. Am I earnest in prayer?

Observe, too, that it was not merely prayer, but repeated prayer—the same words over and over again, the same entreaty to be spared, joined to the same act of resignation. We sometimes say we cannot pray, but at least we can repeat over and over again some word pleading for mercy and help. Our repetitions will not be vain repetitions, but will bring certain relief from our dear Lord, who encourages us to importunity in prayer.

Prayer will help us to understand the Mystery of the Cross. Trials and crosses are very useful, but humiliations are still better. Crosses are as pure gold, humiliations are as pearls and precious stones. “Know for certain,” says à Kempis, “that thou must lead a dying life, and the more a man dieth to himself the more doth he begin to live unto God. No one is fit to comprehend heavenly things who hath not resigned himself to suffer adversities for Christ. Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more salutary for thee in this world than to suffer willingly for Christ.”

Whilst contemplating Jesus, my dear Master, I shall consider seriously and lovingly the chief intention of His Sacred Heart in suffering this Agony. Jesus’ chief intention in suffering this Agony was:

1. To give us a conclusive proof of His true and complete human nature. We have here, indeed, a confirmation of the fact that there
were two wills in Christ’s nature, one Divine and one human, for He says: “Not my will, but Thine be done.” Further, we have a palpable proof that He had, like ourselves, an inferior will, with all its natural impulses and emotions, the only difference being that in His case even the very beginning of an emotion was dependent upon the higher will. Jesus wished to teach us that these emotions are not faults, or even imperfections, as long as they remain subject to reason.

2. Our Lord intended in this mystery to experience in His own Person all interior sufferings, and this in the highest possible degree; just as He was also about to take upon Himself all exterior sufferings. That is why He fills His chalice of mental suffering to the very brim and drains it to the last drop.

3. Jesus intended to satisfy for the sins and imperfections that we are often guilty of in these interior trials—impatience, rebellion against the Will of God, want of generosity, neglect of prayer, unfaithfulness to our resolutions, inordinate seeking of comfort from creatures, and complaining to them. Our behaviour is often very different from our Lord’s in His Agony in the Garden. He wished to make atonement for this.

4. Our Lord wished to comfort us by His example when we cannot find comfort anywhere else. How pained Jesus, our dear blessed Lord, felt at finding no one to comfort and console Him, having to bear the whole weight of His sufferings alone! Here, indeed, we have another example to comfort us when we can find no other solace. And is it not a sweet consolation to think that our Lord had to suffer the same, and that He, too, found no comfort?

We have always our Lord to fly to, to strengthen and comfort us in all our interior trials. It was by His bitter struggle and Agony in the Garden that Jesus merited for us grace and strength to accept and bear in a generous, devoted spirit whatever trials and sufferings His loving Providence may see fit to send us during our probation here.

Trials are necessary for us—they are the seed of future glory. As long as we are in this world we are sorely in need of help. Jesus has won that help for us, we have but to go to Him, study Him, unite our trials and difficulties to His, unite our will to His, ask courage to overcome and be true to Him, and with Jesus we, too, shall win the victory. We must never lose sight of the fact that we shall have our hours in Gethsemani.

Lastly, there will be one hour in particular that will be very like that of our Lord’s Agony, the hour of our death, our mortal agony, when similar anguish of soul, fear, lassitude, and sadness will be our portion when we shall be quite alone. What a consolation to have the loving Heart of our Jesus too, that Sacred, human Heart that can understand our distress and help us! Let us never weary asking for a share of the blessings, graces, and victorious strength of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus.

The best resolution, and the one most in accordance with the intention of the Sacred Heart, and the true meaning of this mystery of
the Agony of the Sacred Heart, will be never to desist from our determination to give our Lord our best, to give fearlessly, and from purest love. Never to abate our generosity in the service of our Lord and Master on account of interior difficulties, such as sadness, distaste for spiritual things, darkness, repugnance, interior rebellion, fear of difficulties. In our distress, difficulties, and struggles with our weakness let us never forget what a combat Jesus had to sustain in His Heart, and how hard it was for Him to undertake the Passion for us, and yet how that loving Heart never wavered in its love and fidelity. "He loved me and delivered Himself for me." . . . What a happiness, what an honour, if the Angel of Comfort included me in his consoling representations, and pointed to me as being among those who, out of gratitude and reverence and love for Jesus Crucified would stand the test of interior affliction victoriously.

Colloquy.—In our Lord’s Agony I see how full His Heart was of me, how grieved He is by my sins, how He hates them, how His hatred of them oppressed and pained Him, how He would give me not only a bare pardon, but the grace of following Him in the path of perfection.

Ah, dear Jesus, let me cling to Thee, to Thy loving Heart, in confidence, in sorrow, and loyal devotion! Let me dwell in Thy Heart, living to please Thee and not to please myself! Dear Lord, make me truly and constantly sorry for my sins, sorry for Thy bitter pain; help me to imitate Thee in bearing humiliations and suffering! These are the three things Thou dost want of me, dear Jesus, so help me with Thy love and grace.

"Lord Jesus, turn into bitterness for me all carnal consolations." Mother of God, my Mother, thou who didst suffer so intensely during the Agony of Jesus, thy Jesus, being present in spirit, obtain for me, thy sinful child, the Spirit of Christ—great sympathy with Him in His sufferings. Ah, dear Lord, through Thy love for Thine Immaculate Mother, give me love and appreciation of the Cross, that I may be like Thee!

XV.—THE BETRAYAL AND SEIZURE OF JESUS


1st Prelude: History.—"Rise, let us go; behold, he is at hand that will betray Me. And as He yet spoke, behold Judas one of the Twelve came, and with him a great multitude with swords and clubs, sent by the Chief Priests and the Ancients of the people. And he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He, hold Him fast. And forthwith coming to Jesus, he said: Hail, Rabbi, and he kissed Him. And Jesus said to him: Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss? Jesus therefore knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth,
and said to them: Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith to them: I am He. And Judas also, who betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon therefore as He had said to them, I am He, they all went backward, and fell to the ground. Again therefore Jesus asked them: Whom seek ye? And they said: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered: I have told you that I am He: if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way. Then Simon Peter having a sword, drew it, and struck the servant of the High Priest, and cut off his right ear. And the name of the servant was Malchus. Jesus therefore said to Peter: Put up thy sword into the scabbard. The chalice which My heavenly Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it? Thinkest thou that I cannot ask My Father, and He will give Me presently more than twelve legions of angels? How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that so it must be done? In that same hour Jesus said to the Chief Priests, and magistrates of the temple, and the Ancients that were come unto Him: You are come out, as it were against a thief with swords and clubs to apprehend Me: I sat daily with you teaching in the Temple, and you laid not hands on me: But this is your hour and the power of darkness. Then the band, and the tribune, and the servants of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him. His disciples leaving Him, all fled away. And they led Him to the High Priest’s house; but Peter followed from afar.”

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—The road which separates the Garden of Olives from Gethsemani. See Jesus standing there surrounded by His disciples, who gaze in great fear at the steep heights opposite and so close to them, where the soldiers and armed crowd are passing through the gate with lamps and torches. The disciples are silent, utterly paralyzed, their eyes fixed on the multitude and the glare of the torches rapidly drawing near. The suspense is short, the traitor is at hand.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To know our Lord most intimately, ask for the Spirit of Christ, for a love and appreciation of the Cross, that I may be very near and dear and devoted to my Blessed Lord, and grow daily more like Him. To have great sympathy with Jesus in His sufferings and humiliations. Mother, I have need of thee!

“Make me feel as thou hast felt,
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Jesus Christ, my dear Lord.”

Points: I. Jesus goes to meet His enemies.
II. Jesus confronts His enemies.
III. Jesus seized and bound.

I

JESUS GOES TO MEET HIS ENEMIES

Contemplate Jesus fortified by the Angel, Who, having regained His strength and composure, says to His disciples: “Rise, let us go, behold he is at hand that will betray Me.” Jesus therefore knowing all things
that should come upon Him, went forth. The three Apostles arose in much alarm. Note their look of fear and anxiety. Hear Peter as he says implicitly to our Lord: “Lord, I will call the others that so we may defend you.” Jesus replies: “The hour is come, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners.” And as He spoke He pointed out to them at some little distance a band of armed men, who were advancing with torches, and He said that one of their number had betrayed Him. From the stone on which the three Apostles had been sleeping to the gate of the Garden the distance is only a few yards.

During the course of the mystery I shall consider how much our Lord suffers, and how much He wishes to suffer. How the Divinity hides itself, and how my Jesus suffers for me, for my sins.

As Jesus walks to the gate and stands expecting His enemies, I shall devoutly watch and listen. Mark that His step does not falter now. His limbs are not tottering. From His Sacred Face the traces of the Agony have passed away. Jesus speaks calmly, exhorts the Apostles to console His Blessed Mother and Magdalen, then He says: “Let us go to meet them, I shall deliver myself up without resistance into the hands of My enemies.”

See, contemplate lovingly, Jesus; note the calm majesty of His person. He advances. What a sublime spectacle, Jesus going to meet His enemies! Listen, as He courageously and nobly affirms—it is of His own free choice that He goes to His Death. “Knowing,” as St. John writes, “all things that should come upon Him, He went forth.” Lord Jesus, grant me a strong love of Thee, which will urge me always to embrace earnestly labours and hard things in Thy service. That I may be able to say: “All that I can do, I will do for Thee.” Help me, dear Lord, to take up the daily cross lovingly and of my own free choice.

“Jesus went forth,” tranquil, gracious, and beautiful, above the sons of men. St. Jerome and others think at this moment our Lord’s Sacred Body appeared more than ordinarily beautiful and majestic. Jesus is not to be taken by surprise. While He was speaking a great multitude appear, composed of the Roman cohort and of the Temple guard—priests, doctors, elders, and the Tribune or Commander-in-Chief of the cohort in person. It was necessary to avoid all tumult, to act by night, and to use all despatch. They were still afraid that the people might be given the alarm, and hearing of the arrest of Jesus break out into tumult.

Contrast the attitude of Jesus with that of His enemies. Contemplate that Divine Presence—what calm, peace, majesty, and courage! In His enemies we see agitation, doubt, haste, confusion, violence. In the trouble and agitation which reigned around Him, Jesus alone remains calm and firm. True image of the Church in this world where she is always surrounded by enemies and persecutors. And of the loyal, devoted lover of Jesus too! For His true lover faces
bravely in His interest every difficulty, both in her own soul and in the souls of others, and in every undertaking for His greater glory.

When we are faint-hearted and waver about making a sacrifice, let us raise our eyes to Jesus, our dear Master, always present to us; let us look well at our Jesus going to meet His enemies and ours, going to His Passion for me, and strength will come to imitate Him, to act like Him. How many religious there are, says Father Clare, who only seek the shadow of the Cross; how many who lean against it; how few who climb up, and are fastened to it!

Colloquy.—What have I to say to my Divine Master as He goes to give Himself to death for me? O Jesus! I will be true to Thee. Lord Jesus, Thou hast conquered. How can I withhold a particle of my heart, my life, from Thee? All are and shall be Thine. Take, take, Lord Jesus, my entire liberty, all that I have, all that I am, all are Thine. "Amorem tui solum," Rabboni! Behold me at Thy feet, look on me.

Jesus, my Master, hear me: I will follow Thee to Calvary! I consecrate myself to Thee till death, looking on myself henceforth as a slave, whose office is to be at the service and disposal of his Master, working with all my heart and soul, body and mind to please and satisfy Thee in all and by all. Vouchsafe, O good Jesus, my Lord and my God, to receive Thy poor servant, that henceforth, with Thy Almighty grace, I may be wholly Thine now and for ever. Mother, I have need of thee. O Mother of Jesus, my Mother, teach me to know and love thy Blessed Son, and to live for Him alone.

II

JESUS CONFRONTS HIS ENEMIES

And as He was speaking, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the Twelve, went before them, and drew near to Jesus, to kiss Him. And Jesus said: "Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"

In this mystery note how much the Heart of Jesus is wounded by treason on the part of His own. There are two circumstances to be considered in this meeting of our Lord with His enemies: (1) The manner in which He is recognized, and (2) His prohibition of all resistance on the part of the Apostles.

1. Our Lord is recognized by means of Judas’ treachery. Judas knew the retreat of the Master, for he had often been there with Him; and it was thither he now led the band to take Jesus. In order to prevent any mistake the traitor had provided a sign by which to mark the victim. “Whomsoever I shall kiss that is He; take Him and lead Him safely away.” Usually it was the Master who embraced the disciple; the disciple rarely embraced the Master.

Contemplate attentively every detail—fix my eyes reverently and lovingly on my dear Lord Jesus. Judas and his band were about to
enter Gethsemani—when Jesus and the eleven came to meet him—Judas urged on by the soldiers. "Hail, Master!" he said; "and he kissed Him." "Friend," said Jesus sadly and compassionately, "whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" These were the last words the wretched man heard from Jesus' lips.

How terrible to renounce, deny, withdraw from Jesus Christ for any temporal, earthly consideration! What a terrible evil to allow any too natural inclination to overrule us! Such will always work ruin, as far as the soul is concerned. And what will it profit to gain the whole world if I lose my soul—yea, or even one degree of nearness to Jesus.

Amongst the soldiers, a great many, probably the greater part, did not know Jesus: besides, in the darkness, to mistake another for Him was quite possible—so a sign was fixed upon. But why a kiss? What audacity to approach thus the Divine Person of Jesus, and under the very eyes of the Apostles! What baseness and hypocrisy so to abuse the sign of friendship and discipleship for the purpose of betrayal! What malice and callousness to give the signal for the terrible process of torture to begin! What malice and hard-heartedness; how cruel, to use a kiss as a sign for delivering up the Master to a terrible martyrdom and death!

Note how our Lord takes this abominable act of treachery! He does not refuse the kiss—no; He permits it—receives and returns it, precisely because it is the signal for His Death. He wishes to suffer and die for me. "All I have undertaken to do, I will do for you."

Hear with what infinite gentleness, sweetness, and compassion our Lord addresses Judas: "Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" Our Lord says this to show Judas that He knows everything, can read his inmost heart and secret thoughts. Also, if possible, to touch the heart of the traitor by this exposure of intention, and by His own unfathomable love and gentleness. What a marvellous grace! But the grace is rejected as so many others before it. How many Saints and servants of our Lord would gladly have accounted a kiss from Him as the very highest reward for their fidelity and love and labour, and do not receive it! But our Lord bestowed this favour on Judas. To what lengths His love for sinners, His desires to save them, and His longing for suffering carry Him!

There was a pause; probably in the obscurity and confusion that reigned everywhere the signal given by the traitor was not sufficiently noticed. Then Jesus advanced resolutely towards the band. "Whom seek ye?" He said. They answered: "Jesus of Nazareth." "I am He," replied our Lord. At these words they went backward, and fell to the ground. He who had just allowed the traitor to see His Divine goodness, flashed forth in a word His Divine strength. His love might be repelled, but no one could resist His power if He wished to overthrow all things. His power, when He wills, is supreme; His Majesty, whencesoever He assumes it, terrible. It was so when He drove the traders
from the Temple; and when, as the angry Nazarenes attempted to throw Him down from the precipice, He calmly and irresistibly passed through their midst. Now He shows it for the last time: He will have all to know that He is a voluntary victim. They only seized upon Him because He willed it.

The guards who had fallen backward now recovered themselves. Again our Lord said to them: “Whom seek ye?” Again they replied: “Jesus of Nazareth.” “I have told you that I am He; if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way,” He added, pointing to the disciples grouped behind Him. “The Good Shepherd gives His life for His sheep” (John x.). What a lesson of self-abasement and forgiveness of injuries Jesus here gives me. How is it we are so unforgiving, so slow to make friendly advances, so ready to wrap ourselves up in our offended dignity? It is because we are so ungenerous, so selfish, so mean and petty, so unlike our Lord.

Ah, Lord Jesus, help me to make reparation for my past mean, selfish, touchiness. Give me grace, when occasions offer of being true and loyal to Thee, that I may courageously set self aside and act in such a manner as to honour and glorify Thee by endeavouring to be like Thee. Mother, I have need of thee. Holy Mother, imprint deeply on my heart the wounds of thy crucified Son.

2. The second circumstance to be remarked about this meeting was our Lord’s hindrance of the Apostles’ resistance. As the soldiers were about to lay hands upon Jesus, Peter cried out, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” and without waiting for answer, he drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the High Priest.

Listen to our Lord: “Put up thy sword into the scabbard.” Jesus reproves Peter for his action—He tells him that every one who takes up the sword must expect to be met with the sword, to his own disadvantage (these words of Jesus seem to have been a proverb). Then our Lord makes it clear—or rather, these words mean, “He who thinks that the Kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of this world, and who seeks to defend it with the sword, he will perish by the sword; for My Father will not protect him nor bless his undertaking.” “The chalice which My heavenly Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it? Thinkest thou that I cannot ask My Father, and He will give Me presently more than twelve legions of angels?” Jesus wishes to drink the chalice, and the Scriptures must be fulfilled. Resistance would therefore have been superfluous and foolish, unworthy of our Lord and contrary to the Divine Will. Thus the opposition was checked, and our Lord mercifully healed the wound that Peter had inflicted upon Malchus. See the tenderness with which Jesus lays His blessed hand on His enemy, and learn to be kind and helpful to all.

But our Lord rebuked the magistrates and priests of the Temple. Why? For their unworthy, despicable act of violence, the result of their envy and jealousy. “You are come out as it were to a robber with swords and clubs to apprehend Me. I sat daily with you in the
Meditation on the Passion

Temple teaching, and you laid not hands upon Me, but this is your hour, and the power of darkness, and it must be so that the Scriptures may be fulfilled.” With these words Jesus proves to them His innocence and voluntary submission to the Will of God, reminds them of His benefits, and frightens them by His reference to their deed, which cannot be good since it seeks the cover of darkness and is prompted by Satan.

Colloquy.—Dear Lord, give me light to recognize Thy hand in every trial, humiliation, and difficulty in my daily life. Let me never refuse to drink of Thy chalice. Keep me near Thee, increase my faith and love that I may quickly see Thee. Dominus est! Then indeed it will be easy to cast myself at Thy blessed feet and say with all my heart: “My Master, not my will but Thine be done.” Mother, be propitious to me.

“O thou Mother, fount of love,
Touch my spirit from above,
Make my heart with thine accord.”

Help me to say with thee, Ecce Ancilla Domini! Fiat mibi secundum verbum tuum.

III

JESUS SEIZED AND BOUND

Then the band and the tribune, and the servants of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him, and they led him away to Annas.

I will contemplate Jesus seized and bound. When our Lord said these words, “This is your hour and the power of darkness,” the soldiers laid hands upon Him. See them as they seize so roughly the Sacred Hands of Jesus and tie them tightly with hard cords—those hands more powerful than Samson’s. This is the beginning of the apparent weakness and powerlessness of Jesus. He who bade defiance to His enemies, put them to rout by word and work, now seems unable to resist them, as if feeble and helpless in their hands. Yet, under this apparent weakness was hidden a Divine force; nay, it was this very weakness which was the means of conquering the whole world.

Dear Lord, help me to learn the sublime and important lesson. Here Thou teachest me to yield myself up as a little child to perfect obedience; to see Thee, my Jesus, in all who are over me, no matter who or what they are; and help me, dear Lord, to understand the Divine force there is in humble submission. May I, like Thee, be obedient unto death.

The soldiers tied the hands of Jesus so that He could no longer lay them on the sick and the afflicted to heal their diseases and their miseries. So we, too, tie the hands of Jesus by bands far more fatal, in hindering His power to heal the sickness of our soul, when we reject His graces and turn a deaf ear to His inspirations and counsel; for then we render Him powerless to assist us—Jesus cannot bestow upon us the blessings
He delights to impart—our obstinacy ties His hands, so that He cannot help us as He would.

Often in our desire to work for others we find our hands tied, something hinders our charitable designs, some hostile influence renders us apparently powerless. Our prayers seem to avail nothing, our kind acts are rejected, we seem to do the wrong thing when trying our best to do what is right. Yet we must not repine, we are only treading in our Master's steps. The very suffering entailed in this is a sure means of earning the graces we desire.

Watch our Lord closely. See with what Divine patience He submits to the vilest treatment. They encircled his waist with a species of belt to which were attached four ropes. The Pharisees lighted fresh torches, and the procession started. Ten soldiers walked in front, the archers who held the ropes and dragged Jesus along followed, the Pharisees and remainder of soldiers brought up the rear. It was at his arrest that our Lord made the actual sacrifice of His freedom, reputation, honour and life. We make the same actual sacrifice of our freedom, reputation, honour and life for Him by a vow of obedience. That the sacrifice may be true and complete, St. Ignatius tells us to give ourselves up to perfect obedience— by that means we do indeed lay down our life for Christ. True obedience—obedience of faith—is a most perfect sacrifice; nothing else can make us so like to Jesus.

Henceforth Jesus is but the victim of the cruelty of His enemies, and our sins. Contemplate long and lovingly the complete surrender He makes of Himself for us. Behold the answer to the question, "Lord Jesus, wherein hast Thou loved us?" Truly our Lord's love was supreme. He made the sacrifice of His life and liberty with infinite patience, love, and humility. The flight of the Apostles was a bitter drop in the chalice of our Saviour—"All forsook Him and fled"—not one was found to remain by His side in His abandonment. It was the will of God He should suffer alone. "I looked about and there was none to help; I sought and there was none to give aid." Christ suffered alone, and He can sympathize with that loneliness in suffering which adds so much to its bitterness.

The arrest of Jesus is to men the opening scene of the Passion. How great, how glorious, and how lovable Jesus appears! In the first place, He reveals His omniscience. He knew that Judas had fixed upon this spot and hour; in spirit He saw the rabble approaching, and knew all that was to happen. How gloriously His power and Divine freedom are displayed! He needs no defender and will have none. If He had cared to be defended—and the heavenly Father had not decided otherwise—the slightest sign from Him would have sufficed to summon all the heavenly hosts that stood at His command. But He does not need the Angels; He transfixes, as we have seen, the whole mob with a word.

Lastly, Jesus shows His touching kindness of heart towards Malchus as well as towards His Apostles, taking care that no harm should befal them, and even extending His loving solicitude to Judas.
The Church is the Bride of Christ, and the faithful reflection of His Spirit. She always behaves in this manner to the world, which persecutes, reviles, and despoils, and curtails her freedom. She has always met its cunning and violence with the same temper and principles. She does not resort to sword and club; her power lies in the Will of God, in suffering and endurance. When she is fettered she continues to bless, and does good to those who injure her. The bonds she bears for Christ are her most beautiful and precious adornment and the supreme pledge of her victory. Her cry is ever, "We suffer violence; thanks be to God."

Colloquy.—O Sacred, wounded Heart of Jesus, relying on Thy goodness and grace I ask to follow Thee closely, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek reward save to feel that I do Thy will. Take, take, O Lord, take and receive my entire liberty. Blessed is Thy servant who, enkindled and enraptured with love for Thee, follows Thee, O Jesus, love of love. Help me, dear Lord, to understand the Mystery of the Cross. Keep me near to Thee. Be thou only for ever with me; Thou wilt be enough. May I cling to Thee daily more closely and love Thee more perfectly.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, pray for me; O my Mother, I have need of thee!

XVI.—JESUS LED AWAY CAPTIVE TO ANNAS

1st Prelude: History.—"Then the band, and the tribune, and the servants of the Jews took our Lord and bound Him, and they led Him away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiphas, who was the High Priest of that year" (John xviii.).

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—The Garden of Olives. See Jesus alone in the hands of His enemies. Note the gentle, calm tranquility of our Lord in the midst of these furious enemies. He has just said to them: "This is your hour and the power of darkness." Notice how self and darkness go together. When the selfish man seems to be reigning and ruling, in reality the prince of darkness is reigning and ruling. Man can never be lord and master, he is created to serve. If he will not serve God, his Father and Creator, he must of necessity be the slave of Lucifer. So it is with each soul: we can never be independent. Either we willingly submit to our God or we become the most wretched slaves of the prince of darkness. Jesus is the light of the world. Sin brings darkness—sin. Every sin is pride, independence, self-usurping God's place. Its result is always darkness.

Just a few days ago our Lord, on His way to Jerusalem, when come to this spot, Olivet, wept over the fate of Jerusalem. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if thou hadst known in this thy day the things that are for thy peace. But now they are hidden from thy eyes." Culpable blindness is one of the worst punishments of sin. When the eyes of the body are blind men long and seek for their cure. But when the
soul is blind men have no desire for sight, they have no sense of their misery. “We must work the works of Him that sent us, while it is day (i.e., this life). The night (i.e., death) cometh when no man can work.” “If a man,” said our Lord, “walk in the day he stumbleth not because he seeth the light of this world. But if he walk in the night he stumbleth because the light is not in him.”

Those who surround Jesus are completely in darkness (i.e., pride, envy and jealousy), their evil passions have made them the bitter enemies of our Lord. They have shut out “the light.” Poor wretched dupes of Satan. Children of God changed into slaves of Lucifer.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—Light and grace to know Jesus, to know Him intimately, to know His Sacred Heart; His Spirit. That I may truly follow our Lord: walk in the light. That I may never be so weak and cowardly as to side with His and my enemies.

Points: I. Jesus bound.
II. Jesus before Annas.
II. Jesus receives a blow in the face.

I

JESUS BOUND

“They bound him.” By the aid of the bright moonlight and flaming torches let us look at our dear Lord for a little while before the tumultuous march begins. From details diligently collected from ancient writers, and also from relations left on record by holy persons, we gather the following particulars: An iron collar with two chains attached to it is made fast round Jesus’ neck. His arms are tightly pinioned behind his back, and His wrists bound together by cords, so tightly knotted that His Sacred Blood is flowing from the wounds they cause. Round His Body they fasten a species of belt to which are attached four ropes. By means of these ropes they drag our Lord from side to side in a most cruel manner. The fear lest Jesus once again escape is so great that cords, and ropes, and chains, and fetters are all applied with most useless and superfluous cruelty.

Let us try, as St. Ignatius advises, to measure, as best we can, how much our Lord is suffering. The knotted cords are eating into His Sacred Flesh. The ropes are galling His swollen limbs. The heavy boots of the soldiers are crushing His bare feet. From the revelations vouchsafed to our Lord’s devout servants, we know it was not only on the way to Calvary our Lord fell to the ground, and not only in the servants’ hall He was bruised and spit upon, but that from the Garden to Calvary He received continually the vilest treatment. “He was bruised for our sins, He was wounded for our iniquities.”

Look into the Heart of Jesus: hear it pleading with the Father, “All that I can do I will do for them.” Jesus prays and desires with desire insatiable that wounds and sorrows be multiplied in His Soul and on His Body till every sin that has been committed, or shall be committed,
is not only cancelled and outweighed and blotted out, but quite for-
gotten in the beauty and glory of the graces and virtues that abound
in the redeemed soul.

Can I have the heart to be mean and cowardly in labouring for my
perfection when I contemplate the love of Jesus for me and see how
much I have cost? As I look at Him bound and chained I see in Him
my Mediator. He has to reconcile God with man and man with God.
One part of His work is easy—that is, to move the Eternal Father to
forgive man, for the instant the Father looks on the face of His Christ,
out of the infinite love due to God made Man, His Father is perfectly
appeased, and angry no more with the fallen race. But our Jesus must
turn to us and incline our hearts to turn back to our Father who is in
Heaven. Here begins Jesus’ labour beyond measure! What is there
that He could have done and has not done? The charity of the Heart
of Jesus multiplies shapes and forms of suffering and sorrow, that He
may move us to understand how evil and how bitter a thing it is to
abandon the infinite goodness of our Father, our Creator, and go as
traitors to Lucifer.

O love of the Sacred Heart! Lovingly He looks at me, and calls
to me to forget not that if His wounds and bruises are many, yet, accord-
ing to His love, there is not one too many, nor one too deep to satisfy
the desire and prayer of His Heart to enkindle in my heart the fire of
love that is in His own, and which He came to cast upon earth.

While Jesus stands bound under the walls of His Holy City, in the
moonlight, and among the olive-trees, and with the flaming torches
waving round Him, and quite alone among His enemies, while they
looked and stared upon Him; all this time He has the joy set before
Him, which the comforting Angel brought back to His mind, that a
long line of men and women, moved by this scene and by the bonds
and chains of His captivity, will not be content to be bound only by
His precepts and commandments, but will add on other straighter and
more precious bonds binding them closely to Him and His holy Mother
in voluntary poverty, chastity of choice, and most willing and complete
obedience.

Colloquy.—All shall be made new, and the heart that heretofore
said, "I will not serve," now glories to style herself "I, the prisoner
and servant of Jesus Christ." Yes, dear Lord, I consecrate myself to
Thee, looking on myself henceforth as a slave whose sole office lies in
being at the disposal of the Master. Until death I devote myself to
Thee, my Master, to work with all my mind and heart and body and
soul to satisfy Thee in all and by all. Ah, dear Jesus, as I kneel at Thy
Sacred feet, in Thy Divine Presence, look on me and convert me wholly
to Thee; let virtue come out from Thee to me. I offer Thee, my
Jesus, all the love of my heart, I deliver myself up absolutely to Thee.
Take, take, O Lord, take and receive my entire liberty. Jesus, Master,
I am Thine, and I will be Thine for ever. All the days of my life let
not my will but Thine be done.
Jesus led away Captive to Annas

Holy Mother, Mother of God, in the stable you bound your Divine Child in swathing bands. By those hands, and by the cords and chains that bind Him now, obtain for me grace to detach my heart from all earthly things, that nothing may divide my heart with our Lord. O Mother, I have need of you!

II

JESUS BEFORE ANNAS

"They led Him away to Annas first." It was with Annas, we are told, that Judas made his bargain. The palace of Annas was situated on the road leading to that of Caiphas. Everything had been prepared beforehand for the coming of Jesus. The conspiracy was to be executed without hesitation or delay, but with all the legal formalities to which these blind authorities attached so much importance.

It was towards midnight when Jesus and the band reached the palace. The guards immediately conducted Him into a very large hall, where Annas, surrounded by twenty-eight Councillors, was seated on a species of platform placed opposite the door. The delay at Annas' house seems to have been merely casual, the goal of the procession was really the house of Caiphas, which, like that of Annas, stood on the heights of the upper city; and the judicial sitting took place there. All the grades of the Great Council were represented—High Priests, Scribes, and Ancients. But it is uncertain whether all its members were present. We are told that all condemned our Lord at this sitting, so it would seem that his friends Joseph and Nicodemus were not present, perhaps not invited at all. The soldiers who first arrested Jesus now dragged Him roughly to the foot of the tribunal.

Contemplate Jesus as he stands before Annas. He looks exhausted and haggard—His garments covered with mud, His hands manacled, His head bowed down—and He spoke not a word. The room was full—soldiers, servants of Annas, a number of the mob collected for the purpose, and the false witnesses who afterwards adjourned to Caiphas' hall.

See Annas. The expression of his face was most repulsive; it showed the infernal joy with which he was filled, as well as the cunning and duplicity of his heart. Note his arrogance as he smiles ironically, and pretends that he knew nothing of the taking of Jesus, and is astonished to find that the prisoner in front of him is no less than Jesus of Nazareth.

Here our Lord is subjected to new insults—mockery, and all manner of vile treatment. Try to picture and realize this scene; make it a living picture. Watch the persons; listen to the words; observe the actions. (1) The persons. Annas, a cunning, bitter old man delighted to find Jesus, his mortal enemy, in his power. (2) The Pharisees, Scribes, and Ancients, full of diabolical joy at seeing Jesus bound and so humiliated. (3) The false witnesses trying to concoct a plausible story, for which they are well paid by the rulers. And in the midst Jesus, sorrowful, bleeding, exhausted, so gentle, so meek and humble,
and submissive. How much it had cost Jesus to teach me these lessons, and to repair my pride, anger, and disobedience.

Listen to the words. Hear the insulting questions of Annas, the derisive jeers of the Pharisees, the shouts of the mob. How much Jesus suffers in His honour and reputation, and how much he wishes to suffer—and all for me. "I have given you an example that as I have done so do you also." Dear Lord, give me Thy Spirit, make my heart like unto Thine—meek and humble—make me love what Thou hast loved for me.

Would that we could fall in love with humiliation, the means and sure road to humility. Humility is a help to acquire the perfection of every virtue, in fact there is no virtue without it. If I have real, genuine humility all the rest will follow. It is, in a peculiar manner, a help to charity, for how could we condemn others or act unkindly towards them if we recognized our own worthlessness and nothingness? "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart," is our Lord’s special lesson or message to us. Meekness is the term we apply to exterior humility, for if we are humble of heart we shall be meek exteriorly.

At the Sacred Feet of Jesus, so humiliated and annihilated for me, shall I not make a complete surrender of myself, and that from a motive of perfect love; yielding myself up to perfect obedience, which is truest humility in practice and self-abasement? This is the best and most acceptable return I can make to our Lord, for the most genuine, truest love of our Lord is to imitate Him.

How many opportunities in daily life of practising the third degree of humility; the truest following of Christ. Of course it is absolutely impossible to acquire humility if we do not make frequent acts of it, so when we have not many opportunities for exterior acts of this virtue we should make repeated interior acts, and this will serve us quite as well. It is quite possible to make an act of the third degree even if we have not acquired it. For example, if I get a humiliation to thank our Lord for it and try to be glad that I received it. If I cannot feel glad, I can tell our Lord that I wish to feel glad and ask Him to help me.

Humility, or rather the practice of self-humiliation, is a real reparation and compensation to our Lord for all our cowardice and meanness in His service, consequently opportunities of this kind are valuable, and we should be careful not to miss them. They mean much in the light of eternity. Self-humiliation will often atone for a failure in the practice of other virtues; for instance, if I fail in charity I can make up for the fault by an act of self-humiliation. Humiliation will even atone for a failure in humility—e.g., if I take correction badly, I can humble myself by admitting how little virtue I have and by acknowledging my fault. Oh, let us rejoice, and console the humble, crushed Heart of Jesus by being thoroughly steeped in humility. It is well worth striving for distinction here. We need not fear—our Lord will help our weakness, for by humility we can get near our Divine Master and become very dear to His Heart. Let us not forget that "in proportion
Jesus led away Captive to Annas

as we shall have followed Him in pain, so shall we follow Him in glory.”
We should beware of doing good actions from a motive of vain-glory lest they deserve the reproach, “Amen, you have your reward.”

C O L L O Q U I —O most loving Jesus, I ask Thee through the humiliations and abandonment Thou didst submit to for love of me to give me the courage and love that will continually urge me to renounce myself, and to prove that I do indeed love Thee. O my dear Lord, I do wish to renounce all, all, everything to be near Thee and true to Thee.

“Deep in Thy Sacred Heart let me abide.
Thou who hast bled for me, sorrowed and died.”

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me! O Lady of the Sacred Heart, plead for me! Mother, I have need of thee!

III

J E S U S R E C E I V E S A B L O W I N T H E F A C E

One of the servants gave Jesus a blow. I shall draw close to Jesus as Annas begins to question Him on His disciples and His doctrine. Annas attempts to lay snares for Jesus by his captious questions, but in vain! Our Lord knows that Annas is not God’s delegate in this Court. He is not the appointed judge; Caiphas is the High Priest. Annas undertakes a mere private inquiry which will not speed on the work of redemption. Annas therefore is only frittering away precious moments, and is multiplying sins. The loving Heart of Jesus will cut short this mischievous delay.

Hear our Lord as He replies: “I have spoken to the world. I have always taught in the synagogues and in the Temple, whither all the Jews resort, and in secret have I spoken nothing. Why askest thou Me? Ask them who have heard what I have spoken unto them; behold, they know what things I have said.” Our Lord meant that he had not taught in secret any doctrine other than he had preached publicly. Annas was silenced, utterly silenced and confounded. See the angry, eager gestures of the enemies of Christ, the feigned indignation of the judge. One of the servants standing by gave Jesus a blow on the face, saying: “Answerest thou the High Priest so?”

The enormity of this ill-treatment becomes clear in some way when we consider, first, in what it consisted. It was a gross public affront—at once insulting and painful. Secondly, to whom was this affront offered, and by whom? To the Son of God, by a common servant. Where, and before whom? At a public assembly, before the whole Council. And why? Because our Lord had given a most just and dignified answer. How painful and sad it must have been to see the fettered figure of our dear Lord stagger under the blow, the blood flow, and the whole Council applaud the vile, cruel stroke with mocking laughter! Jesus received this blow upon the face to atone for our
sins of the tongue, for the wicked words, uncharitable, censorious words, untrue and deceitful words that so often proceed from the mouth of man.

Anna became still more enraged when he saw the calm, meek demeanour of Jesus as He turned to the servant quite gently, and said: "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou me?" Jesus, our blessed Master, desired to teach us to bear with patience and gentleness all outrage and unkindness, all reproaches and ill-usage, especially such as we endure in His cause. "Blessed are ye," He says, "when men shall revile you . . . for My sake." But we must take care to bear it for Christ's sake, and through love of Him, if we would earn the blessings.

COLLOQUY.—How do I bear reproaches and humiliations? How do I take correction? What have I to say to our Lord? What kind of reparation ought I to make? What opportunities have I of imitating my Jesus in this mystery? "He loved me and delivered Himself for me." Can Jesus look on me and say to His Blessed Mother and the heavenly Court: "He loves Me and delivers himself for Me." Ask light, strength of will, and love strong as death. Remember trials and crosses are very useful; but humiliations are still better. Crosses are as pure gold: humiliations are as pearls and precious stones. Thrice happy the religious who through life courageously and lovingly treads the narrow path of regular discipline—common life—which most effectually crucifies the old man—self. Trials and temptations are soon over, and every act of resistance, every call upon Divine help, will merit for us a crown of glory in Heaven—"our Fatherland."

As our Lord proved His love for me by suffering, so ought I to do. Remember our Lord is loyal and true to those who are His friends—He is a faithful God. My most habitual thought ought to be: What a true friend our Lord is to me. I need not fear that He will ask too much of me. He always asks for something that our human nature rebels against; but the pain of giving lasts but a moment, and the pleasure is eternal. To suffer passes—to have suffered never passes!

Grant, I beseech Thee, Lord Jesus, that I may love the Cross. Passion of Christ, strengthen me! It is—O my dear Master, my Eternal King and Lord—my deliberate determination to follow Thee. O grant, dear Lord, that this may be no empty wish, but an efficacious resolution, which, with Thy grace, I may keep for the consolation of Thy Heart and the sanctification of my soul, for which Thou hast suffered so much. O Sweet Jesus, fountain of life and grace, free my heart from all illusions and make me true to Thee. O Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray for me now. Give me to Jesus, O Mother. O Mother, I have need of thee!
XVII.—JESUS BEFORE CAIPHAS: TRIAL AND CONDEMNATION

(Mark xiv. 55-65)

1st Prelude: History.—“And the Chief Priests and all the Council sought for evidence against Jesus, that they might put Him to death, and they found none. ... For many bore false witness against Him ... and their witness did not agree. ... And the High Priest, rising up in the midst, asked Jesus, saying, Answerest Thou nothing to the things that are laid to Thy charge by these men? But Jesus held His peace and answered nothing. Again the High Priest asked Him, and said to Him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed God? And Jesus said to him: I am. And you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming with the clouds of Heaven. Then the High Priest rending his garments, said, What need we any further witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What think you? Who all declared Him to be deserving of death. And some began to spit upon Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him: Prophesy; and the servants struck Him with the palms of their hands.”

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—See the road from the house of Annas to that of the High Priest Caiphas. The distance is not more than three hundred steps. See the high walls and common-looking houses on each side of the road, which was lighted up by torches and lanterns placed on poles; see here and there groups standing talking in an angry, excited manner; true picture of uncontrolled evil inclinations. The soldiers can scarcely make their way through the crowd, and those who had behaved so shamefully to Jesus at the Court of Annas continue their insults and base usage during the whole of the time spent in walking to the house of Caiphas. I shall keep very close to our Lord: for during His Passion He is teaching me by word, by work, and by suffering.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To know more and more intimately the Heart of my Divine Master—courage to be loyal and true—to stand by Him on all occasions—light to understand the mystery of the Cross. O my dear Lord and Master, my Jesus, be Thou ever my Leader. Grant, Lord Jesus, that I be no longer deaf to Thy call, but prompt and diligent in accomplishing Thy Holy Will, that I be true to Thee till death—follow faithfully in Thy footsteps—never, never counting the cost! Help me each day, dear Lord, to grow more and more generous in the practice of obedience—Thy obedience—holy, Divine obedience. O Mary, my dear Mother, be propitious to me. Mother, I have need of thee!

Points: I. Annas sent Him bound to Caiphas.
II. Trial and condemnation at the Court of Caiphas.
III. Ignominies and affronts at the Court of Caiphas.
I

ANNAS SENT HIM BOUND TO CAIPHAS

It is probably about an hour after midnight when Annas gives the order to lead Jesus bound to Caiphas.

Attendite! With our eyes let us look at our Saviour, our dear Master, standing dumb as a lamb before His shearers, while they quickly make fast every rope, every cord, every chain, and every fetter. We must try to measure the pain and torment caused by every fresh knot made, and every tightening of the cords. Notice His swollen and livid face, bruised by every blow. He goes out worse than He came in, more and more the Man of Sorrows. O heavenly Father, look on the face of Christ, our Jesus, look on all His wounds and forgive us our sins. Mother of God, Mother of Jesus, look on the face of thy Divine Son, thy Jesus, and pray for us sinners. O Mother, I have need of thee!

From the house of Annas, Jesus is dragged to the palace of Caiphas the High Priest. Note the bustle and activity that prevail: the journey this time is short, probably the way lies through the outer court, where the servants are assembled, and where by this time Peter has perhaps already arrived. See the Chief Priests and Council searching everywhere for a show of evidence—messengers sent to and fro and bribes offered. All the worthless summoned to bear witness against Jesus. This is always the way—the wicked are so much more active in fighting against God than the good in fighting for Him. Our Lord's disciples and friends are doing nothing for Him, whilst His enemies are seeking to destroy Him. When I look at myself, O how little I have done—how little I am doing for the interests of Jesus!

Jesus is dragged across the court—short as the journey is, we may be sure, while contemplating, that the sufferings of Jesus are neither few nor light. Their aim is to lead Him speedily and carefully. Strong men are holding the two chains attached to the collar round our Lord's neck, others are holding the chains or ropes round His waist. The mob receive Him with groans and hisses. How Jesus suffers, how He atones for my touchiness and pride! What can I do now but bow down at His blessed feet and kiss them—I can beg of Him to give me a share in the shame that I have brought upon Him. Every circumstance is lowering and humiliating. How completely my Divine Master, my Lord and my God, abdicates His dignity—and such dignity, and for me.

How can I upon every little occasion show resentment! If anything can make me ashamed of my pride and selfishness in the past, and for the future urge me to aim at the perfection of humility—surely it will be the humiliations of Jesus and His Passion.

Colloquy.—Not out of necessity, O Lord Jesus, art Thou going to judgment, but solely because Thou willest by Thy bonds to break my chains. O my Jesus, by Thy Sacred Passion, strengthen me; let not
Jesus before Caiphas: Trial and Condemnation

flesh and blood prevail over me; let it not overcome me; turn for me into bitterness all carnal consolations which withdraw me from Thee. O loving, humiliated Heart of Jesus, conquer my heart—draw me to Thee, help me to follow Thee closely. O Mother of God, my Mother, I have need of thee!

II

TRIAL AND CONDEMNATION AT THE COURT OF CAIPHAS

See the persons, listen to the words, note the actions.

Caiphas was seated in the centre of the raised platform, and seventy members of the Sanhedrin were placed around him—namely, the Priests, the Scribes, and Ancients—standing on either side, and the false witnesses were behind them. The countenance of Caiphas was solemn in the extreme, but the gravity was accompanied by signs of suppressed rage and sinister intentions. Both the time and place of this assembly were contrary to law, but the resolve to do away with Christ made the law of no account now.

Contemplate our Blessed Lord as He reaches the council chamber. Hear Caiphas exclaim in a loud voice: “Thou art come, then, at last, Thou enemy of God, Thou blasphemer, Who dost disturb the peace of this holy night.” Then the trial begins in a way not usual in such cases. Instead of giving our Lord a counsel for His defence, hearing the evidence in His favour, formulating the accusation definitely and confirming it by witnesses, the High Priest began immediately, probably through embarrassment, with a cross-examination of our Lord concerning His doctrine and disciples. Jesus was to declare Himself with regard to these points. “The High Priest therefore asked Jesus of His disciples, and of His doctrine.”

This cross-examination was (1) quite superfluous, for the condemnation of Jesus was a foregone conclusion; (2) it was very unjust, for no defendant is bound to accuse himself; (3) it was very crafty, because they only hoped to find something in His answers that could be turned against Him. The High Priest and the Council were obliged to examine the witnesses, for the law required that at least two witnesses should agree exactly. Our Lord’s enemies had already been on the lookout for witnesses, and false ones, too—“For many bore false witness against Him,” St. Mark says. A great many hired witnesses appeared at the prosecution. We are not told all that they said against our Lord, but whatever it may have been, it was false, malicious, invented, or at least misrepresented; and as the witnesses were heard separately, according to the ordinary judicial usage, the result was deplorable. Their statements did not agree even in the main points, and no use could be made of them.

At last two witnesses appeared, who stated that Jesus had said, speaking contemptuously of the Temple, that He would destroy it and
build another, not made with hands, within three days. This is sup-
pposed to be the answer given by our Lord on the first paschal feast
during His public ministry, when the Priests asked Him by whose
authority He had dared to cleanse the Temple. This evidence was
also false, as regards the words and sense. Our Lord’s answer on that
occasion had been, “Destroy this Temple,” not “I will destroy it,”
and He had been referring to the temple of His Body. These men had
learned the ways of their master, the devil. Satan, when he deceives,
always mixes up a large element of truth with his deceits. This is why
we should never argue with him, for he can represent what is false
and unlawful as true and right if once we listen, by bringing into
prominence the elements of truth it contains. These false witnesses,
in spite of their cunning, could not agree, but one contradicted the
other.

It is one of the certain tests of error, that it is inconsistent and self-
contradictory—jarring discord is the mark of the enemies and foes of
Christ; peace and concord are the privilege of those who are on His
side.

And how did our Lord behave in the face of this evidence? He
was silent. Jesus held His peace, and answered nothing. Even when
the High Priest, in order to get some avowal from Him, asked what He
had to say to the statements of the witnesses, He was silent, and spoke
not a word of reply.

And why did Jesus give no answer? (1) It was wise and prudent
of Him to act thus, for any answer of defence would be unnecessary
and quite useless in the present disposition of the Council; and (2)
Jesus’ silence teaches us fortitude and humility. Our Lord wished to
set us an example not to be too eager in our own defence, and also to
satisfy for the faults and sins which eagerness to justify ourselves causes
us to commit. Let us remember St. Ignatius’ advice: “Always receive
correction or reproof with faith, showing humble, reverent silence,
and submission.” And this, that we may be more like Christ.

“Jesus was silent!” Oh, what a useful, what a necessary word is
this one dictated by the Holy Spirit: Jesus was silent! Jesus held His
peace. Most useful to me is the study of the meek and victorious
silence of Jesus. If I am silent, reverent, humble, particularly when
accused or corrected, God not only speaks for me, but also to me in
prayer.

“Anserest Thou nothing?” said Caiphas. See how all these most
unwise councillors fix their eyes on Jesus during this appeal from the
High Priest. In spite of His chains and bonds they feel in the core of
their hearts, and in the marrow of their bones, that they are in the
presence of their Master. They murmur in their hearts: “Do you
see that we prevail nothing?” “Anserest Thou nothing?” All
the while the silence of Jesus is speaking powerfully—it will speak
powerfully to all His servants to the end of time; His chains are speaking;
His pale face is speaking; His weary body is speaking—weary, yes, most
weary, for He has been dragged hither faint and exhausted, and He is now standing all this long time, while His judges are seated.

Then Caiphas, rising from his seat, approached Jesus and said: “Answerest Thou nothing to the things which these witness against Thee?” Jesus neither raised His head, nor looked at the High Priest, which greatly increased his anger. Then Caiphas, raising his hands, exclaimed in an enraged tone: “I adjure Thee, by the living God, that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ, the Son of the living God.” The intention of Caiphas in this solemn adjuration is wicked. He desires to deliver up our Lord to certain death for blasphemy. A momentary and solemn pause ensued. Then Jesus in a majestic and superhuman voice replied: “Thou hast said it. I am. Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of Heaven.”

The question had been put in official form, as solemnly as possible, so our Lord was bound to give answer—silence would have been tantamount to denial. Scarcely had our Lord given His answer when the High Priest rose and declared it blasphemy: “He hath blasphemed!” And in order to show his indignation and inspire those present with the same holy anger, Caiphas rent his upper garment from top to girdle, as was often done on occasions of great horror or mourning. Then turning to the members of the Great Council he cried: “You have heard the blasphemy; what need have we of any further testimony? What think ye?” But they, answering, said: “He is deserving of death.” And they all declared Him to be deserving of death.

With this the trial ended, the facts established, our Lord found guilty of blasphemy on His own evidence, and the motion for punishment of the crime formulated. The Council could be well satisfied with the result of its work. All was now in readiness for the final sentence of the Great Council, which had to be passed in the daytime. The whole proceeding was a mockery—a comedy—a mere travesty of right and justice, a false court over which the most unblushing malice and hypocrisy reigned supreme. Does it not show me how far envy, insincerity, and infatuation can go? How these Pharisees and sinners, whom our Lord had corrected and threatened, wreaked their long-suppressed jealousy, revenge, and fury upon Him now that they had Him in their power!

See Jesus—fettered, bound, in pitiable plight, He stands among them—a helpless lamb, at the mercy of their teeth and claws. And yet Jesus stands as high above them as God above man, and the dark and stormy background of this scene in the court only serves to throw out the glorious outlines of His figure and the fortitude and love of truth and love of us that He displays in the glorious testimony to His Divinity.

This testimony is of the highest importance and significance:

1. For the Jews. It was necessary that they should have it, for otherwise their belief would have taken refuge behind the less plain
statements of Jesus with regard to His Divinity. Now they had no excuse. They had a clear, plain, and unequivocal answer—an answer so solemn and official that it left nothing to be desired.

2. For our Lord Himself also. It is the sum-total of all His doctrine, the explanation of His miracles, and the seal of His holiness, His truthfulness, His obedience and love of His Father, His constancy, and fortitude; for it was no slight matter to confess His Divinity in His present state of weakness and abasement.

3. For the whole creation. Heaven exulted with joy. Hell trembled and quaked, and felt its judgment in these words; and the farthest ages and ends of the world began to revive and sun themselves in the beautiful light of this saving truth. Such is the grand testimony of our dear Lord and Master—our Jesus. Eternal thanks be to Him for it!

He is deserving of death! How much these words mean to us—to me—"He loved me, and delivered Himself for me"!

Colloquy.—What have I done for Jesus, my Lord and my God? Shall I not give myself up to Him? Shall I not die to the world and myself for Him? What does my Divine Master see in me that is most opposed to His love? Am I making any reserve in my devotion to Him? Can He find joy in my fidelity to Him? Can Jesus look on me and say—"He loves Me and delivers himself up for Me?"

O most kind, O most sweet Lord Jesus! from my heart I return Thee thanks for calling me to Thy immediate, personal service. Draw me closer and closer to Thee. Help me by Thy love to die wholly to myself that I may live for Thee alone. Grant, I beseech Thee, my dear Jesus, that from this moment I may be wholly Thine, and Thou wholly mine; that I may wholly sacrifice my life for Thee and live according to Thy good pleasure—to please and satisfy Thee in all and by all. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, in Thee I trust; O my Mother, I have need of thee!

III

IGNOMINIES AND AFFRONTS AT THE COURT OF CAIPHAS

"Then did they spit in His face." Some writers tell us that it was the usual practice for the judges to rise from their seats and spit in the face of the condemned criminal; and they are of opinion that this savage usage was rigorously enforced now.

The Priests, the Ancients, and Scribes before they retire set an example to their servants whom they are leaving in charge of their victim. They give full vent to their hatred, scorn, envy, and malice. The evangelist says they cry out: "He is deserving of death." Then did they spit upon Him. Caiphas addresses the archers: "I deliver this king up into your hands; render the blasphemer the honours which are His due."

Let us picture the scene. During the trial of Jesus before Annas and
Caiphas, Peter and John were near. Their hearts were plunged in
grief at the sight of our Lord's humiliation and suffering. In the
midst of the bitter affliction which inundated his heart John thought
of the Mother of Jesus: he feared that the dreadful news of the con-
demnation of her Son might be communicated to her suddenly, or in
a heartless manner, and went away quickly to seek the Holy Virgin.

Peter was quite overcome between anxiety and sorrow, which,
joined to fatigue, made him chilly; therefore, as the morning was cold,
he went up to the fire where many of the common people were warming
themselves. He did his best to hide his grief in their presence, as he
could not make up his mind to leave his Master—his beloved Master!

Contemplate Jesus given up to a crowd of miscreants—the very
scum of the people. As Caiphas and his Council left the hall, these
wretches surround Jesus and begin anew to insult and illtreat Him,
setting no bounds to their barbarity. They made a crown of straw and
bark, and placing it upon His Sacred Head saluted Him with insult—
"Behold the Son of David wearing the crown. A greater than Solomon
here! This is the king who is preparing a wedding feast for His son!"
Thus did they ridicule the truths which Jesus had taught to those
whom He came from Heaven to save. Whilst repeating these scoffing
words, they struck Him and spat in His face. They bound His Divine
eyes with a rag, and struck Him, crying out: "Prophesy unto us, O
Christ, who it is that struck Thee."

After many more insults, they seized the chain which was hanging
on His neck, dragged Him towards the room into which the Council
had withdrawn, and forced Him in.

See Caiphas, Annas, and the Councillors as Jesus is so roughly and
ignominiously dragged before them. Every countenance looks full of
hate and contempt. Caiphas and the other members of the Council
continue to address our Lord in reproachful and abusive language.
All around was dark, confusion, uproar. Our Lord, on the contrary,
was from the moment that He declared Himself to be the Son of God,
serene and dignified. Many of the assembly appeared to be aware of
this and to be filled with consternation at perceiving that neither
outrages nor ignominies of any kind could impair the majesty of Jesus,
which served but to incite His enemies to greater fury.

If I desire to become a true servant of God and a devoted disciple
of my Master, I must, in some manner or other, be a martyr. Although
all the Saints did not shed their blood, yet all did undergo sufferings,
humiliations, contempt, both interior and exterior trials of various
kinds, that they might obtain a near likeness to their beloved Lord.
And if I, too, love Him sincerely I shall value the cross and all that will
help me to follow Him closely. Ah, dear Jesus, make me willing to be
humbled and despised with Thee and for Thee, for that is truly to love
Thee.

Colloquy.—Prostrate before my Divine Master, shall I not offer
Him all the love and sympathy of a humble and contrite heart—renew
with much affection the consecration of my life, my whole being, to His sufferings, humiliated, outraged Heart. Regret all my sins, offences, and negligences, for which He suffers and makes reparation to the outraged Majesty of God in this mystery. How shall I in the future accept and bear all reproofs, corrections, humiliations, little opportunities of self-abasement? How shall I regard them now that I see Jesus, my Lord and my God, my dear Master, embrace them with so great love, and for me?

O Sacred, suffering Face of Jesus, I adore Thee in the Blessed Sacrament, that Divine face, that loving Sacred face, that was so defiled, dishonoured, and bruised for me and for my sins. Oh, shall I not strive to honour and love Thee who so loved me? Shall I not prize the perfection of my soul which cost Thee so much? Shall I not seek to be one mind and one heart with Thee, and return Thee love for love? Ah, Lord Jesus, I will follow Thee always. I consecrate myself to Thee till death, looking on myself henceforth as a slave whose whole office lies in being at the service and disposal of his Master, working with all my heart, mind, body, and soul to please and satisfy Thee in all, and by all. O my Mother, I have need of thee! Help me to Jesus—to be true to Him now and always! Teach me to love the Cross—"to drink of the chalice of my Lord lovingly"—because, Mother, I long and desire to be His friend and to have part with Him.

"O thou Mother, fount of love,  
Touch my spirit from above,  
Make my heart with thine accord!"

XVIII.—DENIAL AND REPENTANCE OF PETER  
(Luke xxii.)

1st Prelude: History.—"But Peter followed afar off." The history of Peter's denial is as follows: Peter had followed our Lord at a little distance on the way to Caiphas' house. A disciple who was acquainted with the High Priest succeeded in gaining admittance to the inner courtyard of the house for himself and Peter. There was a fire burning on account of the chilliness of the night. Peter joined the servants of the High Priest, who were sitting and standing about it, and warmed himself. Presently the portress who had admitted Peter came, and looking attentively at him as he sat by the fire, said: "Art thou not also one of this man's disciples?" Peter answered: "I am not. I know Him not. I know not what thou sayest." This was the first denial, and the cock crew for the first time.

Peter now rose, and as he was going out of the gate, another maid said to the bystanders: "This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth.
Thou also art one of them.” Again Peter denied it, this time with an oath, saying: “I am not, I know not the Man.” This was the second denial.

Peter now went into the outer court, but soon returned to the inner one, and, as it appears, again sat down among the servants at the fire. After about an hour had elapsed, another man returned to the charge, saying: “Surely thou art one of them. Thou art a Galilean, and thy speech doth discover thee.” A kinsman of Malchus insisted: “Did I not see thee in the garden with Him?” Then Peter denied it for a third time, with an oath and imprecation upon himself. “I am not, I know not the Man!” And immediately the cock crew again.

Then, as our Lord was being led out of the council chambers, turning He looked on Peter—and Peter remembered the word of the Lord: “Before the cock crow twice, thou wilt deny Me thrice;” and Peter going out wept bitterly.

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—The inner courtyard of Caiphas’ palace. A fire has been lighted as the night is chilly. Around it are soldiers, servants of the High Priest, and common people sitting and talking in a most heartless manner concerning Jesus. Peter is there in the midst of our Lord’s enemies, and thus exposes himself to temptation.

I must draw near that I may study and profit by the lessons here to be learned.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—Lord Jesus, teach me to know myself and know Thee. Give me, dear Jesus, light to see how little I can trust myself, and how great need I have of Thee. Ah, my dear Master, keep me close to Thee. “Cast me not away from Thy face, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” Help me, O my God, and I will not fear. Thy Almighty Hand is able to shield me from temptation, to moderate its violence. O my Jesus, mercy! Help me to follow Thee closely. Look on me, Lord Jesus, and convert me wholly to Thee!

Points: I. Peter followed from afar.
II. Causes of Peter’s fall.
III. Peter’s repentance—Jesus looks on him.

I

PETER FOLLOWED JESUS FROM AFAR

I shall fix my eyes and thoughts on Peter. St. Luke says: “But Peter followed afar off.” Peter’s heart became very sad, when he realized that he had fled from his Master in His hour of danger and sorrow. More than all the rest, had he not professed fidelity unto death? See him as love prevails—he stops in his flight—he cannot, he must not, abandon his dear Master. He must return and see what happens to Jesus, for Whom he has a true love. His courage, however, is somewhat abated by the sudden scare that moved them all to take flight. Peter does not venture to do more than follow afar off. For him who aimed a death-blow at the High Priest’s servant there will be no mercy if he is recognized and made prisoner.
Time was when Peter could not bear to be far from his Master. "Lord, bid me to come to Thee upon the waters," he said in his impatience to be with Jesus. All that eager love will return again. But in this hour of temptation—of fear—Peter is not inclined to draw too near: he followed afar off. Peter is weak now, because he followed Jesus from afar. How much better for me in every way to follow Jesus closely—that is, promptly, diligently, and courageously, than to keep afar off—i.e., tepidly, laxly, cowardly. Experience proves that, as flies keep away from a cauldron that is hot, but draw near when it cools, so the devil keeps away from the fervent who resist him, and molests perpetually those who are lukewarm.

Our Lord delights in being generous to those who are generous with Him, whilst with the niggardly He will deal sparingly: "With the holy, Thou wilt be holy; with the perverse, Thou wilt be perverted" (Ps. xvii.). If God holds His hand, and helps but sparingly, spiritual life becomes dreary indeed: and temptation easily prevails. Our Lord had said but shortly before at Jericho, that from him who has a little grace, that little will be quickly taken away. How dangerous it is for a religious to trifle with the graces that abound in religious life.

Peter is by nature bold and impetuous, and ever ready to run into danger. Who but he would wish to leap into the waves to meet our Lord? Who would draw the sword single-hand to resist an armed multitude? He is now once more running into grave danger of a worse kind. In the former case the life of his body was imperilled. Now his soul is in great danger. Moreover, in the midnight storm on the lake, he asked permission of our Lord, nay more, asked for a command, before he threw himself into the danger. In this midnight storm, far more awful, he acts without his Master's counsel and sanction.

What a lesson for me never to lose sight for long of Jesus, my dear Master—to follow Him closely, to depend on Him for everything, to live under His blessed eye, to speak in His hearing, to lean on Him for strength, to consult Him in all things.

Colloquy.—Lord Jesus, what wouldst Thou have me to do? Lord Jesus, that I may see! Passion of my Jesus, strengthen me! O Sacred Heart of Jesus, in Thee I trust! Incline unto my aid, O God; O Lord Jesus, make haste to help me! O Jesus, make Thyself to me a living, bright reality! Most wisely our Holy Mother the Church teaches us to pray often that, "All our words and works may begin always from Thee, O Lord, and by Thee be happily ended." O Mother, help me to learn this lesson. Mother, I have need of thee!

II

CAUSES OF PETER'S FALL

What was the secret of Peter's miserable fall? He was brave and generous, and loved our Lord dearly, yet, through human respect and fear he denies all knowledge of the Master he loved so well. The reason
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why he fell was that he trusted in himself and his natural qualities instead of in God. In the spiritual warfare natural courage and generosity avail not: he who does not rely upon God alone is sure to fail. When dangers are imminent he loses heart, and then all goes wrong.

It is a singular fate for the most fervent of the Apostles to have become the stock example to all ages of the perils of presumption and dangerous occasions, and that his name should be associated with the warnings contained in a terrible act of apostacy. Yet, so it is, for our consolation. St. Mary Magdalen's sins were committed before her conversion, and never, when once forgiven, did she slacken in her loving service to our Lord; but Peter's fall is after his great profession of faith and after our Lord's promises to him. There is much more comfort in this for us whose sins come after great spiritual gifts. It is not only comfort for the past, but warning for the future.

I may reap much fruit by weighing and considering quietly at the feet of my dear Master, my Lord, and my God (1) the nature, and (2) the cause of Peter's sin—and, then, viewing my own soul in the light of God's grace, and speaking confidently with the loving, merciful Heart of Jesus, I shall ask the grace of perfect conversion.

1. The nature of Peter's sin. The gravity and ignominy of his fall become evident when we consider how many unworthy features this action included. There lay in it a want of character, miserable human respect, a lie, then perjury, and lastly curses and imprecations. Peter swears that he is not the disciple of Jesus—that he even does not know "the Man."

Who is it that swears thus? And with whom does Peter declare that he has no acquaintance? Once it was his glory and greatest happiness to be one of the Apostles—indeed, their head. Only a few hours ago he was ready to die for our Lord, and had drawn the sword in His defence. Now he does not know the Man Whom he had so often called Master and Father, and Whose Divinity he, Peter, had so repeatedly and solemnly confessed. And before whom is it that he does not dare to confess Jesus? Before maids, serving-men, and common menials.

How did Peter deny the Master who had so favoured him, and who destined him to take His own place, when He should have ascended to the Father? He denied Jesus in the most cowardly and vile manner. When did he deny Him? When Jesus was in his direst need, in the midst of His enemies in His ignominy and suffering. What a lesson for me! How completely it was want of indifference to honour and life. An attachment suddenly asserting itself in different circumstances caused Peter's fall. Love of honours often means not differing from those present lest I should be condemned by their judgment. Human respect, therefore, has this particular danger. I must never be afraid to do my duty. Our Lord's own must always stand by Him at any cost. Be fearless when there is a question of fidelity to Rule, and
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Obedience, for these represent Christ. We can well afford to let everything go but Christ and His will, nothing matters but God's will.

Our Lord's loving, faithful Heart must have felt intensely Peter's externally joining His enemies, and behaving like one of them in vehemently renouncing Him. How little even the best and noblest of men can be depended upon! The greatness of Peter's fall becomes evident when we consider the pain and humiliation it caused our Lord. We know and realize how ingratitude, faithlessness, and contempt hurt a master, a benefactor, a father! And was not our dear Lord all these to Peter? To what a depth our Lord's humiliation has reached! One Apostle betrays and sells Him, all forsake Him, and the first and chief of His disciples denies Him, and swears that he never knew Him. Is He not, humanly speaking, quite abandoned? Great and sad and humiliating indeed was this fall of Peter.

2. The causes of Peter's fall. Falls may come close after great graces—Peter had just been ordained and made his first communion.

(1) The first cause of Peter's fall was certainly his neglect of prayer, in spite of the earnest and repeated admonition addressed to him and the other Apostles by our Lord, Who foresaw what would happen. Jesus had expressly warned Peter to watch and pray, and yet he allowed himself to sleep while our Lord was suffering His Sacred Agony. True he was weary and his eyes were heavy, but still he could have made the attempt. It might not have been a satisfactory prayer, yet it would have saved Peter from his fall. He might have used vocal prayers and repeated the same words as our Lord did. I must learn from this that mere struggle against weariness is pleasing to our Lord.

(2) The second cause was self-confidence, which savours of the worldly spirit. Impulsive zeal is very dangerous. Peter had not learned that natural impulse as a motive of action is sure to lead a man astray—it never avails before God. Its excellence, whatever it may be, only avails in things of this world, and even there it is a dangerous and untrustworthy motive. In things Divine, it is the road to ruin. We must never be led by impulse if we are to be safe. We must do more: we must turn our thoughts to God, and seek an inspiration from Heaven, if we are to remain faithful and avoid faults.

Peter did not take to heart the admonitions of our Lord, such as, "Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat," or, the more general one, "I saw Lucifer, as lightning, fall from Heaven." Even the direct prophecy, Before the cock crow twice—that is, before the night is fully past thou shalt deny me thrice—does not affect him. When our Lord rebuked him for his false judgment of the Cross, and had called him "Satan" and bade him get behind Him, Peter had not examined himself to see what was wrong in his judgment. It was secundum mundum and not secundum Deum—that is, according to the world and not according to God—and so was his warm-hearted but mistaken effort to defend our Lord in the Garden with the sword.
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Such a doctrine as that of "the Cross and the blessedness of suffering"—recognizing and accepting the will of God—requires meditation, and a man hurriedly awakening from sleep will be taken by surprise, and will judge wrongly unless he is habitually penetrated with that which is against and above nature.

Peter struck with the sword, and this, which was zeal without knowledge, without any indication of our Lord's Will, was followed by a craven fear, when the words, "And thou, too, wast with Jesus of Nazareth," were addressed to him. The day will come when, "and thou, too, wast with Jesus of Nazareth," will be the most welcome sound the ear can hear. How different it might all have been for Peter, when told "that he savoured not the things that are of God, but that are of men," had he resolved to get to the bottom of what seemed a contradiction to the faith for which he had been praised. Our Lord went straight on with: "If any man will come after Me, and be a disciple or an apostle of Mine, let him take up his cross and follow Me. For he that will save his life shall lose it, and he that will lose it for My sake shall find it. He that shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, the Son of Man also will be ashamed of him, when He shall come in the glory of His Father and the holy Angels" (Matt. xvi., Mark viii.).

This was the opportunity missed by Peter of getting from our dear Lord's lips the very instructions He afterwards gave to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus—"He spoke the word openly"—that is the gospel of His Passion. But they understood not the words, and in like manner Peter did not see that he did not understand. The one thought—that our Lord was the Christ—absorbed him, and he did not know that he was in ignorance of the character and office of Christ. But ought he not to have seen that there was much to ask? The subsequent personal warning would have made a very different impression on him, if his mind had been cleared of error; and that he did not understand, was brought home to him by the way in which his rebuke of our Lord was met. Peter thought that, with his love for our Lord, he could do anything, and that disloyalty or a fall on his part was not to be thought of—"Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, I will never be scandalized"—"Lord, I am ready to go with Thee to prison and to death"—"No, though I should die together with Thee, I will never deny Thee." What a change! At the voice of a woman, of some servants—"I know Him not." "I know not the Man."

(3) The third cause was human respect and going into the occasion of temptation. It was certainly imprudent of Peter to venture needlessly and uselessly into evident danger, and remain in it so long. How quickly the denial followed on the blow struck for the Master in the garden. What a lesson to distrust self—and trust only in the Almighty! The causes of Peter's fall are just those that put me in constant danger: self-confidence, neglect of prayer, tepidity in the way of the Cross—that is, neglect of self-denial, human respect, and not withdrawing from occasion of infidelity to our Lord. Following our
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Lord from afar—that is, want of generosity and diligence—self-seeking in little things.

Colloquy.—O Lord, let me never follow Thee from "afar off," as Peter did before his fall. On the water he was close to Thee, and Thy right hand saved him. Lord Jesus, my dear Master, I, too, wish to follow Thee closely. Give me Peter's sorrow for the past—give me his spirit of self-humiliation. Ah, my Jesus, if there is not a great sorrow, and great self-abasement—self-distrust, there will not be a great horror of future falls. And, oh, my Jesus, the sorrow must come, and humiliation, too, when I contemplate Thee in Thy Passion. Ah, my Divine Master! My Jesus, pardon me. I am sorry for all my ingratitude in the past. Cast me not away from Thy face, but draw me closer to Thee—strengthen me against my own weakness, that I may be true to Thee till death. Help me to keep close to Thee always. O holy Mother of God, plead for your child now and always. O Mother, I have need of thee!

III

REPENTANCE OF PETER

The Lord turning looked on Peter (Luke xxii. 61). The glance of Jesus! Oh, the power and the sweetness of that glance! The look of Jesus—this denotes some very great grace such as the grace of vocation!—the grace of rest, etc., etc. Ah, dear Lord, look on me now—look on me as Thou didst look on Peter, Magdalen, Zaccheus, the leper, the para-lytic, the good thief, Thomas. Mother, I have need of thee! O turn thine eyes of mercy towards me! Lord, Thou canst read the very inmost recesses of my heart. Thou knowest, Lord, that I am sorry for all my unfaithfulness. Ah, purify me by that Divine look of Thine! Change my heart completely—enlighten me—touch my heart effectually. Dear Jesus, my infidelities afflict me, the repentance that Thou hast so mercifully poured into my soul consoles me. My tears are those of Peter. I do sorrow over my disloyalty to Thee, my dear Master; I grieve most heartily for not having always loved Thee, and now, dearest Jesus, I do want at any cost to follow Thee closely.

"And going out he wept bitterly" (Matt. xxvi. 75). Why did Jesus look at Peter? Was it a glance of reproach or indignation? Did it indicate punishment or death? No! it was a life-giving glance. Who can comprehend all it conveyed? An earnest warning surely, and acute pain; but also infinite love, infinite mercy, and encouragement to have complete confidence. That look of Jesus was a great and powerful grace, a glance full of the infinite mercy of God, Who makes in a single moment saints of sinners, and apostles of deniers and persecutors. Peter now saw the awful chasm into which he had fallen—but he also saw the Hand outstretched to help him, so he seized it as he once had done on the sea of Galilee, and it drew him out. He thought of the words Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice" (Luke xxii. 61); and: "I have prayed
for thee that thy faith fail not; and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren” (Luke xxii. 32).

This was the part Jesus took in Peter’s repentance. The rest was for Peter to do: and he did it, perfectly and completely. Peter was struck to the heart—he would never again forget that look of Jesus. He realized how greatly he had sinned against One who had warned him so faithfully and so earnestly. One who was his Father, his Friend, his God and his All—his dear Master! And he began to weep bitterly. Peter feared no longer to be spoken to—he would have told anyone who he was, and what a great sin he had committed. See him as he gives vent to his tears and contrition—he goes to seek the Mother of Jesus.

Our Lord had to bear the grief and humiliation of His dear disciple’s denial. The fact that He foresaw Peter’s fall did not lessen its bitterness. Why did Jesus permit this fall of Peter? (1) To comfort His own in future ages when forsaken and denied by friends. (2) To warn us against rashness and over-estimation of ourselves, and never to trust love that is not humble and discreet; it only makes us unhappy. (3) To teach us to trust our Lord and hold fast to Him in all circumstances. These are some of the lessons we can learn from Jesus’ look of loving mercy.

Peter understood that look completely, and never forgot it as long as he lived—nor his fall either. By day he thought of his office—his Master’s work—the saving of souls and propagating the Kingdom of Christ; by night he rose to weep over his fall, so that his copious tears gradually made furrows in his cheeks. This is the foundation of his Apostolic work. His love had grown humble now, and the sufferings and death in store for him will find him faithful.

What a contrast between Peter’s confidence and love and Judas’ despair. It will help us to greater love and trust to dwell on St. Peter’s tender sorrow, perfect confidence, and self-humiliation—not a shade of distrust towards his dear Master. This was a consequence of his intimate knowledge of our Lord. Peter knew Jesus, he knew the heart of his Master, but Judas was ignorant of Him. Peter learned confidence under the circumstances in which Judas failed to learn it. So, Peter knew what to do when he found himself deep in sin that he never dreamed he could commit. If Judas had turned at our Lord’s look and reproach, “Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” he might have become a Saint like the other Apostle. But Judas did not know his way to the Heart of our Lord; he had been attending to himself instead of to his Master, and he was ignorant of Jesus’ Heart and its tenderness, after his long intimacy with Him. Alas, that those who see Him every day, who know Him, and His words and deeds, who even receive Him frequently, may know nothing of Him to their soul’s good.

The circumstances of Peter’s conversion will help to dispose us for confession. Peter’s sorrow was intense, and lasted all his life. He never forgot that instead of having been a comfort to his beloved
Master as John had been, he had wounded His Heart—and at such a time—when Jesus was enduring every kind of vile treatment, and needed His own to stand by Him.

Where did Peter seek help after his fall? He flew to the Blessed Mother of Jesus—the Refuge of sinners, the Comforter of the afflicted. And Mary consoled him by telling him of the love and tenderness of the Sacred Heart. The more tender our love for Mary, the stronger and more intense will be our love of Jesus. All obstacles and difficulties will readily, sweetly, and easily be conquered as soon as we learn to cling to our Lord and His Blessed Mother. God grants to the soul that lives with Him and His Mother the intima cognitio, the inward intimate knowledge, which St. Ignatius bids us ask for in the contemplations on the second week of the Exercises. The intimate knowledge is the source of absolute trust and love.

The sincerity of Peter’s conversion is proved (1) by his lifelong tears and sorrow; (2) his love for and recourse to mercy; (3) his abiding humility and caution; (4) his generosity and constant labour in the interests of Jesus; (5) his laying down his life for his dear Master. Now Peter hates and most carefully avoids all occasions of infidelity to Jesus—never again trusts in his own strength.

How did our Lord treat Peter after his fall? With deepest love and trust—Jesus’ first apparition to the Apostles is to Peter. He appoints him His Vicar, and the visible foundation and Head of His Church. Oh, what a lesson for us. If Jesus not only pardons but shows the fullest trust in Peter after his fall, so also will He forgive and trust us, if, like Peter, we return to Him with all the love of our hearts, and cling to Him with fullest confidence.

Colloquy.—With the loving Heart of Jesus—a protestation of love and fidelity to Him—and a resolution of devoted service—zeal for souls. Dear Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest, I will follow Thee everywhere!—I will follow Thee always!—and above all, I will strive to fulfil the recommendation given to the Prince of the Apostles before he had experienced his weakness: “And thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren” (Luke xxii.). Dear Lord, I will labour earnestly for my own sanctification, that I may be able to serve souls. I owe this to Thee, my Saviour, to Thy teaching, Thy example which I should follow—to Thy infinite mercy towards me a sinner. It is not enough for a soul seeking after perfection to be holy herself only, she must be an apostle. The past needs a loving reparation.

Ah, Jesus, henceforth “Thy love alone”—Take, take, O Lord, take and receive my entire liberty—all that I have, all that I am. Give me Thy love and grace, with that I am rich enough, and have nothing more to ask. O Mother of God, help me to belong wholly to Jesus. My Mother, I have need of Thee!
XIX.—JESUS IN PRISON

(Luke xxii. 63; Matt. xxvi. 67)

1st Prelude: History.—The rest of the night—that is, after the provisional condemnation—our dear Lord spent in the house of Caiphas amid manifold sufferings. “And the men that held Him, mocked Him, and struck Him, saying: Prophecy, who is it that struck Thee? And, blaspheming, many other things they said against Him. Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him, and others struck His face with the palms of their hands, saying: Prophecy unto us, O Christ, who is he that struck Thee?”

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—The subterranean prison—a little vaulted prison, the remains of which subsist to the present day. Here Jesus was confined.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To know the love of Jesus in going through all the sufferings and ignomories of His Passion for me—light to understand the mystery of the Cross—strength and courage to conquer every difficulty in our Lord’s service, and in my work for souls.

Points: I. Sufferings occasioned by circumstances.

II. Sufferings occasioned by men.

III. The sufferings in prison.

I

SUFFERINGS OCCASIONED BY CIRCUMSTANCES

See our dear Lord still clothed in the old dirty mantle and covered with the spittle and other filth which had been thrown over Him, and His hands tightly bound together. After all the sorrowful and agitating events of the night—the Agony in the Garden, the ill-treatment He had suffered at His arrest and on His way to the city, our dear Lord must naturally have been overcome with weariness and exhaustion, and tormented by hunger and thirst. But His captors gave Him no rest, not even a corner where He might pass the few remaining hours of the night in peace.

Contemplate Him with loving compassion as they lead Him from the council-hall to the outer court, and there see Him standing, notwithstanding His exhaustion, overwhelmed with new outrages and sufferings. Not one to offer Him even a cup of water to refresh Him. To these sufferings are added the rigour of a bitterly cold spring night. Whilst His enemies can warm themselves at a fire lighted for them in the courtyard, Jesus with hardly sufficient clothing must stand on the icy flagstones trembling and shivering with cold. He, the Master of the elements, could have provided that this night of His Passion would be a soft spring night—but no, He wills this new suffering to enter in the plan of His Passion, so that no form of suffering may be wanting to it.

Colloquy.—Ah, dear Lord, teach me to be generous. Have pity on my weakness and help me. Give me light to understand the mystery
of the Cross. Jesus, make me truly humble. Draw me after Thee; I am indeed determined to follow Thee, and to bear reproach and humiliation with Thee. But, Lord, do Thou strengthen me with Thy almighty grace—make me despise the world and all that it values—and value and seek what Thou didst value and seek for my sake. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me! O my Mother, keep me close to thee, and, then, I shall be faithful to my Divine Master!

II

SUFFERINGS OCCASIONED BY MEN

Reflect how much Jesus suffers, and wishes to suffer in this mystery—and for me and my sins.

Far from allowing Jesus any repose after that stormy interview with the High Council, Caiphas delivered Him up to revolting and most ignominious treatment. The authors and instruments of this ill-usage seem to have been not merely the soldiers to whose keeping Jesus was entrusted, and some of the other soldiers, but even some of the members of the Great Council. They, too, it seems, did not consider it beneath their dignity to take part in this unbecoming sport.

Three kinds of ill-treatment are mentioned: (1) They mocked Him, jeered at Him, ridiculed His high offices and attributes.

(2) They spat upon Him—an outrage justly considered by the Israelites as the greatest possible insult.

(3) They proceeded to acts of positive violence, they blindfolded, struck Him in the face, and buffeted Him. This was the fulfilment of the words of the prophet: "I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them: I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spat upon me" (Isa. 1. 6).

The enormity of this vile treatment appears from the circumstances in which our Lord found Himself. It was not merely an act of injustice, but to ill-use a poor defenceless man who was already in such a pitiable condition: it was an act of barbarity. (a) An accused man has a right to public protection, and it is the duty of those in authority to protect Him from any arbitrary ill-usage. Here it was the magistrates themselves who looked on at the revolting scene. (b) The enormity of it all becomes evident when we consider Who this ill-used Man was.

The threshold of the Temple might not be defiled by spittle; we ourselves would not dare to spit upon the floor in presence of anyone who had a claim to our respect, and now the Face of the Living God is made the place of this abominable outrage! The most abject wretch can vent his coarse and wanton vulgarity upon our Lord. And He Who is now covered with filth and spittle, is the same Who received the homage of the prophets on Mount Tabor! But Jesus suffers it all, accepts it all, with unspeakable patience, humility, and devotedness.

Colloquy.—O my dear Master, my Jesus! I adore Thee, I love Thee with my whole heart; I thank Thee for all Thou hast done and
suffered for me; I am grieved, dear Lord, that I have so grievously offended Thee. O assist me now, dear Jesus, to repair the past—to give and not to count the cost—to fight and not to heed the wounds. Make me Thine, O Jesus, my Lord and my God, at any cost. O my Mother, make me true and generous in the service of thy Divine Son—get me, my Mother, a true love of the Cross. Mother, I have need of thee; I would see Jesus, and know Him intimately, and follow Him closely.

III

SUFFERINGS OF JESUS IN PRISON

See Jesus dragged cruelly by the guards to the prison-cell, to be kept there until the Great Council assembled in the morning. It is quite impossible to describe all that the Holy of Holies suffered from these heartless beings. Jesus suffers so patiently, so silently, for the salvation of His own. My sins had here to be expiated! At the Day of Judgment, when the most hidden things will be manifested, I shall see the share I have had in the torments and ignominies endured by the Son of God. Hear Jesus as He enters the prison, praying most fervently that His Father would accept all that He has already suffered, and is about to suffer, as an expiatory sacrifice, not only for the executioners, but as a sacrifice of impetration for all who in future ages might have to suffer torments such as He is now to endure, and be tempted to impatience and anger.

In the Catholic districts of South Germany one often comes across a very touching picture, high up on the mountains or far in the solitary depths of the forest. Our Lord is represented sitting in a narrow cell, with His Sacred Hands bound and an iron ring round His neck, by which He is fastened to the wall; the noble, suffering Head is bowed, as though seeking a resting-place and finding none; He is quite alone, and His gaze is grave and sad. The picture is called God in distress. This is a description of our Saviour’s position in the prison. Rest was not to be thought of. Our dear Lord suffered with a keen feeling of abandonment. We may fitly apply to Him the words: “Weeping, he hath wept in the night, and his tears are on his cheeks; there is none to comfort him among all them that were dear to him: all his friends have despised him, and are become his enemies. Therefore do I weep, and my eyes run down with water; because the comforter, the relief of my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy hath prevailed.” (Lam. i.).

Daybreak found Jesus sitting thus, and the first rays of light that fell through the prison grating greeted the face of the Saviour. Jesus raised His Sacred eyes towards the light, and, in most touching manner, as Catherine Emmerich tells us in her revelations, returned thanks to His heavenly Father for the dawn of that day, which had been so long desired by the prophets, and for which He Himself had so ardently sighed from the moment of His Nativity, and concerning which He
had said to His disciples, I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished? Jesus began His morning prayer—His last. It was always the same—to save mankind and thus glorify the Father. What He had undertaken to do for men He would do. From the first moment of His conception He had been awaiting this day with longing anticipation: it was constantly in His thoughts, as it slowly but surely approached. O Sacred, suffering Heart of Jesus, You loved me unto death. May I never forsake Thee—never prove unfaithful, but ever more devoted, loyal, generous. Take, O Lord, take and receive my entire liberty and my will—I will follow Thee unto death.

And now, Jesus' last day has come. Hesitatingly as an executioner it came—to announce to our Lord His Death. And Jesus received it readily—joyfully. Let us reverently and lovingly contemplate Him as He raises His Divine eyes to His heavenly Father, and thanks Him for the dawn of this great but awful day. Hear our Lord as He offers all His sufferings, Life, and Death for the glory of the Father's name—and for us sinners.

Thus began the ever-memorable day of our Redemption, and let us never forget that one part of our Blessed Lord's most loving design in the details of the Passion is to colour with His sorrows every watch of the night and every watch of the day. Every hour of the day and of the night we want help from our Saviour Jesus Christ, through Whom God has given us the victory. Jesus has instituted the perpetual, never-failing Sacrifice, in which, every hour from dawn to sunset, and from the setting of the sun to the daybreak, He will be on the Altar, offering up all His Sacred Passion for us, and, by His sufferings and His Mother's compassion, crushing the serpent's head.

Does not the remembrance of Jesus bowed down in His dungeon, with His chains and fetters upon Him, and His Divine face disfigured, plead with us ever more and more persuasively to bless and adore Him at the dawning of the light? The first streaks of daybreak are messengers which come to us, as Martha came to Mary, and whisper gently: The Master is come and calleth for thee. It is the hour for us to arise from sleep, and hasten to visit Jesus, in His narrow prison on the altar, where we are reminded of all His wonderful works, and among the rest, of His condition in the dungeon at the dawning of the light on the last day of His Blessed Life—the day on which He proved His love unto death—the death of the Cross.

Colloquy.—Oh, grant, most loving Heart of Jesus, that I may be of the number of those who constantly watch with Thee—remember Thee—live with Thee. O Jesus, bound, deliver me from my inordinate, evil inclinations; free me, dear Lord, from all earthly attachments, draw me forcibly to Thee. O Lord Jesus, watching for me at daybreak in Thy tabernacle, draw my waking thoughts to Thee. O Mary, my Mother, pray for me thy sinful, weak child, pray for me now, and always—and at the hour of my death.
XX.—FINAL SENTENCE OF THE GREAT COUNCIL

(Matt. xxvii. 1)

1st Prelude: History.—“And when morning was come, all the Chief Priests and Ancients of the people took counsel against Jesus, that they might put Him to death. And they brought Him bound, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—Tribunal of Caiphas. See the Council assembling at daybreak. Hear Caiphas ordering the guards to bring Jesus once more into his presence. Note the cruelty with which the guards untied the hands of Jesus, fastened ropes around His waist and dragged Him out of the prison.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To know the love of the Sacred Heart in giving Himself to insult, outrages, and all kinds of suffering—and to death—for me. Grace to sympathize and sorrow with my suffering Lord—to understand the Mystery of the Cross—to value and embrace it heartily for Him who loved me unto death.

II. The trial.
III. Verdict and sentence.

I

CONVOCATION OF THE GREAT COUNCIL

The Great Council was convoked, and representatives of all its three estates—Chief Priests, Scribes, and Ancients—were summoned to attend. Indeed it would appear that all its members (possibly excepting the friends of Jesus) were present.

The time of the assembly was daybreak—“in the morning,” SS. Mark, Matthew, and John say, and St. Luke “as soon as it was day.” They made this dispatch in order to get the affair finished before the Paschal Feast began, on the evening of the fifteenth of Nisan—“The feet of the sinners run to evil, and make haste to shed innocent blood” (Isa. lix.).

The Chief Priests’ object in convoking the Great Council was to kill our Lord—i.e., to do everything in their power to bring about His Death, to pronounce final sentence upon Him and deliver Him up to the Roman governor with a view to His execution; and probably also to consult upon the steps to be taken in order to attain the end. The proceedings of the previous night could pass only for a preliminary examination; for the ordinary course of the law required that sentence should not be passed until the second day of the trial, and it might not be given at night.

Contemplate the unholy activity and promptness of these unhappy
Councillors, who are met together against the Lord and against His Christ. Messengers have been busy since the cock-crow. Our Lord's enemies never weary in their efforts to destroy His reign in the hearts of His creatures—to prevent the establishment of His Kingdom—the reign of His love in each human heart.

If our Lord's enemies are willing, after their labours of yesterday and their night watching, to cut short their sleep in the early morning in order to persecute Jesus, how acceptable to His loving Heart will be our desire and effort to deny ourselves and rise betimes to do Him a most welcome honour by seeking His Sacramental Presence in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, assisting at the Holy Mass, in which His Sacred Passion is renewed—a most welcome honour, because it gives our dear Lord the opportunity He desires for communicating Himself to us and filling us with benediction.

COLLOQUI. — Would, O Lord, that I had been generous and whole-hearted in Thy service. Forgive me, dear Jesus, all the selfishness of my life. I wish, dear Lord, that I could blot from the number of years those in which I served Thee so tepidly. Suffer no more, I entreat Thee, dear Lord, that my heart cling again to aught, even the least object of this world; withdraw it wholly, with all its affections, from all but Thee. Give me Thy love and Thy grace—Lord Jesus, "Thy love alone"—Thy service only—I will belong to Thee henceforth. Turn for me into bitterness all carnal consolations. O Mother, I have need of thee! Help me to serve God with all my heart; teach me to be generous and faithful unto death.

II

THE TRIAL

Contemplate Jesus, our dear Lord, as He is being dragged once more before His enemies.

The appearance of Jesus, when He passed through the midst of the crowd who were already assembled in front of the house, was that of a victim led to be sacrificed; His countenance was totally changed and disfigured from ill-usage and His garment stained and torn; but the sight of His sufferings, far from exciting a feeling of compassion in the hard-hearted Jews, simply filled them with disgust, and increased their rage. Pity was, indeed, a feeling unknown in their cruel breasts.

In order to formulate the verdict and obtain it as speedily as possible, they merely fixed upon the chief point of the proceedings of the previous day, concerning which our Lord Himself had already given His evidence and made his avowal. Caiphas, who did not make the slightest effort to conceal his hatred, addressed our Lord haughtily in these words: If Thou be the Christ—tell us plainly.

See our dear Lord as He raises His Divine eyes and answers with great dignity and calmness: "If I shall tell you, you will not believe Me; and if I shall also ask you, you will not answer Me, nor let Me go.
But hereafter the Son of Man shall be sitting on the right hand of the power of God.” Watch how the Chief Priests receive these words. Looking at one another, they say to Jesus with a disdainful laugh: “Art Thou, then, the Son of God?” Jesus answers with the words of eternal truth: “You say that I am.” At these words they all exclaimed: “What need we any further testimony? For we ourselves have heard it from His own mouth.”

The watchful and overruling providence of God takes good care that it be made clear and evident that He is put to death not as a malefactor, but because “He maketh Himself the Son of God.” Hear the Chief Priests: “What need we any further testimony?” No! Witnesses are not wanted; for they are come not to seek for truth, but that they might put Jesus to death. Moreover, they have heard Him say that He is the Son of God. No; it is most true that from the beginning they needed no witnesses at all. The calling of witnesses was a superfluous and vain folly, just as the armed force was that sallied out to seize Jesus. Pilate, the Roman, will want to have witnesses to prove that He is a malefactor against the Roman laws; of such they have none. But to prove that He calls Himself the Son of God, they have His own confession; they have His miracles; they have the Voice of His Father from Heaven, heard from the Jordan, and again at the Temple four days ago.

“We ourselves have heard it from His own mouth.” Yes, both now and oftentimes before. It is certain beyond all doubt that He claims to be, and is, the Son of God. Therefore, the whole Council now ratifies and legalizes the unjust and illegal sentence of the midnight: He is deserving of death. The question of the High Priests was: “Art Thou the Son of God?” Not then as a malefactor is our Lord to die; for He is the innocent Son of God. But for this and for this only He deserves to die, that He loved me and delivered himself up for me. Our Blessed Lady and Mother is listening; and if we would listen to her, she would say to each of us most lovingly and earnestly: Forget not the kindness of thy Surety, for He hath given His life for thee.

“The short discussion which took place between our Lord and His enemies sufficiently shows, on the one hand, the insincerity, obduracy, and want, utter want of principle of the Jews. They understood the drift of the question perfectly, and were only trying to elicit from our Saviour a clear avowal of His Messianic rank and His Divinity, in order to condemn Him to death as a blasphemer on the ground of this declaration. But, on the other hand, it also shows us the fortitude and goodness of Jesus. Our Lord gives them a full and clear explanation in His plain testimony, thus depriving their unbelief of its last pretext, and directs their attention (in His first answer) to their own malice and bad dispositions, which are more unseemly in a judge than in others. He warns them against the fearful consequences of their conduct by His reference to the Judgment, showing that He, who now stands before their judgment-seat, will one day pronounce judgment upon them. It needed
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no little courage to bear this testimony at this moment, for He knew that it was all they were waiting for, and that it would inevitably cost Him His life. But nevertheless He made the avowal with firmness.

Colloquy.—Dear Jesus, my Lord and my God, give me courage, fortitude, and loyalty in Thy service. Let me never be ashamed of confessing Thee openly—never afraid to follow Thee closely. Strengthen me against my own weakness. May I never allow the world or nature to make me a coward in Thy service. O Divine Master, grant me sincerity, earnestness, and whole-hearted fidelity to Thee and Thy Cause. Grant me patience, humility, and above all, Thy holy love, which includes every other gift. Ah, dear Lord, may the happy day come soon when I can say in very truth: "My God! I love Thee with my whole heart!" O my Mother, help me to know—and serve—and love Jesus. Mother, I have need of thee—O Mary, be propitious to me!

III

VERDICT AND SENTENCE

See our Lord as he stands bound before his judges. Note His Divine patience, meekness, peace in the midst of injustice, outrage, humiliation—and how He suffers all this for me and my sins.

With the words, "What need we any further testimony? For we ourselves have heard it from His own mouth," they rise to give their verdict, and condemn our Lord to death on the ground of His declaration that He was the Messias and Son of God. We can well imagine with what hypocritical expressions of indignation, with what fury and threatening cries they accompanied this sentence.

So the Just One is condemned to death by the representatives and administrators of the law; the Messias—by His own people; God—by His own creatures. . . . We know not whether to feel more horror or grief at such a spectacle. Such a terrible crime, and committed with such obduracy, malice, and wantonness! . . . These judges acknowledge that they have a full and valid testimony from His own lips, and yet pass sentence of death upon Him, as a blasphemer and false Messias, for giving them what they ought to have thanked Him for on bended knee.

Now our dear Lord and Master and Saviour's fate is settled. The ecclesiastical trial is ended, and the die is cast—He must die. And how did Jesus hear and accept this sentence of His people? We can contemplate Him—O what Divine patience, humility, resignation, constancy, and for us. He rejoices to be able to bear this testimony once more with all solemnity, and to die for it. It is for the glory of God, for His own glory, and for our salvation. Does it not give Jesus, our Blessed Lord, a right to our most devoted faith and heartfelt gratitude, and even to the sacrifice of our life for this faith? His own nation hates Him, curses Him, delivers Him to death for His testimony; all the more, then, are we bound to give Him satisfaction,adoration, and unconditional devotion. How many have counted themselves happy to lay down
their lives in confession of the Divinity of Christ? It was but a fit response to our Saviour’s confession.

Do I not owe my Jesus in return a faith most devoted, gratitude the most lively, love the most ardent and enthusiastic, even the sacrifice of life itself for His sake? How happy those who died for Jesus—died, confessing the Divinity of Jesus Christ! How happy those who lay down, with fullest devotion and love, their life for Jesus by the perfect practice of the vows of religion.

Shall I not kneel in spirit at the feet of Jesus as He stands before me—condemned to death for me? With all the love of my heart, O Jesus, my Master, I adore Thee, I thank Thee, I will love Thee only, I will be true to Thee till death, “I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.” O Holy God, O strong God, O Immortal God, look on me, have mercy on me!

Note the haste and diligence of Christ’s enemies; nothing will be left undone to compass their end—the destruction of Jesus. Steps are immediately taken to put the sentence into effect. The whole assembly broke up, and conducted our Lord—with hands bound, to mark Him conspicuously as a condemned malefactor—to the residence of Pilate, the Roman governor, in order to deliver Him over to him for execution. This had to take place, because our Lord had predicted that He would be delivered up to the Gentiles and be crucified by them; and also because the jurisdiction over life and death had been taken from the Jews some years before. Another secondary reason for this step on the part of the Jews may have been a wish to support and confirm their sentence by that of the governor, and thus secure themselves against any eventual popular demonstration in favour of our Lord.

Another laborious journey, during which Jesus is again subjected to outrage, ignominy, and all manner of vile treatment—and all for me, for my sins. So this strange procession, consisting of the Chief Priests, the Great Council, and some armed men, went with our Saviour through nearly the whole city, from the heights of the upper town (Sion) westwards, past the Temple, and through the outskirts to the northern part of the city to the palace of Pilate, the governor. The palace (also called the praetorium) was situated either in the citadel Antonia, at the north-west corner of the Temple square, or in the immediate vicinity. Our dear Lord suffered much distress, humiliation, and grief during this procession, since it intentionally passed in a most conspicuous manner through the principal parts of the city, and the streets were teeming with pilgrims come to the feast. But, on the other hand, it was also, though unintentional on the part of the Rulers, an honourable testimony to Jesus’ rank and importance, since everyone took part in it. It was the memorable procession in which Israel went to deliver its Messias to the Gentiles to be put to death.

All through this terrible night and morning the Blessed Mother, we are told, watched in the Cenacle—watched and listened and prayed till John came. He, when the doors of the prison or dungeon closed
on his Blessed Master, left the building and hurried to the Cenacle close by to find the Ever-blessed Mother, and at her feet he pours out his grief for having fled away when Jesus had been taken by His enemies. Heartbroken though she is, she comforts John as she had Peter, and now bids him stay near to her, for she will go forth and see her Jesus.

John’s heart is melted within him by Mary’s goodness and confidence in him in giving him this charge. With the greatest care and solicitude John leads Mary through the crowd that she may be as near as possible to her Divine Son. How Mary watched, and listened, and sorrowed, and loved. She sees Jesus now dragged violently backwards by one rope, then as violently forward by another. Nothing escapes her watchfulness—every detail goes to her heart and is there laid up. Her compassionate heart shares all His torture and ignominy. How faithful Mary is—she will follow Him with fullest love unto the end. . . . Nothing will make her waver. O Mother most faithful, help me. Mother, I have need of thee, make me true till death! Keep me always close to thee.

Colloquy.—O most loving Jesus, to what extent Thou didst love me; Thou didst condescend to become captive for me—a captive of sorrows, humiliations, ignominy in the hands of Thy enemies, that Thou mightest atone for my many rebellions, pride, and sensuality—that Thou mightest draw and make me a captive of Thy love! O Lord Jesus, my Lord and my God, may I utterly despise in my heart all worldly freedom, and give myself up to the chains of love; ah, yes, my dear Master, may all the senses of my body and the powers of my soul be seized and made subject to Thee—may I be so bound to Thee as never to be separated from Thee.

Grant, I beseech Thee, Lord Jesus, that these may be no empty wishes, but ardent, efficacious resolves, which, with Thy grace, I will fulfil for the consolation of Thy loving Heart and the sanctification of my soul, for which, dear Lord, Thou hast so much suffered. Take, take, Lord Jesus, take and receive my entire liberty—Thou art my God and my eternal King! Jesus! Jesus!—henceforth “Thy love alone.”

XXI.—JUDAS’ REMORSE AND DESPAIR

1st Prelude: History.—“Then Judas, who betrayed Him, seeing that He was condemned, repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the Chief Priests and Ancients, saying: I have sinned in betraying innocent blood. But they said: What is that to us? look thou to it. And casting down the pieces of silver in the Temple, he departed: and went and hanged himself with a halter.”

Whilst Jesus was in the dungeon, Judas, who had been wandering up and down the valley of Hinnom like a madman, directed his steps towards the house of Caiphas, with the thirty pieces of silver, the reward of his treachery, still hanging at his waist. All was silent around, and
he addressed himself to some of the sentinels, without letting them
know who he was and asked what was going to be done to the Galilean.
"He has been condemned to death, and He will certainly be crucified,"
was the reply. Judas walked to and fro and listened to the different
conversations which were held concerning Jesus. Some spoke of the
cruel treatment he had received, others of His astonishing patience,
while others again discoursed concerning the solemn trial which was
to take place in the morning before the Council. Whilst the traitor
was listening eagerly to the different opinions given, day dawned; the
members of the tribunal commenced their preparations, and Judas
slunk behind the building, that he might not be seen, for like Cain he
sought to hide himself from human eyes, and despair was beginning to
take possession of his soul. The place in which he took refuge happened
to be the very spot where the workmen had been preparing the wood
for making the cross of our Lord; all was in readiness, and the men were
asleep by its side. Judas was filled with horror at the sight: he shuddered
and fled when he beheld the instrument of that cruel death to which
for a paltry sum of money he had delivered up his Lord and Master;
he ran to and fro in perfect agonies of remorse, and finally hid himself
in an adjoining cave, where he determined to await the trial to take
place in the morning. (Revelations of Ann Catherine Emmerich.)

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—That place in the valley of
Hinnom south of the city, where Judas went to console himself by
brooding in the moonlight over his thirty pieces of silver. Then the
Temple—where he casts down the silver pieces, saying: "I have sinned
in betraying innocent blood."

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—Light to know our Lord’s love in
calling me to be His own—courage and confidence that I may be true
till death. Grace of strength of will to conquer every enemy—the
Devil, world, nature—that would dare to withdraw me from my Divine
Master. Lord, I will be true to Thee till death—no surrender!
"Thou art my God and my Eternal King."

Points: I. How Judas repents of his deed.
II. How Judas was received by the Priests.
III. The end of Judas.

I

HOW JUDAS REPENTS OF HIS DEED

"Judas, who betrayed Him, seeing that He was condemned, repent-
ing himself." "How are they brought to desolation! as the dream of
them that awake."
The terrible awakening has begun in the soul of Judas. Suddenly
the thirty pieces of silver have lost all their charm. He finds no joy in
them, his poisoned heart rejects the food it craved. The Holy Spirit
speaks of the "fickleness of concupiscence." What so changeable as
the poor soul that is enslaved by passion and by the Devil? "A wave of the sea which is moved and carried about by the wind" (Jas. i.). Jesus Christ is Truth, and changes not—"Jesus Christ yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever." He is a Father worth loving, a Friend worth gaining, a Master worth serving. But Satan, the father of lies, entirely unsays to-day what he represented yesterday as absolutely certain.

Till this moment Satan has vehemently assured Judas that his reward (his thirty pieces) will bring him great satisfaction. Judas has lived in a dream of enchantment. Suddenly the dream dissolves and disappears, and for ever! because that fallen Angel who now has special charge from Lucifer to watch the traitor has ceased to tell one lie and begun to tell another quite opposite. The old story an hour ago was that, "no one would know his treason; he would still be an Apostle; no harm would come to Jesus." Now this pleasant picture is entirely blotted out: and the unseen spirit of lying has begun to whisper: "All is lost." And as Satan had texts of Scripture ready for Jesus in the wilderness, so has the tempter now told off to complete the work of ruin texts in plenty ready for Judas in the valley of Hinnom. "It is written," the tempter whispers—"it is written: My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon" (Gen. iv.). The lying spirit is careful not to add that—"Not out of the mouth of God does this word come."

How careful every soul should be never to listen to suggestions of the Evil One—God's enemy and ours; every thought that tends to weaken our trust and love of God comes directly from the Devil. To have failed, or sinned, is no reason why we should fly from our Father, Friend, Saviour—just the reverse—and when we do fly to His Sacred Heart, looking for forgiveness and mercy, we give joy to our heavenly Father. Does not our Lord in the parable of the Prodigal Son show us clearly how He regards the repentant soul—God likes to be a refuge in the storm. We keep away the caresses and sympathy God is longing to give us, because there is in our hearts some sympathy with the tempter. Nothing honours God like absolute trust in Him. We may well be ashamed when kneeling before the crucifix—and the more and more ashamed we are of our wilfulness and ingratitude the better—but without one tittle of diffidence, or anxiety, or unhappiness. Drive out sadness and dejection; do not listen to the Devil; regard every suggestion to discouragement as treason against the loving Heart of our Lord—promptly repel the tempter, and, like St. Michael, cry out, Quis ut Deus! God loves us in spite of our falls; He can and will do all things if we trust Him.

"Judas, who betrayed Him, repenting himself." It will be useful to note carefully the change come over the soul of Judas. Money which he preferred to the service and company of Jesus, his Master, has lost all its charm.

Any creature, no matter of what kind, that is allowed to come between the soul and its fidelity to God, is sure, in the long run, to
Judas' Remorse and Despair

become a source of bitterness and disappointment. No one can trifle with impunity with God's claim to her unreserved service and fidelity. The hatred that raged within Judas against his Master has died down. Passion and worldliness had blinded him. Now he sees that Jesus is an innocent Man—the veil is fallen from his eyes, he sees all his past vile conduct and ingratitude to Jesus—so that, by rights, it ought to be comparatively easy for him to repent. But the spirits of darkness understand their warfare. They know perfectly well that so long as heavenly hope lives in the soul they cannot prevail. As long as the soul clings unflinchingly to her Lord and God—as long as she loves and trusts Him—saying, "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped—for though great and many are my sins and ingratitude, Thy mercies are greater and more numerous"—so long is that soul sure of forgiveness and salvation.

Every truth that the enemy has untill now carefully hidden from the soul of the duped Apostle is in this hour suddenly brought forward and magnified, but, at the same time, coloured and distorted. "Did He not tell you long ago that you were a devil? Did He not do all in His loving mercy that could be done to soften your heart? When He warned you so often to your face that you were going to betray Him, how could you continue hardened? And remember, too, all your hypocrisy. All is lost! Besides, Jesus is the Christ, and the Son of God. It is entirely due to you that He is to die. You betrayed Him, you kissed Him; you were the leader; you have had your money. All is lost!"

Meanwhile Judas is wavering and straying about through the valley of Hinnom—his soul tossed about by conflicting thoughts—his footsteps wander to and fro. Now he hurries forward towards the Cenacle; now he retraces his steps. And perhaps, too, Peter—for he, too, is in the valley of Hinnom—crosses his path, and the good Angel whispers earnestly to the despairing man: "Follow him. Go and weep with him; for he can have compassion." Alas, how thoroughly all could be repaired for Judas as it was for Peter, if he would only give his consent that the Ever-blessed Mother should put forth her power for him! Ah, if it was night when Judas left the supper-room, what name have we for the darkness now in his soul? What a night of thankless toil, and weariness, and misery! Oh, if Judas were working and watching for Jesus and His holy Mother, instead of working and watching for Lucifer, how blessed this night would be for him.

Mother of God, show us the blessed fruit of thy womb Jesus, that we may ever work for Him, and watch for Him till death, and never betray Him. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me—strengthen me, O dear Lord, against my own weakness—rather do Thou take me out of life than suffer me to be cowardly in Thy service to abandon Thee, or to prove disloyal after all Thy love towards me. May I never lose confidence in Thy tender mercies. Incline unto mine aid, O God; O Lord Jesus, make haste to help me.
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“Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee;
E’en though it be a cross that raiseth me.
Deep in Thy Sacred Heart let me abide,
Thou who hast bled for me, sorrowed and died.”

Look on me, dear Jesus, and say in the depths of my heart, “It is I, be not afraid.”

II

HOW JUDAS WAS RECEIVED BY THE PRIESTS

“Then Judas, who betrayed Him, seeing that He was condemned, repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces to the Chief Priests and Ancients, saying: I have sinned in betraying innocent blood. But they said: What is that to us? Look thou to it. And casting down the pieces of silver he departed” (Matt. xxvii. 3-5).

This much at least the good Angel achieves, for this has been decreed in Heaven, that Judas shall go back and declare publicly that Jesus is just and innocent. For so shall it be throughout the Passion to the end. The prayer in the Cenacle shall be accomplished: “Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee.”

From the mouths of His enemies, from the Heaven above, from the hard rocks, and from the very centre of the earth beneath, a voice shall come to proclaim that Jesus is no malefactor, but only deserves to die because in His charity He loved us and delivered Himself up for us.

Early then at the break of day, Judas comes back to the palaces of the Priests, and there learns the news that Jesus is condemned, sees the procession marshalled, and fixes his eyes on the cruelly disfigured face of that Blessed Master whom he has persecuted. He sees, too, the Ever-blessed Mother of Sorrows, and he is wavering still, and with a double mind: Shall I not beg her forgiveness and help? How wretched the soul that yields to the suggestions of the Evil One, the world, and corrupt nature, and wavers and hesitates to give God our Lord its best, to give fearlessly and perseveringly all that its Lord and Creator asks and desires from it.

Judas hesitates and the Evil Spirit gains new power over him. A little while, and Judas is hurried away by the crowd, his body is jostled to one side and the other, and his soul tossed, like a wave of the sea which is moved and carried about by every wind, with no stability; unhappy indeed the soul that does not cling steadfastly to Jesus Crucified, and despise the contrary winds. Lord Jesus, bid me to come to Thee walking on the waters. What does anything in this uncertain world matter to us, but to cling to Jesus and value His service. How terrible to put Jesus and any creature into competition, and deliberately set aside Jesus for self! This was exactly what Judas did.

It was the condemnation of Jesus by the Great Council, and His being led away to Pilate, which brought Judas to unavailing sorrow. He now saw with his own eyes the awful consequences of his treachery, and began to repent of his deed. As regards the nature of his remorse,
Judas’ Remorse and Despair

it seems to have been intense in many respects, at all events exteriorly. He recognizes the infamy and horror of his crime and bitterly regrets it. He openly confesses it before the Chief Priests and Ancients who had perhaps remained behind in the house of Caiphas to transact other business, or had gone into the Temple. He testifies in their presence the innocence of Jesus, as opposed to the verdict of “guilty” which they had pronounced upon Him, and acknowledges his own guilt, saying that he has betrayed innocent blood and thereby sinned. Lastly, he tears himself away from his idol—the money that had seduced him to sin, and casts it down in the Temple. What, then, was wanting to his contrition and conversion? It was the important—nay, the essential—virtues of hope, confidence, and love. Alas! after three years with Jesus he had not learned the love and mercy of the Sacred Heart. Judas only saw the magnitude and dreadfulness of his sin, and not the possibility of pardon. His sorrow was therefore not a sorrow unto life, but unto death.

And how was this? Some are of opinion that Judas had thought our Saviour would certainly not be killed, but contrive to escape from the hands of His enemies, as He had often done before; but this expectation had not been fulfilled, and so he was the first to be guilty of the blood of our Lord. And, therefore, he despaired. But even apart from this, the whole course of what transpired in his soul is very natural. At first, blinded by passion and tempted by the Devil, he had seen in the deed only the enticing prospect of gain, and now when it was accomplished he saw only the horror of it. A complete reaction set in, and now he could not even endure to keep the money that had had such an attraction for him before.

Mercator pessimus, Holy Church calls Judas; the most foolish of traders! the very worst of bargainers! of all merchants the most silly, the most thoroughly duped! Who ever gave up so much?—the Divine Lord and Master who had loved him and chosen him to be His intimate friend and companion—an Apostle—and a prince in the Eternal Kingdom! Who ever received so poor an exchange?—thirty paltry bits of silver, a little bit of earth, a little of this world, popularity, gratification of inordinate inclination. “The men of riches have found nothing in their hands,” says the Psalmist; yet was Judas most kindly, most clearly, and not once but oftentimes, warned by Jesus to be on his guard. How dangerous, how awful to listen to any suggestion likely to weaken our love or our fidelity to our Lord, or endanger our perseverance in our vocation. How thankfully, too, we should receive every little admonition or advice given to us by those who hold our Lord’s place.

Watch the anger, humiliation, trouble, and bitterness of the Priests as they hastily mutter out, “What is that to us? Look thou to it!” Then they hastily turn their backs on these unwelcome admonitions, affecting to be too busy, too much in haste, to attend to Judas.

“Look you to it.” This is their verdict. Look you to it!—manage
your own concerns—your salvation and perfection is your own affair—
Look you to it! We must not struggle alone against all the cunning
and treachery of him who is the father of lies and a murderer from the
beginning. How different it would have been with the unfortunate
Judas, if, like Peter, he had fled to the Mother of God. Let us learn to
seek help, with all humility from those our dear Lord has appointed
to guide and direct us. “Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth
he hath none to lift him up” (Eccles. iv.).

“And casting down the pieces of silver in the Temple, he departed.”
Judas ought not to depart; he does well to cast away the price of sin; but,
before he departs, he ought to appeal from the merciless sentence of these
Priests to the Heart of Him Who is the Lord and Master of these Priests.

Judas, for the last time on earth, sees his Master standing tightly
bound, the Just Man, whose innocent Blood he has betrayed—Jesus,
his most merciful Master and Redeemer, to Whom he may most con-
fidently appeal. Judas need not fear that Jesus will answer: “What
is it to Me?” Jesus will not reject the sinner that turns to Him. He
will not say, “Look you to it” ; but will take up this dark sin with the
rest of His burden, and will blot out the handwriting of the decree that
is against the traitor.

Oh, how blessed are those who, while they still have a relish for the
things of this world, give them up willingly and cheerfully for God’s
sake; and do not wait for death to wrench them from them against their
will. How much, how exceedingly does God love a cheerful giver,
who in the spirit of love gives back to his Creator what his Creator and
Father has given in love to him. What an unspeakable privilege it is
for us to be able to give something to God! Ah, Lord Jesus, may I
never disappoint Thee! Take, O take, dear Jesus, all—everything,
my entire liberty. Create a clean heart in me, O God! wash me yet
more and more from my iniquity. Incline unto my aid, O Jesus,
Saviour. I grieve from my heart that I have so often offended Thee.
O Mother of Mercy, Refuge of Sinners, plead for me. O my Mother,
I have need of thee now and at the hour of my death.

III

THE END OF JUDAS

It will be a help to us to contrast the manner in which the Priests
received the avowal of Judas, acknowledging that he had sinned, and our
Lord’s loving mercifulness and sympathy with poor sinners during the
three years of His public life. The way in which the Priests received
Judas is odious, (i) because of their callousness and heartlessness,
(2) because of their hypocrisy. After Judas had cast the pieces of
silver down in the Temple, he fled, driven by despair and the Evil One,
out of the city to the valley of Hinnom—“He went and hanged himself
with a halter.” Satan was by his side whispering in his ear—What hast
thou done? His blood cries for vengeance: thou art cursed upon earth.
Judas’ Remorse and Despair

When Judas reached the torrent of Cedron, and saw Mount Olivet, he shuddered, turned away, and again the words vibrated in his ear: “Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” Horror filled his soul. Goaded on by the tempter, Judas rushed on till he reached the foot of the mountain; overpowering by remorse and despair, the unhappy wretch hanged himself. The body burst asunder in the midst, and fell to the ground. “ Destruction is thine own, O Israel.” My sin is always my own! We fools! The serpent deceived us. St. Ignatius presses upon us in the beginning of his Exercises this fundamental truth: Man is created to save his own soul. No one else can save my soul for me, and no one else can lose my soul for me. Salvation or damnation must be my own work.

What an example, and what a terrible lesson! An Apostle ends his days as a suicide—the imposter and avenger of his own crime! What more is needed to teach us how fatal it is not to resist our evil passions and inordinate inclinations? Is not every passion a very Satan, that can make us miserable for time and eternity? But still even passion and its bitter fruit, sin, could not have compassed his ruin if only he had not lost confidence and despaired—if only he had sought the help of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who would have led him to the feet of Jesus with Magdalen. Peter had fallen, too. But he seized the saving hand of Jesus, by his love and trust. How very differently Judas would have been received by Peter, John, and Mary, if he had fled to them in his contrition, and cast himself into their arms, instead of going to the Chief Priests! Let us beware of the evil of losing confidence and falling into despair.

Colloquy.—Most humble and sweet Jesus, O Thou Magnet of Hearts, Who by the Divine goodness of Thy Heart drawest all to Thee!—draw me so powerfully to Thy love and service that nothing, dear Lord, may be able to take me from Thee—draw me so powerfully to Thee that I may be ready to sacrifice every earthly affection to prove my love for Thee. O sweet Jesus, keep Thy hands upon me, that I may never prove disloyal, but may grow daily more and more loyal and devoted to Thee. Incline unto my aid, O Lord, for I am weak. Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew, sweet Jesus, a right spirit within me. O Mother, I have need of thee, teach me to know thy Son, make my love grow daily stronger, more ardent, and fearless, so that no difficulty may conquer me in the service of my dear Lord and Master.

XXII.—JESUS BEFORE PILATE

1st Prelude: History.—“Then they led Jesus from Caiphas to the Governor’s hall. And it was morning: and they went not into the hall, that they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the Pasch. Pilate, therefore, went out to them, and said to them: What accusation bring you against this Man? They answered and said to him: If He
were not a malefactor we would not have delivered Him up to Thee. Pilate therefore said to them: Take Him you, and judge Him according to your law. The Jews therefore said to Him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death. That the word of Jesus might be fulfilled which He said, signifying what death He should die. Pilate therefore went into the hall again, and called Jesus, and said to Him: Art Thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered: Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or have others told it thee of Me? Pilate answered: Am I a Jew? Thy own nation and the Chief Priests have delivered Thee up to me: what hast Thou done? Jesus answered: My Kingdom is not of this world: if My Kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now My Kingdom is not from hence. Pilate therefore said to him: Art Thou a King, then? Jesus answered: Thou sayest that I am a King. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth: every one that is of the truth, heareth My voice. Pilate saith to Him: What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and saith to them: I find no cause in Him” (John xviii.).

St. Luke adds: “And they began to accuse Him, saying: We have found this Man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that He is Christ the King. . . . He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place. But Pilate hearing Galilee, asked if the Man were of Galilee” (Luke xxiii., Mark xv.). “And the Chief Priests accused Him of many things. And Pilate again asked Him, saying: Answerest Thou nothing? Behold in how many things they accuse Thee. But Jesus answered nothing, and Pilate wondered.”

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—The Prætorium or Governor’s hall. According to tradition the Prætorium to which our Lord was led was attached to the castle of Antonia, which stood at the north-east corner of the city, immediately to the north of the Temple precincts. On the northern front of Antonia and the Prætorium, there was a large courtyard or square, paved with reddish stones, and called in Greek, Lithostrotos, in Hebrew, Gabbatha. In this Lithostrotos there stood a raised tribunal, from which at times the Governor administered justice. A flight of marble steps, venerated now in Rome as the Scala Sancta, led from the balcony in front of the Prætorium down to the Lithostrotos. Here the trial of Jesus before Pilate takes place.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To know the love of the Sacred Heart in this mystery of His Passion—that I may see and know our Lord’s love for me, and be urged to greater love for Him and generosity in His service—a closer imitation—I will also ask grief, affliction, and confusion, because for my sins Jesus suffers so many ignominies and outrages. Grace to understand the Mystery of the Cross.

Points: I. Historical course of the proceedings.
   II. The actors in this scene—their behaviour.
   III. Conclusions.
Jesus before Pilate

HISTORICAL COURSE OF THE PROCEEDINGS

"Then they led Jesus from the governor's hall. And it was morning; and they went not into the hall, that they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the Pasch" (John xviii.).

"It was morning." We may suppose that the procession started from the Priests' palace, at the beginning of the first morning watch, about six a.m. according to our reckoning, and it would probably be near seven o'clock when the procession arrived at the Praetorium.

As the Roman cohort helped last night in the arrest of Jesus, we must suppose that the Governor had previously been informed that a very dangerous and seditious malefactor was abroad, who might easily create disturbance among the crowds assembled in Jerusalem. Pilate is therefore already somewhat prepared, when a messenger arrives, sent forward in haste, to tell him that all the principal men of Jerusalem are about to wait on him about urgent business; that they have captured the dangerous Leader of the seditions; that it is most important that the case be heard at once, before the people can have time to attempt a rescue.

The Priests and Ancients add a further urgent request that the Governor will not oblige them to enter the Judgment-hall, as they would by so doing incur a legal defilement, and would in the eyes of the people become unfit to take part in the eating of the Pasch that evening.

Let us follow our Blessed Lord and contemplate Him lovingly, as He is led by His enemies to the court of Pilate. See how these malicious men lead Jesus through the most public part of the town—the procession wends its way slowly down the north side of the mountain of Sion, then passes by the eastern side of the Temple on towards the palace and tribunal of Pilate, which were on the north-west side of the Temple, facing a large square.

See Caiphas, Annas, and many others of the Chief Council, as they head the procession clad in festival attire; then note the multitude of Scribes and many other Jews, among whom were the false witnesses and the wicked Pharisees who had taken the most prominent part in accusing Jesus. See our Divine Lord as He follows at a short distance surrounded by a band of soldiers, and led by the archers. Lastly, see how the multitude throng on all sides and follow the procession, thundering forth the most fearful oaths and imprecations, while groups of persons are hurrying to and fro, pushing and jostling one another.

Contemplate Jesus—our Lord and God! He is stripped of all save His under-garment, which is stained and soiled by the filth which has been flung upon it; a long chain hangs round His neck and strikes His knees as He walks; His hands pinioned as on the previous day, the archers drag Him by the ropes fastened round His waist. Jesus totters
rather than walks, and is almost unrecognizable from the effects of His
sufferings during the night. He is colourless, haggard, His Divine
face swollen and bleeding. His tormentors continue to maltreat Him
unmercifully. They had gathered together a large body of the dregs
of the people, in order to make His present disgraceful entrance into the
city a vile parody on His triumphal entrance on Palm Sunday.

It was about seven o’clock in the morning when the procession
reached the palace of Pilate. See Jesus as the brutal guards drag Him
to the foot of the flight of stairs which leads to the judgment-seat
of Pilate. . . . See Pilate as he sits on a comfortable chair on a terrace
which overlooks the courtyard or Lithostrotos; a small three-legged
table stands by his side, on which are placed the insignia of his office
and a few other things. Note how the Jews and Priests do not enter
the Praetorium, lest they might defile themselves, but remain outside.
How pride, jealousy, and envy blind these men! Note, too, the
soldiers and officers who surround Him, and who are dressed with the
magnificence usual in the Roman army.

When Pilate saw the tumultuous procession enter and perceived how
shamefully these cruel Jews had treated their prisoner, he arose and
addressed them in a tone as contemptuous as could have been assumed
by a victorious general towards the vanquished chief of some insignificant
village. Hear him: “What are you come about so early? Why have
you ill-treated this prisoner so shamefully?” This annoyed the Priests
and rulers. They made no answer, but shouted to the guards: “Bring
Him on—bring Him to be judged!” Watch, with loving sympathy,
our dear Lord as the brutal guards drag Him up the marble staircase
and lead Him to the end of the terrace, from whence Pilate was conferring
with the Jewish Priests.

The Roman Governor had often heard of Jesus, but had never seen
Him. Pilate is perfectly astonished at the calm dignity of deportment
displayed by a man brought before him in so pitiful a condition. The
inhuman behaviour of the Priests and Ancients both exasperated him
and increased his contempt for them. “What accusation do you bring
against this Man?” asked Pilate, addressing the Priests in the most
scornful tones possible. “If He were not a malefactor we would not
have delivered Him up to thee,” they replied sullenly. “Take Him,”
said Pilate, “and judge you Him according to your law.” “Thou
knowest well,” replied they, “that it is not lawful for us to condemn
any man to death.” The enemies of Jesus are furious; but Pilate has
no mind to be made use of as a public executioner; he orders our Lord
to be brought into the judgment-hall that he may question Him. The
last accusation—that of Jesus calling Himself King—made some im-
pression upon Pilate. “Art Thou the King of the Jews?” said Pilate,
looking at our Lord, and unable to repress his astonishment at the
Divine expression of His countenance.

Let us listen lovingly to every word Jesus speaks, and also note His
wonderful silence. Jesus answers: “Sayest thou this thing of thyself,
or have others told it thee of Me?" "Am I a Jew?" replied the Governor; "Thy own nation and the Chief Priests have delivered Thee up to me as deserving of death; what hast Thou done?" Jesus answered majestically—mark His blessed words—"My Kingdom is not of this world. If My Kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My Kingdom is not from hence." Pilate is moved by these solemn words, and says to Jesus in a more serious tone: "Art Thou a King, then?" Jesus replied: "Thou art right in saying that I am a King. For this was I born, and for this I came into the world, that I should bear testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." Pilate looked at Him, and rising from his seat, said, "The truth! What is the truth?"

Pilate was satisfied, and convinced that there was no question here of an offence against the State; he went back to the Jews and gave his opinion in favour of the innocence of Jesus. Jesus, too, was led back whilst Pilate again addressed the Priests from the terrace: "I find no cause in Him." The enemies of Jesus became furious, and brought forward many false accusations against Him. "Answerest Thou nothing?" said Pilate. "Behold in how many things they accuse Thee." Jesus was silent—praying for His base enemies. Pilate was astonished, and saw clearly all they alleged was false. Our Lord's enemies hereupon began to lend weight to their assertions by many serious accusations, such as charging our Lord with having incited the people to revolt from Galilee down to Judea—"He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place."

The persistent silence maintained by our Lord, even when Pilate called upon Him to defend Himself, confirmed the Governor still more in his opinion of our Saviour's innocence. But since the Jews were so unruly, he sought to get rid of the affair under the pretext that our Lord was Herod's subject, and that the matter must therefore be referred to him. So he sent the Jews to Herod with our Lord—"Take Him before Herod; he is here for the festival and can judge Him at once, as He is his subject." Our Lord was immediately led out of the tribunal, and Pilate despatched an officer to Herod to inform him that Jesus of Nazareth, who was his subject, was about to be brought to him to be judged. Pilate had two reasons for following this line of conduct: (1) He was delighted to escape having to pass sentence himself, as he felt very uncomfortable about the whole affair; (2) he was glad of an opportunity of pleasing Herod, with whom he had had a disagreement, for he knew him to be very curious to see Jesus.

Contemplate our dear Lord once more abandoned into the hands of His enemies, who, being enraged at being dismissed by Pilate in the presence of the whole multitude, gave vent to their anger by ill-treating Jesus even more than before. They pinioned him afresh, and then ceased not to overwhelm Him with curses and blows as they led Him hurriedly through the crowd towards the palace of Herod.
Meditation on the Passion

Colloquy.—O Jesus, my Master, my Lord and my God, object of so much contempt and injustice. Thou art the King of Heaven, the Son of the Most High. For me Thou dost endure all these outrages, ignominies, and art so cruelly treated—Thou, Who deservest the adoration and love of all creatures. Prostrate at Thy Sacred Feet, I adore Thee; I bless Thee; I thank Thee; I love Thee with my whole heart; I am grieved for having offended Thee in the past. O assist me now, dearest Jesus, to amend my tepid life, and do Thou have mercy on me and strengthen me to be faithful to You from this day forward. May I never be untrue to Thee—never more be a coward in Thy service. Mother of God, help me to know and love and serve Thy Jesus and my Jesus. O Mother, I have need of thee!

II

THE ACTORS IN THIS SCENE—THEIR BEHAVIOUR

(1) The accusers, the Jews. (2) Pilate, the Roman Governor. (3) Jesus, our Divine Saviour.

1. The accusers, the Jews. In them we have an illustration of the power of passion. All—the Chief Priests and the Great Council—appear before Pilate, probably in order to influence him, and they demean themselves by acting the common rôle of prosecutor. This they do before the hated Roman Governor, who treats them in a most offhand manner, and yet, in spite of this, they make the ignominious admission that they have no power over life and death. All these sacrifices they make in their hatred of Jesus! The accusation itself is most slanderous and malicious, and their admission is thoroughly calculated to entangle the Governor also in the matter.

At the meeting of the Great Council they had condemned our Saviour on the charge of blasphemy. But here, before Pilate, they drop this accusation, and impeach Him of a political crime amounting to high treason—viz., of seducing the people and inciting them to revolt, refusing to pay tribute, and giving Himself out for the Messiah—of course in their and the Governor's sense of that dignity, namely, as a political sovereign. They turn the ecclesiastical case into a political one. In the second onset they let fall the name of Galilee, perhaps with the intention of placing our Lord in an unfavourable light from the very first, because the Galileans were very restless and often took part in risings against the Romans. Thus the accusation was a mixture of confusion and downright falsehood. Our Lord had never forbidden anyone to pay tribute. But the aim of the Chief Priests and Ancients was to force Pilate into the matter, since his first duty was to look sharply after the paying of the tribute, and uphold the prestige of the Roman name with all the means at his command.

2. Pilate himself comes next. Pilate is a fair sample of a Roman official of the day. We see in him the haughty pride of a Roman patrician and his contempt for all the conquered races, especially the
Jesus before Pilate

Jews. He treats them in a most disdainful manner, and sends them away with their object unobtained. Note his words: “Am I a Jew, that I should trouble myself about the so-called Messiah?” said he to our Lord in an irritated tone, when our Lord asked him if he inquired about His high rank of his own accord, or on account of the statement of the Jews. At the same time we cannot overlook in him a certain sense of justice and sound judgment. He sees through the Jews’ tissue of lies at once and does not let himself be influenced by mere words of accusation, but disregards the first two charges on account of their evident falsehood, and only inquires for facts to prove that our Lord had aspired to the secular sovereignty and actually arrogated to Himself its rights, as they allege. Not finding any, he publicly proclaims the innocence of Jesus, and admires the calmness and nobility of character He shows in not replying a word to all the accusations of the Jews.

Lastly, Pilate shows from the first his indecision, shallowness, insincerity, and time-serving policy. He sees that Jesus is innocent and yet he does not take Him under his protection, but turns the matter over to Herod, either because he hoped the latter would keep our Lord with him, or because he wished to gain time and show Herod a mark of attention. Pilate is untrue even to himself, since he scorns to be taught the way of truth by our Lord. A thorough statesman—lax, unscrupulous, and sceptical—he regarded the search for truth as mere romantic enthusiasm. Our Lord is in Pilate’s eyes nothing but a harmless, fanatical dreamer.

3. Our dear Lord is the third to be considered. They are indeed weighty words with which St. Matthew begins his account of our Lord’s appearance before Pilate: “And Jesus stood before the Governor.” It was the first official meeting of our Lord with the holder of the Roman executive power; the Heir to the future world stands before the representative of the actual world—empire, innocence, and holiness before the sullied Gentile—God before His creature. Yes, God—though poor, humble, stripped of all exterior power, rejected and accused by His own people, and delivered up to the Gentile to be tried and judged by him. . . . And how does our Lord behave? Ah, let us lovingly fix our eyes on Jesus, and diligently learn the lessons He teaches us. Jesus’ conduct is, first, very humble and submissive. He acknowledges Pilate’s jurisdiction, and submits to it. He replies with great calmness, lucidity, and modesty to the question concerning His kingly rank, and shows His great ascendancy of mind by immediately asking Pilate: If he put it in consequence of his own conviction, or merely on account of the Jews’ accusation?

Taking the words in this sense, our Lord is certainly inquiring about the charge brought against Him, but assuredly with the intention of cross-examining Pilate also—awakening his conscience, and warning him not to pander to the lying accusations of the Jews if he did not consider Him guilty himself. The question betokens great clearness, composure, and majesty. And what does Jesus say of His Kingdom,
Meditation on the Passion

its origin and nature? That it is upon earth certainly, but not of the earth; it is a spiritual, supernatural Kingdom—the Kingdom of Truth. It does not fight with weapons of steel, but with the power of conviction, and conquers by this means the hearts that by right belong to it; He Himself—our Lord and Saviour—is witness to this truth, and is Himself the Truth. What clear and majestic words, and yet how modest! What might He not have said of His Kingdom, and how little He does say. Finally, He gives Pilate another earnest warning in the words: Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.

When our Lord speaks, He does so humbly, wisely, and in a manner that commands reverence. But Jesus knows how to be silent too, and His silence is like His speech—full of wisdom, humility, power, and majesty. He opposes silence to the persistent accusations of the Jews, and preserves it even in the face of Pilate's repeated exhortations to speak. Jesus could easily have defended Himself and turned the charges against the accusers, if He had chosen. But He did not choose, in spite of the fact that His life and honour were at stake. And why not? Because it was unnecessary after the information He had already given Pilate; the Jews themselves well knew what their accusations were worth. Besides, He would have nothing more to do with them; His cause had passed to another judicial authority.

How terrible a state when our Lord ceases to speak to a soul and withdraws on account of its wilful contempt of His graces and inspirations! Further, our dear Lord wished to warn us against the inordinate desire of always defending ourselves, to satisfy for the sins it leads us to commit, and comfort those who cannot defend themselves. So this silence of Jesus was not, as ours might be, due to impotence and stupidity, obstinacy, or pride; it was prompted by majesty, patience, wisdom, humility, intrepidity, nobility of sentiment, and love to God and to us.

Colloquy.—O Sacred Heart of Jesus, Heart most meek and humble, in whatever day and on whatever occasion Thou speakest to my heart, may I, dear Lord, hear Thee with full attention and loving reverence, and yield Thee most perfect submission. May I learn to love and value correction and humiliation with the humble, meek spirit of Thy Sacred Heart. May I consider it an honour to be thought worthy to meet contradictions in Thy service. Heart of Jesus, inflame my heart. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. Dearest Lord, I most heartily regret all my unfaithfulness in the past. May I, O Jesus, Master, serve Thee with all the love of my heart. Mother of God, help me, keep me close to thee, that I may be true to thy Divine Son.

III

CONCLUSIONS

1. Our Lord's motto through life was all that I can do for them I will do. No two ways with Him. Pilate is what St. James calls double-minded, and therefore inconstant in all his ways: he is, as we say, "a
man between two minds.” Even in the holy, there are two forces struggling. “The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.” In the good soul the spirit triumphs; in the worldly and selfish soul the flesh triumphs. Ecclesiasticus tells us how a hot soul—i.e., fervent, loyal to our Lord—works: “A hot soul is a burning fire; it will never be quenched till it devours something.” Our dear Lord came to cast fire on the earth. He wants, for His Spouses and Apostles, Religious whose souls are hot, disciples who being on fire themselves will spread the Divine fire to others. Now a soul who does not give himself up wholly to God, who is inconstant, wavering, one day all for Him, the next gone over to the world and self, is a source of pain and disappointment to our Lord. Hear Him through the lips of His prophet Elias: “How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow Him.”

Pilate has a leaning towards Jesus. No evidence is brought against Him. There is clearly a malicious conspiracy against Him. A Roman ought to be just. Therefore, if Pilate were a single-minded man he would say: “The case is ended”—and drive the Jewish multitude from his tribunal. But he sees another side to the matter—the selfish side. These Priests and Ancients are powerful in Jerusalem. The Emperor Tiberius knows well how to chastise offending officials—therefore Pilate halts between two sides. Human respect overcomes Pilate’s convictions, and he has not the courage to set Jesus free. How fatal is cowardice in things Divine!

Alas! Pilate is seeking to serve two masters, and we know the result. How dangerous for a Religious to trifle with his vocation. How sad and miserable not to give himself wholly to God—to the perfection to which he is called. There is no peace or holiness but in generosity and loyalty in our dealings with our Lord. “And I brought you into the land of Carmel, to eat the fruit thereof. I planted thee a chosen vineyard, all true seed: how then art thou turned for me into that which is good for nothing—O strange vineyard?” (Jer.). Grant, O grant, Lord Jesus, that I may be wholly intent on serving Thee. That I may be prompt and diligent in accomplishing Thy most holy will.

2. Following the first practical conclusion—viz., to beware of “halting between two sides”—striving “to serve two masters,” there is a second I can draw from these words of Pilate, “I find no cause in Him”: grace to bear, with Christ, humiliation, correction, when not in fault, and also grace to bear reproof and humiliation after I have given cause by my faults. The first, of course, is the higher and better grace. St. Peter tells us, “If doing well you suffer patiently, this is thankworthy of God. But what glory is it, if committing sin and being buffeted for it you endure?” (1 Pet. ii.). “I find no cause in Him.” We may lay up this word for our own use. Blessed Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may thoroughly apply it. Holy Mother of God, I find no cause in thy Son
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Jesus and my Divine Saviour, why I should not with all the energy of my will and love of my heart, praise, reverence, and serve Him—I find no cause why I should not trust absolutely in the love of His Sacred Heart, why I should not follow Him closely always—yes, Immaculate Mother, and lay down my life for Him.

Note how our Lord's delivery into Pilate's hands marks a new development in the tragedy of His Passion, and this scene in court shows us clearly the chief actors. (1) The Jews—who most truly represent the great force and inventive power of the passions—with their fierce implacable hate, their unbelief, malice, and utter want of principle, who shrink from no means that can lead them to their end. (2) Opposed to them is Pilate, in possession of all the resources of the executive, with evident appreciation of truth and justice, but as unprincipled and unreliable as a statesman can be who regards the expediency of the moment, and not truth and justice, as his highest law. It is not difficult to guess who will be the victor here. (3) Between them stands our Lord—a Lamb between the fox and the wolves. He has nothing at His command but the majesty of truth and holiness, humility and voluntary suffering, and yet it is equally certain that in the end He will vanquish both His adversaries with these means. Truth and patience are eternal. Even here in His state of powerlessness and humiliation, our Lord is the object of Pilate's respect, admiration, and reverence.

Colloquy.—Stir up my heart, Lord Jesus, with a strong and active and earnest and fearless and persevering love for Thee. O my dear Lord, when I contemplate Thy humility and meekness, under the most galling outrages, I am overwhelmed with confusion at my sensitiveness to the least annoyance. Strengthen me, my Jesus, I implore Thee, to bear humiliation calmly at least, if not joyfully. O dear Lord, grant me patience, humility, self-control, and above all, Thy holy love, which includes every other gift. O loving Heart of my Master, I consecrate myself to Thee till death, looking on myself henceforth as a slave, whose sole office lies in being at the service of his master, working with all my mind, body, and soul to serve and please Thee in all and by all.

O Mary, my sweet Mother, keep me close to thee, so that I may be always faithful to Jesus. Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me. Show me the blessed fruit of thy womb. O Mary, dearest Mother, I have need of thee!

XXIII.—JESUS BEFORE HEROD

(Luke xxiii.)

1st Prelude: History.—“And when he (Pilate) understood that He was of Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him away to Herod, who was himself at Jerusalem in those days. And Herod seeing Jesus, was very glad: for he was desirous for a long time of seeing Him, because he had
Jesus before Herod

heard many things of Him; and he hoped to see some sign wrought by Him. And he questioned Him in many words. But Jesus answered him nothing. And the Chief Priests and Scribes stood by, earnestly accusing Him. And Herod with his army mocked Him, putting on Him a white garment, and sent Him back to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate were made friends that same day: for before that they were enemies one to another.”

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—The road or street leading to Herod’s palace. Then the palace which was situated to the north of the official building or dwelling of the Roman Governor. See our suffering Lord and Saviour; keep close to Him. Since He left the Cenacle last night He has already made three journeys: the first to Gethsemani, of about a mile; the second from Gethsemani to the palace of the Priests, about another mile, but for half the way up a very steep hill. The third journey early this morning was to the Praetorium, a little under a mile. This journey to Herod’s palace is the fourth.

St. Ignatius calls our attention to these laborious goings and comings of our Lord, in which He suffered inexpressible anguish, vile treatment, and all for me, and my sins of pride and sensuality.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—An interior knowledge of my dear Lord and Saviour—to understand and realize the extent of His love for me. Grace to understand the Mystery of the Cross, to value and love it. Grace to sorrow with my Jesus in anguish; to follow Him faithfully to Calvary.

Points: I. The journey to Herod’s palace.
II. The meeting with Herod.
III. The signification of the mystery.

I
THE JOURNEY TO HEROD’S PALACE

This journey was a bitter and painful one for our Lord. We are to look as well as we can at the persons; to listen to the words; to watch the actions; to note how much our Lord is suffering; how completely His Divinity condescends to be hidden and set aside, in order that He may suffer more; and lastly, that He is suffering for me because He loves me.

This journey was very bitter and painful to our Lord. (1) It was humiliating for Him to be treated thus by Pilate. It was only from policy and cowardice that Pilate shifted the affair on to Herod’s shoulders. He could pass it on to him, according to the law, but was not bound to do so. But he saw plainly enough that he could not in justice condemn our Lord, and on the other hand he wished not to irritate the already exasperated Jews. So the rightful authority would not hold itself responsible for our Lord, and washed its hands of Him. Besides, the present case afforded Pilate an opportunity of paying Herod a mark of attention, and of effecting a reconciliation with him
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(they had quarrelled about several matters). Herod was at this time at Jerusalem. It was humiliating for our Lord to have to appear before this prince who had persecuted Him. And now Jesus has to go before him; His fate lay in his hands.

(2) The journey was rendered very bitter to Jesus by the ill-usage He had to submit to on the way. This reference to Herod annoyed the Jews—on account, firstly, of the delay and loss of time it entailed; secondly, of the danger of a demonstration in favour of Jesus; lastly, of the humiliation of having to go round the town begging for a final condemnation, especially at the hands of Herod, whom they detested. We can hardly doubt but that they made our suffering Lord pay dearly for their vexation, by all sorts of outrages and ill-treatment.

Let us follow our Blessed Lord. See the Priests and Ancients as they set out; their minds so disturbed, so full of bitter resentment against Pilate, who has publicly disgraced them, paying no respect to their dignity, and giving no credit to their solemn affirmation. They had hoped to see Jesus crucified by this time. Their malice against our Lord is intensified. Note how they redouble their entreaties, and warnings, and bribes to the Roman soldiery to induce them to bind and shackle Jesus so that escape be impossible. Hear them: Do it quickly; lead Him cautiously.

Watch the crowd, how it grows larger as the news is reaching the different quarters of the city that Jesus is being led a prisoner to Herod's court. At the sight of the great change wrought in our Lord, His disfigurement, wretched plight, chains, fetters, the heavy blows so often dealt out to Him, and with entire impunity, His utter helplessness when dragged hither and thither and cast upon the ground: their souls are scandalized, their faith staggered. They say: "The Priests, then, are right after all. He is found out!"

What can we do better than to place ourselves in spirit near the Blessed Mother of God, and as we walk on, look at her and our Lord. O my Mother, source of charity, share thy holy grief with me, let me walk and weep with thee. This is the second journey the Blessed Mother has made with Jesus since the daybreak; and it is still early in the morning. Through the weariness and extreme exhaustion of our Blessed Lord and the Most Holy Mother may we have the grace to conquer our inordinate inclination to seek ease and convenience, and may we seek with courage and generosity to fulfil all the duties of our state and calling or to follow common life exactly and lovingly, shunning with care all unnecessary dispensations. Untiring performance of duty, common life and perfect conformity to God's Will are the safest, surest, and most meritorious mortifications. By exact observance of common life, regular discipline, we have the opportunities for practising the continual mortification required by St. Ignatius.

Watch how the Priests and Ancients during this journey are racked with fear. Why? Because they know Herod has no love for them. He will not bow to them. He has little to fear or hope from them.
They know, too, that he had no cause to persecute Jesus. No one ever has peace who is a slave to passion.

Colloquy.—Behold me, now, in Thy presence, most sweet Jesus, begging grace and imploring mercy that I may be wholly converted from the world and self; that I may begin heartily to renounce myself, and labour with love and diligence to follow Thee closely. Grant, Lord Jesus, that I be no longer deaf to Thy call, but prompt and generous in accomplishing Thy most holy Will. O Mother of God, I have need of thee. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me now—now, Mother, that I may completely rid myself, with God's grace and thy help, of all human respect and inordinate self-seeking and cowardice in the service of my Divine Lord and Master.

II

THE MEETING WITH HEROD

"And Herod seeing Jesus, was very glad: for he was desirous of a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to see some sign wrought by Him" (Luke xxiii. 8).

In order to gain a correct idea of the meeting, we must consider the attendant circumstances. In the first place, Herod was an effeminate and notorious voluptuary, condemned and branded by public opinion. Further, he was a frivolous, shallow man, with a mania for marvels and sight-seeing; and lastly, he was vain, and as a "fallen star," very eager to regain the prestige of his person and house. This reference of the affair to him was a capital opportunity of gratifying all these passions. He received a mark of distinction from the Roman Governor, was publicly acknowledged by him and chosen as judge in a celebrated case. The Great Council, including the High Priests, appeared before him, bringing their accusations against our Lord; the latter Himself—Whom he had long wished to see, and of Whom he had heard so much—was now in his power: thus he, Herod, received public recognition and honour from all sides. And if only our Lord, too, would acknowledge and honour him in his own way, this day would be the most glorious of Herod's life. This was what made him so glad to see and receive our Lord. He would, we may be quite sure, have mustered the whole of his military retinue for the occasion.

Contemplate the meeting of Jesus and Herod. See Herod in his robes and seated on his throne, his crown upon his head. He is full of vanity and, like all fallen grandeur, desirous of gaining popularity by external show. His guards are drawn up around him. He resolves to receive the Sanhedrin in state. He has no love or reverence for the Jewish Priests and Ancients. He is, like his father, a Jew only out of policy. Herod has no hostile feeling to our Lord; he is desirous to see a miracle, and anxious to pose as a patron of Jesus. The very sight of all the chains and ropes, and the marks of Jewish cruelty which he sees upon Him, make him doubly inclined to take His side. Listen to
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the Chief Priests as they entered and placed themselves by Herod's side, leaving Jesus at the entrance. They all began at once to vociferate their accusations, to which Herod hardly listened, being intent solely on gratifying his curiosity by a close examination of Jesus, Whom he had so often wished to see.

What was the attitude of Jesus? He stood before the vain, weak, sensual Herod, being in appearance nothing more than a miserable, disfigured, suffering man. His eyes lowered, His hands bound. Jesus' exterior was by no means attractive to Herod, and his curiosity and love of the marvellous found just as little gratification. He questioned Jesus with many words, but Jesus was silent, which both irritated and disconcerted the Tetrarch. For all others who approached Him, Jesus had a word of instruction, a kind welcome, miracles even; for Herod and his numerous questions, He has not one word of reply. Jesus is silent!—not even a look to give him—Herod was as nothing to Him. This is truly indifference from the God-man. Jesus, by His absolute silence and striking reserve, reproves and condemns Herod before his own courtiers, and all the people.

The attempt to approach God, and to be intimate with Him, while at the same time we outrage and despise Him by deliberate sin and a sensual, proud life, is a presumption and hypocrisy that God detests. God most gladly hears us when we pray for grace to rise from our sins, and for pardon of our sins. "Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the desires of thy heart." As soon as a soul repents, all is changed—"A contrite and humble heart Thou wilt not despise." "If your sins be red as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow. If you be willing and will hearken to Me, you shall eat the good things of the land" (Isaiah). Herod has obtained many graces; received many instructions from St. John the Baptist, whom he knew to be a great and holy man, and whom he heard willingly. After all these graces, to gratify two fiends in woman's shape, and rather than cast a gloom on the merry-making of his flatterers, he murdered St. John the Baptist, than whom no greater had risen among those born of women. Herod has not repented, but is still wallowing in sin. Therefore Jesus, Who spoke many salutary words to Pilate, has for Herod nothing but terrible silence. "O Lord, do not chastise me in Thy wrath" (Ps. vi.). "Be not thou silent; O Lord, do not Thou depart from me."

The effect of our Lord's silence and reserve in Herod's presence ought to have been to convince him that there was no truth in all the charges brought by the Priests against our Lord of aspiring to the monarchy; but, on the contrary, he was moved to exasperation and anger at what he considered the slight put upon him by Jesus. So, with all his court, he derided and mocked Jesus, and finally sent Him back to Pilate. Thus, Herod, too, gained his end—he flattered Pilate and returned his compliment by sending Jesus back to him—he satisfied the Jews to some extent at least by the disgrace and humiliation he inflicted upon Jesus—and secured for himself the greatest gratification
of all by getting rid of the disagreeable business. Well, indeed, did he
deserve the name of “fox”? In this way Pilate and Herod became
friends.

One humiliation alone seemed wanting to complete the Saviour’s
ignominies. He had not yet been publicly declared a fool, but to
manifest the full extent of His love for us, He submits to be treated as,
and called a fool, and welcomed all the confusion attached to it—
Herod and his Court set Him at nought, taunting and reviling His
supposed simplicity. Jesus patiently suffered His tormentors to mock
Him, and offered no resistance to their will. “He was despised for His
weakness,” says St. Bonaventure, “because He wrought no miracle;
for His folly because He deigned no reply; for His cowardice, because
He made no attempt at self-defence.”

Why, O my dear Lord, why didst Thou suffer the contempt of this
impious prince? Why didst Thou not confound his pride, and
command legions of Angels to avenge Thy injured honour? O all-
merciful Lord and Saviour! it was love for me which restrained Thy
justice and inspired Thy patience. Ah, Lord Jesus, strengthen me,
I implore of Thee, to bear correction and humiliation in silence—and
with love for Thee; make me courageous and generous, thus enabling
me to prove my gratitude for the love which urged Thee to submit
to contempt for my sake. O my Jesus, may I seek to please Thee only,
and generously despise all vain earthly honour and opinion of men.

While standing before Herod and his court in the garb of derision,
Thou wast not less the immortal King of Glory, the supreme Lord of
Heaven and earth, and the only Object of the Father’s complacency.
And so, though the world should slight and despise me, still I shall be
also the object of Thy love as long as I do not forfeit Thy holy grace.
Happy, indeed, is the soul whose silence and submission under correc-
tion, humiliation, and contempt, make it one with Thee, my God,
mocked and derided! O dearest Mother, help to make me worthy to
suffer contempt and humiliation with my Divine Master, in order that
I may imitate Him more closely. O Mother, I have need of thee!

III

THE SIGNIFICATION OF THIS MYSTERY

Contemplate the Eternal Wisdom of God treated as an object of
derision! And the reprobate Herod surrounded by flatterers and
admirers. Herod was the personification of self-satisfied worldliness—
he was munificent, popular, successful; but he was hateful in God’s
sight, and rejected by Him, so that our Lord showed an aversion to
him that He showed to none else. What a lesson for us!

Jesus was ready enough to speak to Pilate, and even Caiphas; but
for Herod He had not a word! There is something terrible in this
silence in the presence of the sensual, hardened reprobate. There is
something in a sensual life that shuts the ears of the soul so that the
whispers of grace seem never to reach them. If I want our Lord to speak to me, the first thing to see is that I do not indulge my body inordinately.

It is only for the humble and mortified—that is, the pure of heart—that our Lord works miracles. Yet I expect Him to work for me—proud, carnal, and selfish as I am—miracles of grace, to enable me easily to overcome long-rooted faults, to attain a spirit of prayer and a close union with Him. How can a soul hope for this, as long as it is full of the worldly spirit of Herod?

Here in this mystery, “deep was calling on deep”; the love of Jesus for me heard and willed that He should be humbled to the deep, that He might snatch me from the abyss. Though He felt an unutterable pang in His human nature, yet, for my sake, He underwent, with a willing mind, this depth of humiliation, in the hope of gaining at last, by so great a demonstration of love, my whole heart—of inflaming me with the same love, and of animating me with the same sentiments. The Divine Master says to each of his own: Be ready, My child, to appear in some manner foolish to the world: for thou shalt be sometimes considered as such, if thou art willing to be a perfect disciple of My Heart.

Let us never forget that by this mystery is signified the mocking of the Kingship of Jesus by earthly royalty, in the person of Herod. Our Lord’s universal monarchy had to be bought at the price of being mocked on all sides. Jesus displayed the full majesty of true royalty in every sense of the word, by the nobility of His truly royal spirit. Our Lord wished to set us an example of how to behave in our intercourse with the great ones of the world. We must never sacrifice human, Christian, and religious dignity and simplicity.

This lesson is very necessary for us, because our vanity and natural worldly inclinations may very easily lead us to curry favour with the world, and desire to appear, to some extent at least, on a par with it. And, yet, what is the world?—Lucifer’s kingdom; for our Lord tells us Lucifer is the prince of this world. May we be adherents of that world which ill-uses our Saviour, and mocks Him? And shall we have part and lot with Jesus if we do?

This meeting of Jesus and the world—for Herod represents the world—shows what the latter is. It smiles upon and flatters us as long as we flatter and smile at it, and in order that we may do so. For the world seeks itself alone in all things. “Know you not,” says St. James, “that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God?” Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God” (Jas. iv. 4).

Ah, Lord Jesus, as much as I can, and with my whole heart, I deliberately choose to follow Thee, and to confess my faith in Thee openly. I desire, above all things, to know and love Thee, most sweet Jesus—Thee, treated with derision, for love of me. Too late, too late, have I known this sublime mystery, which taught and formed the Saints.
Second Appearance before Pilate

Grant me grace, O most compassionate Jesus, that I may be carried forward after Thee by love, that I may follow Thee by love—that I may value humiliation and the Cross in whatever shape Thou dost send it to me. O Jesus, Infinite Sweetness! with Thee all becomes sweet! To be like Thee is the truest happiness upon earth, and the most certain pledge of close union here, and nearness to Thee in Thy Kingdom. O Mother of God, help me to the third degree of humility, that closest following of Christ.

XXIV.—SECOND APPEARANCE BEFORE PILATE—JESUS OR BARABBAS?—FAILURE OF PILATE'S EFFORTS TO SAVE JESUS

(Matt. xxvii. 15-25.)

1st Prelude: History.—Jesus was led back from Herod to Pilate, and the Governor was compelled to take up the matter at once. The sequel consisted of efforts on Pilate's part to save Jesus, and of counter-efforts of the Jews to compass His death.

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—Follow our dear, suffering Lord along the way that leads from the palace of Herod to the Praetorium. Another of the painful goings and comings—more ignominy, and every kind of vile treatment—and all for me—on account of my sins! See the Blessed Mother sharing the anguish of every footstep. I shall keep close to her, and let my heart sympathize with the agonizing Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—Ah, what can satisfy me but the intimate knowledge of Jesus—to know and love Him in this mystery of His Passion, and be urged to greater love and generosity in His service. Ah, yes, dear Lord, give me courage to follow Thee closely—the third degree. Raise me, dear Lord, to that closest following of Thee. All things are possible with Thy help and grace. O Mother, plead for me; teach me the Mystery of the Cross.

Points: I. Pilate's efforts to save our Lord.
II. Jesus or Barabbas?
III. (a) Failure of Pilate's efforts to save Jesus.
(b) Sufferings of our Lord.

Pilate's Efforts to Save Our Lord

Let us lovingly contemplate our dear Saviour as His enemies lead Him once more back to Pilate. "Herod sent Him back to Pilate." If Herod was glad when Pilate sent Jesus to him, not so Pilate when Herod sends Him back again. In the early morning the tumult was but a spark of fire compared to what it has grown to now. The Priests
and Ancients came back foaming with rage and indignation as if they were wronged and injured men who have a right to demand reparation. The Roman had made fools of them by parading them through the streets. He must make amends by compliance. Now they are no longer afraid of a tumult among the people—the multitude are backing them. They return more resolved, more reckless, more prepared to browbeat Pilate—to force him to crucify Jesus.

See our suffering Lord as He is led back to the Prætorium. This time He is led by a much longer road, that the people may see the state of ignominy to which He is reduced. Mark—how extremely rough and uneven the road is, and watch the soldiers, who, encouraged by the Pharisees, can scarcely refrain a moment from tormenting Jesus. How does Jesus receive this vile treatment? He bears all sweetly, humbly, offering not the smallest resistance! He prays constantly to His Father for strength not to sink under these brutal sufferings, but to accomplish the work of His Passion for our redemption! How great His love for us! What a lesson of fidelity to us! How easily we are turned away from fidelity to Him on meeting with the least difficulty, contradiction, or humiliation.

It was about eight o'clock when the procession reached the palace of Pilate. Note how dense the crowd is! See—the Pharisees walking to and fro, endeavouring to incite and infuriate them still more. Pilate has assembled upwards of a thousand soldiers, whom he posts round the Prætorium, the Forum, and his palace. He has not forgotten the insurrection that took place last year at the time of the Pasch. See—our Blessed Mother, Magdalen, and the holy women—they are near and can see all that takes place. John at first was with them—then he goes to be nearer to his Blessed Master. The Pharisees lead Jesus, still clothed with the garment of mockery, through the midst of the insolent mob. O suffering Heart of my Jesus, help me to understand the depth of Thy love!—that love is indeed proved by deeds. The archers, with their usual brutality, drag Jesus up the stairs of the Prætorium. His enemies take their seats at the entrance to the Forum.

See—Pilate reclining on a kind of easy-chair, with a table before him, surrounded by his officers—"He calls together the Chief Priests and Magistrates and the people." Little pleasure, indeed, does it give this weak man to see this great wave rolling in on Him. His perplexity is increased—always the case with the soul that is vacillating and ungenerous with God. The situation is becoming every hour more alarming. Such is the inevitable result of cowardice and half-heartedness in God's service. "No one can serve two masters." But Pilate still confides in his own powers and resources. Till now, only the Chief Priests and Ancients and leading men have been admitted within the gate into the court of the castle, the Lithostrotos. At present he calls the people, and trusting to his powers of persuasion, he harangues them from the tribunal that stands there. He calls in the people in the hope
that they may side with him and strengthen his hands against the Priests and Ancients.

Hear Pilate: "Behold, I find no cause in Him; no, nor Herod neither." Observe: Judas has acquitted our Lord of all crime; Pilate has done the same; Herod has virtually declared Him innocent. Pilate now again ratifies his verdict: "I find no cause in Him. I will chastise Him, therefore, and release Him." Observe, how at once Pilate's last state becomes worse than the first. All of a sudden, in his panic, the sense of justice, honour, mercy, and compassion has become so deadened, that He is not ashamed to utter the words: "I will chastise Him, and release Him."

Pilate's new expedient is received in sullen silence. Again he is labouring to serve two masters, and it cannot be done. He wishes to let Jesus go, because He is innocent, and because he, a Roman Governor, and a servant of the Roman Emperor, dreads to condemn an innocent man. On the other hand, he wishes to satisfy the Sanhedrin, and therefore is willing to chastise Jesus, and chastise Him most cruelly. The result is that he satisfies neither. The Priests and Magistrates see at once that Pilate has taken a great plunge downward. To meet them half-way he has made a rapid and deep descent. They have only to show a bold front, to persevere, and the weak man will fall deeper and deeper into the abyss.

What a lesson to us! Never try to effect a compromise between God and self or the world—it will prove most disastrous. Give everything—everything! God must be Master!—"Strive to enter by the narrow way"—self-surrender. Pilate's frame of mind illustrates what St. Ignatius means by his first degree of humility. He says that the first degree of humility necessary for salvation consists in this: that I am so subject to my Creator that I will not, even to gain the whole world, deliberate (reflect well on deliberation) about committing a mortal sin. We can understand what he means by deliberating, from what we see in Pilate. His state of soul throughout is that of a man deliberating about mortal sin. He wishes to do right if he can conveniently do so. He is not willing to do wrong for a small price; but if he has much to lose by doing right, or can gain much by doing wrong, he is ready to give up God and conscience, and do the wrong.

Oh, let us take to heart the words of the Divine Master, and we shall always come off gloriously triumphant: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." Pilate's state of mind also represents the second class in St. Ignatius' meditation on the three classes: those who are ready to do many things, but not the one thing necessary. But in the service of God there can be no half measures. "If thou wilt be perfect—sell all."

Colloquy.—O good Jesus, have compassion on me. Lord, there is no courage, no strength, no security, but in Thee. Dear Lord, keep Thy almighty hand upon me. No wisdom avails, if thou, my Jesus, cease to govern me; no guard I can keep on myself will profit me, if Thy
loving Providence watch not over me. For if I am left to myself, I sink and perish: but if Thou, sweet Saviour, visit me, I am raised and live. For I waver, but by Thee, my Jesus, I am fortified; I am tepid, but by Thee, O loving Lord, I am inflamed with love.

Ah, Lord, how humbly should I think of myself!—how little I should esteem whatever good I may seem to have! When, O my Jesus, I consider my strong inclination to evil, my cowardice in Thy service, I feel that my only hope is in Thy protecting grace. O Lord Jesus, have mercy on me, and leave me not one moment to my own weakness. Teach me, dear Lord, to be generous—to give and not to count the cost. Take, Lord, everything—I want to live for Thee alone—to be true to Thee always—and in everything. O Mary, be propitious to me—turn Thine eyes of mercy towards me. O Mother, I have need of Thee!

II

JESUS OR BARABBAS!

Observe Pilate’s trouble and unrest. He has called the people into the Lithostrotos and taken them into Council.

Note how unnerved he is by the sight of the crowd, and the bold, angry aspect of the Rulers. He has just uttered these words of wicked weakness: “I find no cause in Him. I will chastise Him, therefore, and release Him.” This word, “I will release,” reminds the people of their Paschal privilege, and they began to desire that he would do to them as he had ever done. It does not seem that as yet they have at all determined what prisoner they shall release. Pilate, who is entirely intent on getting out of his troubles by finding a middle course between justice and injustice, when he hears the wish of the people, falls in with it at once. His intellect, sharpened by his strong wish, sees in this petition of the people a door unexpectedly opened for his escape.

Pilate turns his back on the Priests and Ancients—puts their wish completely aside, and leaves it entirely to the people to decide, saying: Whom will you that I release unto you, Barabbas or Jesus? that is called Christ?—only giving them a choice between two—Jesus, who is innocent and much esteemed and a prisoner simply because the Rulers are jealous of Him, or Barabbas, a notorious criminal and murderer. Then he puts a leading question to them, in order to suggest the answer which he wishes: Will you that I release to you the King of the Jews? For a time there is no response. They look at one another, and break up in various groups, eagerly discussing the question.

Note—the action of the Priests and Pharisees. They are furious and dispatch emissaries to persuade the people to demand the death of Jesus. With what amazing energy, untiring industry, giant efforts of perseverance, these enemies of our Lord work to bring about His crucifixion. Mark—how they leave nothing undone to secure their evil purpose—sending their servants in every direction, and going themselves among the people to gain their vote against Jesus. O good and
gentle Lord Jesus, if we loved Thee as Thy enemies hate Thee, we, too, would move and persuade the multitude, and they would cry: "Not Barabbas, but Jesus!"

Again Pilate came forward on the platform, and once more demanded: "Which of the two am I to deliver up to you?" Ah, listen to the cry which resounded through the courtyard: "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" O terrible choice! One repeated every hour throughout the world. The whole multitude together cried out, saying: "Away with this Man; release unto us Barabbas." And the most loving and compassionate Heart of our dear Lord and Saviour is answering: "O my people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I molested thee? answer me" (Mich. vi.). And the blessed Angels are in sadness, repeating: "Is this the return thou maketh to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people? Is He not thy Father that has possessed thee and made thee and created thee?"

Oh, what scene of the Passion is more often reproduced than this competition between Jesus and Barabbas?—the world and self are continually put in competition with our Blessed Lord. And alas! with the same results, "not this Man, but Barabbas!" Those who forsake Jesus Christ to gain only Barabbas—self or the world—will, when the perishable things of this world pass away, utter the everlasting wail: We fools! we fools! The serpent deceived us! How great an outrage to the loving, merciful Heart of Jesus, when a soul sets up the idol self or the worldly spirit in any shape or form, in opposition to the will or Spirit of Jesus, her Divine Spouse and Master. Then, too, does she say in heart and act—"Not this man, but Barabbas!"

"Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and ye gates, therefore be very desolate, saith the Lord. For My people have done two evils. They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of Living Water, and have digged themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jer. ii.).

Contemplate our dear Mother listening to the words, "Not Jesus!" How great her suffering—how she loves those who are loyal and devoted to Jesus! To her we continually say: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." One part of our meaning is that the Lord, in her, takes the place which self usurps in us. Mary's heart, her tastes, all her inclinations, her whole will—is for Jesus, her Son and her Lord. Jesus is always present to her heart, and her one desire is to give Him pleasure always and everywhere. Never has Mary once in her life, in order to please her self, given the least displeasure to her Son. Never has she in any way, however small or slight, shown a preference of herself or of any creature.

Most earnestly, O our dear Mother, do we cry to thee. Mother of God, pray for us sinners. O Mother, we have need of thee! For (1) it is thy office, as Mother of God and our own dear Mother, too—to bring Him forth in our hearts, that He may reign in place of self; and (2) even if thou wert not bound—as Mother of God and Mother of men—to bring Him forth in us, yet out of charity, as thou art full of grace, and full of love for thy Son, share with us some of thy love for
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Jesus, that the cry of our hearts may ever be: Not Barabbas, not any creature, not self! but Jesus always—always—Jesus. My Lord and my God, my Spouse, my Master, my Redeemer "who loved me and delivered Himself up for me."

Let me frequently and diligently exercise my soul in making acts of loving preference for Jesus, such as the Saints made. The Psalms and New Testament abound in them. "For what have I in Heaven? and besides Thee, Lord Jesus, what do I desire upon earth?" (Ps. lxxii.). "Better is one day, is one hour, in Thy courts above thousands" (Ps. lxxxiii.). Lord Jesus, not my will but Thine be done. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as in Heaven. God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of my Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world. "I am sure that neither death, nor life . . . nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii.).

Look at our dear Lord as He accepts, with so great love, patience and sweetness, the humiliation and outrage of being put in competition with a murderer and then set aside and despised by the whole people—and all for me. Oh, how much He loved me! Men would think it an unbearable calamity to be condemned to death unjustly that another may be set free; but in reality one so treated may be a most privileged Saint, permitted to drink the chalice with his Divine Master. . . . Love is shown by deeds—shall I not value every opportunity of accepting and bearing humiliation and contempt with Jesus condemned and set at naught for love of me?

"What evil has He done?" asked Pilate, for the third time. "I find no cause in Him—I will scourge and then acquit Him." But the cry—"Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" burst from the crowd, and the sounds echoed like an infernal tempest: the High Priests and the Pharisees vociferated and hurried backwards—urged by the demon of hate and jealousy. Pilate at last yielded; his weak pusillanimous character could not withstand such violent demonstrations; he delivered up Barabbas to the people, and condemned Jesus to be scourged.

O my dear Jesus, through the love of Thy Sacred and suffering Heart, keep me always and in all things faithful to Thee. May I never seek or prefer to Thee and Thy Blessed Will myself or anything in this world. Thou alone, my Jesus, art my God and my Eternal King. Give me, dear Lord, the generosity and courage to become a voluntary sharer in Thy humiliations. Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; open the eyes of my soul, O dear Jesus, to see the value of humiliation, and strengthen my weak and wavering will, to embrace the practice of it with constancy and fortitude. Cast on me, my Jesus, my Lord and my God, one efficacious glance of love and compassion. O Mother, I have need of thee! Through the love thou dost bear thy Divine Son, help me to be truly humble, to value humiliation and all that will give me possession of that virtue which is of so great account in the sight of God.
III

(a) FAILURE OF PILATE'S EFFORTS. (b) SUFFERINGS OF OUR LORD

(a) Consider the reasons of the miserable failure of all Pilate's efforts to save our Lord. The Jews were the first cause—above all—the stubbornness with which they kept to their diabolical plan. They rejected Pilate's conciliatory offer to scourge our Lord, although he twice repeated it, and demanded that Barabbas should be set free and our Lord put to death. The second cause was the activity of the Chief Priests and their skill in exciting the passions of the mob. It was they who instigated the people to demand the release of Barabbas and crucifixion of Jesus. Lastly, the exasperation and uproar of the multitude and the threatening attitude assumed by the Chief Priests and the excited rabble, which made the place a perfect Babel. Time after time the shouts rang out: "Away with Him! Crucify Him!" By degrees a regular tumult ensued, and all the people cried out like demons, with ever-rising fury, that Pilate should have our Lord crucified.

What a true and vivid picture of the evil passions of the human heart. There is no safety for us but in generous self-conquest—self-denial. This alone with devotion to the Mother of Jesus will keep us true to our Lord, and safe from the wiles of the Evil One. O Mother of God, Mother of Jesus, I have need of thee ever and always!

As far as Pilate was concerned, the frustration of his efforts to release Jesus was due to his uncertain mode of action. He had no fixed plan, and so he falls back upon one expedient after another, just as they chanced to present themselves. A good lesson here for me! Have everything fixed and act through blessed obedience—leave nothing to chance. Then another cause of Pilate's failure was his inconsistency—he declares the innocence of Jesus and yet orders Him to be scourged. And, again, his weakness! He had nothing but words, declarations of innocence, negotiations; but no deeds, or at least only weak, half-hearted ones, such as the ceremony of washing his hands—a ceremony signifying innocence and immunity from an alleged crime—but it can never have the sense of shaking off the responsibility of an act that one regards as unjust, and yet voluntarily commits—as Pilate did here.

The last cause of failure was the wretched policy which sacrifices the life of an innocent man, though fully aware of his innocence, from considerations of state and fear of an insurrection. If Pilate had at once shown sternness, and threatened the rabble with the sword, as he had often done before and as the Romans were accustomed to do, he would have come off victor. As it is he retreats, step by step, before the systematic and pertinacious attack of the Jews, and already gives a virtual consent to the crucifixion, although he does not yet pronounce the sentence in due form, but orders the scourging first in the hope of satisfying the Jews and finally saving our Lord's life.
Sufferings that these efforts of Pilate caused our Lord. These sufferings consist in slights, humiliations, and wrongs, which are showered on our Lord from all sides. From Pilate He has to suffer this humiliating injustice, that the legal authority—the representative of justice—instead of espousing His cause and protecting Him, gradually deserts Him for reasons of policy, and out of cowardly weakness. But the most outrageous injustice and humiliation is offered to our Lord by Pilate when he places Him before the people side by side with Barabbas, and on a par with him, and leaves them to choose which they will with the words: "Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas or Jesus?"

To realize how deep a degradation this was for our Lord we must consider Who He is—Christ, the Son of the living God: Infinite Sanctity! And who Barabbas is—a robber, a murderer, a criminal! And by whom our Lord is thus insulted and exposed?—by Pilate himself, with the intention of saving His life at the expense of His honour; then, before whom this indignity is put upon Him?—in presence of the people. And, lastly, the result of this degrading attempt to save Him—that Jesus is rejected and Barabbas preferred to Him. Oh, think of it! What a degradation of His innocence, His merits, His Person, His dignity! How humiliated and degraded and despised my dear Lord is as He stands there beside Barabbas before the whole crowd! Jesus, my Divine Lord and Master, loses His cause against a robber and a base murderer.

How great the ingratitude of the people! How much they wound and grieve His Sacred Heart! Not only do they prefer Barabbas to Him, but they demand that He shall be put to death, and in the most painful and shameful way—by crucifixion; and as Pilate declares Him innocent and solemnly repudiates all responsibility of the execution, they cry unanimously: His blood be upon us, and upon our children! What an awful act! What terrible words! What revolting ingratitude! He had done no one any harm—on the contrary, how many of those who joined in this shout He had healed, instructed, and comforted. O the fickleness, blindness, and ingratitude of the human heart!

With what reason and truth our Lord might have cried out: "O My people! what have I done to thee that thou coverest Me thus with opprobrium and demandest My death?" This act of the people was the most crying injustice. Most of them, certainly, did not know the truth of the matter. They simply let the Chief Priests dictate the sentence to them. Their shouts express a terrible hate that could rest satisfied with nothing short of the disgrace—nay, even the blood of our Lord. They show indescribable contempt of our Lord. Pilate, heathen as he is, calls attention to the responsibility they will incur by the shedding of innocent blood—the crime they are committing against a human life. But they cry: "His blood be upon us!" They are quite ready to answer for the blood of the Nazarene; they take all the consequences upon themselves and their children, and are sure they will not find them too heavy to bear. In their eyes our Lord is no more
than the worm that one treads under foot without compunction. . . .
He their Creator and Judge! How terrible is the position of our
Saviour now. All His friends are near but powerless to help Him, the
authorities do not protect Him, and their enemies have everything
their own way. He is hated, despised, and rejected by the whole
nation.

Colloquy.—With sincere and deep love, compassion, and humilia-
tion, behold me, dearest Jesus, at Thy Sacred feet; how great my
share in the ignominies and indignities now heaped on Thee! O
Sacred, suffering Heart of my Jesus! I grieve most heartily for all
my ingratitude, injustice, and baseness. Look on me, sweet Jesus,
with those eyes of tender mercy; pardon the past—wash me yet more
and more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sins! Strengthen
me against my own weakness—rather take me out of life, dear Lord,
than permit me ever again to waver in choosing between Thee and self
or the world. Here at Thy blessed feet, in this mystery, may I learn
what sin is—that just what Pilate proposed to the people takes place in
every sin that is committed—a choice between God and a creature.
Dearest Lord, I learn, too, that the result of policy and half-measures is
to deliver Thee over to be scourged and crucified. Ah, Lord Jesus,
this mystery clearly shows me what popularity with men is worth.
To-day the cry is “Hosanna”; to-morrow, “Crucify Him.” Nothing
is more fickle and uncertain! Help me, sweet Jesus, to understand
the value of humiliation in Thy service. Whatever may befall me in
this way, it can never be compared with what Thou, my Blessed Master,
hast endured for me.

Ah, my Jesus, grant that by my love and fidelity henceforth I may
offer some consolation and reparation to Thy loving, suffering Heart.
May I never shirk a difficulty in Thy service. O Mother, I have need
of thee!

“O thou Mother, fount of love!
Touch my spirit from above,
Make my heart with thine accord.”

XXV.—THE SCOURGING—CROWNING
WITH THORNS—“ECCE HOMO”

1st Prelude: History.—“Then therefore Pilate took Jesus and
scourged Him” (John xix. 1). Then the soldiers of the Governor took
Jesus into the hall, and gathered together unto Him the whole band;
and stripping Him, they put a scarlet cloak about Him, and plaiting a
crown of thorns they put it upon His head, and a reed in His hands.
And bowing before Him, they mocked Him, saying: “Hail, King of
the Jews!” And spitting upon Him, they took the reed and struck
His head (Matt. xxvii.).

Pilate went forth again and saith to them: “Behold, I bring Him
forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in Him.” (Jesus therefore came forth bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment.) And then Pilate saith to them: “Behold the Man!”

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—The courtyard or Prætorium. See the pillar where the criminals were scourged. It stands to the north of Pilate’s palace, near the guard-house. See the executioners carrying whips, rods, and ropes which they toss down at the base of the pillar. After the scourging, our Lord is led into the hall, where He is crowned with thorns, mocked, and spat upon. Then He is led to a platform where all can see Him while Pilate utters those touching words: Behold the Man!

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—A vivid realization of the sufferings of Jesus in this mystery. Anguish with Jesus in anguish. Sympathy with my suffering Lord, Who endures such terrible tortures for me—to repair my sins. Courage to suffer with and for Him. Generosity in His service—to give and not to count the cost.

Points: I. Jesus scourged.
II. Jesus mocked and crowned with thorns.
III. “Ecce Homo.”

I

JESUS BOUND AND SCOURGED

“Pilate, being willing to satisfy the people, delivered to them Barabbas. Then he took Jesus and scourged Him.”

Contemplate our Blessed Lord—see how much He suffers in this mystery—and for me—for my sins.

First, consider the punishment of scourging; then our dear Lord scourged; and, lastly, the sentiments and intentions of Jesus in the scourging.

I. The punishment of scourging.

(a) The punishment of scourging is an exceedingly severe and terrible one. It is one of the chief mysteries of our Lord’s Passion, and therefore He usually mentioned it when predicting His sufferings. This punishment was severe and terrible, first, on account of the degradation and ignominy of it. Thoroughly low, bad men—robbers, murderers, slaves—and brute beasts were scourged. With men the whip has to make up for the deficiencies of conscience, with beasts for the lack of reason. Whoever had once been touched by the lash was for ever branded, degraded, and ruined. St. Paul was thrice beaten, not with scourges but with rods. When he was arrested in Jerusalem, the tribune, Lysias, commanded that he should be beaten with scourges, but St. Paul successfully protested against such a degradation, on the ground of his being an uncondemned man and a Roman citizen.

(b) The Roman scourging, which had for some time previously been known to the Jews, was terrible on account of the pain and torture it inflicted. The whips or scourges, called flagra, were made of thongs of
leather, armed with spikes of bone or of lead. This instrument was most cruel, penetrated to the bone, and carried away pieces of flesh. The flagella, which inflicted still greater agony, appear to have been used in the case of Christ. Scourging was regarded as a definite punishment or a prelude to crucifixion, or as a torture for the purpose of extracting a confession. The number of stripes given might not exceed forty. With the Romans sixty-six were allowed. In consequence of having been scourged many died, others remained broken in health for the rest of their lives. The flagellation might be either private or public. In this case it seems to have been inflicted in the courtyard. The pillar of the scourging, which is now in Rome (Church of Santa Prassede), is about twenty-seven inches in height, and bears traces of having formerly had a ring fastened on its top. Ancient writers speak of slaves being tied to a ring in order to be scourged. Our Lord was treated as a slave. His hands were tied to the ring and He had to bend low so as to present His back to the soldiers. "I have given my body to the strikers" (Isa. 1. 6).

In our dear Lord's case, too, there were circumstances that tended to increase the torment: (1) The crying injustice of the punishment made it most bitter. (2) Pilate's object in having our Lord scourged was to inspire the Jews with pity for Him; that was why he separated it from the crucifixion, and had it inflicted in the Praetorium or courtyard of his palace. (3) The extraordinary tenderness and delicate constitution of our Lord's body.

2. The scourging of Jesus.

We can well imagine with what feelings of fear and dread Jesus, our dear Lord and Saviour, took His place at the blood-stained pillar, and what a torture even the partial stripping was for His sense of modesty. Note how He strengthens His will to bear the punishment due to our sins of the flesh. How lovingly He repairs those sins which so outrage the glory and the holiness of God. See Him—pity and sympathize with Him; love Him—on account of His great love for us in undergoing this awful torture. His wrists are bound with cords, His body is drawn up and made fast with His face to the pillar—He delivers Himself for me.

Now the strokes of the scourges hiss through the air and fall with fearful force on His back and shoulders. O Jesus, Thou art in truth my Saviour, my dear Lord! O ineffable love of Thy Sacred Heart for Thy ungrateful creature! I alone, dear Jesus, am the criminal deserving of this awful punishment. As blow follows blow, the virginal flesh of Jesus assumes a livid hue, it swells up and becomes inflamed; red and purple weals appear, the skin breaks—at first in little cracks, then perfect furrows open out, ever deeper and longer; the flesh parts asunder—the blows fall upon the very bones. The blood wells forth, first trickles down in little streams, and at last flows in torrents, until the whole body is bathed in it—it is sprinkled upon the pavement and forms pools around the pillar. O Jesus Saviour, I love Thee! O God
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of love!—woe to the heart that loves Thee not! This, O Lord, is the baptism of blood for which Thou didst so ardently thirst. O Jesus! Jesus!

Oh, the pain of the Sacred Body of Jesus—from the first, sharp and stinging as fire and salt, it penetrates our dear Lord's Body—rages in the limbs, pierces its way to the very soul, forces tears from His eyes, and moans from His blessed lips. Oh, how His Heart must have cried to Heaven—how pleadingly His eyes must have gazed up to His Father there. But it goes on—blows, wounds, blood, and burning pain, until the poor Victim threatens to perish under the torture—He loved me and delivered Himself for me. Can I ever again doubt of His love for me when I witness in spirit the agonies of His scourging? Each of Thy wounds, O Divine and loving Saviour, is a certain pledge of Thy infinite love and mercy towards me, and each indeed calls loudly for a return of love from me.

A single drop of Thy Precious Blood would have amply sufficed to redeem me, but Thou didst shed it all. Ah, dear Lord, shall not Thy generous sacrifice and Thy love for me urge me to ardent love and zeal and fervour in Thy service? Ah, Jesus, my Jesus, take now and for ever the undivided possession of my heart; take my life, everything, dear Lord, and grant me grace never to revoke this offer. Henceforth, my Jesus, I am Thine, and Thine only—Jesus, I am Thine, save me from myself!

Oh, let me look lovingly at my Blessed Master. At last they loose Him—He sinks prostrate at the base of the pillar. See Him prostrate on the ground. See Him there in a pool of blood, helpless, like a crushed and trodden worm. No one moves a hand to help Him. How alone He is in His misery, weakness, and agony! "I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort Me and I found none." With no thought but of me, to help me, to save me. Ah, my dear Lord, grant that I may never be ungrateful for all Thou hast done for me. For Thee, Lord, will I live—I will die to myself and the world! I will, with Thy holy grace, be true to Thee till death. O Mother, I have need of thee!

"Make me feel as thou hast felt;
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ, my Lord."

Where were all those who had seen Him honoured, loved—and who had followed Him in better days—all upon whom He had bestowed health, comfort, and life? Where are Lazarus, Peter, Magdalen, John? Is there no balm, no oil, no linen for His wounds in the land that flows with oil and balsam? He must painfully gather up His own clothing and wrap it round His lacerated shoulders. No hand to help Him, no eye to compassionate Him. How many saw Him and knew Him well, but were ashamed to own it? How many mocked at Him in His pain? O mystery of humiliation and love!
Kneeling at the feet of Jesus scourged, each of us may say: "This is Jesus Christ, my Saviour, my Friend, my loving Lord and Master, Who did no evil, but is pouring out His blood for me; He is my God, Who has assumed my nature to give to His sufferings in that nature an infinite value whereby to pay the all but infinite debt I had contracted towards Him." It is God Who is thus tortured—God Who is subjected to this indignity—God Who is silent, patient, counting it all joy to suffer for me.

3. Dispositions and intentions of Jesus in suffering this scourging.

Our Lord endured this terrible suffering and humiliation with the holiest dispositions. Throughout His whole life our dear Master draws us by His example to the practice of the interior life or spirit. Jesus was not so much occupied with His exterior pain that He did not sanctify it by the sublimest acts of virtue. He bore flagellation with heavenly patience, constantly raising His Heart to God; He suffered with deepest love for all men, even His torturers, and for Pilate and the Jews. What was the intention of our Lord in enduring this frightful suffering? Scourging is a physical pain—a suffering of the senses; Jesus would endure it to repair sins of the flesh, and to satisfy for them. It was for sins of this kind that the law prescribed the punishment of stripes.

Let us look at our scourged and lacerated Saviour and His bleeding wounds. Here at the pillar, if anywhere, we shall gain some understanding of the evil of sin. "Why hath the Lord cast down to the earth the glorious One of Israel? He was wounded for our iniquities; He was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed" (Isa. liii.). It is by pondering its awful havoc on the person of the Son of God that we come to realize something of the nature of sin. But a hasty glance is of no avail—we must look and see—we must go from wound to wound, from the sole of the foot to the top of the head, and see how there is no soundness in Him, wounds and bruises and swelling sores—"because the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Further, our Lord wished by this suffering to set us an example of how we should treat our body and use it in God's service. "Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish." "All," therefore I, myself. Am I ready to meet my Lord? Must not I do penance, the penance of necessity, the penance of prudence, the penance of love? (1) The penance of necessity: repenting of my past sins and confessing them, shunning all sin and the dangerous occasions of sin. (2) The penance of prudence: not leaving for the fearful expiation of the next life the whole debt of temporal punishment of my sins, but accepting in the spirit of penance the troubles that come to me in the course of God's Providence, and even imposing on myself small privations which, because free, are of great account with God, and go far to satisfy His justice. (3) The penance of love. "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps" (1 Pet. ii.). He has
not dispensed us from suffering because He has suffered so much, and
love of Jesus will not let us dispense ourselves. St. Paul bids us “Fill
up the things that are wanting in the sufferings of Christ,” the little
measure He has left to our love to supply, “Always bearing about in
our bodies the mortification of Jesus.” It is an instinct of love to desire
to suffer with the beloved; hence, great love, great mortification; little
love, little mortification; no love, no mortification.

COLLOQUY.—O Jesus, my Saviour, my God, what must my soul be
worth to have been bought at such a price! For I know the meaning
of this awful scene. It is to expiate my sensuality that Thou, dear
Lord, art so shamefully used. It is to win me, dear Jesus, to sorrow
for my sins that Thou dost here show me the punishment they have
deserved. What ought I to do after this? Can I see my Lord making
such reparation for me and not desire to make some satisfaction myself?
If I cannot look out for occasions, shall I not at least bear the daily
crosses with patience, and unite my little pains and trials with His?
O God, my sweet Jesus, Who for my sake hast borne such agony, such
shame, draw my heart to Thee in this most piteous, most touching
mystery. Give me, dear Lord, O Jesus, Master and Saviour, give me
a true interior sorrow for my sins, especially all pampering of my body,
which has brought Thee to this.

O Mother of God, my Mother, help me to deep gratitude and love,
strong love of Thy Divine Son, Who for me didst suffer so cruelly at the
pillar. Each wound is a pledge of His infinite tenderness for me, and
loudly calls for a return of love. O Mother, help me, I beg of thee,
to generous devotion, zeal, and fervour in His holy service! Ah,
Lord Jesus, through the most pure heart of Thy Mother, receive the
oblation of my whole heart, all that I am, my entire liberty, everything.
Grant me grace never to revoke my offering. Jesus, I am Thine;
save me!

II

JESUS MOCKED AND CROWNED WITH THORNS

“Then the soldiers of the Governor, taking Jesus into the hall,
gathered together unto Him the whole band, and, stripping Him, they
clothed Him with purple. And plaiting a crown of thorns, they put
it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And bowing the knee
before Him, they began to salute Him, and they mocked Him, saying:
‘Hail, King of the Jews.’ And spitting upon Him, they took the reed
and struck His head.”

1. Contemplate this new ignominy and suffering of our dear Lord.
See the barrack-yard of the soldiers in the Prätorium. The whole
band, about five hundred men, gathered together for the sport.
Approach our Lord as He is seated on a stone bench. An old scarlet
cloak has been thrown over His shoulders. Wonder that human hearts
could be so hard as not to be satisfied with the state to which the
scourging has brought Him. They could see that every movement was
torture, but no pity was awakened in their hearts. They are determined to make sport for themselves by dressing Him up as king, and doing Him mock homage.

See Jesus. They have roughly dragged off His vesture, which not even His mother could have removed without causing Him intense torture. They have seated Him on a low stone bench, thrown an old rag round His shoulders by way of royal mantle, and put a reed in His hand for a sceptre. A crown alone is wanting. They bring a branch of brier, covered with hard spikes, and twist it into a kind of diadem, bristling with sharp points within and without. They put it on His head, and beat it down with the reed. Oh, mark the agony of Jesus as the thorns are driven into the eyes, temples, nerves! See the rush of tears caused by the intolerable pain! The blood trickles through His hair, disfigures His face, fills and blinds His eyes.

Now the mockery begins. See them as they draw up in line and pass before Him, bowing the knee in derision and saluting Him: "Hail, King of the Jews!" One takes the reed from His hand and strikes His head, others pull at His beard and buffet Him. Jesus makes no resistance; there is no sign of indignation. He does not turn away His face when they spit upon Him. When they want the reed to strike His head He gives it, and takes it into His trembling hands when they return it to Him. Jesus endures beyond the limit of endurance, because supported by His Divinity, torture that would have killed the strongest man. His physical suffering is awful, but it is not the worst. Oh, think what Jesus feels in that tender, sensitive heart of His!

"Spitting upon Him." This indignity was not only foreseen by the prophet, but was one of the few pains of the Passion foretold by Himself: "The Son of Man shall be betrayed and delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon, and put to death." Six only of His sufferings being mentioned out of so many, and among these the mockery and the spitting! Jesus is a king, and He felt as none but a king could feel dishonour, treachery, and betrayal. "For this is God, our God unto eternity, and for ever and ever" (Ps. xlvii.). "The Blessed and only mighty, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords." How then must He feel the outrage He endures at the hands of His brutal creatures!

See the Angels surround Him in adoration and astonishment! How they marvel at the predilection of God, and try to see what He sees in this human race that is now being redeemed in so wondrous a way, and at such a tremendous cost!

Colloquy.—I love Thee, O my suffering Saviour! and I desire to prove my love by suffering for Thee. Grant me, my Jesus, courage to conquer every difficulty in acquiring genuine humility, and to take generously and lovingly every humiliation that Thou in Thy mercy and love sendest me. May I, dear Lord, value everything that will help me to unite myself to Thee; make me more like Thee. Draw me close to Thy Heart, dear Jesus; help me to the third degree of humility,
for that is the highest privilege, the honour coveted and sought after by all Thy servants. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me! O Mary, Mother of Jesus, imprint deeply in my heart the wounds of Thy crucified Son! O Mother, I have need of thee!

2. "O My people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I molested thee? Answer thou Me" (Mic. vi.).

See our Lord seated on the stone bench—meek, brave, invincible in His patience. On every side the thorns encircle and pierce His head, wounding the temples, breaking the nerves, and this in expiation of my evil thoughts, my pride, rebellion, contempt of authority, uncharitable interpretations. This is to teach us how to bear headache, anxiety, worry.

Contemplate His Divine face, defiled with spittle, besmeared with blood, swollen and bruised with blows—a fearful sight to look upon. From their intolerable pain His half-closed eyes have all but lost the power of sight. Dimly, through tears and blood, they discern the long line of mockers, and the hand lifted to snatch the reed and beat the crown still deeper into the head. This in atonement for my vanity, my curiosity, my love of display and notice of creatures. See His parched, pallid lips, His shoulders seamed with the lash, His trembling limbs, His aching heart—all these are bearing the penalty our sinful flesh has deserved. Ah, how truly He loved me and delivered Himself for me!

O my King, can I resist this piteous sight? Can I see unmoved what my sins have brought upon Thee? Can I refuse Thee my gratitude and my love! Dear Lord, I was not by the pillar of the scourging nor in the barrack-yard. I could not tell Thee of my thankfulness at the time Thou didst suffer for me. But how frightful would be my ingratitude were I to show myself ungrateful now! Who shall pay my debt if I neglect it? My pity for Thee in Thy pains, my sorrow for my cruel sins that caused them, is as acceptable to Thee now, my Jesus, as it would have been at the hour when Thou wert enduring all this for me. But, my Jesus, if my gratitude is to be more than a name I must seek out and destroy the cause of Thy sufferings. I must look at the model Thou hast set before me, and reform myself by what I see there.

"Who, when He was reviled did not revile" (I Pet. ii.).

Do I pray for grace to forgive what I cannot forget? Do I practise self-control when I feel hurt? Do I try to accept bitterness of speech with sweetness? Do I make allowances for mistakes and misunderstandings, and strive to accommodate myself to those of a different character to my own? Am I too exacting? Am I ready to make sacrifices for the sake of peace? Am I as ready to find excuse for others as for myself? Am I royally merciful towards those I naturally dislike, or who dislike me? Do I make others impatient by contradiction? Do I check in myself the spirit of criticism? Ah, dearest Jesus, help me to learn the lessons Thou dost teach me with so great love!

3. Consider Who He is that sits there among those inhuman wretches and upon Whom are such pain and contumely showered! Upon
Crowning with Thorns

Christ, the Living God, the God of gods, the King of kings, Who at this very moment wields His sceptre over myriads of radiant Angel hosts; they lie at His feet waiting for a sign, and He sits there in pain and shame, in the power of a miserable rabble, by whom He is over-whelmed with reproaches. He is the Messias, the long-expected of the nation, and, behold! thus His people treat Him. Lord Jesus, Thou art, and shalt ever be my King. Yes, Lord; in what place soever Thou shalt be, Lord, my King, either in life or death, there will Thy servant be.

Let me look into the heart of my King as I kneel before Him—crowned with thorns—delivered up to be the sport of the vilest rabble. What sustains Him? What makes Him suffer willingly in spite of the repugnances of nature? The same recognition of the Father's hand in all that befalls Him, to which His words in the Garden testified: "The chalice that My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" The faith that sees the Father's hand in every trial. "Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight."

Jesus asks me to follow Him, to imitate Him in His meekness and patience under injury. He may not want me to bear outrage, but He does ask me to pass over little slights, to bear peacefully the annoyances of daily life, the failings or the inconsiderateness of those around me. Can I dispense myself from following Him at least thus far and still call myself His disciple? How can I get the fortitude to follow Him more closely, for it is fortitude that is wanting? Where can I get the royal virtue of meekness, the strength of soul to bear at least the little trials of life as I ought? In the intimate knowledge of Jesus Crucified. O Passion of Christ, strengthen me!

We cannot doubt that every event in the life of Jesus, our Blessed Lord and Master, came about by the express decree, or by the permission of the Father—"Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight." The same is true of all events in our own lives, those included in which the human element is most apparent. If instead of ascribing my troubles to chance or to the ill-will of others, I rise to the thought of God's designs in sending them I shall find myself in a region of calm; I shall have passed beyond the reach of the sting that comes from the hand of man, but is not found in the hand of my Father, who is in Heaven. Pain, indeed, comes from that hand, but for a little while only; the crown of thorns to-day, the crown of glory to-morrow. Meanwhile, pain is sweetened by the thought that my companionship with Jesus, my dear Master, compensates His sorrows. Shall I not then say with all the love of my heart: "In what place soever Thou shalt be, Lord, my King, either in life or in death there will Thy servant be?"

Colloquy.—Thousands of Thy Saints have been thus loyal. O Jesus, Saviour! grant me a heart capable of loving Thee and following Thee closely. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me! O Jesus, my Lord and my God, make that possible to me by grace, which seemeth impossible to me by nature. Lord, Thou knowest
that I want to love Thee with a strong love. O my God, my Love, Thou art all mine, and I am all Thine. Ah, dearest Lord, here burn, here cut, here mortify all that is opposed to Thy Blessed Will. Make me Thine at any cost. Mother, draw me close to thy most pure heart and then give me to Jesus.

III

"ECCE HOMO!"

The last proceedings, by which our Lord’s final condemnation was finally brought about, fall naturally into three scenes, each showing a renewed effort on Pilate’s part to save Him, and a counter-effort of the Jews to frustrate it: (1) "Ecce Homo!" (2) Further examination. (3) Last decisive words.

1. "Ecce Homo!"

See Pilate leading our Lord, scourged, thorn-crowned, and clad in the purple garment, to a balcony, where He could be seen by the whole people. "Jesus came forth," St. John tells us, "bearing the crown of thorns and the purple mantle."

Contemplate our Blessed Lord as He is led from the inner court, the barracks-yard, back into the great court in front of the Praetorium; and thence up the sacred steps, the Scala Sancta, to the hall where Pilate awaits Him. Help us, Blessed Mother, to see what you see, to hear what you hear, and to share in your loving compassion. Watch our dear Lord as He is forced by the pitiless guards to mount the long flight of steps, sanctified ever since by His painful journeys up and down. Mark how His limbs, exhausted by loss of blood and extreme agony, fail Him; how often He stumbles and needs to be dragged upwards by the guards. O suffering Lord Jesus, bid me to come to Thee, strengthen me to suffer with Thee!

Listen to Pilate: "I bring Him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in Him." Then Jesus came forth, and Pilate said: "Behold the Man!"

For a moment all tongues are hushed. The people press forward. An exclamation of horror burst from the multitude, followed by a dead silence, when Jesus with great difficulty raised His wounded head, crowned with thorns, and cast His exhausted glance on the excited throng. Ah, Lord Jesus, cast Thine eyes of mercy upon me, let Thy look of pity and love rest on me, and detach me for ever from all earthly things. May my love for Thee grow daily, even hourly, more intense and true. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me. Behold the Man! Dear Lord, let me look and look until the fire which Thou camest to cast on earth begins to burn in my heart. Behold the Man! Ah, my Jesus, when troubles grow, and I am tempted to lose patience, may I recall these words, Behold the Man! and remember I have not yet resisted unto blood. May Thy look, dear Jesus, fill my heart with a burning zeal for souls and urge me to spend myself in Thy service.
The hatred of the High Priests and their followers was, if possible, increased at the sight of Jesus, and they cried out: "Put Him to death! crucify Him!" . . . Then the multitude joined in the cry: "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" Pilate sounded the trumpet to demand silence, and said: "Take Him you, and crucify Him, for I find no cause in Him." Hear the words of the Priests—words of the sinner against the Saviour: "We have a law, and according to that law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." Self is the sinner's god! Note the fear and hesitation of Pilate as he hears these words—"He made Himself the Son of God." He takes Jesus into another room and questions Him: "Whence art Thou?" Pilate was so struck by His calm majesty, His silence, and His patience in the midst of cruel injustice and pain that he asked Him: "Whence art Thou?" Pilate wanted to know if Jesus was a mere man or if there was any truth in the belief of many that He was more than man—that He was God. But Jesus made no answer.

"Speakest Thou not to Me?" said Pilate. "Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee and power to release Thee?" Jesus replied: "Thou shouldst not have any power against Me unless it were given thee from above, therefore he that hath delivered Me to thee hath the greater sin." When Pilate heard this he feared the more—"for wickedness is fearful, and a troubled conscience forecasteth grievous things" (Wis. xvii.).

COLLOQUY.—O my God, my dear Master and Redeemer, may Thy Kingdom come! May Thy Will be done! May I never hesitate. Yes, dear Lord, not as I will but as Thou wilt. Blessed Mother of God, pray for us sinners that we may learn to say: Lord Jesus, I am Thy servant, be it done unto me according to Thy word. Take, Lord, take and receive my entire liberty—all that I have, all that I am, all are Thine. Give me only Thy love and grace, and I have nothing more to ask.

2. Further examination.

"He that delivered Me to thee hath the greater sin." These words refer to Caiphas. From the forgiving Heart of Jesus a grace passes with these words into the stony heart of Pilate, this worldly man who has been the cause of so much pain and shame to Him. Pilate is once more roused to a sense of justice. Once more is set before the judge life and death, good and evil—that which he shall choose shall be given to him. It is the last struggle between grace and worldly selfishness, or selfish worldliness. "And from henceforth Pilate sought to release Jesus," St. John tells us. Pilate, then, has once more some better thoughts. A good seed is again cast into his soul, that it may be covered up and nurtured there and allowed to grow. A spark of life has come back. Oh, that it may be sheltered from the cold blast that will else extinguish it. Pilate ought to have barred his doors and not allowed his tempters to come near him. The bold daring of the Priests and Ancients unmans his weakness; in their presence he is brought to nought. What a lesson—to shun the occasions of sin or infidelity to our Lord.
Certainly it is, even in this eleventh hour, the wish of the most merciful Heart of Jesus that Pilate may be converted and live. He sought to release Jesus. Alas! he does not set rightly to work. He goes out to parley once more with our Lord’s enemies, for whom he, weak man, is no match. What chance has the spark of life within him of surviving the storm which a fair attempt is sure to rouse in the souls of those tyrants! Once more Pilate goes forward and says: “I find no cause in Him; I will release Him.” But the Jews cried out, saying: “If thou release this Man thou art not Caesar’s friend. For whoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.” The cry, “If thou release this Man thou art not Caesar’s friend,” rises above all the conflicting elements in Pilate’s soul as a thunder peal. It is as if the bolt had struck him. All struggle in his conscience is ended. Christ or Caesar? Pilate chooses to be Caesar’s friend—and Satan’s slave.

How dreadful to put Jesus Christ and the world or self into competition—above all in the case of a seeker after perfection—“And yet I planted thee a chosen vineyard, all true seed; how then art thou turned unto Me into that which is good for nothing, O strange vineyard?” O Blessed Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may not be led into temptation. Grant me, my Jesus, this favour, which I humbly beg of Thee through Thy love for me, that love unto death, that Thou keep me inseparably united to Thee in life and in death—that nothing may be able to separate me from Thee. May Thy Passion, dear Lord, strengthen me to suffer and die for Thee. Detach me from everything—here burn, here cut, here mortify all that is opposed to Thy most holy Will—do with me, O Lord, what Thou wilt, for I know that Thou lovest me.

3. Last decisive words.

Pilate had no moral courage to oppose the resolute and ingenious project, and the passion of the Jews, and so he was vanquished. He has not even, like them, the sorrowful distinction of owing his ruin to a great passion. He feared his conscience, but he feared Rome more, and his own interests were more to him than anything else. So he succumbed to human respect and self-seeking. This last vice made Pilate a coward, a criminal, an unjust judge, and a murderer of the Son of God.

Hear Pilate as he continues to address the Jews: “What shall I do, then, with Jesus that is called Christ? Shall I crucify your King?” The Chief Priests answer: “We have no king but Cæsar!” The people blindly follow the example of the Priests rather than their God. So, too, Pilate bows down before the will of the wicked Priests rather than do his duty to God. The Priests themselves choose to worship Cæsar rather than God.

Here once more we see the terrible truth that a large proportion of men perish through human respect. The Chief Priests are few, but the many slavishly follow them. And this shows us what a responsibility rests on each of us—and the glorious position we can secure for ourselves if we will. For God has so arranged that we cannot fail to influence
others for good or for evil. We can each, if we will, become a leader, to guide and help others, by our courage and fidelity in our Lord’s service, to be faithful to Him unto death. We can each be a mediator, a Jesus, to bring about a reconciliation between our God and our neighbour. And is it not the end for which our Lord has called us? Every soul who labours earnestly after its own personal sanctification is sure to become a good instrument in our Lord’s hands for the salvation of others.

“Away with Him! Crucify Him, crucify Him! We have no king but Caesar!” An awful rejection, a deliberate denial of God—the Creator set at nought by the creature—the love of God despised! ignored! rejected! How painful and humiliating this was for our dear Lord. With how much truth He might have made to these people the reproaches that the Church puts into His mouth on the day on which we celebrate the memory of His Passion: “My people, what have I done to thee, or wherein have I grieved thee? I led thee out of Egypt, and cast Pharao into the Red Sea, and thou hast delivered Me up to the Chief Priests—I went before thee in a pillar of cloud, and thou hast led Me to Pilate’s Praetorium—I fed thee with manna, and thou hast scourged Me—I struck down the kings of the Canaanites, and thou hast struck My head with a reed—I gave thee a kingly sceptre, and thou hast crowned Me with thorns—I exalted thee with great power, and thou wilt raise Me upon the Cross. What more could I have done for thee that I have not done?” No, He could not have done more for His chosen people. There was nothing left for Him to do but to let them have their bitter will, and consummate the terrible fate the nation was about to incur by its own fault. What has Jesus done for me? What have I done for Him? What have I to say to Him now as I kneel at His Sacred feet?

Pilate, seeing that all his efforts were vain, that he could make no impression on the infuriated mob—their yells and imprecations were deafening—fearing an insurrection, called for water, and washing his hands before the people, said: “I am innocent of the blood of this just Man; look you to it!” A frightful and unanimous cry then came from the dense multitude, who are assembled from all parts of Palestine: “His blood be upon us and upon our children.” What can be more thorough than their rejection of our Lord!—“Not this Man, but Barabbas!” “Behold the Man!”—“Crucify Him, crucify Him!” “Behold your King!”—“Away with Him, away with Him; crucify Him!” “Shall I crucify your King?”—“We have no king but Caesar.” “I am innocent of the blood of this just Man”—“His blood be upon us and upon our children!”

Oh, let us take heed, listen, and learn. For what is it that hath been? The same that shall be. Mark well what a terrible supremacy is allowed to the free will of man. “His blood be upon us and upon our children!” That cry seems to be but a word, a passing word; yet, see how it endures. The Jews to the present day have never revoked that word of their
fathers. We understand, as we look upon their fixity of purpose, how sin can be everlasting in the world to come, and how it is that the malice of the fallen Angels lives on through all ages. Ah, let us try as well as we can to form some notion of the grief our Lord experiences in His faithful, loving Heart while He listens to this solemn and final decree against Him. “My people, what have I done to thee? Yet I planted thee a chosen vineyard. Return, O ye revolting children—great as the sea is thy destruction.” To the loving heart of Jesus the loss of His people is great as the sea. How can we be unfaithful and ungrateful to so tender a Father, Lord, and God?

**Colloquy.—**

“O burning Heart, O Jesus mine,  
O make me love with love like Thine.”

May Thy grace, O Lord Jesus, make that possible to me which seems impossible to me by nature—Thou knowest, dearest Lord, that I can bear but little, and that I am quickly cast down by small adversity. Put an end, my Jesus, to all my meanness and cowardice in Thy service. May all opportunity of humiliation and mortification be sweet to me henceforth, and every occasion of suffering give me new courage and stronger love. O Blessed Mother! turn thine eyes of mercy towards us and show us the loving Heart of thy Son Jesus. O Heart of Jesus! most faithful to those whom Thou callest to Thy love. Ah, influence my wretched heart that it may burn with love for Thee, as Thine dost burn with love for me. O Mother, I have need of thee! O make me love Jesus, thy Son. Amen.

**XXVI.—PILATE CONDEMNS JESUS TO DEATH**

1st Prelude: *History.—* “Then therefore Pilate delivered Jesus to them to be crucified. And after they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him and put on His own garments on Him. And there were also two other malefactors led with Him to be put to death. And bearing His own Cross, He went forth to that place which is called Calvary. And there followed Him a great multitude of people, and of women who lamented Him.”

2nd Prelude: *Composition of Place.—* See the Prætorium of Pilate, and, to the west, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile, Calvary. See the streets through which the procession is to pass—dark, narrow, roughly paved with large stones, here and there crossed by arches. See the multitude lining the whole length of the road—sightseers on every roof and in every doorway. Watch the procession coming from the Prætorium—the Centurion on horseback taking the lead, a herald walking beside him; the thieves filled with rage and despair; our Lord tottering under His heavy load, His right hand trying to steady the Cross on His shoulder, His left to gather His long robe from under
Pilate condemns Jesus to Death

His feet. Around the prisoners: executioners, soldiers, Priests, Pharis-ees, a vast crowd insulting them. See the ladders, ropes, and nails. Notice at the corner of the street the Blessed Mother, Magdalen, and John. Hear the babel of tongues—the herald proclaiming the sentence, the yells, jeers, blasphemy of the crowds; hear on every side the words “impostor,” “seducer,” “blasphemer.”

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—Grace to realize the sufferings and sorrows of Jesus carrying His Cross to expiate my sins; anguish with Jesus in anguish; sympathy with my suffering Lord, Who loves me and delivers Himself for me; courage to follow Jesus closely and generously in this life that I may be a consolation to His loving Heart.

Points: I. Pilate condemns Jesus to be crucified.
   II. The carrying of the Cross.
   III. The escort of our Cross-bearing Saviour.

I

PILATE CONDEMNJS JESUS TO BE CRUCIFIED

In vain does Pilate endeavour to stifle remorse by washing his hands before the people, saying: “I am innocent of the blood of this just Man; look you to it.” Vainly indeed does he pronounce these words; he cannot wash the Blood of the Saviour from his soul, he too is guilty of the death of our Lord. Those fearful words, “His blood be upon us and upon our children,” had scarcely ceased to resound when Pilate commenced preparations for passing sentence. The place where the sentence was pronounced was a raised seat in the outer atrium, or court, which St. John calls the Lithostrotos, or court of the tessellated marble pavement. It was to this court that Pilate came out as often as he spoke to the Jews. How privileged are the Dames de Sion, whose chapel stands on a part of this very court where Pilate, when he uttered the words “Behold the Man,” showed our Lord to the Jews! The Roman Governor always passed sentence in the open air, sitting on the judgment-seat, and with great solemnity. So Pilate, wearing the insignia of his office and accompanied by soldiers, went thither and mounted the judgment-seat. Our Lord was placed before him as a criminal. Then Pilate condemned Jesus to the death of the Cross: “I condemn Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, to be crucified.” And he ordered the executioners to bring the cross. At once he prepared to write the sentence and also the inscription for the head of the cross.

See the extreme dissatisfaction and anger of the Priests at the words of the sentence, which, they said, were not true. They clamorously surrounded the tribunal to endeavour to persuade Pilate to alter the inscription and to put, not “King of the Jews,” but that He said, “I am King of the Jews!” Note Pilate’s vexation as he answers impatiently: “What I have written, I have written.”

Contemplate Jesus. No sooner had Pilate pronounced sentence than our Divine Lord is handed over to the soldiers, and His clothes,
which had been taken off in the court of Caiaphas, were brought for Him to put on again. Oh, watch our suffering, patient Jesus. His hands are untied. Then the old purple mantle which was put on in mockery is roughly dragged off. His Sacred Body is but one wound, not even the lightest and softest texture could touch it without causing Him intensest torture—all Its gashes are reopened. See Him as He tries to put on His own under-garment with trembling hands. Note the humble submission of Jesus to His cruel, heartless executioners. As the crown of thorns was too large to allow the seamless robe to pass over His head, they pull it off violently, heedless of the pain thus inflicted. His robe is put on, then His girdle and cloak, over which a rope is fastened round His waist with cords by which to lead Him—all being done with brutal cruelty.

See how they push Him: nothing but ignominy and outrage. Pity our Lord. Let us try to realize what our Lord suffers. Wonder how He could bear so much! How His love could go so far! Only the absolute determination of His Will could have enabled itself to undergo so willingly such awful torture.

How willingly my Jesus suffers for me! O Sacred suffering Body of Jesus, save me. Ah, dear Jesus, what was my share in Thy intolerable anguish? What has been my return of love to Thee for bearing so much for me?

Note the several groups of people who hear our Lord condemned to death. (1) Our Lord’s enemies—the Chief Priests and Pharisees who hated Him bitterly. See how they exult! They have gained all they wanted, and their victory is complete. Their worst adversary and foe is to die on the Cross! What a splendid revenge for all the humiliations and defeats they had suffered at His hands! How great and terrible the result of yielding to our evil passions. (2) The deluded crowd join our Lord’s enemies and rejoice in the condemnation of their kindest Benefactor and truest Friend. Oh, the force of evil counsel and evil example. They renounce the Messias; they reject the Son of God; they demand His death, and become Deicides and incur the punishment of their terrible crime. (3) The Judge—Pilate. Can he be satisfied with his sentence? The Supreme Judge—Eternal Justice itself—submits Himself unknown before the highest representative of this world-empire to be judged by him. Long did Pilate resist injustice; but finally he succumbed to it. And not our Lord—but he, Pilate, and in his person the whole empire which he represented, went away judged and condemned. Our Lord said to Pilate: Caiaphas has “the greater sin”; therefore, the judge sinned too, because he acted against justice and right, in opposition to the obligation of his office. Such an act could not fail to be fatal to Pilate and to the power he represented. (4) The friends and disciples of Jesus were also present—His Blessed Mother, with John and Magdalen, and the other holy women. Probably they were standing aside in the portico or vestibule that was in front of the Lithostrotos, or outer court, and saw and heard everything.
How describe the pain and grief this sentence caused them? All was over now! All hopes of Jesus' deliverance gone! His cause entirely lost! Jesus, their Divine Lord and God and Master, condemned to the most shameful and awful of deaths! With unutterable pain they gazed at Him and heard the words of the sentence of death. Their hearts were ready to break with pain and sorrow.

Lastly, Jesus!—my Saviour. Surely Jesus felt to the full the injustice, cruelty, and ignominy of this sentence; for was He not more conscious than anyone else of His own holiness and Divine dignity? But He stood there, full of humility, His head meekly bent, and accepted it willingly and lovingly. He did not contradict, did not protest, did not appeal. Jesus regarded Himself as a victim for the punishment due to the sins of the whole world, and submitted to the sentence as a well-merited one, without any bitterness against the authors—Pilate and the Jews; on the contrary, with great love to them, to God, and to us all. Jesus saw therein the sentence of His heavenly Father, and kissed with submissive reverence and gratitude the hand that condemned Him.

Colloquy.—Where is my place at this moment? At the feet of Jesus. To adore my Lord!—my God!—on the spot where, for my sake, He receives so unjust and ignominious a sentence. Ah, my dear Jesus, I thank Thee with all the love of my heart for submitting to it. It ought to have been passed on me. Ah, dear Lord, shall I not learn here at Thy feet to bear patiently not only humiliations, corrections, contradictions, but, if need be, to bear unjust judgment and contemptuous treatment in silence and humility, and to imitate Thee more closely. Strengthen me, Lord Jesus, with Thy love and grace, always to choose that which will make me most like Thee. O Jesus! I know too well that my sins were the real cause of that most cruel sentence, and that I was, in truth, the instrument of Thy sufferings and humiliation. It was hell for me or the Cross for Thee! What return shall I make Thee, Divine Jesus, for so great love? May I hate and shun whatever displeases Thee and find only bitterness and disappointment in all that is not Thee. May my happiness be to suffer for Thy love. Grant, O loving Master, that I may love Thee daily with an ever-increasing ardour and devotion. I am not worthy to love Thee; but, through Thy love for Thy Immaculate Mother, I conjure Thee to purify my soul, and render me less unworthy of Thy service.

"O thou Mother, fount of love,
Touch my spirit from above,
Make my heart with thine accord!"

II

THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS

"And bearing His own Cross He went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha."

1. Contemplate Jesus as He is led forth. The soldiers and officials assemble, the two malefactors are led out, and the crosses brought.
Criminals were executed by day and in public, and had to drag their crosses to the place of execution themselves, in order to increase their pain and disgrace. No exception is made in our Lord’s case. Should one then seek exemption from little points of rule? Common life? Should anyone shun the humiliations and mortifications usual in a life meant to be the closest following of Jesus? Jesus was treated as a common criminal!

The upright part of the cross was probably from eight to ten feet long, and to it the transverse part, probably about six feet long, was fastened.

And how did Jesus, our Lord and God, receive the Cross? Hardly without very great natural fear and shrinking. The Cross was the very embodiment of all suffering and shame. But see the love and reverence with which He embraces it—perhaps even kneels to receive it—for He looked beyond the shame and pain, and beheld in the Cross the Adorable Will of His Father, the instrument of our salvation and all our blessings, and the sceptre of the honour and power that was hereafter to be His. We read of St. Andrew that he greeted his cross from afar with words of heartfelt love and longing: “O holy Cross! O blessed Cross! that will take me to my Master!”

Note how Jesus accepts His Cross, and note His blessed words: “I have given you an example that as I have done, so do you also.” Jesus accepts His Cross at the time and in the shape in which it is presented to Him. “Stand without choice or any self-seeking and thou shalt gain. Give up thyself and thou shalt find Me.” Our Lord does not examine His Cross, but embraces it. He does not consider the cruelty of those who lay it upon Him, but the love of the Father Who has chosen it for Him. Does my way of bearing my cross show that I have studied my Master on His way to Calvary?

2. Jesus carries His Cross.

See our dear Lord as He starts on His last and bitterest journey—from the citadel Antonia to the place of execution outside the city. The road is several hundred paces long, and is called the Via Dolorosa. Along this road the sad procession passes. A Roman centurion rides in front; then follow the condemned men, each accompanied by four soldiers: after these come the executioners and their assistants with the instruments of death and the penal title on poles; in the rear and on either side of the procession walk countless throngs of people, high and low, especially Pharisees—both strangers and those of the city. Oh, look with pity, love, attention, and sorrow at that Divine Figure in the midst of the crowd—He is bowed and tottering, scarcely visible under the heavy Cross and the overshadowing crown of thorns. It is Jesus, our dear Lord, our Saviour bearing His Cross.

And how does Jesus carry His Cross? (1) He suffers great shame and ignominy. It is a criminal procession, and He is the principal culprit—condemned everywhere and by everyone as a false prophet and blasphemer. Crowds of people are awaiting Him. See how they
stare at Him. Hear the jeers that reach Him from doors, windows, and roofs. Jesus traverses the same streets along which He formerly passed respected, sought after, and feared. (2) Jesus bears His Cross painfully. The way was long, uneven, and steep, too, in parts. He was worn out with the ill-usage of that day and the previous night. Think of the state of His Sacred Body from the cruel scourging. One can well imagine how dreadful this journey must have been for Him under the weight of the Cross. We are told that Jesus fell from three to seven times. *In all things like as we are, without sin.* Was it not for our encouragement that in spite of His efforts to reach Calvary, Jesus fell again and again?

Is there anything so disheartening on the road to Heaven as the repeated falls that follow upon our best resolutions? We know they should not cast us down as they do—and that they are not without their advantages—since they teach us to know and distrust ourselves, and excite us to humility and contrition. They serve, too, as a stimulus to greater fidelity and fervour in the future. On the other hand, *discouragement* does more harm than the fall itself. Its source and its fruits are bad. It springs from pride, for if we knew ourselves better we should be less surprised to find ourselves weak. Discouragement aggravates the evil done in the past and weakens us for the future. All this we have been told a hundred times. We believe it, we have experienced it, and yet we remain discouraged. What is there that our dear Lord could have done for us that He has not done? Fall as we fall, He could not; but the contrivances of His love bring Him marvelously near to us. In His desire to show Himself like to us in all things excepting sin, Jesus takes appearances where He may not take the reality. He suffers the *effects* of guilt as He could not incur its stain.

**Colloquy.**—O Son of Man, Thou art like us in our sorrows; like us, Holy One, in the sadness that comes of sinfulness; like us, O Mighty God, in our fears. O dear Lord Jesus, how touching is Thy faltering and falling on the uphill road. How reassuring is it for us to creep up to Thee after our own falls, to see Thee lying prostrate, spent, powerless! And, dear Lord, here is our example, whilst still trembling with the shock and pain of Thy fall, with all the weariness of failure upon Thee, with the knowledge that at no great distance Thy strength will give way anew—rising and struggling on—in no wise shaken in Thy resolve to pursue Thy way, and to prove by Thy very falls Thy incomparable love for us.

In many things I am too weak to follow Thee, dear Lord, but in the toilsome task of daily duty my very weakness makes me like Thee. I fall, oh, how many times! My falls bring with them soreness and dejection, the temptation to give up the struggle. But this, my dear Master, with the help of Thy grace I will never do—I will remember Thou art at hand still, *the same Jesus yesterday, to-day, and for ever;* indulgent, easily appeased, ready to forgive.

Ah, dear Lord, my God, my Jesus, Thou dost deplore far more than
Meditation on the Passion

I do anything like estrangement between Thee and me—for Thou art my Father, and only waitest for me to turn to Thee with humble, sorrowful acknowledgment to put all right again. Tenderer far than a mother is the love of Thy Divine Heart—"I will have compassion on thee more than a mother."

This will be my consolation, dear Lord—I will think more of Thy Mercy than of Thy Justice, of having disappointed more than of having displeased Thee. Dear Jesus, by Thy weariness refresh me! Give me the trust in Thee that holds on its way, undismayed by slips and by bruises, fixed in its resolution to reach Thee at last. My Jesus!—Thou art watching, waiting, stretching out Thy arms to me. Draw me into Thy embrace when life is done, and, Jesus, my dear Master, reward me throughout eternity by possession of Thyself—a trust that has never failed. In Thee, O Lord, I have hoped, I shall never be confounded.

3. Signification of the carrying of the Cross. Our Lord's carrying the Cross has a double signification.

(1) It is the fulfilment of ancient types and prophecies. (2) What Our Lord did and suffered here, we shall all have to do and suffer. Christ's way of the Cross is the path which all must take.

Here we have two lessons. First, that we must carry the cross. Our cross is that of penance, in bearing the yoke of God's Commandments; in overcoming our evil inclinations; in following common life closely; in exact observance of Rule; in bearing the daily crosses of soul and body generously and lovingly, with a cheerful countenance. No one can escape from this uniform cross. As Christians, we must carry the cross if we wish to live according to the dictates of reason, to belong to our Lord, to save our soul, attain perfection, to win Heaven. As our Lord Himself says: If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross daily and follow Me. That is the first lesson.

The second lesson is we must carry our cross well. We carry our cross well when we carry it for Jesus, in union with Him, in loving thought of Him. We carry it well when we carry it with the same dispositions and as like our dear Lord inwardly and outwardly as we possibly can. Jesus did not carry His Cross with proud independence, but bore it with noble dignity. Neither did He try to lighten it or to relieve Himself of it. Jesus bore His Cross humbly, lovingly, and courageously to the end, and died upon it. "The whole life of Christ was a Cross and martyrdom; and dost thou seek for thyself rest and joy? If thou carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee, and bring thee to the desired end—namely, to that place where there will be an end of suffering, though here there will be no end. If thou carry it unwillingly, thou makest it a burden to thee, and loadest thyself the more, and, nevertheless, thou must bear it. Set thyself, then, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the Cross of thy Lord, for the love of Him who was crucified for thee. Drink of the chalice of thy Lord lovingly, if Thou desirest to be His friend, and to have part
with Him. And remember, no one is fit to comprehend heavenly things, who hath not resigned himself to suffer adversities with Christ."

COLLOQUIUM.—Ah, Lord Jesus, I humbly implore grace to reduce these salutary lessons to practice. Jesus, my dear Master, give me light to understand the Mystery of the Cross—to love the Cross that will bring me so closely and securely to Thee—strengthen me to accomplish Thy holy Will perfectly under every variety of circumstances in which Thou art pleased to place me; but give me the surpassing treasure of Thy love—with that I shall want for nothing. I shall be able to attain the degree of sanctity Thou dost design for me. O my Jesus, grant me, then, Thy Divine love; strengthen me to suffer for and with Thee, and may my life be one continuous act of love.

III

THE ESCORT OF OUR CROSS-BEARING SAVIOUR

Our Blessed Lord did not carry His Cross alone; He was accompanied by many. Indeed, all who walked with the procession to the place of execution took part in the carrying of the Cross, each in his own way. We may distinguish three different groups among them: (1) Those who load our Lord with the Cross. (2) Those who literally carry the Cross with Him. (3) Those who participate in spirit in our Lord's carrying of the Cross.

First Group.—Those who load our Lord with the Cross.

Those who lay the Cross upon our Lord's shoulders are the authors of His Passion—viz., the Jews, the Priests, the Pharisees, the soldiers, the executioners and their assistants. They are all guilty of His Passion, and increase it by their cruelty and mockery. They themselves carry a cross too—the cross of their evil passions and sins. They are the tools of Satan, and it is his yoke that they drag along. This is an inglorious cross—a fatal cross, which leads not to redemption, but to eternal death. Whoever does not embrace the Cross of Jesus must bear that of Satan.

And in a wider sense we and all men belong to those who load our Lord with the Cross. They are our sins that He is painfully carrying—our sins, that are pressing upon Him with such cruel weight—which of us has not contributed a share to weight the Cross laid on our dear Lord? How just and fitting, then, that we should accompany our Lord, and now at least make reparation to Him for the hardships and cruelties of this journey by the relief our compassion and gratitude can afford Him! As Jesus allowed Himself to be loaded with the Cross through love of me, so shall I accept each cross that is laid on me, through love for Him. When nature is ready to sink beneath the burden of the cross I shall look confidently to Jesus for grace to carry it patiently and meritoriously.

Many, says St. Alphonsus Liguori, love Jesus, as long as the breeze of heavenly consolation refreshes them; but if the clouds of diversity
lower, if for their trial, Christ, our dear Lord, withdraws His sensible presence from them, they are sorely tempted to give up prayer, neglect self-denial, sink into despondency and tepidity, and finally turn for comfort to creatures and perishable things. Such souls love themselves more than Jesus Christ. Those who truly love our Lord are faithful in darkness and trial. Faith tells us that Jesus is as sovereignly amiable and good when He afflicted as when He consoles. Oh, how dear to the Heart of Jesus is the soul who suffers with loving submission! Precious, beyond all graces, is the grace to suffer and to love!

Colloquy.—O most sweet Jesus, draw me close to Thy Heart and help me to love the Cross, for without the Cross I know there can be no close union with Thee. “Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go.” I do want to be wholly Thine; take me, and dispose of me ever and always, according to the good pleasure of Thy Heart. May I at last, by likeness to Thee, and union with Thee, become a true disciple of Thy Heart. “Thou art my God and my Eternal King?”

Second Group.—Those who literally carry the Cross with Jesus.

The two malefactors are the first in this group. They go with Jesus and carry the crosses to the place of execution. But they do not carry them for Jesus, for faith and virtue, but on account of their crimes and misdeeds. Nor do they carry them as Jesus did His, but only under compulsion, raging and gnashing their teeth, and—one of them at all events, the thief on the left side—with evil consequences. For him it may have been the instrument of eternal damnation. But in the heart of the good thief the first emotions of the contrition and penance that he so touchingly completed on the cross, may have just begun to stir during the carrying of the cross.

Another who literally carries the Cross with Jesus is Simon of Cyrene, who actually carried it part of the way to Calvary. How did this happen? Simon was returning from the country, and, as it appears, just entering by the city gate; for we are told that the soldiers found him as they were going out, laid hold on Him, and forced Him to take up our Lord’s Cross. Why? Because the weakness and exhaustion of Jesus was so great that they feared He would succumb on the way under its weight. They laid the Cross on him to carry after Jesus.

It was for Simon’s sake much more than for His own that our Lord shared His Cross with him. The virtue that came from its contact with the Son of God went out to him who followed in His footsteps. Quickly Simon learned his lesson. From bearing the Cross reluctantly he came to bear it patiently, willingly, joyfully, reaching thus the highest perfection of which love is capable on earth. We may assume this in respect of Simon himself. And as regards Alexander and Rufus, his sons, the fact of their being mentioned by name in this place of St. Mark’s gospel may show that they received extraordinary graces through Simon’s good deed.

To carry after Jesus.—What blessed words! I shall do well to hear
them, as they apply to me just as truly as to Simon. There is rarely a
day that I have not the privilege of bearing some cross for and after
Jesus, my dear Master. What a loss for eternity if I neglect my oppor-
tunities. Do I? They laid the Cross on him. True, but did Simon
stop at the instrument? When, after years spent in his Master’s service,
he looked back to the meeting on the road to Calvary, did he so much
as think of the hands that constrained him? Was not the design of
God too plain? Was it not God who planned that meeting, who chose
him for the honour of being the first to carry the Cross after Jesus.

Looking back on their lives, from the bed of death and from their
place in Heaven, the servants of God see that what they could least
spare out of their life would be its crosses. It is the Cross that has
stamped them all with the mark special to the elect. For whom He
foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His
Son (Rom. viii). How wonderful are God’s dealings with us. How
continually He turns our days of trouble into times of the richest blessing.
Little did Simon of Cyrene think that Friday morning as he went forth
to his daily toil, that grace was lying in wait for him on the road to
Calvary—that hidden in the cross of pain and shame was laid up for
him the highest honour and never-ending joy. We rise in the morning
and make our plans for the day. God has made His for us. Turning
a corner, we find the Cross of Christ awaiting us, and with it the grace
that with a little effort on our part will enable us to bear it bravely
after our Master. How is it that whilst we have plenty of congratula-
tions for Simon we have nothing but compassion for ourselves!

COLLOQUY.—Teach me, dear Lord, to bear my crosses with faith,
and hope, and love.

"Nearer, my God to Thee, nearer to Thee;
E’en though it be a cross that raiseth me."

With faith—to believe that every cross comes from Thy hand—
to cry out when I see it in the distance: It is the Lord. With hope—
because, dear Jesus, if I follow Thee to Calvary now, I shall follow Thee
into Thy Kingdom by-and-by. With love—that will make me glad to
bear something for Thee Who hast borne so much for me. Mother,
imprint deeply on my heart the wounds of Thy Crucified Son;

"Make me feel as Thou hast felt;
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ thy Son."

Third Group.—Those who participate in spirit in our Lord’s carrying
of the Cross.

In this group we find, first—the women of Jerusalem, and other
good people who compassionated our Lord’s fate. For a great multi-
tude followed Him, says St. Luke. They commiserated Him, and
gave vent to their pity and grief in loud lamentations. This expression
of their grief was right, and required great courage, since it was made
in the presence and the hearing of our Lord's triumphant foes. What was imperfect about it was that they regarded our Lord's Passion as a pure misfortune, and bewailed it as such. Jesus rewards them for their compassion. He speaks to them, and in His turn offers His pity for them and their children. These women and other compassionate people are a type of the souls who feel pity for the sufferings of our Lord, but do not follow up their pity by deeds. But Jesus, the loving Lord and Master, accepts even this token of love graciously, and returns it in His own way.

According to tradition, our Lord was met on His way to Calvary by a woman named Veronica or Berenice. Veronica desired to give Jesus a proof of her attachment, love, and compassion at this moment of distress and abandonment. Her loving pity is practical, noble, and courageous. See her as she pushes her way through the crowd to Him, and hands Him her veil that He may wipe His Divine Face. This act was a slight service, but a courageous confession of her faith in Jesus, of her loyalty and fidelity to Him. It was all she could do at this moment, and she did it with a generous and loving heart; and oh, how magnificently Jesus rewards her for her faith and love! See how gratefully and tenderly Jesus looks on Veronica as He takes the veil, wipes the blood and perspiration from His Sacred Face, and gives it back to her. How her heart overflowed with love when, having reached her home, she unfolded the veil and beheld the adorable face of Jesus miraculously imprinted on its folds.

"Magnet of souls!—O holy Face!
Draw us to Thee by Thy sweet grace,
That all we do, and think, and say,
May be for Thee alone to-day.
And through Thy boundless power and grace
Work wonders, O most holy Face!"

How sweetly our dear Lord rewards even the very smallest act of charity, and encourages us to give Him heartfelt proofs of our love, even though we can do so little.

Lastly.—We find in this group our Lord's own Mother, who (as tradition says) also awaited Him on this painful journey. In the Via Dolorosa, or Way of the Cross, it is believed that there is a memorial of their sorrowful meeting. The new church of "The Lady of the Spasm," which belongs to the Armenian Catholics, stands over the place marked by tradition as the Fourth Station of the Cross, and in a subterranean chapel belonging to this church the memorial may be seen. In the words of the learned Father Meistermann, O.S.F.: "In the crypt, level with the ancient street, some bits of the pavement of which have been found on the northern side, is a great piece of mosaic, which was discovered in digging the foundations for the new church. A square, framed in a rich border, bears in the centre two little shoes or sandals placed together, with their points turned to the north-west. This mosaic, which is prior to the seventh century, seems to mark the
very spot where tradition states that the Blessed Virgin stood when she exchanged with her Son a look which pierced her maternal heart like a sword.” These words will help us in making our composition of place. “In death they were not divided.”

Jesus, our dear and Blessed Master, on the way to Calvary must teach us at every turn, for His time is short. His most Blessed Mother, too, the first and most faithful of His disciples, is to serve us for an example on that way. Let us watch the meeting and see the kind of consolation they bring to one another in this hour of bitter anguish for both. What fortitude! What self-forgetfulness! What oblation of the strongest, holiest affection earth has ever seen! Mary’s heart beats in perfect unison with the Heart of her Son. Like His, it throws itself into the Divine Will for the redemption of the world with a strength of purpose that sanctifies the instincts of nature. There is no shrinking in their self-immolation at the sight of the anguish of the One dearer to each than life. The Son and the Mother meet, but it is as the Redeemer and the Co-Redemptrix of the world. The sacrifice that their mutual love increases occupies them entirely.

Contemplate the meeting of the Mother and Son. Their eyes meet. Dimly, through the tears and blood that obscure His sight, Jesus discerns His Mother’s face, and His glance carries strength to her soul. He summons her, His well-beloved, to ratify the oblation made at Nazareth in the hour of the Incarnation, when she consented to become the Mother of the Man of Sorrows, the oblation made solemnly in the Temple on the day of His Presentation, and renewed again and again as the time of the Passion drew near: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord.” At every stage of His Redemption she has been, and is, His handmaid, waiting upon Him always, His solitary fellow-worker, on whose sympathy and absolute fidelity He can rely.

And now His hour has come, the hour of which He had so often spoken to her at Nazareth, the hour that was the subject of such earnest prayer put up together, as they knelt side by side; the hour for which He had promised to strengthen her, that, first in privilege as in dignity, she might drink deeper than any other of His chalice. His glance recalls all this to her now, and it is met by a response such as that handmaid alone could give. No cry escapes her. To bring Him the only comfort in her power, the assurance that she accepts with Him every jot and tittle of the Father’s Will; that she does not grudge one pang, that she is ready for more, for the consummation of the sacrifice, for Calvary—this is her one thought. Mary cannot speak her Ecce Ancilla, her heart would break with a word to Him; but her eyes, her quivering lip, her clasped hands speak for her.

It is by studying prayerfully this meeting of Jesus and Mary on the road to Calvary that I shall learn how true friendship comports itself in the hour of trial. What kind of consolation do I bring to others in the path of daily life that is for so many of God’s servants the Way of the Cross? Is it a help and spiritual support to meet me? Do I try
to take the sting out of wounds, or are they the worse for my handling? Do I, by injudicious sympathy, accentuate vexations or misunderstandings? Do I try to put a favourable construction on painful words or acts, and abstain from repeating what would work further mischief? Are others moved by my words and example to bear up bravely and trust in God.

Mary's was the noblest and most sublime participation in our Lord's Cross, because nothing could equal the courage and love of His Mother, and her desire to suffer with her Divine Son. Is not our Blessed Mother here the highest model of all cross-bearing souls?

All have a cross to bear, the cross of sin and passion, the cross of misfortune permitted by God, or the cross of penance or of love. Thus the Way of the Cross is a living type of the Church and the whole human race. Whoever we are, willingly or unwillingly, we must form part of the escort of our Cross-bearing Saviour. All that is left to our choice is, to which division of the company we will belong, and surely the choice is not difficult. "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth." How glad and proud I shall be on the last day to bear the Cross on my forehead, to hear the congratulations of the holy ones who surround the throne of God: "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth." Why should I not feel at least the beginning of that gladness now?

Colloquy.—Thou wert glad, dear Lord, to suffer for me, not that Thou couldst desire suffering for its own sake, for Thou wert truly man, and Thine exquisitely sensitive nature shrank as none other ever shrank from pain; but, my dear Jesus, my Lord and my God, Thou didst long to go through that pain which was to purchase my happiness, and to prove Thy love to me. If Thou, my Jesus, didst look forward with eagerness to Thy Passion, it was all for my sake. "He loved me, and delivered Himself for me." Ah, dear Lord, so must it be with me. I cannot desire suffering for itself, but, sweet Jesus, with the grace which Thou wilt give to me as to Thy Saints I may come to love what will bring me nearer to Thee—which will forward Thy designs for my sanctification and happiness, which will enable me to glorify Thee more, and be proof to Thee of my gratitude and my love.

Give me grace, dear Jesus, to understand the Mystery of the Cross, to value it, and when Thou dost give me the Cross here, to give me a right to bear its glorious sign on the last day, let me not turn away rebellious or disconsolate. Let me not sorrow as those that have no hope, bitterly, because unwillingly. My dear Master, with Thy Almighty Grace, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go. "In what place soever Thou shalt be, Lord, my King, either in life or in death, there will Thy servant be." O my Mother, help me to be true to Jesus at any cost.

"Make me feel as Thou hast felt,  
Make my heart to glow and melt,  
With the love of Christ, my Lord."
XXVII.—THE CRUCIFIXION

1st Prelude: History.—“And when they had come to the place which is called Calvary, they gave Him to drink wine mingled with gall, and when He had tasted He would not drink. And it was the third hour and they crucified Him. . . . And with Him they crucified the robbers, one on the right, and the other on the left, and Jesus in the midst . . . and crucifying Him, they divided His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And Jesus said: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And they put over His head His cause, written: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—Mount Calvary—the ascent was both rough and steep. Soldiers are stationed at different parts of the mount to keep order. See the immense multitude come to witness the Crucifixion. See our dear Lord as He reaches the hill of Calvary—pale, blood-stained, and completely exhausted. Whilst the crosses were pieced together and holes dug to receive them, our Lord has been confined in a grotto at the north side. The site is still shown in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Can we doubt that Jesus spent the time here in prayer, and thus recited the Introit to His Sacrifice on the Cross?

3rd Prelude: Let me ask what I want.—Intense sympathy, compassion, sorrow, and love at the sight of my Divine Lord’s anguish and suffering. Grace to understand better and realize deeply the enormity and malice of sin. Courage to renounce everything for love of Jesus, to give Him my best, to give fearlessly, and with love. Ah, dearest Jesus, take everything—everything! I want Thee; do what Thou wilt with me, my Jesus. Bid me come to Thee; yes, Lord, nearer and nearer to Thee! Help me to love the Cross. May I never again deliberately offend Thee, my Jesus; may I daily grow more devoted to Thee. O Mother of God, my Mother, help me, teach me thy fidelity, and share with me thy love.

Points: I. Preparations for the Crucifixion.
   II. The Crucifixion and prayer of Jesus.
   III. 1. The erection of the Cross. 2. The title over the Cross. 3. The soldiers cast lots for His garments.

I

PREPARATIONS FOR THE CRUCIFIXION

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself.”

See Jerusalem at the Crucifixion; about two millions of people are in and around the city. Look at the crowd winding through the dark, narrow thoroughfares, pouring through the judgment-gate, and congregating in vast masses round the place of execution. Watch the
three condemned as they painfully toil up the little mound outside the walls known as “the place of Calvary.”

The soldiers clear a space on the summit. The crosses are thrown on the ground. The executioners lay hands on our Lord. How tenderly we prepare for death those we love. Jesus is prepared by His executioners. He has been made to carry His Cross. All the dread preparations are made before His eyes and those of His Mother. There is no pity, no attempt to mitigate in the very least the awful sentence of crucifixion.

Contemplate with love and compassion our Blessed Lord, Whom the soldiers, as soon as the preparations were completed, drag to the place of crucifixion. See the agony of Jesus as they take off the crown of thorns. It has been so knocked about, so roughly removed and replaced, that His head is a mass of wounds. Note that Jesus will not drink the wine mixed with myrrh or gall, which it was customary to give the condemned, in order to deaden their pain. See His Sacred Body as these cruel men drag off His garments, thus scourging Him a second time, since all His gashes, to which His clothes adhered, were torn open afresh. His Sacred Body is but one wound; not the lightest texture could touch it without causing Him awful agony. It is in expiation of our vanity and self-indulgence that Jesus would have His vesture during the whole of His Passion a source of torture to Him! The sweat of blood in the Garden, which trickled down to the ground, must have first saturated His garments. Think how hard and stiff they would become when dry, what agony they would occasion Him after the scourging and along the Way of the Cross, as they rubbed against the raw wounds when they were dragged off, and when He fell. What He suffers now as they are again torn off! Jesus our Saviour, our Lord and our God, has come to His death in a manner too horrible for description, yet not piteous enough to arouse compassion in the thousands that have come to see Him die.

How is it that we, His own chosen ones, can be so niggardly, so ungenerous in His service? That we seek so persistently all possible convenience, comfort, rest, variety in our life? How ashamed we shall be when we stand before Him in judgment—if we have not led a life of sacrifice and labour for His interests.

Watch the perfect obedience of Jesus even unto death. The executioners order Him to lie down upon the Cross that they may take the measure for the nails. Jesus submits at once, and does exactly as they tell Him. This done, they thrust Him aside while they bore the holes in the wood. See Him pushed here and there, not knowing where to stand in His misery, as closer and closer, driven forward by the multitude pressing up the slope, crowds the coarse, cruel rabble. It is with difficulty the centurion and his band keep it back, and leave the executioners room to do their work. Ah, pity our dear and blessed Lord, try to realize what He suffers. Wonder how His love could go so far, how reverence due to His Majesty did not compel Him to prevent ignominy such as this!
COLLOQUY.—O my Jesus! I know too well that my sins were the
real cause of Thy terrible Passion—that I was in very truth the instru-
ment of Thy awful sufferings and humiliations. What return shall I
make Thee, Divine Jesus, for so great love? Can I ever repay it
adequately? Alas! dear Lord, I have nothing to offer but my poor
heart, and its desire to love Thee; my life, everything, all that I have
and am. Accept, I conjure Thee, my oblation, take me, dear Jesus,
and make me wholly Thine. Mayest Thou, my Jesus, my Crucified
Lord, be the centre of attraction, to which my heart and mind shall
ever tend. O Jesus, Master, grant that I may love Thee with an ever-
increasing love and fidelity. Purify me, dear Lord, turn into bitterness
for me all carnal consolations. Passion of Christ, strengthen me! O
Mother of God, my Mother, keep me close to thee at the foot of the
Cross.

II

THE CRUCIFIXION AND PRAYER OF JESUS

"He loved me and delivered Himself for me. Who, then, shall
separate me from the love of Christ?"

The soldiers now formed a circle round the place of crucifixion,
and the executioners entered the ring. Contemplate our dear Jesus.
Must not His Heart have quailed, and His whole being have trembled
at this moment, before the terrible execution that was about to take
place? Shall I not adore with fervent love every pulsation of His beating
Heart? Shall I not offer Him my own without reserve? Shall I not
suffer with Him in His anguish, and offer every reparation and con-
solation possible to that loving, agonizing Heart of Jesus?

All is ready! The condemned are called for—Jesus is seized by the
executioners and thrown down on the Cross, like a helpless victim.
Note again His obedience. He stretches Himself upon it voluntarily.
How touchingly beautiful Jesus is as He lies there in His disfigurement!
How venerable in His shame! The Eternal God upon the Cross with
His eyes upraised to Heaven! The agony of His human Soul is beyond
words. The thieves extended on their crosses blaspheme in their
despair. Jesus prays. No martyr, no criminal, ever quelled like this
before torture and death, for Jesus knows all that is to come. Every
pang from now to the death struggle is vividly present to Him. He
does not divert His mind from it. He does not seek to repulse the horror
it produces. He allows it to assail Him with the most vehement
repugnance.

Our Jesus overcomes all with the love that will love us even unto
death. Ah, my dear Lord, I compassionate Thee in this strife between
the inferior part of Thy Blessed Soul that shrinks from torments and
death and the superior which rules that at such exceeding cost we shall
be redeemed. And now, dear Lord, may I learn from this strife of
Thine endured for me that repugnance which is conquered by the
energy of the will, far from lessening, enhances the heroism of love.
In our Lord’s repugnance there was nothing inordinate, as unfortunately there sometimes is in ours. His was reasonable and arose exclusively from the objective difficulty or the awful degree of agony about to be endured. It was, moreover, brought on Him by His own Will.

At the bidding of the executioner, Jesus lies down upon the Cross and stretches out His arms. They bind the upper part of His Body to the stem of the Cross. One executioner holds His right hand, another places the rough, three-sided nail, filed to a sharp point, in the palm, and drives it with powerful blows, through the tendons in the hollow of the hand into the hole already made for it in the Cross. A tremor of exquisite pain passes through our Lord’s limbs, the blood spurs up and around about, and the fingers contract convulsively round the nail, the limbs contract, the knees are drawn up, the left hand will not reach the hole prepared for it. And then, oh, agony inexpressible. They draw a noose around the wrist and stretch the arm till the sinews give way and the joints are dislocated. At last they bring it to its place, and a blow nails it fast, the breast heaves and the muscles crack. Then the feet are violently pulled down, and with a spitting crackling sound the nail is driven through the instep into the hole in the place for the feet. Then the executioners rise and survey their work.

Ah! look long—and with deepest love and sympathy—at our dear Jesus, as He lies there, nailed to the Cross. His whole body is terribly distended; every nerve is twitching and quivering with intensest anguish. His face is deadly pale, and covered with blood; tears, sighs, and gentle moans mingle with the terrible blows of the hammer, while the blood pours from His gaping wounds. Can we not realize the horror and anguish of our Lord’s Blessed Mother, St. John, Magdalen, and the holy women, who were close by and heard the strokes of the hammer and the groans of the innocent Victim? Ah, how different is the live Crucifix from the white figure, unscathed except for the wounds in the hands and feet, that we behold so often and so heedlessly! The form of Jesus crucified on Calvary is a sight almost too fearful to look upon. One alone of the many tortures inflicted on it was sufficient to cause death. The scourging, the thorny crown, the thirst, would certainly have killed the strongest man.

And what does our dear Jesus think? What does He feel? His own words tell us best. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Now is the moment of His prayer. He begins at once His work of Mediator; begins, as men are nailing Him to the Cross, to secure their pardon. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Would not his charity prove Him to be Divine, were all other evidence wanting? Jesus asks forgiveness for them all, for His torturers, the Chief Priests, and the Jews—all who have a hand in His sufferings and death. And He asks it so pleasingly, supporting His petition by the most touching motives. Note how Jesus makes use of the tenderest form of address, the name of Father! He pleads in His quality of Son, and conjures
The Father by His obedience unto death, by all His wounds and sufferings, and by the love that His Father bears Him.

Jesus' second motive is taken from His tormentors themselves; He excuses their crimes by their ignorance. It was certainly a culpable ignorance, at all events as far as the Jews were concerned, as our Lord Himself had testified. Lastly, Jesus pleads with success. All who were converted on the Feast of Pentecost and subsequently, and all who will be converted at the end of the world, are the fruit of this touching and earnest entreaty. The excess of pain and the fearful malice of His foes could extort nothing from His Sacred Heart but this precious prayer. All who have the Spirit of Jesus will endeavour to act as He did.

The Jews had seen Him give sight to the blind, cleanse the lepers, free the possessed, cure every disease and every infirmity, raise the dead. They had heard Him preach a sublime doctrine, silence all cavillers, speak as never man spake. He had read their thoughts, fulfilled their prophecies, proved Himself their long-expected Messias. And they had hated and rejected Him; they had shut their eyes to His miracles, and their ears to His invitations and His warnings. They had stirred up His people against Him, delivered Him to the Gentiles to be put to death, and invoked His Blood in condemnation upon themselves and upon their children. How could He find excuse for them? How could He plead their ignorance? He did so in this way—they did not see the full extent of their malice, they had not an approximate idea of the greatness of their sin. But that they knew they were doing wrong is evident from His praying that they should be forgiven. Their ignorance, therefore, did not excuse them totally, but it did partially: and our Lord asked that the rest of their guilt should be pardoned.

O mercy of the Sacred Heart! O tender and forgiving Lord! Who will fear Thy condemnation! Who will fear Thee as Judge even, provided we do not refuse the pardon for which Thou pleadest earnestly! Ah, my dear Jesus, can I ever mistrust Thee, or doubt Thy most earnest desire to save me? Help me, my God, to understand what sin is—to hate it, because it grieves Thee. Plead for me, dear Lord, with the Father, that I may be forgiven for the past, and so enlighten and strengthen me that I may be kept from sin for the time to come. May I never, dear Jesus, never again grieve Thee, nor be disloyal to Thy loving Heart. They know not what they do. Ah, Lord, how different are my harsh judgments and my vindictiveness, from the charity of Thy Sacred Heart. How hard I find it to make excuses for those who injure or annoy me. O Jesus, make my heart like unto Thine, patient, kind, thinking no evil, bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things! "Father, forgive them." O dear Jesus, offer this tender prayer for all near and dear to me who stand in need of Thy special mercy, for all who at this hour are crucifying again the Son of God. In Thy prayer, my Jesus, is my trust. Draw me close to Thee, my God, by the grace of perfect love and sorrow.
O Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus, and in the name of Jesus, receive me for Him Who gave Himself for me, and for His dear sake grant me pardon, absolution, and full remission of all my sins.

III

1. ERECTION OF THE CROSS.—2. TITLE OF THE CROSS.—

3. THE SOLDIERS CAST LOTS FOR HIS GARMENTS

1. Erection of the Cross.—And now the Cross with its Sacred Burden was pushed to the place where it was to stand, and raised by means of ropes and ladders; with many a reel and stagger it is dropped into the hole prepared and made firm with wedges, driven in with heavy blows. Oh! the intolerable pain our dear Lord endured at every jerk and movement, especially the dreadful shock with which the Cross fell into the hole. His Sacred Body is dragged down by its own weight, tearing the wounds still further, and making the blood flow more copiously than before. The whole weight of the disjointed frame is now borne by the wounded hands and feet. The head falls forward, unable in its agony to hold itself erect. The eyes see dimly, through the darkness that has fallen on the earth, a vast throng that has poured through the judgment-gate, and is gathered around Calvary, every face turned towards Him; some few in pity, almost all in hate.

Jesus sees into every soul there. He knows what He has done for each; what He is doing now for each. He offers His torments and His death, not only for all before Him there, but for every soul that has been created, and that is to be created, to the end of time. Was I a consolation to Him? Shall I not strive henceforth to make some return for so much love?

It was an ever-memorable moment, touching and terrible, when the Cross rose tottering on high, and at last stood there overlooking the world. Hell raised its cry of rage and victory, in the persons of His enemies who surrounded the place of execution. Pushing their way through the people come a crowd of Priests, Scribes, and Ancients. They stand triumphant before the Cross to mock the Saviour in His agony and misery: "Vah! Thou that destroyest the Temple of God and in three days dost rebuild it, save Thy own self. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross. He saved others, Himself He cannot save." The soldiers mock Him: "If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself." One of the thieves, blaspheming, says: "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us." Priests, soldiers, thieves—all taunting Him with His helplessness, all defying Him, all uniting in the cry: "Come down from the Cross!"

So the Cross was erected, and overshadowed the earth for the first time, as an incontestable token of the justice and mercy of God.

Look long and lovingly. There Jesus hangs between Heaven and earth, outside the city, cast forth by His own people as a criminal, suspended between two malefactors as the principal of the three; a
picture of the most terrible misery, abandonment, and pain. The darkness deepens. With it comes fear over the souls of men. The scoffers are silent. "And all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned striking their breasts." Now at last there is room for the Mother by the side of her Son. John leads her to the foot of the Cross. Magdalen, heart-broken, falls down before it. The beloved disciple looks up into that loved Master's face on whose breast he had leaned at supper last night.

Jesus' head has sunk upon His breast beneath the weight of the heavy crown and the blood trickles into His eyes and mouth. His breast is stretched to dislocation. His shoulders are hollow and strained. His form has almost disappeared under the tension of the body. Rivulets of blood flow from the wounds of the feet and hands over the arms and feet and down the stem of the Cross. Such is His awful agonizing condition. Oh, how just that I should love and cling to the Cross of Christ, "Who loved me and delivered Himself for me." What have I done for Him Who died for me? What shall I do? Lord, I will love Thee, I will follow Thee, I will be true to Thee. Ah, dear Jesus, help me by Thy most Sacred Passion. Never let me be separated from Thee. Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee. O Passion of Christ, strengthen me.

2. Title of the Cross—Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.—Pilate selected this title (1) because it was a fair summary of the accusation and specified the main point of the trial; (2) in order to clear himself of the charge of being implicated in high treason; (3) to annoy the Jews, because they had forced him to condemn Jesus against his will and against his better judgment; (4) this inscription was in reality the work of the finger of God. The Jews appear not to have seen the title until it was placed over the Cross, or at any rate about to be placed there. When they did catch sight of it, they were angry at Pilate's having put such an affront upon them, and hurried to him with the request that it be altered, that he would write: "He said, 'I am the King of the Jews.'"

We have here a further proof of the hatred of the Jews towards our Lord as well as a sign of their evil conscience and the incompleteness of their victory. In truth, the success of the wicked is, after all, but partial. Fruitless protest. Pilate is determined to be firm at last and take his revenge on the Jews. Pilate is but an instrument in God's hands to carry out His design, that the royalty of Jesus should be officially expressed in all the principal languages of the world, and that He should be proclaimed to all nations as King. And it is precisely the Roman Governor, the representative of the sovereign power that ruled the world at that day, who was to do this, and thus to prophesy that our Saviour would be the Heir, and the future Ruler of the Roman Empire.

Thus does God turn the mockery and evil inclinations and intentions of men to His own honour. How wonderful are His ways! At the very moment when our Lord dies, He has Himself proclaimed
King! The title of the Cross is the proclamation of His royalty and the condemnation of the Jews. Jesus is their King, although they lead Him away to death. They thus pronounce their own judgment. They read it in the superscription, and that is why they rise up against it. This is, in truth, the beginning of Christ's Kingdom and glory on earth.

How did Mary and the holy friends of Jesus regard the title? What must His Blessed Mother have felt as her glance rested on the sweet names Jesus and Nazareth, and what well-springs of pain these dear memories must have opened in her heart. Jesus in Nazareth and Jesus here? What a contrast?

These words expressed the awful crime of her poor countrypeople and the condemnation of the nation. Mary and the friends of Jesus were the first to acknowledge and greet with intense love the title. Jesus had long been King over their hearts, and they had but one wish, that He might become King over all others.

"Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." Pilate writes this title, but God dictates it. Never was title read by so many, and realized by so few. Some read and understand not, others read and understand, but do not profit by it. There are some, our Lord's own, the predestinate, who read it, value it, love it, for Jesus of Nazareth is in very truth their King. Thou art my God and my Eternal King! O Incarnate Word, O my Saviour, it is just that all should cast themselves at the foot of Thy Cross, and acknowledge Thee as their only King. With all the love of my heart I say: O Jesus, Thou art my God and my Eternal King. Grant, Lord Jesus, that I may be no longer deaf to Thy call to follow Thee closely along the way of the Cross!

3. The Soldiers cast lots for His Garments.—According to custom, the soldiers had a right to the garments of those who had been executed. Our Lord’s clothing consisted of a tunic, or ketoneth, a girdle, a mantle, a headdress, or kusteyb, and sandals. The last-named articles were divided among the four soldiers. Our Lord's tunic or undergarment was a seamless tunic "woven from the top throughout." So they did not tear it, because this would have rendered it useless to all, but cast lots as to who should have it. They did this in rough soldier fashion, close to the Cross, with coarse, cold-blooded indifference. How touchy, sensitive, peeved, easily offended we are at the slightest little neglect, indifference, or want of thought on the part of others. Our Lord knew this and would make reparation for us. To be like us in all things—this was our dear Lord's wish and will. His rule from first to last: that having shown Himself like us in bearing all the sufferings, infirmities, trials to which human nature is subject, He might win us to be like Him in bearing every kind of cross bravely, patiently, lovingly. The chalice which My heavenly Father hath given Me to drink, shall I not drink it? How can we ever lose sight of our dear Lord's practical love for us? How faithful to His motto under every circumstance: All that I can do, I will do for them.

When the soldiers had cast lots for the seamless robe, they sat down
to guard the place of execution, that no one might ill-treat our Lord and the other two crucified with Him, nor yet try to take them down. Jesus' last possessions were disposed of. Now He had nothing more—not even a shroud. He was quite poor and despoiled of everything. He, the great Creator, and Lord of all! Truly, "He loved me and delivered Himself for me." Jesus saw in His seamless garment the emblem of the unity of His Church, and His Heart was ready to break at the thought of the dissensions and heresies that were to tear and mutilate His beloved Church. And how did Mary, His dear Blessed Mother, and John, and Magdalen, and the other holy women look on at the division of our Lord's garments? Surely they, too, grieved sorely at it. How precious would have been these holy relics to them! They had been consecrated by contact with His Body, and sanctified by His Precious Blood; and of how many graces and miraculous cures had they not been the medium!

The division of our Lord's garments teaches us (1) love of poverty. How few garments He had! No more than it was customary to possess and wear, simply what was common and necessary. They were not costly, but neither were they unbecoming. Our Lord teaches us to be content with little, to use that little in the Spirit of Poverty, and, lastly, to do without even this, if need be. Death will deprive us of everything in any case. (2) The division of our Lord's garments teaches us to make good use of the graces of Jesus—and turn to account every opportunity of doing good and gaining merit for Heaven. Every day, every minute, every inspiration is a relic of our Saviour, which can sanctify us and work wonders in us. (3) The casting lots for His inner garment teaches us to love, esteem, and respect very highly the unity of the Church. Jesus would not have His tunic sundered, for therein was prefigured the mystery of the unity and concord of the Church, and this unity was His last wish.

Colloquy.—O Jesus, make me true to Thee till death. Never permit me to be separated from Thee. Teach me to love poverty and all that will make me one with Thee. O dear Lord, turn into bitterness for me all carnal consolations. Let me follow Thee, my Jesus, and never shrink from a share in Thy service. Deal with me according to Thy great mercy. Make me all that Thy loving Heart desires. Thine at any cost. Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me! O Mother, I have need of thee! Imprint deeply in my heart the wounds of thy Crucified Son.

XXVIII.—JESUS ON THE CROSS

1st Prelude: History.—In addition to all His physical pain, our Lord had also to endure the mental suffering of mockery and derision. "And they that passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying: Vah, Thou that destroyest the Temple of God, and in three days
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buldest it up again; save Thyself, coming down from the Cross. In like manner also the Chief Priests, mocking, said with the Scribes one to another: He saved others, Himself He cannot save. Let Christ, the King of Israel, come down from the Cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him” (Mark xv.).

Whilst all around were deriding and mocking our dying Saviour, the thief on His right hand began to reflect and repent. Rebuking his companion, he said: “Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation. And we justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds—but this Man hath done no evil. And he said to Jesus: Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom. And Jesus said to him: Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.”

“Now, there stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother, and His Mother’s sister Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen. When Jesus therefore had seen His Mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He saith to His Mother: Woman, behold thy Son. After that, He saith to the disciple: Behold thy Mother. And from that time the disciple took her to his own.”

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—The summit of Calvary—the foot of the Cross. See the crowd of Priests, Scribes, and Ancients pushing their way through the people to get in sight and within hearing of Jesus. They stand triumphant before the Cross to mock Him in His misery. Note how the darkness deepens. With it comes fear over the souls of men. See the Immaculate Mother, Magdalen, and John close to the Cross. I shall take my place with them close to Jesus.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—Intimate knowledge of the love of the Sacred human Heart of Jesus—deepest sorrow for all my past ingratitude—deep, strong, personal love; love unto death; fidelity with my Mother to Jesus Crucified, confidence and courage to live, labour, suffer, and die with Jesus Crucified.

Points: I. Jesus mocked.
II. “Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom.”
III. “Mother, behold thy Son. Son, behold thy Mother!”

I

JESUS MOCKED

“And they that passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying: Vah, thou that destroyest the Temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save thy own self; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross.”

1. By whom our Lord is mocked.—Contemplate our dear Jesus in the midst of His cruel Agony on the Cross being mocked and derided. There seems to have been scarcely anyone among the bystanders that
did not deride our Lord; in every group or division of the spectators there were mockers to be found. A great many people looked on at the sad scene. Let me, too, look long and lovingly at my Crucified Saviour and draw nearer and nearer to the foot of the Cross. Mount Calvary stood near the open high road to Joppa and Cesarea, so there were many passers-by. On seeing the Cross they remembered the words in which He had promised to manifest His power, and shook their heads in sign of contempt. The sight of Jesus hanging on the Cross, so far from melting the hearts of the Jews, only hardened them the more against Him. Instead of feeling pity they rejoiced over their victim and insulted Him in His misery. When a soul deliberately refuses to listen to the voice of Jesus she becomes quite insensible after a time to His claims on her. She thinks evil good, and good evil, she is given over to a reprobate mind. Even in little things, those who do not obey the impulses of grace, become deaf to its call, or feel a positive aversion for that which once was loved but is now rejected.

How apparently impotent to save Himself the King of Glory seems to be! But that weakness is true strength. It is by these outrages and insults, by this passive endurance of their jeers and jibes that our Lord is doing the wondrous work of our redemption, and earning graces for all those who bear with insult for Him to rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer shame for His dear sake. But Jesus is doing more than this: He is also preparing for His Sacred Humanity a glory corresponding to all this ignominy. Of Him it is true above all others that he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Each taunt, each mocking word, was to earn the praise and adoration of the Angels and Saints to all eternity. Here is an encouragement for us. What matters it if men despise and insult us, if God approves! The just Judge will not forget in the day of account what we have suffered for Him.

2. In what respects is Jesus mocked.—Our Blessed Lord was not only mocked at from all sides, but also in all His relationships, offices, and dignities. He was mocked as a prophet who said that he would destroy the temple and build it up again, mocked in His quality of Son of God, mocked as a miracle-worker who healed others but could not help Himself, mocked for His sanctity and confidence in God, mocked as Messiah and King of Israel. If He freed Himself now from the Cross, they cried, they would believe in Him. And the soldiers held a sponge soaked in vinegar to His lips, but, as it appears, only to add another and a blasphemous insult. Thus there was nothing that they did not do to deride Him.

3. How this Mockery must have hurt Jesus.—Mockery and scorn always wound, and especially such mockery as this. (1) It was indescribably coarse and inhuman under such circumstances. They would not grant Him a moment of peace or a quiet spot in which to die. It is wrong to hurt anyone’s feelings—much more in time of trouble and misfortune—and most of all in the hour of death, and death under such circumstances. (2) This mockery was black ingratia-
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tude. They mock and deride Him for that for which they ought to have been eternally grateful—viz., the revelation of His Divinity and all the tokens of His love and power. All the use they make of these is to torture His Heart with them. Even His trust in God is derided. (3) Mockery is, in this case, nothing less than blasphemy—and thus our Lord’s gentle Heart was oppressed not only by the injury done to Himself, but also by the gravity of the offence against His Father.

This mockery of Jesus in Agony on the Cross shows us exactly the spirit of this hard, unbending, and cruel people. Even the Priests in their fury do not consider it beneath their dignity to make common cause with the rabble in deriding and abusing our Lord. To what length our evil passions may lead us if not restrained and conquered. In the hour of His utmost distress these Priests satisfied their jealousy, hatred, and revenge by shooting arrows of scorn at their poor Victim, since they could no longer reach Him with their hands—but, Jesus is silent—He locked within His Heart the pain their mockery caused Him, like “a deaf man, that heareth not, and that hath no reproofs in his mouth.” My Jesus looking on me says, with love: I have given you an example that as I have done, so do you also.

Colloquy.—O my dear Jesus, my Lord and my God! in what suffering, sorrow, and ignominy do I behold Thee. My Jesus, my much loved Master! I desire to love Thee always and to love Thee alone. Thee alone! Thee alone! my love, my God, my all. Thy life, dear Lord, Thy whole life was a continual example and a school of perfection, but at no part of it dost Thou instruct me better in the sublime virtues of obedience, self-humiliation, detachment, fidelity, than from the pulpit of the Cross. Above all, my Jesus, dost Thou teach me how to love. On the foot of Thy Cross are indeed inscribed these words: “Behold! how He loved me”—beneath I may read: “Behold! how I should love Thee.” Ah, my Jesus, Thou hast loved me unto death; even unto death also do I desire to love Thee. O Mother, imprint deeply on my heart the wounds of thy Crucified Son! O Mother, I have need of thee!

II

“LORD, REMEMBER ME WHEN THOU SHALT COME INTO THY KINGDOM!”

1. The Good Thief repents.—Among those who mocked and derided Jesus were the two thieves crucified with Him. But very soon the unspeakable gentleness and meekness of Jesus touches the heart of one of them. Look at these poor thieves, our Lord’s companions. They suffer sorely—yet something yonder is riveting the attention of one, and stirring his soul to its depths. In his fellow-sufferer on the left—that Man tortured almost out of the likeness of a man—he discerns a majesty that neither pain nor indignity can disturb. The thief watches Jesus looking down with gentleness on the rabble that are feasting their
eyes on His agony. From those parched lips he hears no word of indignation or complaint, but broken by the sobs of the death struggle: 

*Father, forgive them.*

The repentant thief looks, listens, ponders. Grace comes and is not rejected. Faith shows him in this outcast the King of kings. Hope that was dead an hour ago revives. Love draws him strongly to this Friend found so late. For the robber feels that Jesus is not only a King, but also a friend. Again and again he had read the words affixed to the Cross of Jesus, “King of the Jews!” This King is a friend, for though He has not spoken, His eyes have turned in the direction of the repentant thief more than once, and whilst the look of Jesus rested on him all pain was forgotten! O power of the look of Jesus when it rests on a soul! The poor thief thinks within himself, Who can He be that has such power to draw his soul like this? Oh, that he could fling Himself at Jesus’ feet, that he could cling to Him, that he might belong to Him, be with Him in that life on which they are both entering, as he is with Him now, that he might not be altogether forgotten by Him whose presence is soothing his last hour! A passionate desire wakes within his soul to reveal itself, to cast himself on the mercy of Him who hangs there.

But will this Holy One spurn him? Will his King reject him? He flings away the thought. He gives no heed to the reviling of his fellow-robber, no heed to the fury he will cause down there. A cry goes forth: *Lord, remember me, when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom.*

2. *How Jesus receives his Repentance and Prayer.*—See! Jesus hears! The thorn-crowned head that lay drooping on the breast is lifted. It turns to the repentant soul. The eyes dulling with the mist of death painfully raise themselves to his. The dry lips open, and words come thick and slow: “Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.” Mark, a remembrance was all the thief had asked. The answer was pardon for the sins of a life, final perseverance, canonization while living, the promise of Heaven, and happiest of all—reunion with his Master before the sun had set.

Can we trust our Lord to be tender and generous with us when we return to Him? O love of the Sacred Heart! Does not His royal Heart proclaim Him King! “Lord, remember me!” These words went straight to the loving, Sacred Heart of Jesus. The thief had but a short time for prayer. He had much need, much to pray for. In two words he prayed, and his prayer covered all his needs. I, too, have but a short time for prayer. Life will soon be over, the little space wherein I am to obtain from God all that I want for my eternal happiness. And I, as the good thief, may be content with the cry that includes every petition: “Lord, remember me!” Jesus, although He was Himself immersed in a very sea of pain, receives the thief’s repentance with loving attention, readiness, and magnanimity. He gives him infinitely more than he had asked. He gives the poor sinner the Heaven that costs Him so much more than words can tell. He gives it immedi-
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ately—without delay. He grants it in return for a contrite sigh and a courageous confession. O loving, loyal, generous Heart of Jesus!

The pardon granted reveals the loving mercy of the Sacred Heart. In the first place, this pardon reveals to us all the loving kindness and majesty of our Lord. How merciful, how good, and how powerful Jesus is! He notices everything, nothing escapes Him. He hears the softest sigh. Here on the place of execution—Himself judged and condemned by human justice—He judges souls, forgives and retains sins, bestows Heaven, and condemns to hell. How marvellously our Lord raises up confessors of His innocence and Divinity, even in the midst of the deepest shades of a criminal’s death.

3. *This Pardon shows us the Power of Grace, and also the Independence and Complete Freedom of the Human Will.*—Wonderful graces of conversion knocked at the hearts of both the thieves, desiring admission. One of them listens and goes from the cross to Paradise. The other remains obdurately impenitent, and goes to hell. What a terrible thought!—to be damned—at the side of the dying Saviour and His Blessed Mother! How awful the consequence of infidelity to grace, or neglect of means and opportunities of strengthening our will in good. This wretched man can hear the sighs of Jesus pleading with His Father. He sees the Precious Blood poured out around his cross as though it would besiege the heart of the sinner, and ward off Christ’s justice from its victim, and yet the miserable sinner remains unmoved in his wickedness! Awful power of free will. On its use depends eternal happiness or misery. Ah, well for the soul that learns to renounce self-will, to seek and find but God’s Will—to have no choice—to stand indifferent to everything but the Master’s Will. Rabboni! What will anything profit me but God’s Will? O blessed obedience that always secures the Holy Will of God being done with peace and liberty of soul.

How admirable are the counsels of the Lord! When the good thief offered his earnest prayer, He to whom it was addressed had sunk to the depths of humiliation. One of His disciples had betrayed Him, another had denied Him—all had fled, and now only one stands near the Cross. The blasphemies of the Jews had mingled with the derisive mockery of the Gentiles, and while the universal voice was raised in His condemnation, scarcely one faithful heart adhered to Him. The moment which seemed to blight the Redeemer’s reputation for ever was precisely that in which the good thief, interiorly enlightened by grace, recognized Him as his King and his God.

The disciples of Jesus had frequently listened to their Divine Master’s admirable lessons; they were familiar with the details of His life, and the prodigies of His power; nevertheless their faith was not proof against His sufferings and ignamies. The good thief, on the contrary, had probably never heard a word from the lips of Christ until they breathed the Divine prayer for His murderers—he knew nothing either of the Saviour’s doctrine or miracles, and yet, surpassing the Apostles themselves in constancy and courage, he made a public declaration of his
faith, under circumstances which of themselves were likely to shake it to its centre. How clearly this proves that the weakest of men is strong with grace, and the strongest weak without it! And grace comes through prayer! Oh, the power of prayer!

COLLOQUY.—O my Jesus! in union with the penitent thief, I conjure Thee to remember me in my present necessities—in the actual state of my soul as it is in Thy sight. Remember its wounds and its weakness, the result of sin in the past. Remember me, dear Lord, in trial, temptation, and weariness. Remember, O Lord, the love with which from eternity Thou hast cared for me. O grant, my Jesus, that I may never disappoint Thee, that I may not waste all the love, patience, and grace Thou hast lavished on me. Lord, permit not that I lessen by any short-coming on my part the glory Thou hast put in my power to render Thee. O Jesus, Master! I love Thee. Help me to love Thee always more and more. Jesus, remember my desires—those aspirations after better things which are the fruit of Thy grace, which subsist in spite of all my inconsistencies and failings.

Remember, me dear Jesus, when “the figure of this world passeth away,” when I shall see Thee coming in glory to judge the living and the dead. Remember me in life, remember me in death, in time and in eternity. O Jesus, my Lord and my God, remember me. O merciful Jesus, have mercy on me! Grant me grace to embrace the Cross generously, and to carry it bravely with love, humility, and constancy.

O Mary, be propitious to me! Mother, I have need of thee! Turn thine eyes of mercy towards me, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

“Make me feel as thou hast felt,
Make my heart to glow and melt
With the love of Christ, my Lord.”

III

“WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON. SON, BEHOLD THY MOTHER”

1. Mary is Jesus’ last gift, kept for the end. He had declared His Father to be ours—“I ascend to My Father and to your Father.” He had given Himself—“This is My Body; this is My Blood.” He had promised us His Holy Spirit—“If I go I will send Him to you.” Jesus had parted for our sakes with all He had in this world—His followers, His friends, His fame, His honour. What was now left to Him? She alone—she to whom He came at first—His Immaculate Mother—now He will give her to us. We must not be able to say there is anything, however dear to Him—however especially His own, that He has not shared with us. Jesus will prove His right to the title of elder Brother by making His Mother our Mother. As He has said—“My Father, and your Father,” He will say—My Mother and yours.

Heartbroken, Mary is standing at the foot of His Cross, with the disciple whom Jesus loved. Who can fathom her sorrow? Never was
there a mother whose heart was capable of a greater, deeper, or more comprehensive love—and therefore also of greater pain—than the heart of the Mother of Jesus. The whole awful scene was enacted before her eyes; she saw it all—the nails, the wounds; she heard it all—the strokes of the hammer, the imprecations against her Son, and His own words and sighs. She stood close to the Cross, and looked into His blessed, dying face. Who can form any idea of her pain! And Mary suffered all this voluntarily. No one, nothing but her own intense love could impose upon her the sacrifice of being present in person at the death of Jesus. She made it courageously and undauntedly—in spite of the threats and invectives of His foes. She held up until the day with all its horrors was over, and accompanied it all with the most magnificent acts of adoration, love, compassion, and all other virtues.

And why did the Immaculate Mother of Jesus act thus? Precisely because she was the Mother of Jesus—and wished to participate in the sufferings and shame of her Divine Son. Mary recognized to the full the great significance of His death. It was the great sacrifice of the Redemption, and she must co-operate in it, as Eve had once taken active part in the Fall. What drew our Lady to the Cross and held her there? Her deep, loyal faith, which revealed to her all the glory of the Cross. And then her love—love stronger than death. Lastly, the unfathomable humility that made her ashamed to be treated better than her Jesus—her Son, and her God.

2. How Mary and John are rewarded. Such faithful, motherly, and heroic love as Mary showed was certain to be rewarded by our Lord. Jesus saw everything—her actions, her thoughts, and her sufferings. He comforted and cared for her life. Mary was not to die with Jesus but to survive Him many years, and therefore it was fitting that He should make provision for her. So, glancing at John, He said to His Mother: “Woman (i.e., second Eve), behold thy Son.” Thy Son Jesus is dying, and can no longer care for thee. I will give thee John to take My place, he shall tend thee—I give him to thee.

And to John He said: “Behold thy Mother.” Take My place with her now, honour and love her, and take care of her as I have hitherto done. Poor Mother! These words smote Mary’s heart with a thrill of unutterable pain—they were His actual leave-taking, a formal adieu to her. Everything seemed to vanish from her heart and before her eyes—her whole life, the soul and centre of which Jesus had been, seemed nothing—His place is now to be taken by John—the beloved disciple, it is true, but still only the disciple instead of the Master—the son of Zebedee for the Son of God. But it was Jesus’ Will, and Mary consented to the loss of her Son and our Saviour with the same humility with which she had once consented to His conception—“Ecce ancilla Domini—Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.”

John, too, obeyed our Lord’s Will with deep, great humility and confusion, readiness and love—receiving Mary as his own Mother with dispositions of reverence, love, and tender solicitude—striving to care for
and cherish her as Jesus had done throughout His whole life. John had merited this great privilege by his virginity, his courage and fidelity at the death of Jesus—and his child-like love for our Blessed Lady.

3. What conclusions may be drawn from this mystery:

(1) This mystery teaches us how our Lord respects and fulfills the Will of the Father in regard to the reverence and love due to those in authority—Parents and Superiors. (2) The mystery shows us how we must love and honour Mary as our Mother. St. John represents the whole human race, so that Jesus in giving him Mary for his Mother, gave her to us all, and likewise inspired her with motherly care for us, and prepared for us the grace of childlike dispositions towards her. When we love Mary and cling to her as our Mother, we fulfill the dying request of Jesus. Thus, on the Cross, just as He was about to breathe His last, He made His will, as it were, and left His nearest and dearest possession on earth as a legacy to the Apostles, the Church, and all the faithful, with the wish that we should enter into these filial dispositions towards His holy Mother. (3) It is very evident from this mystery what an advantage it is to stand by the Cross and persevere to the end. How magnificently St. John was rewarded for his love and loyalty to our suffering Saviour! From being a disciple and an Apostle he became a brother of Jesus and a son of the Mother of God.

And from that hour the disciple took her to his own. St. John had nothing, he could possess no property, for he was one of those who had left all things or had made a vow of poverty. But as his mother, Salome, was one of the women who followed Christ from Galilee and ministered to Him and His disciples out of their own substance or property, St. John had only to ask Salome to provide for the temporal necessities of the Blessed Virgin as she had up to this helped to provide for those of his Divine Master, while at the same time he himself showed the Blessed Virgin all the reverence and love due to such a mother. It is the mother that makes the home. It is her influence that pervades it and determines its spirit. The soul that lives with Mary her Mother, will find in her a comforter, a counsellor, a guide, a strong wall of defence against all enemies. They who work by her shall not sin. And again: Those that serve her will be servants of the Holy One. God loveth those that love her. Jesus gives us His Mother, but the gift must be accepted. We must receive with love, reverence, and gratitude the treasure bequeathed to us. We must, like St. John, take her to our own.

Colloquy.—O Mother of Jesus, be to me what thou wert to the beloved disciple. Let me dwell with thee, Mother—cling to thee—love thee, with an ever-increasing love. Like John I receive thee as a precious gift to me. Like him I promise thee, O my dear Mother, the honour, love, and trust of a child. O Mother, I have indeed need of thee! “Who shall dare to measure strength with those whom Mary’s protection encompasses as an impenetrable armour?” (Bellarmine). All shall assuredly triumph in their conflicts with hell, if they have recourse to Mary their Mother, saying with the Church: “We fly to
thy patronage, O holy Mother of God.” How many victories this short prayer has won over the spirit of evil!

O Mary, my tender Mother! I will ever love thee, and cling to thee, and call on thy sweet name. Love and protect me, my Mother, for the sake of Jesus Who gave thee to me, and me to thee. Powerful Virgin! obtain for me the pardon of my sins, and eternal life! O Jesus, my all-merciful Benefactor! how shall I ever thank Thee enough for giving me Thy mother as mine! Jesus and Mary! may your dear and blessed names be engraven on my heart, and may my last words be: “Jesus and Mary! I love you and give you my heart and my life.”

XXIX.—DESO LATION OF JESUS ON THE CROSS—THIRST OF JESUS—DEATH OF JESUS

1st Prelude: History.—“And it was almost the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened: and the veil of the Temple was rent in the midst” (Luke xxiii. 44). Towards midday, and probably very shortly after the Crucifixion, the sky began to grow dark and lowering, and by degrees a complete eclipse of the sun set in, which lasted until about three o’clock in the afternoon, when our Lord’s death took place. The eclipse of the sun was evidently given as a testimony to the innocence and Divinity of Jesus. This eclipse could not have been an ordinary natural one, for the moon was at the full, and the eclipse lasted nearly three hours. As the appearance of a miraculous star had proclaimed the birth of Jesus, so now an eclipse of the sun proclaimed His death. Jesus was the spiritual Light of the world, and thus it was right that the sun, the source of all its material light, should mourn at His departure. The Jews had repeatedly desired a sign from Heaven. Now they had a sign, and a very great one. And it was given to show them what a terrible crime they had committed, and to lead them to repentance. Darkness and obscurity betoken in the Scripture approaching judgment and the anger of God.

In the midst of the silence and obscurity that surrounded Mount Calvary, and towards the end of the three hours of Agony, when darkness and terror had reached their climax, our Lord suddenly made the air ring with the loud cry: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Matt. xxvii. 46). Then Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said: “I thirst” (John xix. 28). And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the Temple was rent in the midst, and Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said: “All is consummated. Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.” And saying this He gave up the Ghost. And the Centurion, seeing what was done, glorified God, saying: “Indeed this was a just Man.”
Desolation of Jesus on the Cross

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—Foot of the Cross, with Mary our Mother, the Mother of Jesus Crucified. Look at the living Crucifix—“He loved me, and died for me!”

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To know most intimately Jesus Crucified: to understand His great love for me—to know and love the Cross of Christ; courage to renounce all—all for Him Who so loved me—to give Him my best—to give fearlessly—and with strong, deep love. O Mother, I have need of thee!

“O thou Mother, fount of love,
Touch my spirit from above,
Make my heart with thine accord!”

Points: I. “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”
II. “I thirst.”
III. “All is consummated. Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.”

I

DESOLATION OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

What the cry of our Lord signifies—why He utters this cry—how His cry of agony was received.

Hear the cry of anguish that comes from the lips of Jesus—My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? These words express the depth and intensity of our Lord’s suffering on the Cross—they lay bare His complete desolation—they show us the suffering Humanity of Jesus forsaken by God. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity never forsook His Sacred Humanity. What He once assumed, He never withdrew from, nor could the First Person of the Blessed Trinity forake the Second either in His Divine or in His human nature, nor during His Passion was the beatific vision which Christ’s soul enjoyed from the first moment of its creation diminished, or in any other way affected, much less interrupted. It remained just as it had been from the beginning, it was then what it is now. But during His mortal life or as long as He was a “viator,” that ineffable light of glory, inherent in His human intelligence, and that incomprehensible bliss of His human Will consequent to it, and that surpassing happiness of His whole soul, all was confined to the higher part. Otherwise He would necessarily have been impassible, or incapable of suffering. Of itself the glory would naturally have extended to His Body, but He Himself kept the glory within limits, in order that He might redeem us. He and He only was simultaneously “viator” and “comprehensor”; while the higher part was in Heaven, the lower part was on earth. Speaking to Nicodemus, He described Himself as “He that descended from Heaven, the Son of Man who is in Heaven.” At His Transfiguration He permitted a transient gleam of that glory miraculously to appear in His mortal body, but not a ray from Thabor penetrated the cloud so dense and dark that afterwards
hung over Jerusalem, from Gethsemani to Calvary. During His Passion, or from the time His Agony began—when He said "My soul is sorrowful even unto death," till He gave up the ghost, in the intelligence and will so far as these faculties were occupied with things of time and acted in this lower order and in His soul so far as it was the vital principle of His Body, there was an unalleviated suffering of incomprehensible intensity. Below there could not be greater sorrow, above there could not be greater happiness—the Sacred Humanity was engulfed in an abyss of unspeakable suffering of every description. Our Lord experienced the utmost degree of abandonment, exterior as well as interior. What encouragement and help does not our dear Lord give us here! By His abandonment and desolation in His Agony on the Cross He shows us that though He may appear to withdraw and permit our soul to be plunged in darkness, desolation, aridity, and every form of interior trial—yet He is near—and very near—watching our fidelity and loyalty to Him in seeming abandonment and absence. O love of the Sacred Heart. Knowing this trial to be necessary for the sanctification of His servants—Jesus would experience it Himself in order to be our Model—and that uniting our sufferings to His, they would be of greatest value for all eternity—"All that I can do for them I will do." To be like us in all things—this was His motto from first to last.

Ah! Look with love and deepest reverence and compassion on Jesus, our Saviour. Contemplate Him as He hangs in mid-air, rejected by earth and not received by Heaven. The last tie that bound Him to earth is severed—His garments are divided—the very Mother who bore Him is given away—"Almost all have forsaken Him, nearly all His disciples are absent, many of His adherents have fallen off or are dispersed, the nation as a whole has rejected Him." As far as eye can reach He is surrounded by a crowd of foes and tormentors, men who hate Him and gloat over His misery, abuse and revile Him. All that He hears are bitter insults inspired by the spirit of hate and revenge. The little circle of faithful souls can do nothing but increase His pain by their sorrow, helplessness, and inconsolable grief—Oh, how their pain went to His tender, loving, human Heart! Jesus receives nothing from earth but suffering.

How slowly the three hours have dragged on. Three hours Jesus has hung in torture, His limbs trembling, His wounds smarting in the open air. From His Body, all Divine protection is withdrawn. He hangs stretched out upon the hard, rough wood, on the terrible bed of the Cross. His shoulders and back are raw and bleeding. He is one wound from head to foot. His hands and feet, pierced by the cruel nails, burn like fire—the thorns in His head and temples torture Him like pointed flames. The unnatural position, the cruel pain and distension of the limbs gradually cause numbness, and check all regular vital functions—the lungs, overfilled with blood, dilate painfully and uneasily in the oppressed breast—the heart beats slowly and heavily—and a terrible oppression weighs Him down with mortal fear. The
blood cannot make its way from the heart on account of the tension of
the arteries, and produces a dull, paralyzing, yet throbbing pain in the
temples and neck. The brain is on fire with the intolerable fever—and
the countless wounds, exposed to the air, cause excruciating pain. Oh,
look at our dear Jesus, our Saviour—there is no refuge or relief for Him
on earth. Nothing is left Him but Heaven and His Father. Hear
Him—My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? His Father,
the refuge and comfort of all the forsaken, in Whom is mercy, fidelity,
and fatherhood of Heaven and earth, has forsaken Him. This is the
most terrible suffering of all. How overwhelming must have been the
anguish which in a manner forced this pathetic lamentation from one
so resigned, so patient, so unrepining.

Jesus' dereliction by His Father was the most intense of all the
sufferings to which He submitted for our redemption—no martyrdom
being comparable to that of the excessive desolation into which His
sorrowful soul was plunged. O love of the Sacred Heart! He would
be our Model in the darkness of desolation—when in His infinite wisdom
and love He sees it necessary or useful to impart to us a share in His
agony of soul—when no visible ray of light dawns from Heaven, no
sensible hope of comfort from earth—when we feel extreme repugnance
to the Divine service—and we shrink with disgust from the very practices
once replete with consolation. In our hours of darkness and of trial,
when encompassed with tribulation—with none to comfort or help us—
let us cling to the Cross—to the feet of Jesus Crucified—unite our
suffering to His and force ourselves to say with resignation and love like
His—My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

My Jesus, my Lord and my God, I most humbly and patiently
submit to Thy Holy Will. I know, dear Lord, that I cannot make a
more acceptable sacrifice to Thee, than to abandon myself into Thy
hands, that Thy Holy Will may be accomplished in me, leaving to Thy
infinite wisdom and love to regulate the measure both of my suffering
and of my consolations. Dearest Lord, may I never forget the aban-
donment and desolation Thou didst endure for my sake. Thy Agony
on the Cross and in the Garden of Olives will support me in my trials,
and encourage me to say, in the hour of affliction: "Not my will, O
Jesus Saviour, but Thine be done!" I am unworthy of Thy heavenly
visits, and deserving only of desolation. I have offended Thee in
so many ways and so many times. Do with me whatever Thou wilt for
I know that Thou lovest me! O my Mother, imprint deeply on my
heart the wounds of thy Crucified Son—O Mother, I have need of thee!

"Make me feel as thou hast felt,
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ, my Lord."

Why Jesus utters this cry: "My God, My God, why hast Thou
forsaken Me?" Not through reluctance to suffer or repugnance to
bear the greatness of His pain—but to reveal to us that He took these
sufferings of interior desolation upon Himself also, and that He suffered
without any interior consolation. He wished, too, to show that all the prophecies with regard to the manner of His death were now fulfilled; and therefore He chose for this cry the first words of the very Psalm in which the principal prophecy is contained. Lastly, Jesus, our loving Lord, intended this cry to be a comfort to us when we, too, have to suffer without human or Divine consolation. By His complete abandonment He has left us a precious treasure for the benefit of the desolate to the end of time.

Here on the Cross, Jesus merited for us the strength not to despond when we stand in the midst of the desert of darkness and solitude—and not to despair even in our last hour. We are not alone there—Jesus our Saviour has been there before us and erected His Cross to be a comfort to us. This cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” is like the voice of a friendly guide and powerful helper, proclaiming His presence in the pathless desert waste, and offering his aid. Jesus loves to call Himself the “Son of Man,” and truly there is none among His many titles to which He has more fully proved His claim. He came down to us in His Incarnation resolved to share with us all He could share. He would come down to our level—He would know by experience our trials and sorrows. In the execution of His design there were difficulties all but insuperable. But the Omnipotence of Jesus’ love overcame them.

We are wayfarers, journeying painfully to our country—to the Vision of God there, which will satisfy every desire. Jesus’ soul enjoyed the Beatific Vision from the moment of its creation—and that vision is naturally incompatible with pain. But His Almighty power could suspend its effects. He did suspend them. Now He could suffer cold, heat, hunger, weariness. Sickness He could not suffer—but He would more than compensate for this by the torments of His Passion—“From the sole of His foot to the top of His head there should be no soundness in Him, wounds and bruises and swelling sores.” Whilst we seek and employ every manner of relieving and deadening pain, and ask miracles to avert suffering, Jesus will use His Omnipotence to bring it within His reach. Thus will He be at one and the same time with us on the way to cheer and support, and at the term to reward.

But there was a deeper depth yet to which He must descend if He would be like us in all things. Sin had fixed a gulf between us and our God. It had hidden His face from us—and then left us wailing in our despair. Here surely the Son of Man must part company with us—He “Who did no sin, neither was guilt found in His mouth.” No, for He is come to seek and to save that which was lost—Jesus, our loving Saviour, will follow us down into our misery that He may rescue us. Sin cannot touch Him—but its chastisement He can draw upon Himself. He has undertaken to satisfy for us to the full—to bear all that He may bear consistently with the dignity of His Person. Therefore Jesus will endure, as far as possible, the most awful form of human suffering—separation from God, dereliction by God.
Desolation of Jesus on the Cross

How was Jesus' cry of agony—"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me"—received? This touching cry of the desolate Heart of Jesus only evoked fresh mockery and scorn from the enemies of Jesus—"Behold He calleth Elias; let us see if Elias come to take Him down." They seem not to have quite caught our Lord's words, and thought He had called Elias, who was regarded as the forerunner of the Messiah, the helper in great distress and persecution, and defender of God's people. At all events their words were a fresh expression of derision. O Sacred, suffering Heart of Jesus!

St. Mark tells us "there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour"—but, oh, how deep, how terrible the darkness over the soul of Jesus! Among His unspeakable sufferings the keenest was this hiding of the face of the Father. We have no thoughts or images whereby to bring home to ourselves in the very least the love with which the soul of Jesus turned to the Father. To be about His Father's business He had come into the world. That the Father's name might be hallowed He had taught and toiled and wearied, and suffered. It was when He spoke of the Father that His full Heart revealed itself. To the Father's face He lifted His eyes, weary with sin and sorrow of earth. The Father's bosom was rest when, heavy at heart, He knelt in prayer on the mountain-side by night. The Father's love was His all-sacrificing compensation for the coldness and ingratitude of men. And now the Father's face is turned away from Him. The chastisement of our sins is upon Him. The loneliness, helplessness, terror that the sense of estrangement from God brings upon the soul, He allowed Himself to feel for our sakes. Can our Lord descend lower than this? Is He not now at last like to us in all things? O love of the Sacred Heart! O Sacred Heart of Jesus, Thou lovest! Thou art not loved! Oh, would that Thou wert loved!

How did Mary and John and Magdalen hear this cry of Jesus' Crucified Soul? The deep, mysterious abysses of His dereliction and mortal agony lay open before them. They themselves were plunged therein, and accompanied our Lord in all His pain, all His conformity of Will, and love to His heavenly Father, and His love for us sinners. Let us think of this when we, too, shall be alone in this desert of darkness, aridity, abandonment, desolation, and engulfed in this abyss.

Colloquy.—O love of the Sacred Heart! O my Jesus, how good art Thou! Behold, O Thou delight of the Angels and Saints, Thou art forsaken upon the Cross, and deprived of every consolation, yet Thou dost deal so mercifully with me, a wretched sinner. Ah, Lord Jesus, willingly do I entrust myself to Thy loving Heart, wholly do I resign myself to Thy Will. Do Thou carry out the designs of Thy Heart, cleanse me, sanctify me, dear Lord, in the way and manner pleasing to Thee, only keep me from every sin. O Mother of Jesus, in every temptation and danger, assist me efficaciously, at any cost. O my Mother, keep me faithful to Jesus.
II

"I THIRST"

"Afterwards, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said: I thirst."

Here I shall consider—How great this suffering was; how this thirst of our Lord’s was relieved.

1. "I thirst!" How great this suffering was. God’s way is to reward, to punish, to satisfy for sin in kind; the working of this law we see throughout the Passion. To make reparation for our misuse of the senses our Lord suffers from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head; His thirst on the Cross is an atonement for the sin that forfeited Paradise and occasions the loss daily of so many souls. It is plain that the suffering our Lord’s thirst caused Him was excessively great, from the mere fact of His complaining of it. He says nothing about His other torments—the thorns, the scourges, the nails—great as they were, but here He complains, and asks for alleviation.

The circumstances were such that He was bound to experience torturing thirst. Great pain always provokes great thirst, and is always one of the most acute sufferings that accompanies death by crucifixion. No refreshment had passed our Lord’s lips since the drinking of the consecrated Chalice at the Last Supper. His Blood had been shed in torrents our Lord’s scourging, the crowning with thorns, and the Crucifixion. The life-spring was exhausted, and His very bones had grown dry with the fever heat He suffered, and the open wounds, exposed as they were to the air, must have caused this heat to alternate with feverish chills that made the whole of His Body tremble as if with ague. His lips were parched, His tongue black, His throat and palate dry and burning. What shipwrecked sufferer was ever consumed by such thirst as was our dear Lord? This torment alone is so great that it can deprive men of their reason, and there is scarcely any death more terrible than to die of thirst. In two places in the history of the Passion do we find mention of a drink. First, of the wine mingled with myrrh, and perhaps with other bitter herbs, which was offered to our Lord before He was nailed to the Cross. Second, of the vinegar, mixed perhaps with water, which He drank just before the end of the Three Hours’ Agony. The wine is spoken of only by St. Matthew and St. Mark, the vinegar is spoken of by all four evangelists. We know that it was customary to offer, out of compassion, aromatic wine as an anodyne or narcotic to those about to be crucified in order to make them, as far as possible, insensible to the awful torture; but whoever offered it to our Lord did not know enough about Him. He declined to drink it lest His Agony should in any degree be alleviated, but at the same time He tasted it in recognition and commendation of the sympathy or commiseration which prompted the well-meant act.

Very different from all this were the second drink, the motive which
led the soldier to give it, and our Lord’s action respecting it. This
drink consisted of vinegar. Owing to the exceedingly great pain,
those who were crucified generally fainted, so in order that they might
feel the agonizing pangs again, vinegar was employed to bring them
back to their senses. Some whose sufferings were incomparably less
than those of our Lord, lived on the cross for more than two days, and
such men would frequently be in a state of coma. The centurion and
the soldiers expected that Christ would fall into a swoon, as others did,
then they provided a vessel of vinegar, and a sponge, with a branch of
hyssop—the usual accompaniments of the cross and nails. But our Lord
never once lost consciousness, so at the end almost of the Three Hours’
Agony, as St. John takes care to note, the vessel of vinegar was full; it
was still untouched, the common, ordinary reason for its application
not having arisen; but in order that these words of the Passion Psalm,
“My tongue has cleaved to My jaws” (Ps. xxi. 16), and these words of
another Messianic Psalm, “In My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink”
(Pr. lxviii. 22), might be fulfilled, our Lord willed both to be thirsty and
to say so. The words which at the same time He quoted from the same
twenty-first Psalm, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”
(or, “Let Me suffer so much?”) “Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani?” were not
understood by some of the Roman soldiers, who, however, knew the
Palestinian dialect of Aramaic, which Christ spoke, and who were
aware that Elias was to come as the precursor of the Messiah, or King of
the Jews. For us, while meditating on the Passion, it is necessary to
bear in mind that not all Roman soldiers were men of the Latin race.
The Jewish historian, Josephus, says that the majority of Pilate’s
soldiers were Syrians, natives of Cæsarea or of Sebaste. These Aramaic-
speaking men would have no difficulty in conversing with one born in
Judea; they had been quartered there, and even if they did not profess
the Jewish religion, their words show that they were well acquainted
with Jewish belief. The meaning of their words and actions is simply
this: “This Man, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, calls Elias to
come to his assistance,” said they. A soldier ran immediately in order
to fill a sponge with the vinegar and to give the King of the Jews a drink.
Another appears to have tried to dissuade or to hinder him from actually
giving the drink. Then the soldiers interposed with the scoffing remark:
“Let him alone, let him do what he wishes to do, let him hand a drink
to the King of the Jews, the Messias; this will prolong His life, and give
more time to Elias, in case he is coming to assist Him.” What the
soldiers did was in no sense a work of humanity or mercy, but an ex-
pression of derision and mockery. It was the last insult. Our Lord
submitted to it, and said then: “All is accomplished.”

By the insults that were now heaped on the Eternal Wisdom in His
human nature, how clearly, and at the same time how fearfully, were
these words of sinners foretold in the Book of Wisdom (ii.) fulfilled:
“Let us, therefore, lie in wait for the Just, because He is contrary to our
doings, and upbraideth us with transgressions of the law, and divulgeth
against us the sins of our way of life. He boasteth that He hath the knowledge of God, and calleth Himself the Son of God. He is grievous unto us, even to behold: for His life is not like other men’s, and His ways are very different. Let us see, then, if His words be true, and let us prove what shall happen to Him, and we shall know what His end shall be. For if He be the true Son of God, He will defend Him and deliver Him from the hands of His enemies. Let us examine Him by outrages and tortures, that we may know His meekness and try His patience. Let us condemn Him to a most shameful death: for there shall be respect had unto Him by His words.” “These things they thought and were deceived: for their own malice blinded them.”

2. How our Lord complains of His thirst. Jesus complains of His thirst very modestly; He asks for nothing, and only mentions His suffering late—very late, indeed; He really did it in order to make known that He had this also to suffer, and spared Himself nothing of the bitter chalice of crucifixion, as also in order to fulfil the prophecies, and reveal that He was tormented by quite another thirst, of which this bodily one is but a feeble image. Oh, how great the thirst of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for souls—thirst for the salvation and redemption of men—the Jews not excepted. Ah, let us never forget that our dear Lord’s longing was not so much for what the Jews and His tormentors could offer Him to allay His bodily thirst as for their souls. Jesus saw all souls on to the end of time, and burned with a desire to save them, and this thirst was infinitely greater and more torturing, because what else did He suffer and die for but the redemption of the human race—His creatures whom He so loved?

Shall I not labour to allay and satisfy this thirst of the Sacred Heart by endeavouring to gain perfection, to become a Saint, and so become a fitter instrument in His hands to help others to His knowledge and love? Personal sanctity will indeed comfort and assuage the thirst of Jesus. Surely His Mother’s children will constantly labour, that no degree of perfection to which, by God’s grace, they can attain be omitted by them.

Hear our dear Lord, our Eternal King, saying: “Soul, so well loved, so patiently followed, so faithfully cared for, so often raised, cleansed, and fed, I have followed you long, will you not now follow Me? I have laboured, and suffered, and died for you, will you not love, work, bear, die—now no more for self—but for Me?” Ah, shall we not animate ourselves to accept the graces Jesus holds out to us, and give Him generously all He asks? The more generous our offering and cooperation, and the more entire our abandonment into God’s Hands, the more light and grace shall we obtain. We must either gain the apostolic spirit or fail to appease the thirst of Jesus. A truly apostolic soul, one filled with real zeal, does not shrink from sacrifice, but yearns and thirsts for opportunities of sacrifice.

3. How this thirst of our Lord was relieved. The implied request of Jesus was granted, but with a niggardly heartlessness they gave Him
no drink of refreshing water or strengthening wine, but only vinegar, and very little of that, and even this scanty refreshment was to be embittered by mockery and scorn.

A soldier was hard-hearted enough to soak a sponge in vinegar, a vessel of which stood near at hand, and held it to our Lord's lips; that was all the refreshment Jesus received in His mortal Agony, He Who gives us everything in abundance. And Jesus' thirst for souls is just as scantily relieved; nay, more so, even the two thieves do not satisfy it—one of them refuses to give Him his soul, and prefers to give it to Satan—and so it was to continue. All men pass by the Cross, and how many of them refuse Jesus their souls, and carry them to hell? Have I no desire to give Him mine? Can I watch Him in His torments and be content with a little barren compassion? Can I find it in my heart to leave Jesus, the Divine Lord and Master, who loved me and delivered Himself up to the death of the Cross that I might be saved and possess eternal happiness? Can I leave Him to suffer quite alone? O my Jesus, my Lord and my God, let me bear Thee company by voluntary self-denial and penance; and following resolutely a life of self-sacrificing service, let me prove my gratitude for the burning thirst Thou hast endured for me.

Think what the Immaculate Mother felt as she looked up and saw Jesus' Agony, and was powerless to help Him. Jesus' thirst was a great grief to His Mother, John, Magdalen, and the Holy Women. They had no less zeal and courage than had David's warriors, and they were quite as ready to fetch Him a drink of water at the risk of their lives. But what could they do? They looked up into His pale, dying face, they saw His pale, parched lips, and they had nothing to give Him but their good will, their grief, their love—and souls! What a supreme surrender all made, in union with His Blessed Mother, to live for Him and die for Him. There were no reserves among those faithful lovers of Jesus, who clung so closely and fearlessly to His Cross. Love is strong as death! Shall I not devote myself heartily to the work of my perfection, since that is the most effectual means of satisfying the thirst of Jesus on the Cross? St. Basil of Seleucia says that Jesus used these words, "I thirst," to give us to understand that such was His love for us He desired to suffer even more than He suffered.

Colloquy.—O God of infinite love! Thou desirest that I should thirst after Thee, because Thou lovest me. God, says St. Gregory, thirsts that we may thirst. Ah, my Divine Master, give me, I beseech Thee, through the merits of Thy thirst for me on the Cross, an ardent desire of loving Thee and of pleasing Thee in all things. Dearest Lord, Thou hast promised to grant everything that we ask—"Ask, and you shall receive." Jesus, my Jesus! I ask only one thing of Thee, and that one grace I will never cease to ask of Thy Sacred Heart, I ask it in Thy Holy Name, I ask it through Thy love for Thy Mother, give me that intimate, personal knowledge of Thee that will lead to, and produce in me, a strong, ardent, enthusiastic love of Thee. I know, dear Lord, I am utterly
unworthy of this grace, but, my Jesus, it will be the glory of Thy most Precious Blood to enkindle a special love for Thyself in a heart that has so long and so cruelly offended Thee, to convert into a furnace of love a heart that has been all filled with mire and sin.

Hear me, Sweet Jesus! O my Mother, plead with me and for me that I may continually advance in love, may please thy Divine Son in all, and that incessantly and without reserve. Grant that, all miserable and little as I am, I may be entirely Thine. I love Thee, O Eternal God! I love Thee, O Infinite Lover; O Jesus, my Master, now and for ever, all that I can do, I will do for Thee. O Jesus, for Thy Mother’s love, help me to be faithful unto death. O Sacred Heart, what shall I render Thee for all the love Thou hast bestowed on me!

III

"ALL IS CONSUMMATED. FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT"

Three hours Jesus, the Eternal God, has hung in torture, His limbs trembling, His wounds smarting in the March air. Three hours the Mother most faithful has stood beside Him, erect, not swooning, not turning her eyes nor her mind from the contemplation of the Victim hanging there, with whose bloody Sacrifice she unites the agony of her bleeding heart. Mary stands: her delicate, sensitive frame strung up to that endurance. She stands, unaltering in her oblation, whilst Simeon’s sword makes its way deeper and deeper into her soul; no weakness, no lamentation. "Behold the handmaid!" as in the quiet midnight at Nazareth. It is the Father’s Will. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord!"

I shall keep close to my Mother and note the events immediately preceding our Lord’s death, the death of Jesus, and effects of the death of Jesus.

1. Events immediately preceding our Lord’s Death.—The end draws near. During the three hours the body has been continually sinking, and widening the wounds till it seems as if the hands must give way, and it will be torn from the nails. The words that have come painfully at intervals have ceased. The breathing becomes more and more laboured. Jesus grows more and more pallid—and the little channels of trickling blood are getting darker and drier. The Sacred Head droops lower on the breast—His face grows longer, His features thinner, sharper, and narrower—the cheeks fall in, the blue lips are slightly opened. The eyes get glazed and fixed—a dark shadow settles on the face. Jesus is silent, awaiting the approach of death in mysterious suffering and prayer with His Father. Suddenly the head lifts, the lips part—a loud cry goes out over the Mount and is carried far into the distance: It is consummated. Reviewing His mortal career in its closing hour, Jesus saw in one glance the fatigue, toil, poverty, and privation which had uninterruptedly marked its progress—once more He presented His life
of self-sacrifice to His Father. *It is consummated*—all I could do for men I have done—the work of redemption is accomplished, the justice of God appeased, the gates of Heaven thrown open. *All is consummated.* My lifework is ended, God’s Will and the prophecies are fulfilled, and the duties of My office and vocation accomplished—sin atoned for, justice satisfied—grace and glory are prepared. My work and merits completed, it only remains for Me to die. “What is there that I ought to do more for My vineyard and have not done it?” Redemption is most abundant. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, what shall I render Thee for all the love Thou hast bestowed on me? O grant, grant, dear Lord, that I may love Thee daily more and more!

“It is consummated.” Jesus gave Himself to be our companion—therefore it is part of His plan to share every sorrow and pain that His disciples shall suffer, and to sanctify them all. Is there, then, on earth any kind of pain or sorrow of soul or body which was not in His bitter chalice? From the sole of His foot to the top of His head, is there any spot, within or without, that has not its wound, or bruise, or swelling sore? Is there any kind of mental suffering that Jesus has not fully borne? Anguish from treason and faithlessness of friends? from their weakness, their neglect, their disloyalty, or their ingratitude? All the suffering that can be caused by confusion and shame and public disgrace? All that crushing pain that can arise out of tyrannical injustice and hypocrisy? All the agony that can come from witnessing the pain of those much loved? Still worse, the most oppressive of all anguish—the sense of God’s abandonment—and that resemblance of the pain of loss which can be tasted on this earth when desolation visits the soul. Jesus, our beloved Master and Lord, says to each one of us—Who is there weak in any way whatsoever that I am not weak with him? Who is there so heavily burdened, that I cannot say to him: “Come to Me, and I will refresh you?” “For I have shared your load.”

“It is consummated.” All the enemies of God and man are conquered. (1) Satan is prostrate beside the Cross, with his head crushed under the foot of the Blessed Mother. (2) The world, Satan’s great ally, without whose aid he can do nothing, is also conquered—Have confidence, I have overcome the world. (3) The lust of the flesh, of the eyes, and the pride of life: Jesus’ most patient Body has conquered all. Body of Christ, save me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. “He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross”—and so has triumphed over pride.

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, help me by the contemplation of Thy Sacred Passion to love Thee ardent, to give Thee of my best, to give fearlessly, perseveringly, and from love. O my Mother, keep me close to thee, then I shall be true to Jesus and value and love the Cross of Christ.

2. *The Death of Jesus.*—With a mighty voice, with an upward glance of infinitely touching resignation and childlike confidence Jesus cried—Father, into Thy Hands I commend My spirit. The head drops
on the breast, the Heart is still, the Soul is with the Father—Jesus has
been obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. He has loved
us to the end! “Father, into Thy Hands I commend My spirit.” O
beautiful words! full of help and consolation for me. A little while
ago Jesus’ words were a piteous cry to the Creator—“My God, My God,
why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Now it is the filial commendation to the
Father. The lesson He wishes us to have ready for our last hour is
confidence. Had there been any other, Jesus would have taught it.
I must learn this lesson now. I ought to be perpetually rehearsing for
the hour of my death, as the Church teaches in the Hail Mary, and the
most important thing to rehearse is confidence.

Father—my Father—Who hast loved me with an everlasting love,
and drawn me, taking pity on me—“Who hast made me, and created
me”—and “called me by my name,” remember that it is not as Maker
and Creator—but as Father—that Thy Son has taught me to speak to
Thee—Our Father, Who art in Heaven. I am a prodigal—I have wasted
my substance—I am not worthy to be called Thy child. But Thou
art my Father still, merciful, long-suffering, and full of compassion.
O my Father, when life on earth is ended—take me to the Home where
Thou art awaiting me—Thy house with its many mansions where Thou
hast prepared my place. Take me to Thyself Who alone canst
satisfy me—for what in Heaven have I besides Thee? Into Thy Hands—
the hands that have formed me and guided me, provided for me,
shielded me, blessed me, sustained me to the end—I commend—with
a child’s unquestioning trust—my spirit—my one possession in the hour
of my death, all that will remain to me of what I have in this world. As
it goes forth from the body, alone and trembling, assailed by enemies,
beyond the reach of friends, receive it, O Father, into Thy Hands—
“To the work of Thy Hands stretch out Thy right hand.” In union
with my dying Saviour, I confide it to Thy Mercy now—for the hour
of my death—“Father, into Thy Hands I commend my spirit.”

“Having loved His own He loved them to the end.” Holy writers
tell us that our Lord is commending into the hands of His Father not
only Himself—but also His Mystical Body, His little flock, His Church,
His Bride. “Father, into Thy Hands I commend My spirit”—each
word and act of our Lord during His human life is replete with solid,
practical instruction for my guidance in the path of perfection. These
last words of Jesus are full of deep meaning and help. They imply
absolute abandonment to God’s Providence—and entire resignation
to His Most Holy Will—God’s Will only in life and death. My God,
I desire to live, if it be Thy Divine Will, and I consent to die, if such be
Thy pleasure—“Cruci dum spiro, fido.” O dear Lord, grant me grace
to make this act from the depths of my heart at the moment of death,
and then say with Thee, Father, into Thy Hands I commend my spirit!
Jesus and Mary, I love you.

St. Francis de Sales tells us that we shall derive great spiritual profit
by committing our souls absolutely and without reserve into the hands
of God’s infinite goodness and mercy. Is He not our Father, Who has made us, preserved us, spared us, chosen us, called us? We advance slowly in perfection, only because we have never abandoned ourselves entirely to God, and yet if we desire to attain sanctity—we must begin, continue, and end our spiritual career by the practice of this virtue, in imitation of our Divine Model—whose whole life so beautifully exemplified it. "That all may know that I love the Father, and as the Father bath given Me command, so do I. Arise, let us go!" Our Lord always showed absolute dependence on the Father’s will—fullest devotion to it.

On occasion we are all ready to exclaim, "Lord, into Thy Hands I commend my spirit," but on condition that I be exempt from suffering—that I abound in consolation—that I be subject to none but those congenial to my inclinations—on condition, in other words, that I encounter no contradiction, no opposition, no suffering on my way to Heaven. But surely this is not to commit myself into the hands of God in the same spirit as Jesus Christ, my Model. All disquietudes and imperfections usually proceed from ungenerous reservations: "Stas sine electione"—"stand purely, and with a full confidence in Me, and thou shalt possess Me. Thou shalt be at liberty, within thy own heart, and darkness shall not overwhelm thee" (Imit. iii. 37). "I would it were so with thee, and thou wert come so far that thou wert no longer a lover of thyself—but didst stand wholly at My beck, and at His whom I have appointed Father over thee—then wouldst thou exceedingly please Me and all thy life would pass in joy and peace" (Imit. iii. 32).

Shall I not endeavour to say under all circumstances and in all occurrences, Lord Jesus, into Thy Hands I commend my spirit. Whether it be Thy Will to afflict me with desolation, or to refresh my soul with Thy heavenly comfort, to render me attractive to others, or repulsive, to exact my obedience in great things or in small, Jesus, my dear Master, into Thy Hands I commend my spirit. Practically to adopt this spirit of entire and universal abandonment to all the arrangements of Providence will entitle me to say, at the hour of death: "All is consummated." "O Lord, I commit my soul into Thy Hands at the close of life."

Colloquy.—Yes, my Lord and my God, my Jesus, to Thee I commend my spirit, my soul with its faculties, my body with its senses, my heart with its affections, all that I have, and all that I am, that Thou mayest dispose of me absolutely in everything, according to Thy Will. Henceforth, dearest Jesus, may everything outside Thee be a matter of indifference to me, provided only I accomplish Thy Will and advance in Thy love. O Jesus, I love Thee and Thy Mother, and abandon myself to Thy mercy and love for time and eternity.

3. Effects of the Death of Jesus.—On earth. Earth itself bears witness to the death of Jesus—it began to rumble and quake as though in great agitation—a terrible and wonderful rent cleft the rocks of Calvary, graves were opened, and many Saints of the Old Testament appeared to bear witness to Jesus. And in the Temple also there was
great destruction and confusion. The massive and costly curtain between the Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies was rent into two from top to bottom, so that the Holy of Holies lay open to view. This rending of the curtain signifies the cessation of the Old Testament, the rejection of the Temple, the fulfilment of all types and mysteries, and the direct access of the people to Jehovah. Among men—the first to be affected by our Lord’s last cry were the Centurion and the soldiers under his command. On hearing our Lord’s last words and perceiving how the earth immediately began to quake and the rocks under their feet were cleft, they feared greatly, and the Centurion, enlightened by grace, glorified God and confessed the innocence and Divinity of Jesus. “Indeed this was a just man, and the Son of God!” And as for the people who stood near the Cross, watching the spectacle, they were panic-stricken at these awful signs. They listened to the voice of conscience, struck their breasts, lamented aloud, and fled in consternation to the city. There, too, a panic of fear had seized all.

But what was the effect of the death of Jesus upon His friends, upon the Holy Women, John, Magdalen, and the Holy Mother? Grief and reverence cast them all upon their knees. John, although his heart was rent with unspeakable grief at the death of his beloved Lord and Master, does not forget his vocation for an instant, but observes closely all that transpires, in order to record it in his gospel as the appointed witness. And our Lord’s Mother? Lost in contemplation of her Jesus, her Divine Son, and motionless with grief, she at length perceived with unutterable woe that He was dead. Mary knew all; her crucified soul, instead of dying, rose—assisted by powerful grace—to the supreme and most terrible of sacrifices: she made it. “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word.” His Mother never failed Him—this is her prayer now as it had ever been. The Eternal Son offered the Father the sacrifice of His life in the arms—so to speak—of His Mother, whose soul was crucified with Him. On Mary His last glance will have rested, as His first look had greeted her before any other visible being. His holy Soul passed by her on its way to Limbo, and she stood there a childless Mother. These were the spectators and witnesses of the Agony and Death of Jesus. They show us the effects it should produce in us—they show us the dispositions and sentiments which should animate us in order to commemorate it worthily. They believed, above all, in His Divinity, confessed and adored it, they repented (Mary, of course, excepted) of their sins, and loudly and lovingly bewailed them—their hearts were crucified with the dying Saviour in love, pity, and grief. Inanimate nature accompanied their homage with the irrefutable testimony of mourning and horror.

But it is especially Mary’s heart that should teach us how to commemorate the death of Jesus in our hearts. It was the living altar on which the Lamb offered Himself for the sins of the world, and no one accompanied the supreme act of sacrifice with such true, loving, devoted sentiments of whole-hearted, absolute conformity and fidelity as Jesus’ Immaculate Mother. As Mary represented the entire human race by
Death of Jesus

her love and adoration at the Conception and Nativity of our Lord, so she represented it now at His death. The first adoration of the Cross, which the Church so lovingly celebrates every year on Good Friday, took place here. Oh, contemplate long and lovingly this first adoration of Jesus Crucified. "Behold the wood of the Cross, upon which the salvation of the world hangs! Come, let us adore! O Holy God! O strong God! O Immortal God! have mercy upon us!"

COLLOQUY.—O my dear Jesus, through Thy Sacred Wounds and agonizing Death, grant me the grace to expire in Thy love and friendship. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me. O Jesus, Saviour, grant that I be no longer deaf to Thy heavenly call, but prompt and diligent in accomplishing Thy most holy Will. Make me Thine at any cost. Give me courage to overcome every obstacle in Thy holy service. Draw me continually, dearest Jesus, to closer union with Thee. May I die to myself and live only to Thee.

Ah, dear Lord, Thou hast purchased my soul with Thy own most Precious Blood; permit not, then, that I should be separated from Thee. When my soul shall wing its flight to Thee, oh, receive it from the hands of Mary—Thy Mother and mine—receive it in mercy. O most merciful Jesus! I embrace Thy wounded hands and feet—and desire to be fastened with Thee to the Cross—beseeching Thee, through all Thy love, to unite me so closely to Thyself, that nothing may again separate me from Thee. May my life tend solely to the promotion of Thy greater glory. Holy Mary, Mother of God, my Mother, preserve me from ever disappointing the Sacred Heart of Thy Divine Son. My Jesus! I am Thine, save me.

XXX.—JESUS DEAD ON THE CROSS—OPENING OF HIS SIDE

1st Prelude: History.—After the death of Jesus the darkness had gradually disappeared, and the sun, though dim and misty, shone once more upon the hills and heights. Its light fell also upon the place of execution on Mount Calvary, and the three crosses with the condemned, at whose feet the Roman guard was still stationed—and the friends of Jesus who were standing in deepest grief. The scoffers had all departed. No longer does the cry resound, "Come down from the Cross"—silence reigns. The order has been given to break the legs of the crucified. The Centurion pierces the side of Jesus with his lance.

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—The foot of the Cross with our Mother, St. John, and Mary Magdalen. Let us fix our eyes on the Blessed Mother, for her passion is not over.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—

"O thou Mother, fount of love,
    Touch my spirit from above,
    Make my heart with thine accord!
Make me feel as thou hast felt,
    Make my soul to glow and melt
    With the love of Christ, my Lord."
Meditation on the Passion

O Mother, imprint deeply on my heart the wounds of thy Crucified Son!

Points: I. The cause of the opening of Jesus' side.  
II. The opening of Jesus' side.  
III. Jesus' Heart laid bare.

I

CAUSE OF THE OPENING OF OUR LORD'S SIDE

Crucifixion does not of itself cause death speedily, but the sufferers perish slowly by the gradual loss of strength. For this reason the Romans were accustomed either to burn crucified criminals on the cross, to kill them with a lance, cast them to wild beasts, or sometimes leave them to die of hunger. According to Jewish law, the executed criminal whose body had been hung on the gibbet to increase his disgrace had to be taken down and buried before evening. The Jews now took their stand upon this law, and asked Pilate to send soldiers to go and break the legs of the crucified with clubs, kill them, and take them down from the gibbets. They urged as a reason for this that the following day was the Sabbath, and the great Sabbath, too: the Pasch, or day of preparation, was already nearing its close, and it was high time to act. Other reasons were probably their evil consciences, the terror with which the dreadful natural phenomena and other occurrences had inspired them, and the fear of the people. They wanted to end the matter and consign it to oblivion. So Pilate sent soldiers to do as the Jews wished.

Hear St. John as he tells us: "The soldiers came, and they broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with Him." See the soldiers rapidly mounting the hill of Calvary—bringing clubs to break the legs, ladders to bring down the bodies, spades and shovels to open the common graves for criminals. Magdalen and John and the Holy Women, who have had peace till now on Calvary, are thrown into great consternation. St. Bonaventure represents them placing themselves at the side of Holy Mary to protect the Sacred Body from outrage. Mary Magdalen, Mary of Cleophas, and Salome, the mother of James and John, had ministered to our Lord all through His public life; they had openly declared themselves His disciples; they had kept their faith in Him in trial and persecution—even the horror of Calvary they had braved to be near Him to the end. The executioners approach the crosses to consummate the punishment of the three whom they had crucified—armed with clubs they speedily fracture the limbs of the thieves. It was a fearful sound for the Immaculate Mother to hear—the dull crashing of the flesh and bone, the agonizing cries of the miserable sufferers. But words will not tell the anguish with which Mary saw them approach the body of Jesus—earth held nothing half so sacred. Dead as it was, it was joined to the Divinity, and therefore entitled to the fullest honours of Divine worship; unspeakable was Mary's love for the body of her Son—her Son Who was God as well. She
spoke not—her voice broke not the silence—but the silence of her prayer was loud in Heaven. The rude men saw that Jesus was dead and desisted from their purpose—"You shall not break a bone of Him," it was written. These things were done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.

"O thou Mother, fount of love,
Touch my spirit from above,
Make my heart with thine accord!"

II

THE OPENING OF JESUS' SIDE

See our Blessed Lady—though her heart trembles at the thought of further profane insult, yet she is strengthened by a sure trust—she perseveres in prayer. "O Eternal Father, glorify Thy Son, for He has glorified Thee." There is another Scripture to be fulfilled: "They shall look on Him Whom they pierced." Here, as in every detail of the Sacred Passion, we see how the Divine Providence ever overrules the storm, allowing the raging tide to roll just as far as suits the designs of God, and no further. Two things have from the beginning been decreed: (1) That no bone shall be broken, but (2) that our Lord's side shall be opened, and that water and blood shall come out from the wound. Out of this water and this blood His helpmate—His Holy Church, His Bride—is built up, and every Christian may be called, as the Holy Fathers do call Him, another Christ! The merciless Priests and Ancients, therefore, are robbed of the satisfaction of seeing Jesus beaten to death with clubs—"The hope of the hypocrite shall perish" (Job viii.).

Seizing his lance, and riding quickly up to the mound on which the cross was planted, Longinus, the soldier, stopped just between the cross of the good thief and that of our Lord, and taking his lance in both hands thrust it so completely into the right side of Jesus that the point went through the heart and appeared on the left side. O wonderful efficacy and power of the Blood of Jesus! When he drew his lance out of the wound a quantity of blood and water rushed with it. This produced effects somewhat similar to the vivifying waters of Baptism—grace and salvation at once entered his soul; he leaps from his horse, throws himself upon his knees, striking his breast and confessing loudly before all his belief in the Divinity of Jesus.

St. Bernard addresses the pierced Heart of Jesus as "the home of love, the throne of the Blessed Trinity, the ark of wide-reaching charity." St. Laurence Justinian says: "Through an excess of love, Jesus opened His side in order to give us His Heart." St. Augustine writes: "The Evangelist uses a very significant word—he would not say he struck His side, or he wounded it—but he opened it, that there the door of life might stand open. It was as a type of this opening that Noe was bidden to make a door in the side of the Ark through which might pass in those animals that were not to perish in the Flood. What more life-giving
Meditation on the Passion

than this wound?" Admit me, O dear Jesus, into this home of love. Therefore was Thy side pierced, that an entrance might stand open for me.

Note the effect of this piercing of Jesus' Heart with the lance on His Blessed Mother. St. Bernard says: "Since Jesus had given up the Ghost it is clear that the cruel lance that opened His side could not reach His Soul." But Mary's soul most certainly it reached—Simeon had prophesied: "Thy soul the sword of sorrow shall pierce." As Mary looks on her wounded Son she feels all the crushing sorrow of death. Thou, O Mary, in thy heart art pierced by the lance. O heart of most tender love, why art thou changed into a heart of sorrow? With good reason may we call thee—O our dear suffering Mother—the Queen of Martyrs.

Colloquy.—Teach me, O my dear Mother, as I kneel with thee at the foot of the Cross—teach me the lesson of sacrifice. Let me learn it here at the feet of Jesus Crucified. O my Mother, let me never forget that many sins have been forgiven me. May I, like Magdalen, be faithful to the end; stand firm and cling to Jesus in spite of repugnance, interior rebellions, darkness, and temptation. Help me, my Mother, to take from the hands of Jesus in the same spirit of humble love and devotion my daily crosses—the weariness and disappointments of life, all that it costs to struggle against self, to sacrifice self for my dear Lord's glory. Help me, Mother, to be a consolation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, by being a messenger of His to those among whom I live, making His service easier and happier for them. O may I, most holy Mother, through thy intercession and guidance, be faithful to Jesus, my Crucified Lord and Master, to the end, and be through eternity among the devoted servants of Jesus Crucified who put their trust in Him and were not confounded. O my Mother, imprint deeply in my heart the wounds of thy Crucified Son.

III

JESUS' HEART LAID BARE

The opening of Jesus' side is the last mystery in the Passion, and by it His Heart was laid bare, so to speak, and revealed as the seat of love—the hidden mainspring of life and all mysteries, the source of all virtues and merits, the last sacrifice for us and, by means of the devotion to this Sacred Heart, an important instrument of the graces in the meriting of which it had played such an exceptionally prominent part. In the blood and water that flowed from our Lord's side when pierced by the soldier's spear were represented the Sacraments of the Church—the Blood of Christ that cleanses our souls in Baptism and Penance. That loving Sacred Heart that was open then is open still, the rich stream of graces still continues—it has flowed even unto me. What countless graces I have received from the love that has been poured upon me from the Sacred Heart of Jesus! The Sacred Host that we receive in Holy Communion reminds us in many things of the dead Body of Jesus as It
hung upon the Cross—all the glory hidden, no life to all appearance there, in the power of all to treat It as they choose, reduced to the lowest humiliation—yet It is our God and our Lord, our Jesus—the object of the adoring love of Angels and of men; He Whom the Heaven of heavens cannot contain, Who condescends to be our Guest and the Food of our souls. O unspeakable love of Jesus sacrificed for us! How can we ever forget Him? How can we ever lose heart or despond with this abiding proof of His tender love before our eyes?

Contemplate the wound in the Sacred Heart—that never-failing fountain of grace—a very ocean of mercy. Jesus Himself has said: *If sinners shall come to My Heart they shall find it an ocean of mercy*. Peter and Thomas and Magdalen found it so, and hundreds of souls since these have found peace and love and holiness in that loving Heart. Jesus says to us now and always: "Abide in My love!" Then, courage and confidence! We, too, shall find that loving Sacred Heart a sure refuge in the fiercest storms of temptation. The Heart of Jesus is the school of sanctity in which the bitterness of trials and the practice of virtue is sweetened. It is the paradise of our souls—a temple of peace and love—the Holy of Holies—the Ark of the New Testament! Heart of Jesus, Thou lovest! Thou art not loved! Oh, would that Thou wert loved!

*Heart of Jesus, Thou lovest*—Heart of Jesus! O the dear Sacred Heart which beat so lovingly for His own and for all poor sinners while here on earth, and continues to beat with the same ardent, longing love in the Blessed Sacrament! Thou lovest!—oh, how can we doubt it? Everything proves it! We ourselves—out of countless millions who are living in ignorance of Him—we, *we*—have received the gift of faith, Catholic education; have been called to be His intimate friends, His apostles—called to closest union with Him. The graces and privileges we have received show we are His favoured, well-loved children. Oh, what a Father, Friend, Master, and Spouse we have! "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." "What is there that I could have done for My vineyard that I have not done?" O love of the Sacred Heart! Our gardens, fields, flowers, the sky, all nature, all the works of His all-perfect Hand, speak of His love for us all. Remember He loves all—all—even those who are not Catholics. Jesus loves me! We know what a mother's love is, yet Jesus' love for me is infinitely more. He loves me with a love strong as death.

*O Sacred Heart, Thou lovest!* Yes, dearest Lord, we have no doubt of this. How ardently Thou didst long to die for us—to remain with us in Thy Sacrament of love. How ardently didst Thou long for the love of Thy poor, suffering, sinful children! Ah, sweet Jesus, may we satisfy the thirst of Thy Sacred Heart by loving Thee with a strong, enthusiastic, faithful love. Oh, let us ever abide in Thy love. *O Sacred Heart of Jesus, Thou lovest!* Alas! then comes the unfortunate part, O dear Lord—*Thou art not loved!* Alas! this is but too true. Ah, think of the hundreds and thousands who do not even know His Name. Then think of those who willingly scoff at and blaspheme His Holy Name—
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Atheists, Freemasons, unbelievers, etc. But these even are not the cause of the deepest wounds in His Sacred Heart. Jesus, our dear Lord, has told us Himself, in His words to Saint Margaret Mary, what He feels most: “The coldness, irreverence, want of love of His own chosen ones”—those who do know Him, who hear Him spoken of so often, and yet, love so little, so poorly. Oh, it is this that hurts Him deeply, this that He feels so keenly—and from those who receive so many graces and favours, and yet are such ungrateful, thankless children to this most loving of Fathers.

Colloquy.—Ah, Lord, it is but too true, Thou art not loved! O Sacred Heart, if we have any spark of love and generosity in us at all, shall not our most fervent desire and longing be, Oh, would that Thou wert loved! Shall we not strive by every means in our power to make Thee known and loved? Shall we not try to pay many an extra visit to our dearest Friend, ever present in the Blessed Sacrament, ever living to make intercession for us? And may this prayer, dearest Lord, be on our lips when we bow down in lowly adoration in Thy Sacred Sacramental Presence: “O Sacred Heart of Jesus, Thou livest! Thou art not loved! Oh, would that Thou wert loved!” O Lady and Mistress of the Sacred Heart, open that Heart to me, thy child. Teach me to know Him intimately, to love Him ardently, and to follow Him closely. Mother, give me to Jesus!

“Make me feel as thou hast felt,
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ, my Lord.”

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XXXI.—THE TAKING DOWN FROM THE CROSS—THE BURIAL OF JESUS—THE SOLITUDE OF OUR LADY

1st Prelude: History.—“And after these things, Joseph of Arimathea, because he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the Body of Jesus. And Nicodemus also came, he who at first came to Jesus by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes about a hundred pounds’ weight. They took, therefore, the Body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

“Now there was in the place where He was crucified a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre wherein no man had been laid. There, therefore, because of the Parasceve of the Jews, they laid Jesus, because the sepulchre was nigh at hand. And returning, they prepared spices and ointments; and on the Sabbath day they rested, according to the commandment” (John xix.).

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—The summit of Calvary, close to Jesus’ Cross, with the Holy Mother, John, Magdalen, and the Holy Women. Then the Sepulchre and the Cenacle.
3rd Prelude: Ask what I want.—To realize our Lord’s love for me; to understand the Mystery of the Cross and to value it; the grace of true detachment from the world and self; that I may ever live with Mary my Mother and be a joy to her.

Points: I. The taking down from the Cross.
   II. The burial of Jesus.
   III. The solitude of Mary.

I

THE TAKING DOWN FROM THE CROSS

Contemplate the heart-breaking situation of the Mother of Jesus. As evening came on, it grew quieter and quieter around the Cross of Jesus. See the soldiers occupied in dragging the bodies of the dead thieves down the hill to the common burial-place. See the Immaculate Mother—her eyes fixed on Jesus. Oh, with what unutterable pain Mary contemplates this Holy Body hanging on the Cross—now robbed of all form and beauty, even of Its soul—torn and shattered, borne down by Its own dead weight on the Cross. She could not take Him down, and had no grave for Him. Any request from her might result in grosser execration. The Holy Mother feared every moment that the soldiers would come back and drag away her dear Son’s Body also to the burial-place of criminals. It was considered a disgrace among the Jews not to be buried in their own family sepulchre. The Mother of Jesus had always been poor—poor in Bethlehem, poor in Egypt, poor in Nazareth—but never had she felt her poverty so bitterly as here in the sight of her Jesus’ dead Body.

Note the party of men passing through the judgment-gate bringing ladders and many other things. They are hastening rapidly towards Calvary. Our Blessed Mother, sick at heart, asks John anxiously: “Who are coming?” At last, when they are near enough, John whispers to the Blessed Mother that she has nothing to fear. They are friends. Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews—Nicodemus likewise. But lo! Jesus in His Death has made all things new. Joseph and Nicodemus are not afraid now. The Passion of Christ has strengthened them. Scarcely had Jesus breathed His last sigh than the efficacy of His Blood inspires them with a courage they had not known before. They are determined to honour the Body of Jesus whom they recognize as the Messias. At once Joseph goes to the Praetorium and boldly asks Pilate for the Body of Jesus. A glorious testimony to the innocence, sanctity, kingship, Divinity of Jesus, all of which have been well proved by the miracles of His life and death.

See with what ardour and reverence they approach the Sacred Body of Jesus. They salute the Mother of Sorrows, but neither can speak, their hearts are full of emotion and deepest sympathy for the Mother and Son. The beloved disciple joins them—all prostrate and adore Jesus on
the Cross. Then the ladders are placed against the Cross and they begin the most sacred of duties.

Note how lovingly and reverently they touch the Sacred Body. First, the crown of thorns is removed—kissing it reverently they give it to the Immaculate Mother, who stretches out her hands to receive it, and she, too, kisses it and presses it to her heart. With the tenderest care the nails are drawn out, and passed one after another to the heroic Mother. See how gently and with what reverent love Joseph and Nicodemus wind linen bands around the limbs and then lower the Sacred Body to the ground. John holds the Adorable Head, Joseph and Nicodemus support the Body, and Mary Magdalen—always at her chosen place—takes the Sacred Feet of the Divine Master. No priest can treat the Blessed Sacrament with more care and reverence than these holy men of high degree treated the Body of Jesus. How dear they must be to us for their love of our Lord, and His Holy Mother, and for the generosity with which they give not only their property, Nicodemus his wealth and Joseph his sepulchre, but also themselves, the personal service of their hands; and lastly, for their courage.

It is not without significance that we are told that Joseph went "boldly" to Pilate. It really needed courage to do this, seeing the fanatical hatred borne by the Chief Priests and Rulers to Jesus, and the victory they had gained over Him. Joseph's and Nicodemus' sympathy for the fate of the Crucified—their intervention for Him—and the public burial they gave Him—might well be regarded as a demonstration of opposition, and might have the worst consequences for themselves. But they care nothing for all this. They came to know Jesus, they love Him, and everything must be done to serve and honour Him—Love is proved by deeds! These noble-minded men and their act is the first victory of the Death of Jesus, and a fruit of our Lord's gentleness and patience. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth"—by being crucified—"shall draw all to Myself." He did not take it amiss that they kept the fact of their discipleship secret for a time. Jesus waited patiently, and now His patience has borne fruit. And this is all the more wonderful—seeing that they were the only ones of all the disciples and Apostles, except St. John, who openly declared themselves for Jesus and espoused His cause.

As soon as the Sacred Body is lowered, going a few steps they place the "World's Treasure" in the winding-sheet that our Lady has spread on her knees. Then all prostrate and adore. I also will kneel and adore, fixing my eyes alternately on the Sacred Body of Jesus and on Mary. Contemplate lovingly, and mark how all who surround the Sacred Body of Jesus preserve a religious silence! How the Blessed Mother's heart speaks to her Beloved Son as she gazes on His bleeding face, His glazed eyes, His mangled body, His pierced hands and feet, His opened side. She speaks to the Eternal Father, the Holy Angels, the faithful friends of her adorable Son, she looks over the whole human race for whose redemption Jesus has suffered and died. She prays for all—for me! How
reverently Jesus' faithful ones listen to the Immaculate Mother—her words are loving and tender—they illumine the mind and move the heart. Mary's incomparable grief alters neither the peace of her soul nor the majesty of her countenance, and "in peace is her bitterness most bitter."

What were the Holy Mother's thoughts as she gazed into the five wounds and sees the Sacred Body covered with gaping wounds and bruises, battered out of all shape by the cruelty of man! O Mother of Sorrows, great as an ocean is thy sorrow! What must be thy hatred of sin, when thou seest what it has wrought in the Divine beauty of thy spotless Son! What a mixture of agonizing compassion and mournful sorrow, of hope and consolation, gratitude and triumphant joy, fills her holy soul while she looks on the dead Body of her Son. The day on which Jesus died is indeed well called Good Friday. It is the day when Jesus consummated His victory over death.

Shall I not condole with my Mother—the Mother of Sorrows—as with unutterable woe she lives through the whole Passion again, following it out by the dreadful traces it has left? Now she sees it all close at hand. What have I to say to her as she arranges the hair, touches, kisses, and closes the wounds? And of what does she think? Surely of happier times—of the hour of the Last Supper—the majesty and nobility of His Sacred Person during the three years of His public life—of the sweet days in Nazareth and Bethlehem. See! the Babe of Bethlehem has come back to His Mother's lap. But how differently His arms are stretched out now! Oh, of what do all these wounds speak to the Blessed Mother, if not of His love for us? We were bought with these wounds, this blood, and this death. How could she help loving us? How could she forget us? We are graven on her heart in a thousand wounds. Everyone who passes by the Cross sees the Mother there with her dead Son on her lap, and blesses God for having so confounded our enemies through her means. Blessed art thou—above all upon earth! O Holy Mother, Queen of Martyrs, imprint deeply on my heart the wounds of thy Crucified Son. So long as this heart of mine shall be capable of loving, it will love thee. O Mother of Jesus, and my Mother, too—yea—it will burn to influence all hearts with the same fire of love—that all may begin upon earth to love thee for the sake of Jesus—and Jesus for His own dear sake. O Mother, give me to Jesus! Now and at the hour of my death. Amen.

II

THE BURIAL OF JESUS

The evening shadows grew longer and the Parasceve was drawing rapidly to a close—so the men see haste must be made to bury Jesus. Joseph, John, and Nicodemus beg the Holy Mother to allow them to complete the embalming of the Sacred Body. They reverently lift the Sacred Body of Jesus from His Mother's knee, and carry it to the stone
of anointing, which is still shown and venerated in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. There they prepared it for burial according to Jewish custom. They wrapped the Body of Jesus in fine linen cloths and bands, and placed spices and sweet-smelling herbs between it and the linen; sprinkled the linen itself with sweet perfumes—covered the Sacred Head with a napkin. See Mary herself performing this last duty. Oh, with what woe she gazes for the last time on the dead face of her beloved Son! The sun of her life has set with the covering of Jesus' face!

The preparation of the Body for burial was such as rich and respected men received. The preparations being completed, they proceed to inter the Body. It was already late, probably about five o'clock in the evening. The site where our Lord was to be buried was situated about fifty paces north-west of the place where the Cross stood. It was fortunate that the distance was so short, on account of the nearness of the Sabbath. The sepulchre was in a garden, and was hewn in the rocks and thus protected by nature against violation and profanation. It was quite new and unused, as befitted our Lord in regard to Whom everything must be pure and inviolate, as had been the womb of His Mother—to which the Holy Sepulchre is often compared. As a Joseph had once helped Mary to lay the Infant Saviour in the manger, so it is now a Joseph, too, who helps her to lay Him in the grave. Follow the little procession of mourners as they go down the hill, through the ravine, straight across to the garden, the three or four men bearing the Sacred Body of Jesus—His Mother, Magdalen, the Holy Women, and a few servants follow closely. When they reach the sepulchre our Blessed Lady spreads a white cloth in the tomb. Then the Body of Jesus is placed on the stone—there to remain until the hour of its joyful Resurrection.

Contemplate It as It lies there—disfigured by countless wounds and scars—apparently lifeless—but nevertheless the joy of God and worthy of our highest adoration. Passive and cold and motionless—but soon to be radiant with the most dazzling beauty—dead but belonging to a Divine Person. From this we may learn (1) the glory of suffering, (2) the power of apparent helplessness when God is with us, (3) the beauty of passive obedience, (4) the true life of those who are dead to the world. Mark how, before closing the entrance to the tomb, all fall on their knees and adore the Sacred Body, shedding many tears—in spirit I can unite with all these loyal, devoted servants of our Lord, and adore, love, and thank my dear Master for all His goodness to me. Then they lead the Mother of God back to the Cenacle—leaving their hearts where their Treasure rests. In passing before the Cross our Blessed Lady prostrates, and is the first to adore the Sacred Sign of our Redemption. All who accompany her follow her example. Watch—and listen—as the Holy Mother and Jesus' devoted servants reach the Cenacle. Our Lady, before entering with John, Magdalen, and the Holy Women, thanks most tenderly the faithful friends of Jesus—she blesses them for the love with which they have rendered Him the last duties, and says
with fullest confidence: "The God of our Fathers will not permit His Holy One to see corruption."

What was our Lord doing while thus apparently inactive in the silent tomb? He was beginning His work of triumph; announcing the glad tidings of salvation to the holy souls in Limbo, among whom soon appeared the penitent thief, in fulfilment of His promise, "This day shalt thou be in Paradise"; dethroning Satan and changing the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of God and of His Christ. So it is with us. When we seem useless and apparently doing nothing, we are often doing great things for God! Our tabernacles are so many tombs where the Body of Jesus is buried. What is my assiduity in visiting the Hidden God? What is my devotion, my respect in His Divine Presence? Are not our hearts so many tombs into which Jesus deigns to descend? Is mine a garden enclosed?—cultivated—adorned with flowers of virtue, especially purity, love, humility, desire? Is this garden of my soul silent from all din of earthly, worldly things and dedicated to Him alone? Is His Sacred Body embalmed by my love, and wrapped in the clean winding-sheet of purity of intention? If this be so, His Presence in my soul when I have received Him in Holy Communion will be the pledge of my glorious resurrection with Him. The rock signifies stability in good—"Be ye steadfast and immovable."

COLLOQUY.—O Jesus, would that all might know and love Thee! Would that I never displeased Thee! Now, dearest Jesus, I begin. I must serve Thee with all my heart's love, with all my strength. Would that I possessed the hearts of all, that I might consecrate them to Thy love! Help me, dear Lord, to make some return for all Thy loving patience with me in the past. O Jesus, the life and delight of my soul! How unutterable is the love wherewith Thou hast loved me! Grant, Lord Jesus, that from this day I may begin to serve Thee in earnest—give of my best—give fearlessly—and from purest love. Grant that my life may bear much fruit of holiness, and so show forth the Divine power of Thy grace and love, and promote Thy greater glory.

O Mary, Mother of God, my Mother, for the love of thy Divine Son, keep me always close to thy pure heart—shield me from the devil, the world, and my own evil nature—that I may become thy true child and the devoted Spouse and Apostle of Jesus. O Mother, I have need of thee; O Mary, be propitious to me!

III

THE SOLITUDE OF MARY

Good Friday Night.—I shall see the Mother of Jesus, John, Mary Magdalen, and the other Holy Women who were with her. How great is their sadness! All are plunged in desolation because Jesus is no longer with them. They spend the first hours of the night in speaking of the sufferings and death of our Lord. St. John relates all that took place in the Cenacle the evening before. I shall listen to the beloved disciple as
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he relates how the Divine Master ate the Paschal lamb with the Twelve—how Jesus washed their feet—how He instituted the adorable Sacrament of His Body and Blood—how their hearts glowed with love when He discoursed with them after the departure of Judas—how He told them all that was to happen to Himself—how He prayed for them, and led them from the Cenacle to the Garden of Olives. On the way He told them His Soul was sorrowful unto death—that they would all be scandalized in Him that night. Then St. John described with many tears the awful Agony in the Garden—the kiss of the traitor—the seizure—how all His own abandoned Him. Thus does the adopted son endeavour to soothe the grief of the afflicted Mother. I, too, am Mary's child—and should I not strive to console her by speaking lovingly to her of what Jesus has done and suffered for me?

“Oh! how sad and sore-distress'd
Was that Mother highly blest,
Of the sole-begotten One!

Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain,
In that Mother's pain untold?”

Holy Saturday.—The Sabbath now began—a day of quiet mourning and hope. Its character is a mixed one—the dusk of Good Friday and the dawn of Easter Sunday seem to blend together. On this day the occupants of the Cenacle are quiet, very quiet. They have much to reflect upon, much to mourn over, some much to repent of. One sees only eyes reddened with weeping—tears still flowing—little is spoken. The preceding day with all its terrible incidents oppresses every heart with bitter pain. Jesus, their beloved Master, the God-man had suffered—was dead—lay buried outside the city. Our whole life ought really to be like this. We ought never to forget that our dear Lord has suffered and died—even though it happened long ages ago. A noble heart is never indifferent to this thought. How silently reverent some of the occupants of this house are! And yet what deep consolation they find in the thought that they have remained true to our Lord to the end. John, Magdalen, the Holy Women! See the Apostles and disciples coming one after another humbly asking admittance. Those within full of kindness—receiving, encouraging, and comforting them.

Peter came overwhelmed with contrition and shame confessing his sin with many tears—all the Apostles are sad and inconsolable. They dare not think of the past, nor yet of the future. And who is now their comfort and support? Our Blessed Lady—the Mother of their beloved Master. In the midst of all the woe and pain that rent her heart, Mary was still calm, firm, unbroken in her trust—and a comfort to them all. Then, as now, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. Whilst the Good Shepherd Who had given His life for His flock was in Limbo consoling by His Presence the just souls confined in that dark abode, He did not forget the little flock He had left defenceless on earth.
He inspires them to seek His Mother who is to strengthen and console them in His absence—"Having loved His own who are in the world, He loved them to the end."

The grief of the Apostles was great, seeing their number reduced to eleven—the thought of the ruin of Judas was bitter in the extreme. Ah, if the unhappy man, detesting his awful crime and ingratitude, had come as Peter, to cast himself at the feet of the Mother of Mercy—how tenderly she would have received and consoled him! What a lesson for all of us! No matter what our weakness, sinfulness, unworthiness, we need never lose heart at the remembrance of past ingratitude—if we fly to the Refuge of Sinners, the Mother of Mercy, the Mother of Jesus—she will gain a full pardon, and the grace of true and perfect conversion from the adorable and loving Heart of her Divine Son—"My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin; but if we sin we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the Just" (I John ii. 1). And we have also our advocate, the Mother of the Saviour, Who confided us to her maternal heart before expiring for love of us on the Cross.

Colloquy.—Mother most pure, most holy, most kind, may the love of Jesus and of thee grow in our hearts together. May that love make us fear and hate sin and the world, Christ's enemy. Strengthen us to deny ourselves constantly and generously, confirm our faith, hope, and charity, and be with us in the hour of death. O Mary, our Mother, thou art our hope in life, and wilt be our joy for ever. From thee, dearest Mother, we receive all blessings, for through thee we have Jesus, the source of all our grace. Ah, dearest Mother, was it not as thou didst watch thy Divine Son on the Cross, that thou didst learn that immense compassion and boundless pity, which made thee the Mother of the Apostles—the Refuge of sinners—the Promoter of the Sacred Heart's interests in souls. Dearest Mother, let us share with thee thy sorrows—let thy compassion grow in our hearts and make us like thee. For happy indeed, O Mother of Jesus crucified, is the soul who desires to share in thy compassion—happier still he who really strives after it—happiest, supremely happy, he who in compassion and gentleness becomes like thee, O Blessed Mother of God.

Saturday Night till Sunday.—Having consoled the Apostles and comforted the Holy Women, Mary recommends all to remain in the Cenacle. Then she retires to her oratory as on the preceding night—to occupy herself solely with the thought of her Divine Son. See our Blessed Lady—wrapt in deep contemplation, surrounded by numberless spirits who compassionate their suffering Queen. We may reasonably suppose that on this happy night, as the Church calls it, the Mother of God knew supernaturally all that was taking place since her Jesus' Soul was separated from His Sacred Body. Mary sees—and I will see with her—how the Blessed Soul descends to Limbo, accompanied by an innumerable multitude of Angels, singing hymns of praise to their triumphant King. The heavenly Spirits command the entrance to the dark prison, to open to the King of Glory—the God of Armies, Who is
omnipotent in battle. In an instant the subterranean prison is filled with resplendent light by the presence of the Divine Redeemer—the souls of the Just are made happy in the light of the Divinity. They recognize their God, their Liberator—they thank Him, and exalt His mercy in canticles of praise.

The Mother of the Saviour, witness of these marvels, comprehends that an infinite price was paid for the redemption of the human race, and sees its inestimable happiness in being so gloriously and abundantly redeemed. Mary sees the New Church that Jesus had founded and enriched with His Sacraments and the treasury of His merits. She penetrates deepest mysteries by the light her Divine Son gives her, either through the ministry of Angels or directly from Himself. These sublime considerations cause great joy in the superior part of Mary’s soul—but she begs the Eternal Father to keep it from affecting her senses, for she does not wish to receive any sensible consolation whilst the Body of Jesus remains in the sepulchre unglorified. By this incomparable fidelity she shows her love for her Divine Son, of Whom she is a perfect image—for her soul was full of joy and her body of suffering—just as it happened to our Divine Lord through His Passion and even on the Cross.

Colloquy.—O dearest Jesus, teach me to be generous—make me generous—to give, and not to count the cost. Grant, I beseech Thee—oh, grant that my heart, wholly united to Thee, may be closed to Thy enemies, dead to myself and to the world—ever open to Thee, breathing Thee alone—above all things loving Thee. O glorious Queen of Martyrs, help me to fight bravely against my enemies—the devil, the world, and myself—that I may be generous and devoted in the service of thy Divine Son. O Mother of love and sorrow! love has given thee the Cross, grant that the Cross may give me love! Heart of Mary, my Mother, transfixed with a sword of sorrow, enkindle within my heart, by thy intercession, the Divine fire which consumes thy heart—which will enable me to practise faithfully resignation, patience, conformity to the Divine Will; to suffer courageously for the glory of God, for the salvation of souls, and for my own sanctification.

"Make me feel as thou hast felt,
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ, my Lord."

XXXII.—THE CROSS OF CHRIST

1st Prelude: Subject.—There is no health of soul, nor hope of eternal life, but in the Cross. Know for certain that thou must lead a dying life; and the more a man dieth to himself, the more doth he begin to live to God. No man is fit to comprehend heavenly things who hath not resigned Himself to suffer adversities for Christ. Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more salutary for thee in this world, than to
suffer willingly for Christ. Take up, therefore, thy cross, and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting. By this we see how very useful it is, when meditating on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, to consider carefully our own condition in this life with regard to suffering or the Cross of Christ.

2nd Prelude: Composition of Place.—Hear my Divine Master: “What is there that I could have done for My vineyard that I have not done?” “Lovest thou Me?”

3rd Prelude: Let me ask what I want.—Grace to know Jesus Crucified—to understand the Mystery of the Cross—to answer His call with much generosity. Lord Jesus, grant that I be no longer deaf to Thy heavenly call, but prompt and diligent in accomplishing Thy most Holy Will.

Points: I. It is necessary to bear the Cross of Christ.
II. The happiness of sharing the Cross of Christ.
III. To bear adversity with advantage, I must recognize it as the Cross of Christ.

I

IT IS NECESSARY TO BEAR THE CROSS OF CHRIST

“If thou wilt come after Me, deny thyself—take up thy cross and follow Me.”

The Cross of suffering is more or less the characteristic of all human life; and it is one which, while it contains within itself special capabilities of union with God, may derange and disturb our relations with Him more than anything else. It assaults our confidence in Him—and confidence is the only true worship. It engenders temptations against faith—it leads to a certain kind of peevishness and petulance with God which destroy our love and reverence for Him. The patient, humble endurance of the cross—of whatever nature it may be—is the highest and most arduous work we have to do. No cross, no crown. The Cross is never only a chastisement, but always a reward as well—and the fulness of God’s love to each created soul is measured by the abundance of its crosses. It was a wonderful thing that the Son of God should become Man for man’s redemption, still more wonderful that He should have chosen the life and death He lived and died, and yet His was a wise as well as a gracious choice—a choice intended for our instruction no less than for our redemption.

Ah, let us often contemplate Jesus, our dear Lord, on His last journey. See Him as He goes forward from the Praetorium, bearing His Cross. His back and all His Sacred limbs have been torn by those scourges under whose cruel blows so many victims fell dead. His brow is encircled and His temples are pierced by that awful crown of thorns. He is weak with loss of blood, He is struggling along under the burden of the Cross to the place where He is to be nailed to it—to die there in torment and disgrace. And, in doing all this, and enduring all this, He is tracing out
the path which I, too, must tread if I would reach the goal which He has set before me. He is my King, my Lord, my Model, my heart’s Love, and He bids me follow Him. He bids us all follow Him in our measure and degree. There is no other way to Heaven. No one’s face is towards Heaven when it is not towards Calvary. Our cross may be lighter, or it may be heavier—but, if we would enter into life everlasting, some kind of cross we must all carry and bear it faithfully to the end.

There are many reasons why we must suffer: (1) We are sinners, and must atone for our sins—do penance. What is penance but suffering? Our nature corrupted by sin has been turned aside from the straight road, and can only regain the path of virtue by doing violence to itself. In order to practise virtue we must fight against evil inclinations and inordinate affections, which cannot be done without suffering. The fundamental maxim of our Lord, which has been considered so fully during the Exercises, proves clearly the necessity of suffering—“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me.”

(2) The noblest, and at the same time the strongest reason why we must suffer is the Divine Master’s word: “It was necessary that Christ should suffer and so enter into His glory” (Luke xxiv.). Now Christ is our Leader. If it was necessary for our Leader to suffer, it is necessary that we who belong to Him should suffer with Him and say with St. Thomas: “Let us go with Him, and die with Him.” We are called to imitate Jesus Christ—and that as closely as possible. “Let us endeavour to have constantly before our eyes the example of Christ our Lord, and copy it to the best of our power. He has given us an example, that in all things, as far as God’s grace enables us, we may imitate and follow Him, Who is the true way that leads to life.” Now to imitate Jesus Christ, we must suffer, for the whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom, and dost thou seek for thyself rest and joy? St. Paul says: “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. iii. 12). And St. Peter: “If doing well you suffer patiently; this is thankworthy before God. For unto this are you called, because Christ also suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps” (1 Pet. ii. 20). “When we have read and searched all, let this be the final conclusion, that through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God” (Imit. ii. 12).

How necessary for us to grasp thoroughly this truth—that to follow Jesus closely in the way of perfection we must suffer. To be an Apostle of Christ means to suffer with Christ and for Christ. When our Lord sent Ananias to baptize Saul, whom He had cast to the ground, saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” He spoke thus to Ananias: “Go thy way, for this man is to be a vessel of election, to carry My Name before the Gentiles and Kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name’s sake.” And in truth what great sufferings St. Paul bore during the long years of his Apostolate! And so, likewise, was it with all the Apostles. All
The Cross of Christ

suffered much in extending the Kingdom of Christ. All animated with the Apostolic Spirit have walked faithfully in the path traced out by "the Master." "Take up, therefore, thy cross and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting. He is gone before thee, carrying His Cross; and He died for thee upon the Cross that thou mayest also bear thy cross, and love to die upon it. Because if thou die with Him, thou shalt also live with Him; and if thou art His companion in suffering, thou shalt also be His companion in glory" (Imit. ii. 12).

Like our Divine Master, until God’s hour comes for the cessation of the struggle with our enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh, let us persevere on our cross. The enemy says: "Come down from the Cross." Why so much self-restraint? Take things easy—violence never lasts. Do as others do. Have a good time whilst you can. Come down from the cross! The challenge comes to us as to our dear Lord; but, like Him, we must turn a deaf ear to the tempter—hold on to the end—persevere on the Cross as long as God wills—battle bravely with suffering, with self, and overcome in that hardest form of conflict—endurance. What is our chief cross? It is well to remember that the Cross for every one of us means all that goes against self. All that it costs to subdue self—to act on principle, submit to authority, to follow common life, to accommodate ourselves to others, to bear correction, to be faithful to irksome duties, to be submissive and humble during sickness, to struggle against self-indulgence and the softness of our times, persevering attention to the rules of Modesty, to be energetic in attention to our weak point, to bear up against failure and the monotony of daily routine, to be resigned when all seems to go wrong, whatever is contrary to our liking in our circumstances, our health, our companions, the way things are done, the way things turn out—all this is our cross.

The enemy fears nothing so much as perseverance in well-doing. He can put up with spasmodic piety, with duties and good works zealously begun, with resolutions to go against our own whims and to be faithful to our religious practices—but what he dreads is the courage and love that holds out under difficulties, that perseveres to the end, that answers his challenge, "Come down from the Cross," with "No surrender! I will be true to Thee, Lord Jesus, till death!"

Colloquy.—O most kind and merciful Lord, look graciously, I beseech Thee, on my weakness, misery, and cowardice. Strengthen me against myself. Grant me in Thy love to be able, by Thy grace, to do that which, owing to my frailty, I cannot effect. O most sweet Lord Jesus, through Thy love for Thy Immaculate Mother, grant me this singular grace, that I may love Thee, dear Lord, with a more perfect love—with a love generous and courageous; that I may love the Cross—because by it I can be more closely united to Thee. Do with me, O Lord, what Thou wilt, for I know that Thou Lovest me! O Holy Mother, imprint deeply in my heart the wounds of Thy Crucified Son. Mother, help me to value and love the Cross.
II

THE HAPPINESS OF SHARING THE CROSS OF CHRIST

"If thou abide in My way, thou shalt know the truth, and the truth shall make thee free, and thou shalt attain to life everlasting; I am sufficient to recompense thee beyond all bounds and measure."

If it is necessary to understand that suffering is the portion of the servants and followers of our Lord, it is no less necessary to know and to realize the happiness of suffering through love of the Master—the joy of distinguishing oneself in His service, of making Him offers of greater worth and moment.

Jesus Christ—the Son of God, the Divine Saviour Himself—pronounced these words: "Blessed are ye poor; blessed are ye that hunger now; blessed are ye that weep now; blessed shall you be when men shall hate you and when they shall separate you, and shall reproach you and cast out your name as evil for the Son of Man's sake. Be glad in that day and rejoice, for behold your reward is very great in Heaven." He who is infinite Truth cannot deceive or be deceived. He is the Omnipotent, and He alone is the Master of true happiness. He gives it to whom He wishes on conditions which have been determined by Him in His infinite Wisdom and infinite Justice. Shall we not place implicit trust in Him when, in His loving Providence, He judges it well to send us trials and sufferings of body or soul, or external tribulations? "Behold in the Cross is all—in dying thereon to thyself is all—and there is no other way to life and to true interior peace but the way of the Holy Cross and of daily mortification."

Is it not the hour of a man's weakness or adversity that, if only he is a faithful and honest servant, the power of God is most surely and fully made manifest in him? And this, we may be sure, was one of the reasons, among many, why Jesus Christ, our Divine Master and Model, deliberately chose to live, as Man, a life of poverty and hardship and toil and suffering, and to end it with a death which, to all human appearances, would have seemed to set the seal of final and irremediable failure on all His efforts. His life and death should teach us, far more efficaciously than any experience of St. Paul, the great lesson that the power of God is made evident in and through human weakness—that the way to the highest moral victory lies for the most part, at least, through physical defeat; that the way to the fullest realization of everlasting glory and triumph lies for the most part through temporal adversity.

All this being so, can we wonder that not only the canonized and acknowledged Saints, but multitudes of earnest and devoted Christians in all ages of the Church's history have prayed, and prayed fervently, that they too might be counted worthy of a share in the Cross of Christ, or that they rejoiced, like St. Paul, and gave heartfelt thanks to God when the Cross—perhaps in some quite unexpected form—was laid upon their shoulders. Nay, is it too much to hope that we ourselves
may feel moved to ask that, like Simon of Cyrene, we also may have the
privilege of helping to bear the Cross, and to thank God when in some
measure our petition is granted? But if we are as yet too weak to bear
a heavy cross, we are not too weak to begin at least to form brave resolu-
tions, and to take to heart sound principles of life and conduct; and
among these sound principles is this, that there is room and that there
are motives in abundance for generosity to our Lord not only in strenuous
labour but also in courageous endurance.

It is especially in the lives of the Saints that we see and admire the
blessed results of the Cross of Christ when accepted with filial submission
to the Will of God and borne generously through love of Jesus Christ.
Jesus, our loving Master, never permits Himself to be outdone in
generosity; He loads with His favours souls who, for love of Him and
through trust in Him, accept cheerfully and bear courageously and
perseveringly the sufferings to which He, in His all-wise Providence,
submits them. By these trials He advances them very speedily in virtue,
and leads them even to the loftiest heights of perfection—"In the
Cross is height of virtue and perfection of sanctity"—giving them
power over His Heart, great power of advancing His interests in souls,
and thus increasing His greater glory; frequently inundating their souls
with sweetest consolations in the midst of their most painful trials. We
are told in the Acts (v. 41) that the Apostles, having been scourged by the
order of the Chief Priests, went away rejoicing that they were accounted
worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus. And St. Paul says:
"I superabound with joy in the midst of my tribulations" (2 Cor. vii. 4).

We find similar examples in the lives of St. Ignatius and St. Francis
Xavier—in fact, in the lives of all the Saints. Our Lord once said to
St. Teresa: "Thou seest, My daughter, how My whole life was full
of dolours, and only on Mount Tabor hast thou heard of Me in glory.
Do not suppose when thou seest My Mother hold Me in her arms that
she had that joy unmixed with heavy sorrows. From the time that
holy Simeon spoke to her, My Father made her see in clear light all I had
to suffer. The grand Saints of the desert, as they were led by God, so
also did they undergo heavy penances; besides, they waged unceasing
war with the Devil and with themselves, and much of their time passed
without spiritual consolation.

"Believe Me, My daughter, his trials are the heaviest whom My
Father loves most; trials are the measure of His love. How can I show
My love for thee better than by desiring for thee what I desired for
Myself? Consider My wounds—thy pains will never reach to them—
this is the way of truth; thus shalt thou help Me to weep over the ruin
of those who are in the world, for thou knowest how all their desires,
anxieties, and thoughts tend the other way.” Our Lord also told St. Teresa to keep in mind the words He said to His Apostles: “The servant is not greater than his lord.”

We must clearly understand and bear in mind that it is not the fact of suffering that produces these happy results in souls, but the manner in which the suffering or trial is accepted and borne. It is, above all, the degree of generosity with which it is accepted and endured out of love for Christ and in conformity to His most Holy Will. Alas! how many have been lost through rebellion against the Cross! On Calvary there were three crosses—in the middle the Cross of Jesus Christ, Who by His Cross redeemed the world; on the right the good thief who, from his cross, is saved and reaches Heaven; on the left the bad thief who, from his cross, is lost for ever! Thus the whole question lies in suffering well, taking up the Cross generously and following our Divine Lord and Master—“In the Cross is salvation, in the Cross is life, in the Cross is protection from enemies. There is no health of soul nor hope of eternal life but in the Cross.” The more the flesh is brought down by affliction, the more is the spirit strengthened by interior grace. We are not exhorted to pray for the Cross, but we may and ought to pray for a love of the Cross. The price of great graces is humiliation—the Royal Way of the Cross. Humiliations are precious drops from the chalice of our Lord’s Blood. When our Lord loves anyone, He presses him to His Heart as a tender friend would do; but round Jesus’ Heart there is a crown of thorns, and the more He presses us to His Heart, the more these thorns enter into ours. How many—even Religious—there are who only seek the shadow of the Cross, how many who lean against it, how few who climb up and are fastened to it!

Fervent seekers after perfection ought to lead heroic lives—lives of mortification. Nature says: “But I don’t like it.” Jesus Christ did not like it except through love for me. Love of Him can make me like it. We need not fear God will ask too much of us. He always asks for something that our nature will rebel against, but the pain of giving it lasts but a moment and the pleasure is eternal. In proportion to our suffering will be our glory; suffering comes and goes, pain is short and fleeting, but the glory is eternal. Therefore, let us have great confidence, not in ourselves, but in God, Who is always by our side helping us to pull against the stream. If we are only faithful, if only we keep our courage and hold fast to our hope, the power of God will work its effects in and through us more surely and more efficaciously in our hours of trial and apparent weakness than in our longer and more normal periods of prosperity and strength—“My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity.”

COLLOQUIY.—O good Master, most sweet Jesus, teach me to love the Cross, to understand the Mystery of the Cross. May I never fail to recognize Thee, dear Jesus, when Thou comest to me under the disguise of the Cross. Help me to take it lovingly from Thee; let it do its work in my soul according to Thy good pleasure; let it make my heart a pure
and holy dwelling wherein I may find Thee, my Jesus; possess Thee, enjoy Thee for the sanctification of my soul and the ever-enduring glory of Thy Heart.

"Make me feel as Thou hast felt,
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ, my Lord."

III

TO BEAR TRIALS AND ADVERSITIES WITH ADVANTAGE WE MUST RECOGNIZE THEM AS THE CROSS OF CHRIST

"Blessed is he who understands what it is to love Jesus and to despise himself for the sake of Jesus—He that cleaveth to the creature shall fall with its falling; He that embraceth Jesus shall stand firm for ever!"

What a consolation it would be to hear our Lord say to us: "You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations." This we truly do when we are loyal and faithful to Him in trials, temptations, humiliations, etc. The Cross, indeed, is the test of the sincerity of our love for Jesus. How do I act when the Cross touches me? To meet the Cross with faith and bear it well with loving resignation, I must recognize it as the Cross of Christ. Life is the road to the Eternal Home, and this road goes by Calvary—no other way; along that way we continually meet Jesus; He is always near—but with His Cross. Every morning of life we begin anew. We go forth to encounter a new day on its passage into eternity. We go out to meet Jesus in every action of the day; but, remember this, that we must rarely expect to meet Him except with the Cross—and that a new one. When we are in sorrow, or struggling under difficulties, humiliation, sickness, temptation, desolation, disappointments, repugnance to offices or duties, Jesus Himself "draws near and goes with us," as He did with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. That is the privilege of the Cross. It is an attraction to our dearest Lord which He cannot resist. Provided we seek no other comfort, He is sure to draw near and comfort us Himself. Oh, if ungenerous and self-seeking souls did but recognize the graces they miss by airing their grievances and whining over their little sufferings, inconveniences, miseries—looking out for human sympathy, for their fellow-creatures to console them—how Saints would multiply in the Church of God!

We wonder sometimes at the marvellous union with God some holy souls attain to, little suspecting, all the while, that we may have had sorrow, difficulties, crosses enough to carry us even further still than they—only we would not wait for Jesus; we turned aside because He asked us to bear the Cross with Him. How necessary to remember that whilst we are making our way home we shall certainly meet Jesus, for He is ever passing our way, but always with His Cross. If we want Him, we must have His Cross too. Some meet Him and turn away. Some see Him afar off and turn down another road. Some come close up and leap down a precipice to avoid the Cross. Some pass by as if they do not know
Jesus the Cross-laden. He has few honest, reverent, loving greetings. Faith and love make some too timid to pass Him or avoid Him, but they remonstrate with Him about the Cross and weep aloud when He insists. Others follow in the sullenness of servile obedience—drag their cross, which jolts upon the stones and hurts them all the more—and they fall; but their falls are not in union with those of the Master, Jesus the Saviour, upon the old Way of the Cross.

How few kneel down with alacrity—kiss His dear feet—take the Cross off His back—shoulder it gladly to please and satisfy Him—walk courageously and lovingly by His side, and smile when they totter beneath the load! This is what we should do. Can we do it? No! Not of ourselves—but we can try and then He will do it for us—effort is success with God.

Remember it is Jesus who meets us with the Cross. This implies much. It implies that we must turn back from our own road and go His—and that all the way we went till we met Him was but waste of time and strength, and fruitless travelling. Remember, too, we can carry our crosses only one way, and that is Heavenward! They keep our faces in that direction—"the Cross is protection from enemies."

Oh, let us not miss our opportunities, but take up our cross at once—turn round, and closely follow Jesus, our loving Master, with Whom nothing is impossible. I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me. Every opportunity of standing by our Lord is a grace which must be used at the time; if missed it is an eternal loss. Devotion means only one things—promptitude in accepting and doing the will of God. Ah! shall we not fall in with the procession of God’s servants—the Saints—who now are wending their way by Calvary to the heavenly Jerusalem? That procession of holy ones never ceases—it is as full, varied, and wonderful in our days as in those of St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier, St. Teresa, St. Gertrude, St. Augustine, and so many others who were one and all lovers of the Cross.

Let us ask ourselves, shall we, who gave our dearest Lord that heavy Cross to bear—and kept weighing it after we had given it—as if our cruelty were not satisfied—shall we refuse to bear the sweet grace-giving crosses which that loving Hand binds on us?—so little, too, as, when we have borne them for a while, we are forced to confess they are? Oh no, we shall try to do now what Mary our Immaculate Mother did, when she met her Jesus with His Cross—look at Him Who is on the road before us, and see how the beauty of the Sacred Heart appears with meek majesty and attractive love on the woefull and disfigured face of our Divine Lord and Saviour—our Jesus, Who loved us, and delivered Himself for us.

**Helps to bear the Cross well.—I. To recognize that it is the Cross of Christ.** The mere thought that the trial, difficulty, and suffering I now experience is the cross which my Divine Lord and Master sends me, at once disposes my heart to receive it well, because I know that if He sends it—it is for my good—that He loves me, and is always ready to
help me by His grace! God knows all things! God can do all things! God loves me! In this thought St. Teresa found peace and courage in every trial. We know that when all seems darkest the everlasting arms are underneath; then trust and be at peace!

2. The next help to bear the Cross well is to raise my heart quickly to our Lord—to beg of Him the grace of light and strength to accept His Holy Will—The chalice which My Father has given me, shall I not drink it? Without the grace of God we can do nothing for our salvation and perfection—but with God all things are possible.

3. Another help to bear the Cross well. Accept it with unbounded confidence in the grace of God, Who will never suffer us to be tried beyond our strength. Offer our will generously to bear, for love of Christ and in union with His sufferings, our present trial.

4. Lastly, let us persevere in prayer with peace and patience—give ourselves up completely to God, with entire submission to His Holy Will. Should the trial be prolonged—to become more intense—our soul be overwhelmed with sadness or sorely tempted to diffidence—let us redouble our cries to God, to the loving, compassionate Heart of Jesus—to His Blessed Mother, and our Mother, too—to all our holy patrons and advocates before the throne of God—call to mind the Agony of Jesus in the Garden of Olives—Who being in an agony prayed the longer.

Oh, what a help it would be to us to understand the Mystery of the Cross—to get a true idea of the Cross! What a friend we should find in the Crucifix—how it would speak to us, and listen to us. True holiness does not consist in not feeling the Cross, but in bearing the pain with true conformity to God’s Will. If we will but keep our hearts lifted, and believe in the Everlasting Love, strength will be there. Then lift up our heads above the little waves, and believe that when the things of to-day go as we would not have them go, our Lord is Master still, and whispers, Fear not, it is I.

If through the violence of temptation we commit faults of impatience, or others, we must not be disheartened, but make haste to turn to our Lord, ask His pardon, and offer Him the virtues of His Sacred Heart in reparation. Then endeavour to repair the fault by greater patience, resignation, and gentleness—humble ourselves sincerely before Him—pray and trust in His infinite Goodness and Mercy. Faithful adherence to these practices will lead to ever-increasing love of Jesus Crucified, by which everyone will be helped to make rapid progress in perfection and become a fit instrument in God’s hands to advance His greater glory. But remember that in this life Jesus is never separated from His Cross; therefore, never think you love Him truly till you love His Cross, for it is planted in His Heart.

As God loves the cheerful giver, so He loves sacrifices and offerings made with joy, and the cream of our offerings is to show joy when tried. To believe that obstacles are graces—the harder the greater—the more they cost the richer. A thousand times better to live in struggle and
humiliation than in sweetness and triumph. So our Lord thought—so was it with Himself. He is our lover and a jealous One. We must be blind indeed if we look at Him with a heart attached to anything but Himself. He is our King, and as such claims indisputable possession of our all. Sacrifice and struggle are the consummation of a devoted life.

O most sweet and loving Jesus, when shall I begin to love with a generous heart? I beg and beseech Thee, dear Lord, spare me not—here burn, here mortify, all that is opposed to Thee in my heart—incite me by a fervent love that, co-operating with Thee, I may advance in every virtue that will make me a faithful disciple of Thy Sacred Heart. O Jesus, so bountiful to me! I am indeed willing to follow Thee, and, with Thy help, to love and value the Cross. Dearest Jesus, may I never fail to recognize Thee under whatever disguise Thou dost meet me. May I always know Thee. Dominus est! O Blessed Cross, O Holy Cross, that will take me to my Master.

O my Mother, I have need of thee! If Jesus, thy Divine Son, sacrificed Himself for love of me, how is it anything great, or extraordinary, or wonderful, if I, O Mary, my dearest Mother, should sacrifice myself for love of Him? Mother, turn thine eyes of mercy towards me. Help me to be daily more and more faithful to Jesus. May my heart ever echo thy words—Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.

"O Mary, by the priceless love
Which Jesus' Heart bore thee,
Pray that my home in life and death
That loving Heart may be."

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