

THE WATCHES
OF THE SACRED PASSION
WITH
BEFORE AND AFTER

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CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST MORNING WATCH.

From 6 to 9 A.M.

SCENE I.

FROM THE PRESBYTERY TO THE PRÆTORIUM.

STATION I.

And straightway in the morning, the Chief Priests holding a consultation with the Ancients, and the Scribes, and the whole Council, binding Jesus, led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate (St. Mark xv.).

And the whole multitude of them rising up led Him to Pilate (St. Luke xxiii.).

And they brought Him bound, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate, the Governor (St. Matt. xxvii.).

Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Governor's hall. And it was morning (St. John xviii.).

A. The whole multitude of them.

Eager as they are to see Jesus crucified, yet some of them doubtless cannot help pausing to ask each other: "What shall we say to the Roman? We have not one single witness with us! What will he think of us?"

Annas, their despotic master, and others of more hardened conscience, answer at once: "Away with these doubts! Look at our numbers. All the ruling men are here. No one is absent. We shall let Pilate see that we are resolved. He will not dare to withstand us! When there are such multitudes gathered in Jerusalem, he will think twice before he provokes a sedition by resisting us. It would be an outrage against the nation. Be quite sure

that we shall have Jesus crucified before the rabble in Ophel know what is going on. Take care that the Cross be ready. We shall have our Pasch in peace."

They judge rightly. They prevail nothing against Christ Jesus. Neither shall they prevail against His servants when He shall have strengthened them. But their numbers will overcome and overwhelm the weak, time-serving worldling.

Therefore the whole multitude of them set out on the march.

Number not thyself among the multitude of the disorderly. Remember wrath; for it will not tarry long. Humble thy spirit very much (Ecclus. vii.).

B. Binding Jesus, they led Him away. They brought Him bound.

"We hear once more the warning word given by Judas, earnestly repeated: *Lead Him carefully*. "Now that the day is come, the people will be astir; there is more danger of a rescue." Every cord, then, and every rope is tightened. The strong chains are put into the hands of strong men. *They humbled His feet in fetters, the iron pierced His Soul* (Psalm civ.). When, heretofore, our Blessed Saviour by the lake set free the man possessed, who when the fit came on him *was bound in chains and kept in fetters* (St. Luke viii.), well He knew that to set the sinner free, He must Himself put on the sinner's chains and fetters.

"Compassionate Mother of God, watching His chains and fetters, and by compassion wearing them and feeling them, pray for us poor sinners, that every morning of our lives we may become more strictly bound by His Commandments and His sacred wishes."

C. The whole multitude of them.

All was to be done secretly and quickly, before the people should be awake from their sleep; and yet from one end of the city to the other they will march as a noisy rabble, as if designedly to wake up the people.

There is no wisdom, no counsel, no prudence, against the Lord (Prov. xxi.).

They led Jesus from Caiphas to the Governor's hall.

The Palace of the Priests, as has been said, stands in the south-west corner of the city, on Mount Sion. The Fortress or Castle of Antonia, where the Prætorium is, stands just above the Temple area in the north-eastern corner of the city.

The tumultuous procession may therefore go down through the gate from Mount Sion into the lower city, and crossing the narrow valley or ravine, the Tyropœon, turn northward and go up by the street that skirts the Temple enclosure, or else, as some students of ancient topography assume, they may cross the bridge over the Tyropœon, which joins Mount Sion with the Temple, and then go northward through the Temple grounds. This route is shorter; we may assume then that the Rulers, in their eagerness to see the end quickly, choose this shorter road.

D. From Caiphas to the Governor's hall.

This route also suits their views in another way. They are the men who like to pray in the corners of the streets. As they pass the Temple, it is the hour of the morning sacrifice: *This is what thou shalt sacrifice upon the altar: Two lambs of a year old, every day continually. One lamb in the morning, and another in the evening* (Exodus xxix.).

Some writers, learned in the Books of the Rabbis, tell us that the Pharisaical Priests loved to be present at this sacrifice, there to say aloud, with show and notoriety, what were called the Phylactery prayers, perhaps because the broad Phylacteries were pompously displayed on the occasion.

Therefore as the solemn days of the Pasch are begun, it suits the capricious consciences of these men, for whom our Saviour has no better name than *Ye hypocrites*, to show themselves this morning in the Temple, that all may know that they are godly men rendering a great service to God by handing over Jesus of Nazareth to Pilate for crucifixion.

E. They brought Him bound.

Meanwhile, as we are told, the Blessed Mother has been watching in the Cenacle, watching every hour, and

listening. When the day dawns *her tears are on her cheeks; for in the night weeping she hath wept* (Lament. i.). John has come to her. It has been assumed in the past contemplations, that he entered with Peter into the Palace of the Priests, and stayed in the judgment-hall till Jesus was condemned. When he saw the doors of the dungeon closed upon his Master, he left the building and went quickly to the Cenacle close by, to find the Ever-Blessed Mother, and at her feet he pours out his grief for having fled away from her Divine Son. Heartbroken as she is, she can comfort him; and now bids him stay near to her till all is over. He is now to accompany her and the three devout women who are with her; for it is her wish to go forth and see her Son Jesus. "*Deus, Deus meus, ad te de luce vigilo*"—*My God, my Son, to Thee do I watch at break of day.—My soul panteith after Thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God: when shall I come and appear before the face of God?* (Psalm xli.). John's contrite heart is melted within him by her goodness in giving him this charge. With the greatest care and solicitude he conducts her through the crowd of loiterers that is gathering, and through the servants running to and fro, that she may be as near as possible to her Son Jesus.

Then is fulfilled the prophecy of Holy Simeon, *that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed*. Some see her and recognise her, and are moved to great compassion. Others, on the contrary, reproach her: "*She had not known how to train her Son: otherwise He would not be in such a plight to-day*". *The mouth of the wicked is opened against me. Instead of making me a return of love, they detracted me: but I gave myself to prayer* (Psalm cviii.).

Besides the careful protection of John, she has the blessed angels guarding their Queen; for her Son has given them a charge over her to take care, that while she fixes her eyes on Him, she strikes not her foot against a stone. With all our hearts let us join in spirit with the blessed angels, and humbly greet her.

"*Ave! Hail, full of grace: thy Son Jesus, thy Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, because thou art the Mother of this Blessed Son, and allowed to drink of His chalice with Him.*"

F. *They brought Jesus bound.*

With her eyes she watches, and with her ears she listens, and with her heart she loves and suffers.

She sees Him now dragged violently backwards by one rope, then as violently forward by another. Nothing escapes her watchfulness; every detail goes into her heart and is there laid up. Each time that His bleeding feet stumble she sees and notes it. She hears the heavy fall; marks how His unprotected face strikes against the hard stones; and how severely He is chastised with sticks and ropes for troubling the march and delaying their haste by falling. And her compassionate heart shares all His torture as they drag Him again from the ground by His dishevelled hair: *The places in which before He was accustomed to rejoice, He filled with His torn hair.*

Virgo Virginum præclara,
Mihi jam non sis amara,
Fac me tecum plangere.

Virgin mid all virgins bright,
Do not bid me from thy sight,
Make me mourn and weep with thee.

G. And we must remember also what we have learned from the revelations recorded by holy contemplatives, that His blessed angels have not only a charge to protect the Mother of God, but also to obey the behests of their Queen.

For she follows the march, not only as a Mother sharing every sorrow, but also as the Valiant Woman watching with her fearless eye every movement, every attempt of Lucifer, to rebuke him if need be; and the secret prayer of her heart is: *Give me constancy, my God, in my mind that I may despise him; and fortitude that I may overthrow him. For this will be a glorious monument to Thy name when he shall fall by the hand of a woman* (Judith ix.). We may also bear in mind what we are told, that to strengthen her for the work

of this Good Friday, so that she may be able to walk to the Mount of God, and see all to the end, she carries still within her by a special privilege, the Divine Bread, the Most Holy Sacrament received in the Cenacle.

Some, no doubt, who see her pass by, and are being already prepared for conversion and sanctity, as they gaze on her, are *astonished and admire her beauty exceedingly. But they ask her no question, only they let her pass, saying: The God of our fathers give thee grace, and may He strengthen all the counsel of thy heart with His power, that Jerusalem may glory in thee, and thy name may be in the number of the holy and just.* And one or another of the standers-by answer: *So be it: so be it* (Judith x.).

Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

SCENE II.

JUDAS IN THE VALLEY OF HINNOM.

STATION I.

Then Judas, who betrayed Him, seeing that He was condemned, repenting himself (St. Matt. xxvii. 3).

Repenting himself.

As has been already said, it seems quite improbable that Judas was in the court below with Peter during the denials; for surely he would have tried to earn more money by convicting Simon. Where then was the traitor? Was he in the Judgment-hall above? This is possible. He may have witnessed the condemnation. He may even have been admitted among the privileged, to witness the orgies of the dungeon. But there are difficulties in this supposition. For it seems necessary to take for granted that the other disciple who arrived with Peter and gained him admittance, was in the Judgment-hall, and not in the courtyard below, since it seems highly improbable that if he had been present Peter would have denied so boldly. If Judas then had been in the Judgment-hall, he would have recognised this other disciple and betrayed him. For these reasons the opinion which we have been following seems more probable, that as soon as the traitor had received his wages from Annas, he did not care to stay longer among his new masters, who were showing their contempt for him, and having used him, were now glad to cast him off. He, therefore, as we suppose, left the building and

went down from Mount Sion into the Valley of Hinnom, south of the city, there to console himself by brooding in the moonlight over his thirty pieces of silver.

A. Repenting himself.

How are they brought to desolation!—as the dream of them that awake (Psalm lxxii.).

The terrible awakening has begun in the soul of Judas. Suddenly the thirty pieces have lost all their charm. He finds no joy in them. His poisoned heart, like a diseased stomach, rejects the food it craved.

The Holy Spirit speaks of the "*inconstantia concupiscentiæ*"—*the fickleness of concupiscence*. What so changeable as the poor soul that is enslaved by passion and by Lucifer? *A wave of the sea which is moved and carried about by the wind* (St. James i.).

Jesus Christ is Truth, and changes not. *Jesus Christ yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever.* But Satan, the father of lies, entirely unsays to-day what he urged yesterday as absolutely certain. Till this moment, Judas has been vehemently assured that his wages would bring him great contentment. He has lived in a dream of enchantment. Suddenly the dream is scattered and dispersed, and for ever; because that fallen angel who now has special charge from Lucifer to watch *the traitor* to the end, has ceased to urge one lie and begun to urge another quite opposite.

The old story an hour ago was that "he would still be an Apostle; no one would know his treason; 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 Holy 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*" (Genesis iv.). The lying spirit is careful not to add that not out of the mouth of God does this word come.

B. Judas, who betrayed Him, repenting himself.

It will be useful to note carefully the change come over the soul of Judas. Money, as has been said, can no longer charm him. The hatred that raged within him against his Master has died down. Jesus is now an innocent Man. So that, by rights, it ought to be comparatively easy for him now to repent. It was when the Prodigal could no longer find happiness in his passions that he turned back towards his father's house.

But the spirits of darkness understand their warfare. They have only laid aside weapons less sure, to attack with one more murderous.

For a time it serves their purpose to persuade men to say: *I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me?* (Ecclus. v.). For so they secure the multiplication of sins, grievous indeed, but yet reparable. But when the moment for the great, supreme, and decisive struggle comes, they rely entirely on hopeless and final despair; for that is irreparable. They know perfectly well that so long as heavenly hope lives in the soul, they have not prevailed. So long as the sinner is able to say: *In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped*—for though great and many my sins, Thy mercies are greater and more multiplied—so long is that sinner sure of forgiveness and salvation.

Every truth, therefore, that has till now been carefully hidden from the soul of the duped Apostle, is in this hour suddenly brought forward and magnified, and coloured, and distorted.

"Did He not tell you long ago that you are a devil? Did He not do all 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; how you spoke out so loudly for the poor while you were robbing them. You are the man described in the Psalms, who pretended to be of one mind with Him and to pray with Him: *In the house of God we walked with consent.* 'All is lost.' Your

fate has been long foretold: *His bishopric let another take, may there be none to help him. He loved cursing, and it shall come unto him; he would not have blessing, and it shall be far from him, because he remembered not to show mercy; but persecuted the poor man and the broken in heart.* Besides, this Jesus is beyond all doubt the Christ, and the Son of God. His Mother is the holy woman who was to come. You have persecuted them both. It is entirely due to you that He is to die, and that her heart is broken. You betrayed Him; you kissed Him; you were the leader; you have had your money. *All is lost.*"

C. Judas repenting himself.

But the Sacred Heart of our Lord is as merciful now as ever; and the Blessed Mother is still pleading; and the Angel sent from her is refuting every lie of the tempter; reminding this poor sinner that he, more than all others, has had ample proof that Jesus is a *gracious and merciful God, patient and of much compassion, and easy to forgive evil* (Jonas iv.).

I have laid up, O Lord, the Psalmist wrote, Thy words in my heart, that I may not sin (Psalm cxviii.). O, with what care and diligence must we lay up in our hearts some at least of the many, many words our God has spoken to prevent us from consummating our iniquity by refusing to hope in His boundless mercy!

Spiritual writers tell us that the last act of the soul before death is to turn its gaze backward on the life that is closing, and if in that supreme hour it can bear the sight of sins committed and say: "My God, Thy mercies are greater than my sins; Lord Jesus, Thy wounds call more loudly for mercy than my crimes for justice; Mother of God, pray for us sinners, for thy prayer will prevail": if this heavenly hope, through the merits of Christ Jesus, is living in the soul, all is well. The tree shall fall to the right side: *and in what place soever it shall fall, there it shall be for ever* (Eccles. xi.).

Martha, Martha, thou art troubled, thou art busy about

many things; one thing is necessary. Whatever other business we may have, we must find time to secure for our death-beds genuine hope, true hope, heavenly hope, sufficient hope.

D. Never must we rest till we are able to say; *I have laid up Thy words in my heart, O Lord, that I may not sin by despair.*

1. Easy it is to find such words; for He has said: *As I live, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live* (Ezech. xxxiii.).

2. He has said: *Be converted, and do penance for your iniquity: and iniquity shall not be your ruin* (Ezech. xviii.).

3. He has said: *It is commonly said if a man put away his wife, and she go from him and marry another man, shall he return to her any more? Nevertheless, return to Me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee.—Therefore at the least from this time call to Me: THOU ART MY FATHER* (Jerem. iii.).

4. He has said: *I—I am He that blot out thy iniquities FOR MY OWN SAKE: and I will not remember thy sins.*

A very loving mother forgives for her own sake, because she longs to have her prodigal back at home with her. She is more punished by his absence than he is. "Your sins may be very heinous," our God says to us, "but, *for My own sake* I wish to forgive them all."

5. And so when Sion said of old: *The Lord hath forsaken me; and the Lord hath forgotten me*: at once He repelled the calumny, saying: *Can a woman forget her infant? and if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee* (Isaias xlix.).

6. He said, too, when His people had provoked Him by most heinous and multiplied crimes: *Let every man of you return from your evil ways, and make your ways and your doings good.* And when His people answered: *WE HAVE NO HOPES: we will go after our own thoughts, and we will do every one according to the perverseness of his evil heart*: our God exclaimed in horror, at this blasphemous despair: *Ask among the nations: Who hath heard such horrible things, as the virgin daughter of Israel hath done to excess? Shall the*

snow of Libanus fall from the rock of the field? or can the cold waters that gush out and run down, be taken away? (Jerem. xviii.). If the snow and the streams, and the sunlight and the stillness of the night go on, much more surely will the mercy and the compassion and the patience and the love of our God for His children continue and endure.

7. And even when life seems utterly wasted, and the soul a mere ruin, what does our God do? He takes us to the potter's workshop, where the earthen vessel lies smashed to pieces, and while *the potter turning made another vessel, as it seemed good to his eyes to make it*, our God says to us, *Cannot I do with you as the potter, O house of Israel? Cannot I create over again a clean heart and a right spirit?*

8. Then, above all, we never must forget that, day and night, our Saviour Jesus Christ is *ever living* on the altar to *intercede for us*, and saying, *Father, forgive them.*

9. Neither does the Blessed Mother of God ever forget by day or by night that she has a charge from her dying Son to be a Mother and a refuge to the poor sinner. She *neither slumbers nor sleeps* to whom it is committed to watch over the disciples of her Son.

10. We must also lay up in our hearts that wonderful word spoken by our Saviour when penitent Magdalen was at His feet: *Thou hast judged rightly. He to whom He forgave most loveth Him most.* For if this golden rule be true, is it not also true that the man who has wronged his God more by committing many sins, ought to forbear more than others from outraging his gracious and patient God by adding the crowning crime of all—the sin of despair, which blasphemes against that infinite mercy which is *above all his works?*

E. *Judas repenting himself.*

Meanwhile Judas is wavering and straying about through the Valley of Hinnom; now reminded by his good Angel that the Ever-Blessed Mother is near, and urged to find her out; now assured by the tempter that she never can forgive him the sorrow that he has brought on her

Son. 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 perchance, too, Simon Peter—for he, too, is in the Valley of Hinnom—crosses the path of this tempest-tossed wreck, 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 if he would only give his consent that the Ever-Blessed Mother shall put forth her power for him!

F. *Judas, who betrayed Him, repenting himself.*

Ah me! if it was night when he left the Supper-Room, what name have we for the darkness now in his soul?

For whereas wickedness is fearful, and a troubled conscience always forecasteth grievous things, he is scared by the passing by of beasts, or the noise of stones tumbling down from Mount Sion (Wisdom xvii.).

His thoughts are even more uncertain, more restless and wavering than his footsteps.

G. *Judas, who betrayed, repenting himself.*

What a night of thankless toil and weariness and misery! Have not the wicked good cause to repeat for ever in the prison-house: *We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways?*

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! And how enviable a man would he be!

“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.”

H. *Judas, who betrayed Him, repenting himself.*

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 break of day, Judas comes back to the Palace of the Priests, and there learns the news that Jesus is condemned, and he sees the procession marshalled; and fixes his troubled eyes on the *Man of the broken Heart* 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—shall I not beg her forgiveness?”

A little while, and he is hurried away by the crowd, his body jostled to one side and the other, and his soul tossed, *like a wave of the sea which is moved and carried about by the wind.*

“O poor sinner, be wise. *If to-day thou shalt hear the voice of the Lord, harden not thy heart*” (Psalm xciv.).

Judas reaches the Temple in the hour when the High Priests are hastening in for a brief visit—to proclaim aloud their prayer, and so make known to men their righteousness.

SCENE III.

THE TEMPLE. JUDAS.

STATION I.

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 (St. Matt. xxvii. 3—5).

A. According, then, to the opinion which we are following, this disorderly crowd pass rapidly to the east,

and going through the gate of Sion pass down the flight of steps and cross the bridge over the narrow gorge, the Tyropœon, and reach the Temple area. They turn their steps to the north, and in a few minutes are at the gate of the Temple, where the natives of Jerusalem and the Paschal pilgrims are gathering for the morning sacrifice. It is the last time that the lamb shall be slain according to God's ordinance. By to-morrow's daybreak all types and shadows are passed away for ever. "*Umbra fugat veritas.*" *Christ our Pasch is sacrificed.*

"Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us and grant us Thy peace.

"Ever-Blessed Mother, obtain for us grace to hasten gladly to our most holy morning Sacrifice."

B. *They brought Jesus bound.*

Once again, we notice *how iniquity has lied to itself*. Care was to be taken exceedingly that the sleeping people be not disturbed, lest perchance there should be a rising; and lo! this noisy rout hurrying along scares away all sleep and quiet, and invites sedition; but *Jesus of Nazareth is passing by*, and He bids the waves be still.

C. *Then Judas brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the Priests and Ancients—and casting down the pieces of silver in the Temple, he departed.*

Two things are certain from this passage.

1. That Judas brought back the money to those who gave it, that is, to Annas and Caiphas and the others who are heading the procession.

2. That he cast down the pieces of silver in the Temple.

But a question arises, where did he meet the Priests this morning? Some think that it was at the Priests' Palace that he expressed his bitter remorse, and that when rejected there he went across the city to the Temple.

Others, as has been said, are of opinion that the morning Council was held in a hall hard by the Temple; and that Judas found the Priests and Ancients there, and from thence passed over to the Temple, which was close at hand.

According to the opinion which we are following, the High Priests and Pharisees who are heading this tumultuous

tuous march, being hypocrites, wish most specially on this solemn occasion, to be seen saying their phylactery prayers, and to pose as holy men, and therefore on their way to the Prætorium they make a short halt at the Temple gate, and go in to thank God "that they are not like other men," and above all, not like this wretched miserable Seducer, Jesus of Nazareth, Whom they have conquered at last, and exposed and brought to justice. *For that which is feeble is found to be nothing worth* (Wisdom ii.).

D. We may contemplate our Saviour led in to the Temple and watching for a little while the offering of the Lamb. "Oh, do it quickly," His Heart is saying to men. "I am the Lamb of God. On Me be all the iniquity of My people. Let this chalice of My Blood pass from Me!"

And His Heart is remembering too His own words: *My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.*

"Ever-Blessed Mother of God, obtain for us grace to love the beauty of God's house."

E. *Judas brought back the thirty pieces of silver.*

Neither does the Son of God forget the promise He made on the day of the dedication of the first Temple: *I have chosen and have sanctified this place, that My eyes and My Heart may remain there for ever* (2 Paral. vii.).

"*Popule meus, quid feci tibi?*"—O My people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I molested thee, that I am driven out of My house to be delivered up to the Gentiles?

And they have compassed Me about with words of hatred (Psalm cviii.).

"No Hosannas to-day, Jesus of Nazareth. Where are all your admirers? There are no children crying after you! Yet the stones do not speak as you said they would! And where is your scourge with which you beat the poor people? It is your turn now to feel the lash." And the slavish servants gladly take their cue from their masters' ribaldry and give them pleasure by using their ropes and sticks to chastise His insolence for daring

without the permission of the Priests to drive out the buyers and the sellers.

F. And now the High Priests go in and take their position—to utter aloud their phylactery prayers—and Jesus of Nazareth is placed before them in the eyes of the assembled pilgrims and natives of Jerusalem, that all may see how the hand of God has stricken Him, and that all may join with them in thanksgiving that the Great Seducer and False Prophet has been found out and brought to justice.

We give Thee thanks that we are not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers. We fast twice in a week, we give tithes of all we possess (St. Luke xviii.).

STATION II.

Then Judas, seeing that He was condemned, brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the Chief Priests and Ancients, saying: I have sinned in betraying innocent blood (vv. 3, 4).

A. *I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.*

Little reverence has he for their solemn phylactery prayers. Little credit for sanctity will they win among the bystanders by their hypocritical devotion, if he can gain a hearing.

Rudely and roughly this man whom they have wronged—this Apostle whom they have bribed to turn traitor, and to become a Deicide; this wretched fallen Apostle whom they cajoled, and helped on to ruin—rudely enough and without ceremony, breaks in upon their mock devotion, and publicly proclaims aloud to all present that they are there merely to hide with the mask of piety the hideousness of the murder they are perpetrating: *I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.*

Judas is standing on the ground where three days ago he heard his Master say, in tones never to be forgotten, to these very Priests and Ancients: *Ye hypocrites! Ye whitened sepulchres! fair only to the eye. filled within*

with filthiness and death! He heard, he remembers, he believes every word, as now he confronts them, and, while the crowd around listen in breathless surprise, pours out his terrible confession, which his tortured conscience cannot suppress any more, but must cast forth.

I have sinned, he says slowly and solemnly, I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.

As he speaks, every word sinks into the guilty souls of these Antichrists, who will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven themselves, nor suffer any others to enter. Each word is like bitter wormwood and the gall of dragons to them. The domineering Rulers are struck dumb with confusion, and with terror too, lest some Daniel shall stand up and cry out: *Return to judgment; for they have borne false witness (Dan. xiii.); and convict them of shedding innocent blood, and require blood for blood. For wickedness is fearful and forecasteth grievous things (Wisdom xvii.).* Listen, and mark the fierce anger and the scorn in the tones of Judas, as with his eyes glaring on them, he publishes aloud his guilt and theirs.

I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.

B. "*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? Who ever received so poor an exchange? *The men of riches have found nothing in their hands (Psalm lxxv.).*

Yet was he most kindly, and most clearly, and not once but oftentimes, warned to be on his guard.

We must with all our hearts pray again and again: "O merciful Lord, lead us not into temptation".

For, as St. Augustine says so truly, "There is nothing that one man does, which another man may not do, if not helped by Him, by Whom all men were made".

What is this that hath been done? The same that shall be done! (Eccles. i.).

C. *I have sinned.* Alas, poor dupe of Satan! do not waste words on these blind guides of the blind. Hasten to the retired corner where the Mother of God is contemplating all that passes; throw yourself at her feet; say to her that hallowed and privileged word: *Peccavi*; and then, lifted up and encouraged by her powerful maternal prayer, pass on next to the feet of your compassionate Master, and there with a holy presumption—for what does heavenly hope look like but a holy miraculous presumption quite above this world?—gladden His crushed Heart by making again your short confession: *Peccavi*; and surely you also, as well as the guilty King, shall hear the answer: *The Lord hath taken away thy sin.*

But, alas! now these things are hidden from thy eyes.

D. It behoves us to notice carefully what it is that is wanting in this confession of Judas; for it looks like a true and genuine confession. David says, "*Peccavi*," and is forgiven. Judas says, "*Peccavi*," and he is not forgiven. What is the explanation?

Among other points of difference in these confessions, we may note these two—

1. David made his confession to the Prophet duly sent by God to forgive him: but Judas confessed to the rejected Priests in whom now God has no pleasure.

2. David's confession was made with hope, and therefore, like good coin, had the image of the King stamped upon it. Judas made a confession hopeless and unloving. Heavenly hope has not stamped the image of his Redeemer upon it.

Oh, how careful we should be, when we confess and beg absolution, to see that through good and genuine hope the contrition of Jesus be joined to our poor sorrow.

STATION III.

But they said: What is that to us? Look thou to it (v. 4).

A. *What is that to us?*

The loud protest of the traitor, as has been said, appals and confounds these haughty Rulers. Of the queen from the far country, we read that when she came into the presence of the glory of Solomon *there was no more spirit in her.* So now the voice of the great despair is like a death-knell to these arch-sinners. *There is no more spirit in them.* They are publicly disgraced and made infamous in the presence of the people and before the face of Jesus of Nazareth. They have no wish at all to continue their pompous prayers; but only to slink away, as they did once before, on this very spot and in this morning-time, when Jesus stooped down to write an extract on the ground from the dark story of their lives. Not knowing what to answer, filled with trouble and chagrin, they hastily mutter out the words: *What is that to us? Look you to it;* and hastily turn their backs on these unwelcome admonitions, and affect to be too busy, too much in haste, to attend to Judas.

Once more the crouching slaves of these degraded masters—men such as he was who struck Jesus in the face—come to the rescue, and interpose to drive the insolent intruder away; and will not suffer him to trouble these sacred High Priests and Ancients in this solemn and busy hour.

B. *What is that to us?*

Better, better far, a thousand times better for those High Priests and Ancients, had they laid aside their unholy work to attend to the task that best becomes the Priest of God, the raising up of the fallen!

C. *What is that to us?*

Is that your deliberate and final answer to this despairing sinner, ye Priests of the Most High God? If from yesterday's sunset to the nightfall of this day, there were no other sin of yours to be kept on the record than

this one, yet pause a little while and think: will you be glad of this word to the fallen outcast when you shall stand to be judged? Many a time in the synagogue have you read, or heard, the very words which the Judge of the living and the dead will address to you: *Wo to the shepherds of Israel that fed themselves: should not the flocks be fed by the shepherds? You ate the milk and you clothed yourselves with the wool, and you killed that which was fat: but My flock you did not feed. The weak you have not strengthened, and that which was sick you have not healed: that which was broken you have not bound up: and that which was driven away you have not brought again: neither have you sought that which was lost: but you ruled over them with rigour and with a high hand. And My sheep were scattered because there was no shepherd, and they became the prey of all the beasts of the field* (Ezech. xxxiv.).

Will you still say, *What is that to us?* in that hour when you are listening to this irrevocable denunciation of your most criminal neglect of duty towards the fallen sinner!

D. *They said: What is that to us? Look you to it.*

Have they then so soon and so entirely forgotten the words that Jesus addressed to them three days ago: *Wo to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut the Kingdom of Heaven against men, for you yourselves do not enter in, and those that are going in you suffer not to enter. Wo to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you go round about the sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made you make him the child of Hell two-fold more than yourselves* (St. Matt. xxiii.). This outcast traitor is one of your proselytes, whom you have won over to your doings; is it no concern of yours, whether he dies in his sins or returns by repentance to his Master?)

Priests and Ancients, receive instruction, and beware. Your Lord and your God, and your Judge, Whom you here hold in bonds during your short hour of rule and authority, is saying to you: "What you have done to the least and most wretched of My little ones you did it to Me"; and far

more readily will He at the great day of reckoning forgive the Wounds you have left on His own Body, than the incurable wounds and eternal death you have brought on the souls created and ransomed by Him.

E. *Look you to it.*

This is their verdict. Outcast Apostle! fallen sinner, pursued unremittingly by the tempter, and urged on to the abyss of everlasting hopelessness! *Look you to it.* Manage your own concerns, decide your own doom. You must stand alone, and alone struggle against all the cunning and the treachery of him who is the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning. Entirely they forget the word: *The lips of the Priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth* (Malach. ii.). Alas! "*Væ soli.*" *Wo to him that is alone. It is better that two should be together than one. If one fall he shall be supported by the other. Wo to him that is alone, for when he falleth he hath none to lift him up* (Eccles. iv.).

And if there is wo for him that is alone and falleth, what is in store for the strong and the mighty who were there to help, and whose sacred duty and whose office it was to help, and they left the fallen sinner to perish alone? Their sentence is written: *Horribly and speedily will He appear to you; for a most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule. For to him that is little, mercy is granted; but the mighty shall be mightily tormented. For God will not except any man's person, neither will He stand in awe of any man's greatness: for He made the little and the great, and He hath equally care of all. But a greater punishment is ready for the more mighty. To you, therefore, O Kings, are these my words, that you may learn wisdom and not fall from it* (Wisdom vi.). For one short day, Priests and Ancients, till the evening sacrifice shall be offered (it is your hour, your will shall prevail.) But pause in your work, be wise in time! Harken to the Holy Spirit saying to you: *Say not, I have sinned and what harm hath befallen me! For the Most High is a patient rewarder* (Ecclus. v.).

F. *What is that to us?*

If these Priests of the Old Testament had not rejected our Lord, they would, no doubt, have become consecrated Priests in His new Church, and would have had that heavenly power entrusted to them: *Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them*: and if they were ever tempted to say to the sinner confessing his guilt: *What is it to us?* they would have seen St. Paul start up at once with tears in his eyes to take the sinner's part, and saying with emotion: *Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is scandalised and I am not on fire?* (2 Cor. xi.).

The sin committed may be heinous and black, and one to be severely reprov'd, but he adds, with his heart on fire: *To him that is such a one this rebuke is sufficient that is given by many. So that contrariwise you should rather pardon and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with over-much sorrow. For which cause I beseech you that you would confirm your charity towards him* (2 Cor. ii.).

STATION IV.

And casting down the pieces of silver in the Temple, he departed (v. 5).

A. He ought not to depart. He does well to cast away the price of his 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 straitly bound, the Just Man, Whose innocent Blood he has betrayed; the Just Man, and his most merciful Master and Redeemer, to Whom he may most assuredly appeal. Magdalen was more out of rule and out of place when she fell at the feet of Jesus in the middle of the banquet, than Judas will be now if he falls down and clasps the feet of his Lord here in His own house, His house of prayer and mercy. Jesus will not answer:

What is it to Me? For on this very day He is the Lamb of God, and His Eternal Father has *laid on Him the iniquities of us all*. Jesus 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; fastening it to the Cross*.

B. *Casting down the pieces of silver.*

O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions! As long as a man has peace in his possessions, he shudders with horror when death comes, and cries out: "*Siccine separa amara mors?*"—Is bitter death going to tear me thus away from all my loved possessions? But, *O death, thy sentence is welcome to the man that is in need; and to him whose strength faileth, who is in a decrepit age; and that is in care about all things, and to the distrustful that loseth patience* (Ecclus. xli.). In this last case, the world abandons men before they give up the world. They only give up what they can no longer relish. So it is with Judas, he has no longer peace in his possessions. He is in care about all things. Remorse, not tempered by hope, is swallowing him up. He is distrustful; full of terror and remorse; and he has not patience to set all to rights by penance.

C. *Casting down the pieces of silver.*

Oh, how blessed are those who, while they have still a relish for the things of this world, give them up willingly and cheerfully for God's sake; and do not wait till death comes to wrench from them, against their will, all their dear possessions!

How much, how exceedingly does God love a cheerful giver, who in the spirit of love gives back to his Creator what his Creator has given in love to him!

What an unspeakable privilege it is for us to be able to give something to our God!

"Ever-Blessed Mother, help us to bless thy Son, Who, when He had no need at all of us, has become poor purposely that we may be able to give Him alms."

And never must we forget the lavish, the inconceivable munificence with which our God repays the man who lends Him freely what He wants from us. *He shall have a hundred-fold in this life, and life everlasting* in the better world. It is as if God were the poor, needy creature, and man His bountiful god.

"Mother of God, pray for us now that we may give up in heart, at least, and also in act, if our good God wishes it, our poor possessions, before they abandon us. Pray for us too, in the hour of death, that the bitter Passion of thy Son may enable us to welcome death when it comes to strip us and consume us."

D. Casting down the pieces of silver in the Temple.

In the Temple Jesus Christ appeals to us for His poor. In the Temple He pleads with us for His own wants, for He wants to work out the salvation of men. To do that He must have the Church as His home. He wants the Altar of Sacrifice. He wants His tabernacle. He wants the juice of the grape and the grains of wheat. He wants the sacred vestments. He wants the tribunal of penance. He wants the pulpit. He wants the holy font. He wants the sacred music—full and loud, sweet and becoming. He wants a sanctuary that shall attract the hearts of poor men. He wants the holy oil for the dying. He wants Christian children to be trained for the Priesthood. He wants alms wherewith to educate them.

May we have grace to love the beauty of God's house; and to love the poor; and above all, to love Jesus become so poor in His tabernacle, in order that we may have the glory of helping Him. May we have the grace to cast down willingly and cheerfully in the Temple what the traitor flung down out of a bitter necessity, and with so bad a grace.

And went and hanged himself with a halter.

1. As we read this passage, our first impression is that there is no break in the story; that Judas goes immediately from the Temple to the gloomy valley on the south side of the city, and

there without delay puts an end to his life. This opinion, which naturally suggests itself as we read, is the one most commonly followed.

2. In the writings, however, of one or two early Fathers, stories are found, which have not gained much belief, that Judas survived some years, wandering about *a vagabond and a fugitive* on the earth; that he was a dropsical man, and in the end was crushed to death by the wheels of a waggon. On the other hand, an opposite story, still less believed, is also found in the pages of an early Father, that Satan induced Judas to hasten his death by telling him that if he died before Jesus, he would obtain pardon from Him in the other world.

3. St. Peter, when addressing the meeting in the Upper Chamber after the Ascension, added other details about the death of Judas.

Being hanged, he burst asunder in the midst: and all his bowels gushed out (Acts i.).

In this passage, instead of our reading, *being hanged*, which is taken from the Latin Vulgate, "*suspensus*," the Greek text has the words, *πρηνὴς γινόμενος*—literally, "being, or becoming, prone". The Anglican version, following the Greek text, renders these words: being cast headlong. To reconcile these different readings, one esteemed commentator suggests that as the place where Judas died was both hilly and rocky, he probably stood on a ledge of rock while he fastened the rope round his neck, then flung himself off the rock, and by the weight of his body broke the branch, or the rope, and fell to the ground on his face, *prone*. His bursting asunder is accounted for in one of two ways: (1) that he was an obese, heavy man, and that the drop caused the rupture: or (2) that as he fell to the ground with his face downwards, he came in contact with one of the projecting rocks or sharp stones, which abound there, and thus burst asunder.

SCENE IV.

THE DEATH OF JUDAS.

STATION I.

He went and hanged himself with a halter (St. Matt. xxvii. 5).

A. We may notice with profit how in the end his death is entirely his own work. The Priests have, no doubt, provoked him; and grossly neglected to help him in his hour of need; and they thus become partners in his crime. The unseen tempter also persuades and urges him to

self-destruction; but it is he himself, and himself alone, that commits the suicide.

This must always be so. Suicide, as the word tells us, must always be the work of the man who kills himself. If others use violence and hold his hand and force him to wound himself, this is not suicide, but murder committed by them. It is essential to the notion of suicide that a man kills himself. This remark, though quite obvious, is not useless, for it sets before us this most important truth:

Sin is always a suicide.

When we sin we are oftentimes persuaded that all the blame attaches to others. "My father provoked me." "My employer for whom I worked would not pay me my wages, and so made me dishonest." "I was driven by ill-usage to take to drink."

Now, the people around us can, it is true, provoke us or persuade us, as Eve persuaded Adam; but neither man, nor angel, nor devil can *make us sin, or drive us into sin*. We have a proverb, that one man may lead a horse to the water, but ten men cannot force him to drink. This may be true, or may not; but it is absolutely true that not all the men on earth, nor all the devils in Hell can compel any one man to sin. God, Who created free-will, can of course destroy or control the will, but that He does not do; and no one else can do it.

Therefore *sin is always a suicide*. If I am provoked or persuaded by others to sin, they become partners in my sin; but I myself, and I alone, inflict the mortal wound on my soul and effect the suicide.

Destruction is thy own, O Israel (Osee xiii.).

Sin is then completely and entirely our own act. If men around us provoke us with their tongues, or cast stones at us, it still rests entirely with each of us whether we will, with St. Stephen, say: *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*, and die a glorious saint; or, yielding to the most gross and clumsy artifices of the father of lies, resolve that

because others are wronging us, we will add on to their wrong-doing an outrage, a terrible crime against ourselves, ten thousand times worse, nay, immeasurably worse than all that others can do to us.

If ever then we sin, and lay all the blame of our sin on others, we shall have sooner or later to deplore our folly: *We fools! we fools! the serpent deceived me.*

Destruction is thy own, O Israel. My sin is all my own.

B. *He went and hanged HIMSELF.*

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.

C. *He went and hanged himself.*

With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.

If I betray my God, or if I am a traitor to God's image, my neighbour, I end by betraying myself. Judas has turned traitor—against his own body and his own immortal soul, and betrayed them with unspeakable cruelty. All the wrongs he brought on his Divine Master shall be undone and repaired a thousand-fold. *Eye hath not seen* how every wound and sorrow shall be changed into heavenly jewels. But the suicide of Judas, his treason against himself, is for ever, and beyond all remedy or repair. With great reason, as well as with infinite charity, did our Saviour say: *Weep not over Me*, but weep over the poor sinner.

He went and hanged himself.

St. Peter afterwards, in the Upper Chamber, added these words: *Thou, Lord, Who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two (Joseph the Just or Matthias) Thou hast chosen to take the place of the ministry and Apostleship from which Judas hath by transgression fallen, that he might go to his own place*. Commentators generally understand these last words to mean that Judas had fallen from his Apostleship to go to his own place, that is to perdition which he merited. If, however, we consider the Greek text, is it not possible that the sense is: "Show, Lord, whether of these two Thou hast chosen to go to his own place," that is,

show whether Joseph or Matthias is to be the Apostle, that he may go and preach in the country which shall be assigned to him?

SCENE V.

THE TEMPLE.

STATION I.

But the Chief Priests having taken the pieces of silver said: It is not lawful to put them in the corbona, because it is the price of blood. And after they had consulted together, they bought with them the potter's field to be a burying-place for strangers. For this cause, that field was called Haceldama, that is, the field of blood, even to this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremias the Prophet, saying: And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was prized, Whom they prized of the children of Israel. And they gave them unto the potter's field as the Lord appointed to me (St. Matt. xxvii. 6—10).

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremias.

The words here quoted from Jeremias are not found in any of the writings of Jeremias that have come down to us; but St. Jerome testifies that he found the words in a book of Jeremias shown to him by a Jew; which book, however, has no place among the canonical books of Holy Church. That some writings of the Prophets and Apostles have been lost seems quite certain; and therefore we are not obliged to adopt the suggestion of some commentators that the name of Jeremias is inserted in the Sacred Text instead of the name of Zacharias, in whose prophecy are found words that may be those alluded to by St. Matthew, though perhaps this is somewhat doubtful.

The words read in the eleventh chapter of Zacharias are these: *And they weighed for My wages thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said: Cast it to the statuary (the potter), a handsome price that I was prized at by them! And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and I cast them into the house of the Lord, to the statuary.* The Lord is making known to Zacharias the coming rejection of the Jews, whom He calls *the flock of the slaughter*, that is, a race doomed to destruction. Zacharias is ordered to personate Christ, and act as shepherd of the flock. As shepherd I took, he says, *unto Me two rods: one I called BEAUTY, and the other a CORD (Zach. xi.).* These two rods represent the two ways in which God endeavoured to lead the Jews right, sometimes by the rod

of Beauty, that is, gentleness and love, sometimes by the Cord, the lash of severity and the bonds of captivity. Then the Prophet, acting thus in the person of Christ, as shepherd, goes on to say: *I took My rod that was called BEAUTY, and I cut it asunder to make void My Covenant, which I had made with all people, and it was made void in that day (Zach. xi.).* This signifies that when the Jews finally rejected all the loving and most merciful efforts of our Saviour to win them, the Covenant of mercy was at an end, and the Prophet adds, *And so the poor of the flock that keep for Me, understood that this is the Word of the Lord.* That is to say, a certain number among the poor will be faithful to Christ, and understand that the rejection of the Jews is God's decree.

And then the Prophet, speaking still in the person of Christ, says to the people: *If it be good in your eyes, bring hither My wages, and if not, be quiet.* That is, if you have still any wish that I should continue to be your Shepherd and rule over you, even with the rod of fear, bring Me My wages. Give Me some return for what I have done for you. Show Me some reverence at least, if you have no love. *If not, be quiet* (as we say—"leave it alone"). That is, if you don't choose to give Me My fitting wages, I shall not compel you to do so: use your free-will. *It is your hour, and the power of darkness.*

And they weighed for My wages thirty pieces of silver. They are not willing to give Me the reverence, the honour, the love that are My proper wages. All that they will give is thirty pieces of silver, in order that they may secure Me and put Me to death. In Exodus xxi. it was ordered that, if an ox belonging to one man gored the male or female slave of another man, the owner of the ox should pay in compensation thirty pieces of silver. And this sum is the only price, or wages, that the stiff-necked people are willing to pay. Therefore, *the Lord said to Me: Cast it to the statuary* (the potter, the man who models figures from clay), *a handsome price that I was prized at by them! And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and I cast them into the house of the Lord, to the statuary* (or the potter). And then the Prophet cuts asunder the second pastoral rod, that was called a CORD, to signify that God would no longer attempt, even by severity, to bring back the people to their duty, but would allow the disruption begun under Roboam, to be thoroughly completed by the Romans, who are to scatter Juda and Israel over the face of the earth, and leave not one stone of the Temple on another.

In the Prophet's picture, observe that our Lord considers the thirty pieces paid to Judas, who has been till now His bursar, as belonging to Him, or as if they had been paid to Him, and He exclaims, *A handsome price that I was prized at by them!* It shows how vile He is become in the eyes of men, that they only offer thirty pieces for Him; and His Apostle is willing to accept that price for Him. He, however, will not ratify the compact. He does not suffer His treacherous bursar to retain this money, which is such an insult and outrage. Nor must it remain in the

treasury of the Temple, which is His house. It must go to the potter to buy a burying-ground for strangers. Thus some good will come of it. Our Lord, therefore, entirely rejects the compact.

A. *It is the price of blood.*

Joseph, who was a type of our Lord, was sold by his brethren for twenty pieces of silver to the Ismaelites. They sold him because *Juda said to his brethren: What will it profit us to kill our brother and conceal his blood? It is better that he be sold to the Ismaelites, and that our hands be not defiled. For he is our brother and our flesh* (Genesis xxxvii.). But Jesus is sold by His own Apostle, and bought by His own Priests and people, in order that He may be killed and crucified. *They do not say, What will it profit us to kill our brother?* They, on the contrary, in their blindness think that all will be gained for them by His Death. *It is expedient that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not* (St. John xi.).

B. *A handsome price that I was prized at by them!*

St. Ignatius, in his meditation on our sins, sets before us as a matter for sorrowful meditation the very small price for which we give up our God. If there were two Gods, and I abandoned the one who created me and to whom I belong, to go over to the other God; this would be treason, but still I should be giving up one God for another equally good. But when we sin, the case is very different. *Be astonished, O ye Heavens, at this; and ye gates thereof be very desolate, saith the Lord. For My people have done two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have dug to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water* (Jerem. ii.). To turn our back on God is one great evil. But when we turn our back on our Creator and our Father, in order to gain, not another good God, but the gratification of some passion which is so vile that even if not forbidden we ought to shun it and abhor it on account of its baseness, we add a most hideous aggravation to our guilt. We abandon our God, the inexhaustible and ever

lasting Fountain of living waters, in order to have our revenge gratified for a few minutes, or for a short-lived sensual pleasure: *A handsome price that I was prized at by them! We fools, we fools! The serpent deceived me.*

C. *But the Chief Priests having taken the pieces of silver, said: It is not lawful to put them in the corbona, because it is the price of blood* (St. Matt. xxvii.).

Mark well how inconsistent, how illogical a deluded conscience can be. Only three days before Jesus said to those very men: *Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel* (St. Matt. xxiii.). They commit unhesitatingly the sins "they are inclined to," and affect to abhor those "they have no mind to". The corbona was the great alms-box, or treasury of the Temple, into which the widow cast her mite, that the poor might share her last farthing. Out of this treasury of God and of His poor the Priests did not scruple to take sacrilegiously the widow's alms to pay it to Judas as the price of the Just Man's innocent Blood; they gave the alms of the poor to procure the murder of the poorest of the blessed poor. But now that this unhallowed money is forced back upon them, their conscience does not permit them to put back into the corbona what they sacrilegiously stole out of the corbona.

"From the leaven of the Pharisees, the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, deliver us, O Lord.

"From a false and deluded conscience, deliver us, O Lord.

"From the snares of the devil, deliver us, O Lord."

And after they had consulted together, they bought with them the potter's field to be a burying-place for strangers (St. Matt.). A tradition, which seems well authenticated, tells us that the clay in the potter's field had a marvellous power of consuming quickly the bodies of strangers buried there; and that in after years St. Helena covered over half the field, and changed it into a vast vault, with several openings in the roof, through which the bodies of Christian pilgrims were let down for burial. The writers who give us this information add moreover that, when she

became aware of the wonderful power this earth had of consuming the flesh buried in it, she sent several ship-loads of the soil to the Campo Santo in Rome, where it preserved its power; but only over the bodies of strangers, for whose benefit the field was at first purchased. The well-known Jesuit writer, Father à Lapide, after copying this statement from an ancient writer, adds his testimony to its truth: "I have often visited the Campo Santo at Rome, and heard from the parish priest and his attendants, and from other Romans, that the facts stated are correct".

After they had consulted together.

Are we to suppose that the Chief Priests held this consultation, and resolved on buying the potter's field while on their way to Pilate? This is not probable. St. Matthew is the only Evangelist who mentions the episode of the remorse of Judas. He inserts here the consultation of the Priests because there was no other opportunity of alluding to it.

For this cause that field was called Haceldama, that is, the field of blood, even to this day (St. Matt.).

St. Peter, in his discourse in the Upper Chamber, says: *He indeed (Judas) hath possessed a field of the reward of iniquity; and being hanged, burst asunder, and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the same field was called in their tongue Haceldama, that is to say, the field of blood (Acts i.).*

Some Protestant commentators, who love to see discrepancies in different parts of Holy Writ, assume that these two stories do not agree. For St. Matthew writes that the field is called Haceldama, because the money spent upon it is the price of blood: while St. Peter, as they interpret, says that the name was given because Judas there committed suicide. But does St. Peter say this? According to tradition, the field, Haceldama, was not the scene of Judas' death; nor does St. Peter assert that it was. He merely states the two facts: (1) that Judas possessed the field; and (2) that he hanged himself. The field then is popularly called Haceldama for two reasons: (1) because the money paid for it is blood money; and (2) because the field belonged to the unhappy suicide.

St. Peter in his discourse says: *He (Judas) possessed the field,* and this passage is one of the reasons which induce some to think that Judas survived some time, and was the owner of the field. But this supposition is commonly considered quite improbable. St. Peter's words may merely mean that the field was bought with money that had been his.

SCENE VI.

FROM THE TEMPLE TO ANTONIA.

And the whole multitude of them rising up, led Him to Pilate (St. Luke xxiii.).

And they brought Him bound, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the Governor (St. Matt. xxvii.).

And they led Jesus . . . to the Governor's hall (St. John xviii.).

To the Governor's hall (Prætorium).

1. A question here meets us: where is the Governor's hall, or Prætorium?

Some writers and lecturers take for granted that Pilate was living in the Palace of Herod the Great, and that the Prætorium was there. This magnificent Palace stood on the west side of the city, close to what is now called the Jaffa Gate. One of the towers which formed part of this Palace is supposed to be still standing, and goes by the name of the Tower of Hippicus. It was spared by the Romans during the siege which changed Jerusalem into a ruin, in order that men in after times might form some idea of the strength of the fortifications which in vain resisted Roman valour.

This theory, however, is contradicted by the well-established and ancient tradition that the Prætorium to which our Saviour 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, and abutting on them. It is from this spot that all pilgrims begin the Way of the Cross. It is here that the arch called the arch of the Ecce Homo is shown, and the Chapel of the Flagellation. There seems to be no good reason for abandoning this venerable tradition. The number of those who recede from it is small. They are chiefly modern Protestant writers.

The Roman Governors not unfrequently preferred to fix their abode at Cæsarea by the sea, another creation of Herod the Great, and a monument of his desire to curry favour with the great men of Rome by honouring their names. When, however, they visited Jerusalem, they might, no doubt, ordinarily dwell in the grander palace of Herod on the western side; but during the Paschal season when a vast crowd of excitable Jews, very impatient of Roman rule, were gathered in and around Jerusalem, it was very natural that they should prefer to be with the Roman soldiers in the strong fortress of Antonia, whence they could watch and control every movement in the Temple grounds and in the whole city.

2. Consequently, the multitude of Priests, Ancients, Scribes, Pharisees, and their retainers, who are leading Jesus to the Governor's house, when they leave the Temple, have only to advance northward, a very short journey of a few minutes, in order to reach the great gateway leading into a courtyard which lies to the north of the fortress. If the students of ancient topography be correct, the procession of the Priests and Ancients walked past the western side of the Castle of Antonia into a large square or forum, and there on their right hand found the gateway that led into the Lithostrotos, the large paved courtyard which was on the north side of the Castle and the Prætorium.

3. As all the Temple buildings, and the colonnade around, have been remodelled on a magnificent scale by Herod the Great, and as the Castle of Antonia is also his work, our Blessed Saviour, as He is dragged along, is surrounded on all sides by memorials of that unblessed King who massacred the Innocents in the hope of rendering the Blessed Mother of God childless.

4. This fortress which King Herod enlarged and strengthened, and called Antonia in memory of his patron, Mark Antony, was originally built by the Machabees, and called Baris. After Herod's improvements, Josephus describes it, in exaggerated terms, as like a city from its size and the accommodation it afforded to the soldiers of the garrison; and like a palace from its magnificence. It covered, we are told, an area of one hundred yards square. The rock on which it stood was, Josephus writes, seventy-five feet high, and the sides of this rock were faced with marble, which not only served as ornament, but also rendered it well-nigh impossible for an enemy to scale the walls. From this rock the fortress rose to a height of sixty feet, with a turret at each angle. One of these turrets on the south side was a little more than one hundred feet high; and from thence the Roman soldiers could command a view of the city, and especially the Temple grounds; and there were two flights of steps by which they could descend rapidly into the Temple area and crush at once any disturbance. There was also an underground passage connecting the fortress with the Temple.

On the northern side of the fortress, between Antonia and Mount Bethesda, a deep artificial fosse had been dug to render the Castle more impregnable.

5. The Prætorium, we are told, was not within the fortress, which was reserved as a stronghold where the Governor and the Roman Legion could have a safe refuge in any time of disturbance. The Governor's hall and offices were in a separate building, standing on a much lower level than the Castle, and connected with Antonia by drawbridges or galleries.

6. Careful students of ancient topography generally place the fortress at the north-west corner of the Temple enclosure. In this they are following the guidance of Josephus. This Temple enclosure had been, as has been said, much enlarged by Herod, and at the time of our Lord was, it is supposed, about

fifteen hundred feet long from north to south, and nine hundred broad from east to west, and in the opinion of these writers, the fortress occupied about two hundred feet of the northern boundary of the Temple area, and projected another hundred feet to the west. The remaining six hundred or seven hundred feet along the northern side of the Temple area were occupied by the Prætorium and other offices.

7. On the opposite side to the Temple, that is to say, on the northern front of Antonia and the Prætorium, there was a large courtyard or square, paved, we are told, with reddish stones, and called in Greek, Lithostrotos, in Hebrew, Gabbatha.

In this Lithostrotos there stood a raised tribunal, from which the Governor at times administered justice.

A flight of marble steps, venerated now in Rome as the Scala Santa, led from the balcony in front of the Prætorium down to the Lithostrotos.

8. The Castle of Antonia stood just outside the northern wall of the city, commonly called the Second Wall.

The more ancient wall known as the First Wall, is supposed to have been built by David or Solomon.

It ran due west from the wall of the Temple area to the Palace of Herod the Great, on the western side of the city.

Later, as the city grew to the North, the Asmonean Princes found it necessary to build the Second Wall.

Outside this second wall a large northern suburb had in time sprung up on the slope of Mount Bethesda, which, as has been said, was separated from Mount Moriah by a deep cut, partly natural, partly artificial. For the protection of this suburb, King Herod Agrippa, about twelve years after our Saviour's death, built a wall known as the third wall. Between the third wall of Agrippa and the first wall of David and Solomon, a second, as has been said, had been built by the Asmonean Princes, the successors of the Machabees, to protect houses which had been built outside the old first wall.

9. In the great northern suburb on Bethesda, which Agrippa afterwards enclosed, the Romans, following their usual practice, constructed, we are told, a large forum for assemblies of the people. This forum was probably contiguous to the west side of the Lithostrotos, and close to the ancient northern wall of the city.

10. Advancing then from the Temple grounds northward, the Priests and Ancients pass by, as has been said, the Castle of Antonia on their right hand and go into the forum, and thus arrive at a gateway, also standing on their right hand, which leads them into the Lithostrotos.

Arriving at this gateway they face to the right, and walk down eastward past the northern front of Antonia, and arrive at the Scala Santa. There they stand with their faces turned southwards, looking up to the doorway through which they impatiently expect the Governor to come out to them.

11. Pontius Pilate, we are told, was a descendant of Pontius,

King of the Samnites, who defeated the Romans in battle. Some think that he acquired the surname of Pilate by some exploit in war. He was the sixth Procurator who governed Judea since its annexation to the Roman province of Syria. He had been about nine years in office on the first Good Friday. Till his time the seat of government had been at Cæsarea by the sea, so called to distinguish it from Cæsarea Philippi, built by Philip, one of Herod the Great's sons, and *Tetrarch of Iturea and the country of Trachonitis* (St. Luke iii.). Like the rest of the Herodian family, he gave a Roman name to his new city.

Pilate was the first who quartered the Roman Cohorts in Jerusalem; and exasperated the Jews to the highest pitch by ordering the Roman Eagles to be displayed there. Their remonstrance was so determined that Pilate was on the point of ordering a massacre of them; but in the end he thought it better to yield. On two other occasions, however, he did command his soldiers to use their swords and daggers. St. Luke alludes to one of these affrays: *There were present at that very time some that told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices* (xiii.). This massacre, supposed to have taken place in the Temple grounds, and apparently not many months before, must still be fresh in the memory of the Rulers. Another similar massacre of Jews is mentioned by Josephus, when the Roman soldiers with their daggers killed many of them. Pilate had, moreover, excited great odium by taking money out of the Temple Treasury for public works.

The Priests and Ancients, therefore, cannot now be very partial to him, nor he to them. But as they have before prevailed over his will by showing a bold front, they trust that the same plan may succeed now. They are, moreover, doubtless aware that he has been reprehended by Tiberius for not conciliating the Jews, as the Romans tried to do with all tributary nations.

STATION I.¹

Then they led Jesus 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 (St. John xviii. 28).

It was morning.

I. If we suppose that the procession started from the Priests' Palace at the beginning of the first morning watch, about 6 A.M., according to our reckoning, it would be probably drawing near to 7 o'clock when they arrive at the Prætorium

¹ It might be well here to refresh our memory of St. Ignatius' method of contemplating the Sacred Passion. See vol. i. pp. 16—18.

II. As we have taken for granted that a 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 crowd assembled in Jerusalem. He 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 on urgent business; that they have captured the dangerous Leader of the seditious; 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 be in the eyes of the people unfit to take part in the eating of the Pasch in the evening.

A. They led Jesus to the Governor's hall. And it was morning.

From the high turret of the fortress Antonia, Pilate's officers can see the multitude when they are still at half a mile's distance, crossing the Tyropœon, from Mount Sion to the Temple grounds. The Governor is informed that this large gathering is approaching. As we have seen, he has had some experiences of these Jewish demonstrations, and therefore has his guards in readiness.

Men say sometimes that Christianity has worked no good. This much it has at least effected. It has taught many Christian rulers that they must be God's faithful stewards. Such men, therefore, take care not to begin the important business of the day without assisting at the Holy Mass if they can, or, at least, without an earnest cry to their God for light, for guidance, for strength, for rectitude. "Prevent, we beseech Thee, O Lord, our actions—forestalling them by Thy inspirations, and carry them on by Thy gracious assistance, that every word and work of ours may begin always from Thee, and by Thee be happily ended." Such prudent and faithful servants whom *the Lord hath placed over His family*, are well convinced *that we ought to prevent the sun to bless Thee, O God, and adore Thee at the dawning of the light* (Wisdom xvi.).

Pilate's good Angel is doubtless whispering words akin to those of our Saviour last night in the Garden: *Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.* Sore is the Governor's need of prayer to strengthen him.

Seek not to be made a judge unless thou have strength enough to extirpate iniquities: lest thou fear the person of the powerful, and lay a stumbling-block for thy integrity. Be not faint-hearted in thy mind. Neglect not to pray and to give alms (Ecclus. vii.).

They went not into the hall, that they might not be defiled: but might eat the Pasch.

Commentators may truly say of this passage: *I studied that I might know this thing; it is a labour in my sight* (Psalm lxxii.).

We have already seen in the chapter on the Last Supper something of the question which is raised: Why have they to eat the Pasch to-night? Why did they not eat it yesterday evening, as our Lord did?

Moreover, why are they doing profane work to-day, as this is the first day of the Paschal solemnity which is to be observed as a Sabbath day? *The first day shall be holy and solemn, and the seventh day shall be kept with the like solemnity. You shall do no work in them except those that belong to eating* (Exodus xii.). In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, shall be the Phase of the Lord: and on the fifteenth day the solemn feast (Numbers xxviii.).

It seems quite clear that they are not keeping the Friday as the solemn feast-day; and are not abstaining from servile work.

What is the reason?

In addition to what has been already said in the chapter just mentioned, we may here notice some points as a help to a solution.

I. The word *Phase of the Lord* is found in Holy Writ applied not only to the eating of the Paschal lamb, but to the other celebrations prescribed for the seven days of the Azymes, or unleavened bread. *Thou shalt sacrifice the Phase to the Lord thy God, of sheep and oxen: thou shalt not eat it with leavened bread* (Deut. xvi.).

So too we find in the account of the Pasch celebrated so solemnly by Josias (2 Paral. xxxv.) that the King gives to the people for the celebration, besides the lambs and kids, of other small cattle thirty thousand: and that the eating of the roasted Phase and the eating of the boiled peace-offering make up one celebration. In the Book of Numbers also (xxviii.) we read that what is done on the first day of the Azymes is to be repeated on all the other days: *So shall you do every day of the seven days.*

This being so, it is not surprising that the Priests and Ancients, many of whom are Pharisees, and wish to pass for

very righteous men and strict observers of law, desire to appear quite clean even for the celebration of the second evening.

II. Then besides, as the celebration on the Friday evening begins the great Sabbath-day—for the Sabbath which occurs within the seven days of the Azymes is especially solemn and called the Great Sabbath—they might very naturally wish to pass before the people as free from defilement for such a service.

III. These conjectures, however, though they may possibly account for the words of the Evangelist, *that they might eat the Pasch*, yet do not explain how it happens that the Priests and Ancients are not keeping the first day of the Azymes as a solemn festival day on which they must abstain from all servile work. The Evangelists speak of the Good Friday only as the *Parasceve*; that is, the *preparation day* for the Great Sabbath; the vigil of the Great Sabbath. If it had been a solemn festival day, as solemn as the Sabbath itself, they would surely have referred to it as such.

The most probable answer to this difficulty seems to be that rightly or wrongly a custom had been introduced whereby, when the first day of the Azymes fell on the eve of the Sabbath, the festival was transferred to the Sabbath in order to avoid the inconvenience of having two days of strict obligation without a break between.

IV. Our Blessed Saviour, then, celebrated the Paschal supper on the day prescribed in the Law: and the day on which He died was *de jure* the solemn festival day of the Pasch—the first day of the Azymes; the fifteenth day of the month Nisan. Whether the High Priests had sufficient authority to transfer the feast to the day following is a question of no great importance to us. If they were going beyond their powers, this was not their only nor their greatest transgression.

V. *That they might not be defiled.*

Some writers think that the Jews incurred legal defilement by transacting any business, at any time, in the court of a Pagan judge. Others limit this liability to the Paschal time. Others, again, are of opinion that the danger of legal defilement in this instance arose merely from the case being one in which blood would be shed.

B. *They went not into the hall, that they might not be defiled.*

St. John afterwards wrote: *Jesus did not trust Himself to them: for that He knew all men—He knew what was in man.* How well He knows the hearts and secret thoughts of these Rulers blinded by pride! His words of last Tuesday are still ringing in their ears: *Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!* They are anxious to make the

Roman Governor believe that they are righteous and scrupulous men, who *strain out a gnat*. Before the ninth hour he will see clearly enough that they can swallow a camel. *Wo to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness. Hypocrites! you tithe mint, anise, and cummin, and have left the weightier things of the law: judgment, and mercy, and faith* (St. Matt. xxiii.).

"Merciful Lord Jesus, Who knowest all men, and art the *Searcher of hearts*, give us grace to detest the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

C. *They went not in.*

We may contemplate their feverish excitement as they stand at the bottom of the steps looking up to the doorway; doubting whether the Governor will or will not condescend to come to them; and their bitter murmurs at the delay: and their curses and words of execration. All their peace of mind and contentment is at the mercy of this Pagan, who loves them not at all.

Meanwhile, Pilate is between two minds. Shall he or shall he not comply with the wish of these men whom he scorns? *He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea which is moved and carried about by the wind* (St. James i.). In the end, the remembrance of the Emperor's command, that he is to conciliate the subject people, or some other politic motive, determines him to humour the Rulers.

"Ever-Blessed Mother, pray for us, that the grace of thy Son may keep our wills firm and constant in the law of the Lord, that we may not become like the dust which the wind driveth from the face of the earth" (Psalm i.).

SCENE VII.

IN THE LITHOSTROTOS BEFORE PILATE.

STATION I.

Pilate therefore went out to them (St. John xviii. 29).

The doors are at length opened, and, not without the protection of his guards, the Governor comes out; and first from the balcony he surveys the multitude: the High Priests in the foreground; Annas, whom he deposed, and Caiphas, and all the notable men of the city. His eyes also rest on Jesus, so mercilessly bound and chained, looking so pale and so disfigured. The Blessed Mother with John and Magdalen and the other sorrowful women are behind. Holy Mary, with all her mind and all her heart, is watching and listening: *No particle of the good gift escapes her*. After his careful survey, the Governor comes down some of the steps, expressing, perchance, to his officers beside him his contempt for the rabble, and for the hubbub they are making about such a poor Prisoner; and the barbarity with which they are treating Him.

As he draws near, the noise in the crowd is hushed.

"Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may have eyes to see, and ears to hear."

STATION II.

Pilate therefore went out to them and said: What accusation bring you against this Man? They answered and said: If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to thee (vv. 29, 30).

A. *What accusation bring you against this Man?*

This is a fair and reasonable question; one that a judge could not fail to ask who had any share of that sense of justice which helped so much, it is thought, to win for Rome the empire of the world. Some years later, when the Jews were thirsting for St. Paul's blood, Festus,

the Proconsul, said to King Herod Agrippa I told them (the Jews) *that it is not the custom of the Romans to condemn any man, before that he who is accused have his accusers present, and have liberty to make his answer, to clear himself of the thing laid to his charge* (Acts xxv.). There is nothing, then, at all amiss in the Governor's question.

But the Priests and Ancients are *cut to the heart* by it. They are not come to be catechised. They do not want the Roman to play the judge, and investigate. What wonder! These are the men of whom Jesus said to Nicodemus, *Men love darkness rather than the light. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light.* It is not to find light and truth that they have been watching last night, and have risen before the dawn, and hurried so fast to the Prætorium. *Their feet are swift to shed blood.* Their present work is very evil. Consequently, they hate and abhor the light, and all investigation. When therefore they hear the Governor questioning, at once *their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. The poison of asps is under their lips* (Psalm xiii.). After interchanging for a moment their glances full of anger, and turning their eyes to their leader Annas, to see what instructions they can get from his features, they chime in at once with the words they hear him saying, and cry out noisily together:

B. *If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to thee.*

Of accusations they have but one: *He calleth Himself the Son of God.* Pilate's ears are not prepared as yet for this charge. He would answer at once, as a Roman Proconsul answered later, when a disciple of Jesus was brought before him: *If it were some matter of injustice, or a heinous deed, O ye Jews, I should with reason bear with you; but if they be questions of words and names of your law, look you to it. I will not be judge of such things. And he drove them from the judgment-seat* (Acts xviii.).

They have not come to give one single proof. They are in a state of extreme tension. They cannot brook

any contradiction. The Roman must be browbeaten. They have done it before. They can do it again. "When we come here in a body—all the influential men of Judea—what business has he to doubt our word? Does he not know that by lifting our finger we can raise the people? Let him mind what he is about!"

Let our strength be the law of justice (Wisdom ii.).

C. *If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him to you.*

We have examined already, most fully. We here declare Him to be a malefactor. What more evidence do you require? Is an uncircumcised heathen daring to call in question our sentence?

Thou wast born wholly in sin, and dost thou teach us? (St. John ix.).

The anger of man worketh not the justice of God; nor does it even satisfy a Roman's very imperfect sense of justice.

D. *If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to you.*

In these Watches of the Sacred Passion the whole history of human wickedness is epitomised. *What is it that hath been done here to-day? The same that shall be done.*

Men are still, every day, browbeating and terrifying the weak till they sacrifice conscience and yield to their tyrants.

E. *If He were not a malefactor.*

We may consider, too, how often men still accuse the absent, and bring no proof at all, and allow no investigation; and deem it an insult if their slander is not accepted without question.

If He were not a malefactor, do you think I would have said so? Do you mean to accuse me of telling a lie?

From the 14th Psalm we learn that it is a sign of predestination when one has courage not to take up in such a case *a reproach against his neighbour*: and when *the malignant accuser is brought to nothing* (Psalm xiv.).

F. *If He were not a malefactor.*

Let us contemplate meanwhile the Heart of our Blessed Lord and the Heart of His Holy Mother, how they are pleading intensely for Pilate, that he may have grace to judge justly. We have seen in how many ways, and how many times Jesus appealed to Judas, and strove to win him. Now the charity of His Heart is turned upon Pilate. *He hath given His angels charge over him*, to counteract the wicked inspirations of Lucifer.

This is the great day of battle. *Mors et vita, duello conflixere mirando.*

The struggle in this hour is for the soul of the Roman Governor all of a sudden so assaulted with temptation. *They have opened their mouths against Me as a lion ravening and roaring* (Psalm xxi.).

"Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that in our day of conflict we may not enter into temptation."

G. *What accusation do you bring against this man?*

We have to reflect on ourselves. If we would make leisure, and give the Blessed Mother opportunity, she too would perchance say to us with most persuasive earnestness, "*What accusation do you bring against my Son Jesus? What fault do you find in Him that your disrelish for Him is so strong? Why do you shun Him? Why do you dread so much to be alone with Him? What is the cause that you will not watch one hour with Him? In what has He molested you? Answer me*" (Micah vi.).

We know the one answer. *He is a censurer of our thoughts. He is not for our turn. We are esteemed by Him as triflers.*

"O Mother of Mercy, pray for us that we may never wish His thoughts to become like our thoughts, but rather that our hearts may become like to His."

STATION III.

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 kill any one. That the word of Jesus might be fulfilled which He said, signifying what death He should die (vv 31, 32).

A. If Pilate were a man as firm as the Proconsul Gallio afterwards was, he would have stuck to his question: *What accusation do you bring? If it (be) some matter of injustice, or a heinous deed, I (shall) with reason bear with you.* But if they have no proof of crime committed, he will drive them *from the judgment-seat.* Pilate, alas! is not firm; he is a weak man; a man by no means strong in justice. Theologians divide sins into sins of malice, sins of weakness, and sins of ignorance. We have all the kinds of sin exemplified to-day: in the Priests and Ancients we see malice; in Pilate weakness; in the people ignorance and weakness.

"From the weakness of Pilate, O Lord, deliver us."

B. *Take Him you, and judge Him.*

It was a gross outrage to a Roman Governor to ask him to sentence a prisoner at their bidding, and without trial. The Governor is quite alive to the arrogance and insolence of their bearing towards him. It would not at all displease him to mingle some more Jewish blood with the Paschal sacrifice; but he has some of that self-command which politic men can put on: he has been reprehended by Tiberius, and he is dealing with the powerful men of Judea, and he sees determination in the scowling eyes and angry faces. He knows well that want of courage and boldness is not a characteristic of the Jews. If he had ordered his legionaries to disperse the gathering, he would not have deserved blame; but as he has not courage to end the discussion in the right way by driving them away *from the judgment-seat*, he seeks to get rid of the unpleasant

business by apparent courtesy. *Take Him you and judge Him.*

Under ordinary circumstances, the subject race would be flattered and gratified if a cause were thus entrusted to them by their Roman masters; but Pilate does not understand the present temper of the Sanhedrim. They do not want any form of trial. They have already tried and judged Jesus. They want His death, and death by crucifixion; and they want, moreover, to be able to tell the people that it was not they who put Him to death, but the Roman Governor. Most indignantly they said afterwards to the Apostles, *You have a mind to bring this Man's Blood on us* (Acts v.).

C. *Take Him you and judge Him.*

We have here one instance of the many which show how the overruling providence of God is guiding the storm that is raging, and making all things *co-operate unto good*. For though this answer of Pilate is not what would have come from an upright and just judge, yet it compels the hypocrites who hate the light to reveal their hidden purpose: "We don't ask for a trial. We have come to have His Blood. We have power to judge Him, but not to crucify Him."

From the mouths of children He can draw perfect praise, and from the mouths of lying men He can draw truth.

D. *It is not lawful for us to kill any one.*

Here then we have the real answer to Pilate's question: *What accusation have you against this Man?* Accusation, none. We are come to require of you to crucify Him.

It is not lawful for us to kill any one.

The common opinion seems to be that the Romans had taken away from the Jewish tribunals the power of life and death. But if so, some ask, how did they stone St. Stephen? And more than once they took up stones to kill our Lord. How explain this?

To this difficulty one answer given is, that they still retained power to kill blasphemers. But if this were so, would they not

at once last night have stoned our Lord when they all pronounced Him guilty of blasphemy? Or if, through fear of the people, they abstained from so doing, Pilate at least, when later he finds that the real charge against Jesus is that He is a blasphemer, would certainly have got rid of this most unwelcome business forced upon him, by telling them that they have power to condemn blasphemers, and therefore must not trouble him.

A more probable answer, perhaps, is that they have no right to kill; but when they stoned St. Stephen, as on other occasions, they were carried away by that lawless spirit and that hatred of Roman rule, which at length brought Titus and his legions under their walls.

Another less probable answer is also given, that they retained their power over life and death, but considered it wrong to exercise this power during the days of the Azymes. Had this been their difficulty, Pilate would surely have told them to wait for a few days, and thus have got rid of his most unwelcome task.

E. *It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.*

It is a great grievance with these Rulers that the Romans have taken from them the power of killing. It is not the Romans, but our good God Who has laid on us the commandment: *Thou shalt not kill*. In this instance, as in all others, He only forbids things which we ought ourselves to loathe and detest, even if they were not forbidden. As He is Supreme God, even if He commanded very hard things, and forbade things wholesome and salutary, yet we as poor insignificant creatures have no right to resist: *I the Lord have created him. Wo to him that gainsayeth his Maker*. But because He is not only our Creator, but our Father, and our gracious and merciful and loving God, He never does command aught but what is most desirable for us; and never forbids anything that we ought not to detest and shun even if it were not forbidden.

He orders us to love Him and love our neighbours. He forbids us to kill, to hate, to be proud, and to be drunkards. Have we reasonable cause to complain of such commands and such forbiddings?

I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart (Psalm cxviii.).

F. *It is not lawful for us to kill any one.*

Our Blessed Lady, if we will listen, will counsel us to lay this word up in our hearts. It is not lawful—it is highly unlawful—to kill or wound the soul of any of God's children, our brethren.

“O Merciful Mother, pray for us, that with Zacheus we may say from our hearts: *If I have wronged any one, I restore him four-fold.*”

G. *That the word of Jesus might be fulfilled which He said, signifying what death He should die.*

About a week or ten days ago, as we have seen, our Saviour had called aside His twelve Apostles near Jericho, and prophesied to them in presence of the traitor: *The Son of Man shall be betrayed to the Chief Priests and Scribes; (2) and they shall condemn Him to death; (3) and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles; (4) to be mocked, and (5) scourged, and (6) crucified.*

Three of these six prophecies are already fulfilled.

H. *It is not lawful for us to kill any one.*

So now things are apparently at a deadlock. Strong graces are being offered to Pilate, through the prayer that is ascending from the Heart of our Lord and the heart of His Mother. Apparently he will adhere to Roman justice; he will not sentence Jesus to death without trial.

The Priests and the Ancients, on the other hand, are resolved that trial there shall not be. After the failure of the witnesses last night, the word went forth: No more judicial inquiry. Their reliance is, and must be, on the dignity and majesty of their presence. “This will certainly overawe the Governor; and he will yield at once.” They are disappointed.

It will help us, if we bear in mind the prayer of our Lord in the Cenacle: *Father, the hour is come. Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee.* There are, then, two desires in our Lord's Heart: one, that He may quickly be baptised in His Blood; the other, that His enemies may gain no triumph whereby the souls of men shall suffer

scandal; that throughout the Passion He may be glorified, by being fully recognised as innocent; and that wickedness may be brought to naught. *Let them be confounded and ashamed that seek after My Soul. Let them be turned back and be confounded that devise evil against Me* (Psalm xxxiv.).

In this hour, then, these wise Rulers are confounded and put to shame and turned back.

Their plan of carrying all before them by their august presence has, like their other designs, failed entirely. They are obliged to turn back to their first plan, which they abandoned last night as hopeless. They must bring some accusations.

“O compassionate Mother of God, pray for us sinners that we may be confounded and ashamed and filled with true contrition for those miserable hours in which we devised evil against our God, and against thy Son. May the most just, and most high, and most amiable will of thy Son and our Lord be done for ever.”

STATION IV.

And they began to accuse Him, saying: We have found this Man (1) perverting our nation; and (2) forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar; and (3) saying that He is Christ the King (St. Luke xxiii. 2).

A. Their minds, then, are in utter confusion. Suddenly, quite against their intention, they are compelled without plan, without order, without any proof ready, without any appointed spokesman, to pour out with clamour and disorder all the absurd and improbable accusations which last night they abandoned as hopeless.

1. *We have found Him perverting the people.*

Were Gallio the Proconsul here he would say: “This is a vague charge. If it means exciting them to be disloyal to the Romans, where is your proof? If it means that He is teaching some doctrines contrary to your law; then it is a question of words and names of your law; look you to it. I

will not be a judge of such things." And he drove them from the judgment-seat.

2. *And forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar.*

Pilate knows perfectly well that with the exception of the Herodians—that faction which follows the fortunes of the Herods—all the Jews, and most of all the Ancients and Rulers, would bless the man that forbade tribute to Cæsar. This lie is transparent.

3. *Saying that He is Christ the King.*

For this charge there may be some foundation. This emaciated and exhausted Man may be some fanatical enthusiast who pretends to royalty; but it is *not the custom of the Romans to condemn any man before that he who is accused have liberty to make his answer, to clear himself of the thing laid to his charge.* He will therefore on this point examine the Prisoner.

B. *They began to accuse Him.*

What is it that hath been done? The same that shall be done. We have set before our eyes on this Good Friday a specimen chapter that is to be continually reproduced in the history of this sinful world.

While we contemplate, we are looking at our own days, and our own passions, and our own iniquity.

We must notice then how utterly false, and unjust, and shameless men become when a prey to envy and hatred and malice. *Their throat is an open sepulchre which pours out poison. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. There is no fear of God before their eyes (Psalm xlii.). The tongue is a fire; a world of iniquity; an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison (St. James iii.).*

While listening to the calumnies of these enemies of our Lord, we must in sorrow bear in mind what He has revealed to us, that His Sacred Heart feels every word we utter against our neighbours as if said against Himself.

Am I doing anything to heal the wounds caused by my tongue and to repair four-fold the evil I have wrought by it?

C. *We have found this Man forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar.*

St. Paul's words are verified here: *Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest. For thou dost the same things which thou judgest (Romans ii.).* The dishonest suspect others of dishonesty. The unchaste accuse others of immorality. Proud men inveigh against pride. Self-willed men denounce tyranny.

These hypocrites have never ceased opposing the Roman tribute; and did their best to draw from our Lord's lips a condemnation of the odious impost. And now He deserves death because He has forbidden tribute to Cæsar. *Let them be clothed with confusion and shame, who speak great things against Me (Psalm xxxiv.).*

Thou art inexcusable, O man. For thou dost the things which thou judgest (Romans ii.).

D. *They began to accuse Him.*

While so many tongues are reviling our Blessed Lord, we can turn to our Blessed Lady, who in her heart is saying: *My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Jesus.*

"Holy Mother of Sorrows, obtain for us grace to say most heartily: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. *Benediction and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and strength to our God for ever and ever, Amen*" (Apoc. vii.).

STATION V.

Pilate therefore went into the hall again, and called Jesus (St. John xviii. 33).

A. The Governor, helped by the grace given to him, has a wish to be just. He will examine the Prisoner. Some of his guards come down the steps of the Scala Santa to fetch Jesus. The Priests and Ancients surround them and warn them earnestly that He is a most noted Seducer; that He deals in witchcraft; that He may at any moment attempt an escape; that they must lead Him

most cautiously, and not spare Him. Perchance too they bribe the Romans with money to be on their side against Jesus. The guards, seeing the heavy chains, the ropes, the cords, and how they have *humbled His feet in fetters*, scoff at their fears of an escape, and lead Jesus at once up the steps into the hall.

B. *Pilate called Jesus.*

"*Vae victis.*" Hard is the lot of the weak and the fallen! We must mark how much suffering is caused to our Blessed Saviour's weary and worn Body by the journey up this long flight of steps. If Pilate's clemency and justice inflict so much suffering, what shall his injustice and iniquity do?

Moreover, as our Saviour climbs, if we see Him tottering and stumbling, we must not forget that the real cause is that *the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquities of us all.*

C. *Pilate went into the hall and called Jesus.*

Let us observe with what intensity of compassion our Blessed Lady watches every step of her Divine Son as He ascends; and how she listens to every rough word and every blow from the soldiers, who rebuke Him if His step falters.

We read in the contemplations of the Venerable Mother d'Agreda, that our Blessed Lady, as she saw Him fall on the way to the Priests' Palace, was so overpowered by the outrages and cruelties heaped upon Him, that she sent one of her attendant angels to ask most reverently of Him whether instead of honouring His Father by these terrible falls, He would not consent to glorify Him by substituting a humble compliance with her motherly desires that the heart-rending spectacle of His falls might not be so frequently reproduced; and we are told that the wish of Holy Mary was complied with; so that the falls became less frequent till He made His last journey along the *Via dolorosa*.

D. In this wish of our Blessed Lady an important truth is contained which is inculcated by St. Thomas and

other theologians, that as the love of His Eternal Father was always infinite in our Divine Lord, any act of His, however trivial in our eyes, gives as much glory to His Father as the worst sufferings of His Passion. Our Blessed Lady, the Seat of Wisdom, fully understands this truth, and therefore is not desiring anything that diminishes the glory of her God.

E. *Pilate went into the hall and called Jesus.*

As we contemplate our Blessed Saviour dragging His worn Body with so much difficulty up these steps, we must again and again call to mind the cause of so much labour and anguish: *He loved me and He delivered Himself up for me.*

And we may hear His Holy Mother saying most feelingly to each of us, "*My child, Tantus labor non sit cassus—May all His toil not fruitless be.*"

Blessed is the man whose help is from thee, Mother of God, in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps in the vale of tears. The lawgiver shall give a blessing. They shall go from virtue to virtue. The God of gods shall be seen in Sion (Psalm lxxxiii.).

To reach our place in Heaven we must climb the mount of God; rising *from virtue to virtue—and keeping ourselves unspotted from this world (St. James i.). Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? The innocent and clean of heart (Psalm xxiii.).*

If while climbing we grow faint, our Blessed Saviour says to us most compassionately, "*I am yoked to you. I am climbing with you. I can compassionate your infirmities.*" *For we have not a High Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities; but One tempted in all things, like as we are, without sin (Hebrews iv.).*

STATION VI.

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? (vv. 33, 34).

A. Art Thou the King of the Jews?

St. John wrote many years after: *There are also many other things which Jesus did: which if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written.* We must, therefore, always bear in mind that only a few things are recorded and many omitted.

Pilate, when he heard the accusations so hotly urged by the Priests and Ancients, would probably ask, Where are your witnesses? Finding that no evidence at all is forthcoming on the first charge—we have found Him perverting the people—he sets it aside as vague and unmeaning. The second—*forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar*—reveals to him at once how badly in want of an accusation the Rulers must be, since they pretend to wish for His death, merely because He opposes the tribute, whereas he knows well that they would be proud of any man who did this. From this charge he begins to see clearly that Jesus is the victim of the malice of these men whom he hates and despises.

Then, moreover, we cannot suppose him to be ignorant of passing events. St. Luke tells us that Chusai, the wife of Herod's steward, was a disciple of Christ. So too may there be disciples in the court of Pilate. It is commonly believed that his wife, Claudia Procla, though allied, it is said, by blood to the Roman Emperors, was already a believer in Christ. From her and others Pilate may have learned much. He has been in office all during the Public Life of Jesus. A few days ago, on the Palm Sunday, he and his soldiers could see from Antonia every step of the triumphal procession of our Lord

from the moment they crossed the summit of Olivet to its arrival at the Temple. It is impossible, then, that he should not have heard much concerning Jesus of Nazareth.

Now, moreover, he has watched in wonder and with admiration His patience under insult and outrage, His gracious manner, His dignified bearing, the beauty of His features; for though His Face is bruised and defiled with spittle and dust, yet as sometimes the eyes of men are held so as not to know Him, so too at times special light is given so that men can see that He is *beautiful above the sons of men*: and this day is Pilate's special day of privilege and grace. St. Paul. writes: *God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: but will make also with temptation* ISSUE, *that you may be able to bear it* (1 Cor. x.). We must notice the phrase: *Will make with temptation* ISSUE: that is, will send with temptation so much grace as will secure a glorious issue, if the tempted man chooses to resist.

As then temptation exceptionally great comes to Pilate this morning, we may be quite sure that there is a far greater outpouring of grace. The most compassionate Heart of Jesus is pleading for him *with groanings unspeakable*. Holy Mary's eyes of mercy are shedding many tears for him. A blessing and a curse is set before him; it rests with his will to choose whether Jesus shall be to him his resurrection or his ruin. By the coming of the sunset he can either be a great saint, or a most wicked sinner. One part of to-day's wondrous conflict is a struggle between Jesus and Mary on one side, and Lucifer and his brood on the other, for the soul of this heathen man, this child of God, this image of God, at present indeed damaged and begrimed, but capable of complete restoration.

I will put enmity, Lucifer, between thee and the Woman: her seed and thy seed. It rests with Pilate to choose whether the Woman and her seed shall conquer. *God made man from*

the beginning, and left him in the hand of his own counsel. If thou wilt keep the commandments, and perform acceptable fidelity for ever, they shall preserve thee. He hath set water and fire before thee: stretch forth thy hand to which thou wilt. Before man is life and death, good and evil, that which he shall choose shall be given him. For the wisdom of God is great, and He is strong in power, seeing all men without ceasing. The eyes of the Lord are towards them that fear Him; and He knoweth all the work of man. He hath commanded no man to do wickedly, and He hath given no man license to sin (Ecclus. xv.).

The eyes then of the Lord and His Heart are fixed in mercy on the Roman Governor; more anxious infinitely that he choose life and not death than the best of mothers is for the preservation of her loved child. He hath commanded no man to do wickedly. He does not permit for one moment either men or the unseen spirits to coerce the free will of Pilate. He hath set water and fire before thee, stretch forth thy hand to which thou wilt.

But, "O Pilate, child of the Eternal Father, with desire He is desiring that thou make choice of that fire which He is come to cast on the earth. And He is ready to die to-day that it may be enkindled in thy heart." For Thou lovest, O Lord, all things that are, and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made, for Thou didst not appoint or make anything hating it (Wisdom xi.). "As I live, I desire not that Pilate should die in his sins, but that he turn from his way and live" (Ezech. xxxiii.).

B. Art Thou the King of the Jews?

Not then in an unfriendly mood does Pilate put this question; but with some sympathy and some respect, and a conviction that Jesus is a persecuted victim of the malice of the Sanhedrim; perchance because He is of royal lineage, and thus above them. For in truth there is royalty and grace and dignity in His bearing. "Art Thou then the King of this people, *de jure*? Art Thou the lineal descendant of David and the ancient Kings? Or

art Thou one of those they talk of, selected by their God to govern? Hast Thou been putting forward Thy claims to sovereignty?"

C. Jesus answered: Sayest thou this of thyself, or have others told it thee of Me?

Our Blessed Saviour's Heart is, as has been said, full of compassion for the Roman Governor. He is most desirous to incline him to justice. By the mouth of the Psalmist He had long ago said: *Receive instruction, you that judge the earth* (Psalm ii.). That word His compassionate Heart is now whispering into the soul of Pilate. He answers therefore with great calmness and gentleness and deliberation: *Sayest thou this of thyself, or have others told it thee of Me?*

This answer is intended to set the Governor thinking and reasoning. "If I had really claimed to be the earthly King of the Jews, you as Governor must have known through your officials what I was doing. Have you heard of any attempt on My part to seat Myself on the throne?" Possibly the Governor may, on the contrary, remember to have heard how on a certain day when Jesus had fed miraculously the multitude, they wished to take Him by force and make Him king (St. John vi.), and that He fled into the mountains alone, to escape royalty and popular commotion.

For we must observe that this question put by our Lord implies that Pilate is very well informed of all that has gone on.

"If you then, Pilate, have never of your own knowledge been aware that I was claiming royalty, you can be sure that this accusation is only a slander invented by My enemies, whose malice you have already discerned."

So too does Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, reason with us. "Oh, in whatever day we hear His voice, may we not harden our hearts."

STATION VII.

Pilate answered: Am I a Jew? Thy own nation, and the Chief Priests have delivered Thee up to me: what hast Thou done? (v. 35).

A. *Am I a Jew?*

The Governor perceives clearly the force and wisdom of our Saviour's answer. He is ashamed of having even asked whether He had ever publicly claimed royalty: but excuses his question on the ground that Jesus may have some secret or mysterious title to royalty known to the Sanhedrim, though not to him, an outsider. "There may be some secret question of words or titles between you and them of which I know nothing."

Pilate, then, has now had a sufficient answer. He has been reminded that of his own knowledge he is quite sure there has not been treason, no outward usurpation of royalty, nor any pretension to royalty whatsoever. He ought now, by good right, to say at once and do, as Gallio the Proconsul afterwards said and did: *If there only be question of words and names (titles), look you to it. I will not be judge of such things. And he drove them from the judgment-seat.*

But Pilate is not prepared to walk so straightforward, or to follow so promptly the right path. We must contemplate him carefully, for he is a type everywhere and at all times reproduced. *What is it that hath been? The same that shall be.*

The Governor 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; Jesus spoke of them last night in the Garden: *The SPIRIT is willing, but the FLESH weak*. St. Paul speaks of *the law in my members, and the law in my mind*. In good men the spirit triumphs; in very bad men, such as the Pharisees and Scribes and Judas, the law of the members has triumphed

completely. Between these two extremes is found the man of two minds, *inconstant in his ways, like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind*: the weak good man, who this hour wishes very much to be virtuous, but the next shrinks from the cost.

Elias was dealing with double-minded men when he said: *How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.* To the Bishop of Laodicea our Lord sends a message something akin to the words of Elias: *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would that thou wert cold or hot* (Apoc. iii.). Does Elias really wish them to declare for Baal, rather than remain between two minds? Does our Lord really wish His Bishop to be cold, rather than neither cold nor hot? One answer to this question may be, that as He is come to cast fire on the earth, He wants as His help-mates men whose souls are hot. Ecclesiasticus tells us how a hot soul works: *A hot soul is a burning fire; it will never be quenched till it devours something* (c. xxiii. 22). Christ wants disciples who being on fire themselves will spread the Divine fire to others. A man neither hot nor cold cannot do this. Therefore, in the first place, he is useless: *They are become unprofitable altogether; there is none that doth good; no not one* (Psalm xiii.). But moreover, secondly, he is worse than useless; he is in the highest degree dangerous; because he passes as a friend of Christ; and outwardly stands in the ranks of His army. Now, any good general would rather have such men in the enemy's ranks than in his own. As long as they are in his army he counts on them and trusts to them, and because he is leaning on a broken reed, he will fall in the critical moment. We shall see before the day is over all that our Lord suffers from one neither hot nor cold.

"Heart of Jesus, inflame our hearts. Passion of Christ, strengthen us."

What can be more dangerous to Christ our Lord, or to any other leader, than to have a man apparently one

of His intimate familiars, who yet has not a good word for Him, who is neither hot nor cold? Men cannot help saying, "Here is one who knows Him well, yet cares nothing for Him".

Pilate, then, is between two minds. He 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 he were a single-minded man, he could say: *Causa finita est*, and drive the Jewish multitude from his tribunal. But he sees another side to the question. These Priests and Ancients are powerful in Jerusalem. It is their Paschal season, the favourable moment for risings of the people. Tiberius enjoins conciliation of the natives. Tiberius knows well how to chastise offending officials. Therefore he *halts between two sides*.

B. *Thy own nation, and the Chief Priests have delivered Thee up to me. What hast Thou done?*

Pilate, then, is seeking to serve two masters. He has before his mind a very strong case in favour of Jesus; and his good Angel is urging him to act upon it. But his will is also anxious to content these influential Jewish Rulers; and consequently his will sets his intellect to work to look out for good reasons on their side. And lo! the tempter has one ready, and a very strong one:

"*Thy own nation, and the Chief Priests have delivered Thee up to me.*

"*Thy own nation*, who are so intense in their nationality, have yet found it necessary to deliver Thee up to me, a heathen, whom they loathe and abhor: *What hast Thou done?*

"Your own know you far better than I do; and with their intense Jewish feelings, they would never turn against you all in a body without some grave cause. *What hast Thou done?*

"Detesting the Romans as they do, and worshipping everything Jewish, they surely would not deliver you up to

me unless there has been some very heinous crime committed. *What hast Thou done?*

"On the contrary, if I had seized you to punish you, they would have been inclined to rouse the people to rescue you. *What hast Thou done?*

"*The Chief Priests have delivered Thee up to me.*

"And mind, it is not only an outcry of a low rabble. The very best men of your nation are here against you. All the Chief Priests, whose lips, they say, speak truth, and who are in such veneration—*What hast Thou done?*"

Pilate's argument is very strong. How true is our Lord's word: *The enemies of a man are those of his household.*

Outsiders have a right to say, if his own people are all against a man, there surely is a *primâ facie* case against him. Don't we say that the voice of the people who know us is the voice of God?

And, moreover, in those days, though the Romans will not condemn the prisoner till he is proved guilty, yet to a great extent they will treat him as guilty till he proves his innocence. So much so that, not many years will elapse before St. Paul will be bound with thongs to a pillar in this very Castle of Antonia, to be scourged and tortured, not because he has been found guilty of any crime, but simply because there is an outcry of the people against him, that he may be forced to declare *for what cause they should so cry out against him*. It was only when he let them know that he was a Roman citizen that *they departed from him that were about to torture him*. If, then, Pilate chooses to halt between two sides, he can find reasons for doing so.

C. *Thy own nation hath delivered Thee up.*

Here is a word that we Catholics should consider in our hearts. It is not the heathen, it is not the heretic, it is not the persecuting tyrant, that works ruin. They can do little till His own people betray Jesus.

Proverbs are commonly useful truths. "Lord, save me from my friends," that is, from apparent friends who are neither hot nor cold.

D. *What hast Thou done?*

If some strangers could come from another region into this world of ours, and see our Blessed Saviour in His tabernacle neglected and shunned, and quite unpopular amongst His own; would they not say in wonder: *Lord, what hast Thou done?* How hast Thou alienated Thy own from Thee?

E. He Himself asks us this same question: *My people, what have I done to thee?*

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? (Jerem. ii.).

Many good works have I shown to thee; for which of them all art thou so thoroughly estranged and turned away from Me?

This is a labour in My sight; and unable to find any satisfactory explanation, our Lord Himself by His Prophet puts this most strange and startling question: "*Numquid redditur pro bono malum?*" (Jerem. xviii.).—Is it become the rule that evil must be returned for good?

F. *Thy own nation and the Chief Priests.*

Shall there be evil in the city, the Prophet Amos asks, *which the Lord hath not done?* The holy Doctors of the Church have written words that justify us in asking another question like to this: *Shall there be evil in the Church which the Priest of the Lord hath not done?* *To you, O Priests, who despise My name—I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts.*

"From none," St. Gregory writes, "does the Lord endure greater wrong than from His Priests."

You are the salt of the earth, our Lord says to His Priests. A good Priest, like salt, saves others from corruption. Therefore: *Salt is good.* But, He adds, *if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?* *It is*

neither profitable for the land nor the dunghill, but shall be cast out (St. Luke xiv.).

Therefore (1) a bad, unworthy Priest is useless as salt that has lost its savour. He cannot keep others from corruption.

2. His own cure and conversion is difficult. For if the salt that is to save others from corruption lose its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned again? If the strong men fall down, where shall we find stronger to defend them?

3. As living bodies propagate life, and dead bodies spread infection and death; so good Priests spread holiness, and a bad Priest spreads vice.

4. The Arians, Nestorians, Lutherans, and so many others, could say with truth: *All we have gone astray like sheep.* The Bishop, or the Priest led, and we followed.

5. What wonder that when the Lord gave that terrible order to the man clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn at his reins: *Utterly destroy old and young;* He added this word: *And begin ye at My sanctuary!* (Ezech. ix.).

6. When the Ember-days come round, oh, that the Prophet's voice could cry to us all: *Blow a trumpet in Sion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather together the people,* that with the Priests and ministers they may weep and say: *Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people from the scourge of unworthy Priests. May Thy Priests be clothed with justice* (Joel ii.).

7. In the Canticle of the Children, which Priests recite after Holy Mass, we say: (1) *Ye sons of men, bless the Lord;* then (2) *Let Israel* (the people of God) *bless the Lord;* then (3) *All ye Priests of the Lord, bless the Lord.* We should grow in fervour as we go on. When those who are mere sons of men sin, they have less light than the house of Israel, the children of the Church; and the children of the Church in their turn do not abuse grace as much as the Priest who sins.

STATION VIII.

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 My Kingdom is not from hence (v. 36).

A. My Kingdom is not of this world.

Mark the earnest attention and surprise with which Pilate listens to these words. For with the words a grace goes into his soul. Otherwise he would laugh with great derision—as he looks on this Man so worn and wobegone, so helpless in His chains—to hear from His livid lips these words: *My Kingdom*.

A pleasant jest indeed, he and his officials might well think it, to hear this wretched Prisoner talking of *My Kingdom*. For to men *who sit in darkness* there is no kingdom, no palace, no home, no resting-place outside this world. With reason does the Holy Spirit tell us that whenever they see men die, to them as a matter of course, *their departure (is) taken for misery, and their going away from us for utter destruction (Wisdom iii.)*. But now, our Lord is pleading for Pilate; and Holy Mary, too, is joining her Mother's cry for his soul; so that a grace is going into his heart with every word that comes from the mouth of Jesus; and he is not inclined to scoff.

He is quite satisfied that this is 'no foolish pretender to earthly royalty; and that He never has forbidden tribute to Cæsar. From his own guards, moreover, he has learned that the midnight expedition to Gethsemani, and the alarm raised about a possible fierce resistance, was a sheer fabrication. Pilate, therefore, takes in all the truth of that argument: *If My Kingdom had been of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I might not be delivered to the Jews*.

STATION IX.

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 (v. 37).

A. Pilate therefore said to Him: Art Thou a King, then?

He is between two minds. These Jews cling much to their old royalty. This Man may be by birth a Prince; or He may be one of those they boast of as having a mission from their God. On the other hand, He may be a mere visionary. It is quite clear that, as He says, He has no kingdom in this world. It is very perilous to espouse His cause against these determined, obstinate men of the Sanhedrim, who might have very considerable influence with the Emperor.

B. Art Thou a King, then? Jesus answered: Thou sayest that I am a King.

We may be quite sure that with the words came a grace to enlighten Pilate's mind and to incline his will, otherwise flesh and blood could not reveal to him that this poor Prisoner is a King.

How widely and fatally we stray when we trust too much to our senses!

1. They never tell us that Lazarus, starving and covered with sores, is soon to be one of our Lord's saints in Heaven, one of His blessed poor whose suffrage will have such power for us or against us in our day of need. And yet our Lord's earnest advice to us is, *Make friends of the mammon of iniquity*, that is, by almsgiving; *that when you fail they may receive you into everlasting dwellings (St. Luke xvi.)*.

2. Again, while we are at the altar, the sight, the touch, the taste, the smell mislead us, and tell us that there is nothing before us but bread and wine. Only through our ears does the heavenly truth sink into our souls: *This is My Body; this is the chalice of My Blood*.

3. And also, not one of our senses tells us that our neighbour is really and truly the delegate, the envoy, the proxy, the second self of Jesus Christ. Oh, had I realised that by a wounding word spoken to the least of my brethren, I wound Jesus in the apple of His eye! Oh, had I known that by helping and serving the very least of these little ones, and poor ones, and wretched ones, I could win from the lips of my Judge that word: *You did it to Me!* But, alas! these things were hidden from my eyes.

C. *Art thou a King, then?*

I must make leisure to kneel before the tabernacle, and ask humbly and perseveringly: *Art Thou, O hidden Lord Jesus, art Thou a King?* For if Thou art a King, where is Thy honour? There I must stay knocking till it be opened unto me, till Thou shalt bring home to my heart Thy presence and all Thy love, and till with a most lively faith and ardent devotion I can say, "Yes, my Lord, *Tu rex gloriae Christe*". "May Thy Kingdom come, more and more."

From a far country the Wise Men came asking this one question: *Where is He that is born King of the Jews?*

I need not ask that question; for I know where He is. I have only to believe, and believe more firmly.

St. Helen found the Holy Cross buried deep down in filth, and the emblems of Satan reared triumphant over its dishonoured grave. What place has my King, Jesus Christ, in my heart? Is He enthroned? Or is He cast down deep under the refuse of this world, that self may reign, and Satan, in His stead?

D. *For this was I born; for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony of the truth.*

Often and often in these days of unbelief and indifference to truth, we must repeat our conviction that our Lord is the Truth, and cannot love anything but truth. Satan, on the other hand, because the very opposite to Jesus, is essentially the father of lies. He multiplies false religions without number, to suit men's craving for novelty. He

has great contentment in every shape of falsehood. Truth alone he abhors and persecutes. We must convince ourselves, and do our best to explain it to others, that there cannot be any real sanctity agreeable to God, which is not founded on truth; that the multiplication of religions is not at all a necessary adaptation of the Gospel to different nationalities and the character and temperament of different races, but a murderous device of the father of lies to thwart the will of our Saviour Jesus, that all men shall come to the knowledge of the truth and be made one, by one faith in one Shepherd. God our Saviour *will have all men come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Timothy ii.).

E. *For this was I born, that I should give testimony of the truth.*

"Attendite." It is our duty as children of the Church to persuade men around us that Jesus Christ became Man to teach truth; and that therefore every revealed truth is most precious; that the spirit of heresy, which accepts some truths and sets aside others, is entirely wicked and blasphemous. If truth is not essential, fools indeed were all the martyrs who died in cruel torments rather than sacrifice one truth.

F. *For this was I born, that I should give testimony of the truth.*

We may all in due measure say this word. We are all born again, and made children of God, not for our own advantage merely, but that we may spread truth among other men. All Christians are in a real sense the salt of the earth, and the leaven that is to leaven the world.

Are we fulfilling our mission? On every side we are surrounded by men wandering in search of truth. How easy it is to give them a great alms by helping them to find truth!

St. Augustine, we are told, had written up in his dining-room a caution to his guests not to indulge in detraction. Situated as we are in this country, we need to be, in the same way, continually put in mind of St. James's golden

sentence: *My brethren, if any of you err from the truth, and one convert him; he must know that he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins* (c. v.).

STATION X.

Pilate saith to Him: What is truth? And when he said this he went out again to the Jews (v. 38).

A. *What is truth? And he went out.*

Grace is continually passing from the Heart of Jesus into Pilate's soul, enlightening and moving. And the Blessed Mother of God is pleading as a true Mother for him. *The light of justice* is dawning on him; *the sun of understanding* is rising upon him. He is drawn, and there is a great struggle going on within him when he asks that question: *What is truth?*

Alas, why does he not wait for the answer? "Why, Pilate, go away, and not stay to prolong at all costs this most golden opportunity, the most *acceptable time* in all your life? Your other works will wait for you; *but Me*, Jesus meekly says to him, *you have not always with you.*"

"Do not go away," his holy wife, Claudia Procla, would say to him; "but on the contrary, compel Him to stay with you." The grace in his soul is a spark of heavenly fire. Oh, if not most carefully nursed, it will be extinguished. How pathetically the poets describe the benighted shepherd in the snowdrift; he struggles on through the darkness till he is within a few feet of his own little cottage, and then he loses heart and sinks down to die in the snow. Oh, had he but known that safety is so near; so near!

B. *He went out.*

It is the father of lies who whispers urgently into Pilate's soul that the Rulers are growing restive and will not brook further delay.

How often, how perpetually does he use again this

successful trick when Jesus Christ wishes to speak to a soul for which He has great grace prepared! A voice that seems friendly whispers, "*You have bought five yoke of oxen*, you must say, *pray hold me excused*: you must go to your farm; you really cannot stay with Him".

All the while Satan is thinking of the hour when he will stand at the judgment-seat to accuse you; and when Jesus asks, *What commutation will you give (Me) for your soul?* he will answer scoffingly: *Five yoke of oxen*. This was the *one thing necessary*.

C. *What is truth?*¹

In our days it is very much the fashion to ask this question with a sigh, as if men were desiring earnestly to find truth but cannot. The fault is cast upon God. "It is He Who does not make the truth clear enough. Men are only too eager to find truth, but have no grace."

And yet we have God's own declaration that He desires all men to be saved, and to *come to the knowledge of the truth*.

Of Himself, again, our Lord says, *I am the Truth and the Life*.

The two must go together. Truth and life. No truth, no life. If God is holding back truth from men who are seeking, He is refusing life and salvation to men who crave for it. If so, most assuredly He is not our Father, nor is He a God infinitely good. This thought, then, that men wish for truth and cannot find it, is only one of the many lies spread by the father of lies.

As faith is the beginning of man's salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, "without which it is impossible to please God" (Council of Trent), we may be quite sure that it is a grace that God gives most willingly and most reluctantly takes away. Of this grace, He says most emphatically, *ask and you shall receive, seek and you*

¹ Some one has studied the letters in the words of Pilate's question as we find it in the Latin Vulgate: "*Quid est veritas?*" and has discovered that by transposing the letters, you can get this answer; "*Est vir qui adest*".

shall find. Indeed, we may perhaps often hope that one who really wishes to believe, already has a good measure of faith, or, at least, is *not far from the Kingdom of God* (St. Mark xii.).

It is not God Who puts obstacles when men wish to believe. For He never unsays that word He spoke by His Prophet concerning His Church: *A path and a way shall be there: this shall be to you a straight way, so that fools shall not err therein* (Isaias xxxv.).

Wherein, then, lies the difficulty? Our Lord revealed it when He said: *Unless you become as little children you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven* (St. Matt. xviii.).

To believe in God, Whom we do not see, we must first believe in man His delegate whom we do see. Men who are full of secret pride in their own intellect want to arrive at God's truth without being taught by men. So do they also want to be forgiven by God, without confessing to men.

Our Lord makes it an absolute condition of salvation that we believe in man His delegate: *Go ye and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be condemned* (St. Mark xvi.). *If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican* (St. Matt. xviii.).

D. *When he had said this he went out.*

"*Recogitabo tibi annos meos.*" I will think over in Thy presence, my Lord Jesus, my years gone by, to deplore those sad moments when after praying a little while I suddenly broke off my prayer at the instance of the father of lies, and did not persevere asking for the grace Thou wast desiring so much to give.

When the mother of Bethlehem lost her children, *she would not be comforted, because they are not.* I desire graces for a little while; but before I have paid the proper price, I break off my prayers, and go away to find comfort in other things—a book, a letter, a conversation, or my meals; and my hunger and thirst for grace have died out.

STATION XI.

He went out again and saith to them: I find no cause in Him
(v. 38).

A. *I find no cause in Him.*

Better undoubtedly had he stayed within, communing with Jesus; but we see that grace has so far prevailed that he has courage to say this word: *I find no cause in Him.*

Oh, how blest if he had ended here with this wise word! The pagan Romans could admire *Iustum et tenacem propositi virum*—a man of rectitude who could stick firmly to his purpose. Pilate ought, at this stage, to do as Gallio afterwards did—he *drove them from the judgment-seat* (Acts xviii.).

B. *I find no cause in Him.*

In reality, Pilate as a just judge ought to go even further. He ought in all justice and equity to remind these Priests and Ancients of their own law against a false witness: *Thou shalt render to him as he meant to render to his brother—that others hearing may fear, and not dare to do such things. Thou shall not pity him, but shalt require life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot* (Deut. xix.). As a just judge the Roman Governor ought to have punished severely this wicked conspiracy of proud, envious, and most unjust men. But he is not single-minded. He is not one who loves truth and justice and goodness and nothing else. He is between two minds, he will not yield to the Jews; but neither will he offend them. Therefore he takes the mid-way course; he goes to parley with his enemies and God's enemies. Later his good wife begged him to *have nothing to do with this just Man, Jesus.* How happy for him had she been able to persuade him to *have nothing to do with these enemies of Jesus!* Do not stand paltering and dallying with them. *Who will pity an enchanter struck by a serpent? Or any that come near wild beasts? So is it with him that keepeth company with a wicked man, and is involved in his sin* (Ecclus. xii.).

How much we all need St. Paul's warning word: *Evil communications corrupt good manners!* (1 Cor. xv.). Men feel so sure of themselves; and that they shall never fall. They are fascinated by the company, but they are quite sure that they hate the sin. What more astonishing than Samson's helpless paralysis of the will! He sees quite clearly the murderous intent of Dalila, the treacherous Philistine woman, and yet goes on playing with the danger till he perishes.

C. *I find no cause in Him.*

What is it that hath been done? The same that shall be done.

The penitent confesses the grievous fall. I am really sorry. I never will repeat the sin; but do not ask me to break off abruptly from him or her; I do not like to hurt their feelings. I cannot bear to appear unkind to one who has been so good to me. When in this frame of mind, we are often trying to do what Pilate is trying in vain to do: to serve two masters and please them both. Our Saviour said a little while ago: *No servant can serve two masters.* This rule is most of all true and certain when the masters are as irreconcilable enemies, as Christ and Lucifer are. Our Lord adds the reason: *For either he will HATE the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and DESPISE the other.*

When then the sin was committed, the child of God *despised* God and adhered to Satan. When the sin is confessed and renounced and absolved, this is a return to God, and Satan is supposed to be thoroughly *despised*. But if the penitent stops short and says: I wish to return to God, but I do not wish to break with my accomplice; I cannot offend him or wound his feelings; not unfrequently this is only an attempt to do what Jesus says cannot be done, an attempt to adhere to God without despising or displeasing God's implacable enemy—a wish to stand well with both.

D. *I find no cause in Him.*

Judas the traitor was the first to proclaim openly the

innocence of Jesus. The Roman Governor now follows; and his is a very public testimony. He is, as it were, preaching from the housetop the truth that he has learned in secret. This is a part of the plan as approved in Heaven. Jesus is not to suffer as a malefactor.

We sometimes imagine that we could bear better a slight or chastisement, if we had done something to deserve it.

But can this be true? If I have done something to deserve it, I have sinned. Do I gain grace to be more patient by sinning?

Doubtless God may give me grace to be contrite and to accept due chastisement for my offence; but this grace must come to me from God. Sin of itself cannot help me to be patient. If then God must give this grace, which grace will He give more willingly: grace to bear with Christ when there is no cause in me; or grace to bear after I have given cause by sinning? The first is the higher and better grace. *If doing well you suffer patiently, this is thank-worthy before God. But what glory is it if committing sin and being buffeted for it you endure?* (1 St. Peter ii.).

E. *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 adopt it.

"I find no cause in thy Son Jesus, Holy Mary, why I should not praise Him.

"I find no cause in Him why I should not reverence Him.

"I find no cause in Him why I should not serve Him.

"I find no cause in Him why I should not greatly fear with a holy fear to offend Him.

"I find no cause in Him why I should not always and in every place hope in Him.

"I find no cause in Him why I should not love Him with my whole heart.

"I find no cause in Him why I should not for His sake love my neighbour for whom He died."

F. *I find no cause in Him.*

For the works of God are perfect, and all His ways are judgments (just and wise and well-considered). God is faithful and without iniquity; He is just and right (Deut. xxxii.).

STATION XII.

But they were more earnest, saying: He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place. But Pilate hearing Galilee, asked if this Man were of Galilee? And when he understood that He was of Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him away to Herod, who was also himself at Jerusalem in those days (St. Luke xxiii.).

A. *But they were more earnest.*

May we have grace to learn from the enemies of Christ, to be earnest and more fervent. Not long before His Death, He said in Galilee: *The children of this world are more prudent than the children of light (St. Luke xvi.).* Not only more prudent, but often more in earnest.

If God is only silent when we pray, though He gives no positive refusal, we often cease to pray and give up making an effort. These men have from Pilate a positive rejection of their suit, which sounds quite like a decisive and final answer; but they only grow more earnest.

How consoled our Blessed Lord was when the woman of Canaan did not cease praying when He seemed to reject her petition in words so severe: *It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs.* His own Heart, loving to give grace, inspires her how to answer: *Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat of the crumbs (St. Matt. xv.).*

B. *But they were more earnest.*

Why are bad men earnest, and Christ's servants remiss? Do they earn better wages than we?

1. Certainly not in the next world. Their everlasting wail is: *What hath pride profited us? We fools! The light of justice hath not shined unto us: the sun of understanding hath not risen to us (Wisdom v.).* But to His faithful ser-

vant our Blessed Saviour says at the Judgment: *Enter into the joy of thy Lord.* He made a prayer before He died which was heard: *My Father, I will that where I am, those also whom Thou hast given Me shall be (St. John xvii.).* They shall be with Him, and, St. John tells us, *shall become like to Him, because (they) shall see Him as He is.* They shall become like to Him in wisdom, in holiness, and in charity. Their perfect and everlasting bliss we can only believe, we cannot picture it. St. Paul saw a glimpse of it, but how much does he communicate to us? He merely tells us that *he heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter (2 Cor. xii.).* And he adds the words, so familiar indeed, yet so deserving of much meditation: *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him (1 Cor. ii.).*

2. But what of the present world? Surely the wicked thrive better here!

That sometimes they fare sumptuously every day and wear purple, we know. That they have at times more opportunities of gratifying *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, is certain.

But, on the other hand, we know that *the eye by seeing and the ear by hearing can never give contentment to the soul (Eccles. i.);* and neither can man live and be made happy merely by the food he eats. *Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God (St. Matt. iv.).* Again we know from the Holy Ghost in what way the wicked in the next world tell the story of their own career: *The way of peace we have not known.* For even in this world, *a troubled conscience is always fearful, and forecasteth grievous things.* And what word more familiar than the inspired word of Isaiah: *There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord. The wicked are like the raging sea that cannot rest, and the waves thereof cast up dirt and mire (c. lvii.).*

On the other hand, to those who make the greatest sacrifices for Him, and therefore appear to men to be the

most miserable of all, He promises that even in this life they *shall have a hundred-fold*, to say nothing of life everlasting in a better world.

C. *He stirreth up the people.*

How easily our Lord could, by multiplying loaves and fishes and changing water into wine, have stirred up the people, and gathered round Him a crowd of followers before whom these Priests and Ancients must have hidden their heads! But all His effort is to stir up men's hearts to charity. *Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them that calumniate you.*

"*Excita, Domine, corda nostra*—Stir up our hearts, Lord Jesus, with a strong and active and earnest and persevering love for Thee and for Thy little ones."

D. *He stirreth up the people.*

Have these accusers so soon forgotten the word He spoke last night; *Put up thy sword*; and how lovingly He healed the ear of Malchus; and with what meekness He permitted them to rise from the earth when He had cast them down; and to come round Him and seize Him?

E. *Pilate asked if the Man was of Galilee.*

On one point Pilate's will is strong, he wishes strongly to save his own skin; to rid himself of the consequences of authorising a murder; and at the same time to screen himself from the vengeance of the Jewish Rulers. This earnest will of his, therefore, quickens his intellect to discover possible expedients. It suddenly flashes across his mind that if Jesus is a Galilean he can transmit the whole case to Herod. What will then be the result? "Herod may gratify the Jews and put Jesus to death." If so, let him look to it. I, Pilate, shall not have done it. On the other hand, Herod may set Him free. Then the Sanhedrim will vent their rage on Herod; not on me. Moreover, if I compliment Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee, by sending this case to him, the quarrel now rife between him and me will be at an end."

Here, then, he sees clearly; on this point he is single-minded; and accordingly he acts with vigour and without hesitation, and listens to no protest. Roman soldiers are at once told off to conduct Jesus bound to Herod. The Rulers are chagrined and mortified and filled with bitterness at this fresh delay; but the Roman Governor, they see clearly, is resolved, and they must submit. And so, too, they will submit if Pilate will only be as bold and determined for truth and justice as he is for his own interest. *Resist the devil*, St. James writes, *and he will fly from thee.*

We often tremble at the fierceness of the devil's assaults. We forget the teaching of Holy Church and the saints: that the devil is only fierce when dealing with cowards, and flies away full of confusion and vexation if courageously resisted.

F. *He sent Him away to Herod.*

Pilate is not wicked enough to say "Yes" to the Jews; not firm enough to say "No". He tries a middle course, which satisfies neither our Lord nor His enemies; a temporising makeshift, which staves off for a little, a very little, the evil hour, but in the end repays the Jews and Lucifer with good interest, *pressed down and flowing over*, for the delay caused to them.

SCENE VIII.

FROM PILATE TO HEROD.

He sent Him away to Herod (St. Luke xxiii.).

As there are five Herods mentioned in the New Testament, a short account of the family may prevent confusion.

I. Herod the Great, the founder of the family, was not of Jewish origin. He was an Idumean, and he adopted the Jewish religion out of policy. After him his family took their place among the Jews. He owed his subsequent elevation to the favour of the Romans. Mark Antony and the other triumvir, Octavian, afterwards the Emperor Augustus, were his chief patrons. By his ten wives he had a large and wicked family. We know the names of nine of his sons. The eldest, Antipater, in order to secure the succession for himself, persuaded his

father to put to death his two half-brothers, Alexander and Aristobulus, who were very popular among the Jews because their mother, Mariamne, Herod's second wife, was the lineal descendant, through the Asmonean Princes, of the Machabees. Herod knowing himself to be an alien, was jealous of all who were of this glorious Jewish lineage. He therefore began by putting to death Hyrcanus, his wife's father; then also his wife, Mariamne, and her two sons. He afterwards became afraid of their accuser, his eldest son, Antipater, and about the time of the massacre of the Innocents, ordered him also to be murdered. As a third wife he married another Mariamne, daughter of the High Priest, Simon. By the use of torture, he procured some evidence that she was privy to a conspiracy against him, and thereupon disinherited his and her son, Herod-Philip. This Herod-Philip therefore lived and died in obscurity. He is only known as the husband of that wicked wife, Herodias, who left him to marry his half-brother, Herod-Antipas, taking with her that dancing daughter, Salome, who procured the death of St. John the Baptist.

This Herod-Antipas was the son of Herod's fourth wife, Malthace, a Samaritan. She was also the mother of Archelaus, who was therefore full brother to Herod-Antipas. By his fifth wife, Cleopatra, a woman of Jerusalem, Herod the Great had another son, Philip, the Tetrarch mentioned by St. Luke (c. iii.).

II. Therefore of the sons of Herod the Great, those mentioned in the New Testament are (1) Archelaus, Tetrarch of Judea when the Holy Family returned from Egypt, afterwards degraded by the Romans for his barbarous cruelty; (2) Herod-Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee, who murdered St. John and mocked our Lord; (3) Philip the disinherited, whose wife, Herodias, abandoned him; and (4) Philip, the Tetrarch of Iturea and the country of Trachonitis (St. Luke iii.), who bore a better character as a ruler than his brothers.

Then in the next generation we have Herod-Agrippa the First, grandson of Herod the Great, and son of the murdered Aristobulus. He built the third or outer wall of Jerusalem, about twelve years after our Lord's Death; and he it was that put to death St. James, and had St. Peter in prison.

His son, Herod-Agrippa the Second, was the one before whom St. Paul preached (Acts xxv.). In the war that ended in the destruction of Jerusalem he sided with the Romans, and then retired into private life and spent the rest of his days in Italy, with his sister Berenice.

He was the last Prince of his race. In him ended a very unblest family. Some of the daughters rivalled the brothers in the scandal of their lives: Drusilla, the wife of Felix, the Roman Governor before whom St. Paul preached, was sister of Agrippa the Second and of Berenice, and abandoned her legitimate husband to marry, in violation of Jewish law, the Gentile, Felix, who offered her riches and higher position as a bribe;

Josephus speaks of Berenice also as a woman of very questionable character.

Herod-Antipas, who murdered St. John Baptist, is the one to whom Pilate is now sending Jesus. A few years later he quarrelled with his nephew, Herod-Agrippa the First, and went to Rome to procure his dethronement; but Agrippa had more powerful friends, and obtained a sentence of degradation against his uncle, Herod-Antipas, who ended his days in banishment, with the miserable Herodias. He had previously sustained a heavy defeat in battle from the father of the lawful wife whom he had discarded to take Herodias.

Agrippa was then put in possession of his uncle's province of Galilee. Other grants were afterwards added by the Romans; so that he ended by having almost as large a kingdom as that of Herod the Great; but he did not long enjoy it. After ordering the execution of the gaolers of the prison from which St. Peter escaped, he died, as we read in the Acts, struck by an Angel of the Lord, and eaten up by worms.

The history of this unhappy family is a striking proof of the Gospel truth referred to in the last Station, that worldly prosperity and happiness of mind do not necessarily go together.

STATION I.

He sent Him away to Herod, who was himself at Jerusalem in those days (St. Luke xxiii. 7).

In what part of Jerusalem was Herod's home? How far distant was it from the Prætorium?

Three opinions have been advanced. The first, that he was occupying the Palace of Herod the Great on the west side of the city; a little to the south of Golgotha. This opinion seems quite improbable. For since the annexation of Judea by the Romans, this magnificent palace was their property, and the ordinary residence of the Roman Governor. It is quite unlikely that Pilate would put it at the disposal of his enemy, Herod.

A second opinion, and one more commonly received, is that through a marriage with the heiress of the Asmonean Princes, the successors of the Machabees, the Asmonean Palace had come into the possession of Herod's family; and he was now residing there. In many maps of ancient Jerusalem, the Asmonean Palace is seen at a little distance to the west of the Temple, and south-west of the Prætorium.

The third opinion, which is found in modern guide-books, and backed by the local tradition in Jerusalem, places the site of Herod's Palace at about eight or ten minutes' walk to the north of the Prætorium, beyond the Lithostrotos and the Forum, in the new city built in Bezetha, and afterwards walled in by Agrippa.

In this uncertainty we may follow the local tradition; and thus the road from Pilate's house to Herod's will be northward, and for part of the way up an incline.

Some writers say that Jesus was led to Herod by the direct route, but brought back by a longer way.

Since our Lord left the Cenacle last night at the beginning of the second watch, 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 the same distance; but for half the way up a very steep hill. The third journey, early this morning, was from the Priests' Palace to the Prætorium, a little under a mile. This fourth journey to Herod will be, according to the opinion we are following, perhaps a short half-mile to the north, outside the ancient walls, into the new suburb not yet enclosed.

A. *He sent Him away to Herod.*

We are to look as well as we can at the persons; to listen to their words; to watch their actions; to note how much our Lord is suffering; how completely His Divinity seems to be hidden and set aside, in order that He may suffer; and lastly, that He is suffering for me because He loves me.

B. *He sent Him away to Herod.*

The Priests and Ancients set out on this journey with their minds very much disturbed, 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. *Let all My enemies be ashamed and very much troubled* (Psalm vi.). Their malice against our Lord is intensified. They redouble their entreaties and warnings, and perchance their bribes, to the Roman soldiers to induce them to bind and shackle Him so that escape be impossible: *Do it quickly; lead Him cautiously.*

C. *He sent Him away to Herod.*

Our Blessed Lady, as we learn from the contemplations of those holy souls to whom special light has been granted with regard to the Sacred Passion, has in this journey, as in every other scene throughout the day, a place secured

for her by the blessed angels, where she is near her Son, and can see and hear what passes.

D. *He sent Him away to Herod.*

The crowd is growing larger. For the news is reaching the different quarters of the city that Jesus is made prisoner. At the sight of the great change wrought in Him, His disfigurement, His wretched plight, His chains, His 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 scandalised; their faith is staggered. "The Priests, then, were right after all. He is found out." *I am become a reproach to them: they saw Me and they shook their heads* (Psalm cviii.). As little children blessed Him and cried Hosanna five days ago, so now, we are told, little children are encouraged to throw stones and filth at Him. "My Father, *they have persecuted Him Whom Thou hast smitten, and they have added to the grief of My wounds*" (Psalm lxxviii.).

E. *He sent Him away to Herod.*

Let us remember how wisely the blind men of Jericho took advantage of the acceptable time when they heard the news: *Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.* We must leave our yoke of oxen and other cares and concerns, to follow this procession, watching and listening. What can we do better than place ourselves in spirit near Holy Mary, and as we walk on, looking at her and her Divine Son, say in our hearts with Holy Church:

O quam tristis et afflicta
Fuit illa benedicta
Mater unigeniti.
Eia Mater fons amoris,
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac ut tecum lugeam.

Oh, how sad, and woe-begone,
Is she now—that blessed one,
The Mother of this only Son.
Mother, Source of charity,
Share thy holy grief with me,
Let me walk and weep with thee.

F. *He sent Him away to Herod.*

This is the second journey of Jesus and His Blessed Mother, since the daybreak; and it is still early in the morning.

Through the weariness and extreme exhaustion of the Divine Son and the Most Holy Mother, may we have the grace to put ourselves to trouble in the early morning, to console our Blessed Lord by being present at the Holy Mass.

G. *He sent Him away to Herod.*

Watch also the Priests and Ancients during this journey—how they are racked with fear. For Herod, they know, bears no love to them. He will not bow to them. He has little to fear or hope from them. Neither has he any cause to persecute Jesus. *Destruction and unhappiness in their ways: and the way of peace they have not known. They have not called upon the Lord: there have they trembled for fear, where there was no fear* (Psalm xiii.).

SCENE IX.

IN HEROD'S PALACE.

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 (St. Luke xxiii. 8).

He hoped to see some sign wrought by Him.

Some writers tell us that one of the signs which Herod wished to see wrought was the cure of Salome, the daughter of Herodias, who after procuring the death of St. John the Baptist, had been struck with palsy, and was still paralysed.

STATION I.

* *And Herod seeing Jesus was very glad* (v. 8).

A. It is, for more reasons than one, a bright hour for Herod. The Roman Governor has sent on a messenger with a note announcing to the Tetrarch of Galilee that, because it concerns Jesus the Galilean, "he is referring to him a cause of great importance. Of what great moment the case is, he will see from the interest which all the members of the Sanhedrim, and the great men of Jeru-

salem take in it. He is glad to commit such a weighty business to his enlightened discernment." This mark of confidence on the part of the haughty Roman pleases Herod much. He and Pilate had been at enmity for some time on a question of the boundaries of their jurisdiction. This message puts an end to the discord. He and the Governor will be able to entertain each other as of old. The Herods are all noted for their Roman proclivities. The Psalmist prays: *The just man shall correct me in mercy, and shall reprove me; but let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head* (Psalm cxl.). Herod does not adopt this prayer, either as to the first part or the second. He did not at all wish the just man, John the Baptist, to correct him or reprove him; and he does not now at all object to be fattened with the sinner's oil of flattery. He is most delighted with this graceful condescension of the proud Roman Governor.

B. *Herod was very glad.*

Again, he is much pleased to have this unexpected visit from Jesus of Nazareth. *He has heard many things concerning Him.* Naturally; as so many of our Lord's miracles were worked in Galilee, and so many of His disciples are natives of Galilee.

Moreover, there may be others attached to his Court, besides Joanna, the wife of his steward, Chusai, who are disciples of Jesus. This at least we know for certain, from St. Luke and St. Matthew, that when our Lord was preaching in Galilee, *Herod the Tetrarch heard of all things that were done by Him* (St. Luke ix.), and as he is said to have grown superstitious since the murder of St. John, he may think that there is truth in the report that John has come to life again: *He said to his servants, This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead* (St. Matt. xiv.). *And he sought to see Him* (St. Luke ix.).

A short while before the Passion some of the Pharisees came to say to Jesus: *Depart, and get Thee hence, for Herod hath a mind to kill Thee; but commentators think that this*

was a lie of the Pharisees, who wished thereby to induce Jesus to quit Galilee and go into Judea, where they could better entrap Him. There is no proof that Herod was hostile to Jesus. He killed St. John reluctantly, only to please Salome and her wicked mother. He has been anxious to see Jesus, and now is greatly pleased to know that He is coming.

Herod, then, is in good spirits. This is for him an unexpected gala-day.

He resolves to receive the Sanhedrim in state. For though he and his brothers are called Tetrarchs, perhaps because they each inherited only a fourth part of the dominions of their father, Herod the Great, yet they were practically petty kings.

We may then contemplate Herod in his robes, and seated on his throne, his crown on his head, Herodias at his side, and possibly the paralysed dancing girl brought in to be ready for her cure. His guards are drawn up around him. Herod may have inherited some of his father's handsome features and noble bearing; he certainly has his tastes for luxury and magnificence, as well as a large share of his vices.

Some writers think that the presence of his guards is not merely for show and ornament, but also as a protection in case the members of the Sanhedrim, for whom he has no reverence, should create disturbance. The Evangelist speaks of his guard as an army. The Greek text adds to the difficulty; it has the plural, "armies". We read that he maintained an army of foreign mercenaries. But it is not credible that the Roman Governor would tolerate in Jerusalem the presence of an army not subject to himself. As the Herod family was generally loyal to Rome, he might not be sorry that Herod should have a strong guard to act in concert with him in case of any outbreak of the Jews.

STATION II.

And he questioned Him in many words (v. 9).

A. As has been said, Herod has no hostile feeling to Jesus; and no love or reverence for the Jewish Priests

and Ancients. He is, like his father before him, a Jew only by policy. He wishes much to see a miracle. He is anxious to pose as the friend of Jesus. And 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.

B. *He questions Him in many words.* "You have wrought many wonders in my states, I believe. You changed water into wine at Cana, did you not? And you raised the dead young man at Naim, I understand; and you gave him back most kindly to his mother. Is not this so? You have also cleansed, I am assured, lepers by the hundred. I have heard nothing but good of you. I am sorry indeed to see you in this trouble; but I am quite sure you have done nothing to deserve it. I know that you have many enemies who persecute you; merely because you are a great Prophet. That is not my mind: I am entirely your friend. You can thoroughly reckon on my support. I believe you to be a great Servant of the Lord. I am quite sure, then, that you will be willing to work some sign here such as you have so often worked in my kingdom; in order that I may be able to set you free at once. You will not, I hope and trust, be unwilling to do for me what you have done for the poorest. If you will raise to health and strength one sad sufferer stricken with palsy, all shall be set right at once. Your innocence will be beyond doubt, and your accusers will be confounded."

Some writers add, that water is brought in to be turned into wine; and that Herod promises to make Jesus his partner in the government, and his heir to the throne also, if He will work the desired miracle: and actually orders a crown to be set on His Head.

C. *He questioned Him in many words.*

And while he is speaking, we notice how envy and jealousy and raging malice is torturing the disappointed souls of the Rulers. *Let them be confounded and ashamed together that seek after My Soul to take it away. Let them be*

turned backward and ashamed that desire evil to Me (Psalm xxxix.).

And yet all their fears are vain. *They trembled for fear, where there was no fear* (Psalm xliii.). Jesus is here chained, because *He willed it*.

Herod will not set Him free, because He wills not to be set free. They shall see their wish carried out to the end, because their wish is His wish. They wish to crucify Him. He wishes to die on His Cross.

STATION III.

But He answered him nothing (v. 9).

He answered him nothing.

For to God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike (Wisdom xiv.).

Herod is glad to see Jesus. He has been long seeking to see Him. He is disposed to be a friend to Him in His hour of need. A very little condescension will suffice to gain him entirely. Yet our Lord has not one word for him.

Under circumstances somewhat similar, the Jews on a former occasion made up to God, as we say, and wished to be familiar with Him. *They seek Me from day to day, and desire to know My ways, as a nation that hath done justice, and hath not forsaken the judgment of their God. . . . They are willing to approach to God. Why have we fasted, and Thou hast not regarded? have we humbled our souls, and Thou hast not taken notice?* The Lord's answer to their advances is the word addressed to His Prophet: *Cry, cease not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their wicked doings, and the house of Jacob their sins* (Isaiah lviii.).

To wish to approach to God, and to be intimate with Him, while we are wallowing in sin, is a presumption and hypocrisy that God detests. *Offer sacrifice no more in vain; incense is an abomination to Me. Your assemblies are wicked. My soul hateth your new moons and your solemnities; they are*

become troublesome to Me, I am weary of bearing them. And when you stretch forth your hands, I will turn My eyes from you, and when you multiply prayers, I will not hear, for your hands are full of blood (Isaiah i.).

What then? Is it true what the blind man said, that *God does not hear sinners?* God most gladly hears them when they are praying for grace to rise from their sins, and for pardon of their sins. But when they have no intention of repenting, and yet expect special favours from God—such as happy marriages, the cure of their bodily diseases, success in their speculations and enterprises—their prayer is not pleasing.

Delight in the Lord, the Holy Spirit says to us, *and He will give thee the petitions of thy heart* (Psalm xxxvi.). *But to the sinner God hath said: Why dost thou declare My justices, and take My covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest discipline, and hast cast My words behind thee* (Psalm xlix.).

As soon as the sinner repents, all is changed. *Wash yourselves, be clean, cease to do perversely, and then come and accuse Me. 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 i.).

Herod has had great graces; many instructions from St. John the Baptist; and he *knew him to be a great and holy man, and he heard him willingly*. After all these graces, to gratify two fiends in woman's shape, and rather than make the dancing girl sad, and cast a shade on the merry-making of his flatterers, he murdered him than whom *no greater had risen among those that are born of woman*. And he 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 merciful Lord, we have sinned: to us belongeth confusion of face; but to Thee, the Lord my God, mercy and forgiveness (Daniel ix.). *O Lord, do not chastise me in Thy wrath* (Psalm vi.). *Be not Thou silent; O Lord, depart not from me."*

STATION IV.

And the Chief Priests and the Scribes stood by earnestly accusing Him (v. 10).

These men are regaining courage. They perceive that Jesus is making no effort to conciliate Herod, and that the pride of the man accustomed to flattery is much wounded. They seize the opportunity eagerly to press their accusations.

Their throat is an open sepulchre, pouring out poison and infection.

Some writers think that they raked up the story of the coming of the Wise Men, and reminded Herod Antipas that his great father looked on Jesus as a dangerous rival. "It is moreover quite certain that His influence at present in Galilee is so great that any day it may become a danger. Besides, it cannot be very pleasant for Herod to have one going about Who passes Himself off as John the Baptist come to life."

Now, however, as all through the Sacred Passion, their wisdom, their counsel, their prudence, can avail nothing. Herod recognises no crime in Jesus. His only offence is that He has by His silence wounded the pride of this lustful sinner.

SCENE X.

FROM HEROD TO PILATE.

STATION I.

And Herod with his army set Him at nought : putting on Him a white garment, and sent Him back to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate were made friends that day ; for before they were enemies one to another (St. Luke xxiii. 11, 12).

A. *Herod set Him at nought.*

The rich man, if thou give, he will make use of thee ; and if thou have nothing he will forsake thee. If he have need of thee, he will deceive thee, and smiling upon thee will put

thee in hope ; he will speak to thee fair and will say : What wantest thou ? And at last he will laugh at thee. And afterwards when he seeth thee, he will forsake thee and shake his head at thee (Ecclus. xiii.).

Herod has known much about our Lord ; quite enough to convince him that He is at least a great prophet ; but because Jesus will not speak to him, He is a fool.

So oftentimes, though God has created and redeemed, and is daily opening His hand and filling every living creature with benediction (Psalm cxliv.), yet, because He has not given ME what I ask for, "He is not a good God. His promises are not true". So too, with God's revelation, because I do not understand, it cannot be true.

B. *Herod with his army.*

Herod is a very degraded man of a low type, yet he has an army of followers.

I am too proud to bear a wise correction. Nobody shall insult me with impunity ; and yet I am prepared to grovel, and become one of Herod's followers ; to applaud with him when he calumniates the absent, to smile when he is obscene, or scoffs at religion.

The child of God knows not his own worth when he worships a degraded man, and forgets that he was bought with a great price. *Since thou becamest honourable in My sight, thou art glorious (Isaiah xliii.).*

St. Paul's rule ought to be ours : *We speak, not as pleasing men, but God (1 Thess. ii.).*

C. *Herod mocked Him, putting on Him a white garment (from the Greek, a bright robe).*

Among the Romans a man who was asking for the votes of the people wore, while canvassing, a white garment (he was *candidatus*). St. James blames the Christians who pay special court to a man in church, because he comes in wearing a gold ring and a white garment (bright robe), in our Douay version, *fine apparel*.

Herod, adopting Roman customs in order to please Pilate, dresses Jesus as a mock King—a pretender, a claimant.

He is one of those described by Isaias: *Wo to you that are wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own conceits. Wo to you that are mighty to drink wine, and stout men at drunkenness; that justify the wicked for gifts, and take away the portion of the just from him* (Isaias v.).

Concerning Jesus, God's revelation is this: He is the brightness of His glory, the figure of His substance; Who has emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant; that is, stripped Himself of all His dignity to become a Man, tempted in all things like as we are (Hebrews iv.).

The judgment, on the contrary, of this proud vain man, Herod, is that He is a foolish pretender to greatness. A proud and vain man like Herod cannot well pronounce any other judgment. The silence wherewith Jesus has answered all his eloquence, and his attempts to be fascinating, is a great public humiliation in presence of his courtiers, in presence of Herodias, in presence of the Great Council of the Sanhedrim. Jesus has set him at nought. *In His sight the malignant is brought to nothing* (Psalm xiv.).

From this great disgrace there is no escape except by making Him out to be an idiot. "I expected to meet with something noble, and to hear words such as I used to hear from John. John was in truth a great man. This is a weak-minded simpleton."

Possibly Herodias and her daughter suggest the idea of sending Him through the streets in the dress of a mock king; and the proud man, scattered in the conceits of his heart, is well pleased with their proposal; for by it he is reinstated. If Jesus is only a poor weak-minded idiot, His silence casts no stain on the majesty of the King.

Two things, Lord Jesus, humble of Heart, I have asked of Thee; deny them, not to me before I die. Remove far from me vanity and lying words (Prov. xxx.).

D. Herod sent Him back to Pilate.

Contemplate our Blessed Lord dressed as a foolish impostor.

And notice that this is not at all the verdict which the Priests and Scribes want. Once more they are full of trouble. They wish Jesus to be sentenced as a wicked, malicious criminal that must be crucified; and not let off as a fool. *They have been confounded because God hath despised them* (Psalm lii.).

E. *They mocked Him, clothing Him with a white garment.*

Yet this verdict, this word uttered off-hand, "Put a fool's dress on Him," might well satisfy cruelty; for it means quite a new outburst of blows and outrages and insults and blasphemies, as He passes along through the crowded streets; quite a new Passion, beyond our imagining. More than ever, now, even little children will be urged to make reparation for the blessings which children uttered, by pouring out curses, and casting stones and filth at Him. The multitude is largely increased. Herod's judgment is heartily accepted. No indignity is too great for a fool, and an arrogant pretender. Every outrage is lawful.

O all ye who pass by the way, attend, and see if there be sorrow like to My sorrow—He shall put His mouth in the dust. He shall give His cheek to him that striketh. He shall be glutted with reproaches. He shall (walk) solitary and hold His peace, because He hath taken it upon Himself (Lament. iii.).

F. Holy writers take for granted that as our Lord walks in silence, He is often in His Heart repeating those Psalms which the Holy Spirit dictated as prophetic pictures of His Sacred Passion.

His Sacred Heart during these processions through the streets is bleeding for His poor followers who are being scandalised, and, by the example and threats of the Rulers, are induced to join with His enemies against Him.

I am become a reproach to My enemies, and very much to My neighbours; and a fear to My acquaintance. They that saw Me without, fled from Me. I am forgotten as one dead from the heart. I am become a vessel that is destroyed. For I have heard the blame of many that dwelt round about.

While they assembled together against Me they consulted to take away My life (Psalm xxx.).

G. And our Blessed Lady is sharing all the anguish of every footstep.

Virgo virginum præclara,
Mihi jam non sis amara,
Fac me tecum plangere.

O Virgin without peer,
Do not refuse to hear,
Share with me tear for tear.

H. Herod sent Him back to Pilate.

Once more we must notice how blindly men follow a leader. Whatever Herod says, his army says. What the Chief Priests say and do, that the multitude says and does. Who is there among us that may not have a following? We are watched when we know it not.

If we influence any one for good, our Lord is full of unbounded gratitude. A Protestant lawyer became a Catholic a few years ago, and told a Catholic barrister that he had been much impressed by noticing how faithful he was to Friday abstinence.

If we scandalise even one of His little ones, our Lord says from His Heart, "Wo".

I. Herod mocked Him, putting on Him a white robe.

King Ezechias in his great sickness prayed: *Lord, I suffer violence; answer for me.* But immediately he corrects himself, saying: *What shall He answer for me, when He Himself hath done it?* (Isaias xxxviii.). So now, while contemplating our Lord's suffering derision in His white robe, we cannot forget that He has done worse to Himself when, for our sakes, He put on the disguise of His white garb in His Eucharistic Life, and is exhibited in this condition to be neglected and despised, and *glutted with reproaches.*

My Heart hath expected misery and reproach.

"Turn, Blessed Mother, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, in His Hidden Life upon the altar."

Adoro te devote latens Deitas!

J. And they were made friends that day.

Friends, and partners in a bad day's work. Yet, when they meet to banquet together, they excuse each other. "We could not act otherwise. It was all Jewish malice!" *If thou didst see a thief, thou didst run with him; and with adulterers thou hast been a partaker* (Psalm xlix.).

Incline not, Lord Jesus, my heart to evil words, to make excuses in sins, with men that work iniquity; and I will not communicate with the choicest of them. The just man shall correct me in mercy, and reprove me: but let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head (Psalm cxl.).

We must rather resolve, while we contemplate His Sacred Passion, to be friends and partners of all who are friends of our Lord, and love Him—I am partner of all who fear Thee, and that keep Thy commandments (Psalm cxviii.).

K. They were made friends that day.

Much more, while contemplating the Passion, must we make friends with all our enemies. We must not rest content till we can truly love our enemies, and do good to those who hate us, and bless those that curse us, and pray for those who calumniate us.

Every day of the year is for us a Good Friday. Every day we must forgive, and love our enemies.

L. 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.

If thou blow the spark, it shall burn as a fire: and if thou spit upon it, it shall be quenched (Ecclus. xxviii.). In the early morning the tumult was but a spark of fire compared to what it has grown to now. The Priests and Ancients come back as if they were wronged and injured men, who have a right to reparation. The Roman has made fools of them by parading them through the streets. He must make amends by compliance. And now they are no longer afraid of a tumult among the people. The multitude are backing them. Pilate has gained nothing. His trouble is doubled and trebled. The Rulers have come back more resolved, more reckless, more irreverent, more prepared to browbeat

The tree of life grows out of a small seed. Great havoc and ruin out of a small spark of fire. *He that contemneth small things* (the small beginnings of temptation) *shall fall by little and little* (Ecclus. xix.).

"Lead us not, O merciful Lord, into temptation. Grant us grace not to enter little by little into temptation."

SCENE XI.

THE PRÆTORIUM. THE PAVED COURT, OR LITHOSTROTOS.

STATION I.

And Pilate calling together the Chief Priests and Magistrates and the people, said to them: You have presented to me this Man as one that perverteth the people: and behold, I, having examined Him before you, find no cause in this Man of those things wherein you accuse Him; no, nor Herod neither, for I sent you to him, and behold, nothing worthy of death is done to Him (St. Luke xxiii. 13—15).

A. *Pilate calling together the Chief Priests and Magistrates and the people.*

Little pleasure does it give to this weak man to see this great wave rolling in on him. His perplexity is multiplied. The situation is becoming every hour more alarming. But he still confides in his own powers and resources.

Till now only the Priests and Ancients and leading men have been admitted within the gate into the court of the castle, the Lithostrotos. Now he also calls in *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.

B. *Behold, I find no cause in Him; no, nor Herod neither.*
Observe: Judas has acquitted Jesus of all crime; Pilate

has done the same; Herod has virtually declared Him innocent. Pilate now again ratifies the verdict: *I find no cause in Him.*

Our human prudence does not think that our Lord acts wisely when, in the presence of so many accusers, He remains silent—"Jesus autem tacebat". But, O Blessed Lord, how abundantly the providence of Thy Eternal Father takes care, *that Thou mayest overcome when Thou art judged* (Psalm l.).

STATION II.

I will chastise Him, therefore, and release Him (v. 16).

A. Chastise and release.

Observe, how at once Pilate's last state is become 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.*

If such a sentence were heard in one of our courts of justice in this country from the lips of a judge: *I find no cause in Him*, neither does the other judge to whom the cause has been remitted: *I will chastise Him, therefore, and release Him*: with what an irrepressible storm of indignation would the words be received! That judge would never again dare to show his face. "He is innocent, quite innocent, but to satisfy you I will chastise Him," that is, "I will have Him scourged". We have seen how St. Paul's expostulation prevailed at once: *Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned?* (Acts xxii.). By rights, Pilate's friends ought to have pressed round him and urgently said: "How can you think of scourging a Jew, here, in the midst of His own people; a Man that is innocent and has been revered as a Prophet, and a Man that is utterly uncondemned?" But no such voice is heard. Pilate's new expedient is listened to 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 as a Roman Governor and servant of the Roman Emperor, dreads to condemn an innocent Man. On the other hand, he wishes to satisfy the Sanhedrim, and therefore is willing to chastise Jesus, and chastise Him most cruelly. The result is that he satisfies neither. Our Blessed Saviour cannot be satisfied with anything but what is just and right. On the other hand, the Chief Priests and Magistrates cannot be satisfied unless they see Jesus crucified.

So far from contenting them, this proposal of Pilate only renders them doubly determined to have their will. For they perceive at once that Pilate has taken a great plunge downward. To meet them half-way, he has made a rapid and a deep descent. They have only now to persevere and show a bold front, and the weak man will sink down deeper and deeper into the abyss.

Again, then, Pilate has utterly failed in his hope of effecting a compromise between right and wrong, between Christ and Antichrist. Once more is our Lord's word proved true: *No man can serve two masters* (St. Matt. vi.).

B. *I will chastise Him and release Him.*

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* (*enter into deliberation*) about committing a mortal sin.

Does this mean that I must be in such a state *that I cannot be tempted* to commit a grievous sin? Certainly not, as the holiest *may be tempted*,

Does it mean that to be in the *first degree of humility necessary for salvation* I must be so firm that temptation takes no effect upon me? Certainly not; for even if temptation has some effect, so that I commit a venial sin by not being prompt and faithful enough in rejecting it, yet I still remain in the state of grace, and if I die in this

condition I shall be saved; whereas St. Ignatius lays it down that I am not in the state necessary for salvation if I *deliberate* 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 to lose much by doing right, or can gain much by doing wrong, he is ready to give up God and conscience, and do the wrong.

C. *I will chastise Him and release Him.*

Pilate is in the position of a man defending a besieged fortress. A strong outer wall has been taken by the enemy; he is becoming more timid; the enemy more bold and resolute. If Elias the Thesbite were by his side with his strong faith and upright heart, he might still lead Pilate to victory with his burning words: *How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him* (3 Kings xviii.).

Or if Pilate would listen to the teaching of the Prisoner before him, he would come off gloriously triumphant: *Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you* (St. Matt. vi.). But he is, as we have seen, a *double-minded man*. He wishes to do right, but will not take the plain straight road of duty; he is clinging to the hope that by his own cleverness and shrewdness he can find another by-path that will lead him right.

How many are there at this day who wish, in a way, to arrive at truth! They could have it at once if they would become docile and listen to the infallible teaching of Christ's Apostle; but this appointed method, plain, easy, and sure, they will not adopt; yet they are ready to study and read Church history, to travel and look at the Eastern Church, to put themselves in communication with the Old Catholics of Germany. This state of mind represents the second

class in St. Ignatius' meditation on the Three Classes: the men who are ready to do many things for salvation, but *not the one thing necessary*.

Pilate has therefore to find out some new plan, some new tactics.

STATION III.

Now on the festival-day he was wont to release unto them one of the prisoners, whomsoever they demanded. And there was one called Barabbas, who was put in prison with some seditious men, who in the sedition had committed murder. And when the multitude had come up, they began to desire that he would do as he had ever done to them (St. Mark xv.).

He had then a notorious prisoner that was called Barabbas (St. Matt. xxvii.).

Barabbas, who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for a murder, was cast into prison (St. Luke xxiii.).

And when the multitude was come up, they began to desire that he would do as he had ever done.

The order then of the incidents is perhaps this: Pilate has called the people into the Lithostrotos, and taken them into council. Unnerved by the sight of the crowd, and the bold, angry aspect of the Rulers, he utters these words of wicked weakness: *I find no cause in Him. I will chastise Him therefore, and release Him.* This word, *I will release Him*, reminds the people of their Paschal privilege. They are not all intent on one object, as the Priests and Ancients are. Forgetting, therefore, for a while, the great question which is alone of interest to the Rulers, their minds go off to their 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 own 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.

STATION IV.

They, therefore, being gathered together, Pilate said: Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus, that is called Christ? (St. Matt. xxvii.).

Will you that I release to you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the Chief Priests had delivered Him up out of envy (St. Mark xv.).

Once more the prayer is heard: *Let them be confounded and ashamed that seek My Soul.* The Priests and Ancients are humbled to the dust. The Roman Governor turns his back abruptly on them; puts their wish completely aside, and leaves it entirely to the people to decide what is to be done with Jesus. Moreover, to show more clearly his scorn for them, and that he is fully alive to their envious malice, he puts the question in the form the most galling to them: *Will you that I release to you the King of the Jews?*

Then again, though he is quite aware of the custom that he is to release one prisoner, *whomsoever they demanded*, yet he tries to make them ignore the will of the Priests and Ancients, and vote according to his wish, by only giving them a choice between two: Jesus—Who is innocent and much esteemed, and only a prisoner because the Rulers are jealous of Him—or Barabbas, a notorious criminal and murderer.

Lastly, after calling on them to choose, he puts a leading question to them, in order to suggest the answer which he wishes for: *Will you that I release to you the King of the Jews?*

This appeal then to the people for a plebiscite, is gall and wormwood to the Rulers.

If the people suddenly cry out: *Release Jesus!* the cause of His enemies is lost irreparably. Pilate will most

certainly side with the people against them. But the people, as usual, wait for a leader to direct their suffrage.

For a time they give no response. They look at one another, and break up into groups discussing the question. Some time must be allowed for them to make up their mind.

Another incident occurs which allows the time wanted.

STATION V.

As he was sitting in the place of judgment, his wife sent to him, saying: Have thou nothing to do with that just Man. For I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him (St. Matt. xxvii. 19).

A. I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him.

It was, as we have seen, at an early hour, probably before seven o'clock, that the news reached Pilate that the members of the Great Council were coming to wait on him on very urgent business. Possibly he was aroused from his sleep to receive the message, and was not on that account any the better pleased to meet the early intruders. Claudia Procla, his wife, would not perhaps consider it necessary to rise so early. For it appears that it was after Pilate's departure to attend to business, that she was visited with the dream that terrified her. For, had this happened during the night, she would have warned her husband before the trial began; and, moreover, she does not say that the dream came during the night, but *this day*.

Some holy Fathers think that this alarming dream was caused by Satan, who was beginning to perceive that he had made altogether a false move in procuring the death of Christ. But the more common and more probable opinion is that the dream was sent by God. If Satan had already resolved on preventing the Jews from consummating their crime, the spirits of darkness would, we should imagine, have worked upon the minds of the people and moved them to oppose the Priests and Ancients, who alone were thoroughly determined on the Crucifixion. Claudia

Procla's name is found in the calendar of the saints; and therefore a simple and obvious explanation of the dream is, that it was sent as a grace to her, and also, on account of her prayers and good dispositions, as one more great grace to her husband. Some writers, such as Origen and Tertullian, imagine that Pilate was in the end converted to Christianity. St. Augustine seems to be of the same opinion, but these Fathers have on this point a large majority against them. We may, however, safely assume that great graces are to-day given to Pilate; for in the case of Judas we see clearly that our Lord *at sundry times and in divers manners spoke* (Hebrews i.) to his heart to induce him to be converted to his God; and Pilate being in ignorance needed more help; and, because he had not abused so many graces, was more likely to get the necessary helps.

B. Have nothing to do with this just Man.

How did the Governor receive this warning word from his good wife? In the disturbed state in which his mind was, it may have made an impression. As we have seen, he is *one that wavereth*, and *is like a wave of the sea carried about by the winds* (St. James i.). Here is a very strong wind sent from Heaven to turn his course back into the right direction, and undo the mischief already done. Does he hasten off to his wife, who counselled so wisely, and confer with her? If so, she sees by his looks and gathers from his words that he is already far more than half conquered. And she uses the most earnest entreaties with many tears to move him not to consummate this terrible crime. And for the moment, perhaps, he is persuaded, and makes promises that he will do nothing but what is right.

On the other hand, though he may feel the full weight of her counsel, yet he may not be at all prepared boldly to adopt it, but will wait to see how events shape themselves. In this supposition, he is perhaps unwilling to let her know the impression that her words have made; and may affect to resent her interference, and send her back some impatient message. However this may be, we have good hope that her soul turns in prayer to God to beg for mercy for herself and her husband; and that if he gives her no comfort or contentment, the Heart of our Saviour from

His bonds is speaking to her, and giving her many graces in return for the good alms she has given Him, in His hour of need, by speaking in His defence. Holy writers tell us that Claudia Procla was afterwards a disciple of Christ, and that her name is found in the Greek calendar of Saints. Commentators suggest that she may be the Claudia mentioned by St. Paul: *Eubulus and Pudens and Linus and Claudia salute thee* (2 Timothy iv.).

STATION VI.

And the Governor answering said to them: Whether will you of the two to be released unto you? But they said, Barabbas. But the Chief Priests and Ancients persuaded the people that they should ask Barabbas and make Jesus away (St. Matt. xxvii.). *But the Chief Priests moved the people that he should rather release Barabbas to them* (St. Mark xv.). *The whole multitude together cried out, saying: Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas* (St. Luke xxiii.). *Then cried they all again, saying: Not this Man, but Barabbas* (St. John xviii.).

A. *The Chief Priests and Ancients persuaded the people—moved the people.*

Mark once more how a little leaven, as St. Paul writes, *corrupts the whole mass* (1 Cor. v.). The men who maliciously hate Jesus are few. The many follow their leaders like sheep. And yet a child like St. Agnes, who loves God, conquers the very greatest potentates of this world: *Through Thy commandment Thou hast made me wiser than my enemies. I have understood more than all my teachers. I have had understanding above Ancients* (Psalm cxviii.).

B. *Not this Man, but Barabbas.*

When Esau heard his father say: *Thy brother came deceitfully and got thy blessing*, we read that he roared out with a great cry, and being in a great consternation wept with a great cry (Genesis xxvii.). What wonder! But what is his roar of indignation and consternation compared with the wail and the howl and the gnashing of teeth with which

this senseless multitude when laid in Hell like sheep will greet their Priests and Rulers who moved them and persuaded them to make that terrible choice and say: *Not this Man, but Barabbas?*

Here on earth, when one scandalises another, and they sin, they call it love and affection. By what name will they call it at the judgment-seat?

Esau always hated Jacob, and he said in his heart: The days will come of the mourning of my father, and I will kill my brother Jacob (Genesis xxvii.). What wonder if this unhappy multitude, when they discover that they have been duped by their blind guides, these whitewashed sepulchres, these hypocrites, who would not themselves go into the Kingdom of Heaven and would not suffer any others to enter, what wonder if they should hate them with a life-long hatred and tear them limb from limb, for having persuaded them to choose Barabbas and reject their own Jesus?

C. *The Chief Priests persuaded the people.*

Consider, too, the amazing energy, the untiring industry, the giant efforts, and the perseverance wherewith these Priests and Ancients work to bring about this result; how diligently they use the time given to them, while Pilate is busy with Procla, sending their servants in every direction, and going themselves among the people to gain their vote. *We have walked through hard ways, we have wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction* (Wisdom v.). Mark how true our common saying is: "Where there is a will there is a way".

"O good Lord Jesus, if we loved Thee as Thy enemies hate Thee, we too could move and persuade the multitude, and they would cry: Not Barabbas, but Jesus."

D. *The whole multitude together cried out, saying: Away with this Man; release unto us Barabbas.*

And the most loving and compassionate Heart of our Saviour is answering: *O My people, what have I done to thee? or in what have I molested thee? Answer Me* (Micah vi.). And the blessed angels are in sadness repeating the

words of Moses : *Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people ? Is not He thy Father that hath possessed thee and made thee and created thee ?* (Deut. xxxii.).

"When I was with you in the wilderness feeding you with the loaves and teaching you and curing your diseases, you did not cry : *Away with Him !* When you met Me on the Mount of Olives five days ago and led Me to the Temple, you cried, *Hosanna to the Son of David !* You did not cry : *Away with Him !* But now you are blindly following blind guides " (St. Matt. xv.).

E. *Not this Man, but Barabbas.*

What is it that hath been done ? The same that shall be done (Eccles. i.). Oh, what scene of the Passion is more often reproduced than this competition between Jesus and Barabbas ? And, alas ! with the same results, *Not this Man, but Barabbas.*

Sometimes we sin by surprise ; as when we suddenly give way to irritation and anger. Such sins do not heap upon our Lord so much dishonour and disgrace as does a calm, cold-blooded preference of Barabbas and rejection of Him.

F. *Not this Man, but Barabbas.*

If a wife abandons her husband because he is a poor man, and joins herself to one who is a prince, she acts very wickedly ; but we see what her temptation is ; for she gains by her sin money and position.

But if a princess abandons a royal husband, who is, besides, a good and gifted man, to unite herself with a leper, her wickedness is much more inexplicable and unintelligible. Even so, if we abandoned God our Creator and Redeemer, in order to go and serve some other God, there might be some palliation for our treason ; but when we forsake Christ Jesus to gain only Barabbas, we can give no reason for our crime except the everlasting wail, *We fools ! we fools ! The serpent deceived me !*

G. *Not this Man, but Barabbas.*

Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and ye gates thereof

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 to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that hold no water (Jerem. ii.).

My people have done two evils. For (1) it would be an infinite evil to forsake our God even if we could get by so doing a Paradise or Heaven that should be ours for ever.

Then (2) even if it were possible to give the love of our hearts to Barabbas—to sensual pleasures, or to revenge, or to money, or to cruelty, or to gluttony—without losing the possession of our God, it would be a great evil to give our love and worship to such things for which our hearts are not created.

But (3) when we give up our God, and get no exchange but Barabbas ; and when we are quite content with Barabbas, and make ourselves happy with him, and completely turn our backs on our God, and forget Him and ignore Him entirely, then indeed we *have done two evils.*

H. *Not this Man, but Barabbas.*

We must notice the degrees in this preference.

1. Sometimes it is a question of deliberate mortal sin ; and then we give up our God entirely and for ever, in order to obtain some short-lived and base gratification.

2. Sometimes it is a case of deliberate venial sin. I am not asked to renounce God entirely, and for ever ; but only to displease Him, to dishonour Him, to offend Him, by setting at naught His commandment and His will to a certain extent, which our conscience tells us to be only venial.

3. Then lastly, there are cases in which there is not question of breaking a commandment, but only of what is called inordinate action, by which we refuse to deny some unreasonable inclination or appetite, though by so doing we shall give more pleasure and more glory to our good God.

A good father oftentimes wishes his children to consult him as to their movements, and their expenditure, though he does not command them to do so. So God creates us,

wishing with an infinite desire that always and at all times we should show Him filial reverence and affection and the love of preference. If, then, the case arises, as it often does, that I can either gratify some taste or appetite—not because I see some good motive for so doing, but merely to please myself and satisfy my inclination—or, on the other hand, my conscience tells me that I can please God and be of use to Him by doing instead some work of mercy or going to Holy Mass; if in such a case, because there is no special command given to me by God, I resolve deliberately to follow my own unruly inclination, and read or converse, or spend my money or my time, or eat, or sleep, merely because I am so inclined, without caring to give pleasure to my Creator, this is inordinate action, not directed to the service or praise of my Creator. In such action there is always a clear and distinct preference for gratifying self rather than giving pleasure to my God, my Creator, my Father, my Redeemer, my Lord Jesus Christ.

I. *Not this Man, but Barabbas.*

We can contemplate our Blessed Lady listening to these words. To her we continually say, *Hail, the Lord is with thee*; and one part of our meaning is that the Lord in her takes the place which self usurps in us. Her heart, her tastes, all her inclinations, her whole will is for her Son and her Lord. He is always present to her heart, and her one desire is to give pleasure to Him always and in every place. Never has she once in her life, in order to please herself, 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 we must cry to her, "Mother of God, pray for us sinners. For (1) it is thy office as Mother of God 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 motherly love for Jesus, that the cry of our hearts may ever be: 'Not Barabbas! not any creature! not self! but Jesus Christ, my God, my Redeemer, Who loved me and delivered Himself up for me!'"

J. *Not this Man, but Barabbas.*

We must frequently and diligently exercise our souls in making acts of loving preference for Jesus, such as the saints made. The Psalms and New Testament abound with them. *For what have I in Heaven? and besides Thee, Lord Jesus, what do I desire upon earth?* (Psalm lxxii.).

Better is one day in Thy courts above thousands (Psalm lxxxiii.).

Lord Jesus, *not my will be done, but Thine. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as in Heaven.*

I opened my mouth and panted, because I longed for Thy commandments. My eyes have fainted after Thy salvation. I have loved Thy commandments above gold and the topaz (Psalm cxviii.).

God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world (Galat. vi.).

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 (Romans viii.).

K. *Not this Man, but Barabbas.*

"*Sursum corda.*" In Heaven too the question has been asked by the Eternal Trinity, which shall be released—Jesus the innocent Lamb of God, or man the sinner? And the answer of the Eternal Father has been, Not Jesus, but the sinner. And the Divine Son promptly answers, Yes, My Father, behold I come. *And He loved me and delivered Himself up for me.*

L. 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.

M. Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus Who is called the Christ?

Some writers think that Barabbas also bore the name of Jesus; and that therefore Pilate distinguishes Jesus Barabbas, and *Jesus Who is called the Christ*. The name of Barabbas is commonly interpreted, Son of the Father. The poor sinner is become by the Incarnation the brother of Jesus and the son of the Father. How gladly would our Blessed Lord welcome Barabbas as one of His brethren and as a son of His Father. Even if I have been like Barabbas in the past, I can now be a Jesus, and help to save others.

END OF THE FIRST MORNING WATCH.

CHAPTER II.

THE SECOND MORNING WATCH.

9 A.M. to 12.

SCENE I.

THE LITHOSTROTOS.

STATION I.

THE SCOURGING.

I will chastise Him therefore, and release Him (St. Luke xxiii.).

I find no cause of death in Him: I will chastise Him therefore, and let Him go (St. Luke xxiii.).

Then, therefore, Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him (St. John xix.).

I. The question has been discussed whether our Blessed Lord was scourged twice or only once. We are told that the Romans used to scourge all criminals sentenced to crucifixion; and had we only St. Matthew and St. Mark to guide us, we should be inclined to think that Pilate, after passing sentence, did, according to custom, order Jesus to be scourged. St. Mark writes: *And so, Pilate, being willing to satisfy the people, released to them Barabbas, and delivered up Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified.* St. Matthew writes: *Then he released to them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered Him unto them to be crucified.* These narratives seem to point to the ordinary mode of proceeding, a scourging after sentence and before the crucifixion. But St. John, as we have seen, wrote his Gospel later, and with a view of adding some details omitted, and making some doubtful points more clear. His narrative, then, seems to make it plain that Pilate ordered a scourging before he passed the sentence of death. And St. Luke seems to corroborate St. John by telling as that Pilate twice expressed his intention of scourging Jesus and then releasing Him: *I will chastise Him therefore, and let Him go. I will chastise Him therefore, and release Him.* It is not to be a scourging preparatory to death, but a severe chastisement that shall satisfy the people and be a

substitute for death. We must therefore conclude that either there were two scourgings, one before sentence and one after; or adopt the common opinion that as there had been already a scourging, and one of unusual severity, the Priests did not clamour for a second, but were glad to hasten on to the Crucifixion.

II. Scourging was a chastisement sanctioned by the Law of Moses, but under certain restrictions. If the Judges see that the offender is worthy of stripes, they shall lay him down and shall cause him to be beaten before them. According to the measure of the sin shall the measure also of the stripes be. Yet so that they exceed not the number of forty: lest thy brother depart shamefully torn before thy eyes (Deut. xxv.).

From this passage we see, firstly, that the stripes are not to exceed forty; so that when St. Paul tells us that he received five times from the Jews forty stripes less one, this means that he five times was scourged with the greatest severity allowed by the law. Those who study the Rabbinical Books tell us that they find it there prescribed that thirty-nine lashes are to be the largest measure of chastisement; that of these, thirteen are to be administered on each shoulder, and thirteen in front, on the chest.

Secondly. From the words of Deuteronomy we see also that the criminal was to be laid down flat on the ground, or perhaps on some low table or couch, so that the executioners could stand on the right side or left as required, and the criminal could be turned over to receive the stripes on his back or in front.

Thirdly. We further gather from these words in Deuteronomy that this was a very severe punishment; so much so, that the stripes were to be counted, lest thy brother should depart shamefully torn from before thy eyes, so that if the prescribed number of lashes was exceeded the victim ran risk of being shamefully torn.

III. The Romans were not limited to any fixed number of stripes. Neither did they lay the criminal down as the Jews did. Sometimes they stretched him upright on a frame or rack, and beat him either with rods which the lictor carried, or with the flagrum, one heavy lash like the Russian knout; or with the flagellum, or scourge, which consisted of several thinner cords. From the Acts of the Martyrs we see that these cords were often weighted with lead.

IV. Not unfrequently the sentence passed was that the criminal be scourged to death. Again, on the other hand, we are told, money was sometimes given to bribe the executioners to hasten death. This could easily be done. It is said that one blow of the heavy Russian knout suffices to break the spinal cord, and so cause instant death.

The executioners, however, we find, in different countries have their rules and regulations, and are trained to inflict great torture without endangering life. In the English prisons, it is said, that the men who have to use the cat practise on block-

figures in order to learn how to inflict pain without risk to life. In a manual, printed, we are told, in Russia a few years ago, for governors of gaols, precise directions are found for those who have to flog criminals. After the fifth stroke the skin must be rent, and after that, each stroke must deepen the wound or make a new one of a certain breadth, so that at the end of the flogging the back shall be entirely raw.

V. The flagellum, made of several thinner cords, was considered more painful than the flagrum with one heavy lash, or than the flogging with rods, as each cord made its own separate wound. And thus the cat-o'-nine-tails, it is said, inflicts more torture than the Russian knout, though the latter is wielded, we are told, with such cruel skill that each blow tears away skin and flesh from back and front. It is quite certain that in our own courts offenders dreaded flogging far more than any other chastisement. It was deemed so cruel a punishment that there has been a national uprising against it. It is only permitted now when criminals have been guilty of savage violence; and it has been found that it deters hardened offenders in a way that no other punishment does. In England, as we know, formerly the use of the lash was common. In ancient Rome, masters and mistresses could order their slaves to be scourged with what Horace calls *horribili flagello*. And we are told that when masters shrank from using their terrible power, their wives were less merciful.

VI. One of the arguments used by those who voted for the abolition of this punishment in the army, was that it was so degrading. And when it was afterwards proposed to pass a Bill through Parliament to enact flogging as the punishment for brutal husbands who barbarously ill-treated their wives, the proposition was rejected, because, it was said, a husband once flogged through evidence given by his wife would never forgive her in after years. This seems probable enough.

One who witnessed in the early part of this century the public flogging of a prisoner at the cart-tail, used to describe how the cart was violently shaken by the convulsion of the howling sufferer each time the lash fell, and how the skin of the victim was seen sticking to the cords as the executioner passed them through his fingers after each lash. A navy officer, not long dead, used to tell that as he was standing to witness a flogging, the sentenced man, already tied up, turned round to the officer in command and asked him one favour: "Do not let the left-handed man flog me". One reason for this petition might be, that the left-handed man would deal the lashes on parts of the back not touched by the right-handed man. The Jewish law, as we have seen, provided that no part should be without a wound; and the Roman executioners, we are told, dealt their blows with great deliberation, under the supervision of an officer, who saw that the chastisement was thorough. It was, however, enacted by Roman law that no Roman citizen

could be sentenced to be scourged with the flagellum. Citizens might be beaten with the lictor's rods; but the terrible punishment of the lash was reserved for slaves.

A. Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

"O vos omnes"—O all who go by the way, give heed a little while, and see, and listen.

The words of the Gospel are very few: we can very quickly read them and pass on to other things: *Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him*; we can read them and at once forget them. What words afford a better example of the difference between merely reading, and *considering in the heart* or contemplating, than these words: *Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him*? Till we contemplate, how little do we know of the Sacred Passion! The words lying on the surface cover rich mines of sacred treasures, which are entirely lost unless we make time to reach them by thought, and study, and contemplation.

Sancta Mater istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas,
Cordi meo valide.

O Holy Mother, grant my prayer:
Fix in my heart, engraven there,
The wounds of Jesus crucified.

B. Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

From these words the question has arisen, did Pilate himself inflict any stripes on our Blessed Lord? Some of the holy Fathers so interpret. Venerable Bede holds it as certain that he did; but the common opinion of commentators seems to be that no Roman Governor would dare to degrade his office by becoming the executioner.

Therefore these words remind us, while contemplating, of that important truth, *qui facit per alium facit per se*—that is, when we get something done, either by commanding, or counselling, or persuading, or in other effectual ways, it is as if the act were our own. We become full partners in the work done, whether it be good or evil.

"Blessed Mother of God, pray for us, that we may always be able to say, *I am partner, O Lord, with those that*

fear Thee (Psalm cxviii.); and that we may not in any way become guilty of the sins of other men. *From the sins of others spare Thy servant*" (Psalm xviii.).

C. Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

Our Blessed Lord is then to be scourged, not according to Jewish law, but according to Roman custom. And from the Latin word *flagellavit* we see that the *flagellum*, or scourge, is to be used. The chastisement is not to be such as might be inflicted on a Roman citizen; that is to say, not a flogging with rods, but with "the horrible scourge," such as slaves only have to endure.

Jesus is not then laid down flat, as Jewish law prescribes, but is standing. As has been said, the Romans sometimes fastened the criminal about to be scourged to a frame, or rack, and with ropes and pulleys stretched his legs and arms. But this is not done in our Saviour's case. Tradition tells us that He is fastened to a pillar; and the common opinion is that it is a low pillar, not more than two feet and a half in height; one of three still preserved as sacred relics.

To an iron ring then on the top of this pillar He is fastened by His wrists. It is further stated, that His position was more than once changed for the convenience of the executioners; His sacred hands being bound to the pillar sometimes in front of Him, sometimes behind His back. In either case His Sacred Body is bent down, and the position is most distressing.

D. Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

We may, with St. Bridget, contemplate our divine Lord in humble obedience taking off His clothes at the bidding of the executioners.

According to the contemplations of St. Bridget, our Lord was entirely stripped of His clothes. In the writings of the Venerable Abbess d'Agreda, on the contrary, we read that our Lady assured her several times that, at her prayer, the executioners were restrained all through the Passion from stripping Him entirely:

How are we to account for this discrepancy, and others similar, which we meet with in narratives that are commonly called Revelations?

1. One answer may be that we have not always the exact words of the holy contemplatives. The text of St. Bridget's contemplations, for instance, must, apparently, have undergone in republication some alterations, as we find it sometimes stated by grave authors on her authority that the number of lashes inflicted on our Lord was about four thousand five hundred, sometimes over six thousand.

2. Besides, we must bear in mind that these holy servants of God do not themselves claim for their writings the character of infallible revelations. Thus the Abbess d'Agreda, when she writes at the command of her Superiors, says that what she writes may be considered only as pious contemplations.

3. With regard to such pious contemplations in which holy souls are much helped by Divine light, St. Ignatius in his Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, gives us very valuable instruction. He teaches us that not only when an angel speaks to the soul, but even when God Himself, our Creator, speaks directly to one of His faithful servants, His visit is commonly of short duration; but it may leave the favoured soul in a state of intense happiness; and during this blissful aftertime, the soul, while dwelling on the words spoken by God, may enlarge upon them, and interpret them, according to its own pre-existing habits of mind. If this be done, and if all these thoughts be afterwards committed to writing, the result may be that though all that is written is good and pious and edifying, yet all is not revelation.

Discrepancies therefore found in such writings do not prove that they are all impostures. They may be the contemplations of holy persons who in time of prayer have been very much helped by the grace of the Holy Ghost; and therefore they may be of great use to others; but as the Holy See has not pronounced that all that is found in such writings is revelation, we are not bound to accept them as such; nor are we to be astonished if we find them at times differing one from another. We shall see later that eminent theologians have no scruple in rejecting at times statements found in the contemplations of St. Bridget, such as we have them extant at present.

E. Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

"Attendite." We may watch our Blessed Lord, now stripped of His clothes, presenting willingly His sacred hands, and laying them on the low pillar to be bound.

In His Sacred Heart He is saying, *My Heart is ready, O My God, My Heart is ready.* Last night, He came forward, we read, in the Garden to meet the armed multitude, knowing all things that should come upon Him. Nay, all

His life through He has perfectly known what this scourging is to be. How could He not? Since it is His own charity that has in the end determined that it shall be, and what it shall be.

The scourging is one of the few details of His sufferings of which He spoke in time past. *The Son of Man shall be betrayed, mocked, spit upon, scourged, and crucified.* These are the great features of His Sacred Passion, which have never been away from His Mind or His Heart. *I am prepared for scourges; and My sorrow is always before Me* (Psalm xxxvii.).

My sorrow is always before Me.

Our most compassionate Lord has many sorrows in His Heart. One of these is that most afflicting thought, "*Quæ utilitas in sanguine meo?*"—*What profit is there in My Blood?* (Psalm xxix.). *My eyes have failed in weeping for the destruction of the daughter of My people* (Lament. ii.).

I am ready for scourges; and the load of sorrow on My Heart would be all turned into joy if My people would listen to the voice which speaks to them from every wound: My people, know thou and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God (Jerem. ii.).

F. Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

The low pillar, we are told, stands at the north side of the Lithostrotos, the side furthest removed from the Governor's house.

Contemplate the executioners binding the sacred hands to the pillar, as usual, with merciless severity. For the injunction is again and again repeated: "*Lead Him carefully; make all safe.*"

Once more He stands, as last night in the dungeon, His back bent, His Sacred Head bowed down. To the eyes of men the word of the Psalm is well fulfilled: *I am become miserable, and am bowed down even to the end* (Psalm xxxvii.). *I am become as a Man without help* (Psalm lxxxvii.).

It is said that on either side there is a raised step, on

which the executioners stand, in order to deal their stripes more effectively.

G. Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

Some writers tell us, on the authority of St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, that as many as sixty executioners took part in the scourging, relieving each other, two at a time. At first the number seems an extravagant exaggeration. But if there be truth in the statement so commonly accepted among the faithful—that the scourging lasted an hour, and the lashes amounted to six thousand, or thereabouts—even if the executioners employed are as many as sixty, each of them must administer about one hundred lashes; and as they are animated and urged to put forth their strength, it may easily be that owing to the fatigue relays are frequently needed. Moreover, if blood-money is distributed to the executioners, the soldiers themselves will arrange that there shall be as many employed as possible. It is also plain, that if the number of the lashes is to be so great, no study, or skill, or deliberation is necessary to secure that the whole body shall be bruised and wounded and torn. To inflict six thousand lashes in the hour, one hundred lashes must be dealt every minute. The number of stripes will certainly do all that skill and deliberation could have effected. Besides, as the wish of the Pharisees and Ancients is to produce speedy death, it matters not how quickly the blows fall.

H. Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

Besides the statements found in the writings of holy contemplatives and others, we have what may be more useful in contemplation, weighty reasons which render it highly probable that the scourging is severe and cruel beyond all ordinary examples. One is that the soldiers have been told what the Governor's wish is. This is Pilate's last expedient for extricating himself from a position most troublesome, and possibly highly dangerous.

His plan of sending Jesus to Herod failed entirely. The competition with Barabbas was equally abortive. So that

now if he cannot satisfy the fury of the Priests and Ancients by this scourging, the choice before him will be either to condemn to death a Man not only innocent, but highly esteemed, and thereby possibly incur the merciless severity of Tiberius; or, on the other hand, to set at defiance all the leading men of Jerusalem, who are so resolved and so excited, and can easily hurry the people into a sedition, which is equally likely to draw down on his head the vengeance of the Emperor.

I will chastise Him and let Him go. Here then is the last hope of this most weak and unhappy Judge. Doubtless he was thought an enviable man when promoted to be Procurator of Judea; and yet any true friend would say, *Seek not to be made a judge, lest thou fear the person of the powerful, and lay a stumbling-block for thy integrity* (Ecclus. vii.).

St. Augustine writes: "Pilate did this, we must believe, with no other view save that the Jews might be satiated with His torments, and think that enough had been done, and no longer rage for His death" (Tract. cxvi.).

I. I will chastise Him and let Him go.

On the other hand, the Priests and Ancients, hearing this announcement in sullen silence, at once in their secret hearts make answer: "Chastise Him, yes; but let Him go, never". Anxious therefore though they be to have Jesus crucified, yet as they see clearly that they cannot depend on the inconstancy of the double-minded Governor, their one fixed purpose at present is that Jesus shall never come away from the pillar alive, to be set free. Whatever, therefore, they can effect by bribes they scruple not to do. They who afterwards gave the guards money to move them to say that the Sacred Body had been stolen away, will surely be liberal now in order to see Him dead. For they are in a perpetual agony of fear lest He should, in one way or another, escape out of their grasp. Here then we have another strong argument to prove that the accounts given of the scourging are well founded.

J. Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

Again, commentators consider the third verse of the 128th Psalm to be a prophetic description of the scourging. *The wicked have wrought upon My back: they have prolonged their iniquity.*

The wicked have wrought upon My back: that is, the executioners stand over Him as smiths over the anvil, dealing blow after blow with the strength of their strong arms. The Hebrew words bear an interpretation still more appalling. St. Jerome renders them: *Ploughing, they ploughed upon My back, or furrowed My back.*

And for the words: *They prolonged their iniquity*, St. Jerome has: *They prolonged the furrow.* The Syriac version: *They prolonged their ploughing.*

[The executioners prolong their terrible work beyond all ordinary measure; first, through their slavish wish to please the Governor; secondly, because they are urged on by the entreaties and bribes of the Rulers; and lastly, because, too, their natural cruelty is whetted and instigated by the unseen spirits, whose watchword is still: *He calleth Himself the Son of God. Let us see if His words be true. Let us examine Him by outrages and tortures* (Wisdom ii.).

K. Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

It will help us also to form a true notion of the scourging, if we call to mind that the Paschal lamb, last evening, was a picture of what the Sacred Body becomes to-day. While the skin of the lamb was being torn off, and while the flesh was being roasted at the fire, and by the fire converted into one large wound, our Blessed Saviour recognised in that which He saw the story of what He is to undergo to-day.

L. Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

Again, the familiar words of Isaias, though in their primary and direct sense they describe the state of the sinful people, yet as Christ Jesus is to-day personating the sinner, and has *laid upon Him the iniquities of us all*, they are also a faithful picture of His present condition at the

pillar: *The whole Head is sick, the whole Heart is sad. From the sole of the foot unto the top of the Head there is no soundness in Him, wounds and bruises and swelling sores. They are not dressed, nor bound up, nor fomented with oil* (c. i.). This prophetic picture, we may take for granted, proves to be most accurate. For the soles of the feet to which the lash does not reach are already sorely bruised and wounded. The crown of thorns, as well as the lash, will abundantly wound the top of His Head. The stripes that are now being inflicted reach to every other part of His Sacred Body. For we must bear in mind what we are told, that they more than once changed His position, so that the stripes might reach the front part of His Sacred Body as well as His back. And as the lashes are really guided by His own charity, we may apply the words of the Psalmist, and say: "There is no part of His most innocent flesh that can escape from the burning fire of His love" (Psalm xviii.).

And not one wound is *dressed or bound up or fomented with oil*. Alas! they shall all be aggravated, and fretted, and irritated beyond all thought.

M. Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

We must bear in mind also that word of the 21st Psalm: *They have numbered all My bones*. This may be a description of the stretching of His limbs on the Cross, and the emaciated state of His Sacred Body, which rendered it possible to count His bones; but holy contemplatives, who have had so much light about the Sacred Passion, assure us that the wounds made during the scourging are so deep that the bones are often visible; and that pieces of flesh as large as the human hand have been torn away by the lashes.

N. Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

It will help us also to call to mind the word of Deuteronomy already quoted: *According to the measure of the sin shall the measure also of the stripes be. Yet so that they exceed not the number of forty; lest thy brother depart shamefully torn before thy eyes.*

If, then, the number of stripes far, very far, and quite appallingly, as is commonly believed, exceed forty, we may be quite sure that our Lord, our most loving Brother, our Surety, when let loose, *departs shamefully torn.*

"Blessed Mother, obtain for us grace to keep this Sacred Body, *shamefully torn*, before the eyes of our soul and as a seal on our hearts."

O. Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

We must likewise reflect on the other words just quoted: *According to the measure of the sin shall the measure also of the stripes be.* For to-day: *The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all. To-day He (is) wounded for our iniquities; He (is) bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace (is) upon Him; and by His bruises we are healed.*

According to the measure of the sin shall the number of the stripes be.

In this case, then, the sin is above measure. The innocent Lamb of God has undertaken to atone for all our sins.

True, as has been said, one tear, one sigh, any one act of God made Man, would suffice to take away at once all the anger of His Father from our fallen race; but what would it have availed that God should be willing to forgive sin, if man is not willing to renounce sin? *Jesus is the Mediator, the go-between.* He has to deal with God and with man. When He addresses His Father, His prayer is heard at once, *for His reverence.* But then He has to win men also. For this, He has to undo all the immeasurable mischief wrought by the poison of sin in their souls.

"Blessed Mother of God, pray for us sinners." Else how shall we ever form a notion of what thy Divine Son has to effect through this scourging?

He has to undo, we say, the work that sin has done; but we are met at once by the inspired question: "*Delicta quis intelligit?*"—*Who understands sin?* Are we not taught that we are so blind about sin that the ordinary

inclination of men is to say: *I have sinned and what harm hath befallen me?* (Ecclus. v.).

This is most true. And this very delusion of our miserable blindness is the very first effect of sin which our most compassionate Saviour is labouring and suffering to dispel. As we listen, each stroke of the lash says to us: *Say not, I have sinned and what harm hath befallen me? for the Most High is a patient rewarder.* The lash has not touched me yet, and therefore I say, *What harm hath befallen me?* But though the mercy of God is patient, most patient, most unwilling to strike, most desirous that we repent in time, before our turn comes, yet most surely our turn will come. Our most meek and humble Saviour is now saying to each of us; *Remember My judgment: for thine also shall be so: yesterday for Me, and to-day for thee* (Ecclus. xxxviii.). *What is this that hath been done? The same that shall be done.* For, it is written, and it is an irrevocable word: *Many are the scourges of the sinner* (Psalm xxxi.). The innocent Body of Jesus is now under the lash only as our proxy; and only to induce us to consider in our hearts, and ask ourselves the question: *If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?* If Lucifer's work upon this innocent flesh is so terrible, so appalling, what shall be the condition of a disciple of Christ in the everlasting prison-house—*exiled from the providence of God*, and given over to the will of the spirit of wickedness, to be beaten *with many stripes, because he knew the will of his Master and did not prepare himself to do it?*

We are dismayed, and sickened, and inclined to be incredulous when we hear the details of the scourging, but, after all, the end of this hour must come. *All things concerning Me*, Jesus said last night, *have an end* (St. Luke xxii.). Very soon the youthful stranger will step forward boldly to cut these cords, and by the hour of the evening sacrifice this mangled Body will have ceased to suffer. But when will the ninth hour of rest come in the prison-house of the lost? Never! When will any stranger enter there

to interfere with the cruelty and malice and hatred and tyranny of Lucifer? Never! This, then, is our Lord's first desire, to rouse us out of our fatal delusion that we can sin with impunity. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom* (Psalm cx.). And surely this awful scene may well awaken some salutary fear.

P. Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

Then, too, our Saviour Jesus has to cure the worst of all the deadly wounds which sin has left in our souls, the wound of hopeless despair.

Yes, undoubtedly, with one tear the Divine Son could have appeased His Father's wrath; but would one tear have brought back hope to our dead souls? It is not His Father that demands all this agony, but our cold and blind and insensible and selfish hearts have to be convinced and persuaded that our God loves us; that He wishes to forgive us; that He Himself has paid our debt. Therefore is every one of the lashes wanted; there is not one too many.

Q. Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

Then, besides, there are three terrible powers to be conquered: the gods of the earth; before whom Lucifer persuades so many men to worship. They are: the *lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life* (1 St. John ii.). In other scenes of the Sacred Passion we see our loving Redeemer grappling with the other concupiscences. Here He is struggling with *the lust of the flesh*. In other scenes we see Him condemned and outraged as Son of God, as Prophet, as King. Here He is chastised as a man, as if a guilty man of flesh and blood. Here He is conquering the tyranny of the flesh. Is this an easy task? Could one tear from His eyes win this victory?

We read that a third part of the host of Heaven joined Lucifer in his sin of pride, and fell like lightning into Hell. Is it too much to conjecture that a third part, at least, of those who shall weep and wail for ever are cast into Hell through the unconquered *lust of the flesh*?

God sent the Flood to drown this vice *because all flesh had corrupted its ways upon earth* (Genesis vi.), but the Flood was powerless. God, too, showered down fire upon the Cities of the Plain to consume this vice. But fire could no more prevail than the waters of the Flood.

Then, when all seemed hopeless, our Divine Lord said to His Father: *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.* He and His Blessed Mother are come to make war on Lucifer, and to make war on the three great powers which are allied to Lucifer, and maintain his kingdom—*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Have confidence, our Saviour said last night, I have conquered the world.* Have confidence, He says to us in this hour, as the lash falls on Him, I am conquering the flesh.

And though His Blessed Mother's heart and her whole being are torn and writhing and agonised through her intense compassion, yet to every lash, as it falls, she says: *Fiat*—so be it; because she knows that, through this cruel scourging, the promise shall have its fulfilment which her Son in the days gone by has with ineffable delight explained to her: *After her shall virgins be brought to the King. They shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing. They shall be brought into the temple of the King* (Psalm xlv.); and throughout eternity they shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Then shall the blessed choirs of Heaven in ecstasy sing: *How beautiful is the chaste generation!* And they shall sing: *Salvation to our God Who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb:* because they know well that this chaste generation, so beautiful, of Christian men and women, is purchased from among men, the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb (Apoc. xiv.); and they know, too, that the wine that germinates virgins and inebriates the martyrs is no other than this Sacred Blood which the lash is drawing from the fountain of the Saviour, our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

Which of you, the Prophet asks, can dwell with devouring

fire, which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings? (Isaias xxxiii.). We may here add another question: If the lash is nowadays proscribed by such a universal *plébiscite* as too cruel and unendurable, how do we make up our minds for the sake of a bodily pleasure to go into the everlasting prison-house, where we know well, the unfaithful servant is to be *beaten with many stripes*? (St. Luke xii.).

Which of us can face the scourge that Lucifer there wields—*exiled from the eternal providence*: with no angel there to limit the strokes lest we be *shamefully torn*?

Our God has three rods that He makes use of: the rod of *discipline*, which He uses in mercy to give us wisdom; the rod of His *indignation*, with which He chastises sinners here on earth, to bring them to repentance; and the rod of His *fury* and *vengeance*, which is reserved for the land of forgetfulness, where there is *only weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth*; where sin lives on without repentance.

Alas! once more let us consider in our hearts how here on earth sensual sinners solemnly profess their undying love for one another. What name will they find for their accomplice, when they are given over to Lucifer to be *beaten with many stripes*?

R. *Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.*

Another text that helps us to form to ourselves a notion of the scourging is that word of the Prophet who saw the Sacred Passion in vision: *There is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness, and His look was as it were hidden and despised. We have thought Him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted* (Isaias liii.).

We have thought Him as it were a leper. So that if we might see together, side by side, our Blessed Saviour, as His Blessed Mother sees Him now, and holy Job, after Satan had *struck him with a grievous ulcer, from the sole of his foot even to the top of his head*, we should say of both: "Oh, yes, indeed; *struck by God and afflicted*". The cruelty of Satan is let loose on both: but his malice towards Jesus of Nazareth far surpasses his hatred of holy Job.

What word is there in holy Job's description of his sufferings that has not its fulfilment in our Lord?

What shall I do? If I speak, My pain will not rest, and if I hold My peace, it will not depart from Me (Job xvi.). If our Blessed Saviour moans as the lash falls, that does not give Him rest; if He stands silent, the agony does not depart from Him.

They have opened their mouths upon Me, and reproaching Me they have struck Me on the cheek. They are filled with My pains (Job xvi.). So now too; for the Priests and Rulers still have the revengeful remembrance fresh, how Jesus had made a scourge of cords and dared to drive their money-changers out of the Temple; and now they open their mouths and exhort the strikers to show Him no pity, and not even to spare His face.

He hath torn Me with wound upon wound, he hath rushed in upon Me as a giant (Job xvi.). Job's wounded body was the image of what is to come to Job's Lord and Master. Satan is still the real executioner: *He hath torn Me with wound upon wound.*

Holy Job prayed in his agony: *O earth, cover not thou my blood, neither let my cry find a hiding-place in thee. For behold my witness is in Heaven, and He that knoweth my conscience is on high* (Job xvi.). So may we pray: *Our Father, Who art in Heaven, look down on the face of Thy Christ bound to the pillar; look down on His Sacred Blood. May the earth never cover it up, nor the cry of His Sacred Blood be hidden away; but may it night and day ascend to plead for us poor sinners.*

Sanguis Christi, munda me.

Sanguis Christi, inebria me.

The chastisement of our peace is upon Him (Isaias liii.). *With His shoulders He will overshadow thee* (Psalm xc.), and protect thee from the everlasting scourge!

S. *Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.*

He loved me and delivered Himself up for me. Here we must remember that not only has our Lord to atone for

our sins and to rouse us to holy fear, and to a wish to do penance, but it is also part of His task to sanctify and consecrate with a heavenly grace all that His disciples shall have to endure. In the annals of the persecuted Church, what words are more familiar than the formulas which express in what way the Martyrs and the Virgins were beaten or scourged? He is identified with every one of them, and wishes to be yoked as helpmate to each, and bear stripe for stripe.

Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

The question is discussed: did our Lady remain conscious during the scourging? In the account that has come down to us of St. Bridget's contemplations, our Blessed Lady is introduced as saying, that after the first stroke of the lash she swooned, and only came back to consciousness when all was over. We also meet elsewhere with certain traditions that the Blessed Mother became insensible at certain stages of the Passion. Thus in Jerusalem, on the *Via dolorosa*, they are now restoring an ancient church which is said to have been called "the Church of the Spasm," because on that spot, it was supposed, our Lady sank down in a swoon. On the other hand, theologians of great repute, such as Suarez, Toletus, and Maldonatus, reject altogether the notion that our Lady lost consciousness at any moment during the Passion. Father Suarez treats the question at length, and holds it as certain that she never became insensible. Certain writings attributed to St. Bernard and St. Anselm, in which Holy Mary is described as swooning, he considers to be of very doubtful authenticity.

T. Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. I will chastise Him and let Him go.

Whatever may be the wish of men, it is not the will of the Eternal Father that Jesus shall die under the scourge. All the pain that the lash can inflict He is willing to endure; but He is not to die bound to the pillar.

St. Augustine hands it down that a young man, a stranger, abruptly put an end to the scourging by running forward and cutting the cords, and saying with firmness to the executioners: "Are you going to kill a Man Who is not condemned?"

And thus once more *the desire of the sinners shall perish*. All this hour they have been waiting and watching eagerly,

thinking that the next stripe would be the final one, and that Jesus would droop His Head and die, if not crucified, at least *shamefully torn*. But here again the great truth stands out clear: *There is no wisdom, no prudence, no counsel against the Lord*.

"*When Thou wiltest, Lord Jesus, and where Thou wiltest, and in the way Thou wiltest, death shall come to Thee, and Thou wilt lay down Thy life.*"

STATION II.

I will chastise Him and let Him go (St. Luke xxiii. 22).

A. Pilate's promise is, so far, fulfilled abundantly: *I will chastise Him*.

As soon as the cords are cut, down to the ground, so wet with His Sacred Blood, the Lamb of God sinks. And here we find the fulfilment of that word which long ago He spoke by His Prophet: *I am a worm and no man* (Psalm xxi.).

"*O vos omnes*"—*O all you who pass by the way, stay a little while to consider in your heart this new picture*. For our Blessed Lord, our Brother, our Surety, our Mediator, our Saviour, our Jesus, in His desire to draw us all to Himself, presents Himself in another new character: *I am a worm and no man*: a bruised, crushed, wounded, bleeding worm, writhing on the ground.

And observe, in wonder, how the Ever-Blessed Mother does not run forward to raise Him up, because in the *head of the book it is written* of her: *I shall do Thy will, O God*; and she knows God's will to be, that on this Good Friday she is to stand, and watch, and listen, and suffer by compassion, till her soul is pierced through and through; but she is not to bind up one wound, or dress, or foment it with oil.

The holy Fathers picture her as standing there with an obedience to the Divine will, so devoted and loving and perfect, soaring far beyond the obedience of Abraham's

bleeding heart, that undoubtedly, for the glory of her God, and to carry out her Son's will for man's redemption, she would herself raise her hand to inflict the wounds, if need were. *The Mother was to be admired above measure, and worthy to be remembered by good men; joining a man's heart to a woman's thought* (2 Mach. vii.).

B. *I will chastise Him and let Him go.*

Gather up the fragments, our Blessed Lord said last year. The blessed angels will carefully gather up every drop of the Sacred Blood; every shred of the torn Flesh.

We, too, must, with the help of Holy Mary, gather together some at least of the golden lessons which our Master, as He lies here, *like a worm*, meekly and lovingly begs us to lay up in our hearts and carry home with us.

I. *Take ye and eat, for this is My Body.* But before you take My wounded Body as your food, think in your heart a while, whether your brother has anything against you. If he has, leave My Body upon the altar, and go first and be reconciled, and then come back to Me (St. Matt. v.). For remember, and forget it not: *As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me* (St. Matt. xxv.). If by an angry word, or unkind deed, or cruel neglect, or evil counsel, you have left a wound on his soul, that wound is to Me more grievous a thousand times than the wound from the lash. You have wounded Me in the apple of the eye. The lash did not do that.

II. And then, if your brother has wronged you, lay upon Me his iniquity, *I am ready for scourges.* I am his Surety. If you must be revenged, you must strike Me. For I am pledged; the promise is written: *With His shoulders shall He overshadow thee: under His wings thou shalt trust* (Psalm xc.).

III. Then, too, our Blessed Lady adds: Think on the *weak* (that) *you have not strengthened*; the *sick* (which) *you have not healed*; the *broken* (which) *you have not bound up*; the poor outcast sinner driven away that *you have not brought back*; the *lost one* that *you have not sought* (Ezech. xxxiv.).

Those poor neglected ones round about you, of whom you *had no care*, of whom you said: *What is it to me?* Oh, look on the ground and see how my Son, your Saviour, loved them! If you help to save them, He that is lying here to-day will, from the judgment-seat of His Majesty, with all His saints and angels round Him, say to you: "Come, you blessed ones, for you did it to Me".

C. *I will chastise Him and let Him go.*

He is chastised, Pilate! What more is wanting? Whose business is it now to see that He is set free? But Pilate makes no sign at all in His favour; and enough has not been done. For the prophetic word is: *I am a worm and no man; the reproach of men and the outcast of the people.* The people must *add to the grief of My wounds* (Psalm lxxviii.). The bystanders now have their opportunity. In the second century Tertullian writes: *Dominicum Corpus a columnâ dilapsum ad terram, quasi pilam—pedibus exagitabant.* They kicked the Sacred Body about as if it had been a ball.

St. Peter adds this more consoling word: *When He was reviled, He did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not* (1 Peter ii.). And we may add: The Ever-Blessed Mother, when she sees her Son reviled, does not utter a mother's curse; when she sees Him suffer, and herself suffer with Him and in Him, her heart breathes no threat. She says: *My Son, lay not this sin to their charge.* She says to us: *See how He loved you!*

We know not whether Venerable Bede learned from tradition what he writes, that they dragged the mangled Body some distance along the ground, and flung it into a pool of water; possibly, to carry out in this cruel way some usual practice of washing the wounds of the scourged criminals.

"O Mother of God and Refuge of Sinners, beg of thy Divine Son to wash my wounded and disfigured soul.

"Wash me, Lord Jesus, yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

STATION III.

I will chastise Him and let Him go (v. 22).

A. Some writers think that as soon as ever the cords are cut and our Saviour falls to the ground, the soldiers hurry Him away at once to crown Him; but from St. Matthew's narrative it seems clear that between the scourging and the crowning He has put on His clothes. St. Matthew expressly states that before the crowning, *they stripped Him*. We may therefore contemplate our Blessed Lord lying on the ground, *like a worm and no man*; and bidden roughly to dress Himself; and how they mock and ill-treat Him because He cannot do it quickly; and at the same time impede Him and render His painful task more difficult.

While looking at Him, let us not forget the marvellous obedience of His Holy Mother who is there, sick with desire to help Him; and yet she lifts not her hand. She only looks, and weeps, and prays, and suffers with Him; full always of the peace which *passeth understanding*: because the will of her God is being accomplished in His Divine Son and in herself. *The Mother was to be admired above measure.*

With what transport the blessed angels are contemplating their King and their Queen, and they too are practising a perfect obedience. They forbear from giving their King the help He so much needs. For His Heart is saying to them: "*Sinite modo*"—*Suffer ye thus far*. More, yet more than this I can endure.

B. While we contemplate, we may imagine to ourselves what a happy recollection it would have been through life to any one who in that hour had been so blessed as to be allowed to help our Blessed Saviour to dress Himself. Most kindly and earnestly He says to us now: Do not waste time in wishing for that opportunity; *Amen I say to you, as often as you do it to the least of My little ones you do it to Me* (St. Matt. xxv.)

If I have despised him that was perishing for want of clothing, and the poor man that had no covering; if his sides have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; let my shoulder fall from its joint, and let my arm with its bones be broken (Job xxxi.).

C. We must remember too the agony caused while the woven tunic is dragged over the wounds: *They are not bound up, nor dressed, nor fomented with oil.*

SCENE II.

THE BARRACK-YARD.

Then the soldiers of the Governor, taking Jesus into the hall, gathered together unto Him the whole band (St. Matt. xxvii.).

And the soldiers led Him away into the court of the palace, and they called together the whole band (St. Mark xv.).

Taking Jesus into the hall.

I. The scourging we suppose to have taken place in the Lithostrotos, the large court paved with red blocks of stone, to the north of the Prætorium and Fort Antonia. The soldiers now lead our Lord away *into the hall* (St. Matt.). According to the Greek and Latin text it is *into the Prætorium*. In St. Mark's Gospel: *into the court of the Palace*; according to the Latin: *into the court of the Prætorium*; literally from the Greek: *within the Prætorium*.

From these passages it seems clear that the scene which follows is not enacted publicly in the Lithostrotos, the large square in front of the Prætorium; but more privately in the court, or barrack-yard of the soldiers. Why this is to be so, we shall have to conjecture presently. But this much seems clear, that it is to be a private pastime for the soldiers.

II. *Then the soldiers, taking Jesus into the hall (the court), gathered together unto Him the whole band—(the whole Cohort).*

The whole Cohort seems to mean all the soldiers at the time in garrison. The Cohort, scholars tell us, is the tenth part of a legion. A legion was more like a brigade in our army, than a regiment. The legion sometimes grew to the dimensions of six thousand infantry and four hundred horsemen. If the Roman Governor had troops at Cæsarea, which was the ordinary seat of government, one Cohort might be considered sufficient to garrison Jerusalem. We have noticed that St. Luke speaks of Herod's army, when our Lord was presented to him. It is difficult to

account for Herod being allowed to have an army in Jerusalem, unless we suppose, that though Herod Antipas and Pilate have been lately at variance, yet as the Herods were ordinarily devoted to the Romans, they were encouraged to bring their mercenaries to Jerusalem, to act in concert with the Romans in case of a rising during the Paschal celebrations.

III. We are taking for granted, then, that the people are not spectators of the scene which we are going to contemplate. Some, however, of the Priests and Ancients, always in terror lest Jesus escape, may procure admittance in order to watch.

IV. Then the question arises: Who suggests this new torment? One answer is, that the spirits of darkness have not yet come to the end of their programme: *He glorieth that He hath God for His Father. 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 Son of God, He will defend Him, and will deliver Him from the hands of His enemies. Let us examine Him by outrages and tortures.*

(a) The princes of darkness, therefore, we may assume, devise and suggest this novel and unheard-of cruelty. If Jesus is in any exceptional way Son of God, they argue, a miracle will be worked to rescue Him; and thus they shall know what He is.

(b) They find no difficulty in persuading the soldiers to follow these inspirations. Once suggested, the plan seems, if we may so say, quite a natural cruelty and barbarity. For, it has gone among the soldiers that Jesus asserted before Pilate that He is a King. Herod, too, sent Him back in a robe of mock royalty. I He is a King, then why not treat Him as King?

(c) This plan, then, of the wicked spirits is adopted by men; and it is not barred in Heaven because it will greatly help our Saviour to root out of the souls of His disciples *the pride of life*.

V. We may also ask, why do the soldiers move away from the public Lithostrotos, and prefer to carry on this new barbarity in their barrack-yard?

(a) One answer may be, that it is no part of Pilate's sentence. They may consider it dangerous to indulge in this new and unknown cruelty publicly before all the people. Some might cry out and denounce them to the Governor.

(b) More especially, if, as we may suppose, they intend what they are going to do to be a scornful mockery of Jewish royalty. We observe how often in the course of the morning Pilate expresses his contempt for the Jews by calling Jesus, *King of the Jews*, and *your King*. The soldiers follow his lead. They are going to exhibit Jewish royalty as it ought to be; a crown, a sceptre, a royal robe, all suitable for a King of the contemptible Jews.

It might not be safe to exhibit such an exasperating spectacle before all the people. The soldiers have not as yet found out how thoroughly diabolic malice can suppress national spirit.

(c) At the same time, knowing Pilate's mind, how glad he is

to show contempt for the Jews, and also how he wishes Jesus to be such a spectacle of misery that even the heartless Jews will not clamour any more for His death, the soldiers, even if they do not get an explicit permission for their barbarous pastime, feel sure that the Governor will connive and condone.

VI. We may ask: Are these soldiers Romans? Probably, a great part of them are conscripts from the provinces.

STATION I.

Then the soldiers of the Governor, taking Jesus into the hall (the court), gathered together unto Him the whole band (the whole Cohort) (St. Matt. xxvii. 27).

A. They gathered unto Him the whole Cohort.

This is then to be a special pastime and indulgence for the Roman soldiers. Last night, the Jewish Priests and servants mocked our Saviour. But He had distinctly foretold a week ago, that the Gentiles also shall mock Him: *They shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to be mocked. This is (their) hour and the power of darkness.*

B. They gathered unto Him the whole Cohort.

How diligently they seek for one another, and invite all: and are anxious that none shall lose the unnatural and inhuman enjoyment: *Come, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are present. Let none of us go without our part in luxury. Let us oppress the poor just man.*

C. They gathered unto Him the whole Cohort.

THEY GATHERED UNTO HIM. This is precisely our work, to gather men to Jesus. *For He hath given to every one commandment concerning his neighbour.—I will make you fishers of men*, our Blessed Saviour says to us all. *I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself.—How often have I wished to gather you as the hen gathers her chickens under her wing. Who will help Me, who will bring back My lost sheep? Pray the Lord of the harvest that He may send workmen unto the harvest.—Why do you stand all the day idle?—The weak you have not strengthened.—That which was driven away you have not brought again.*

"Blessed Mother of God, pray for us sinners that we may redeem time lost, and by gathering poor sinners to thy Son Jesus, repair whatever scandal we may have given in the past."

STATION II.

And stripping Him they put a scarlet cloak about Him
(v. 28).

A. Stripping Him. Therefore, as has been said in the last scene, our Blessed Lord had been clothed after the scourging. This crowning is an after-thought, suddenly planned while He is dressing Himself.

B. Stripping Him.

Our Blessed Saviour *was offered because He willed it*. And He is now stripped again because Himself wills it. His Sacred Heart is not content with what the lash has done. He Himself wishes all His wounds to be renewed, and chafed, and aggravated unutterably, while the soldiers roughly strip Him of the woven tunic. A wounded man cries out in anguish, and his flesh quivers when nurses are tenderly dressing his wounds; and when his sores smart, he craves for opiates that shall take away the sense of pain.

But our Blessed Lord, through charity for us, has planned for Himself more pain, fresh agony, because He knows that *in His bruises we are healed*.

He knows that each new anguish will help many souls to escape eternal anguish. And therefore over each fresh wound or agony He rejoices, as one does *who has found many spoils*.

"*Passio Christi, conforta me*. May virtue, dear Lord, come out of Thy wounds to us."

C. And stripping Him.

The sight of a wounded man generally awakens pity. How comes it that these soldiers have no compassion for the mangled Body of our Saviour?

1. One answer may be that Jesus is a Jew, and they

bear an intense hatred to the Jews, and are glad of the chance of venting their malice.

2. Again, men when they indulge their passions become as the savage beasts, and with the beasts the taste for blood grows. Many of these soldiers were executioners during the scourging. Cruelty has gained strength.

What will be the cruelty of Satan and his wicked spirits in their own home! It never dies out or abates.

Oh, grateful indeed, most grateful, everlastingly grateful will our Lord be to any one who rescues even one poor sinner from the everlasting tyranny of the devil.

D. Stripping Him.

Throughout the Sacred Passion our Saviour is planning so that each new suffering shall call our attention to some different sin that we have committed, and move us to sorrow for them all.

Well He knows on this Good Friday how many sins will be occasioned by dress and undress, by dressing and undressing. After the Fall, *the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins . . . and clothed them. And sent him out of the paradise of pleasure to till the earth from which he was made* (Genesis iii.). Like felons and convicts they were dressed in the skins of beasts, that they might remember and not forget that the child of Heaven has been degraded; *compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them* (Psalm xlviii.). But the pride of fallen man soon revolted and changed the penitential garb into robes of vanity and concupiscence, that they might subserve to the *lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life*. Therefore by *what things a man sinneth, by the same also is he tormented* (Wisdom xi.). Jesus, the Elder Brother, the Representative of our fallen family, must to-day suffer torment by all those things wherein we sin. *We deserve to suffer these things*, Joseph's brethren said, *because we have sinned* (Genesis xlii.). "I suffer this torment," our Lord says, "because My brethren have sinned." The rich man who had been clothed with purple and fine linen, desired, when in his

place of torment, that a spirit from the dead might go to warn his brothers in his father's house; but the answer came to him: *They have Moses and the Prophets—if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead* (St. Luke xvi.). We want no messengers from the dead. Those who devoutly contemplate Jesus on this day, dressed and undressed, find a virtue come out from His wounds to their souls, and they are able to say with St. Paul: *To me the world* (with all its pomps) *is crucified, and I to the world* (Galat. vi.). Christian nobles, men and women, have been able to say as heartily as Queen Esther said of her diadem: *Thou knowest, O God, my necessity, that I abominate the sign of my pride and glory, which is upon my head in the days of my public appearance, . . . and wear it not in the days of my silence* (Esther xiv.).

At our Baptism we were each asked: "Dost thou renounce Satan and all his works and all his pomps?" And by the voice of our proxy we answered: "I do renounce". And on this understanding we were received into the Kingdom of God.

"Pray for us poor sinners, Blessed Mother, that now at least, while we contemplate thy beloved Son stripped and clothed again, we may have grace to renew from our hearts the promise of our Baptism: 'Yes, I do renounce'."

How many Christian men and women have, while considering in their hearts the scenes of His Sacred Passion, gone back to the primitive idea of dress after the Fall, and understood that dress is to be, not for luxury, not for show, not for the multiplication of sins, but for necessity, for decency, and for penance.

For necessity: *Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content* (1 Timothy vi.).

For decency: *Women also in decent apparel, adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety* (1 Timothy ii.).

For penance: *They would have long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes* (St. Matt. xi.).

As His scourging has moved multitudes of His disciples to chastise their bodies by the use of the discipline, so too all the agony He endures through His dress—through dressing and undressing—has moved very many to mix penance with the comfort and luxury of their dress.

E. Dress, it is said, ought to be suited to our state of life. What then is our state of life? One answer is: We are sinners, penitent sinners. Whether high-born sinners or plebeian sinners, is of secondary importance. We are sinners. God grant that we be penitent sinners. This is one aspect, at least, of our present state of life during the *short days* of our sojourn here.

Then the change comes, and Isaias tells us this much of our new state: *Thy carcass is fallen down; under thee shall the moth be strewed, and worms shall be thy covering* (Isaias xiv.).

F. *Stripping Him, they put a scarlet cloak about Him.*

The scarlet cloak may possibly have been a cast-off chlamys of the soldiers. If so, it is short, not much more than what we call a cape. As, however, St. John calls it a *purple garment* (ἰμάτιον) it may have been longer; for this Greek word signifies a robe longer than the chlamys. And as scholars tell us that the word chlamys is sometimes used for a royal mantle, it is perhaps probable that our Lord was dressed in some worn-out mantle, fastened about His neck, but leaving visible the wounds in His Sacred Body.

It is asked, Was the mantle scarlet or purple? St. John and St. Mark call it *purple*, St. Matthew *scarlet*. Some commentators therefore think that there must have been two garments, one purple, the other scarlet. The lexicographers give an easier solution by telling us that the Greek word πορφύρεον is sometimes used for a red colour.

"O Blessed Mother of God, while contemplating Thy beloved Son in His mantle of royalty, say once again for the Priests of His Church the prayer inspired by the Holy Ghost: *May Thy Priests be clothed with justice* (Psalm cxxxi.). Pray too that we may hearken to the admonition

of His faithful Apostle: *The night is passed and the day is at hand, let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Romans xiii.).

STATION III.

And plating a crown of thorns, they put it upon His Head
(v. 29).

And plating a crown of thorns they put it on His Head.

I. A question arises, how are these thorns procured on a sudden? For the project of a mock coronation is an inspiration of the moment, not premeditated.

Some writers answer that during the scourging, besides the *flagellum*, other instruments of torture were used, and among the rest, rods armed with strong thorns. If this be so, they assume that the soldiers took some of these rods, and twisted them into the shape of a crown.

II. Was the crown a mere wreath, or more in the shape of a turban which covered the whole head? Both opinions are put forward. Some writers argue, from the relics that still remain, that it was only a wreath, or diadem.

A. *Plating a crown of thorns, they put it on His Head.*

According to a common opinion there were seventy-two thorns in the crown, but St. Anselm adds that as the crown is often dislodged and readjusted, the wounds on the Sacred Head from the thorns amount to one thousand.

As the thorns are long, some of them pierce His cheeks, some His eyelashes, and interfere with the movement of His eyes.

In the writings of St. Bridget, our Blessed Lady is introduced saying to her, "From the many streams of blood flowing down His face and through His hair, and filling up His eyes and His beard, nothing was to be seen but blood".

B. *They put it on His Head.*

Taking care that the hard and sharp thorns do not hurt their own hands, the soldiers, with skilful cruelty, contrive with the help of staves and rods, to press the thorns into our Blessed Saviour's flesh, and fix the crown on His Head.

O all you who pass by, stay a little while to measure the pain and anguish caused by this new torture. *The whole Head is sick, the whole Heart is sad* (Isaias i.).

C. *They put it on His Head.*

Yet still His sad Heart is comforted by the thought that a virtue will pass out from His bleeding Head to help men and women without number to conquer the terrible power of the *pride of life*. Heaven shall be peopled with disciples of Jesus who, by contemplating the Sacred Passion, will learn to say with their whole hearts: *Thou knowest, O God, my necessity, and that I abominate the sign of my pride and glory that is on my head.*

Have confidence, our Divine Master said yesterday evening to His little flock; *I have conquered the world*. Seated now in silence on the low column, while the thorns are entering one after another into His Sacred Head, never opening His mouth, and making no resistance, He is conquering Satan's strongest ally, *the pride of life*.

D. *They put it on His Head.*

And the low column on which He sits becomes *cathedra docentis*, the chair from which our Master teaches us.

"*Delicta quis intelligit?*" He is saying to us—*Who can understand sin?* Who weighs and measures correctly all the iniquity of the head, the countless evil thoughts, lying arguments, wicked plans and projects, which, nurtured in the brain, pass thence to defile the heart?

Wonderful as the discoveries of science are, what machinery is there that can work as rapidly as the thoughts of man? But, alas! sins of thought so easily multiplied are often disregarded because they are only sins of thought; as if the treason of Judas were not thoroughly consummated in thought long before it took effect in act.

"O Jesus my Redeemer, crowned with thorns, from my sins of thought, deliver me. From my hidden, unheeded sins of thought, wash me yet more, and blot out all their iniquity."

E. *They platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His Head.*
Instead of sharing the thorns of my Lord, my head is

multiplying uncharitable judgments and revengeful desires, each one of which is a thorn that can fix a wound in the soul of my neighbour, and therefore also in His Heart: a wound immeasurably more cruel than any that material thorns can imprint on the Sacred Head. "For what you do to My little ones, you do to Me."

F. *They platted a crown of thorns.*

But these thorns are only outward signs of the real inward agony. For to-day Jesus is the Sinner, and His Heart is sad indeed, and He is saying: Father! *there is no health in My flesh, because of Thy wrath. For My iniquities are gone over My Head, and as a heavy burden are become heavy on Me* (Psalm xxxvii.). *The chastisement of our peace is upon Him* (Isaiah liii.).

G. *They put it upon His Head.*

Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see (your) King in the diadem wherewith His Mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the joy of His Heart (Cant. iii.).

The Ever-Blessed Mother is watching, is listening, is suffering, through her perfect motherly compassion, wound for wound, thorn for thorn. Can there then be a sense in which we may say that she crowns her Son with this diadem? The holy Fathers answer: Yes, assuredly. For she gives her full and entire consent that, to obey the will of His Father and to content the desire of His own Heart, He shall wear this crown. Nay, if need were, they add, with a courage and a love and an obedience a thousand times stronger than death, she would herself fix the crown and cause the stream of blood to flow, that so poor sinners might be brought to life, and *draw waters in joy out of the fountain of their Saviour.*

The holy angels, gazing on her, *bless her with one voice, saying: Thou art the glory of Jerusalem; the hand of the Lord hath strengthened thee; and thou shalt be blessed for ever* (Judith xv.).

H. *They platted a crown of thorns.*

All through this day Jesus, God and Man, is the sinful Adam. On Him is the sentence passed: *Thorns and thistles shall (the earth) bring forth to Thee* (Genesis iii.).

He is for to-day the *accursed* one Who is to *hang on the tree*. But in Him the curse comes to an end. From this hour, for those who have hearts to love, the thorn of malediction is changed and becomes prominent among *the things that spring up from the earth to bless the Lord.*

I. *They put it on His Head.*

And while *He was suffering, He did not threaten* (1 St. Peter ii.), nor make resistance. For He knows that His followers shall, through *many tribulations, enter into His Kingdom of God* (Acts xiv.), and that, among the other countless shapes of woe, the head oftentimes *shall be all sick*, racked with pain, weighed down, finding no rest, day or night. And from every one of His thousand wounds virtue is going out to His suffering disciples. He above all, immeasurably beyond all, can say: "*Quis infirmatur?*"—*Who is sick, and I am not sick?*

He that touches you, and any pain or sorrow that touches you, *touches the apple of My eye* (Zach. ii.).

J. *They platted a crown of thorns.*

Traffic, our Saviour said, *till I come; trade till I come*. But what He teaches, that He always does. Holy writers tell us that He is come to earth to trade. The trader picks up in the foreign land what he cannot find at home.

In Heaven, in His own home, the Son of God had all bliss and all riches; yet He could not find there thorns or outrages. These He is greedily gathering here on earth where they abound for Him.

"O most charitable Saviour, if you take our thorns, give us in exchange some little share of Thy heavenly love

Passion of Christ, strengthen us.

Blood of Christ, inebriate us.

Make the bitter things of this earth sweet to us, and its sinful pleasures bitter."

K. *They put it on His Head.*

And while contemplating His Sacred Head, we must not forget how the wounds all over His Body are being irritated and made more sore, as they set Him down roughly on His hard stone throne; and then pull Him and push Him from side to side, while adjusting His crown. *The wounds and bruises and swelling sores are not bound up, nor dressed, nor fomented with oil—I am turned in My anguish while the thorn is fastened* (Psalm xxxi.).

L. *They put it on His Head.*

And He is our Head: *The head of every man is Christ.* He is the Head, we the limbs. St. Bernard therefore asks us: "Is the Head to be crowned with thorns, and the limbs to abound in comfort and luxury?"

STATION IV.

They put it upon His Head, and a reed in His right hand
(v. 29).

A. *A reed in His right hand.*

The Blessed Mother, as she contemplates, watching and listening, has in her heart the prophetic word: *The Lord will send forth the sceptre of Thy power, out of Sion; rule Thou in the midst of Thy enemies; with Thee is the principality (ἀρχή) in the day of thy strength* (Psalm cix.).

This is the day of our Lord's strength. This reed in His right hand is the true sceptre of His power. To-day He Who is mighty is doing great things: *He hath showed might in His arm.* To-day He can say: *I broke the jaws of the wicked man, and out of his teeth I took away the prey* (Job xxix.). In the Canticle of the Three Children we say: "*Benedicite virtutes Domini Domino*"—*All ye powers of the Lord, bless the Lord.* One meaning of the Latin word, *virtus*, may surely be manly power. To-day we see wonder after wonder of manly courage, manly fortitude, manly endurance, in our Blessed Saviour, nay a meekness and patience far more than manly, nothing less than Divine.

To-day, then, already, our most gentle and humble Saviour is reigning and ruling in the midst of His enemies visible and invisible. His almighty helplessness is conquering them all by unconquerable endurance. His invisible enemies understand far better than men do how His meekness is conquering. *Do you see*, they are saying with vexation and disappointment unbearable, *Do you see that we prevail nothing?* They are fast losing heart.

B. *A reed in His right hand.*

With His crown on His Head, His royal robe on His shoulders, His sceptre in His hand, He is also silently, but most persuasively, teaching us how to conquer and to reign. *Blessed are the meek*, His crown and His sceptre and His royal mantle are saying to us, *for they shall possess the land.*

C. *A reed in His right hand.*

And at His side, the second Eve is always, at least virtually, standing—His own Ever-Blessed Mother, His image, and, as far as creature can be, His second self, the Mirror of His Justice. *Now this Mother was to be admired above measure, and worthy to be remembered by good men.* For she saw her Son crowned with thorns, and bore it with a good courage, for the hope that she had in God. *Joining a man's heart to a woman's thought: joining to all her motherly tenderness the fortitude of her Divine Son's manly Heart.*

STATION V.

And bowing their knees they adored Him and they mocked Him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews (St. Matt. xxvii.; St. Mark xv.).

A. *Bowing their knees they adored Him.*

Yes! and the Blessed Mother and all the choirs of angels are saying in their hearts with that peace that passeth understanding: *In the name of Jesus*, in the presence of Jesus, *every knee shall bow, of those that are in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth* (Philip. ii.). The unseen spirits of wickedness have little joy as they gaze on this bending

of the knee; for they are beginning to have a strange presentiment of what is coming.

B. *Bowing their knee they adored Him.*

Alas, poor men! They knew not the prophetic word written by Isaias: *Every knee shall be bowed to Me.* Poor heathen man, *these things are hidden from thy eyes.*

"Oh, pray to My Father," our Lord says to us. "*Ask the Lord of the harvest to send workmen into His harvest, that the light may be carried to those who sit in darkness.*"

C. *Bowing their knee they adored Him.*

But still more earnestly He says to us: *Weep for yourselves and for your children.* For *we* do not sit in darkness. We are His friends, to whom He has made known the *hidden things of His wisdom.* Alas! how wretched our misery if while we bow our knees, our hearts are far away from Him!

Surely this is the place to pour out earnest prayer that whenever we bow the knee before our Hidden God upon the altar, faith and hope and love may be in our hearts, and be ever growing in our hearts.

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

D. *They bowed their knees and they said: Hail, King of the Jews.*

Mark well, how we bring down on our own heads the evil we plan for others. If we curse another, the curse rebounds upon ourselves. If any of these desecrated Priests and Ancients are present by privilege, what do they see? Mark how ignominy is heaped upon them. These Roman soldiers are exhibiting, with all the insult that they can devise, their unbounded contempt of the Jews; *Hail, King of the Jews.* This mock King is, in their minds, just such a Monarch as befits them, a most worthy and proper and becoming King for this detestable race.

They prepared a snare for My feet and they bowed down My Soul. They dug a pit before My face, and they have fallen into it (Psalm lvi.).

But sin has so poisoned and degraded the souls of the Rulers that they will gladly swallow all this ignominy and Roman insult, and far more, if only they may see Jesus of Nazareth crucified.

But what is all this disgrace, compared with the degradation to which Lucifer will subject us if we fall under his power in the everlasting prison-house?

"From anger and hatred and all ill-will, deliver us, Lord Jesus.

"Mother of God, full of compassion, pray for us sinners."

STATION VI.

And they gave Him blows. And they struck His Head with a reed. And they did spit upon Him (St. Mark xv.; St. John xix.).

A. *And they gave Him blows.*

These words, added later by St. John, indicate that many other blows, besides the strokes with the reed, fell upon His mangled Body.

B. *And they struck His Head with a reed.*

If we observe the words of the Evangelists, we shall see that the soldiers, who doubtless were aware how much the Jews were addicted to ceremonies, are ridiculing their rites by a mock religious service.

According to St. Mark: Each soldier approaches, strikes our Lord's Head with the sceptre, then spits on His sacred face, then bows his knee to adore Him, and says: *Hail, King of the Jews!* and so retires to make room for another. St. Matthew changes the order somewhat. They first bow their knees to worship, then spit upon Him, then strike His Head and retire. St. John adds that *they gave Him blows.*

"*Attendite.*" Look on in sorrow while each of the men of this well-drilled Cohort comes in due order to offer this cruel worship.

Satan and his legions are watching most eagerly to see
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if Jesus of Nazareth gives any sign of impatience, or revenge, or weakness, during this long ceremony. But the result is as before. *Do you see that we prevail nothing? When He was reviled, (He) did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not* (1 St. Peter ii.).—*I do not resist; I have not gone back. I have given My Body to the strikers.*

I have not turned away My face from them that rebuked Me, and spit upon Me (Isaias i.).

"Saturabitur opprobriis"—He shall be glutted with reproaches. This prophecy is now abundantly fulfilled. So, too, the word He uttered last week is now accomplished: *They shall deliver Him to the Gentiles, and they shall mock Him and spit on Him.*

Last night the Jews had their opportunity, and without authority they gratified their humour to the full by gross, unbridled mockery and outrage.

As His Passion is offered for Jew and Gentile, the Gentiles now have their turn. In both cases the issue is the same. *"Saturabitur opprobriis"—He shall be glutted with reproaches.*

C. *They did spit upon Him.*

There is this peculiar feature in the mocking of the Gentile soldiers: that there is more method in it, more discipline, more cruel skill.

This too is new, that emblems of honour are turned into instruments of torture.

At the pillar the lash was employed—but the lash is an ordinary instrument for severe and cruel chastisement. Here the crown, the sceptre, the mantle are brought into use, and by a novel device are changed into instruments of torture and dishonour.

This, then, is only one instance more of the way in which our Lord in His Passion makes *all things new*. Honours and riches are become a pain, and suffering a high distinction.

We are familiar with the words immortalised by our poet: "Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate you!"

Countless thousands of Christ's followers have, by the virtue that comes out of His ignominy in the Sacred Passion, been able to say such words from their heart; and with St. Paul: *God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Galat. vi.).

D. *They struck His Head with a reed, and they did spit upon Him.*

His crowned Head is suffering enough already. Why do they strike it?

Our Lord's hard chair of agony is *cathedra docentis*. He is teaching His future Church the same lesson that He inculcated yesterday evening: *The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them. But you not so. But he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger* (St. Luke xxii.). Men raised to honour naturally become giddy and intoxicated through pride. Our Lord is in this, as in all things else, making a great change. In His Church, as persecution, which naturally makes men apostates, will, through the grace of His Passion, raise multitudes to the dignity of martyrdom; so the crown, the sceptre, the mantle—which naturally lead to adulation, and worship, and excessive pride—shall, through the Sacred Passion, become the badges of a painful charge, a laborious Apostleship, a sacred office full of holy solicitude and charity.

St. Paul reminds us that he who rules ought to rule with *carefulness*, or *solicitude*, that solicitude which true mothers feel for their sick child. Ecclesiasticus describes a good father lying sleepless at night through solicitude about his young daughter: *The father waketh for the daughter when no man knoweth, and the care for her taketh away his sleep* (Ecclus. xlii.). Whenever priests, or those in authority, have in good measure this grace of their vocation, this anxious parental solicitude—they pray much for light and guidance, they do penance for those under their charge; they secure help from the prayers of the poor; like the Good Shepherd, they are ready to lay down their lives for their flock; and thus they pass unscathed

through the good things of this earth to the good things of a better world. "*Sic transeamus per bona temporalia ut non amittamus æterna.*" *When thou shalt walk in the fire thou shalt not be burnt, and the flames shall not burn thee* (Isaias xliii.).

Spiritual writers have said that the purple and scarlet robes of those in high stations are emblematic, and signify that they must be ready to shed their blood for those under their care.

E. *They did spit on Him—they bended their knees and adored Him.*

Call to mind how sensitive we naturally are to ridicule; how our pride revolts at once against anything approaching to scoffing or scorn. And therefore the Eternal Father, when, as He is mingling the chalice for His own beloved Son, He sees that men, under Lucifer's guidance, are resolved on sinning in this way, does not forbid it; but lets them follow their will, that His Divine Son may give us an example, and that we may look and do according to the model. To these pagan soldiers, as well as to the Jews, our Saviour says: *It is your hour.* For every fresh reproach and outrage becomes a seed from which the precious flowers of patience and meekness spring up and cover every Christian land.

F. *They put a reed in His right hand, and bent their knees.*

All things serve Thee, O Lord, and according to Thy ordinance the day goeth on. All things co-operate unto good for those who love God, and who is there that loves God as His own Divine Son loves Him?

Let the music round the altar and the tabernacle be full and sweet and becoming, Holy Church says. Mark how becoming this ceremonial is, though men's malice intend it to be far otherwise.

Kings are crowned. Conquerors are crowned. Victims are crowned. As Jesus of Nazareth is a King—*Thou hast said it, I am a King*—by the soldiers He is crowned.

As He is this day conquering a power that no man has

ever till now conquered, therefore it is meet that He be crowned.

As He is the Victim, the Lamb of God that is to be slain on the altar, let Him be crowned.

G. *They platted a crown.*

The pagan crowns so much prized were made of things of no intrinsic worth, laurel leaves, or parsley, or ivy. Yet what coveted prizes they were!

And what diadem ever was so sacred and so loved and cherished as the crown made out of the thorns, with the curse upon them?

H. *They platted a crown of thorns.*

Conquerors had their trophies made out of the spoils of the enemy. So has our Saviour Jesus. For thorns signify the penalties of sin, and it is by conquering sin and its penalties that He wins His glory and His Name of Jesus—the Name above all names.

I. *They struck Him with the reed.—They bent their knees.—They said, Hail.*

"*Attendite. O vos omnes.*" All of us who belong to the household of the faith, priests and people who frequent God's House, ought to stay longer, contemplating this mystery, in which things that are good and honourable and holy are all changed into unholy and blasphemous mockery. The bending of the knee, the sceptre, the royal robes, the greeting "Hail!" all become outrages as gross as the spitting in the face.

We are the only ones who can now sully, spoil, and desecrate the beauty of God's House, and profane His sanctuary, and render *the table of the Lord contemptible*, by irreverence, by profane thoughts, by doing the work of God fraudulently.

J. *They bent their knees. They said, Hail!*

The Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist is the memorial of all God's wonderful works. Above all it is a memorial of all the scenes of the Sacred Passion. *Recolitur memoria passionis ejus.*

At the holy Benediction service how truly are we reminded of this coronation! We enthrone once more our Blessed Saviour, we bend our knees, and we say, Hail.

"O Ever-Blessed Mother of God, show us the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Pray for us sinners, that we may discern the Body of the Lord, and know our Hidden God."

Adoro te devote, latens Deitas.	Devoutly I adore Thee, Hidden God.
Fac me tibi magis credere,	I believe: do Thou increase my faith,
In te spem habere; te diligere.	Give me more hope in Thee.
	Give me more love for Thee.

K. They bent their knees and adored Him. They did spit upon Him.

Weep for yourselves and for your children. Here again we must call to mind how much more grievously our Blessed Saviour is afflicted by His own, who are false friends, neither hot nor cold, and ever ready to betray Him, than by avowed enemies.

These soldiers know Him not. To them He is only one of the despised and hated race; and a pretender to royalty and holiness.

They are heathens, strangers, and ignorant. We are His own; His familiars; *You I have called friends, because all things I have heard of My Father I have made known to you* (St. John xv.).

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 perhaps have hidden Myself from him. If open and avowed enemies of Christ rise up against the Blessed Eucharist, the result is that the altar is pulled down, and our Blessed Saviour retires and hides Himself from His enemies; *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* (Psalm liv.). "Thou, My trusted Priest, My confidant, My delegate, invested with My own power; thou who canst absolve in My Name, and I at once ratify in Heaven; thou who hast a power not given

to angels to pronounce, in My Name and in My Person, the almighty word of consecration, and I am at once subject to it; thou, man of one mind, who hast walked with Me in the house of God, hast stood at the altar carrying Me in thy hands, as My Holy Mother carried Me in Bethlehem; thou who hast been at My table with Me, to eat the sweet meats with Me; thou who hast been permitted to have as thy food My wounded Body, on which *the angels desire to look*, thou My Priest, My Vicar, My Proxy, My second Self, if thou turn against Me how can I hide Myself from thee?

"Whither shall I go? If I ascend into Heaven, thy word can find Me there, and bring Me down upon the altar. If I descend into Hell to hide Myself, there thy power is present. If thou call, I must come. *If I take My wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea*, even so thy word shall reach Me, and bring Me back to the altar and the tabernacle. The Priest of the Most High God has spoken the word, *This is My Body, this is My Blood*, and the sacred mystery is accomplished. *He spoke and they were made, He commanded and they were created* (Psalm xxxii.).

"Oh, let the heathen soldiers strike Me, and mock Me, and spit upon Me, but let not My enemies exult over Me and say, *Thy own Priests* and Thy own people have betrayed Thee, and abandoned Thee, and outraged Thee, *What hast Thou done?*"

"Ever-Blessed Mother, pray for us sinners; with all the power of thy omnipotent intercession plead for us, and say, O my Son, *may Thy Priests be clothed with justice.*"

"To be spit upon by Jews and heathens is indeed a great ignominy; but after I have boasted in the presence of the wicked spirits that if lifted from the earth, I will draw all to Myself, when I am left solitary in My Eucharistic prison, and neglected and loathed by My own, it is then that My Heart looks imploringly for some consolation and reparation from those who love Me."

L. *They platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His Head, and stripping Him, they put a scarlet cloak about Him.*

Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see your King in the diadem wherewith His Mother crowned Him in the day of her espousals, etc. For this coronation is truly the work of the Synagogue—that is, of the ancient Jewish Church, which is His Mother. For He and Holy Mary have through life been most devout children of the Old Church. He is come on earth not to destroy it, but to perfect it. Most truly can He say from His Heart, and His Blessed Mother's Heart re-echoes every word: *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let My right hand be forgotten. Let My tongue cleave to My jaws if I do not remember thee, if I make not Jerusalem the beginning of My joy* (Psalm cxxvi.). He is come not to set aside or destroy the old Priesthood, not to reject the Priests of the Old Church, but if they permit Him, to perfect their Priesthood. In Him all ancient types have their fulfilment, and the old shadows are changed into reality.

Of Aaron and the ancient Priesthood it is written: *In the priestly robe which he wore was the whole world, and Thy majesty, O God, was written in the diadem on his head. And to them the destroyer gave place* (Wisdom xviii.). Till to-day those words had only a very slight and partial fulfilment. It is on this scarlet mantle which Jesus wears to-day that the whole world, and the sins of the whole world, are inscribed. It is on His crown of thorns that Thy majesty, O God, and all Thy love, and all Thy wisdom, and all Thy infinite goodness, are engraven and represented. It is before His diadem and His sceptre that the destroyer gives place.

"We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, because by Thy holy Crown and by Thy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world."

SCENE III.

ARCH OF THE ECCE HOMO.

The prophecy has now been fulfilled abundantly: *He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon* (St. Luke xviii.). The Gentiles have surpassed the Jews in cruel and skilful mockery. Indeed, we may suppose that one reason why the Jewish Rulers handed Jesus over to the Gentiles was that they knew that Gentiles could be severe and cruel in a way which Jewish law did not permit.

Our Saviour has now suffered as Son of God, as Prophet, as King, and at the Pillar as a Man accused of crime but declared innocent; that is to say, as a man who has to pay a debt not his own. Then did I pay what I took not away (Psalm lxviii.).

The soldiers are content; and by this time the Priests and Ancients outside are growing very impatient and restless. Moreover, Jesus Himself has given a command that all be done quickly. Therefore Pilate sends orders that the prisoner be brought to him.

STATION I.

Jesus therefore came forth bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment (St. John xix. 5).

Commentators take for granted that He also carried His mock sceptre.

We may, then, contemplate our Blessed Saviour led from the inner court, the barrack-yard, back into the great court in front of the Prætorium—the Lithostrotos; and thence up the sacred steps, the Scala Santa, to the hall or chamber where Pilate awaits Him.

"Help us, Blessed Mother, to see what you see, to hear what you hear, and to share your compassion."

The chains and ropes and fetters are all readjusted; for the Priests and Ancients are as importunate as ever: *Lead Him carefully*; and the soldiers have to earn their bribes.

"*Attendite et videte.*" Watch our Blessed 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.

Hear Him panting for breath. 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.

His Sacred Heart, meanwhile, is ever soaring above His own pain and crying out: "OUR FATHER, *hallowed be Thy name*". He is praying in union with us. *Our Father*, Father of these fallen Priests. So must we pray with Him. *Our Father*, Father of Thy Son Jesus and of us.

Eia Mater fons amoris,
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac, ut tecum lugeam.

Mother, fount of charity,
Share with me thy agony;
Give me tears to weep with thee.

STATION II.

PILATE'S CHAMBER.

Jesus therefore came forth bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment (v. 5).

Pilate, when he sees Him enter, is content. His idea has been carried out, and beyond his expectations. He wished for a spectacle that ought to soften the hardest hearts and satisfy the vengeance of the most envious. He has his ideal: and more than he hoped for. What wonder! For in reality our Lord Himself is, we may say, the author and planner of all that has been done: *He was offered because He willed it*. He has been scourged because He willed it, and as He willed it; and crowned because He willed it, and as He willed it. And the thought ever upon His Heart is, *What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard, and have not done it?* (Isaias v.). So that His loving desire for wounds and bruises and swelling sores has gone beyond the cruel wishes of His enemies.

The restless and terrified soul of the Governor is satisfied. He can breathe more freely. His policy will win the day. Jesus may now certainly go free; and he and Herod can sup together pleasantly and end this trouble.

some day with a laugh. His oppressed spirit is much relieved. His step is lighter, as he walks towards the balcony to present Jesus to the people.

STATION III.

Pilate therefore 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 (v. 4).

There is, we are told, in the large paved court in front of the Prætorium, called the Lithostrotos, a tribunal, a raised seat, or throne, where the Governor often sits in judgment. But it is not from this chair that Pilate now addresses the people. The crowd has gradually grown larger and larger, and is now so great as to represent the whole people. The Lithostrotos is probably not large enough to contain them all. They are gathered in the large Forum, or public square, which lies immediately to the west of Fort Antonia and the Prætorium, and is separated from the Lithostrotos by a large gateway. According to some archaeologists (though others dissent from this view) the arch still standing in Jerusalem, known as the Arch of the Ecce Homo, formed a part of this gateway. And over the gateway, there was a balcony or loggia from which Pilate addressed the people.

Again, some diligent students of ancient topography, such as Adrichomius, tell us that there was a colonnade connecting the Fortress Antonia with the Governor's house, that on the top of this colonnade there was a terrace, or balcony—that this colonnade was called the Xystus; and that from the terrace, the Governor usually addressed the people. By other writers, however, we find the Xystus placed more to the south. According to them it was a bridge or viaduct thrown across the Tyropæon gorge, and connecting the Asmonean Palace with Mount Sion.

In either of these suppositions, then, whether he speaks from the gateway or the Xystus, Pilate does not now descend by the Scala Santa into the Lithostrotos, but walks along a terrace to the balcony. He is attended by his own body-guard; and the other soldiers follow, leading Jesus bound and chained. Pilate, therefore, arrives before our Lord, and full of confidence that he has now at last hit upon the right expedient, comes forward to speak blandly and cheerily to the crowd. He is very anxious to secure a favourable *plébiscite*, to back him against the implacable malice of the Priests and Ancients.

A. Behold, I bring Him forth, that you may know that I find no cause in Him.

First, then, we see how here again the Divine decree

is executed without fail, and once more from the housetop the innocence of our Divine Lord is preached: *I find no cause in Him.*

The response of His chosen people ought to have been a loud and exulting Amen. Last Sunday's anthem ought to have burst forth again: *Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.* This is the response of all the Heavenly choirs of angels. And the Ever-Blessed Mother, too, in her heart replies: *My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Jesus.* "There is no cause, no cause at all in Him save that He loved us and delivered Himself for us; for me and for my children, to save us all from the tyranny of Lucifer."

B. *That you may know that I find no cause in Him.*

Alas! how great, how heinous, how appalling can the wickedness of weakness be! If, Judge, you find no cause in Him, why call for a *plébiscite*? Why transfer your duty to a lawless mob? Who is the ruler in Jerusalem? The Jews are crouching down to-day before Roman supremacy in a way they have never done till now; and yet you are degrading your office, and degrading Rome, by leaving it to the rabble to decide whether you shall condemn or acquit Him Whom you declare to be innocent.

C. *I find no cause in Him.*

Therefore, set Him free. Did you not say it publicly and solemnly, *I will chastise Him and let Him go*? What a contrast between the judge and the accused! If Christ speaks, we may rely on every word: *for the truth of the Lord remains for ever. Blessed art thou, Mother of God, that hast believed; because these things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord.* Not one jot, nor one tittle of His words shall pass until all be fulfilled. But, alas! of us it is written, *Every man is a liar!* We promise and we vow, *but Jesus did not trust Himself to men, for that He knew all men! . . . He knew what was in man* (St. John ii.).

Good reason had this most unhappy judge to ask, *What is truth?* For he is the slave of that master of whom

Jesus said: *Truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own* (St. John viii.). And yet, surely, one who sits in judgment ought to know what truth is: *God is truth: and every man a liar.*

D. *I find no cause in Him.*

Oh, unhappy man! The recording angels register that word. What will you answer at the Judgment, when Jesus is compelled to say: *Wicked servant, out of thy own mouth I judge thee.* Thy own public proclamation is: *I find no cause in Him*, and yet no criminal has ever been sentenced and chastised as you have sentenced and chastised Him.

Truly, it is good to confide in the Lord, rather than to confide in men! It is good to trust in the Lord, rather than to trust in princes (Psalm cxvii.).

Were St. Paul present, with his impetuous heart, he well might exclaim: *God shall chastise thee, thou whited wall. For sittest thou to judge according to the law, and contrary to the law commandest Him to be mangled in this way?* (Acts xxiii.). Though all the while thou art proclaiming, *I find no cause in Him.*

E. *I find no cause in Him.*

Let us for a moment reflect on ourselves, as St. Ignatius directs. Even when I have done wrong, and there is abundant cause in me, yet if I am blamed and punished I often rebel; I cannot, I will not bear it.

But if I have not sinned; if I am wronged and calumniated, and the calumny is believed; and I am unjustly punished, who can soothe my anger? Who can speak to me of forgiveness?

And if, still worse, no calumny is believed at all, and I am declared quite innocent; but still heavily chastised, merely to please some powerful enemy of mine. Alas! what shall become of my soul under such temptation? Is there a just God in Heaven, I ask in my wrath, that tolerates such wickedness?

O merciful and compassionate Lord Jesus, one tear

from Thy eyes would most certainly have appeased the anger of Thy Father against our fallen race; but if we had not before us the whole of Thy Sacred Passion, all its cruel scenes, who could teach us to be meek, to be patient, and to forgive?

"Passion of Christ, strengthen us. Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, make us by Thy strong grace meek and humble like Thee."

F. *I bring Him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in Him.*

The people stand silent, watching for what shall come. There is a short pause of suspense.

STATION IV.

Jesus came forth bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And he saith to them: Behold the Man (v. 5).

A. *Jesus came forth.*

"O vos omnes attendite." Oh, make a little leisure to see and to hear and to think in your heart.

For a moment all tongues are hushed. The people press forward to see this strange spectacle. Never before have they seen a man crowned with thorns. The scarlet mantle does not hide the ghastly wounds. Bruises and gashes and spittle and blood hide His features. His step is feeble; with difficulty He trails his legs forward. His flesh is quivering in the morning air: *A Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity* (Isaias liii.). For a little while the people stand gazing and stupefied. Pilate is elated. The effect is produced.

B. *Behold the Man!*—he says with complacency—the Man you all feared so much! the dangerous Man Who can stop the tribute to Cæsar! the great Leader of the people, Who is to drive out the Roman legions! the *King of the Jews!* The Romans understand how to deal with such characters. *Behold the Man!* For a little while there

is no response. "All is well," the Governor thinks within himself.

C. *Behold the Man!* John and Magdalen and others hear that word; but they do not need it. With all the earnestness of their souls they are looking, striving to recognise their Master. Alas! they cannot—*His look is hidden.*

To-night, when all is over, *when all things are quiet, and the night is in the midst of her course*, an eye-witness is being questioned by disciples who were not at the Prætorium: "How did the Master look? Was He still as we used to see Him: *The beautiful one in His robes, and walking in the greatness of His strength?*" "Alas! not so. His robe was not on Him. Nothing but a tattered soldier's mantle that did not cover Him. The wounds could all be seen. And in His footsteps there was no *strength* at all. He scarcely walked; the soldiers dragged Him to the front." "But was not His face still beautiful? Was there not that heavenly grace that used to draw us all?" "Oh, no; far from it. I was near and I saw Him: *His look was hidden.* I could not recognise Him at all. I heard them say it was Jesus, and I knew it must be our Master; but I could not distinguish one feature. His face was bruised and swollen and torn, and it was covered with spittle, and over the spittle were trickling down streams of blood from the thorns; and His eyes were half-closed and stopped up with blood, and His beard was filled with blood. *We saw Him, and there was no beauty in Him, nor comeliness at all!* No, we could see Him clearly, and *there was not even sightliness!* There was nothing left of that grace that used to charm us; nothing that *we could be desirous of Him.* Oh, His word came true: *You shall all be scandalised in Me!* For a time the thought was in my mind: After all, then, the Pharisees and the Priests may be right. Alas! is the Master an impostor? Our trust was shaken. For a time *we esteemed Him not.* It seemed clear in that hour, that not only were men against Him,

but He was become like a leper, and one struck by God; a man afflicted.

"It was only when I turned and looked at the Blessed Mother, and saw her pale face, her eyes fixed most devoutly upon Him, and her tears falling, and her lips moving in prayer, that I felt full of remorse for having thought so wrongly; and remembered that *He was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins.*"

D. *Behold the Man!*

Here, let us not forget that the tears of our Blessed Lady are pleading for us, that the promised grace may be given to us. *I will pour out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of prayers, and they shall look on Me Whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son; and they shall grieve for Him as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born (Zach. xii.).*

"O Blessed Mother, say to us still: *Behold the Man!* Behold my Son! Turn thine eyes of mercy towards us, and show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

E. *Behold the Man!*

Alas! we pray to her to show her Divine Son to us. But she is far more earnestly beseeching us to make leisure to look on her Son Jesus, Whom we have wounded; to look on Him till grace comes out from Him to move us to mourn over Him *as one mourneth for an only son.*

F. *Behold the Man!*

Even Pilate will witness against me if I will not stay a little while to look at this wounded Man.

G. *Behold the Man!*

And cease not to look on Him, till we can grieve heartily for our sins. *For the chastisement of our peace is upon Him.*

H. *Behold the Man!*

Look on Him till the bite of the fiery serpent is healed; till the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life lose their great power.

I. *Behold the Man!* till from the morning watch even until night we can hope in the Lord.

J. *Behold the Man!* till the fire He came to cast on earth begins to burn in our hearts.

K. *Behold the Man!*

And when troubles grow, and we are tempted to lose patience, remember we *have not yet resisted unto blood (Hebrews xii.).*

L. *Behold the Man!*

And say: If Jesus paid this price for the poor sinner, how well it will one day fare with me if I help Him now to seek and to save that which was lost!

STATION V.

When the Chief Priests, therefore, and the servants had seen Him, they cried out: Crucify Him! Crucify Him! (v. 6).

When the Chief Priests, therefore, and servants had seen Him.

The people, as has been said, are standing silent. They are looking on Him Whom they have wounded. The spectacle is having its effect on them; *the wounds, bruises, and swelling sores, from the sole of the foot to the top of His Head; His whole Head sick, His whole Heart sad.* The spectacle is turning their hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. Moreover, a grace is going out into their hearts from the fountains of their Saviour; and the ever-compassionate Heart of their own Good Shepherd, Who still wishes to gather them, *even as the hen gathereth her chickens,* is saying to their souls: *My people, what have I done to thee? or in what have I afflicted thee? (Micah vi.).* The Blessed Mother's Heart, too, is joined with her Divine Son's—prayer for prayer, sigh for sigh. *Why will you die, O house of Israel? return ye and live (Ezech. xviii.).* The Governor is well contented. His policy has succeeded.

But, once more, *the desire of the sinner shall perish.—It is the dream of them that awake, O Lord.* In a moment his bliss-

ful delusions are scattered, and for ever. *When they were lifted up, Thou hast cast them down* (Psalm lxxii.). There is a form of verdict in use among our lawgivers in this country: "Content, or, Not content". The enemies, the arch-enemies of Jesus, they, and they only, are not content. Jesus of Nazareth is chastised, but not dead. He is not crucified; and they begin to mutter their discontent to one another. Their leader, their precentor in this terrible hour of suffrage, first pronounces their verdict, *Crucify Him*. Instantly his followers and accomplices take courage and make the word heard: *Crucify Him*. But they are only a few voices among so many. But these Rulers have around them their wretched slaves, their servants without a soul of their own; and these degraded bondsmen, seeing the eyes of their masters upon them, at once chime in and cry: *Crucify Him*. The Princes of the Philistines said: *Our god, Dagon, hath delivered Samson into our hands: and the people seeing this, praised their god, AND SAID THE SAME* (Judges xvi.). Yet, still, it is only a feeble cry. It is not the response of the people. But it is quite sufficient to change the pleasant delusion of Pilate into despairing rage. *The wicked shall see and shall be angry. He shall gnash with his teeth and pine away* (Psalm cxi.).

The wicked shall be angry. He is angry, full of bitter anger and keen regret that long ago he did not send his troops to *mix the blood* of these relentless mischief-makers with the Paschal celebrations. *He shall pine away.* Yes, for all dignity, and manliness, and courage is gone from him. What wonder! The golden dream of this most weak and wicked time-server is scattered for ever. He made sure that he had found out the *modus vivendi*, as we say, the method of serving two masters, and making an adjustment, a concordat between light and darkness, Hell and Heaven. His last stratagem, the very last, is entirely baffled. *The wicked shall see and shall be angry. He shall gnash with his teeth and pine away.* He is full of wrath at being utterly foiled by the obstinate malice of the men he scorns and hates.

STATION VI.

Pilate saith to them: Take Him you and crucify Him, for I find no cause in Him (v. 6).

The weak and unjust Judge is now carried away entirely by impotent anger. And, as St. James writes, *the anger of man worketh not the justice of God* (c. i.). Neither will Pilate's angry word satisfy the demands of those whom he has made his masters. Who can be satisfied with such a sentence? If he finds no cause in Him, by what right does he say: *Take Him you and crucify Him*? What does he gain by such a word? If they act on his permission, the murder will still be his act. He has sanctioned it.

But while he through vexation and hopelessness is losing all self-possession, his clever and determined adversaries are every moment through success growing in boldness and resolution. The Governor shall humble himself lower yet, much lower, in their presence: down to the very dust.

If they act on this hasty, passionate word of his anger and vexation: *Take Him you and crucify Him*: when he returns to his senses he will disown it, and maintain that the murder is their lawless act. Whereas their fixed determination is that they shall be able to maintain before the people that the judgment of death comes from him; so as hereafter to be able to say indignantly to the disciples: *You have a mind to bring the blood of this Man on us* (Acts v.).

What a spectacle of degradation! "To serve God is to reign," and those who will not serve God become the veriest slaves of men and Lucifer! The proud Representative of Imperial Rome is cowering down before the outcast race; and the degraded people of God are licking the dust to win over to their wicked will this heathen man. Of Moses it is written, that *he was a man exceedingly meek above all men that dwelt upon the earth* (Numbers xii.). Oh, for the

holy courage of the meek and humble of heart! Moses did not truckle to the people as this proud Roman Governor does. *O foolish and senseless people*, was his word to them; and he said it aloud—it was no secret whisper, or uncertain sound. *Hear, O ye heavens, the things I speak; let the earth give ear to the words of my mouth. . . . They have sinned against (God) and are none of His children in their filth. They are a wicked and perverse generation. . . . They are a nation without counsel and without wisdom. O that they would be wise and would provide for their last end!* (Deut. xxxii.).

Immeasurably more than the men whom Moses rebukes, these Rulers are now *without counsel and without wisdom*; and yet this Governor, representing the greatest Empire in the world, is cowed down before them; and they are equally degraded and servile before him. When the old father of the Machabees saw his countrymen ill-treated by the minion of a foreign tyrant, he struck down the oppressor and sounded the trumpet for war. What would have been the action of that true-hearted Israelite if he had seen his countryman, Jesus of Nazareth, the innocent and holy one of the Lord and the glory of Israel, covered with wounds by command of the foreign tyrant, and heard the word, *I find no cause in Him?* But these Chiefs and Rulers of God's people, these Priests to whom the Lord has said: *I have no pleasure in you*, in this hour not only tolerate all this oppressive and insulting tyranny, and unheard-of injustice, but humbly beg for more.

STATION VII.

The Jews answered him: We have a law, and according to that law He ought to die: because He made Himself the Son of God (v. 7).

A. *He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.*

Now for the first time they let out their secret before the Roman Judge.

If Pilate is terrified by them, so too Pilate's anger and fitfulness alarms them.

I find no cause in Him. The words sound like decision. He speaks as if resolved. Their obstinacy has baffled Pilate's plan, and now his wavering and fickle indecision has entirely spoiled their scheme. They have been contending all the morning that He is a malefactor. Now they are constrained to tell the truth. In their hopeless bewilderment, they let out their great secret.

The reason why *He ought to die*, and the only reason, is *because He made Himself the Son of God.*

Pilate entirely loses himself before their determination, and they also entirely lose themselves in presence of Pilate's inconstancy. *They have not called upon the Lord. There have they trembled for fear where there is no fear* (Psalm xiii.).

B. *He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.*

Of this Jesus of Nazareth, St. Paul writes that *He is Christ according to the flesh, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever.* Chained then and bound though He be, and apparently the Man without help, yet *the day goeth on according to (His) ordinance, and all things are serving His purpose.* Pilate's vacillation has compelled the Chief Priests and Ancients to publish here on the house-top what last night they only whispered among themselves, that the one crime of Jesus is that *He made Himself the Son of God.*

"O Holy Lord Jesus, *God over all things and blessed for ever*, may *Thy Kingdom come* within us, may *Thy will be done*, and not ours."

The Blessed Mother, the Admirable Mother, is consoled and filled with a deep contentment when she hears this word drawn by God's over-ruling providence from the mouths of the enemies of her Son: *He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.*

It is the disciple whom Jesus loved, blessed St. John, who preserved for us these precious details omitted in the

other Gospels, through which we see how all things *work together unto good*, and make known the true reason why our Lord must die.

STATION VIII.

When Pilate, therefore, had heard this saying, he feared the more (v. 8).

A. Pilate has suddenly heard quite a new revelation. It is *because He made Himself the Son of God* that Jesus has been dragged before him. On false charges, then, on pretences utterly hollow, these men have induced a Roman Judge to perpetrate this unexampled act of injustice and cruelty. And lo! it is now publicly proclaimed before the whole people, and before all the strangers present in Jerusalem, that he, Pilate, has inflicted torments till now unheard-of on an innocent man, against whom there is no charge save this absurd Jewish one, that *He made Himself the Son of God*. These lying impostors have insulted, they have degraded the majesty and good name of Rome. If in his just indignation he now ordered them to be scourged, Roman justice and Roman pride would have fully ratified the award. Or if he chose to stand by the Jewish law, and enforce their Code against these false witnesses: *Thou shalt not pity him, but shall require life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot* (Exod. xxi.), wound for wound, lash for lash, he will be doing justice and probably great mercy also. For chastisement does often bring conversion, and suffering brings repentance.

B. *When Pilate heard this.*

At the very least, now that his eyes are opened, he will surely act at once, as his successor acted in after years: *If it were some matter of injustice or some heinous deed, O Jews, I would bear with you; but if there is nothing but a question of a word and names, and of your law, look ye to it. I will not be a judge of such things. And he drove them from the judgment-seat.* But this is not the effect wrought on this double-minded man, who is bent on serving two masters.

C. *When Pilate heard this he feared the more.*

He feared the more. For wickedness is fearful, and a troubled conscience forecasteth grievous things (Wisdom xvii.). *They have trembled with fear where there was no fear* (Psalm xlii.).

From time to time, this forenoon, Pilate has been greatly impressed by the meekness, the patience, the becoming dignity of this prisoner. That He is no malefactor is quite evident; but now for the first time he hears that He claims to be the Son of God. "How, then, if this be true? If He really be a Divine Man, or one of the gods come down from heaven to reform this earth, what will He do to avenge these lashes and this coronation? On the other hand, if He be only a vain boaster, and if I by setting Him free rouse the revengeful spirit of these determined Jews, what will they not allege against me?" The outcome of these reflections is that the weak, double-minded man, *feared the more*.

SCENE IV.

THE GOVERNOR'S APARTMENT.

STATION I.

And he entered into the hall again, and he said to Jesus: Whence art Thou? But Jesus gave him no answer (St. John xix. 9).

A. Contemplate the unhappy man, who came out of this chamber a few minutes ago so cheery and full of unblest assurance, now going back along the terrace in sore perplexity; angry, downcast, and helplessly bewildered: *He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind* (St. James i.).

The Psalmist puts this question: *When the wicked have bent their bow, what has the just man done?* The answer is: *The Lord is in His Holy Temple; the Lord's throne is in Heaven. His eyes look on the poor man* (Psalm x.). That is, when a good man is in trouble and perplexity he lifts his heart

to the Lord in Heaven, and he cries out with King Josaphat : *O our God, as we know not what we ought to do, we can only turn our eyes to Thee* (2 Paral. xx.). But Pilate is one of those described in the Psalm : *Behold the man that made not God his helper, but trusted in the abundance of his riches and prevailed in his vanity* (Psalm li.). Of such it is written : *They have trembled for fear, where there is no fear* (Psalm xlii.).

B. *He entered into the hall again.*

And he gives orders that the prisoner be brought to him.

"*Attendite.*" Give heed ; for to Jesus each new journey is like a fresh and very severe sentence. To the *Man of Sorrows*—on Whose Body from the sole of the foot to the top of the Head there is no soundness ; nothing but wounds, bruises, swelling sores—every step, every touch from the rough hands of the soldiers, is a new and heavy chastisement. In spirit, His Blessed Mother is journeying with Him, and suffering, step by step : *Going they went and wept* ; sowing the heavenly seeds of the tree of life for us.

C. *He feared the more.*

Seated in his saloon, awaiting the prisoner, the words of his wife Claudia come back to him : *Have thou nothing to do with this just Man.* And lo ! this just Man, it turns out, claims to be the Son of God. Wo is me ! What have I done ? Lightning from heaven may strike me. *A sudden and unlooked-for fear is come upon him.*

"In that hour, Lord Jesus, when *the sign of the Son of Man shall appear in the heavens, and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and men shall be withering away with fear*, by Thy Sacred Passion and Death, deliver us."

D. *And he said to Jesus : Whence art Thou ?*

Alone with our Blessed Saviour and a few officials, he goes back to his old plan of parley, to see if he can find a straw to catch at.

But how has he the courage to look upon the face of Jesus, Whom he has wronged and tortured as no man ever has been wronged and tortured till now ? How does

he presume to put a question, or expect an answer ? His proper place and attitude would be to lie on the ground, and cry out from a broken heart : *Miserere, parce, Domine—Have mercy, O Lord. Spare, O Lord—for against Thee only have I sinned, and I have done evil before Thee.*

Even so, we too at times forget our iniquities and wish to be familiar with God. *Show My people their wicked doings ; for they desire to know My ways as a nation that hath not forsaken the judgment of God. They are willing to approach to God* (Isaiah lviii.). Give me, Lord Jesus, a contrite and humble heart, for such a heart Thou wilt not despise.

E. *But Jesus gave him no answer.*

Alas ! a great change has come on since the early morning. Much grace has been given this day to Pilate ; and it has all been wasted and rejected. That friendly counsel of the Holy Spirit has been utterly neglected : *Add not sin upon sin* (Ecclus. v.). Oh ! great reason has a sinner to fear, and to fear more and more, when God begins to be silent. *Jesus gave him no answer.*

"Correct me, O Lord, and chastise me in Thy mercy, and let me have the many stripes that are the sinner's portion ; but chastise me not in Thy wrath : *Thou hast seen, O Lord, all my iniquities ; but be not Thou silent : O Lord, depart not from me*" (Psalm xxxiv.).

Why should our Lord answer ? The question is irrelevant. What matters it, Judge, whence the prisoner comes ? Your duty is clear ; you find no cause in Him, therefore set Him free : beg humbly, most humbly, forgiveness for injustice perpetrated, and reckon with the false accusers. Why should Jesus answer ? At the dawn of day He was saying to the Sanhedrim, when they questioned Him : *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.* It is the same case now : *You will not believe : you will not let Me go.*

STATION II.

Pilate therefore saith to Him: Speakest Thou not to me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and I have power to release Thee? Jesus answered: Thou shouldst not have any power against Me unless it were given thee from above. Therefore he that delivered Me to thee hath the greater sin (vv. 10, 11).

A. *Speakest Thou not to me?*

According to human wisdom Pilate's reasoning is most powerful. Your life is in my hands, will you not answer me? Will you by insult make me your enemy? According to the wisdom of this world, Jesus is badly in want of friends; and already to-day made a great mistake when He turned Herod against Him by His offensive silence; and He is now repeating the fatal blunder.

Our Lord's meek defence would be: *What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter* (St. John xiii.). *My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways My ways, saith the Lord* (Isaiah lv.).

B. *Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and I have power to release Thee?*

Pilate speaks a truth. He has all that power, but he does not see that he has the power only because Jesus entrusts it to him. *These things are hidden from thy eyes.*

"Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty, and all my power; Thou hast given all to me. To Thee I give all back. *May Thy Kingdom come. May Thy will be done: not mine.*"

C. *I have power to crucify Thee, and I have power to release Thee.*

We must reflect on our own case. Let us turn in spirit to look at our Hidden God in the tabernacle; not great there and exceedingly to be praised, but "little and exceedingly to be loved". Come, "*Attendite et videte*". Give heed and see how wonderfully subject He is to each of us.

Which of us is there who cannot say: My Lord and my God, I have power to crucify Thee again, by sin and by cruel neglect; and I have power to set Thee free and console Thee?

Consider, too, how the littleness of Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist is only a visible picture of the littleness of the invisible God throughout His own creation.

The earth He has given to the sons of men. During my short day of stewardship, I am master here; and my own God makes Himself subject to me and depends on me.

I can give to Him, I can lend to Him of the things He has given to me; or I can refuse Him.

"O my God, my Creator, my Father, my King, my Redeemer, *May Thy Kingdom come. May Thy will be done.—Father, not as I will, but as Thou.*

"Blessed Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may learn to say, according to thy spirit, to every messenger of God, and above all to thy Son Himself: *I am Thy servant and the son of Thy handmaid—be it done to me according to Thy word.*"

The ever-grateful Heart of our Saviour one day uttered this wonderful word: *Whoever shall do the will of My Father, he is My brother, My sister, and My mother.*

STATION III.

Jesus answered: Thou shouldst not have any power against Me unless it were given thee from above. Therefore he that delivered Me to thee hath the greater sin (v. 11).

A. *Thou shouldst not have any power against Me unless it were given thee from above.*

First, then: *All power is from God* (Romans xiii.). Therefore, whenever I exercise power of any kind, I ought to be God's faithful steward, acting in His name, and in humble subjection to Him.

Secondly. Whenever I am exercising power over God's child, my neighbour, and still more over Jesus Christ,

the Eternal Son of God, I am bound to use my power with the very greatest reverence and tender care, with some share of that consideration and humble devotion wherewith St. Joseph used his authority over the Divine Child and the Blessed Mother.

But *thirdly*. Our Lord is teaching Pilate—what St. Peter afterwards teaches us—that *governors (are) sent by Him (God) for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of the good* (1 St. Peter ii.); and as St. Paul teaches, *Princes are not a terror to the good work, but the evil* (Romans xiii.). Consequently, as a judge, Pilate ought not to have any power but that power given by God, power to chastise wrong-doers. As, then, Jesus has violated no law, he ought not to have any power over Him. Therefore Caiphas the High Priest, and Annas, and the Chief Priests and Ancients, who delivered Him up to the Romans, have the greater sin.

B. *He that delivered Me to thee hath the greater sin.*

Let us think of ourselves. If my neighbour is innocent, and I accuse him falsely, and thus bring trouble and chastisement upon him, I subject him to the power of those whom God did not intend to have power over him—therefore my sin is great.

Again, even if my neighbour has sinned secretly, this secret sin does not give the public a right from Heaven to sit in judgment on him. Therefore, if I reveal his secret sin to others and bring upon him condemnation and reproach, I am, like the Jews, handing my brother over to a tribunal to which God has given no authority over him: and my sin is great.

C. *Thou shouldst not have any power against Me.*

Men who lose all grace by neglecting prayer, and Holy Mass, and the sacraments, sometimes say oracularly that Christ's religion has done little or no good. But what do we learn from the scene before us? Can we imagine a Christian judge looking at Jesus, covered with wounds, and quite convinced that He is innocent, and yet never

giving an order that the terrible crown of thorns be taken off His Head, and that His wounds be dressed and bound up? Can we imagine a Christian judge bearing the spectacle of the mangled Body, with the full consciousness that this is all his own work, and that his victim is a perfectly innocent Man?

It is entirely our own fault if Christ's redemption be not plentiful. For, as St. Peter tells us, *we are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people; that (we) may declare His virtues Who hath called (us) out of darkness into His admirable light* (1 St. Peter ii.). By word and by deed we have to spread His Gospel and His virtues.

D. *He that delivered Me to thee hath the greater sin.*

From the forgiving Heart of our Lord a grace passes with these words into the stony heart of 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* (Ecclus. xv.). It is the last struggle between grace and worldly selfishness, or selfish worldliness.

SCENE V.

THE BALCONY.

STATION I.

And from henceforth Pilate sought to release Him
(St. John xix. 12).

A. 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 is come back. Oh, that it may be sheltered from the cold blast that will else extinguish it! The Governor ought to bar his doors and not allow 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. He fears the men who can damage his body and his position. His fear of God, Who *can cast body and soul into Hell*, is weak indeed. He ought to shut himself up in his chamber, as a sick man most feeble, and with only a spark of life within him which has to be most carefully nursed. In his state, as we are often taught, it is madness to run back into the occasions of sin. As we have seen, some holy Fathers think that Pilate was, in after years, converted. Certainly it is, even in this eleventh hour, the wish of the merciful Heart of Jesus, that he may *be converted and live*. He and St. Procla may yet spend their days in grieving and mourning over the sacred wounds, and there shall be joy in Heaven. O Pilate, *seek not to be made a judge unless thou have strength enough to extirpate iniquities, lest thou fear the person of the powerful, and lay a stumbling-block for thy integrity* (Ecclus. vii.).

B. *He sought to release Him.*

Alas! he does not set rightly to work. He goes out to parley once more with His stubborn adversaries, for whom he, weak man, is no match. The Evangelist writes that he *sought to release Him*. And, no doubt, Pilate makes some feeble efforts from the balcony. He says once more: *I find no cause in Him: I will let Him go*, and the like. But are these real sincere efforts to release Him? Who is Governor in Jerusalem? Who wields the supreme power? Who can speak the word that shall set Him free? Did not Pilate say a few minutes ago: *I have power to crucify Thee and I have power to release Thee*? If he wishes to release Jesus, he has only to say one word to his guards, and bid them disperse the gathering, and so remain quite safe in his chamber. Therefore clearly St. John's meaning is that he goes out on the balcony, and there once more utters some weak expostulations, *neither hot nor cold*. What chance has the spark of life within him of surviving the storm which a faint attempt is sure to rouse in the souls of his masters, the tyrants who are this day humbling him down to the

dust? For a brief moment, then, Pilate seems to be made strong, and resolved to *extirpate iniquities*, but the good seed has fallen on a very rocky soil, where there is no moisture; and *when there ariseth tribulation and persecution he is presently scandalised*.

STATION II.

But the Jews cried out saying: If thou release this Man, thou art not Cæsar's friend. For whoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar (v. 12).

A. "Attendite"—Give heed, for we may learn a great lesson from the children of this world, *who are more prudent than the children of light*: more prudent, that is, more provident, more far-seeing; we may add, more persevering. A moment ago all seemed lost for the cause of Satan, and the spirits of darkness. But they do not give way to despair. They believe in the motto: "Where there is a will there is a way". They know they are dealing with a man made of dust, and easily blown about by the wind. They practise well in a bad cause the golden rule given to us for our spiritual warfare by the Holy Ghost: *Make not haste in the time of clouds*.

Why may we not rival their determination? Are they fighting for a better prize than ours? Which is the happier lot, to fight to win Christ Jesus, or to fight to lose Christ Jesus, and win an eternity with Lucifer? *The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence. Looking on Jesus—think diligently upon Him, that you be not wearied, fainting in your mind. For you have not resisted unto blood* (Heb. xii.). *He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved* (St. Matt. x.).

B. *If thou release this Man, thou art not Cæsar's friend.*

Under the inspiration of the prince of darkness, the Priests and Ancients persevere to the end; they do not faint in their mind. Their strong wills set their intellects in motion to discover some new kind of destructive shot or shaft, and beyond their expectation they have succeeded. They have hit the Roman Governor in the apple of his

eye, or rather in the core of his heart. For the only god whom Pilate worships is Tiberius Cæsar. To him Cæsar is the author of life and death. To be in disgrace with Cæsar is simply ruin, destruction, annihilation. Only a very short time is gone by since Sejanus, Cæsar's favourite, seemed to be the most powerful man in the universe. But in one day he is tried, by Cæsar's order, sentenced, and strangled. "A courier will be on his way to-morrow to tell Cæsar that contrary to the urgent advice of the Sanhedrim I released this would-be King. Never! this cannot be."

C. *If thou release this Man, thou art not Cæsar's friend.*

This cry, therefore, rises above all the conflicting elements in his soul, as a thunder-peal. He can hear no other sound. It is as if the bolt had struck him. He is lying prostrate, to rise no more. All struggle in his conscience is ended. He will never seek again to release Jesus. For with the whole energy of his being he fears to be reputed as no friend to Tiberius Cæsar. You may argue with him that God is above Cæsar, but what can argument avail? *For fear is nothing else but a yielding up of the succours from thought* (Wisdom xvii.). He fears with a great fear. *Thought* cannot avail against this great scare.

They have not called on the name of the Lord. They have trembled with fear, where there was no fear (Psalm xlii.).

And yet a maiden child like Agnes, strong in the grace and virtue that comes out to her from the fountains of her Saviour, can say, *I spoke, Lord Jesus, of Thy testimonies before Kings and tyrants more cruel than Tiberius, and I was not ashamed* (Psalm cxviii.).

D. *Thou art not Cæsar's friend.*

"Give to Cæsar, Thou didst say, Lord Jesus, *what belongs to Cæsar*. This part of Thy word Pilate will do and overdo. He will give to Cæsar more, much more, than belongs to Cæsar; but to God he will give nothing. He will give to Cæsar his immortal soul, which is Thine, for it was created for Thee, and to-day Thou art buying it back again at a great price after it was lost."

All is ended. *He that wavereth, is like a wave carried about by the wind*. The mighty wind from Heaven (Acts ii.) has made itself felt for the last time. *The Spirit breatheth where He will*; so Jesus of Nazareth in time past said to one who to-day is watching here among the crowd. The holy spirit of discipline cares not to breathe any more into the soul of Cæsar's creature and Satan's slave.

E. *Thou art not Cæsar's friend.*

And so, the Jewish Rulers—who hate Rome with an undying hatred, and who will struggle against Rome till Jerusalem becomes a huge charnel-house filled with the putrid corpses of her dead—prevail in this hour against their own God, their own Jesus, their one true friend, their Messias, the Glory of their people, by passing themselves off as Cæsar's worshippers, and calling to their aid the hated name of Tiberius.

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? (Jerem. ii.).

"Blessed Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may not be led into temptation."

SCENE VI.

THE LITHOSTROTOS.

STATION I.

Now when Pilate had heard these words, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment-seat in the place that is called Lithostrotos, and in Hebrew Gabbatha. And it was the Parasceve of the Pasch, about the sixth hour. And he saith to them, Behold your King (St. John xix. 13, 14).

A. *He brought Jesus forth.*

The Governor's mind is now made up. He gives the signal to his officers to attend him, and he goes out prepared to deliver his judgment.

This time, therefore, he does not make towards the Xystus, or balcony whence he exhibited Jesus to the people, and afterwards made his feeble effort to release Him, but he goes down in state to the Tribunal which, as has been said, stands in the large court paved with red stones, the Lithostrotos or Gabbatha, and there in the chair of judgment he takes his seat.

B. He brought Jesus forth.

This, then, is our Blessed Lord's last journey down the Scala Santa. In some paintings He is represented as coming down the steps after condemnation. But from St. John's narrative it is clear that sentence is pronounced from the raised Tribunal in the Lithostrotos. And there is nothing to show that He ever again goes up the steps to the Prætorium.

"Attendite." We may stay a little while to contemplate our Blessed Saviour coming down for the last time. Last night in the Garden, as we read: *Jesus knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth* to meet the multitude. The words are as true now.

"You know well, most loving Redeemer, as You descend the steps, all the things that are to come upon You, and by one act of Your will You might escape all. You can mount up to Heaven; You can go down into the depths of the earth; You can *take wings and dwell in the uppermost part of the sea*; but Your fixed will is to come down to the Lithostrotos, there to deliver Yourself for me.

"*All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord; all ye wondrous works of His fortitude, of His courage, His love strong as death, bless the Lord.*

"O Mother of Mercy, show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, that we may love Him with a strong and courageous love."

C. And it was the Parasceve of the Pasch, about the sixth hour.

As the solemn and decisive moment is at hand, St. John once more recalls the day and the hour.

1. It was the Parasceve of the Pasch.

Literally, it was the Preparation of the Pasch. There has been much discussion about the meaning of this phrase.

At first sight we are inclined to say that the sense is: It was the preparation-day—the vigil—of the Pasch. If this were the sense, they think rightly who hold that this year the festival-day of the Pasch has been transferred from Friday to the Great Sabbath which immediately follows. But commentators, highly esteemed, such as the Jesuit Fathers Toletus and Barradius, and others also, contend that no such transfer has been made, and that, therefore, the words, *the Parasceve of the Pasch*, do not mean "the vigil or preparation-day of the Pasch". According to them, this Good Friday, being the fifteenth day of the moon, by law must be, and actually is, *the festival-day of the Pasch*. But as it happens also to be *the Parasceve*, that is, the preparation-day, or vigil, or eve of THE SABBATH, it therefore becomes the Parasceve of Paschal-time, the Parasceve, or vigil, that falls during the Azymes, or Paschal days. The Sabbath that occurs during these solemn days is called, *the Great Sabbath*. The Parasceve, or vigil, of this Great Sabbath is known as the Paschal Parasceve, or *Parasceve of the Pasch*.

I. How, then, it is asked, are the Priests and Ancients doing servile work on this day? We may answer (a) that the Law allows a little more laxity on this day than on the strict Sabbath. They may cook food to-day, but not on the Sabbath. (b) Besides, the Priests and Ancients are, our Lord has told us, eminently HYPOCRITES; *they strain out gnats, but swallow camels*. Scrupulous about lesser things, they sin heinously against all that is most holy. (c) Moreover, they do not think it servile work to persecute Jesus. *Whosoever killeth (Him) will think that he doth a service to God* (St. John xvi.).

II. Again it is asked: If this be the festival-day, and if the Pasch was eaten yesterday, why do the Rulers demur about entering the Judgment-hall, and give as their reason that they wish to eat the Pasch this evening? One answer may be that the word Pasch is used in different senses. Thus (a) the Paschal lamb is called the Pasch; (b) the seven days of Azymes are called the Pasch; (c) besides the Paschal lamb, other animals were to be immolated and eaten, such as oxen, lambs, kids, calves. They are all included under the name, the Pasch. It is expressly ordered that there is to be a celebration every day during the Azymes, like the first Paschal supper. These celebrations come under the name, the Pasch. (See Numbers xxviii. and 2 Paral. xxxv.) So that the Priests might correctly say that they had to eat the Pasch in the evening. As, moreover, they had been too busy yesterday with the arrest of our Lord to attend to the Pasch, they would easily satisfy their consciences that they can make up by eating the Paschal lamb to-night. If they gave themselves such a dispensation, this would be only one of their sins, and by no means the worst.

2. *About the sixth hour.*

These words also have caused difficulty. For (1) St. Mark, after narrating the arrival at Calvary, and other details of what took place there, writes: *It was the third hour, and they crucified Him.* Then (2) St. Luke writes: *It was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth.* And yet we have these words of St. John, that when Pilate takes his seat in the Lithostrotos, which must have been an hour, if not more, before the Crucifixion: *It was about the sixth hour.*

Some commentators find it so difficult to reconcile these passages, that they think there must be some error in the manuscripts. Others answer very justly that where there have been some errors of copyists, they have been detected by comparing old manuscripts, and corrected; therefore they do not accept this solution of the difficulty.

Another explanation offered is that at that period the night and the day were divided into watches, consisting each of three hours. Therefore, as with us it is usual to go on saying: It is eleven o'clock: until twelve o'clock comes; so when counting by watches the hour at which the watch begins is spoken of as continuing till the next watch begins; and so St. Mark may say: It is *the third hour*, until the watch which began at the third hour is completed, and the sixth hour comes to begin the next watch. This answer will be accepted more easily, if we observe that in our present way of reckoning there is this much more startling peculiarity, that when our clocks strike twelve the twelfth hour is really ended; and yet, in common parlance, we speak as if the eleventh hour is only then coming to a close.

Father Toletus (Cardinal), however, objects to this second explanation, because he thinks it cannot be proved that the *hours of the day* were divided into "watches," as the night hours were.

He suggests, however, a kindred explanation which will do as well. He notices that in the Acts of the Apostles we have times designated in two different ways. St. Peter says, on Pentecost Day: *It is but the third hour of the day.* Then, in the third chapter, we read: *Peter and John went up into the Temple at the ninth hour of prayer* (Acts iii.). As then we, in this country, have now our solar time and our railway time, so this very careful and learned commentator supposes that in Jerusalem they had their "civil time" and their "church time," or "prayer time"; and that for "prayer time" the day was divided into portions of three hours each, like the night watches (*the excubie*). According to this mode, then, of reckoning, the prayer hours might be the first hour, the third, the sixth, the ninth, and the sunset (or, as the Italians call it, the *Ave Maria*). Measuring in this way, the *third hour by prayer time* would go on till the *sixth* comes. If we accept this explanation, the texts which seem to be in conflict can be reconciled.

Pilate takes his place on the judgment-seat between ten and eleven o'clock. The Crucifixion is completed a little before noon. The darkness sets in very soon after, *at the sixth hour.*

D. *Pilate sat down in the judgment-hall. It was about the sixth hour.*

The Beloved Disciple, who wrote these words, also wrote elsewhere: *Jesus being wearied, sat on the well. It was about the sixth hour.* Beside the well, our Blessed Saviour sat down tired at the sixth hour; and now the Roman Governor at the sixth hour sits down tired out by the long struggle between the two masters whom he has wished to serve. A better man than Pilate, Darius the Mede, was at last tired out by the importunity of the leading men of his kingdom, and commanded Daniel to be cast into the lion's den. *He was very much grieved; and in behalf of Daniel he set his heart to deliver him: and even till sunset he laboured to save him;* but at last he yielded to the ceaseless demands of the princes and governors who were Daniel's jealous enemies. He, also, was too weak a judge, and *feared the person of the powerful, and laid a stumbling-block for his integrity.* But as *star differeth from star in glory*, so sin differs from sin in heinousness and malice. Darius the Mede seems holy when set beside the heartless, selfish, and most cruel weakness of Pilate. For Darius grieved sincerely over Daniel, and moreover had a strong persuasion that God would preserve from harm His faithful servant. The King said to Daniel: *Thy God, Whom thou always servest, He will deliver thee* (Daniel vi.).

Yes; two men sin in the same hour, and sin grievously—mortally, as we say. Yet to the all-seeing eye of God *sin differeth greatly from sin.* Peter sinned last night, and Judas sinned; but the results are as wide apart as Heaven is from Hell.

E. *It was about the sixth hour.*

And Pilate sits down weary, and entirely absorbed in the thought of his own weariness, and his own trouble.

No thought at all has he for the weariness of Jesus, Whom he scourged, and Who is standing now in agony, while he sits.

He is weary and tired out, and his mind is made up to struggle no more. He will set at nought one of the two masters, and adhere to the other. To Cæsar then most assuredly he will adhere. What else can he do? For Cæsar is his god. Jesus of Nazareth, therefore, he must set at nought. Justice is gone from him; compassion is dead; even that fear, *the beginning of wisdom*, which for a moment terrified him from proceeding against one *Who makes Himself the Son of God*—has all passed off. *The light of justice* has faded away. The voice of Claudia Procla is now only the voice of a foolish woman. Who is this Galilean when compared with Cæsar? *That which is feeble is nothing worth*. And, moreover, the Roman historian, Tacitus, has truly said: "It is in our nature to hate the man we have wronged". So that not only does Pilate now because he is weak condemn Jesus; but, moreover, he dislikes Him greatly because he has wronged Him greatly. He is a wicked debtor, who owes to Jesus a great debt of reparation which he has no mind to pay; and therefore he has an aversion for the creditor he has wronged.

As usual, then, where there is a will, the intellect finds out a way. "For, after all, is it not his duty to content this people? And here Priests and Rulers and people are unanimous. This Jesus, though but a foolish impostor and an idiot, yet has made Himself obnoxious to all. The Priests and leading men must have good reasons for their persistency against Him."

F. *He sat down in the judgment-seat and said: Behold your King.*

The Jews had cried out an angry threat: *Thou art not Cæsar's friend. For whoever maketh himself a king is not Cæsar's friend.* Here is Pilate's answer: *Behold your King!* It is the answer of his bitter scorn; but also the

answer of his fears. "This pleasant joke will propitiate the Rulers; they will see clearly that he has reduced Jesus to such a plight that neither they nor Cæsar can have much to fear from Him now."

G. *Behold your King.*

St. Helen found the Holy Cross buried deep in filth and refuse, and the statue of Venus planted above it. The Ever-Blessed Mother, if she might speak to us when our Blessed Saviour is dethroned and dishonoured in our souls, and buried away under the things of this earth, would say to us in sorrow: "*Behold your King!* Before it is too late, restore my Divine Son to His proper place in your heart. Cry out: 'My Lord and my God, may *Thy Kingdom come*'."

STATION II.

But they cried out: Away with Him, Away with Him, Crucify Him! (v. 15).

A. *Away with Him, Crucify Him!*

"Attendite." Give heed for a little while. Listen to this terrible cry. Observe that it contains two parts: (1) *Away with Him!* (2) *Crucify Him!*

For, when we give ourselves to sin, at first we reject God; we turn away to worship some creature—*Away with Him!*

Then in time God becomes a hated enemy, a censurer of our thoughts, grievous unto us to behold. Malice sets in, and we cry: *Crucify Him.*

B. *Crucify Him.*

As if Jesus had not endured enough already! We can understand from this day's work of hatred how Lucifer's malice still to this day goes on, planning fresh dishonour to God and to His Christ, and more ruin to men.

"O Blessed Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may not die in grievous sin and be given up to everlasting malice, and to companionship with the enemies of thy Son."

C. Crucify Him.

If His enemies so earnestly wish for Him more sorrow, more shame, more pain, shall we grow tired of wishing more and more ardently: *To Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction, and honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever?* (Apoc. v.).

Their cruel wishes for Him bring to themselves weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth for ever.

Our loving wishes for Him will secure for us His eternal gratitude and everlasting love.

STATION III.

Pilate said to them: What shall I do then with Jesus that is called Christ? Shall I crucify your King? The Chief Priests answered: We have no King but Cæsar (St. Matt. xxvii.; St. John xix.).

A. Shall I crucify your King?

We have seen how, afterwards, the Jews repudiate with great wrath the charge that they shed the Blood of Jesus. *You have a mind to bring the blood of this Man upon us* (Acts v.). What shall they be able to answer at the Judgment when the recording angels testify how they browbeat and overawe this weak judge; and then, too, by word and example lead on the foolish people like sheep, to reject Him and to demand a cruel death for their Lord? *Away with Him! Crucify Him!* The Death of the Lord is far more the work of their strong wills than of Pilate's weak will.

B. Shall I crucify your King?

Pilate asks in derision: *Shall I crucify your King?* Is the King of the great Jewish people—who have made such a fight for their independence, whose daily prayer is to be free from the yoke—is their King to be crucified?

But unconsciously he is, with all things else *working together unto good*. He is making it more and more clear that the rejection and ruin of the people of God is

their own work. They cast off Jesus thoroughly and entirely, before He becomes their ruin. *Destruction is from thyself, O Israel.*

C. Shall I crucify your King?

Pilate, without knowing the force of his own words, is teaching a great lesson: that the people are dishonoured and degraded, when their King is dishonoured and degraded. Do you really consent, are you willing, can you be willing that your own King be crucified? The King is the Father of His people. *Shall I crucify your own King, your own Father? Glory not in the dishonour of thy father, for his shame is no glory to thee. For the glory of a man is from the honour of his father; and a father without honour is the disgrace of his son* (Ecclus. iii.).

For our own sakes, out of love and regard for ourselves, we ought to cry out earnestly: "O Lord Jesus, may *Thy Kingdom come*". *Benediction to the Lamb, and honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever* (Apoc. v.).

For if there be glory for Him, there will be praise and glory for us. If it fares well with Him, it fares well with us. He is our Head, we His members. His well-being is ours.

So is it, too, with His Holy Church and with our neighbours. If His Church is made to suffer, we suffer. If His Church is oppressed and not allowed to do her work, the look-out for us is bad.

And so again, if my neighbour is scandalised and sins, does it not concern me? Is he not a limb of the body to which I belong? *Did not He that made me in the womb make him also?* (Job xxxi.). Can I isolate myself from my brethren, and affect to say with Cain: *Am I my brother's keeper?* St. Paul understood better the work done by the Incarnation, by the Redemption, and by the Blessed Eucharist, and through the Maternity of Holy Mary: that we are all now members of His body, of His *flesh, and of His bone* (Ephes. v.). Is it wonderful that he exclaims: *Who is weak and I am not weak?* Is it a prodigy if one limb feels for another? The hour will come when

we shall all see that the prodigy, the man to be wondered at, and to be pitied beyond measure, is the redeemed man who cannot feel for his brother ransomed, like himself, by the Blood of Jesus. For *no man hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth it and cherisheth it* (Ephes. v.).

D. *The Chief Priests answered: We have no King but Cæsar.*

The Chief Priests answered. Here once more we see that 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 also what a 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 to their eternal home. We can each be a mediator, a go-between, a Jesus, to bring about reconciliation between our God and our neighbour. The first disciples were few, but they became a leaven that leavened many: *the salt of the earth, the light of the world.* Every good man's holiness is by a most merciful dispensation contagious, and cannot fail to spread grace and salvation.

E. *The Chief Priests answered: We have no King but Cæsar.*

This is the public solemn profession of the Chief Priests; but they are the rejected Priests, to whom the Lord has said: *I have no pleasure in you. I will not accept a gift from your hand* (Malach. i.). *Hear ye this, O Priests, and hearken, and give ear, O house of the King, for there is a judgment against you; because you have been a snare to them whom you should have watched over, and a net spread upon Thabor* (Osee v.). The bad influence of these Priests is like a snare and a net set for the souls of the people, and set too on Mount Thabor, that is, in God's holy places.

F. *We have no King but Cæsar.*

How is the gold become dim? the finest colour is changed (Lament. iv.).

This is the very anniversary-day of the deliverance of Israel out of slavery and bondage, and from the tyranny of a king. To-day the Chief Priests ought to be heading a procession of the people to crowd round Jesus their Deliverer. The drops of blood that are trickling down His face are the drops that were on the door-posts, and saved them when the destroying angel passed by. To-day, and at this hour, and here on this spot beside the holy Temple, these Chief Priests ought to be leading the Song of Joy, and all the people taking it up: "*In exitu Israël de Ægypto*"—*When Israel went out of Egypt, Judea was made His sanctuary; Israel His dominion—The mountains skipped like rams, and the hills like the lambs of His flock* (Psalm cxiii.).

Alas! *How is the gold become dim?* These Priests have been sitting on the Chair of Moses, and it is written of them: *Thou shalt come to the Priests of the Levitical race, and thou shalt ask of them, and they shall show you the truth: and thou shalt do whatsoever they shall say. Neither shalt thou decline to the right hand nor the left* (Deut. xvii.). Good cause had the meek Lamb of God to say to them three days ago: *Wo to you, Scribes and Pharisees, for you shut the Kingdom of Heaven against men.*

The story of the people of God has been one continual struggle for their independence. If ever there was a heart-stirring national elegy, or funeral song, over departed liberty, we have it in the Lament of Jeremias: *Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us. Our inheritance is turned to aliens, our houses to strangers. We have drunk our water for money: we have bought our wood: we were dragged by the necks. We were weary, and no rest was given to us. Servants have ruled over us; there was none to redeem us out of their hand. We fetched our bread at the peril of our lives; our skin was burnt as an oven, by reason of the violence of the famine. The joy of our hearts is ceased; the crown is fallen from our heads* (Lament. iv.).

Yet here in this city of God, and on this day of grace,

these unholy and perverted and degraded Priests publicly proclaim their entire adherence to slavery and tyranny, and their rejection of their Redeemer. "Away with Jesus!" *We have no King but Cæsar.*

I call, Moses is saying with a prophetic voice, I call Heaven and earth to witness this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Choose therefore life (Deut. xxx.)

But wo! wo! they loved cursing, and it shall be given to (them); (they) would not have a blessing, and it shall be far from (them) (Psalm cviii.).

Neither Pharaoh of Egypt, nor the Philistine, nor the Assyrian, nor the wicked root sprung from Greece, Antiochus, nor any other tyrant of the past, has ever been to the people of God such a scourge as Cæsar soon shall be. Him the Priests solemnly elect to-day; and the slavish people answer: "So be it, so be it". *All we like sheep have gone astray—Thy destruction is from thyself, O Israel.*

Cæsar you have chosen, Cæsar will come to you, and will not delay.

A people, with their leader that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be waste; and after the end of the war the appointed desolation; and the desolation shall continue even to the consummation and the end (Daniel ix.).

When the wicked shall be in rule, the people shall mourn (Prov. xxix.).

G. *We have no King but Cæsar.*

"Attendite." For we must also turn back on our own past history. "I will think over for Thee, O Lord my God, my years, in the bitterness of my soul, and grieve over those miserable hours when I rejected Thee, and set up self in Thy place; and the princes of darkness in Thy stead. *We have sinned, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly, and have revolted. We have gone aside from Thy commandments and Thy judgments. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face. But to Thee, the Lord our God,*

mercy and forgiveness, for we have departed from Thee" (Daniel ix.).

H. *What shall I do with Jesus, Who is called the Christ?*

If I have chosen a creature and sinned, then this question always has to be settled: *What shall I do with Jesus?* There is no alternative: I have contemned Him, and cast Him away; for I cannot serve two masters. To us confusion of face. *But to Thee, the Lord our God, mercy and forgiveness.*

STATION IV.

And Pilate seeing that he prevailed nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, taking water washed his hands before the people, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this just Man: look you to it (St. Matt. xxvii. 24).

A. *Pilate taking water washed his hands before the people.*

Contemplate the scene: his pages coming forward in their rich livery, with the salver and the ewer of gold or silver, and the perfumed water. How obsequiously they bend their knees and wait on him, and pour the water and offer him the embroidered napkin. All this to establish his innocence! because he only yields to compulsion!

St. Ignatius describes a class of men who will not do the one thing that God wants, but will substitute many other things of their own devising, which God does not want.

Pilate will not do the one thing necessary: he will not judge justly; but he thinks it very important to wash his hands *before the people*, and to renew his protest: *I find no cause in Him. I am innocent.*

We know the mind of our God concerning this kind of service: *When you came to appear before Me, who required these things at your hands? My soul hateth your new moons and your solemnities. When you stretch forth your hands, I will turn away My eyes from you, for your hands are full of blood (Isaias i.).*

B. *Pilate washed his hands.*

Has he perchance heard of the rite prescribed in the law of Moses?

When there shall be found in the land the corpse of a man slain, and it is not known who is guilty of the murder, the Ancients of the city shall come to the person slain, and shall wash their hands, and shall say: Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it (Deut. xxi.). Wherever he has learned this practice, it will not avail. His affidavit is false.

C. *He washes his hands before the people.*

He is anxious to be acquitted *by the people*; he cares not to be held guiltless by God. What is the result? The people do not acquit him; God does not forgive him. The Rulers whom he seeks to please are the men most eager to publish that he put Jesus to death. They by no means admit that he is guiltless. In this case, the voice of the people is the voice of God. Pilate washes his hands in vain; he is not innocent of the blood of this just Man. "Better far to wash our secret souls, not before the people, but in Thy presence, O God. I will not presume to *wash my hands among the innocent*, until I shall have first cried out again and again to Thee, my Lord and my God, *Wash me yet more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.* For, most firmly I believe, my merciful Saviour, the truth of Thy word: *Unless I wash thee, thou shalt have no part with Me.*"

D. *I am innocent of the blood of this just Man.*

"*Attendite.*" Observe to what a fearful extent we can delude our consciences. We see the mote in our brother's eye, yet not the beam in our own (St. Matt. vii.). Pilate considers the Priests guilty of a wicked murder, but himself quite innocent; because *they* have insisted, whereas *he* has only yielded to their malicious will. And, doubtless, their persevering envy and malice and resistance to light is much more criminal even than Pilate's most wicked and unjust weakness. But, on the other hand, his wicked weakness has added to the shame and pain and agony of our Blessed Lord much, very much, besides what the Priests and Rulers had devised.

They had not planned the procession through the

streets in a fool's garment. This is the work of Pilate's wicked weakness.

They had not asked for the competition with Barabbas. This comes of Pilate's wicked weakness.

They had not planned the scourging. It was the wicked weakness of the Governor that said, *I will scourge Him and let Him go.*

They never hoped for a crown of thorns. This barbarity is altogether the outcome of Pilate's wicked weakness.

The Ecce Homo and the appalling cry: *Crucify Him*, was not in their programme. Pilate's wicked weakness has the credit of all this.

Add, too, all the extreme suffering endured by our Lord while being dragged to and fro; up the steps and down the steps, and from tribunal to tribunal—and we shall have some idea of the dark night that can be spread over conscience, seeing how, after all this, Pilate can say solemnly and publicly, *I am innocent.*

"Chastise us not, O Lord, in Thy wrath. Do not say to the Angel of Thy justice, *Blind the heart of this people.*"

Who will say after contemplating Pilate's work that sins of weakness can only be venial sins?

E. *I am innocent, look ye to it.* He sees their guilt, and congratulates himself that he is not like them. With good reason he warns them to *look to it*. But how much easier it is to preach to others than to practise! If he would hearken, Jesus would say to him, "*Physician, cure thyself* (St. Luke iv.). Pilate, be wise; do first thyself what thou teachest: *look thou to it.*"

STATION V.

And the whole people answering, said: His blood be upon us and upon our children (v. 25).

A. *And the whole people answering, said.*

All we like sheep have gone astray. Human respect has at length done its work. St. John, who not only reveals in such full light the Divinity of our Lord, but also gives

many omitted details, and makes some obscurities clear, points out how each new crime begins with the Priests and then spreads to the servants, and thence at last to all the people.

The Chief Priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar.

The Chief Priests and the servants cried out, Crucify Him. Then the people blindly follow the wicked 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.

They all ignore the word: *He that feareth man shall quickly fall. He that trusteth in the Lord shall be set on high* (Prov. xxix.). These thoughts were not the thoughts of that faithful Israelite, Mathathias, the father of Judas Machabeus and his brethren who delivered Israel from the tyranny of Antiochus. *God be merciful to us—this was his thought—it is not profitable to us to forsake the law and the justices of God.—Fear not the words of a sinful man. For his glory is dung and worms. To-day he is lifted up; and to-morrow he shall not be found; because he is returned into his earth: and his thought is come to nothing. You therefore, my sons, take courage: and behave manfully in the law: for by it you shall be glorious* (1 Mach. ii.).

Behave manfully in the law; by it you shall be glorious.

If to-day they would follow this holy counsel and *behave manfully in the law*, Pilate would now be glorious; the Priests and Ancients would be glorious; the people of God would be glorious. But alas, Jerusalem! Alas, Pilate! *These things were hidden from thy eyes!*

B. His blood be upon us and upon our children.

“O vos omnes, attendite.” All you who go by, give 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. *God made man from the beginning and left him in the hand of his own counsel. He*

added His commandments and precepts. That is, God creates us; makes over this earth to our keeping: gives us our free-will; then advises us, and gives us His commandments and precepts, and teaches us most carefully; and hears us most gladly every time we call on Him for guidance and for help; but still leaves our free-will in its full power: *He left him in the hands of his own counsel—He hath set water and fire before thee: stretch forth thy hand to which thou wilt. Before men is life and death; good and evil; that which he shall choose shall be given him* (Ecclus. xv.). Therefore, we must not wash our hands and lay the blame of our sin on God: *For He hath commanded no man to do wickedly: and He hath given no man leave to sin. For He desireth not a multitude of faithless and unprofitable children* (Ecclus. xv.). For reasons infinitely wise, He allows us our free-will; but by counsel, by command, by abundant teaching, by the most persuasive example of Jesus and His Blessed Mother, He leads us on to use our power rightly; but still, according to His covenant, *leaves (man) in the hands of his own counsel.*

C. His blood be upon us and upon our children.

That cry seems to be but a word, a passing word; yet see how the *plébiscite* 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.

D. His blood be upon us and upon our children.

When our Lady shall stand to-day on Calvary by the Rood, doubtless some drops of the most precious Blood will fall upon her; and in her Mother's heart she will pray—oh, so earnestly—in a better sense: “My Son and my God, may Thy Blood be upon me and my children”.

“Blessed Mother, include us sinners in thy prayer: pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

E. *His blood be upon us.*

"Blood of Christ, inebriate us." His Sacred Body is to feed us as our bread and our meat. His Precious Blood is to cheer us, and inebriate us as a heavenly wine. Full of this most blessed wine, not of this world, the faithful disciples of Jesus and His Blessed Mother are not mere slaves who serve God in fear. They are cheerful and joyous givers who have drunk, Lord Jesus, *of the torrent of Thy pleasure* (Psalm xxxv.). *Be not drunk with wine—but be ye filled with the Holy Spirit: speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles: singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord* (Ephes. v.).

F. *His blood be upon us and upon our children.*

We have seen how, a month or two later, they affect to ignore to-day's work, and say with anger to the Apostles: *You have a mind to bring the blood of this Man upon us* (Acts v.).

And yet what can be more thorough than their rejection of Christ Jesus, and their determination that He shall die; and die by the most cruel form of death then known to men?

Not this Man, but Barabbas! Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas.

What shall I do then with Jesus that is called Christ? Let Him be crucified.

Why what evil hath He done? Let Him be crucified.

I will chastise Him and let Him go. Crucify Him, crucify Him.

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 Cæsar. I am innocent of the blood of this just Man. His blood be upon us and upon our children.

"Attendite." We may try, as well as we can, to form some notion of the grief our Lord has in His Heart while He listens to this solemn and final decree against Him.

Even His own Blessed Mother cannot mourn over the death of her only Son as He mourns over the loss of His people. We may dwell on every word of His lamentation, and try to believe firmly that there is not in it one word that is unreal: *My people, what have I done to you? Yet I planted thee a chosen vineyard.—Return, O ye revolting children, saith the Lord, for I am your husband* (Jerem. iii.). *To what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem, that I may comfort thee! Great as the sea is thy destruction. Who shall heal thee?* (Lament. ii.). To His loving Heart, this loss of His people is *great as the sea*. Who shall heal the wound? As God become Man, as a Son of Abraham, of David, and of Holy Mary, He loves His own people infinitely more than Moses loved, when he besought for them: *Either forgive them this trespass, or if Thou do not, strike me out of the book of life* (Exodus xxxii.).

Infinitely, too, more than St. Paul when he declared: *I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ, for my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh* (Romans ix.).

The Jews had an exceptionally strong love for Jerusalem and their native land; and the more faithful they were to God, the more intense was this love of their land of promise. What can go beyond the Psalmist's passionate exclamation: *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten. Let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I make not Jerusalem the beginning of my joy* (Psalm cxxxvi.). In ardent love for Jerusalem and His chosen people, our Blessed Lord goes infinitely beyond all others.

Not because he forgets Jerusalem, but because He cannot forget her (even if the mother should forget her infant). And because He loves His Holy City above all measure, His own right hand shall to-day *be forgotten*; utterly forgotten, ignored, sacrificed, robbed of all its strength, and nailed to the Cross.

Not because He has ceased to *remember* Jerusalem, but because He does *remember*, and cannot forget, and because Jerusalem is *the beginning of His joy*, His tongue shall cleave

to His jaws—thirsty, and dried, and parched, and cold in death.

Fac cor amans Jesu mei, O burning Heart, O Jesu mine,
Fac ut nos amemus Te. Oh, make me love with love like Thine.

"O Blessed Mother! turn thine eyes of mercy towards us, and show us the loving Heart of thy Son Jesus."

STATION VI.

Then therefore he delivered Him to them to be crucified
(St. John xix.).

Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.—Jesus
he delivered up to their will (St. Luke xxiii.).

St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke seem to indicate, as has been already said, that the sentence was pronounced before the scourging; but St. John, writing later, teaches us how to interpret these words.

Pilate gave sentence.

The question is raised whether he gave his judgment in writing or only by word of mouth.

Some writers hold that he wrote the sentence, and that this was the usual practice. We know that he wrote the inscription stating the cause of His death: *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*. Adrichomius, the mediæval traveller so often cited by learned commentators, gives one text of the sentence supposed to have been written by Pilate, but it is considered to be spurious. A pillar is pointed out in Jerusalem, in the *Via dolorosa*, which is called the Pillar of the Sentence: because, it is said, the sentence was, according to custom, affixed to it, but writers who have studied the subject tell us that this tradition does not date far back.

A. Jesus he delivered up to their will.

We must reflect upon our own story. *What is it that hath been done? The same that shall be done.* The scenes in Jerusalem of to-day are, we may say, stereotyped, so easily and so continually are they reproduced.

Jesus is delivered up to our will in the Blessed Sacrament; and moreover, everywhere, and at all times, from morning till night, and from sunset to sunrise, our invisible God is in many ways subjected to our will. What wonder our Lord has left us that golden prayer to be used continu-

ally: *Our Father, may Thy will be done. Thy will, not mine, my God, my Creator, my Father, my King, my Lord, my loving Redeemer.*

B. Jesus he delivered up to their will.

But, our Blessed Saviour cannot complain: *What shall He answer, whereas He Himself hath done it?* It is His own wish to be delivered up to the will of men; His loving desire is that they by treating Him well during their little day of power shall give Him a good plea for treating them for ever in Heaven with infinite love, such as eye hath never seen, nor heart conceived.

May the glory of the Lord endure for ever. The Lord shall rejoice in all His works. I will sing to the Lord as long as I live (Psalm ciii.).

C. Jesus he delivered up to their will.

When Holy Mary gave up her Child Jesus in His Infancy to the keeping of St. Joseph, or into the arms of Holy Simeon, or of some one of her kindred, she knew they would not harm Him. She ought by rights to be able to feel more sure of us now, when He is delivered up to our will. For (1) never has He done anything since then to deserve hard usage from us, and (2) much has He done since then to deserve kind treatment from us.

1. "*Quid enim mali fecit?*"—*What harm hath He done?* This was Pilate's question. There is not in creation a witness to tell of even one that He has harmed. *The bruised reed He shall not break.* This is His short story.

2. But, on the other hand, *many good works*, good works without number He has shown to us, which ought to win us. *He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil.* This is His record during all time past.

And then, if you ask those who have lived with Him, what do they say of Him? Of His character they say: He was ever *gracious, merciful, patient, of much compassion and easy to forgive evil.* They tell that He was *meek and humble of Heart*; and so entirely unselfish that because He loved

His brethren *He betrayed Himself*, and sacrificed Himself for them.

And when He spoke, they tell us, *never did man speak as this Man*. His conversation (had) no bitterness nor His company any tediousness; but joy and gladness (Wisdom viii.). The people quite forgot their hunger and thirst while hanging on His words.

And as for His appearance, He is *beautiful above the sons of men*.

And when His Holy Mother is by His side, you would say, that even for her sake men would pardon Him, even if He had offended grievously, so full of grace is she, inwardly and outwardly. Why, then, should men ill-use Him, when He is delivered up to their will? Alas, wo is me! *The serpent deceived me!* It was Satan that induced me to believe that Jesus is the *austere Man* grievous to behold, *the Censurer of my thoughts*.

It was the father of lies persuaded me to say in my heart, *Away with Him!*

"Ever-Blessed Mother, show us the fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

"Lord Jesus, may Thy name be hallowed; may Thy Kingdom come."

D. *Pilate gave sentence.*

He never had opened his lips to give that sentence had he allowed Jesus to teach him that truth: *With what measure you mete it shall be measured to you*. If he do not by repentance undo to-day's work, he has spoken his own doom. He, too, will be given over to the will of his enemies; enemies more terrible than these malicious Jews.

E. *Pilate gave sentence.*

Some writers tell us that Pilate tried to pronounce the name of Jesus, but could not. This is against St. Matthew, xxiii. 22—*What shall I do with Jesus that is called Christ?*

"O Lord Jesus, may Thy name be hallowed in our hearts."

SCENE VII.

DEPARTURE FROM THE LITHOSTROTOS.

STATION I.

Then therefore he delivered Him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led Him forth (St. John xix. 16).

A. *To be crucified.*

The Priests and Ancients have gained their point. He is *to be crucified*. He *has been* scourged; now He is *to be* crucified. As a chastisement for those not doomed to death, scourging is the most terrible. As a form of death nothing so appalling as crucifixion. Students tell us that when criminals were hanging on their crosses with their feet not much raised from the ground, the wolves and jackals used to come and tear out their bowels: and the crucified gladly welcomed them, so unbearable was the torment and the distress of a lingering death on a cross.

B. *To be crucified.*

Out of all the houses and homes of this world, Jesus chose for His birth the stable of Bethlehem, and for the end of life, out of all the possibilities that are before Him, He selects the scourging, the crown of thorns, and crucifixion. *What is there that I ought to do more for My vineyard?*

"O man, My brother, child of My Father, if My Passion cannot move you to believe that I love, and to hope in Me, and to be sorry for sin, and to break away from Lucifer, what more can I do for you?"

C. *They brought Him forth.*

"*Attendite.*" Watch and listen. *Watch and pray*, in union with Holy Mary, full of grace. Pilate, we may suppose, retires. The Chief Priests and Ancients now press forward and crowd round the Tribunal and give directions. They are in command. Jesus is delivered over to their will.

"Make haste, *do it quickly, lead Him carefully.*" This is more than ever their refrain.

"Do it quickly," they say, "for much time has been wasted by the fickleness of that foolish Governor. We must redeem time lost. Do it quickly, soldiers, we pray you. You shall have your reward."

"Yet, ye Priests and Ancients," some one might answer, "surely, not so. Time has not been lost. For (1) not yet are twelve hours gone by since Jesus became your prisoner, and see how much you have accomplished. You tried and condemned Him as a blasphemer Who makes Himself the Son of God. Your servants mocked Him as a Prophet till He was saturated with outrage. Early this morning you tried and condemned Him again more solemnly as a blasphemer. Then through your management one of His trusted Apostles is gone to hang himself on a tree. And now you have your will. He is to be crucified."

"Moreover, (2) bear this in mind, that much has been added during the morning for which you had not bargained. You did not covenant that He should be mocked by Herod, and paraded as a fool, and publicly by a vote of the people put below Barabbas. You never dreamed of such a scourging, nor of seeing Him crowned, and exhibited from the balcony. You never had a hope of hearing that cry of the whole people backing you: *His blood be upon us!* In fact, never yet in the history of this world has a prisoner in a short time gone through such an amount of terrible chastisement."

No, surely, time has not been lost. For all the watches, all the hours of the night and the day, will now be well filled up by the Passion of Jesus. *Consummatus in brevi!* hunted down and done to death and made an end of in a short time, He has filled up many days, and long days of martyrdom.

"By Thy ordinance, Lord Jesus, this wonderful day hath gone on, and all things have served Thy purpose."

D. *To be crucified.*

Annas is now a greater man than ever among his accomplices. His policy has succeeded wonderfully. *Let our*

strength be the law of justice: for that which is feeble is found to be nothing worth. He is now obeyed promptly: and directs despotically the hasty preparations. "Do it quickly. Bring out at once the cross that is ready. Despatch the trumpeters through the city to make known the judgment. Have the white mules caparisoned, on which the Priests on a solemn occasion like this head the procession. Send quickly a messenger to the prison to see that the other condemned men are ready."

A very short deliberation settles the question: Where shall He die? where be crucified? "Golgotha is near. Golgotha is near. Golgotha is the place where many criminals have suffered. Let Him die there where lie buried the skulls and bones of other criminals. Golgotha, too, is well placed. Round Golgotha there is ample room. Many can see Him die."

"See that the Temple guards be ready to keep the way to Golgotha clear. If need be, add the Governor's soldiers. They may be wanted. We are never secure against the jugglery of this Galilean. Pilate must now do our will. He is bound to keep order."

And so, Golgotha is selected—because Jesus Himself has selected to die on Calvary. It is by Thy ordinance, Lord Jesus, that this day goes on.

But, alas! at the same time, alas! miserable Rulers, *it is your hour and the power of darkness.*

"O God, our Father, *from them that resist Thy right hand keep me, as the apple of Thy eye* (Psalm xvi.). Be Thou my Guide and Counsellor, that my words and works may begin from Thee, and by Thee be happily ended."

STATION II.

And after they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own garments on Him (St. Mark xv. 20).

After they had mocked Him.

We have seen above that St. Matthew and St. Mark, according to their common practice, do not arrange events in strict

chronological order. They narrate the important incidents, but do not set them down in the exact order in which they happened. Thus here, St. Mark writes: *Pilate being willing to satisfy the people, released to them Barabbas, and delivered up Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified.* There is nothing in this account contradictory to St. John's story which we are following; but St. John states more clearly the order of events: that the scourging and mocking came before the sentence of death, not after.

A. *They took off the purple from Him, and put His own garments on Him.*

"Attendite."—"Oh, give heed." The words, *They took off*, and *they put on*, are soon written, and soon read, and soon forgotten; but can we quickly realise all the suffering our Blessed Lord endures while they take off the purple, and put on His own clothes? The mantle has become embedded in His wounds. It must be torn out of them. The woven tunic without seam, must then be drawn over His Sacred Head. The crown of thorns must be taken off, and then again fitted and fixed on His wounded and aching Head. For the commonly received opinion is that He wore the crown till death. In one copy of the sentence supposed by some to have been written by Pilate it is enjoined that in His crucifixion there shall be introduced some mockery of His pretended royalty.

We must think also of the torment our Lord endures while He is being dragged from side to side, and the tunic and His other garments are being pressed into *the wounds and bruises and swelling sores, which are not dressed, nor bound up, nor fomented with oil.*

What have you come out to see? He says to us, as we contemplate. *A man clothed with soft garments? A man clothed in purple and fine linen? Behold they are in the houses of kings.* But *the chastisement of (their) peace is on Him.*

B. *They put His own garments on Him.*

The Priests and Ancients wish this that the people may better recognise Him. The soldiers too wish it, for then the clothes will fall to them. He, too, wishes to go to death in the garment His Blessed Mother wove for Him.

In Catholic lands and Catholic days it was a widespread wish among the faithful to die in the blessed habit of the Mother of God, or at least not to be without her scapular in the last moments.

C. *They put His own garments on Him.*

Once more we may contemplate the humble obedience of Holy Mary. It would be consolation unspeakable to her to do with her tenderness and *the counsel of her hands*, what the soldiers are doing with so much cruelty, but she remains faithful to God's holy will and stirs not her hand.

Our Blessed Lord, too, remembers, and never forgets, all the affection and devotion wherewith she clothed Him in His childhood. It is a solace to Him to be dressed again in the tunic she made for Him. He values it, He reverences it because it is her gift. *Fac cor amans*: Do this for us, most loving Heart of Jesus, cast fire into our cold hearts, that we may think more of our God Who gives than of the creatures which He gives.

D. *They put His own garments on Him.*

And if we will listen, He will turn to us and say: "Remember Me, and for My sake, *when thou shalt see one naked, cover him: and do not despise thy own flesh. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall hear: Thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am*" (Isaiah lviii.).

STATION III.

And there were also two other malefactors led with Him to be put to death (St. Luke xxiii. 32).

A. In Heaven the Eternal Father decrees that these malefactors shall die with Jesus; for on Calvary, death, no matter how penal, or how well-deserved, is to be made quite new—the sting of death is to be taken away. It is written: *He shall be reputed with the wicked* (Isaiah liii.). And the Evangelist tells us that this prophecy is fulfilled in the hour when He is led out to death with the two wicked robbers.

On earth also, we may doubtless assume, the Priests and Ancients are glad that the people shall see Jesus crucified as a malefactor among malefactors. It is probably at their suggestion that they die to-day. In time to come, Herod will keep Peter in prison and not put him to death till after the Pasch. These two malefactors may also be respited, if the Rulers do not petition for their execution to-day. The Chief Priests therefore remind the Governor of the two waiting in the dungeon for death.

One of the apocryphal sentences supposed to be dictated by Pilate, enjoins especially that He is to be thus united *with the wicked*. It runs thus: "Jesus Christ, Thy own people and Thy Priests have delivered Thee to me, averring that Thou hast wished to usurp sovereignty over the Jews, whereas they have no King but Cæsar. Since, then, Thou hast done this in defiance of the decrees of the Roman Emperor, I therefore sentence Thee to undergo to-day on Mount Calvary, death on the gibbet of the Cross. Likewise I sentence to death, along with Thee, the two robbers, Dismas and Gesmas; Dismas to be on Thy right hand, Gesmas on the left, but Thou in the centre."

B. There were two other malefactors.

Jesus will certainly not object to this arrangement, *whereas He Himself has done it* (Isaias xxxviii.). Long ago, He has earned this reproach from these Rulers: *Behold the Man that is a glutton and a wine-drinker; a friend of publicans and sinners*. You are giving Him a great consolation, Priests and Ancients, though you know it not. For He is the Good Shepherd, Who loves to go after *a lost sheep, and to seek and to save that which was lost*. He is well content with you for putting Him between two malefactors, that so He may find His opportunity: "*I will seek that which was lost; that which was driven away I will bring back. I will bind up that which was broken. Do it quickly. Bring Dismas to My side, and Gesmas, that I may die with them and for them.*"

And Holy Mary, too, is beginning what is to be her special task: she is pleading with her Mother's heart for the condemned malefactors, that they may have a grace through the death of her Son to die the death of the just.

C. There were two other malefactors.

Where are they meanwhile? They are writhing and howling in the dungeon, under the Roman lash. *Væ victis!* Wo to the conquered! Wo to the fallen! Let those who proclaim that the Gospel of Christ has done nothing for men, go back in spirit to the dungeons of the pagan world. For though we may be far from the perfection of the glorious Gospel of peace, yet the Holy Church has so leavened mankind, that to a great extent cruelty to the fallen is proscribed. If the criminal is to die, death is not to be aggravated. *Such a one is not to be swallowed up with over-much sorrow* (2 Cor. ii.). Death is to be so tempered with Christian charity, that the criminal shall be changed into a holy penitent.

Crucifixion is of all deaths the most terrible; and yet the condemned man is to be tortured first by the lash, as a preparation for worse and intolerable torment.

Possibly, however, as all is to be done quickly, the two malefactors are less *shamefully torn* by the scourge than they would have been otherwise.

D. There were two malefactors.

Full of compassion and charity, Jesus awaits them, and the Blessed Mother, too, is waiting, full of pity for them. But they have no welcome for Him or for her. As they come forth into the Lithostrotos, bound and chained, and haggard and begrimed, and with the filth of the dungeon upon them, little pleased are their eyes to rest on Jesus of Nazareth. Their flesh is quivering with pain, and He the Seducer, so they imagine, is the cause. But for Him and His crimes they would not have to die to-day. They would stand reprieved. Who knows? They might later be set free. Poor unhappy, hopeless men: to them death and *departure* from the world is sheer *misery*,

and their going away is *utter destruction* (Wisdom iii.). What wonder that they are bitter, and more sore in mind than in body? Truly they are scandalised in Him to-day; and therefore is His most tender Heart pleading with *groanings unspeakable* for them, and He is inspiring His Holy Mother to use her powerful intercession for them.

STATION IV.

And bearing His own Cross, He went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha (St. John xix. 17).

A. Bearing His own Cross.

Was this a new torment devised specially for Him? Scholars tell us that sometimes, when there was a fixed place for execution, the crosses were stationary; but when this was not the case, the condemned criminal was made to carry his own Cross. Be this as it may, Jesus might well, in His present state of exhaustion, be exempted. By right, according to natural laws, He ought not to be alive to walk to Calvary.

"*Attendite.*" Remember last night how, in the Garden, *knowing all things that should come on Him, He went forth.* He knew then what is going to be done to Him now. The holy Cross, we are told, is fifteen feet in length, the transverse beam eight feet long. And to one of His faithful servants it was made known that none of His many wounds during the Sacred Passion was so painful as the wound made on His mangled shoulder by the weight of the heavy Cross.

"*Attendite.*" Mark how the Blessed Mother watches and notes how heavily and with what heartlessness they let the weight come down on His *wounds, bruises, and swelling sores, not bound up, nor dressed, nor fomented with oil.*

B. Bearing His own Cross.

Does He, before it is laid on His shoulder, devoutly kiss the holy Rood? What His Apostle afterwards felt and expressed, is only a very feeble echo of what is passing in our Lord's Heart: "O holy Cross! with desire long

desired!" And with His Heart is joined His Blessed Mother's. She too is saying most devoutly: "O holy Cross! O blessed Cross! thrice welcome!" Truly, *the Mother was to be admired above measure, and worthy to be remembered by good men, joining a man's heart to a woman's thought* (2 Mach. vii.).

C. Bearing His own Cross.

How dear, how precious was the ark to those sheltered within it, when all flesh was perishing in the Flood! The holy Cross is our salvation from the flood. Our Saviour knows it. Holy Mary knows it. Long ago in their cottage He told her all His secret, and she understood all the loveliness and glory of the holy Cross.

D. Bearing His own Cross.

The blessed angels now understand what was meant by that ladder of theirs—the *ladder standing on the earth, and the top thereof touching Heaven; and the Lord leaning on the ladder, as they went up and down* (Genesis xxviii.).

The holy Cross is the ladder that reaches from earth to Heaven. By it the angels bring graces down to us. By it they take up to God the souls in their keeping. And the Eternal Father is ever, we may say, bent down, and *leaning on this ladder*, and gazing on it with ineffable delight.

E. He went forth, bearing His own Cross.

All is now ready. The Priests are mounted on their mules to lead the way. The Centurion has been appointed to take command. The trumpeters have begun to sound the funeral knell of the condemned. The Masters of this most holy ceremony have quickly arranged the order of the march.

Heavily laden though He be with His Cross, Jesus has not only His own clothes again upon Him, but also His chains and bonds. For "it is most necessary," the Priests again and again repeat to the guards, "most necessary to *lead Him carefully*:" so often and often He has by magic arts escaped. Otherwise long ago they would have put an end to His seduction of the people."

The two chains that hang from His neck are in the hands of strong men, and others hold the ropes that bind Him. Others, again, come to show Him the nails and hammers that they have ready for Him. His Heart is welcoming every chain and every bond and all the nails. For He knows well, how these chains and bonds and nails will *loose the bonds of wickedness, and let them that are broken go free*; and how the weight upon His shoulders shall *undo the burdens that oppress, and break asunder every burden* (Isaia's lvi.).

F. Bearing His own Cross.

He that sat on the throne, said: Behold, I make all things new (Apoc. xxi.). *He that sat on the throne* is Jesus, God made man. To-day He is bringing about the greatest, the grandest, the most glorious revolution that ever has been, or shall be. Everything is made new. Till now the Cross has been infamy and torture beyond endurance.

Accursed is he of God that hangeth on a tree (Deut. xxi.). But that Prophet who saw so clearly in vision the details of the Passion, that he writes as if an eye-witness of them all, holds very different language: *A child is born to us, he says; a Son is given to us; the Government (Empire) is upon His shoulder* (Isaia's ix.).

Government is upon His shoulder: for the Cross is the great weapon by which Jesus conquers Satan and wins empire. David went out against Goliath with his sling, and the five round stones in his scrip. Our Lord wins His great victory to-day through His Cross and His Five Wounds.

The Cross, we may say, is the great ally that helps Him to Sovereignty. *Ought not* (He said a few days later), *ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?* (St. Luke xxiv.).

Again, the Cross on His shoulders may be called *Government*, or *Empire*, because it is to-day our Lord's throne, and the throne is an emblem of royalty. *Regnavit a ligno Deus*, Holy Church sings: "It is from the tree that God reigns"

He Himself taught us the same truth when He said on Palm Sunday: *I, if I be lifted up, shall draw all things to Myself*. It is from His Cross that He is to win all hearts, and to reign in them.

G. Bearing His own Cross.

While, then, we contemplate our Lord with His Cross laid upon Him—*Empire upon His shoulder*—we may find heavenly nourishment and light by dwelling on the titles which the inspired Prophet gives to Him when he sees Him thus in his vision, *with Government upon His shoulder*.

His name shall be called Wonderful. What so wonderful as He is to-day? So helpless and so almighty! so disfigured, and so beautiful above all the sons of men! so poor, and yet *possessing all things, and enriching many!*

Counsellor. Who advises us so prudently as Jesus under His Cross? He counsels forgiveness of injuries, and He advises us not to believe that sufferings are a curse, and pleasures our Heaven. He warns us most tenderly: *My little flock, do not love the world*.

God the mighty. For to-day His Blessed Mother is repeating every hour: "*Fecit potentiam in brachio suo*". He is putting forth the might of His arm, and He is revealing all the ineffable power of His meekness and patience. In another sense, the Holy Spirit has said: *The mighty shall be mightily tormented*: but to-day also, He that is mighty, most mighty in His endurance, *is mightily tormented*. All the power of hell is exerted against Him, and exerted only to be conquered.

The Father of the world to come. He is to-day creating a new world: *making all things new*.

The Prince of Peace. For to-day He is teaching us what true peace is, and is winning peace for all men of good-will.

H. Bearing His own Cross.

Of Abraham we read: *He said to his young men, I and the boy will go with speed as far as yonder. And he took the wood for the holocaust, and laid it upon Isaac, his son, and*

he himself carried in his hands fire and a sword. Isaac said to his father, *My father. And he answered, What wilt thou, son? Behold, saith he, fire and wood. Where is the victim for the holocaust? And Abraham said, God will provide Himself a victim, my son. So they went on together (Gen. xxii.).*

This is only a prophetic picture. To-day we see the reality.

God has provided Himself a victim. His Divine Son said, *A Body Thou hast fitted to Me: Behold I come.* And now, united with His Eternal Father, *with speed He is going yonder, to the mount which the Eternal Father has shown to Him. And His Father has laid the wood on Him, and He asks no questions about the Victim, for He knows all, "Jesus tacebat".* Neither does the Blessed Mother ask, *Where is the Victim for the holocaust?* For she too knows all.

I. Bearing His own Cross.

When Sobna who is over the Temple was deposed, God said, by His Prophet: *I will call Eliacim; I will clothe him with thy robe, and will give thy power into his hand, and he shall be as a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Juda. And I will lay the key of the house of David on his shoulder, and he shall open and none shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open (Isaias xxii.).*

Eliacim is a type. To-day the ancient High Priest is rejected. The new High Priest according to the order of Melchisedech enters into possession, and is about to offer the Everlasting Sacrifice.

The key of the house of David (is laid) on His shoulder. When gates were large, and the keys heavy, the gatekeeper used to carry the keys on his shoulder. The keys are another emblem of power and royalty. Our Blessed Lord has said already, *I am the door of the sheep. By Me if any man enter he shall be saved.* He is both door and doorkeeper. *He shall shut and none shall open, He shall open and none shall shut.*

His Holy Cross is the great key that opens Heaven. Suffering brought the Prodigal home to his father. The Cross to-day opens Heaven for St. Dismas.

"We adore Thee, Lord Jesus, and we bless Thee, because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world."

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas,
Cordi meo valide.

Oh, do this for me, Mother blest,
Deeply engrave within my breast
The Cross and wounds of thy dear Son.

Bearing His own Cross, He went forth.

I. Calvary, or Golgotha, lies due west of the Prætorium, at a distance of about three-quarters of a mile. But the nature of the ground makes the *Via dolorosa* long and weary indeed to one in the condition of our Saviour. Jerusalem, as has been already said, is traversed from south to north by a very narrow valley or gorge, of which the southern part is called Tyropæon, and the northern, though only a continuation of the Tyropæon, is called the Broad Ravine. We may consider the two as one continuous valley, or ravine, dividing the city from north to south. As it is a deep valley, and is very narrow, carriages cannot pass at all from east to west. The very few carriage-roads in Jerusalem run from north to south.

Those making the Way of the Cross start from the Prætorium westward, and go down an incline into the valley, and then up a longer and steeper ascent to Golgotha. The streets leading from the bottom of the Tyropæon Ravine to Calvary are now like a flight of broad steps, or small terraces. Horses and donkeys and camels can go by them, but no wheeled vehicles.

These steps that lead from the bottom of the ravine to Calvary are about one hundred and thirty in number. As after the siege much rubbish from the ruins lay piled up in the streets, the ravine may have been on the first Good Friday deeper than it is now.

The Way of Sorrow, then, lay for our Lord down one incline and then up another, which is long and steep, and paved, probably, with large rough stones.

II. By referring to some old maps, we see that the Way of the Cross which pilgrims now follow does not exactly correspond with the *Via dolorosa* as traced on them. One cause of the deviation is that buildings have been erected which necessitated a change of route. In the old maps the *Via dolorosa*, when the Judgment Gate is reached, turns to the north.

At present after passing what is now called the Judgment Gate, the Way of the Cross bends rather to the south.

The well-known architect, Mr. Schick, by birth a Swiss, and now advanced in years, who has been for forty years employed on buildings in Jerusalem, as his father was before him, and is probably better acquainted than any other living man with the topography of ancient Jerusalem, though not himself a Catholic, and much consulted by modern explorers who are zealously propagating novel theories concerning the holy places, yet alto-

gether adheres to the Catholic tradition respecting the site of Golgotha. He explains the discrepancy between the route of the present *Via dolorosa* and the more ancient one, by saying that the gate now called the Judgment Gate is not really the gate through which our Lord passed. He points out the remains of another ancient gateway that have been discovered more to the south, in a building which has been secured, along with so much other property, by the Russians, and he maintains that there stood the Judgment Gate. In this he comes nearer to the old map of the mediæval traveller, Adrichomius, who is considered by the commentators a trustworthy authority.

III. The Stations of the Cross as we have them now are not exactly in the same order as we find in some old books, which make Simon of Cyrene take up the Cross outside the gate, but they do agree with the order set down by Adrichomius, who gives with great accuracy the distance from Station to Station.¹ I. From the Judgment-Seat (Station I.) to the spot where the Cross was laid on our Lord (Station II.), 60 feet. II. Thence to the spot where He first fell (Station III.), 180 feet. III. Thence to Station IV., where His Blessed Mother met Him, 140 feet. IV. Thence to Station V., where Simon took the Cross, 163 feet. V. Thence to Station VI., at the house of Veronica, 435 feet. VI. Thence to the Judicial Gate, where He fell the second time (Station VII.), 763 feet. VII. Thence northward along a rough and stony ascent to cross roads, where the daughters of Jerusalem waited (Station VIII.), 803 feet. VIII. Thence to the foot of Calvary, where He fell the third time (Station IX.), 410 feet. IX. Thence to the spot where He was stripped (Station X.), 41 feet. X. Thence to the spot where He was crucified (Station XI.), 27 feet. XI. Thence to the spot where the Cross was fixed in the rock (Station XII.), 28 feet. In all, from the Prætorium to Calvary, 3050 feet.

As measures vary in different countries, Adrichomius draws a line to represent one-fourth of a foot, according to the measure which he follows.

▲—————B

This line will be found to be about one-eighth of an inch less than a quarter of a foot by our measure. If his measuring differs from that of some modern writers, one explanation may be that the way of the Cross did not in his day lie along the same route as at present. (See the map of Adrichomius.)

Such details as these will not be deemed trivial by those who love St. Ignatius of Loyola, and value his method of contemplation. He encourages us to be realistic in our contemplations, to find out the length of the roads by which our Lord travels, and whether they are hilly or level, and the rest. The Holy Ghost says that he who *fears God neglects nothing*. Love values detail, even more than fear does.

¹ This measurement of Adrichomius differs much from modern measurements.

SCENE VIII.

THE VIA DOLOROSA.

STATION I.

Bearing His own Cross He went forth (St. John xix.).
And there were also two other malefactors led with Him to be put to death. And there followed Him a great multitude of people, and of women who lamented Him (St. Luke xxiii.).

A. He went forth.

The procession moves westward, through the gate of the Lithostrotos, into the large forum, or square, which lies outside the northern wall of the city; then it immediately turns to the south, and enters the city through a gate in the northern wall; then turns again westward, down the incline into the ravine.

Our Blessed Lord has only gone down the incline about sixty-six yards when He falls to the ground. He has perchance been commanded to hold the Cross with His hands, to keep it from falling, and in that position they may have been tied to the wood.

As He falls, then, on the incline, He has no protection from His hands or arms. His sacred face once more strikes heavily against the rough pavement. We are told that at each of these falls blood is forced from His nostrils and His mouth, and His teeth are loosened.

With what moderation, how very much below the truth the inspired Prophet writes: *Wounds, bruises, and swelling sores, and they are not dressed, nor bound up, nor fomented with oil.*

Who but Himself and His Blessed Mother understands what the shock of the fall does to each of the six thousand wounds upon His Body? *Who understands sin?* the Psalmist asks. "O my children," our Blessed Lady may add, "who understands the pain that sins are bringing

to my Son Jesus?" *The chastisement of our peace is upon Him. By His bruises we are healed.*

B. *He went forth.*

Our Lord saw Lucifer fall out of Heaven. *How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer?* the Prophet asks. We know the answer. *Thou saidst in thy heart, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High* (Isaiah xiv.). Afterwards our Lord heard Lucifer persuade Adam to sin by this word: *You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* As, then, the angels fell through a wish to be like to God, and man fell through the same wish, Jesus, God and Man, falls to the ground that we may be able to gratify our wish of being like to God. Look at Him on the ground; *look, and do according to the Model.*

St. Francis of Assisi, when he saw one of his disciples brought to ruin by pride, cast himself on the ground and lay there saying, "Nowhere else is man safe".

Man placed in honour hath not understood (Psalm xlviii.).

Ever-Blessed Mother, it was on thy humility that the Son of God looked down from Heaven when He became *desirous of thy beauty*, and made choice of thee. Pray for us sinners, that through life our one fixed choice may be, through all the changes of this changing world, to remain ever in humility God's servants. *I am Thy servant, O Lord, thy servant, and the son of Thy handmaid* (Psalm cxv.).

STATION II.

He went forth, and there followed Him a great multitude
(St. Luke xxiii.; St. John xix.).

A. Tradition tells us that St. John led the Blessed Mother by a shorter way down the incline to the main road running from north to south along the ravine. At the point where the road from the Prætorium joins, at right angles, this main road from the north, there have been discovered the ruins of an ancient church, supposed to have been built by St. Helen in memory of the meeting

of our Lord and His Blessed Mother. It has been sometimes called the Church dello Spasmo, because some writers thought that our Lady swooned away at this meeting. As we have seen, however, eminent theologians strongly condemn the notion that the Blessed Mother ever, at any time, lost consciousness during the Sacred Passion. They hold that, as the Second Eve, she must have shared, by the side of her Son, in every scene of the great conflict.

B. *Carrying His Cross, He went forth.*

Other writers represent her speaking gently to some of the soldiers, praying them to be merciful to her Son. Perchance some meek word from her may have softened the heart of the Centurion, to whom grace came to-day.

Simeon foretold to her that on this day, *out of many hearts different thoughts would be revealed* concerning her, as well as concerning her Divine Son. Accordingly, some here present, we are told, respect her, and allow her to draw near to Jesus, to kiss His wounded and disfigured face. Others blaspheme, and ask her why she so badly brought up this wicked Son; and hold up before her eyes the nails that they have ready for Him.

David in his grief could only sob out the words: *Absalom my son! my son Absalom! Ear hath not heard the cry of Holy Mary's sorrowful heart: "My Son Jesus! Jesus my Son, my God, my all!"* And perchance she says, too, a beseeching word to move them not to punish Him for falling under the Cross; not to strike Him so heavily; not to tear out the hairs of His Head in lifting Him. And some hearken, and others scoff. *Out of many hearts thoughts are revealed.*

"Mary, full of grace! blessed among women! blessed, thrice blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

STATION III.

As they led Him away, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, the father of Alexander and of Rufus, coming from the country. They laid hold of Simon; and him they forced to take up His Cross. They laid the Cross on him to carry after Jesus (St. Matt. xxvii.; St. Mark xv.; St. Luke xxiii.).

I. *They found a man of Cyrene.*

There were two towns of this name, one in Africa. It is conjectured by some students that this Simon may have been an African negro, and that this was one reason why he is lawlessly compelled to carry the Cross. These writers add a second conjecture, that the *Simon who was called Niger*, mentioned in the Acts (c. xiii.) as one of the Prophets and Doctors of Antioch, may have been this Simon of Cyrene. No one seems to doubt that he received the grace of faith in return for the service he renders to-day. His sons, Alexander and Rufus, seem to be mentioned by St. Mark as well-known disciples. Tradition tells us that they were all three afterwards consecrated Bishops in Spain by St. James.

II. It has been said above, that the *Via Dolorosa*, coming from the Prætorium, enters at a right angle into the main street running from north to south down the ravine, close to the spot where the meeting with our Blessed Lady takes place. Thence it goes southward for a short distance down the main street, almost to the site where the house of Dives is supposed to have stood. There it turns again to the west, and begins to ascend by broad steps, or terraces, till it reaches an ancient gate, now called the Judicial Gate. In the old maps this portion of the Way of the Cross runs in the same direction, as at present, from east to west; but somewhat more to the south than now.

III. At the point where the *Via Dolorosa* leaves the main street from the north and turns again westward, the procession, according to tradition, meets Simon, *coming from the country*, possibly from the Judicial Gate, to which they are going. The words of St. Matthew: *GOING OUT, they found a man*, are interpreted by some writers as meaning that they had reached the city gate when they met Simon, but the common opinion is that they were still within the walls. St. John uses the same word: *He went forth*, at the first starting from the Prætorium.

A. *They laid hold of him, and forced him to take up the Cross.*

This is the first instance we find of a desire to give some relief to Jesus. Whence comes this consideration? What is the motive? The heavy fall of our Lord under

the Cross, and the delay caused by it, have irritated the Priests and Ancients, who are in feverish haste, and always in terror that He may effect His escape. Another fear has also come to them. His strength may fail. He may die before they can reach Golgotha. This would be a grievous disappointment: for He must be crucified. *Let Him be crucified!* has been their persevering demand. It is not then their compassion, but a merciless policy that suggests this alleviation.

What is it that hath been done? The same that shall be done.

Many things men still do which seem to the eye like kindness. Gifts are given, and honeyed words are multiplied; and this is called affection and love, but in the end it is manifest that *with their tongues they acted deceitfully*. *The poison of asps is under their lips*, and the miserable gifts are worse than the price of blood; they are the *commutation* for the innocence of the immortal soul; an exchange for the everlasting companionship with God in Heaven.

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, forgive us our trespasses, lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil. Amen.

B. *They laid the Cross on him to carry after Jesus.*

Men, therefore, lay the Cross on Simon through a cruel wish that Jesus may survive to hang thereon; but, as has been said, the providence of the Eternal Father is always overruling every detail of the Sacred Passion, and with an everlasting charity has arranged that Simon shall thus carry the Cross.

We may observe that St. Luke emphasises the fact that *they laid the Cross on him TO CARRY AFTER JESUS*. For our Blessed Lord had said in time past: *If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross daily and follow Me* (St. Luke ix.). *And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple* (St. Luke xiv.).

This scene, then, is planned in Heaven that we may ever have it before us. Our blessed Angel, if we only listen, will cry daily to us: *Look, and do according to the model*. If we will make leisure and contemplate Simon

thus walking after Jesus and carrying the Cross, virtue will come out to us and help us to carry our own cross patiently, and not only patiently, but gratefully and with gladness.

Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.

They forced him to take up the Cross. They laid the Cross on him to carry after Jesus.

The question is discussed: Did our Lord Himself still continue to carry the Cross? Did Simon merely walk after Jesus, and lift up the part of the Cross that was trailing on the ground? Or was Jesus relieved entirely from the weight, and was the Cross laid on him?

Some writers and some painters adopt the opinion that Simon only gave partial relief, by lifting the Cross still carried by our Saviour.

But (1) would this be a relief? or rather throw the weight more upon the shoulders of our Lord? (2) Do not the words of St. Luke settle the question: *They laid the Cross on him to carry after Jesus?* This is a literal translation from the Greek and Latin; and the words would not be verified if Simon only lifted the hinder part of the Cross.

C. *They laid the Cross on him.*

Devout writers tell us, and it seems very probable, that at first Simon felt much aggrieved at the injustice done him; but afterwards, helped by Divine grace, found his burden light and the yoke sweet.

We may contemplate our Blessed Lord's pity for him, and our Lady's also, and think with what tenderness they pray that great grace may come to him.

It is one instance more added to countless others, to show how our most bountiful Lord gives the poor wine first, and the best afterward. He begins by asking some sacrifice, and then repays the sacrifice with a shower of priceless graces.

D. *They laid the Cross on him to carry after Jesus.*

Abimelech, we read, when about to attack the town of Sichem, *taking an axe cut down the bough of a tree, and laying it on his shoulder and carrying it, he said to his companions: What you see me do, do you out of hand. So they cut down*

branches from the trees, every man as fast as he could, and followed their leader (Judges ix.).

In sorrow our Saviour said that the *children of this world are more prudent than the children of light. More prudent*, yes, and often more loyal to their leaders. How much His sorrowing Heart would be consoled if when He says to us most earnestly: *Take up your cross and follow Me, each of us as fast as he could* took up the sacred burden and followed (our) Leader.—*The sons of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, have constantly kept the commandment of their father, which he commanded them, but this people hath not obeyed Me (Jerem. xxxv.).*

E. *They laid the Cross on him to carry after Jesus.*

In after years, the disciples, doubtless, venerated Simon, and pointed him out as the privileged man who carried the Cross. May we then have grace to understand, when some suffering comes, that it is the very Heart of our Lord which has planned for us, that we shall be allowed to help Him by carrying His Cross with Him and for Him. *I fill up, St. Paul writes, those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh (Coloss. i.).*

No position is so honourable as that of helping our Lord to carry His Cross. If by some other arrangement we had been redeemed without ourselves contributing anything towards it, our state would be immeasurably less high and holy and glorious than it is now. For then we should not be made like to Christ—*conformable to the image of God's Son*. Now He has purposely left some part of the work of redemption undone which each of us is allowed to do; so that every one may become His partner, and like to Him, a Christ, and a Jesus, His brother, and His bride.

"O Ever-Blessed Mother, obtain for us grace to lay up in our hearts, after thy example, this scene of the holy Passion, that we may help thy Divine Son and carry His Cross, not in sadness, but in gratitude and joy."

STATION IV.

VERONICA.

And there followed Him a great multitude (St. Luke xxiii. 27).

A. *Do it quickly.* They are hurrying on with much tumult, and writers who have collected the sacred details from all the sources within reach, tell us that as our Saviour is dragged painfully along, men and even little children are encouraged to cast stones at Him, and to throw dirt upon His sacred face. The Evangelist tells us that the cry: *His blood be upon us, came from the whole people.*

My friends and My neighbours have drawn near, and stood against Me; and they that were near Me stood afar off; and they that sought My Soul used violence. But I as a deaf man heard not: and as a dumb man not opening My mouth (Psalm xxxvii.).

Contemplate our Saviour's grief when His own beloved children (His first-fruits) are taken from Him, and alienated. As if a deaf man, He will not hear the blasphemies, which they echo without understanding them. As a dumb man, He answers not one word of reproach, but His Heart finds excuses and prays for them. But still, we must always keep in mind the words He uttered in time past: *Wo to those by whom the scandal cometh.* He that shall by example, by bad teaching, by neglect, *scandalise one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a mill-stone be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea* (St. Matt. xviii.).

There followed Him a great multitude.

I. Tradition tells us that Veronica was standing at her door waiting for the Master, and that when He passed she boldly ran into the midst of the soldiers, and presented a napkin to wipe the filth and blood from His Face, and that our Blessed Saviour with great gratitude accepted her service, and left impressed on the cloth the image of His sacred Face.

II. We are told, too, that there were three folds of this linen cloth: and that the impression was found on each of them; and consequently that this sacred image was preserved as a precious relic in three different countries: in Spain, in Jerusalem, and at Rome.

III. Some writers derive the name of this holy woman from the Latin word *verum* (true) and the Greek word *εἰκόν* (image): but this derivation is rejected by scholars, as it is quite unusual to find a name made up of a medley of Latin and Greek. They are of opinion that in her own country she bore the ordinary name of Berenice; and that this name was in other lands changed to Veronica.

IV. We are told, that she was very intimate with our Lady, and very dear to her. A very early chronicler states that she was the woman cured by our Lord of the issue of blood; that she afterwards went to Rome with St. Peter, and from thence, by his direction, passed into Gaul, with St. Martial, and with her husband, St. Amator. This Amator is supposed by some to have been Zacheus of Jericho. Subsequently, it is said, she went back to Rome with her treasure, and there ended her days.

B. Contemplate the holy courage of Veronica. We know how the rage of the Priests and Ancients had burst forth heretofore upon all who took the part of Jesus. Their frenzy is now at its height; wo to those who resist or gain-say it! And besides, she sees the pitiless guards with their swords ready, and their spears. *But love is strong as death.*

Moreover, though our Blessed Saviour does not choose to protect Himself, but delivers Himself up for us; still He can and will protect her.

"Passion of Christ, strengthen us, with that strength which comes from love of Thee."

C. Think how greatly our Saviour is comforted by this outburst of compassion. With what solicitude He gives His blessed angels a charge over Veronica. The guards permit her to come near to Him; and He Who will not allow the blessed angels to give Him help, readily accepts her services, and at once repays her charity with a great increase of grace.

Tears come from His sacred eyes. He is as if taken by surprise. *My Heart, He says, hath expected misery and reproach, and lo! unexpected love is come to Him and fills Him with emotion and gratitude.*

Now, too, in our day *we* are privileged. *We are*

permitted to do work for Christ which angels would gladly do but may not.

D. Mark, too, how faithful our Saviour is to His word: *Give, and it shall be given to you in good measure.* When the linen cloth has served Him and wiped away the dirt that disfigures His face, she has it again; she has not given it away, but only lent it to Jesus; and lo! it returns with good interest. When she lends it, it is a poor linen cloth; it comes back a portrait more priceless than all that man's hand has ever painted throughout the ages.

Glorify the Lord as much as ever you can: for He will yet exceed; and His magnificence is wonderful. Blessing the Lord, exalt Him all you can: for He is above all praise (Ecclus. xliii.). He said, and (it) was made. He commanded and (it) was created.

E. We must turn, too, to the Blessed Mother, who is near—a more perfect image immeasurably, and more beautiful, of her Divine Son. He in His humility of Heart said to His disciples: *The works that I do, and greater than these, shall you do.* And she now, who may not nurse Him, nor bind up one of His wounds, nor foment them with oil, has no sore jealousy because Veronica is so privileged, but is consoled unspeakably because there is one to love her Son.

F. And then, too, if we are looking with a holy envy at Veronica, the Blessed Mother says to us most earnestly: *Sursum corda.* You need not envy her. In the Most Holy Eucharist you have a treasure better than Veronica's. If the image of my Son is precious, know that He Himself is better than His image."

G. When the devout woman in the crowd cried out: *Blessed the womb that bore Thee:* He put a still higher thought into her mind: *Yea, rather, blessed they who hear the word of God and keep it* (St. Luke xi.). So now to us His Heart is saying: "Do not stand gazing on Veronica. For you can set Me as a seal on your heart; as a seal on your arm. Blessed shall you be indeed if My image is in

your heart. Thrice blessed if the image of My meekness, and My charity is stamped, too, on your outward demeanour. For so shall it come to pass that you will draw more hearts to Me than Veronica did with her treasure."

H. And we may try, too, to measure the consolation and astonishment and gratitude and increased love of Veronica when her eyes discover her reward.

The housewife in the Gospel calls her neighbours to be glad with her when she has found her groat. What will be Veronica's feeling when to-night she unfolds the linen cloth to show it to the Blessed Mother and to Magdalen and the others?

"Happy Saint, obtain for us a share of thy gratitude and love; for He that is mighty has done to us even greater things than this."

STATION V.

AT THE JUDGMENT GATE.

He went forth, and there followed Him a great multitude
(St. Luke xxiii.; St. John xix.).

A. *He went forth.*

This gate is called the Judgment Gate because it leads to the place of execution.

The bodies of those beasts, St. Paul writes, whose blood is brought into the Holies, by the High Priest for sin, are burned without the camp. This was the old Levitical law. Wherefore, he adds, *Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, suffered without the gate* (Hebrews xiii.).

"*Attendite.*" Look, and listen, and give heed. For our Blessed Saviour is leaving His Holy City for the last time. He is never again to return through this gate. Not without reason is He once more cast down heavily on the pavement; with all His wounds renewed, and new bruises and new streams of blood covering His sacred face.

O all you who pass by, His Heart is saying to us, stay a little while, and see if there be sorrow like to My sorrow

Touched, indeed, He is, inwardly with sorrow of Heart, as in the early days of the Flood. For He is bidding a last and most mournful farewell to His Holy City and to His people. After sixty-two weeks Christ shall be slain, and the people that shall deny Him shall not be His.

Howl, O gate; cry, O city (Isaias xiv.). For as Jesus goes out of the city to-day, all the glory of Jerusalem departs with Him. This is in truth the last day of the Old Jerusalem, the city of God, the city of perfect beauty, the joy of all the earth (Lament. i.).

From this day begins the desolation that is to come. *The ways of Sion mourn; all her gates are broken down: her priests sigh, her virgins are in affliction; and she is oppressed with bitterness.* When the Jews, to this day, go to their wailing place in Jerusalem on the Friday, they do not know what their lament ought to be. They mourn over their dispersion. But their wailing ought to be over Jesus going to-day for the last time out of their Holy City.

B. *He went forth.*

Let us turn to ourselves. At the sacred font Christ's delegate said solemnly over us: "Depart from this soul, unclean spirit. Give place, that God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost may dwell here." *He said, and (it) was done. He commanded, and (it) was created.* The soul of the baptised becomes the temple of God.

But, alas! The unclean spirit driven out, waited and watched, and returned to beg for re-admittance: to beg of me to reinstate him. For without my consent, he never can return. And wo! wo, a thousand times! I said deliberately to my own God: "Depart, give place to Lucifer, and give place to a poor creature which Thou, my God, didst make for me. As if Thou wert not better than the work of Thy own hands."

He went forth. My God departed in sorrow out of my soul, which was His temple and His holy city: *Touched with sorrow of Heart inwardly, He departed.*

But there was great joy in Heaven on the day and in the hour when I came back, and said: *Father, I have sinned. Father, to me belongeth confusion of face. But to Thee, my God, my Father, my Redeemer, mercy and forgiveness.*

STATION VI.

And there followed Him a great multitude of people, and of women who bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning to them, said: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold the days shall come, wherein they will say: Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the paps that have not given suck. Then they shall begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us; and to the hills: Cover us. For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry? (St. Luke xxiii. 27-31).

I. After passing through the Judicial Gate, the procession has turned towards Golgotha, which stands in full view at about four hundred yards to the north, and close to the upper part of the western wall of the city. To reach Golgotha they skirt the upper western wall. They have gone two-thirds of the way, when the road branches into two: one leading to the northwest, towards Gabaon, the other direct to Golgotha. It is at the junction of these two roads that the women of Jerusalem are gathered.

II. *A great multitude of people, and of women who bewailed.* The Greek text makes it clear that only the women are lamenting; not the multitude of people.

III. The women are not the devout women who are following our Lord from Galilee. They are women of Jerusalem. Some commentators think that in their lamentations they are only carrying out a usual custom. We know how even in our times it has been in certain countries the practice that women should at funerals keep up a lamentation aloud. The words of our Lord, *Weep over yourselves*, seem to some writers to indicate that they are not mourners devoted to Him and full of compassion for Him. But though they may not be His disciples, there is no reason to think that their tears and wailing are not a genuine expression of pity and compassion.

A. For behold the days shall come when they will say: Blessed are the barren.

Interpreters teach that our Saviour is speaking primarily of the days of the siege which are so soon to bring horrors beyond description, and in the end the utter destruction of the city. Some of the crowd here present will live long enough to witness the horrible scenes of that siege. Those who die before, will leave their children to pass through that terrible tribulation: therefore, *weep for yourselves and for your children.*

B. *Weep not over Me, but over yourselves and over your children.*

We cannot suppose that any one person will during the siege undergo sufferings in any way equal to our Lord's; but there is this wide difference between His sorrows and theirs. His are hallowed and blest; theirs will be a curse. He knows that all His sufferings are of His own choice; and every moment while He is enduring He has *joy set before Him*, and knows that because His Soul hath laboured He shall see and be filled. And 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; and He shall divide the spoils of the strong, because He hath delivered His Soul unto death; and was reputed with the wicked (Isaiah liii.). On the other hand, He knows that when the Roman army comes, and brings such tribulations as were not from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, neither shall be (St. Mark xiii.), the sorrows will not be cheered by hope. *For these are the days of vengeance; for there shall be great distress in the land and wrath upon the people* (St. Luke xxi.). These will be days of vengeance; and there shall be wrath upon the people. God is striking hardened sinners who have resisted all His graces and rejected Him. And it is written of the Egyptians in the days of darkness: *Over them was spread a heavy night, an image of that darkness which was to come upon them. But they were to themselves more grievous than the darkness* (Wisdom xvii. 20). So may we say of the appalling horrors of the siege. They were to be only an image of far worse horrors to come; and the Jews

now cast off, with their sins upon them, and the curse which they have chosen, shall be more grievous to themselves than the famine, and the sword, and the fire that will spread so much havoc.

Therefore with good reason does our most compassionate Lord say: *Weep not over Me, weep over yourselves and over your children.*

C. *They shall begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us.*

In the early scenes, before the Sacred Passion began, we saw how our Lord, in His discourse on the Mount of Olives, mingled together the destruction of Jerusalem and the terrors of the final Judgment. So now also, we may in contemplation assume that His thoughts are reaching beyond the siege into the world to come. For we find in other parts of Holy Writ these words which He now uses applied to what is coming in the latter days.

St. John, who in this hour is present with our Blessed Lady watching and listening to every word of his Divine Master, in years to come in one of his visions of things which must be done hereafter, sees that *when the heaven departed as a book folded up, and the islands were moved out of their places, and the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the rich, and the strong hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of mountains, men say to the mountains and the rocks: Fall upon us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb* (Apoc. vi.).

We need not then confine our thoughts to the siege of Jerusalem that is past, but may look forward to what is still to come, which concerns us much more nearly.

D. *Weep not over Me, but weep over yourselves and over your children.*

First, then, we must ask, Does our Blessed Saviour really mean that we are not to stay and mourn over Him? Quite the contrary. He is most desirous that we *look on Him Whom we have pierced*—and *mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son*. From His inmost Heart He calls to us: *O all you who pass by, give heed and see if there be*

sorrow like to My sorrow: because He knows well that it is while we gaze on Him and His wounds that the bite of the fiery serpent will be healed in us.

Still, there is a great truth, and one to us of the utmost moment, which our Saviour wishes to impress on us.

When a sensible man pays a very large price for a property or a jewel, it is clear that he values more what he gets than what he gives. Therefore, if our all-wise Lord thinks it right, and wise, and prudent to give up His own Body to be mangled as it is, and His Soul to be afflicted as it has been, and His Blessed Mother also agonised, in order to win us back from Lucifer, He must see clearly that what is coming to us hereafter is to Him much more grievous than what is coming to Himself to-day.

E. *For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?*

The green wood has the sap in it, consequently it is not fit for the fire. The dry wood is the right and proper fuel for the burning. Our Saviour means that His Sacred Body and His Soul are both innocent. As His own Beloved Disciple will afterwards write: *He appeared, to take away our sins: and in Him there is no sin* (1 St. John iii.). His Body and His Soul, then, are perfectly sinless, and not only sinless, but, through His Incarnation, become Divine—the very Body and Soul of God—and therefore are by their own nature quite unfitted for suffering. It is only by a stupendous miracle that they can suffer. It is only because the Son of God has, we may say, broken through all laws, in His desire to redeem lost man, and has decreed that *no word shall be impossible with God*, and has actually become Sin for our sake, that the fire of suffering can take any effect at all upon Him.

But our case is quite different. Our sinful souls and corrupt flesh are the dry wood, the very fittest fuel for the burning.

F. *If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?*

Surely, He hath borne our sorrows and carried our griefs. Surely, the chastisement of our peace has been laid heavily on Him. Surely, never on this earth has there been sorrow like to His sorrow; a Passion like to His; compassion like His Blessed Mother's.

Yet still, all the while, He knows, what He said last night: *The things concerning Me have an end.* Time is, doubtless, a deceptive word. For, wide indeed is the difference between the hours of a night of agonising pain and the hours of a night of refreshing sleep. From what we witness here on earth we have some faint idea, at least, of what time in Purgatory may mean; and what the Apostle means when he writes that with God *one day is like a thousand years.*

The hours then that shall be spent on Calvary will be, beyond doubt, hours unspeakably long. Yet still, the ninth hour shall come; and when it does come, the Soul and the Body of our Lord will be beyond the reach of all malice, whether of men or of fallen angels. *His place is in peace, His abode in Sion. There hath He broken the powers of bows, the shield, the sword, and the battle* (Psalm lxxv.).

The things concerning Me have an end. His place is in peace. Why? because He is not the real sinner. Jacob put on Esau's garment, but was not Esau. Our Divine Lord put on the *likeness of the flesh of sin* (Romans viii.), but He is not the real sinner. He is come down to our level, in order to raise us up to a share of His Divinity. He is become like to us in all things, excepting only sin—the hideousness, the foulness, the malice of sin. But the real sinner is one who during his day of power on earth, has, in defiance of God's continual efforts to save him from his own iniquity, deliberately rejected his God, deliberately said again and again: *Away with Him!* Nor is this all; for the sinner not only rejects God, but, all filial love now changed entirely into hatred, goes into the house of his eternity a blasphemer

against his God, and crying with intense malice : *Crucify Him ! He is grievous to us to behold.* Deliberately he has chosen to have Lucifer and not God as his master. *He loved cursing, and it shall come unto him ; and he would not have blessing, and it shall be far from him. And he put on cursing like a garment : and it went in like water into his entrails, and like oil in his bones. May it be unto him like a garment which covereth him ; and like a girdle with which he is girded continually* (Psalm cviii.).

In consequence of this deliberate and persistent choice of the sinner's free-will, our Blessed Saviour is obliged to say to him at the Judgment : *Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go into everlasting punishment* (St. Matt. xxv.).

Everlasting punishment. If Annas and Caiphas and the Ancients who are having their will to-day, repent not heartily before their little day on earth is over, they will understand when they enter the house of their eternity and see their master, Lucifer, as he is, why Jesus says to-day : *Weep not over me, but over yourselves.*

The things concerning Jesus have had an end on Golgotha. But wo is me ! Down in this nether Golgotha, unblest, unhallowed, joyless, hopeless, *exiled from the eternal providence ; down in this land of forgetfulness, where no order but everlasting horror dwelleth*, when shall a ninth hour come to them ? When shall they be able to say : *" Consummatus est "* ? When shall a nightfall come to bring them a short respite of sleep ? When shall a dawn visit them to bring one ray of light or hope to the unbearable darkness ? If we go down and ask the sinner there, who here in this world grew old and hoary in sin, How long were you on earth ? we know his answer : *We being born forthwith ceased to be* (Wisdom v.). His long life now seems as one day. Ask him next : How long he has been in the prison-house ? What can he answer : Since *one day is like a thousand years* ? Ask him *once* again : How long

he is to remain shut up in this prison of despair ? How soon does he hope to be delivered ? He can only answer with *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth*—"*Fremet et tabescet*". He shudders with horror, and pines away, but he cannot pronounce the word—the only true word : "For ever" : "for eternity". He can only howl out his wail, so old ! oh, so old ! and yet, still quite fresh and new : *We fools ! The serpent deceived me.*

G. *Weep not over Me, but over yourselves.*

It is no wonder then at all that the tender Heart of Jesus, God and Man, says, *Weep not over Me.* For He sees Hell, and hears the wailing there.

No wonder that the Eternal Father consents with gladness ineffable that He shall deliver Himself, and betray Himself, and sacrifice Himself, and give up all His own rights, to rescue the poor sinner from spending his eternity under the power of Lucifer.

No wonder that the most tender-hearted of all mothers goes with her only Son, step by step, to see Him suffer, and to look on Him as He dies ; and at every blow, every bruise, every fall, and every outrage, says in her heart her own glorious word : *Fiat, fiat* : if only the poor sinner, the fallen child of my God, be snatched out of the jaws of the destroyer.

H. *Weep not over Me, but over yourselves and over your children.*

What wonder, too, that our Divine Lord, when Peter said to Him, *Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee ;* and again, *Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee ;* and the third time, in grief of heart because his love seemed to be doubted : *Lord, Thou knowest all things ; Thou knowest that I love Thee*—what wonder that then our Saviour made answer : *Feed My lambs ; feed My sheep* : that is, if thou lovest Me, take care of My lambs ; take care of My sheep ; go and rescue My lost sheep for Me. *Break the jaws* of him who was a murderer from the beginning, and out of his teeth (take) away the prey.

I. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains : *Fall upon us ; and to the hills : Cover us.*

The terrible siege of Jerusalem, and the wars that rage in the world from time to time; pestilence, also, and famines and earthquakes, these are all, our Lord tells us, only the *beginning of sorrows*. Like the Egyptian darkness, they are an *image*, a foreshadowing of worse things to come. The first day, the opening day of the real sorrows, that *day of misery and calamity*, is the day when the impenitent soul hears at the judgment-seat, from the lips of Jesus Crucified, the words : *Depart from Me.*

Quantus tremor est futurus,
Quando Judex est venturus,
Cuncta stricte discussurus.

Ah ! what trembling then shall be,
When the Lord in majesty,
Comes to judge iniquity.

How blessed they who now betimes, before the *summer is over and the harvest is past*, have the grace to cry out earnestly : *Pierce Thou (O Lord) my flesh with Thy fear ; for I am afraid of Thy judgments (Psalm cxviii.).*

Alas ! why have we to pray earnestly for this fear ? The murderer, when his day of doom is near, has not to go in quest of fear, nor to labour for it. It thrusts itself upon him. He cannot sleep for fear. The gallows is before him ; darkness cannot hide it. But sin so dims the light of faith in us, that it is with us *as in the days before the Flood. They were eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, even till the day in which Noe entered into the ark, and they knew not till the Flood came, and took them all away ; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be (St. Matt. xxiv.). Their little ones go out like a flock, and their children dance and play. They take the timbrel and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down into Hell (Job xxi.).*

J. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains : *Fall upon us.*

Our Blessed Lord tells us of the *wrath to come* ; purposely that when it comes, it may find in us no fuel, nothing to be consigned to *everlasting burnings*. If He were an

enemy, anxious to chastise and to be avenged, He would not forewarn us so earnestly and so often. *Take ye heed, watch and pray.* This is the practical moral of all His warnings : *And what I say to you, I say to all : Watch (St. Mark xiii.).*

K. *The days will come when they shall say : Blessed are the barren.*

A good child carefully trained is to its father and mother on their death-bed : "*Gaudium meum et corona mea*"—*My joy and my crown (Philipp. iv.).* And at the judgment-seat, when the Christian father or mother dies, the Guardian Angels of these well-trained children will plead far more persuasively than the widows of Joppa pleaded with St. Peter round the dead body of Dorcas (Acts ix.). They will have something better to show than coats and garments made for their little ones. And as He listens to the pleading, our Blessed Lord will answer with infinite contentment and gratitude : *Come, you blessed of My Father : for as long as you did it to My little ones, you did it to Me.*

But if, through the heartless neglect of parents, our Lord is obliged to say of the child : *Better for him if that man had not been born*, such parents may have one day good reason to say : *Blessed are the barren.*

Pierce, then, O Lord, my flesh with Thy fear, lest I scandalise any of Thy little ones—Thy children, or Thy poor, or any of Thine who are weak.

Holy Job tells us how he was through life kept from wronging any of God's little ones : *For I have always feared God as waves swelling over me ; and His weight I was not able to bear—For what shall I do when God shall rise to judge ? Did not He that made me in the womb make him (my neighbour) also ? (c. xxxi.).*

SCENE IX.

AT THE FOOT OF CALVARY.

STATION I.

And they came to the place that is called Golgotha, which is the place of Calvary (St. Matt. xxvii. 33).

A. From the Judicial Gate the procession has come up northward, passing close along the upper part of the western wall of the city. At a distance of a hundred yards from Calvary, as has been said, the road to Gabaon branches off, and at the junction of the two roads the women of Jerusalem are wailing. As we may well believe, the feverish impatience of the Priests and Ancients is intolerant of all delay. Yet the will of our Lord is always supreme; and so, despite their impatient haste, they halt perforce—they halt for the short moment while He is addressing the mourners.

Then these unhappy Rulers, whose malice makes them grievous to themselves, urge the guards to redeem time lost by more haste.

“Do it quickly, do it quickly, we pray you. For even at this hour the fickle Governor may change his purpose; or the people may turn soft-hearted, like the foolish women; or the Galilean may escape, with the help of Beelzebub.”

Quickly then, they drag our Saviour over the remaining one hundred and thirty yards, and they arrive at the south side of the place of Calvary.

I. We may notice in passing that, though we call it commonly “Mount Calvary,” it is not so called in the Gospel. The Gospel name is *the place called Golgotha, or the place of Calvary*. In reality, as far as we can learn, Calvary could scarcely be called a hill, or mount. The city and suburbs stood on five hills. Sion to the south-west, Moriah to the east, Bezetha to the north-east, and Gareb to the north-west. Acra was a lower hill in the centre of these four. Gareb, on the west, is not a high hill, and *the place of Calvary* stands on its very gentle slope. The road then from the Judicial Gate has been up a very slight incline. The

ground all around is rough and rocky. *The place of Calvary* is, as far as we can learn, a small plateau, raised about twenty feet above the ground around it, and perhaps sixty feet from east to west, by forty or fifty from north to south.

II. Though it stands about four hundred yards to the north of the Judicial Gate, through which the procession left the city, yet it is not more than one tenth of that distance from the nearest part of the western wall. St. John writes: *The place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city*. Probably nothing more than the deep fosse, or city ditch, lay between Calvary and the upper western wall. The great Basilica built by St. Helen and her son, Constantine the Great, stood east and west. At the extreme western part of it was the Holy Sepulchre. Then came *the place of Calvary*, which, in the original Basilica, they very wisely did not roof over, but merely surrounded it with a colonnade. Then came the long nave which stretched across the old fosse, so that the eastern wall of the great Basilica rested on the foundation of the western wall of the city, or as some say stood within the city.

Coming then from the south to Golgotha, the Priests and soldiers find a steep side of Golgotha in front of them; and if the local tradition be true, they pass along the western side of the small plateau to the north, where they find an easy ascent to the level. On the east side of Calvary there is a deep precipice, as the fosse lies there. It was in this fosse or ditch that St. Helen found the Holy Cross buried, along with the other crosses. On the western side of Calvary the descent is less steep, and at a short distance of about ninety feet from where the Cross stands is the small garden in which the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea was *hewn out in the rock*.

The great crowd that has gathered for the spectacle naturally place themselves, not on the east side of Calvary, where the deep fosse lies, but on the western and southern sides. Accordingly, we find a tradition existing that the crucified had their faces to the west, and consequently their backs turned to the city.

III. The name Golgotha, or Calvary, is interpreted, skull. The place of Calvary would therefore mean the place of the skull. The origin of the name is, according to some writers, that the skull of Adam given by Noe to one of his sons was there buried. Such a tradition would account for the name better than some of the other explanations offered.

St. Jerome mentions that he was told by a Jew, they had a tradition that it was to Calvary Abraham took his son Isaac to be sacrificed.

B. *They came to the place which is called Golgotha.*

From the common tradition we learn that our Blessed Saviour fell once more to the ground when He arrived at the foot of Calvary. This is the third fall since He left

the Prætorium, and, as we are told by those who have diligently collected all traditions and revelations concerning the Sacred Passion, it is the twenty-third fall since He left last night the Garden of Gethsemani. As then we have seen in a former chapter that it was shown to the holy Spanish Abbess that the frequency of these most painful falls was reduced at the prayer of our Blessed Lady, we can understand to what an extreme degree our Blessed Saviour is permitting natural causes, such as the loss of blood, and the weakness brought on by labours and watching and severe fasting, to afflict Him now.

C. *They came to the place of Calvary.*

Let us pause for a while to think of the violent irritation of the Priests and Ancients at this fresh delay and all the trouble which Jesus is giving them. See how they turn their mules and hasten to the spot, and urge the guards to compel Him to rise at once and hasten forward. "This trick has been tried too often. He has been eased of the Cross, there is no excuse for falling now. This is pretence, to move the foolish women to more lamentation, or to rouse the silly people to rescue Him." To deserve a still larger dole of blood money, the soldiers respond readily. Blows and kicks and imprecations are multiplied, and we are told that, as He lies on the ground, a new revenge occurs to them for the trouble He is causing by falling. "As He is fond of the earth, let Him have it," and they fill His sacred mouth with the dust and dirt of the road.

His loving Heart is content to endure this, and much more, if He can only make us contrite for the sins of the palate, and the wickedness of the sinful tongue.

D. *They came to the place of Calvary.*

St. James had reason to write that *the anger of men worketh not the justice of God*. Who deserves these heavy blows and cruel kicks? Jesus, for falling down, or the Ancients, who are so angry that He falls?

What have I done to thee? Why strikest thou me, lo I

now this third time? the patient beast of burden said to Balaam. O My people, Jesus now says meekly, as He lies on the ground, *What have I done to thee? Why strikest thou Me, lo! now this third time?* Is it a wonder that I lie down weary at this sixth hour?

E. Yet now once more He adds, *Weep not over Me, but weep over yourselves*. For meek as He is, and *easy to forgive evils*, yet He knows that the strong and mighty who are cruel to Him or to His little ones, will be *mightily tormented*. What seems to be an imprecation coming from Him, is only the prophecy of His sorrowful Heart. *Let their eyes be darkened, and their back bend Thou down always. Pour out Thy indignation upon them; and let Thy wrathful anger take hold of them, because they have persecuted Him Whom Thou hast smitten; and they have added to the grief of My wounds. Add Thou iniquity upon their iniquity, and let them not come unto Thy justice. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; and with the just let them not be written* (Psalm lxxviii.).

F. *They came to the place of Calvary.*

Lying on the ground, our Blessed Saviour says to us most feelingly, "Have compassion on the fallen. Do not add to the grief of (their) wounds."

When the people represented to Roboam what they had suffered during the reign of Solomon, his father, he answered mercilessly, *I will add to your yoke. My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions* (3 Kings xii.). When my neighbour is already sore and angry, shall I add to his bitterness?

If one has wronged me grievously, he has wronged himself far more than me. The more he has wronged me, the more deeply he has himself fallen. He greatly needs compassion. If he perseveres in his sin, he is lost for ever. Alas! poor fallen child of God, *who shall heal thee?* Some one must pray with a heart like St. Stephen's, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*. Otherwise God's justice will surely lie heavy on all those who wrong others. We must

make haste then to pray earnestly for those who have sinned by wronging us. If we add to the grief of their wounds, and scourge them with scorpions, who shall heal them?

By the side of my Lord lying on the ground, I will think over years gone by: how have I treated the fallen? servants who have displeased me? children who have committed some fault? an old friend with whom I have quarrelled? neighbours, relatives, whom I have known to be in sin? What have I done to lift them all up?

Have I tried to raise them from the earth? Or have I broken the *bruised reed*? Have I stamped out the last sparks of life, and *extinguished the smoking flax*? Have I been more harsh because it is now the third time that my neighbour has fallen? The weaker he is, the more he needs help to rise. Not only seven times, but seventy times seven times I must try to lift him up.

G. *They came to the place of Calvary.*

And when I have fallen down myself, and on account of my relapses am losing hope, our compassionate Saviour reminds me that He fell so often during the Passion, to make me see that He is quite aware of my infirmities and relapses, and has made satisfaction for them all. *For He knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust* (Psalm cii.).

While contemplating Jesus lying so faint, so exhausted on the ground, our Angel says to us: *We have not a High Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities.* From the ground He says to us: *Come to Me all you who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you* (St. Matt. xi.).

H. *They came to the place of Calvary.*

At length Annas, or some other leader, not because compassionate, but through worldly wisdom and politic malice, warns them that if they are too savage, Jesus may expire before they can see Him crucified. Therefore the storm of angry words and blows is suddenly lulled; and they raise Him more gently, and lead Him more carefully

—whither? To death and crucifixion. To the eye of men, they seem to be turned to mercy, but their mercy is only cruel policy.

If I treat a servant well in order to get good work out of him, and then cast him off in his old age when he cannot serve me, is this kind charity? *Do not heathens do this much?* If I entertain neighbours luxuriously in the hope of future favours, is this hospitality?

“Soul of Christ, sanctify us. Body of Christ, save us. Blood of Christ, inebriate us. Heart of Jesus, inflame us. Passion of Christ, strengthen us.”

I. *They came to the place of Calvary.*

Contemplate the Ever-Blessed Mother as she stands with her weeping eyes fixed on her Divine Son prostrate on the ground.

She knows His secret; how He is making His offertory to His Eternal Father before He ascends to the altar to offer the Holy Sacrifice.

“In the spirit of humility, O my Father, and a contrite heart, may we be accepted by Thee. And so may our sacrifice be this day offered in Thy sight, that it may please Thee, Lord our God.”

“Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that prostrate in spirit by His side we may say from our hearts: *We have sinned, we have committed iniquity. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face. It is not for our justifications that we present our prayers before Thy face, but for the multitude of Thy tender mercies. O Lord, hear: O Lord, be appeased: hearken and do: delay not for Thy own sake*” (Daniel ix.).

On our Good Fridays, when we see the priests prostrate while the altar is being made ready for the Mass of the Presanctified, we may call to mind our Saviour prostrate at the foot of Calvary.

SCENE X.

ON CALVARY.

And they bring Him INTO THE PLACE called Golgotha, which being interpreted is the place of Calvary (St. Mark xv. 22).

Jerusalem on the eastern, southern, and western sides, was surrounded by valleys, so that, in those days, it was considered to be on these three sides impregnable. But on the north lay Mount Scopus, and between this hill and Jerusalem the ground was on a level with the city, if not higher; so that it was in this quarter that the Assyrians and Romans, and, in after times, the Crusaders, pitched their camp and assailed the city. The little plateau of Calvary in this respect bore a resemblance to the city. On the south, west, and east, the sides are more steep, but on the north the approach is easy. Therefore, as has been said, the Priests and Ancients coming from the south, pass along the western side, and arrive at the north, and then turn round and face the south, and easily reach the level. On the place of Calvary, and around it, the ground, as has been already said, is rocky.

Caves or grottoes abound in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, as elsewhere in Judea. If the tradition preserved in Jerusalem be correct, arriving at Calvary, with their faces now turned to the south, they find on their left hand one of these caves or grottoes, which, as we shall see, they turn to account.

The ground, as has been just said, is rocky. If Golgotha has been, as many think, a common place of execution, there are doubtless holes already in the rock, into which the crosses can be dropped, and there fixed. If not, such holes must be prepared, and this requires a little time. We read that four soldiers are told off for each of the condemned, and over them all is the Centurion. Other guards are, no doubt, stationed round about, to keep order, and prevent any attempt at rescue. In the early days of our Lord's Public Life, as St. Luke writes, *the Scribes and Pharisees were filled with madness* (St. Luke vi.). It is the same still. What more foolish than the fear that Jesus will not die?

Observe, too, how the Chief Priests, though they much desire that the people may hold them innocent of the blood of Jesus, and ascribe His death entirely to Roman law, yet, in their state of restless malice, have not prudence to keep at a distance; they are on the ground, directing and urging on the work.

The delay necessary for the preparing of holes in the rock, is to them a time of terror. He may escape, and therefore, according to the tradition still extant in Jerusalem, they give orders that Jesus be confined in the little cave or grotto which

they discover on the left hand, below the level of Calvary, and that He be there guarded strictly till all is ready.

On the site of this cave, as is supposed, stands the little chapel still called the Prison of our Lord. And the Greeks add further details to the tradition, for they represent our Blessed Lord seated in the grotto, with His legs secured in stocks, so that escape may be impossible.

STATION I.

And they gave Him wine to drink mingled with gall. And when He had tasted, He would not drink (St. Matt. xxvii.). And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh, but He took it not (St. Mark xv.).

A. The mother of King Lamuel, instructing her son, says to him: *Give strong drink to them that are sad, and wine to them that are grieved in mind* (Prov. xxxi.).

We are told that there existed in Jerusalem a confraternity of pious women, who, following perchance this counsel, undertook, among other good works, to provide myrrhed wine for those condemned to the terrible punishment of crucifixion. This drink was supposed to have the effect of deadening their sense of pain.

St. Mark states that the ordinary drink, *wine mingled with myrrh*, was given to our Blessed Saviour. Some commentators therefore interpret St. Matthew's words, *They gave Him wine to drink mingled with gall*, as if they only meant that the wine mingled with myrrh was bitter as gall. But the sense more generally accepted is the literal one, that the soldiers threw gall into the myrrhed wine. This view is in keeping with the prophetic words, *They gave Me gall for My food, and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink* (Psalm lxviii.). The vinegar is not offered to Jesus at present, not till towards the end of the Three Hours.

From these words of the 68th Psalm, Father à Lapide, and an early Father quoted by him, conjecture that gall in a solid state is thrown into the wine offered to our Saviour. The gall is *food*, the vinegar *drink*.

They gave Him wine to drink mingled with gall.

Why do the soldiers mingle gall with the wine? Is He not suffering enough already? Is He not *sad*? Is He not one of those *grieved in mind* who might be allowed wine to strengthen and deaden pain?

1. One answer may be that cruelty, like other vices, grows by indulgence. Besides, the soldiers have been urged on by bribes and flattery to be cruel. They have become inhuman. *They have persecuted Him Whom Thou hast smitten, and have added to the grief of My wounds* (Psalm lxxviii.).

Contemplate them with mock pity encouraging Jesus to drink, telling Him that He must be weary, and also detailing what they have in store for Him. He will surely want support.

2. Then besides, if this is good wine, provided for the Crucified by charity, by spoiling a little of it with gall, they hope that He will not drink, and it will become their portion.

3. Then we know, moreover, that the unseen spirits are counselling and directing. They have two wishes—one, that men may multiply heinous sins, and afterwards despair; the other, to see if by any possibility they can wear out the meek patience of Jesus. *Let us examine Him by outrages and torments, that we may know His meekness and try His patience* (Wisdom ii.).

4. Lastly. Our Lord Himself is ever hungering and thirsting for every new shape of suffering that may be useful to Him hereafter in His work of redeeming. He knows full well the promise: *Because His soul hath laboured, He shall see and be filled* (Isaias liii.).

Many holy thoughts shall be revealed out of the hearts of men while they *consider in their hearts* the exhaustion of our Blessed Saviour and the cruel refreshment offered to Him.

B. *They gave Him wine mingled with gall.*

"Why, O my soul," St. Augustine asks, "why art thou not inebriated with the bitterness of compunction

and tears since His refreshment is the bitterness of gall?"

And again. "I was the slave of gluttony, Thou art afflicted by hunger; I tasted the sweetness of the forbidden fruit, Thou the bitterness of gall. Behold, O King of glory, behold how my heartlessness stands out apparent through Thy tenderness."

From another devout heart this thought *is revealed*. Of Thy dealings with us, dear Lord, and especially in the Most Holy Sacrament, it is written, *He fed them with the fat of wheat, He filled them with honey out of the rock* (Psalm lxxx.).

What do we give you in return? "*Quid retribuam Domino?*" Gall for His food, vinegar to drink. *Foolish and senseless people, is this the return thou makest to the Lord?* (Deut. xxxii.).

C. *And when He had tasted, He would not drink.*

Our Lord then does taste the bitter and nauseous draught. Whatever suffering it can inflict upon His palate comes to Him; but He will not drink. Most reverently we may ask, Why will He not drink?

One reason is that He has no wish at all, by numbing His senses, to escape one pain. Neither does He wish men to think that He is ready to escape pain when He can. He wishes all to know that He has been offered merely because He willed it.

Again, He said a week ago, *Trade and traffic till I come*. He is now trading and trafficking with extreme diligence. For He knows that *the night is coming*, and coming very soon, *when no man can work* or traffic any more. Once the appointed moment comes, He must bow His Head in willing obedience to His Eternal Father, and die. After that He can never any more teach us and move us and win us by suffering. Therefore has He arranged that during the watches of last night, and the hours of to-day, sufferings beyond all count and number shall be given to Him, *heaped up, shaken together, and flowing over*.

The Psalmist writes: *I will rejoice over Thy words, as one that hath found great spoil* (Psalm cxviii.). Our Blessed Lord is more greedy of sufferings than the most covetous are of money or treasure. He is consumed with the desire to bring men to believe that to suffer for their God is their highest privilege on this earth. He is loth indeed to consent that one *particle of the good gift* shall go from Him or from His Most Blessed Mother.

In the Life of St. Dominic it is told that a holy woman who had by looking at Jesus Crucified become like to Him, was found by him in a lonely spot, with her flesh much eaten away by disease. Already the Prophet's words were verified in her: *Worms shall be thy covering* (Isaiah xiv.), and the words too of holy Job: *My flesh is clothed with rottenness and the filth of dust* (Job vii.).

Jesus Crucified, Who has made all things new, had given to this suffering Saint a share of His own ineffable contentment in suffering, and His greediness for pain and distress, so much so that if a worm or a maggot fell out of its place upon her flesh to the ground, she carefully replaced it again upon the wound, and all the while was *speaking to (herself) in psalms and hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in her heart to the Lord* (Ephes. v.).

"*Flesh and blood did not teach you this,*" Jesus said to St. Peter. So would He say too to this dying Saint who is *desiring to be dissolved* and to be with her Master.

What price is there that our flesh and blood will not willingly pay to escape from pain? But the Archangel said to our Lady, *No word shall be impossible with God*. That is, now that the Son of God has set His hand to the work of redeeming fallen man, and raising him up from the dunghill, He never will look back, and nothing that grace can do shall remain undone. His disciples shall do even greater works than He has done. If holy Job, who never stood in spirit on Calvary, never contemplated the Passion of Jesus or the Compassion of Holy Mary, is yet

of this mind: *I have said to rottenness, thou art my father; to worms, my mother and my sister* (Job xvii.), need we be incredulous when we read of the wonders wrought in men who live in spirit on Calvary, and are fed on the Body of the Lord, and inebriated with His Blood?

Alas! they are not the great prodigies. But if I can live near the burning Heart of Jesus, and still remain cold, if I can drink of the Sacred Blood, and know nothing of the intoxication of Divine love, I am the most mournful of prodigies.

D. *He would not drink.*

Some holy Fathers say, it was not the bitterness of gall that He shrunk from, but that which is signified by gall, the poison and guilt of sin. The penalties of sin are dear to Him. *Dulce lignum! dulces clavos!* But He wishes all to know that He never can have the guilt, the bitterness of sin, incorporated with Him.

E. *He would not drink.*

In the contemplations of the Venerable Abbess d'Agreda we find a different thought, that though His tormentors imagine that the drink will numb His sense of pain, yet in reality, if our Lord continue to drink, His sufferings will by the gall be aggravated exceedingly; and that in this instance again it was the cry of our Lady's motherly heart that induces Him to sacrifice one suffering, and to give infinite pleasure to His Father in another way, by deferring to her. *Look and do according to the Model*. By giving up things holy, as prayer or penance, out of charity, we may honour God greatly.

And here we may call to mind, that as she is by compassion sharing every pain of His, so He, by having her present, and allowing her the privilege and position of the second Eve, is doubling every pain of His own. While we endeavour to realise a little of what compassion means in her, we must always remember that His compassion for her is immeasurably more keen than her compassion for Him. He then is always undergoing two distinct and separate Passions—one from His own wounds of Soul

and Body, the other through sharing all her anguish. If she is watching every wound that appears on Him, He is, with an eye infinitely more acute and quick, noticing every sorrow of her heart, and every suffering of her most delicate and sinless body.

F. *He would not drink.*

As has been said, it may be that the heartless executioners are regaling themselves with the wine intended for Jesus, and are fulfilling what was written, *They that drink wine made Me their song*. These un pitying soldiers may be making merry over their happy device of preventing Him from drinking by spoiling the wine, and while they regale themselves, be afflicting His sacred ears with ribald songs and jests.

What are the thoughts of our most meek Saviour meanwhile? The Psalm goes on to tell us: *As for Me, My prayer is to Thee, O Lord, for the time of Thy good pleasure, O God*. His Heart, in the most perfect submission to His Father, is pining with desire that the hour of redemption may come quickly. *Thou shalt arise and have mercy on Sion, for it is time to have mercy on it, for the time is come* (Psalm ci.).

G. *He would not drink.*

He is not yet on the place of Calvary. The little prison is lower down than the level. He is the Great High Priest waiting for a brief while—as the priest waits in the sacristy before he ascends to the altar of God—saying, meanwhile, in His Sacred Heart: *Introibo ad altare Dei*—“I will go in soon to the altar prepared for Me by My Father. He hath provided the altar, and the wood, and has fitted a Body to Me that I may be both Priest and Victim.”

“Blessed Mother of God, speak to our souls, say to us: *Ecce, Agnus Dei!* Look attentively, for my Son is the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world.”

She is not far from the door of His little prison, waiting and watching. Oh, how much better to be with her at this house of mourning, than to be, without her, in the

house of feasting. *Blessed is the man who watcheth daily at My gates, and waiteth at the posts of My door* (Prov. viii.).

“Blessed Mother, grant us to wait and watch with thee at the posts of this door. Show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, that with thee we may mourn over Him as one mourneth for an only son.”

H. *He would not drink.*

He was less thirsty when He sat by the well than He is now. In that hour, the sinful woman said to Him: *Sir, I perceive that thou art a Prophet. Our fathers adored on the mountains, and you say that at Jerusalem is the place where men adore. Jesus saith to her: Woman, believe Me, that the hour cometh when you shall neither on the mountain nor in Jerusalem adore the Father* (St. John iv.). That hour of promise is come now. Not in the Temple on Mount Moriah is the Lamb of God to be immolated. For to-day all things are made new. Jesus is come outside the gate, the holy Fathers teach us, because grace is no longer to be confined to one chosen city. The *clean oblation* is not to be offered any more only in one temple. *In every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered in My name a clean oblation.*

Therefore the new altar, the new sanctuary, Calvary, the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense, is not shut up within the walls of any one city. It stands in the open, and men from every land are gathered round it, waiting for the High Priest and the Sacrifice.

“The Cross,” St. Leo writes, “is to be the altar, not of one temple, but of the world.”

From to-day, the Mother of God and Mother of men shall have a long line of children, who with her will say: *Till the day break and the shadows retire, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense* (Cant. iv.).

“Till the day of eternity dawn on me, till the shadows of this land of darkness roll away, I will make my home on the mountain of myrrh and on the hill of frankincense.”

I. *They gave Him wine to drink mingled with gall. He would not drink.*

Look and do according to the pattern. With the wine of this world and the good things offered by this world, how often there is a poison mixed; and, alas! for the moment we call the *bitter sweet*. It is only later, sometimes too late, that we find that it is indeed an *evil and a bitter thing* to leave the Lord our God.

J. *Wine mingled with gall.*

Our spiritual teachers advise us to remember, that when we spoil good intentions by mingling others with them that are not pure, we are offering to our Lord works that are *wine mingled with gall*.

K. *Wine mingled with gall.*

"O my Lord Jesus, *recogitabo tibi annos meos*. In the presence of Thy Most Holy Mother I will think over, with Thee and under Thy eyes, my years gone by; all those most unhappy hours when I offered Thee gall; and the blessed angels were saying of me: *Their vines are of the vineyard of Sodom, and of the suburbs of Gomorrha; their grapes are grapes of gall, and their clusters most bitter. Their wine is the gall of dragons, and the venom of asps, which is incurable*" (Deut. xxxii.).

STATION II.

And they bring Him into the place called Golgotha
(St. Mark xv. 22).

I. As then on our Good Friday, at present, the priest waits prostrate in the sanctuary, on the lower level, while the attendants are on the predella arranging the holy altar, so Christ, the High Priest of the good things to come (Hebrews ix.), is waiting in His prison cell below, the condemned cell as we call it, while the attendants are making all ready in the sanctuary, and at the altar, *on the place of Calvary*.

II. Some are of opinion that they have to join together the two portions of the Cross, as, according to usage, so they state, the condemned criminal who had to carry his cross, while he bore on his shoulders the main beam, was made to carry the shorter transverse beam in his hands. The commonly received tradition among us, as represented in pious paintings, is against this view. If, however, this has to be done, they do it quickly. Very quickly, too, the holes are made ready in the rock in which the crosses shall be fixed.

III. Some of the ancient Fathers, and also of later writers, take for granted that, as a part of the preparation, the crosses are now already fixed firmly in the ground, and that our Blessed Saviour afterwards was standing upright when He was nailed to His Cross. St. Bridget, in her narrative, describes the Crucifixion as effected in this way. When the crosses were not higher than eight or nine feet, as seems to have often been the case, the condemned could easily be crucified standing upright. In our Saviour's case, the cross is supposed to have been fifteen feet in height, and therefore St. Bridget describes a platform erected on which He stood, and how at the bidding of the soldiers He placed Himself in position with His back to the Cross, and stretched out His hands for the nails.

Father Louis de Palma adopts St. Bridget's account of what she saw, and holds this to have been the ordinary mode of crucifixion.

The more commonly received opinion, however, is, that our Blessed Saviour was lying on the ground when crucified. This opinion is supported by the local tradition in Jerusalem. For in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre we find an altar erected on the spot where our Saviour lay down to be nailed to the Cross, and another on the spot where the Cross was raised and planted in the rock. The former altar belongs to the Latins; the latter to the Schismatic Greeks. This conception of the Crucifixion is also found in what are called the Revelations of some holy contemplatives. In a former chapter some explanation has been offered of the discrepancy observable between these writings of holy servants of God, which are called Revelations.

To those writers who with Father de Palma profess to follow ancient history, one answer is given which seems satisfactory: that when there was near a city a fixed place for executions, and when crucifixions were frequent, the crosses remained there stationary, and the condemned were therefore crucified standing upright. In other places, such as Jerusalem, where crucifixion was not an ordinary punishment, the condemned criminal had to carry his own cross to the place appointed, and in this case he was laid on the ground to be fastened to the cross.

According, then, to the tradition which is accepted in Jerusalem, we are told that the Cross is laid ready on the ground at about twenty-five yards from the cave where our Lord is confined; and that about twelve yards further on, the holes are ready in which the crosses are to be fixed.

A. *They bring Him into the place called Golgotha.*

While the appointed executioners are making preparations on the *place of Calvary*, we may contemplate the Priests and Ancients, who are watching and directing as masters of the ceremonies. With many flattering words

they are saying: "*Do it quickly*, brave men; and make all secure. The impostor, we reckon, will not easily escape out of the hands of Romans. He will not, we expect, get off this time." Probably, too, they have strong wine, not mixed with gall, ready for these men, that they may forget the ghastly nature of their work, and push forward with more energy. Bribes are also ready: "*Do it quickly*, and *lead Him cautiously*."

B. *They bring Him into the place called Calvary.*

All is now ready. The word is given: "Guards, bring Jesus forth! *Do it quickly: lead Him carefully*."

In the narrow cell, therefore, in the rock, they take off the fetters in which they have *humbled His feet*, and they set Him upright, and by the two chains fastened to His collar round His neck and by the ropes round His waist, they lead Him *as a lamb to the shearer, as a sheep to the slaughter*. They drag Him quickly up the incline till He stands on the plateau, on the *place of Calvary*. He is now in full view of the crowd gathered on the western and southern sides of Golgotha. When they are at fifteen yards' distance from the little prison, and ten yards' distance from the spot where the Cross is lying, they halt to prepare Him for death by stripping Him.

"*Attendite*." Let us pause a little while to consider in our hearts all that His wounds and bruises and swelling sores have suffered in that prison, at His going in and coming out, how roughly they set Him down on the rock, with what little tenderness and circumspection they lift Him again, and how as they hurry Him along, He is only saved from falling by their suddenly and violently jerking the chains hanging from His neck, and the ropes that bind Him. And the cry of His Heart to His angels is still: *Sinite modo*—Suffer thus far and much farther.

Even holy persons, when they are dying, are most grateful when some alleviation is found for their pain. To our Blessed Saviour, on the contrary, each moment is bringing fresh aggravation to His wounds. *They have*

added to the grief of My wounds. And it is with His full consent that each new agony comes. He courts them all, knowing that *in His bruises we are healed*.

C. Of holy Simeon we read that *he came by the Spirit into the Temple*. We may contemplate the devotion, the fervour with which our Great High Priest goes towards the altar of sacrifice. "*Introibo ad altare Dei*."

"Blessed Mother of God, pray for the priests of thy Divine Son, when they are going to the altar. Say for us, Mother of Jesus: *May the Lord keep thy coming in and thy going out*" (Psalm cxx.).

And so, too, whenever we go to assist at Holy Mass or approach the holy altar, we too may pray that virtue may come out to our souls from our Saviour arriving at the place of Calvary.

STATION III.

THE STRIPPING.

They bring Him into the place called Golgotha (v. 22).

A. The busy Priests and Ancients are arranging every ceremony: "Halt here! Strip Him! *Do it quickly*: but hold Him fast."

"*Attendite*." We must stay a little while to watch the stripping of our Saviour.

The crown of thorns is pulled very quickly and very roughly out of the wounds and thrown down on the ground. The weight of the Cross, the frequent falls, the rough hands of the soldiers, have all helped to imbed the woollen tunic in the sacred wounds; but with their strong arms, the executioners very quickly tear it out again from all the *wounds and swelling sores*.

Oh, when even one wound has to be dressed, how imploringly does the sufferer appeal to the pity of the nurses to do their work gently and with circumspection! *With what circumspection*, Lord Jesus—it is Thy Holy Spirit Who gives us the word—*with what circumspection*, dost Thou

deal with each of our wounds, with our infirmities, with our follies! And how do we repay Thee? How do we treat Thy wounds? Do we dress them or bind them up or foment them with oil? If we could even wash them with a few tears of compassion and contrition!

The question is discussed: Was our Lord stripped of all His clothes?

Some eminent theologians are of opinion that He was. They support the opinion (1) on the authority of some of the early Fathers; (2) by alleging the usual practice of the Romans.

To these arguments it may be answered that unless a sufficient tradition be established, the words of one or two early Fathers cannot decide the question. We know, moreover, that the Fathers may sometimes use the word "naked" as we find it used in the Gospel, of St. Peter in his fishing-boat; in which case the received interpretation is that he had laid aside part of his clothing. No sufficient tradition is brought forward to establish that our Saviour hung naked on the Cross. If paintings and sculptures are any indication of the sense of the faithful, they are with few exceptions on the opposite side.

Then with regard to the argument from Roman practice. Even if such a practice can be established, it would not suffice as a convincing proof. For all through the Sacred Passion, we see usage and practice overruled to suit the designs of God. The crown of thorns was not according to Roman usage. Neither is it Roman practice to crucify a man declared over and over again to be innocent. On the other hand, the Romans did allow the breaking of the bones, but the Divine decree does not. Again, it was not Roman usage to open the side of the dead, but it is part of God's plan that this should be done.

The Venerable Abbess d'Agreda states emphatically that our Lady several times assured her that her Divine Son was never during His Passion entirely stripped of His clothing; and in the Revelations of St. Bridget we read that our Lady's veil was wrapped round His loins, when He was crucified.

Father Barradius, S.J., in his Commentary, considers it as certain that our Lord was not entirely stripped of His clothing.

B. Of St. John the Baptist we read that *beholding Jesus walking he saith, Behold the Lamb of God*. As they tear off the woven tunic, our Blessed Lady says to our hearts, *Behold the Lamb of God*. The paschal lamb roasted last night was only a picture of this Sacred Body—in which from the sole of the foot to the top of the Head there is no soundness—*wounds, bruises, swelling sores*.

"*Attendite.*" Stay a little while to look at the wounds not bound up nor dressed, nor fomented with oil, but all torn open and fresh. Stay a little while to *mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son*.—*Behold the Lamb of God: Behold Him Who taketh away the sin of the world*. Mark, how His sacred flesh is quivering from the agony caused by this merciless undressing.

C. For the fourth time to-day our Blessed Saviour is now stripped. To His Eternal Father He is saying: *Thou knowest My reproach, My confusion, and My shame*. In *Thy sight are all they that afflict Me* (Psalm lxxviii.). Who are they that truly afflict our Lord? Those who love and worship this world and its riches; and His Heart is consoled in the thought of the many who contemplating this stripping, will take courage to spurn riches and love poverty.

D. Holy Job said: *Naked came I out of my mother's womb, naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done. Blessed be the name of the Lord* (c. i.). Our Blessed Saviour goes out of life more naked, in one sense, than when He came into the world. For now besides His clothes, the skin of His sacred Body and His sacred flesh are in part torn away. *If riches abound, set not your heart upon them* (Psalm lxi.).

E. When Aaron was called to the priesthood, vestments were made for him of *violet and purple, scarlet and fine linen* (Exodus xxxix.). Are there none for Jesus, the *High Priest of the good things to come*? None: for to-day He makes all things new. Never till this hour has man been High Priest and Victim too. *His wounds and bruises and swelling sores* are instead of *violet and purple and scarlet*. Behold our High Priest, and *behold the Lamb of God*.

F. And the Cross lying hard by is not only His altar; it is also *Cathedra docentis*—His pulpit, whence He teaches: teaches in the best way, that is, by example. He is going to die, and from His death-bed to teach us how to die.

So now, as a preparation for death, He is being stripped.

"*Attendite.*" "*Siccine separat amara mors?*"—Does bitter death separate and strip in this way? Death strips us as no other power can. *Man, when he shall be dead and stripped, and consumed, I pray you, where is he?* (Job xiv.).

Dead! stripped! consumed! All the three words have much the same sense. What is death but a very violent stripping? The woven tunic is not torn off with a wrench so cruel as when death tears away the soul from the body. And what means the word *consumed*? Is it not that death's servants and helpmates, the worms and the rottenness of the grave, strip off the flesh from the bones?

We make, then, a good preparation for death by beginning to strip ourselves of the trappings of this world. *Oh death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions* (Ecclus. xli.). We are making an excellent preparation for death if we are divesting ourselves of some of those possessions in which the father of lies counsels us to place our peace and contentment.

Why does our most loving Saviour promise such marvellous rewards to those who leave house and lands and home for Him? Because He sees that they are preparing most wisely to die well, to be ready and willing and cheerful when He comes to call them away. For more than ever, in the hour of death, does He love a cheerful giver, one who says promptly and devoutly of life, as of all else: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*

"Ever-Blessed Mother of God, watching at the death-bed of thy Son, pray for us sinners *now* and at the hour of our death—*now*, that we may not allow our hearts to have their peace in the poor possessions of the earth, but may do willingly ourselves what death will come to do whether we will it or not."

G. Richly indeed is he clothed in God's eyes who loves the poverty and nakedness and the wounds of Christ

Jesus. Who is so gloriously bejewelled as the martyr who can say: *I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body?* (Galat. vi.).

SCENE XI.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

STATION I.

And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified Him there (St. Luke xxiii.).
He went forth to that place which is called Calvary: where they crucified Him (St. John xix.).

A. *They crucified Him there.*

The Cross is lying at twelve yards' distance from the spot where they have stripped Jesus. *There they crucified Him.* Contemplate these nurses, with hearts of stone, helping this Man *Whom God has smitten*, to His death-bed, and adding to the *grief of His wounds*. *Like a sheep*, we read, *He is led to the slaughter*. But the patient sheep is not led to a cross to be crucified. If we saw a brute beast so treated, we should be touched with compassion. Has not the Lord God a better claim? Mark how the Most Holy Mother watches with her eyes every step, and at every step she is growing in grace. For as she looks, virtue is ever coming out from His Heart to hers.

Mark, too, how the blessed angels desire to carry Him in their hands lest on the rugged rock He strike His bare and wounded foot against a stone; but they remain in motionless and most loving obedience.

B. *They crucified Him.*

It is but a word—like that other word, *Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him*. It is only a short word. You can read it quickly and pass on, and forget it. But the Ever-Blessed Mother says to us imploringly, "*O vos omnes*. O you who pass by the way, turn aside for a little while. Come to me and stay with me to understand what is hidden in

that word, *They crucified Him.* They crucified my Son. They crucified your Saviour."

C. *They crucified Him.*

When the priest arrives at the altar, he bows down to kiss it. Did Jesus of His own accord kneel down to kiss the Holy Rood? "*Domine, tu nosti.*"—*Lord, Thou knowest.* One thing is certain, that with an intensity and devotion infinitely beyond the fervour of His martyred Apostle, His Sacred Heart welcomes and salutes and venerates the Holy Rood, His friend, His ally, His helpmate in the work of redemption.

D. *They crucified Him.*

And the Priests are ever urging, *Do it quickly.* But in the Garden they had to wait for His pleasure. However much the storm is raging, the winds and the waves must obey Jesus of Nazareth. And therefore they must perforce pause till He has with infinite reverence bowed down before the Eternal Father to express Himself, with all the boundless ardour of His immeasurable love, obedient, *obedient unto death, obedient unto the death of the Cross.*—*I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send? and who shall go for us? And I said: Lo! here I am, send Me. And He said, Go* (Isaias vi.).

And as the Blessed Mother is made aware of this act of oblation—for nothing can He conceal to-day from her, His partner, His helpmate, the new Eve—with quite a new sense and feeling her heart once more breaks forth into her melody: *My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Jesus.*

E. *They crucified Him.*

While we contemplate the obedience of Jesus to His Father unto death, unto the death of the Cross, let us not forget that there is an obedience and a subjection far more wonderful: our unhallowed obedience, our slavish submission to our passions, to men and to Lucifer.

But, as has just now been said, the Priests and Ancients are urgent: "Brave soldiers, good friends, *do it quickly*". And in His secret Heart Jesus is echoing the word, Oh, yes,

do it quickly. And in her compassionate heart too, the second Eve is responding: *Do it quickly.*

O man, were you suffering, how tenderly, with what circumspection would Jesus and His Blessed Mother nurse you and tend you! To any one who will dress a wound of yours or foment it with oil, He says: It is to Me you did it. "*Numquid redditur pro bono malum?*" Is it the rule? Is it a law of nature? Is it some necessity that we must be cruel to Him because He is so gentle and so loving to us?

Not gently, not lovingly, not with *circumspection*, not with care or consideration for His wounds, do they lay Him down on His death-bed. "*Do it quickly, faithful, trusty soldiers!*" And they do it quickly, hurriedly, roughly, and mercilessly.

F. *They crucified Him.*

From different sources, however, we learn that they considered some care necessary, but a most cruel care. For they resolve that it is necessary to measure Jesus for His death-bed. Their plan is to prepare the way for the large blunt nails by boring holes in the hard wood; and it has been shown to holy contemplatives that in order to have a plea for afterwards dragging and stretching and straining His sacred limbs, they purposely allowed more than good measure; and this, we are told, the Blessed Mother with her watchful eye at once discerns, and is seized with an anguish beyond all that has been till now, when she discovers that they intend to rack and drag His limbs till they are adjusted to the holes they are purposely preparing quite out of place.

O quam tristis et afflicta
Fuit illa benedicta
Mater unigeniti.

Oh, how sad, and woe-begone,
Was that ever-blessed one,
Mother of that only Son.

"We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world."

Now with a new meaning the blessed angels are making

their prayer to the Eternal Father, *Behold, O God, and look on the face of Thy Christ.*

G. *They crucified Him.*

Remember My judgment, our most thoughtful and loving Saviour says to us: for thine also shall be so; yesterday for Me, to-day for thee (Ecclus. xxxviii.). "If to-day they measure Me for My death-bed, to-morrow they shall measure thee for thy coffin and thy shroud and thy narrow grave. Watch and be ready."

H. *They crucified Him.*

Knowing all things that should come upon Him, He went forth last night to give Himself up. And now, too, He knows well all they are going to do to Him. And He ratifies what they will. To His Blessed Mother's shuddering heart He once more says that meek word of Gethsemani: "Sinite modo—Suffer ye thus far. Yea, and much farther: for there is still much more that I must do for My vineyard."

He has in mind how in time to come His beloved disciples shall be stretched upon the rack; and though in His humility of Heart He is willing that His disciples do greater things than He does, and perchance suffer greater things than He suffers, yet He does wish to taste and share and sanctify every shape of pain and anguish that is to come to them. For He is to bear the yoke with each of them.

Most readily, most thoroughly, most lovingly the Blessed Mother acquiesces, and once more repeats in her heart her prayer of days gone by, her old word still ever new, and most welcome to her God: "*Behold (Thy) handmaid, my God, my Son: be it done to me according to Thy word.*" Let them rack and tear my heart, if only fallen man shall be once again the child of our Father Who is in Heaven."

And accordingly they measure Him for crucifixion, and purposely mismeasure Him.

Then for a moment there is a lull for the last short

preparation. "*Do it quickly,*" the Heart of our Lord is saying; and the executioners lose no time. For, *according to Thy ordinance, Lord Jesus, this day goeth on.*

I. *They crucified Him.*

And now they are ready, and they command Jesus to stretch out His right arm, and to lay His hand carefully on the place they have made ready. He is *obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.* And not to God alone obedient, but to man, for His Father's sake.

Out of love for His Father He intends to obey man at the altar to the *consummation of the world.* This obedience shall often cost Him more than His obedience on Calvary.

The executioner therefore speaks the word, and it is done. He commands, and Jesus obeys, as if man were His Creator and His God.

J. *They crucified Him.*

In that hour the Ever-Blessed Mother hears the wielded hammer descend upon the large nail. For she is so placed that she hears all and sees all. She is not to be defrauded of the good day. *No particle of the good gift shall pass her by (Ecclus. xiv.).*

Her heart, too, quickened by her motherly love—*non fallunt viscera matrem*—hears the large blunt nail crunching its way through the bones and sinews and muscles of that sacred hand that blessed so many and harmed no one.

We are told that twelve heavy blows of the hammer are needed to drive the blunt nail through the hard wood. At the scourging Jesus says: *They have worked on My back,* like to the smith at his anvil. Now the brawny arm of the smith is fastening and riveting the sacred hand to the Holy Rood.

Absit! our human thoughts say; *Absit!* "Far be such a sound from thy ears, Blessed among women! For these things ought not to be to-day."

I. For on this day, thirty-four years ago, St. Gabriel was with thee at Nazareth, and the *Word was made flesh,*

and began to dwell in thy sacred womb. To-day, then, Jerusalem, the city of God, by a special privilege of its own, and by anticipation, ought to have already its Angelus bell, proclaiming from the housetop to the crowd round Golgotha the word whispered to thee in secret, that thou art *full of grace* and the *Lord is with thee*. For *thou art the glory of Jerusalem*.

2. And to-day, too, the trumpets ought to be pealing over Golgotha, and the people re-echoing the song first sung by Israel on the borders of the Red Sea: *Pharao's chariots and his army He hath cast into the Red Sea. The depths have covered them; they are sunk to the bottom like a stone* (Exodus xv.). For this is the festival of the Pasch.

3. To-day, again, all Judea and all the tribes of Israel ought to be following in procession Jesus of Nazareth, *mighty in word and work*, and *beautiful above the sons of men*, the second Adam, with the second Eve by His side; because on this sixth day of the week it was, and perchance at this sixth hour, that in the beginning the Eternal Father created man and woman to *His own image*. *To His own image He created them. Male and female, He created them*.

"But, oh, no! Not as we will, O God our Father, but as Thou. Thy thoughts are better than our thoughts; Thy ways are high above ours, as heaven is above earth."

As she listens to the sound of the falling hammer, "so strong," writes a holy Father, "is Mary's love for us that she can welcome even with a gladness, we may say, the Crucifixion of her Son". "*Quasi gaudenter*," that is, with that peace and gladness that *passeth understanding*.

For she knows, as she listens, that the nails are fastening to the Cross the handwriting that was against us; and, compared with the everlasting weeping and wailing, their sound is welcome, thrice welcome.

Oh, yes, it is the sound of the solemn and sacred passing-bell that marks fittingly and becomingly the most

sacred hour of this great day of grace, not to be forgotten in time or in eternity.

4. On this sixth day, and at this sixth hour, we are told, the first Adam stretched out his sinful hand to repay his God, his Creator, his Father, with disobedience and rebellion and treason, and apostasy to the ranks of Lucifer.

On this sixth day, and at the sixth hour, the second Adam, Jesus, in the flower and beauty of His Divine Manhood, with loving obedience stretches out His right hand to pay back to His Father and our Father, His God and our God, all that reverence and service and love of which the sacrilegious hand of our first father robbed Him.

Lo! His sacred, His feeble, His beneficent, His ever-healing hand, His hand of benediction, is nailed to the tree, as a reparation for the sin of the hand that stripped the tree—"Non sicut delictum ita et donum" (Romans v.). A thousand thousand times more ample and wide-reaching the reparation than the sin. The blessed angels can find no words sufficient for their ineffable gladness at the compensation made to their God.

Were holy Job here on Calvary, more devoutly, more feelingly than ever would he pray: My Lord and my God, *to the work of Thy hands Thou shalt stretch out Thy right hand*.

"Lord Jesus, while I contemplate this wound in Thy right hand, increase in me faith and hope and love and contrition. May I be able to say: *Now have I begun. This is the change of the right hand of the Most High*."

On this day, holy Simeon foretold, *out of many hearts thoughts shall be revealed*.

The thoughts of men on Calvary are very unlike the thoughts of the Blessed Mother and the thoughts of the angels—watching unseen.

K. *They crucified Him*.

"Well done, well done, brave Romans!" the Priests and Ancients are saying with their desecrated tongues.

"Jesus, we think, will not easily undo this work of yours. Oh, well done!" And the man who has thus driven home the first nail, surely deserves largess. The oil of sinners, the flattery of wicked sinners, is poured out on his head, and the bribe of blood-money makes him happy. He rises up panting for breath after his hard work, but smiling over his success.

"Do it quickly, good friends; finish your work."

Now is seen the reason why the heart of our Blessed Mother was sinking within her when she perceived the mismeasurement. The holes for the nails are designedly too far apart; but what matters that? His limbs can be stretched. And to His Eternal Father Jesus is saying: *My Heart is ready, O God, My Heart is ready.* In that hour He is not ignorant of the boast that a persecuting judge shall one day utter in this land of ours over the racked martyr: "I have made him a foot longer than God made him". *"Sinite modo—suffer ye so far, My angels; let it be; let Me taste the chalice of My martyrs and bless it."*

No bone, therefore, shall be broken: *You shall not break a bone of Him*, the watchful angels say to the souls of these executioners; but they can rack and stretch His limbs.

While one, then, kneels upon the crucified arm, that he may thus keep it in position, the other men use the strength of their strong arms to drag the left hand to its appointed place.

In the record left to us of holy Job, we read this marvellous prayer of his compassionate heart: *If I have denied to the poor what they desired, and made the eyes of the widow wait; if I have lifted my hand against the fatherless, let my shoulder fall from its joint* (Job xxxi.). If we were to make that prayer and it were heard, man could no more go forth to his work until the evening; our arms would be powerless. But Jesus, our Brother, our Surety, Who is become to-day the sinner for us; Who has put on our dress to bring down on Himself, not Esau's blessing, but the curse due to us:

He is making a great reparation for our unmerciful hands. His shoulder is dragged out of its joint.

L. They crucified Him.

A moment's pause, and once more the Blessed Mother is standing erect, with her weeping eyes fixed on the face of her Son, and she is again counting with her heart the blows of the hammer.

It is only the same thing over again, we say, for we easily tire of sorrow. We like to pass on, to find elsewhere a change. But the nailing of the left hand is not merely *what hath been done*. Since the right hand was crucified, the shoulder-joints have been racked till they are dislocated.

Since the right hand was crucified, these brawny men have knelt down and laid their weight on His wounded Body.

Since the right hand was crucified, pain that we cannot measure has been added to what was before; and those who watch the sick-bed well know that pain, as it goes on, wears out courage and resisting power.

Holy writers tell us that the agony is so great when the nail is being driven through the left hand, that, as last night in the Garden, Jesus ought by rights to have sunk down on the sward to die of grief—so now, by rights, He ought to swoon away from agony, and become lost to sense.

"Attendite." Stay here a little while, for Jesus is not unconscious nor insensible. He can see, He can hear; He is attending to every compassionate word revealed out of our hearts.

M. They crucified Him.

As we look on these two crucified hands, *Sursum corda!*

Blessed is he, we read, *that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor. The Lord will deliver him in the evil day. The Lord will help him on his bed of sorrow. THOU HAST TURNED ALL HIS COUCH, Lord Jesus, IN HIS SICKNESS* (Psalm xl.).

It is with these two wounded hands that our Saviour will nurse His dying servant, who has had a right spirit

towards the poor. Oh, what a contrast! The gentleness, the *circumspection* wherewith Jesus will tend His suffering servant, and *turn his couch*, that is, as we say, make his bed; and the heartlessness, the cruelty, the savage inhumanity which man has for Him! *Nunquid redditur pro bono malum?* Is it a rule, a law of our fallen nature, that we must return malice for goodness?

"O compassionate Mother, show us more and more the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

N. *They crucified Him.*

His right hand and the left. *Thy hands have made me and formed me*, the Psalmist prays; *therefore, give me understanding*. When he uttered this prayer, his eye had not seen the hands of his God nailed to the wood. His ear had not heard His patient moaning, nor the hammer falling on the large, rough nail. It had not entered into his heart to conceive the Blessed Mother standing by and looking into the eyes of her Jesus while they are crucifying Him.

In quite a new way we may say: "*Thy hands have made me*, Lord Jesus; over again, in a better way, when, thanks to Thy Sacred Passion, we were born of water and the Holy Ghost".

If holy Job had seen what we have seen, with fervour multiplied a hundred-fold, he would pray: *Thy hands have made me*, Lord Jesus, *and fashioned me round about*; and *dost Thou thus cast me down headlong on a sudden?* *Why dost Thou not suffer me to be clean from my iniquity?* (Job x.).

O. *They crucified Him.*

It was not only to Jerusalem that He spoke in the days of old—when *Sion said: The Lord hath forsaken me and the Lord hath forgotten me*; and He at once made haste to repel the calumny—*Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee*. BEHOLD I HAVE GRAVEN THEE IN MY HANDS, and *thy walls are always before My eyes* (Isa. xlix.).

Two proofs He gives that He cannot forget us, or cease to pity us: (1) Because He has all a mother's pitying

love, and much more. To the best of fathers and mothers He has only given a small, very small spark of the fire burning in His own Heart.

And then (2) How can I forget thee? *I have graven thee in My hands.*

To-day this prophecy has its fulfilment. Aaron was to have the names of Israel's sons engraven on two precious stones attached to his ephod. Our High Priest chooses a more excellent way: He has us and our names engraven on His hands.

P. *They crucified Him.*

Thou openest Thy hand, Lord Jesus, *and fillest every creature with benediction.*

"*Attendite.*" We must make leisure, to *consider* in our hearts that now all our blessings come to us from the wounded hands of our Lord. His Passion makes *all things new*. Water and wine, bread and oil, the sunlight and the still night, are all hallowed, and consecrated, and blessed, and elevated for our use, so as to have some share of that power to help us to Heaven that is given to sacramentals. Creation is created over again to-day; and the Eternal Father, Who gives us His only Son to-day to be our Jesus, *how shall He not also with Him give us all things?*

Q. *They crucified Him.*

We are told that each of the four executioners was allowed, as his perquisite and privilege, to drive in one of the nails. Therefore, on the second executioner too the oil of the sinner is now poured out to fatten his head. The unholy lips of the castaway Priests have blessings for him also. "*Euge, euge!*" *They opened their mouth wide against Me; they said, Well done, well done! Our eyes have seen it* (Psalm xxxiv.). *Well done!*

"Good friends, you must be tired. *You are not sad*, we think, *nor grieved in your mind*, that we need offer you strong drink and wine, for you have done a good work. But our Law tells us to pay the workman *the price of his labour the same day, before the going down of the sun.*" Therefore they

give this man too his blood-money, and to both the *strong drink* that Lamuel's mother prescribes for *the sad*, and the wine she would have given to *them that are grieved in mind*.

R. *They crucified Him.*

"But now, brave men, good friends, brave men and faithful, *do it quickly*, finish your excellent work."

As our Saviour teaches, let us learn from *the children of this world*. These Priests and Ancients are working without any hope of reward, they are walking *through hard ways*, wearying *themselves in the ways of iniquity and destruction*. Yet mark their marvellous perseverance. As long as there remains something to be done, so long it is as if nothing had been done. They press forward to their goal, as if contending for the crown *incorruptible*, and *never fading*, of which the Apostles write.

"Ever-Blessed Mother, pray for us and at the hour of our death, that we may persevere to the end, and be saved."

S. *They crucified Him.*

The most troublesome part of the work is now to come. The ropes and chains, we are told, which had been used to bind our Saviour, must now help to stretch His Sacred Body.

"It is hard," they say, "well-nigh impossible, to draw down the feet to the place we have made ready." "No," one says, as they pause, "we shall never do it." And now, moreover, though the night was cold, the noonday sun of the Judean spring-time is very warm. The drops of sweat are gathering on the foreheads of these labourers. They are wearying *themselves in the way of iniquity*.

But, "Courage, brave men," the uneasy Rulers answer. "Courage. Rest a while, and refresh yourselves." *Let them drink and forget their want* of strength, and *remember their sorrow no more* (Prov. xxxi.).

So now, with renewed energy, some throw their weight on the wounded limbs, to prevent the sacred hands from being torn from their places. The others pull, and rack,

and dislocate the joints till they have forced the sacred feet to their proper position, and there bind them with ropes while they make ready the nails.

They crucified Him.

I. The question has been discussed whether the nails used were three or four. The more common opinion among the faithful is perhaps that there were only three. Those writers who compare the three vows of religious life to the three nails assume that there were only three. And yet commentators who study the question carefully come to the conclusion, (1) that no one nail of the size of those preserved as sacred relics could have transfixed the two sacred feet. And (2) they think, moreover, that in the annals of the Church more than three nails are accounted for.

II. These commentators further hold, that either there must have been a footboard to support the sacred feet, or a place hollowed out in the main beam of the Cross in which the feet could rest. Without some such support, they consider, the wounds in the sacred hands must have been so rent and torn that the Sacred Body would have fallen. This difficulty has led some writers to suppose that cords were used to help the nails to keep the Body in position on the Cross.

III. About the length of the Cross also there has been discussion. We are told that the cross used ordinarily did not exceed eight or nine feet in height, but that sometimes, when a more notorious criminal was to be crucified, a higher cross was used. Accordingly the common tradition is that our Saviour's Cross was fifteen feet in length. Certain writers suggest that the Rulers, wishing Him to be the conspicuous malefactor, arranged that His Cross should be taller than the others. This suggestion, however, cannot well be reconciled with the historical account accepted as authentic, that when St. Helen discovered the three crosses, she found it impossible to determine which was the Holy Rood, till the miraculous cure was wrought to solve the doubt. This story being accepted as genuine history, it becomes clear that the three crosses were equal in length, and clear too that the thieves were nailed to their crosses as Jesus was. If they had been only tied to the crosses, as some artists represent them in their paintings, St. Helen and the Patriarch would have discovered the True Cross by the holes for the nails.

IV. Certain early writers tell us that the Cross was made out of four kinds of wood—the palm, the olive, the cedar, and the cypress.

T. *They crucified Him.*

"*Attendite.*" Give heed. Let us watch with our eyes, and listen with our ears.

With our ears we hear the imprecations against Jesus,

because of the trouble He is giving. It is all His fault that they cannot more easily fit Him to His death-bed. Alas! What they are doing is what we too are apt to do. We blame others severely, and perchance chastise them for mistakes or faults which are the result of our own neglect, and our own blindness, and our own sins.

U. *They crucified Him.*

More heavy blows are needed to fasten the sacred feet to the wood than were wanted for the hands. The work is more difficult. And lo! after they have begun, when the Blessed Mother has heard the first, the second, the third terrible sound, there is unexpectedly an interruption. They find it, we are told, so difficult to force the blunt nail through the sacred foot, that they draw it out again, and with the gimlet which they use to prepare in the wood a passage for the nails, pierce the sacred feet also, that the nail may make its way more easily.

“Mother of Sorrows, pray for us sinners. Remind thy Son, Jesus, of His promise: *I will pour out upon (them) the spirit of grace and of prayers, and they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced* (Zach. xii.). Do this for us, Holy Mother, obtain for us grace that we may continue to look on Him Whom we have pierced, till we realise with much contrition that *He was wounded for our iniquities*. His sacred feet are bruised and wounded and crucified, because our *ways are perverse, and our steps infamous* (Prov. ii.). *We walk not by the path of life, our steps are wandering and unaccountable* (Prov. v.). *We have erred from the way of truth. We have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known* (Wisdom v.). Alas! *The chastisement of our peace is upon Him.*”

V. *They crucified Him.*

Pilate asked, *What evil hath He done?* We may ask ourselves now, *What evil* have the innocent feet of our Lord done to deserve this cruelty?

(a) Ask those who lived with Him. They tell us: *He went about doing good.*

(b) Wake up out of his grave the Prophet of the Passion, the holy martyr, Isaias, and see how his tears will flow. Why, “these,” he tells us, sobbing, “these are the feet I saw in my vision, so *beautiful upon the mountains; the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, and that preacheth peace*”.

(c) Speak to St. Magdalen. Her tears tell us: “It was at these most sacred feet that I found grace and pardon and salvation. Let me wash them with my tears; let me with my contrite heart kiss them, and with the best spikenard anoint them: the beautiful feet that brought the Gospel of peace to my soul. But oh! what evil have they done that they should be crucified?”

W. *They crucified Him.*

If we doubt what others tell us concerning His crucified feet, we can, if we please, *consider in our heart* His own account of what is done in this hour. *Many dogs have encompassed Me; the council of the malignant hath besieged Me. They have dug My hands and feet; they have numbered all My bones. They have looked and stared on Me* (Psalm xxi.).

They have dug My hands and feet. If, as we are told by some diligent students of the Sacred Passion, the nails used are large blunted nails, the Psalmist's words will convey to us the work of the large blunt nail crushing its way slowly, and driven in, as the spade is forced into the hard soil. Others, however, among whom are Father à Lapide and St. Bridget, speak of the nails as sharp-pointed.

They have numbered My bones. For the pulling and dragging completes what the scourging left undone. It is easy now to number the bones of this mangled and racked and outstretched Body.

Many dogs have encompassed Me. For He is become a defenceless lamb, the prey of the wild dogs and the wolves.

The council of the malignant hath besieged Me. For see how the relentless Priests and Ancients press round, and keep close, and watch Him that He do not escape.

And they have looked and stared on Me. For they gloat over His agony, and are with staring eyes watching every feature of His sacred face.

And, meanwhile, we must not fail to mark all the pity, the compassion in His sacred eyes, with which He makes a return for their scowls.

X. *They crucified Him.*

And in his vision the Prophet saw strangers gazing on these sacred wounds, made by the nails, and heard them put this question to our Saviour: *What are these wounds in the midst of Thy hands?* We may add: What are these wounds in Thy sacred feet? And He has recorded the answer: *With these was I wounded in the house of them that loved Me* (Zach. xiii.).

"*Attendite.*" We must make leisure for these words. Clearly we see in them that what is impressed most deeply on our Saviour's Heart is not the action of these pagan soldiers. Theirs are only the surface wounds. But the wounds that are gone deep and are fixed as a seal on His Heart, are those inflicted by disciples who have known Him and *once loved Him—in the house of them that loved Me.* Many times and in divers ways He repeats this truth to us. *If My enemy had reviled Me, I would verily have borne it. But thou, a man of one mind, My guide, and My familiar* (Psalm liv.).

St. Paul reminds us how much more grievous the sin is of those *who were once illuminated; have tasted also the Heavenly life* (the Blessed Eucharist), *and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost; have, moreover, tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come; and are, after all this, fallen away* (Hebrews vi.).

Alas! *who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes?* (Jerem. ix.).

"Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that while we look on these wounds, we may have lively sentiments of faith, hope, and love, and contrition imprinted in our hearts."

Y. *They crucified Him.*

The Romans are experts in this terrible art of crucifying. The weight of the body and the contortions and the struggles of the crucified, they know by experience, may loosen and dislodge the nails; but they have learned how to make all secure. In some of the most esteemed books on the Sacred Passion we find their plan detailed. The executioners turn the Holy Cross in order to clench the nails at the other side. Strong men can easily turn the Holy Rood. But what does this mean?

Contemplate our Blessed Lord with His bruised face and all His wounds pressed against the rock by the weight of the Cross. As He lies there, hear Him say to us: *I am a worm and no man.*

Hear our Blessed Lady also sob aloud: *O you who pass by, see if there be sorrow like to my sorrow.* For this is a new inhumanity; and we are told that it appalled the heart of His Blessed Mother. But once more the never-tiring meekness of her Divine Son tranquillises her with the word: "*Sinite modo—Suffer on still, Holy Mother. More, yet more! Weep not over Me, weep over your child, the poor sinner, the fallen child of God, whose soul hath cleaved to the pavement* (Psalm cxviii.). For when I say to him: *Sursum corda!*—look up, child of God!—like *the deaf asp he stoppeth his ears*, and will not look on Me, but says: *He is grievous (to us) to behold.*"

STATION II.

They crucified Him there (St. Luke xxiii. 33).

A. *They crucified Him.*

The Priests and Ancients and Scribes and Pharisees are beginning at last to breathe freely. He is crucified; He has not escaped. All through the night and ever since the dawn they have been fearing lest He should escape out of their hands. It was almost against hope that they hoped, for He has so often escaped them. Now, at

last, He is crucified. "Oh, well done, well done, comrades; the Romans know how to do their work. Do you think, soldiers, that Jesus, the great worker of miracles, will escape this time? Will He be able to undo your work?" They are greatly contented to see Jesus of Nazareth lying down at their feet with His face to the ground.

"Three days ago, do you remember, He was proclaiming at the Temple that He was the Lord spoken of by David. He was to sit on God's right hand, and to make His enemies His footstool. Who is the footstool now, Jesus?" For they stamp upon Him and tread Him under foot.

B. They crucified Him.

But there is no time to be lost. "Finish your excellent work, kind friends! Lift up the Cross: let the people see the seducer!" And their hilarity gets the better and better of their avarice; and they dole out again largess to the executioners.

It is stated that the hole prepared for the Cross was thirty feet from the spot where Jesus has been crucified. Over these thirty feet, we are told, they drag our Saviour as He lies, with His face downwards. But as it does not fit in with God's decrees that this excess of savage cruelty should have its full effect, the blessed angels, at the behest of the broken-hearted Mother, their Queen, interfere to give some protection to the Sacred Body.¹

C. They crucified Him.

Pray do it quickly. Yet suddenly they discover that they must once again halt for a brief space. "We are forgetting," some one says, "that He is a King. Where is His crown? The King must die with His crown on His Head!" We find it specified in one of the copies of the sentence supposed to have been written by Pilate, that Jesus is to be mocked as a King in His Crucifixion. The crown, then, which is lying a few paces away, is quickly

fetched, and quickly readjusted on the Sacred Head. The old wounds are reopened, fresh ones are made. Our Blessed Lord knows His own secret, where there is still place for a wound, a bruise, or a swelling sore. From the sole of His foot to the top of His Head, it is the wish of His Heart that there be no soundness in Him.

And Holy Mary once more in her heart says, "*Fiat mihi*". He knew all that was to come to Him when He offered Himself. And to her He had revealed all. He could not hide from her what He was about to do and suffer.

It is thou, Blessed Mother, who for our sakes, and for the glory of thy God, hast by thy consent placed this crown upon thy Son Jesus.

"*Attendite.*" Oh, let us make time, and go aside for a few moments to see our King in the diadem wherewith His Mother crowned Him on the day of His espousals. And His own Heart, so covetous of every pain that may help to win men to Him—His own Heart is urgent that no particle of the good gifts escape Him.

D. They crucified Him.

The delay is a short one. "Now, good friends, brave soldiers, lift up this great King. Let the people see the great Prophet, and understand what the Romans think of Him."

"*Attendite.*" Let us for a little while watch the raising of the Holy Rood. Oh, with how little tender nursing or *circumspection* do these flattered torturers handle the wounded Body while lifting the Cross! Mark how the Blessed Mother with her accurate compassion measures all the unspeakable anguish when they let down the Holy Cross with a jolt into the hole of the rock.

Then too with our eyes we must note the position of extreme distress and agony into which the Sacred Body settles down when it begins to hang on the erected Rood.

"Oh, be careful!" we cry out, if we see any one about to touch a wounded man. They train so carefully, we are

¹ Contemplations of Venerable M. d'Agreda.

told, nurses for the battlefield, that they know how to lift the wounded skilfully, and even the men of the police force too, that they may understand how to carry to the hospital tenderly the suffering body bruised by an accident.

Contemplate too and note with what scant commiseration and tenderness they drive in the wedges to fix firmly the unsteady and reeling Cross.

The Blessed Mother alone can measure the power of each shock and each jolt to reproduce the pain of the *wounds and bruises and swelling sores*.

For indeed they *are not bound up, nor dressed, nor fomented with oil*.

E. *They crucified Him.*

The triumph of the Rulers seems complete. Annas is receiving congratulations. His policy has won the day. Jesus of Nazareth is crucified. In the excess of their jubilation the Priests and severe Pharisees are inclined to forget their outer gravity and decorum. They gesticulate to the people to draw near and behold. The Cross stands erect. The people can all see the mock King, the false Prophet, the seducer, Who dared to denounce and revile the Priests and Ancients. Perchance they give command to their hirelings to raise a shout of triumph, to mark the accomplishment of the great work and proclaim from Golgotha the glad tidings of great joy, that Jesus is crucified, that the one Man is about to die in order that the whole race may not perish.

Meanwhile, there is a peace come, a balm given to the Heart of our Lord. He is at last lifted up from the earth. His good time is come. The promises shall begin to have their fulfilment. *I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself.* And from His Heart into the heart of His Blessed Mother there goes out that peace which passeth understanding, that peace which the world cannot give.



- A. FOSSE.
- B. HOLY SEPULCHRE.
- C. STONE OF UNCTION.
- D. CITY WALL, N.W.
- E. PIT WHERE THE CROSSES WERE BURIED.



MOUNT CALVARY.

CHAPTER III.

THIRD WATCH OF THE DAY.

The Sixth Hour.

SCENE I.

THE PLACE CALLED GOLGOTHA.

STATION I.

Then were crucified with Him two thieves : one on the right hand, and one on the left (St. Matt. xxvii.).

They crucified Him there : and the robbers, one on the right hand, and the other on the left (St. Luke xxiii.).

A. They crucified Him there.

Our Blessed Lord is now *lifted up*, hanging on His Cross. The Chief Priests and Ancients are smiling on one another. Annas, their great leader, is like one who has earned a triumph. He is not praying *Let not the oil of sinners fatten my head*. His heart is not crying out: *Not to us give glory*. But all is not ready yet for the shout of triumph, and the peal of trumpets. Jesus must die as a malefactor and with malefactors. Their opening word to Pilate this morning was, *If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee*.

In spite of want of proof, in spite of Pilate's obstinate resistance, they have Him condemned and crucified. All that is wanted now is that He be *reputed with the wicked*, and die in the company of malefactors.

B. Then were crucified with Him two thieves.

Their desire is soon accomplished. As has been already mentioned, each of the condemned has his own four exe

cutioners; each his own hard nurses for his death-bed. They are to do all that is necessary for each one that he may die crucified. They must do him to death, and watch him till he dies.

While, then, they have been crucifying Jesus, there came from the cross of Dismas hard by, and from the cross of Gesmas, the echo of every blow of the hammer. But with this difference. Of our Lord it is written, "*Jesus autem tacebat*". He shall be dumb as a lamb (Isaias liii.). When he was reviled, He did not revile (1 St. Peter ii.). But from the cross of the thieves there comes at every fresh torture the howling and the raving of men who have no hope: *an image of (what) was to come*: a prelude of the *weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth* which goes on in that prison where man exists without hope for ever. At one moment they cry out beseechingly to the soldiers to pity and to spare. But for the fallen in those days there was no pity. "*Vae victis!*" That which is feeble is found to be nothing worth. As a matter of course, a slave or a prisoner is first tortured till he owns himself guilty, and then mercilessly chastised for his crime. Let those who blaspheme against the redemption of Christ as unprofitable, study the pages of history in which are recorded the ingenuity and unrestrained liberty wherewith Prætors and Governors tortured the martyrs of Christ. Of Dismas we are told that under torture he acknowledged his robberies, and confession did not secure for him, as it does for us, an absolution.

Lord, we cry out, if Thou shalt observe iniquities, who shall endure it? And with reason. If from the Cross of Christ and the open fountains of grace in His Body hope does not come out to our poor hearts, what man can bear up against the racking pain of sickness? against the tortures that men's cruelty can inflict? against the bitterness of death?

C. *Two thieves: one on the right hand, one on the left.*

"Do it quickly, brave men, good men." And the crosses are seen to rise. Dismas on the right hand, Gesmas on

the left. And as they fall with a shock into the holes prepared, and their suspended bodies settle down into position, their shrieks of agony are heard throughout the crowd, who close in and press nearer to see better, and to hear more of all this great sorrow.

D. *Two thieves: one on the right hand, one on the left.*

Now let the trumpets sound, and tell the good news! Now do the Priests and Ancients, so long trampled on by Jesus of Nazareth, feel themselves righted and reinstated. "He is hanging now, a malefactor among malefactors; the arch-criminal between criminals; *one on each side, and Jesus in the midst*. The crowned King of malefactors and impostors and seducers."

"We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee. Because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world."

E. *Two thieves: one on the right hand, one on the left.*

Here again: *There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, no counsel against the Lord*. They know it not, these triumphant Priests and Ancients, but they are working along with all things else the will of the Master Whom they have crucified. For He, far more than they, has been wishing to have the robbers, one on His right hand and one on His left. It is only what He said last night in the Cenacle: *I say to you, that this that is written must yet be fulfilled in Me: And with the wicked was He reckoned* (St. Luke xxii.). Contemplate the tender welcome which the Heart of Jesus crucified speaks secretly to the hearts of His two companions. Oh, how He wishes to gather them both to Himself as the first-fruits of Calvary! And with what a motherly heart does Holy Mary look up to both of them, to Dismas on the right and Gesmas on the left, and pray fervently that they may both become His friends, and abide with Him throughout His temptations.

F. *Two thieves: one on the right, one on the left.*

With the wicked He was reckoned: and this is His own choice. This, He said, *must be fulfilled*. It has been

arranged in Heaven that men may carry out this part of their design.

For (1) Jesus does not wish to die alone. It is His Holy Spirit Who dictated that word: "*Væ soli!*"—*Wo to the solitary!* He did not come on earth to be a lonely isolated Man. *Se nascens dedit socium.* From His Birth He gave Himself to be man's companion. The bereaved, and the suffering, if they can afford it, are glad to pay a good price to secure a suitable and trusty companion, who shall be to them, not a servant, but far more, far better than a servant. Jesus came into the world under a covenant that He will be a companion to every one of His brethren; that is, to every child of the fallen family of Adam and Eve. When the cavilling lawyer put what he thought his unanswerable difficulty: *Who is my neighbour?*—How can I know who is my neighbour? Where can I draw the line between neighbours and strangers?—Jesus quickly gave the definition: Your neighbour is every one of your brethren who wants help from you, not one excepted, old or young, white or black, the kind or the froward, rich or poor, comely or unsightly.

G. *Two thieves: one on each side; Jesus in the midst.*

And then (2) His Cross is His pulpit; and He is preaching this great fundamental truth: that He is dying for sinners. Therefore He chooses to die with sinners. He has put on Esau's clothing. He is Esau in all things, but sin. This is His will. This must be. He chooses to be reckoned on Calvary among sinners. What is there that belongs to the sinner (excepting his guilt) that Jesus has not taken upon Him? He is preaching—not from the house-top, but from a position where He is better seen and better heard—from His holy Cross He is preaching a truth that shall be echoed throughout Christendom to the consummation of the world, that He is become Sin for us. He is the first-born of the sinful family; the eldest brother of sinners, one of themselves, like to them

in their penalties, and in all things, save and except their hideous sin.

In life He eat and drank with sinners. The Pharisee thought that if He were a real prophet He never would suffer the Magdalen to kiss His feet. This was not the thought of Jesus. "I have come purposely to seek and to save that which was lost."

"I am the Lamb of God, and My whole wish is to take away the sins of the world."

"I am the Good Shepherd; put on one side the ninety-nine just, I will leave them to find My one lost sheep. When My prodigal comes back to Me, then shall there be gladness for Me and for My Mother and for My angels."

"He that wishes to have his own sins blotted out and forgotten, and cast behind My back, let him help Me to bring back My lost sheep. His charity shall cover a multitude of sins."

H. *One on each side; Jesus in the midst.*

Whenever our Lord says, *Our Father*, He sets Himself down in the midst of His sinful brethren, as if one of them. So, too, when we pray, in our own minds we must be reputed with the wicked. We must set ourselves down in the midst of a group of poor sinners—particularly poor sinners whom we have judged severely and condemned—for we are like to them. Among all sinners, we must also especially single out and gather round us, when we pray, those whom we have scandalised; that is, those whom we have drawn into sin, by provoking them, or by bad advice, or by example: *From the sins of others, spare Thy servant, O Lord.*

I. *With Him two thieves.*

He was reputed with the wicked.

If so, in what a delusion are we all! For even the holy cry out: *Redeem me from the calumnies of men, that I may keep Thy commandments* (Psalm cxviii.). Is not this as much as to say: "If I am exposed to calumny, if I am unjustly reputed with the wicked, I cannot keep Thy com-

mandments"? Beyond all doubt calumny does oftentimes unman entirely even strong virtue. But this can only be because men do not look steadily at Jesus crucified, *Whom they have pierced*. Calumny is doubtless one of the most envenomed of the fiery serpents whose bite is so fatal; but all who looked on the brazen serpent were cured of the bite and did not die. And the brazen serpent is only a sign, a type, of Jesus become Sin for us, and lifted from the earth upon His Cross.

Which is better for us? To be reputed, with Jesus, unjustly among sinners? or that the sinner should with his oil of flattery fatten our heads, saying to us, *Euge! euge!*—Well done! well done!

STATION II.

And the people stood beholding, and the Rulers with them derided Him, saying: He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He be Christ, the elect of God (St. Luke xxiii.). The Chief Priests, mocking, said with the Scribes, one to another: He saved others; Himself He cannot save (St. Mark xv.).

The Chief Priests with the Scribes and Ancients, mocking, said: If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe in Him (St. Matt. xxvii.).

A. The people stood beholding, and the Rulers derided Him.

The people behold. The Rulers deride. *Have they made thee a ruler?* the Holy Spirit says to us; *be not lifted up (Ecclus. xxxii.)*. It is hard for a ruler to realise to what an extent men are prone to agree with him, and follow him slavishly; and how much, therefore, it behoves him to walk cautiously. *Lead Him carefully*, is the watch-word so often repeated during the Sacred Passion. "Lead them carefully," "Lead your subjects carefully," is a warning word never to be forgotten by rulers. You have a following. You have men watching you and copying and

imitating, as if they were painting your portrait. Lead them all carefully.

"What say you, Romans? Do you think that this great worker of wonders will be able to undo your work? Will the nails by you so well clenched come out of the wood at His bidding?" The twelve soldiers that have worked so hard are round the crosses, wiping the drops of sweat from their brow, and again refreshing and cheering themselves with the *strong drink of the sad and the wine of the distressed in mind*. They can join heartily in the merry jest of the Rulers.

I am become a reproach to them. They saw Me and they shook their heads (Psalm cviii.).

B. The Chief Priests, with the Scribes and Ancients, mocking, said: If He be the King of Israel, let Him come down from the Cross, and we will believe in Him.

"Do you hear, Jesus of Nazareth? do you mark our words, Galilean? We solemnly promise to believe in you, if you come down from the Cross. Let us wait and give Him time. Will you not promise, High Priest Caiphas? Do you not pledge yourself, venerable Annas, to follow Jesus as His disciple to Galilee and back, if He will only come down now? Give Him time. He cannot get the nails out all at once.

"You worked many miracles for the poor and ignorant. Work just one that will satisfy the Rulers and the educated men.

"You promised, Jesus, to pull down the Temple and build it up again in three days. But we do not require such a troublesome miracle as that. Only come down from the Cross. Just loosen the nails and come down, and you have us all for your disciples; and the people will certainly follow us. What! no answer! no move to come down!" "*Jesus autem tacebat.*"

C. The Rulers derided Him, saying: Let Him save Himself, if He be the elect of God.

Having thus revealed the thoughts out of their own

hearts around the Cross, they are glad to hurry off to teach the people what to think.

For they have (1) to assure the people that this is no work of theirs. The Romans have done all. The Roman Governor has tried the cause, and examined Jesus carefully, and condemned Him. On this errand, therefore, they pass about among the multitude; speaking to the men of Jerusalem, to the strangers from Galilee, and to those from other parts.

They then (2) repeat to all their convincing argument: "We have promised solemnly to believe in this Man, Jesus, if He will only come down from the Cross. What can we do more? You heard Him declare that He would pull down the Temple and build it up again in three days. We do not ask for such an expensive experiment. For here we have a far more simple test. If He is, as He says, greater than Abraham and Moses, let Him just come down from the Cross, and we swear to become His disciples, and we can promise that Pilate will also, and these soldiers too. *He trusted in God. Let Him now deliver Him if He will have Him, for He said: I am the Son of God.* If God will not hear Him, or deliver Him, what further proof can we want? The Law says clearly: He is accursed of God that *hangeeth on a tree*. God has given to us all the plainest proof possible that Jesus the Galilean is no true prophet, but a seducer and blasphemer, *accursed of God*."

"We are perfectly willing to become this day His disciples if He will give us some proof that He is Son of God."

"If God will have Him, if He be the elect of God, and if we are all hypocrites, and white-washed sepulchres as He delighted to call us, what so easy as that God should deliver Him, and strike us? But see: there He is hanging on the tree *accursed*; and here we are, after all the wicked deeds denounced so arrogantly by Him, quite safe and sound. It is easy to delude the simple people of Galilee

with pretended miracles. Why not work just one here before us?"

Say not, O Priest, say not, Pharisee, *I have sinned, and what evil hath befallen me? For the Most High is a patient rewarder* (Ecclus. v.).

STATION III.

1. *And the soldiers also mocked Him, saying: If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself* (St. Luke xxiii.).
2. *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* (St. Matt. xxvii.).
3. *And the self-same things the thieves also that were crucified with Him reproached Him with* (St. Matt. xxvii.).
And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him (St. Mark xv.).

A. *The soldiers mocked Him. And they that passed by blasphemed. And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him.*

We see here, once more, how sin is contagious, and words are like sparks of fire out of which a conflagration grows. The Priests begin: the soldiers follow: then the people, and lastly even the crucified thieves join in. It is like a fugue of most unhallowed music. *All they that saw Me have laughed Me to scorn. They have spoken with the lips and wagged the head* (Psalm xxi.).

The Lord said to Aaron: *Thou and thy sons shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; and thou and thy sons shall bear the sins of your priesthood* (Numbers xviii.).

The iniquity of the sanctuary: the sins of your priesthood. "O sorrowful Mother, pray for us sinners. Say to thy Divine Son: *May Thy priests be clothed with justice: that so they may act as the salt of the earth and the light of the world: and help to spread Thy holy Gospel, and not be apostles of sin and iniquity.*"

B. *And they that passed by blasphemed.*

Hence, we may assume, that when the Priests go down from the plateau—from the place of Calvary, the sacred sanctuary—some of the crowd come up, and walk past the holy Cross, looking on Him *Whom they have pierced*: as we see men do still when there is some public spectacle in the street or square. They cannot tarry long; they must move on, that others may come and see: *For out of many hearts thoughts shall to-day be revealed.*

C. A few are mourning *as one mourneth for an only son.* But the many are crying, *Vah!* The Princes have said, *Vah!* Therefore the people say the same. *All we like sheep have gone astray.* *Wo to the world,* our Saviour said, earnestly and sadly, *because of scandals* (St. Matt. xviii.). One of the terrible scandals of this world is the bad influence of men who by position, or riches, or talents, or assurance and boldness, become leaders.

D. *And they that passed by.*

Let us consider, too, in our hearts, that Calvary and the everlasting sacrifice have not vanished away. All of us must still walk past the Holy Rood of Jesus crucified, and make our choice whether He is to be our resurrection or our fall, whether at the Judgment we are to be placed on His right hand or His left. From each one's heart his thought and his choice must be revealed.

Inter oves locum præsta,
Et ab hædis me sequestra,
Statuens in parte dextra.

Place for me, Good Shepherd, keep
On Thy right, among Thy sheep;
With the goats, oh, curse me not.

E. *And the soldiers also mocked Him.*

These strangers have no quarrel with Jesus. They mock Him (1) because they have been flattered by the Priests; (2) because they have earned money by torturing Him; (3) because they may win a little more blood-money by mocking Him; (4) because the appetite for cruelty grows by indulgence; (5) because that *which is feeble is found to be nothing worth.* The same baseness that leads us

to crouch down and degrade ourselves before a leader, inclines us also to despise the weak and helpless.

Our Lord Jesus, on the contrary, *resists the proud*; is fearless before these Rulers; but has infinite charity for the weak and the little.

F. *And the soldiers mocked Him.*

If the Jews had been worthy of their religion, they might have gained over their masters, the Romans. The men around us, who are outside the Church, form their ideas of Christ's religion from what they see in us. A man when he marries often tries to better his life, because now, he says, "others depend on me". Many others depend on us Catholics. We are watched and noticed; our words, our acts, our demeanour have much influence for or against our Lord Jesus Christ.

STATION IV.

1. The Chief Priests said: *He saved others: Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusted in God, let Him now deliver Him, if He will have Him, for He said: I am the Son of God.*
2. The people: *Save Thy own self. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross.*
3. The thieves: *The self-same thing the thieves also reproached Him with. If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us.*
4. The soldiers: *If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself.*

A. It deserves notice that all are unanimous in this cry: that our Lord is to come down from the Cross.

At the Prætorium, an hour ago, the persistent yell was: *Let Him be crucified.*

Now all in one chorus insist: "Let Him come down from the Cross".

Those who have had special light concerning the Holy

Passion, tell us that both at the Prætorium and here on Golgotha the unseen spirits of wickedness are inspiring and suggesting, and giving to men their watchword.

The change in the popular cry, they tell us, is due to a change in the policy of the princes of darkness.

Throughout the early stages of the Passion their tactics were, as the Holy Ghost has revealed, *He calleth Himself the Son of God. Let us see then if His words be true. For if He be 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 weakness and try His patience. Let us condemn Him to a most shameful death* (Wisdom ii.).

The wicked spirits have heard Jesus say that if the days of persecution be not shortened, *no flesh should be saved* (St. Matt. xxiv.). Their plan, therefore, was to heap every kind of torment and outrage upon Him. For thus, they argued, either God will deliver Him, and then we shall know for certain what He is, and who He is; or else, the tortures will break down His patience and meekness, and He will sin.

All this time, then, they have been trying an experiment in a dark uncertainty, and are constantly asking themselves, Is He a man, or more than man?

When at last Jesus is crucified, and betrays no sign whatever of weakness or impatience, or any departure whatever from the highest sanctity, once more they say to each other in despair: *Do you see that we prevail nothing? The whole world (will go) after this Man* (St. John xii.).

As beyond crucifixion they have nothing worse to suggest, they begin to see that they are vanquished.

Moreover, as soon as ever Jesus is fastened to the Cross, as St. Jerome writes, they feel a mysterious power exercised over them by the Cross. They begin to shudder and quail in presence of "Thy holy Cross, Lord Jesus, through which Thou shalt redeem the world".

*Crux fidelis, inter omnes,
Arbor una nobilis.*

*O faithful Cross! no other tree
Compares with thy nobility.*

In the contemplations of God's holy servants we see that from this hour Satan and his unseen spirits begin to wish to fly away from Calvary; but the decree of God is that they shall remain on the battlefield to the end, to the bitter end.

And in order that their confusion may be worse confounded and multiplied, it is through the voice of the woman, the despised woman, that the will of God is enforced. It is the voice of Holy Mary, the second Eve, that forbids their departure, and commands them to remain on Calvary, till the stupendous conflict is entirely ended. They must drink the bitter chalice of shame and humiliation and confusion to the dregs. The woman shall with her virgin foot crush the serpent's head, before they can have leave to fly away to hide the agonies of their pride.

B. Let Him come down from the Cross, and we will believe in Him.

"To me it seems," St. Jerome writes, "that the demons suggest this cry. For as soon as ever He was crucified, they felt the power of the Cross, and understood that their strength was broken, and now are working that He may come down from the Cross."

From this moment, then, the method of warfare is changed:

"We cannot overcome the meekness of Jesus of Nazareth, but we may yet perchance delude Him and trick Him. We have made a fatal mistake in torturing and crucifying Him; we may be able to undo what we have done by inducing Him to come down from the Cross."

Already they understand something of the mystery, that if He, the Just One, dies, through their machinations, their power over guilty men will be lost. His Death will be death to their empire. They have marked that word on the holy page: *O death, I will be thy death; O Hell, I will be thy bite* (Osee xiii.). From now, therefore, they are

as anxious to hinder the Death of Jesus as they were before to multiply torments.

They will try every plausible argument.

Therefore, having learned, St. Bernard suggests, from their watchful experience, with what ardent zeal Jesus desires to move His people to believe in Him, they suggest to the Priests and Ancients to make this most seductive offer :

1. C. *Let Him come down from the Cross, and we will believe in Him.*

Longing as He does for their belief, surely He will come down to win it. This, St. Bernard thinks, is their plan. The Rulers, Satan knows, are only saying the words with their lips ; their hearts are far away from all intention of believing in Jesus. But this does not trouble him. He is more pleased by far to work for his ends by lying than by truth.

"They do not mean what they say. But Jesus, in His ardent enthusiasm, may believe what they say. We have deceived prophets in days gone ; we may do so still."

Therefore, with all the ingenuity and perseverance of their own malice, the argument is formed and reformed in different shapes, and urged and urged again and again.

2. D. *He trusted in God, let Him now deliver Him.*

So that if Jesus will not now come down from the Cross, men will either doubt the power of God, or doubt the Mission of Jesus. "Are then," St. Chrysostom writes, "all the prophets and just men whom you slew, ye wicked Jews, not prophets and not just, because God did not deliver them? Nay, because they died, they are proved to be just men and prophets."

3. E. *If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself.*

These pagan soldiers know nothing of His being the Messiah, or Son of God, but they heard Him say : *Thou sayest it, I am a King. For this came I into the world that I might give testimony of the truth. My Kingdom is not of this world.*

The challenge therefore suggested to them by the unseen spirits, is, *If Thou be the King of Israel, save Thyself.*

4. F. *He saved others, He cannot save Himself.*

Therefore if He do not now come down from the Cross, all His past miracles are discredited. They were wrought by magic.

5. G. *Let Him save Himself, if He be Christ, the elect of God.*

"If Thou do not descend from the Cross, Jesus, what will become of the faith and trust of all these poor men and women of Galilee who have followed Thee? Their hope is come to nothing" (Tobias ii.).

6. H. *If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us.*

The spirits of darkness have often noticed with intense displeasure and disgust the compassion and charity of Jesus for the suffering ; and therefore they stir up His two crucified companions to appeal to His compassion : *If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us.*

1. But the result of all their stratagems is ever the same : *Do you see that we prevail nothing?* This is the self-same Jesus Who has Himself said : *He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.* If His disciples must persevere to the end to be saved, shall He not persevere to the end to be our Saviour?

J. The Priests cannot deceive Him by saying, *We will believe.* Long ago, we read, *He did not trust Himself to men, for He knew all men. And because He needed not that any should give testimony of man ; for He knew what is in man* (St. John ii.).

Jesus cannot be deluded by fine phrases on the lips. His own Holy Spirit dictated these words : *An enemy speaketh sweetly with his lips, but in his heart he lieth in wait to throw them into a pit. An enemy weepeth with his eyes ; but if he findeth opportunity he will not be satisfied with blood. . . . He will shake his head, and clap his*

hands, and whisper much, and change his countenance. (Ecclus. xii.).

K. And as for the soldiers and the thieves—

He knows well how He can offer them grace and help without coming down from the Cross.

L. *Vah! Thou that destroyest the Temple of God, save Thy own self.*

As we look up at Him Whom we have pierced, while they are mocking Him, He says to us most meekly: "*Laugh no man to scorn in the bitterness of his soul* (Ecclus. vii.). When a man is already troubled, add not to the grief of his wounds. For whensoever you do it to one of My brethren, you do it to Me."

"Mother of Sorrows, pray for us, that we may have grace to say: *If I have wronged any one, I give back four-fold.*"

STATION V.

They crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst (St. John xix. 18).

A. We are told that the crucified on this day had their backs turned to Jerusalem.

1. Some writers say that this was arranged purposely by the Rulers, who did not wish Jesus to die looking on Jerusalem. They considered Him unworthy to look on their Holy City.

I am a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people (Psalm xxi.). *My people, what have I done to thee? In what have I molested thee? Answer thou Me* (Mich. vi.). *Many good works have I shown to you.* For which of these do you sentence Me, that I am not in death to look upon Jerusalem, the city I have loved? *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let My right hand be forgotten. Let My tongue cleave to My jaws, if I do not remember thee. If I make not Jerusalem the beginning of My joy* (Psalm cxxxvii.). *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered together thy children as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not* (St. Matt. xxiii.).

2. The nature of the ground renders it almost necessary that the faces of the crucified should be turned westward, away from Jerusalem. We know from the Evangelists that a large multitude of people are present. St. John adds that many Jews went up to the place of Calvary, and are near enough to read the inscription. They are, doubtless, curious to see the faces of the crucified. This they could not do, if their faces were turned towards the city. For between Calvary and the city, as has been said, there is only the ditch around the fortifications, in which there is no room for the crowds.

3. Other writers suggest that the watching and overruling providence of God wishes our Lord to hang on the Cross with His back turned on the people that are no longer His people, and His face turned westward to the land of the Gentiles, in which the clean oblation is to be offered from the rising up of the sun to the going down thereof; and to the Rock of Ages on which He is about to build His everlasting Church.

B. *They crucified Him.*

His eyes are turned away from Sion, because His people have pronounced their own doom: *We have no King but Caesar!* Consequent on this their election God pronounced His sentence: *Let their habitation be made desolate, and let there be none to dwell in their tabernacles* (Psalm lxxviii.).

From His Cross His sacred eyes are looking over the countries that are white already for the harvest.

In union with His whole fallen family, with all poor sinners of the heathen nations grouped around Him, He is saying in His Heart: *Our Father*, Father of us all, may Thy Name be hallowed; may all My poor brethren come to a knowledge of Thy Holy Name!

And from His Cross He asks humbly: Who will help Me to seek and to save that which was lost? (St. Luke xix.).

STATION VI.

And Pilate wrote a title also, and he put it upon the Cross. And the writing was: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. This title, therefore, many of the Jews did read, because the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city, and it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin (St. John xix.).

They put over His Head His cause written: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews (St. Matt. xxvii.).

Then the Chief Priests of the Jews said to Pilate: Write not, the King of the Jews; but that He said: I am the King of the Jews. Pilate answered: What I have written, I have written (St. John xix.).

I. We are told that it was enacted by Roman law that the crime of the crucified, or his *cause*, should appear over his head.

II. Pilate himself, we gather from the text, wrote the title for the Cross of Jesus.

III. Do the words, *he put it upon the Cross*, mean that he had the title fastened to the Cross before the procession started from the Prætorium? This may be so; but they, on the other hand, may be right who think that the title was not fixed to the Cross till after the Crucifixion, as St. Matthew writes: *They put over His Head His cause written.*

IV. The title, we are told, was written in red characters on a board whitened with lime. A portion of this board, with the characters upon it, is still shown in the Church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme at Rome. The letters are not large enough to be read by the crowd at a distance. Those who came to the Cross and passed by blaspheming would see them. It is noticeable, that on the relic preserved in Rome, the Greek and Latin inscriptions, as well as the Hebrew, are written from the right hand to the left.

V. Some hold that the arms of the Cross were fastened on to the stem so as to form a letter V, and that the title was nailed to both arms above the Sacred Head.

The more common opinion is that in the Roman cross the arms were at right angles.

VI. We commonly see the Cross represented as having part of the main beam above the arms. Some writers hold that the arms of the Cross were fastened at the top of the main beam, and consequently that there was no support for the Sacred Head. In this case a piece of wood or an iron rod was fixed to the Cross to support the title.

Whatever the shape of the Cross may have been, the crown of thorns is sufficient of itself to cause the word to be verified: *The Son of Man hath not whereon to lay His Head.*

A. *It was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.*

Pilate is, unconsciously, working with all things else unto good. *The day is (still) going on according to Thy ordinance, O Lord.* Every detail is regulated in harmony with Thy holy will. The title in Greek and Hebrew fore-shows that in the coming Kingdom of Jesus there shall be *no distinction of the Jew and the Greek, for the same is Lord of all, rich unto all that call on Him* (Romans x.).

In Latin too, because from His Cross He is looking towards Rome, where stands the Rock of Ages on which His Church shall be built.

He gave Him power and glory and a Kingdom; and all peoples, tribes, and tongues shall serve Him (Daniel vii.).

B. *Write not, the King of the Jews, but that He said: I am the King of the Jews.*

At what time did the Priests make this remonstrance? Was it before they left the Prætorium, or after the Cross is set up on Calvary?

It seems from the context, that in the hurry and bustle they did not think of reading the *cause* written by Pilate, till the Cross is erected, and then to their dismay and indignation find how the Governor has tricked them, and insulted them. Watch them, when some one calls their attention to the astonishing inscription, coming close to the Cross to read it, and pointing out to each other the gross outrage to their nation.

Hear the outburst of curses and imprecations against the Governor. *The wicked shall see, and shall be angry. He shall gnash with his teeth and pine away.* They are ready to give a large reward to the executioners if they will take down this title; but the Centurion is a soldier, and accustomed to obey. If his commander says: *Do this, he doeth it* (St. Matt. viii.). What the Governor has set up cannot be taken down. *The desire of the sinner shall perish.*

But these Jewish Rulers are not inclined to be beaten. This is too important a point. "All the people will come up to the Cross and read the inscription, as it is so near the city. What will they think? The Roman states no cause for the condemnation of Jesus but this: *He is the King of the Jews*. We shall be in a worse plight than ever. Herod, the Idumean (because he was an alien and a creature of Rome), murdered the legitimate descendants of our glorious Machabees. And now, men will say that Pilate has crucified Jesus because He is really the Son of David and lawful King of the Jews." On their surefooted mules, therefore, two of their Chiefs, men of the most weight, can reach the Prætorium in a very few minutes. "*Do it quickly. Do it quickly.*" In haste they go. Not in such haste, but *having great wrath*, they return, bringing the Roman's arrogant and insulting answer. "He would not listen. He said curtly: *What I have written, I have written.*" Annas is once more full of bitter scorn. "As usual, you have entirely mismanaged it. You did not put the case properly to the Governor." But it is all in vain. There is nothing to be done, and they can only look up at the title and again see if perchance they have misread it. No, it is all there: *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews—The wicked shall see, and shall be angry. He shall gnash with his teeth and shall pine away. The desire of the wicked shall perish.*

Their anger goes on growing as fresh comers read the title, and go about among the crowd telling in wonder what they have read.

C. *What I have written, I have written.*

St. Augustine writes: *Ideo Pilatus quod scripsit, scripsit, quia Dominus quod dixit, dixit*—"Pilate wrote what he wrote, because the Lord said what He said". Jesus had said: *Thou sayest that I am a King.*

"*Attendite.*" We must understand ourselves, and explain to our neighbours outside the Church, how our Lord can, when He pleases, incline the heart of a bad man to utter the truth and nothing but the truth. *Balac said to*

Balaam: What is this that thou dost? I sent for thee to curse my enemies, and thou contrariwise blessest them. He answered: Can I speak anything but what the Lord commandeth? (Numbers xxiii.). When our Lord says to His delegate: *Go you and preach: whoever believeth shall be saved; whoever believeth not shall be condemned*, He knows well what He is doing. He does not profess that this delegate will be a man impeccable, a man who sins not; but He does profess and promise that whenever His delegate teaches His flock, the Holy Ghost *will give testimony* along with the teacher; and thus, the teaching will be infallible. Consequently all men must hear this teacher, who is only the mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost. This infallibility is not a grace given to the teacher for his own sake. It does not necessarily render him a holy man fit for Heaven. He will have, like other men, to work out his own salvation privately in fear and trembling; but whenever he teaches publicly and officially, the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the people, in order that all may be able to come easily to a knowledge of the truth, will guide and overrule the teaching of the delegate, and render it unerring and infallible.

Pilate, Caiphas, Balaam, and Herod's Priests, all acted as God's mouthpiece, and declared the truth. Even so can our Lord at all times draw truth and praise out of the mouth of babes or sinners.

STATION VII.

Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother
(St. John xix. 25).

It is St. John who, now in years, bequeaths to us these priceless words not found in any other Gospel. The virgin disciple whom Jesus loved and the Ever-Blessed Mother loved, preserved this treasure for us.

A. *Mary His Mother.*

By Thy ordinance, O Lord, (this) day is going on; for all things serve Thee. And it is according to Thy good

pleasure that there shall be a place for Thy Holy Mother near to Thee. The second Eve, throughout the great struggle, shall be beside the second Adam.

She is not yet indeed close to the Cross, but she is within the sanctuary, not far from the Holy Altar, on the plateau, on the *place of Calvary*. There she stands, watching, and listening, and suffering—suffering pains and anguish that no woman but the sinless Mother of God can suffer. She may safely call to us: *See if there be sorrow like to my sorrow*. Eye hath not seen her great compassion. Ear hath not heard the sobbing of her motherly heart. It hath not entered into human thought to understand how truly she can say: *With Christ I am nailed to the Cross*.

No man, then, on Calvary interferes with her grief.

He that said to His disciples when Magdalen was anointing His feet: *Be not troublesome to this woman: has also given His angels charge concerning thee, Blessed among women*, that no one be troublesome to thee.

No hand is raised to strike her; no tongue to outrage her on Calvary. But it is arranged that her sorrow shall be great enough, *great as the sea*, through her perfect compassion. No wound is to come direct to her. But every wound on her Son's Body and in His Heart shall pass on at once to her. Each of His nails has pierced her through and through.

If St. Paul could apply to himself this word: *With Christ I am nailed to the Cross*: what word are we to find for Holy Mary? For his compassion, when set beside hers, is as a small lake beside the great sea.

B. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

When John and Magdalen are telling in after days what they saw to those who question, they answer: "No; she did not sink down on the ground; she did not swoon away. At times she fell on her knees to adore her Son and His holy Cross. More often she stood erect, sometimes motionless; sometimes quivering and shuddering; always pale;

tears on her face; panting, at times, for breath, as she listened to the Master's heavy breathing; but always *full of grace*. The pain of her compassion, indeed, imprinted on her features, was saying more plainly than her lips could speak it: With my Son Jesus, *I am nailed to the Cross*. *Now, not I, but (my Son) Jesus liveth in me*. But the word that ever came to my heart as I looked at her was: *Hail, full of grace! Blessed among women!*"

C. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

Well for us that it is so. Which of you, the prophet asks, *(can) dwell with everlasting burnings?* Which of us, we may add, can stand alone on Calvary and bear the consuming fire? Which of us can endure to stand alone, looking on Him Whom our sins have pierced? "*Væ soli!*" It is not good for us to be there without our great Help-mate, our Mother, the Refuge of Sinners. We can draw near to her and say:

Eia Mater fons amoris,	Mother, source of charity,
Me sentire vim doloris	Share with me thy agony;
Fac, ut tecum lugeam.	Make me mourn and weep with thee.

D. *Mary His Mother.*

And our Mother too. *Come, my children*, she says to us, *come and hear me, and I will teach you* (Psalm xxxiii.). And when we come to her, and listen, she reminds us of the words her Divine Son spoke secretly in the silence of the night to His timid disciple Nicodemus: *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert: so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting* (St. John iii.).

Nicodemus is here to-day, looking at Jesus crucified, and looking at the Blessed Mother; and he finds how true the word whispered to him in the midnight is coming now. As he looks on Jesus lifted up, the venom of the serpent's bite is being quite deadened. Virtue is coming out from the holy Cross into his soul.

The Ever-Blessed Mother beseeches us all to stay with the timid disciple, looking up at Him Whom we pierced

till virtue comes to us also, and we are endowed with power from the Cross.

E. *Mary His Mother.*

"My children," she says to us, "to-day my Son is conquering Satan, and all the powers of Hell. Will you still resist Him? Shall He not be able to conquer you too, and win you over to His compassionate and loving Heart?"

F. *Mary His Mother.*

"My children," she says, *forget not the kindness of thy Surety. For He hath given His life for thee. The sinner and the unclean fleeth from his Surety. A sinner attributeth to himself the goods of his Surety, and he that is of an unthankful mind will leave Him that delivered him* (Ecclus. xxix.).

The sinner attributeth to himself the goods of his Surety. For of all the good things or blessings which we enjoy, what is there that we have not received? what good thing have we that has not on it the inscription, the mark of Jesus crucified, the sign of the Cross?

He that is of an unthankful mind will leave Him that delivered him.

"O Mother of Compassion, pray for us sinners. Beg of thy Son to take from us the heart of stone, and give us a heart of flesh, that we may not leave thy Son Jesus Who delivered us, but love to stay here with Him till we learn how to mourn for Him *as one mourneth for an only son, and to grieve as the manner is to grieve for a first-born.*"

G. *Mary His Mother.*

"My children," she says to us, "forget not your birth-right, the promise made to the children of the New Jerusalem, *I will pour out on them the spirit of grace and of prayers, and they shall look on Him Whom they pierced.*

"Your little day is passing, *the night is coming in which no man can work.* Will you not make leisure while your hour lasts, to secure the spirit of grace and of prayers which is yours, and to look on my Son Jesus Whom you have pierced?"

H. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother.*

Holy contemplatives tell us that one part of her work while she is listening to the scoffs and blasphemies of those who are mocking, is to pray in union with that prayer Jesus made last evening: *Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee.* She does not pray that her Son may not suffer, but she does pray earnestly that His glory and the beauty of His holiness may be revealed and declared throughout the Passion, and that His enemies may not so prevail as to hinder His Passion from having its effect on the souls of men. Already her prayer is heard in part, for Pilate has not yielded to the Rulers this time. He has maintained the writing that is above the Cross, which is to be so salutary.

The prayer of the Blessed Mother shall soon be heard much more amply.

STATION VIII.

THE FIRST WORD.

And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (St. Luke xxiii. 34).

A. *And Jesus said* (literally from the Greek and the Latin, "was saying, said more than once").

To-night when all shall be over, and the disciples with their full hearts are whispering together, within the barred doors, about the things done to-day, after they have listened in tears to the story of the mockeries and blasphemies on the place of Calvary, one asks, "Was the Master silent all the time while they crucified Him, and after the Cross was lifted? Did He speak no word at all?"

"Oh, yes," John answers, or Magdalen perchance, or the other Mary, "oh, yes, I heard Him speak more than once. For though at times there was much noise and tumult, the soldiers uttering savage words, the thieves howling, the Priests running to and fro and giving orders, and though they tried hard to excite the people to shout when the Cross was raised, yet there was often a lull.

From the people there came no great response to the efforts of the Rulers to excite them. Indeed, at one time, when they turned His sacred face downwards upon the ground, under the Cross, in order to clench the nails, there was a murmur of pity quite audible among the crowd.¹ The servants of the Priests indeed were loud in crying, *Vah!* but the people seemed to stand bewildered, so that frequently there was a silence, and we could hear; and I heard the Master sometimes moaning gently; and I could hear too, when the Cross was lifted, His heavy, difficult breathing, as if in the strained and cruel position of His Body He could not draw breath freely. And so, when they were nailing Him, and afterwards, I heard Him say these words: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*"

"Oh, impossible!" some one exclaims. "How could He in truth say that word? Are you not mistaken?" "No, there is no mistake. I heard Him, I am sure, say those words, and not once only, but often, at intervals. And had you been there, and heard the tone of His voice as He spoke them, and watched the tears falling from His eyes, which were almost closed up with blood, you never till the day of your death could forget those words. Never before, I think, on this earth did any one hear tenderness and sorrow such as I heard then in the tone of His voice when He spoke those words, *Father, forgive them.*"

B. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

We must try to realise, as well as we can, how thoroughly, with what intensity, the Blessed Mother joins her heart with her Son's in making this prayer.

What a love, *strong as death*, yea, and stronger than the terrible death by crucifixion, is in the Heart of Jesus, and in the sinless heart of Holy Mary, that they can thus rise above all their own agony to pray for others; and, wonder of wonders, to pray for such bloodthirsty enemies.

C. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

If they know not what they do, we perchance argue, they

¹ Venerable M. d'Agreda.

are not guilty. For ignorance, we say, excuses us if we sin not knowing what we do. Why then does our Saviour say, *Father, forgive them?* If they need forgiveness, they are not guiltless.

The answer may be that there is an ignorance that excuses from guilt, and there is a guilty ignorance.

When St. Paul said to Ananias, *God shall strike thee, thou whited wall! they that stood by said, Dost thou revile the High Priest of God?* And St. Paul said: *I knew not, brethren, that he is the High Priest. For it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the Prince of thy people.* Here St. Paul does not sin by irreverence, because he does not know that he is speaking to the High Priest.

Again, when the Pharisees say to Christ, *Are we blind?* He answers, *If you were blind, you should not have sin.*

These words teach us that there is an ignorance that exempts from guilt.

But there is too a guilty ignorance, an ignorance which is the effect of sin. Thus our Lord, after telling us that *He who knew the will of his Lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes*, goes on to say: *He that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.*

Here we have an ignorance which lessens guilt, but still is worthy of stripes; and is beaten with some stripes, though fewer than those of the servant who knew more. This blindness oftentimes becomes more and more guilty, and the worst punishment of sin in this world. *Blind the hearts of this people, and shut their eyes, . . . lest they see with their eyes . . . and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them* (Isaiah vi.).

This is a most criminal blindness, an entirely voluntary effect of great sin.

This was the blindness of the Chief Priests last night, when our Lord said to them, *It is your hour and the power of darkness* (St. Luke xxii.).

This is the blindness He lamented as He wept over

Jerusalem: *If thou hadst also known the things that are to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thy eyes* (St. Luke xix.).

The blindness, therefore, of those for whom our Lord is praying is not an innocent blindness. There is guilt in it; guilt, however, not the same in all; for some of His persecutors are sinning most deliberately and most grievously against the light.

Others are led away by the example of the Rulers. They sin, and they do things worthy of stripes, but they are partly in ignorance, and their ignorance is some excuse for them.

D. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

At all times, whensoever we sin, we are blind. If we had the full light of the blessed, we could not sin. But still we have light enough to render us guilty. And, moreover, it is through our own guilty neglect, and through our sins, that we have not much more light.

Guilty blindness is one of our great crimes, for which we have to beg great contrition.

E. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

With regard to this guilty blindness, one petition included in our Lord's cry from the Cross is this: "Father, take away from them this chastisement, this curse of guilty blindness, otherwise they never shall know what they do."

"They will go on sinning against Thee, their good God, their Father, their loving Redeemer, and all the horror and foulness and malice of their sin will be hidden from their eyes."

F. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

When we pray, *From my hidden sins cleanse me*, we are praying to be delivered from culpable blindness.

Forgotten sins and *hidden sins* are not the same thing.

Forgotten sins oftentimes have been absolved, because we are sorry for them implicitly, and would confess them if we remembered them.

Hidden sins are not forgiven, because we are not sorry for them. They are sins with regard to which we are culpably blind. Through our own fault, we do not see

their malice, and do not repent of them. Like the lees or sediment at the bottom of the cask, they lie undisturbed in the careless and blinded soul. Hence the Lord's threat: At the Judgment, *I will visit on the men that are settled on their lees* (Sophon. i.).

G. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

To our unloving eyes these men, on Calvary and around, seem all to know full well what they are doing. Our Blessed Lord's Heart can find excuse where we see none. A mother who loves her child has some share of this marvellous power of our Lord's Heart to find excuses.

H. *Father, forgive them.*

The Cross is, as we are often told, not only the altar of our High Priest, where He offers sacrifice, but also the pulpit from which He teaches.

With an everlasting forethought (to use our poor language) He has resolved that this is to be the first word from His death-bed. When a good father speaks from his death-bed, his children listen more earnestly because they know that he will speak the words that are nearest his heart.

Of His death-bed words, then, He puts this one in the first place, and, as far as we know, it is the only one that He utters more than once.

We remember how kindly and with what motherly solicitude Holy Mary said at Cana of Galilee to the waiters, when our Lord was going to work the miracle: *Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye*. With far greater anxiety and tenderness now does she say to us: "My children, watch and listen, and *do according to the pattern*. What you hear my Son say from His Cross, that word say after Him. Lay it up in your hearts. Practise that word. Make it your one thing necessary to learn how to say that word."

I. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

We must, then, learn to say this word. And what word ought to be more easy to us? But, alas! what word is more difficult to flesh and blood?

As, then, our God knows that it ought to be easy to us, and because He also knows that it is to our corrupt nature very repulsive, therefore He insists rigorously and inexorably that we must learn to say this word, and to say it from our hearts.

And this He must do. He cannot do otherwise.

1. Because He Himself is *charity* and *mercy*; and we are His children, created to His own image. *Let Us make man to our image and likeness. And God created man to His own image; to the image of God He created him* (Gen. i.). Therefore He cannot tolerate in us His children anything opposed to His own *charity* and *mercy*. *God is charity. He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him* (1 St. John iv.). *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful* (St. Luke vi.).

J. *Father, forgive them.*

2. God must require of us to say this word, because He is a Father. One of the tasks of our life is to earn for ourselves a vivid faith that God is a *Father*. Our daily and hourly prayer through life is to be: *Our Father, hallowed be Thy Name*; that is, may Thy Name of Father become to us a dear Name, a cherished Name, a truth and a reality. *At least from this time call to me, Thou art my Father* (Jer. iii.).

If I be a Father, where is My honour? (Malach. i.). Why am I not treated as a good Father? For, if God is a Father, He is *our Father*. He is the Father of all my neighbours as much as He is mine. I have no claim to be His child more than my neighbours have.

Therefore, when any one wrongs me, it is a child of my own God who wrongs me, a child of *our Father*. I and the offender who wrongs me are, we may say, twin brothers, children of the same Father. If I strike the offender, if I hurt him, or harm him, *what shall I do when God shall rise to judge? And when He shall examine, what shall I answer Him? Did not He that made me in the womb, make him also? And did not one and the same me form in the womb?* (Job xxxi.).

K. *Father, forgive them.*

3. God must require of me to say these words, because He is not only a Father, but a most just Father. Therefore He must protect all His children against injustice. Consequently He must strictly forbid me to be judge in my own cause. Why so? Because our corrupt and most selfish nature never judges justly when there is a case between self and another.

The anger of man worketh not the justice of God (St. James i.). Our anger never judges justly. Why not? Because our pride is incredibly sensitive, and, as we say, touchy. A wound on the body is very sensitive; an exposed nerve is very sensitive; but our pride is much more so. We often feel grievously offended and wronged, when there is absolutely no cause present. Fear, the Holy Spirit tells us, can get no help nor succour from thought and reasoning. Pride is quite as unmanageable as fear. It often becomes sore before any wound at all is inflicted; and when wounded, keeps no measure in chastising and avenging.

Before God can permit us to act as judge, we must be fair and impartial. To understand how far away we are from justice and fairness and equity, contrast our judgments when we do wrong to a neighbour, and when a neighbour does wrong to us. After we have done a wrong to a neighbour, if we go so far as to make an apology, perhaps a curt and rough one, we claim to have fulfilled all justice. "What can I do more? If the fool chooses to go on sulking, that is his affair. I have made an apology; he ought to be satisfied."

But if I am the wounded man, will a few words of ungracious apology heal up my wound entirely, and change my enemy into a welcome friend?

I say a hasty, brusque, rough word that creates a large and deep wound, and forthwith hasten on to other scenes, and in a few moments I have entirely forgotten my words. *I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me?* (Ecclus. v.). But if the hasty, brusque, and rough word is spoken to

me, will it pass away and be thus forgotten in a few minutes? or in a few hours? or in a few days? or weeks? or months? Will time heal the wound? Is there any moth that can consume this remembered injury? Is there any skilful thief that can steal it out of my resentful soul?

Before God can allow me to judge, He must be sure that I shall weigh and measure a sin committed by my neighbour in the same scales and with the same weights that I use for my own sins. What good reason can be given why a wrong done to me is so much more grievous than a wrong done to any one else? Is there in this universe one just judge who will rule that a wrong, if done by me, is light and venial; but a wrong done to me, heinous in the extreme?

L. Father, forgive them.

4. Again, God must rigorously require that I adopt these words, because He is not only a Father and a good Father, but also because he is the Truth, and must always abhor lying, and fraud, and above all, hypocrisy. Now, when I judge and condemn severely and bitterly the wrong done to me by my neighbour, I am a liar and a hypocrite. The prince of darkness has his name of devil, or diabolus, because he is ever the *accuser of the brethren*. He is the *accuser*, and the *father of lies*. Mark how the two trades go together, lying and accusing.

But why must this be? Why am I a hypocrite, because I condemn my neighbour? St. Paul gives the answer: *Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest. For thou dost the same things which thou judgest* (Rom. ii.).

We do the things which we judge. We condemn loudly another man, but never tell that we have done just what he has done. Those Ancients and Pharisees who came so early in the morning to call on our Saviour to sentence that sinful woman, said nothing at all about their own crimes; and little thought that they were playing the prosecutor before Him Whose eyes are brighter

than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts (Ecclus. xxiii.).

How glad they were to slink away, when our Saviour began to write in the dust extracts from the record of their own lives!

In the eyes of the charitable and merciful and just and holy God, our Father, it is a monstrous iniquity when we judge and condemn another rigorously for sins we do ourselves, and allow ourselves complete impunity for the same.

This is the reason why for this sin He has no mercy: *Judgment without mercy for him that hath not done mercy* (St. James ii.). *If you will not forgive, neither will your Father that is in Heaven forgive you your sins* (St. Mark xi.).

Where can we find a stronger proof of the iniquity, the intolerable injustice, the corrupt malice of our pride, than the fact, well known to the masters of spiritual life, that we are most inclined to judge and condemn loudly the sins we commit ourselves? The truth of St. Paul's words that *we do the things we judge* is so borne out by experience, that our spiritual guides teach us that one of the best ways of finding out our ruling passion is to note what we are prone to blame and condemn severely in others. The vain are merciless on the vanity of others. The self-willed and tyrannical inveigh with much wrath against the tyranny of others. The unchaste are ever suspecting and denouncing immorality in others.

M. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

It is because our Lord knows well *what is in man*, and how our wanton and insane pride and hypocrisy cannot refrain from condemning others, that He offers such incredible privileges and emoluments to those who will abstain from this enormous wickedness.

Judge not and you shall not be judged. Why do heretics and unbelievers stick at other Gospel truths and cavil against them? Why do they not direct all their envenomed

acumen against this word: *Judge not and you shall not be judged?*

If there is in Holy Writ a sentence which to our corruption and blindness might seem irrational, here we have it. What judge in our land was ever heard to say to a murderer: Do not condemn your fellow-murderer, and you will be let off yourself? What Government so reckless as to say to the burglar or assassin: Do not insist that your accomplice be chastised, and you shall not be chastised yourself?

And yet our all-wise God, because He knows how madly bent we are on condemning others for what we do ourselves, binds Himself to this most marvellous covenant: *Judge not that you may not be judged* (Matt. vii.). *If you will forgive men their offences, your Heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences* (St. Matt. vi.).

N. *Father, forgive them.*

Yes, our Lord speaks this word from His death-bed as a lesson to be learned by us. St. Augustine writes, *Pro te misit hanc vocem, ut audiretur*—"He uttered this word for you, that you might hear it". He might have prayed in secret for His persecutors, but then you would not have had your lesson. He preaches this doctrine to us in this most solemn moment, because this is a fundamental teaching in His Gospel, from which there can be no exemption. St. Gregory writes: "His disciples through life must love their enemies, even as their Master in death loves His enemies who are slaying Him".

Is He requiring too much? According to His parable, I owe Him *ten thousand talents*, and my fellow-servant owes me *a hundred pence*. That means that my debt to God is immeasurable; for even the inspired Psalmist can only say, *Who understand sins?* Who, but our Lord? *We* do not understand sin, but *Jesus Christ* does. He knows how immeasurable is the malice, and folly, and ingratitude, and treason of sin, and all the everlasting ruin it brings to us; and therefore when He finds us severe and hard and inexorable against our fellow-servant for his small, insigni-

ficant debt, He lays aside all mercy towards us, and judges us justly according to the true magnitude of our debt.

His lord, being angry, delivered him over to the torturers until he paid all the debt. So also shall My Heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts (Matt. xiii.).

O. *Father, forgive them.*

Indeed, He is making all things new to-day. For He knows quite well that Satan has so thoroughly duped men and persuaded them to admire and adopt his pride, that they accept in its worst sense, as a golden rule, that maxim of the world, "Death before disgrace". In the gospel of the world—the "code of honour," as it was misnamed—a man was bound to try to murder his neighbour, and to run imminent risk of being murdered himself, rather than excuse and forgive some small affront, perhaps only imaginary. From this first Good Friday a very different practice sets in. When enemies are not merely uttering wounding words, but showering deadly stones, the first martyr with his dying face lit up like an angel's shall say: *Lord, do not lay this sin to their charge* (Acts vii.).

The Church of Christ Crucified is to be a Church of miracles. Why do foolish men refuse to believe that saints walk on the water, heal diseases, or raise the dead to life? Are we not all obliged to work the miracle of forgiving our enemies?

Is there one among us exempted from adopting this dying word of our Saviour Jesus: *Father, forgive them?*

Is not that kindred word also meant for all of us: *Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you? Bless those that curse you, and pray for those that calumniate you?* And if a man finds in himself a virtue come out from Christ Crucified which enables him to do all this, will that man be incredulous when told that Xavier raised the dead, or St. Alphonsus was present in two distant chambers at the same moment?

P. *Father, forgive them.*

Oh, thanks be to God, Who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. xv.). This word, once so impossible to man, is since this sixth hour of the first Good Friday become possible; and not only possible, but easy; and not only easy, but sweet and pleasant. After announcing that saving promise: *I will pour out the spirit of grace and of prayer, and they shall look on Me Whom they have pierced:* our Saviour goes on to tell us by His Prophet: *In that day I will take away the false prophets, and the unclean spirit out of the earth* (Zach. xii.). The lying and unclean and malicious code of Lucifer, with which men were so thoroughly imbued, has lost its hold on their minds, and the strange wonder has come to pass that the disciple of Christ Jesus can love his neighbour as himself.

Can find excuses for his neighbour as for himself:

Can desire forgiveness for his neighbour as for himself:

Can grieve over his neighbour's fall as over his own.

Q. Father, forgive them.

While looking on Him Whom we have pierced, and listening to His dying words, and contemplating our Brother, the First-born of our regenerate race, on His death-bed, and staying on Calvary by the side of His Mother and our Mother, we find ourselves beginning to understand all His Gospel concerning forgiveness, so that we at last acknowledge that His yoke is sweet, and what seemed an impossible burden is really light.

How many there have been that could cordially endorse that word: "I never was light-hearted till I learned to forgive every one".

R. Father, forgive them.

On Calvary, all the arguments dictated of old by the Holy Spirit (Ecclus. xxviii.) to teach us forgiveness of injuries, become quite intelligible and convincing.

1. *He that seeketh to revenge himself, the Lord will surely keep his sins in remembrance.* Yes, we now understand that word. For we often say, *If Thou shalt observe iniquities, Lord, Lord, who shall stand it?* We do not go to the

judgment-seat trusting to our own immaculate innocence, or to our justifications; but our trust is that because we have learned from Calvary to be merciful, we shall be able to say, overwhelmed with gratitude: *Lord Jesus, Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back* (Isaia's xxxvi.). He will not keep our sins in remembrance.

2. *Forgive thy neighbour if he hath hurt thee, and then shall thy sins be forgiven to thee when thou prayest.*

Oh, yes: we begin to understand why there has been a cloud between our God and us when we pray. We have not as yet learned sufficiently the lesson, the first great lesson, that comes from our Saviour's death-bed, *Father, forgive them.*

3. *Man to man reserveth anger, and doth he seek remedy from God? He hath no mercy on a man like himself, and does he entreat for his own sins?*

This argument is now unanswerable.

Man to man—man, so small, is angry, and sets himself up so high, and will not forgive, and doth he appear before the infinite majesty of God with his sins upon him, and expect to have a remedy for all his troubles and wounds?

Man to man—he hath no mercy on a man like himself. Is one poor sinful man so hard upon another poor sinful man? Is it not passing strange if a leper condemn a leper? If a convict despise a convict?

4. *He that is but flesh nourisheth anger, and doth he ask forgiveness of God? who shall obtain pardon for his sins?* (Ecclus. xxviii.).

He that is but flesh. St. Paul, knowing that he was but flesh, chastised his body lest, he says, *while I preach to others, I myself become a castaway.* Shall I who am but flesh, so weak, so frail, so liable to temptation, shall I not win grace and help and mercy for my hour of need by showing mercy to others? If I don't, what will become of me? *Who shall obtain pardon for my sins?* Not even the all-powerful Mother of God can obtain for me forgiveness or mercy if I will not be merciful.

5. *Remember thy last things, and let enmities cease.*

Oh, yes, death is too near; Judgment is too near. I cannot continue this quarrel. I want all my time and all my mind and my thought to get ready for my last end. Enmities must cease. *In all thy works, remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin.* Anger and revenge shall not prevail.

6. *Remember the fear of God, and be not angry with thy neighbour.*

God, Who is to judge me, is the Creator, the Father, the God of my neighbour who has done me a small injury.

Can I heavily strike a child who has done me a childish wrong, under the very eye of his powerful father on whom I depend for my bread?

Holy Job tells us that he never through life could act harshly or unjustly or unmercifully to his neighbours, however lowly. Why not? *For I have always feared God, as waves swelling over me, and His weight I was not able to bear* (c. xxxi.).

How can I be so insane as to strike my neighbour, when the great God, on Whom my eternal doom depends, says in my hearing to the man whom I assail: *He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of My eye?* (Zach. ii.).

S. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

"So must we think, so pray," St. Bernard writes, "when enemies revile us and inflict injury."

For ourselves, we can with great ingenuity find excuses. So can we for our neighbours also, once the malice of the unclean spirit is driven out of us. "Excuse," he adds, "the intention if you cannot excuse the act. Think it is ignorance; think it is a surprise; think it an accident. Say to yourself: 'He was under temptation exceeding great'."

T. *Father, forgive them.*

"We can have great hope," St. Bernard adds, "when praying for an enemy. Such prayers offer violence to

the ears of God. He hears us, for He remembers how He wished His own cry to be heard."

God allows (Blessed Peter Faber teaches us) a bad man to wrong a good man, in order that the immense power of the forgiving prayer of the good man may win the great grace needed by the bad man, who else must perish. St. Paul knows now how much his conversion was helped by the dying cry of St. Stephen: *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge* (Acts vii.).

U. *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.*

Even they who seem to wrong us with malice know not what they are doing. They know not, they do not realise that Jesus is wounded by their act in the apple of His eye; they know not that He is the *patient rewarder* Who has the long eternity before Him in which this sin will be chastised, if they repent not. Poor blinded brother! he has wronged himself far more than me. Why need I take revenge? For unless he becomes entirely converted, and makes amends, chastisement is coming to him such as human eye has never seen. He will weep and wail and gnash his teeth with a despair that no ear on earth has ever heard. The everlasting presence of this sin will be a burden my revengeful heart can never desire for him.

V. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

If we continue on Calvary, looking at our Saviour and listening to His words, virtue is all the while coming out from His charitable Heart to our selfish hearts, till at last we see the whole beauty and the wonderful gentleness and mercy of the golden rule laid down by Him for us: *With whatever judgment you judge, you shall be judged, and with whatever measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again* (St. Matt. vii.). For by this law, even after we have sinned, it is left entirely in our own hands to determine our sentence. If we choose to judge others fairly and charitably, and with that leniency which we show to ourselves, we shall be judged leniently and mercifully and with infinite indulgence.

W. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

Let us not grow tired, then, of looking and listening while our Blessed Lord is saying this word. For He does not grow tired of saying it. During the everlasting Sacrifice of the Mass, His thoughts and His cry for us are those of Calvary. He is still the same *Jesus, yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever* (Hebrews xiii.).

(a) Call to mind, then, the agony of His Body when He makes this prayer. He has been scourged, crowned, nailed, and is hanging in the most intolerable torture known. Here indeed is charity *strong as death*, and much stronger. How hard we find it, when in great pain, to plead for others, or care for others!

(b) Then Isaias writes: *He was reputed with the wicked, and hath borne the sins of many, and hath prayed for the transgressors.* Shame and disgrace have been added beyond measure to His bodily torments, when He makes this prayer. *He has been glutted with reproaches and outrage.*

"By the greatness of His Passion," St. Bernard writes, "measure the greatness of His charity."

Remembering how slight an insult is sufficient to unman our virtue and fill us with resentment, we must stay here till strength comes out from the Cross to us. *It is good for us to be here till we are endowed with power.*

(c) St. Laurence Justinian represents our Lord saying: "I make more account of their souls than of the welfare of My Body. Grievous is the torment I endure, but more bitter far to Me their ruin."

(d) "By His most merciful prayer," St. Augustine writes, "He was hindering their damnation."

(e) "What have you ever seen, O my soul," St. Bernard asks, "more meek, more kind than this Man? Great is the weakness of man in death; but to die with thoughts like these is strength immeasurable."

(f) "What manner of Man is this Who over His enemies pours out a word of blessing, the like of which has never till now been heard from the beginning?"

(g) "O Lord Jesus, in what measure wilt Thou refresh, *with the torrent of Thy pleasure*, those who desire Thee, seeing that with such abundance Thou dost anoint with the oil of Thy mercy those that crucify Thee?"

(h) "Never am I more like this goodness, than when to him who has wronged me, and still wishes to wrong me, I always wish blessings, and do him good also, if I can. This comes of Thy grace, Lord Jesus, Who didst pray for Thy crucifiers."

(i) "Christ prays for His murderers; will you not pray for your detractors?"

X. *Father, forgive them.*

It was on that morning when He protected the sinful woman from the malice of the Scribes and Pharisees, that our Blessed Saviour spoke the word: *When you shall have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am He* (St. John viii.).

It is here on Calvary, as we look and listen, that we learn something of what our Lord is: *A gracious and merciful God: patient and of much compassion, and easy to forgive evil* (Jonas iv.).

Y. *Father, forgive them.*

There are five times when we must more especially rouse ourselves to use this word of our Saviour.

(a) In the moment when we are wronged, or imagine ourselves wronged.

(b) Before we begin prayer. *When you shall stand to pray, forgive, if you have aught against any man, that your Father also Who is in Heaven may forgive you your sins* (St. Mark xi.). Purposely and designedly and, as we say, with infinite premeditation, our Lord planned that prayer for us: *Our Father, forgive us as we forgive.*

(c) At night, before we fall asleep. For though, not in St. Paul's sense, yet in a sense allowable, we may say that by sleep we *die daily*. Sleep is, in a way, an image and reminder of death at the end of each working day. *Let not the sun go down upon your anger* (Ephes. iv.).

(d) When preparing for Holy Communion. *Go first and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

(e) Above all, when death is near. *Remember thy last things, and let enmities cease.*

"Ever-Blessed Mother of God, pray for us now and at the hour of our death, that our hearts may be changed and become like to the forgiving Heart of thy Son Jesus."

For I know that Thou art a gracious and merciful God, patient and of much compassion, and easy to forgive evil (Jonas iv.).

Z. Father, forgive them.

We sometimes say with our lips, "I forgive him, but—I will have nothing to do with him".

We must not forget (1) that our Saviour says that He will deliver us over to the torturer, unless we forgive every one his brother from our hearts; (2) that He binds us to this prayer: *Our Father, forgive us, as we forgive our debtors.* We need something better from God than a mere lip forgiveness.

AA. Father, forgive them.

What are we to do when resentful thoughts return? Sick men, when the attack returns, repeat the salutary dose. *Go thou and do the like—I say to you, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that calumniate you.* Not seven times only, but seventy times seven, must we say, *Father, forgive them,* till the virtue that comes from the Cross prevails in us.

Who knows? Our Lord may see that either your soul needs much special grace, or that your enemy is in great need, and therefore allows the resentful thought to return, that you may win grace for yourself and for your enemy, by praying again and again, *Father, forgive them.*

BB. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

All sinners are enemies to our Lord, all have wronged

Him; but all sinners have not wronged us. Besides, therefore, those enemies who have wronged us, our Blessed Lord wishes us to say for all sinners: *Father, forgive them.* All our neighbours in the state of sin have wronged God and wronged themselves. No sick persons, no starving poor, none of the Holy Souls in Purgatory, are in such need of alms as those who are in sin. We must rouse ourselves to say for poor sinners our Saviour's dying prayer: *Father, forgive them.*

Some object: "I want all my prayers for myself".

The reply is this: The more we want help, the more we ought to pray for others. By praying for others we change every prayer into excellent alms; or rather, we add an excellent almsgiving to prayer. We double and treble the value of our prayers, and they win far more grace for our souls than when we pray only for ourselves. In prayer, as elsewhere, "*Væ soli!*"—*Wo to him that is alone!* We must pray with a group around us of those whom we know to be in want.

For, what particular reason is there that God should give me graces rather than to my neighbour? If I imagine in my prayer that I have some special title to mercy which my neighbour has not, I am deluded.

Christ died for all; and desires that all be saved. Unless I desire my neighbour's salvation, my desire for my own cannot be genuine.

I am to love my neighbour as myself. If my love for him is small, my supernatural love for myself is small also. If I have no sorrow for my neighbour's sin, my sorrow for my own is very insufficient.

God is *our* Father, not merely *my* Father. If I don't wish blessings to His other children, He will not be disposed to be generous to me.

CC. Father, forgive them.

We have seen that St. Bernard tells us that we ought to pray with a great love for those who offend us, as such prayers God hears most willingly.

We may bear in mind in addition, that if we lose hope for enemies and sinners, and give them up as incurable and beyond the reach of our prayers, there is great danger that we may lose hope also for ourselves. For what solid ground can we have for hoping for graces for ourselves, if we make up our minds that other children of God, because they have chanced to offend us, or because they have sinned, are beyond the reach of redemption?

Our hope for ourselves will surely grow in proportion as we hope more for our enemies, and for sinners.

DD. *Father, forgive them.*

Lastly, there are all those whom we have wronged. Surely they have a right to a place in all our prayers. What Zacheus said, every penitent disciple of Jesus Christ ought to say: *If I have wronged any one, I give back four-fold.* Restitution in other shapes is sometimes difficult; but prayer is always possible for those whom we have wronged, and it is a prayer that will greatly please our Lord, for it is the prayer of a *humble and contrite heart.*

We may bear in mind, too, that if a man has wronged us, there is always great chance that we have wronged him also. If a man wrongs me at noon, I may in one hour, through resentment and unfair revengeful thoughts, and angry words behind his back, be more guilty in his regard than he has been towards me.

EE. Our Blessed Lord hates sin, but loves the sinner. We have often little hatred for sin, but great hatred for the poor sinner.

SCENE II.

THE SECOND WORD ON THE CROSS. THE GOOD THIEF.

STATION I.

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour (St. Matt. xxvii.).

And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour (St. Mark xv.).

A. *When the sixth hour was come.*

We are assuming that the Crucifixion is completed before mid-day, that is, before the sixth hour. When our Lord has been *lifted up* for a little while the sixth hour is come, and the beginning of the darkness is perceived.

The Chief Priests and Ancients are in the very midst of their feverish triumph, hurrying about among the immense crowd, and with one group after another are enforcing despotically their falacious argument that Jesus is manifestly, by God's silent acquiescence, shown to be a seducer.

As if every martyr, because he dies and is not rescued, were an impostor: whereas his glorious death is the heavenly seal set upon his sanctity by God.

But Ecclesiasticus writes: *Laughter I counted error; and to mirth I said: Why art thou vainly deceived?* Baltassar, the King, is in the very height of his revel when the hand is seen writing his doom on the wall. *The same night Baltassar, the Chaldean King, was slain; and Darius the Mede succeeded to the kingdom.*

We have seen how, during the Sacred Passion, power is given to *the woman*, the second Eve, the Mother of God, to coerce and humble Satan; and how she is ever praying to the Eternal Father: *"Glorify Thy Son. Glorify Thy obedient and suffering Son. Let not the enemy prevail against Him."* In compliance with this wish of her heart, already the joy of the Priests and Ancients has received one

great check through Pilate's refusal to alter the inscription. Worse things are coming to them. For her heart, seeing that men are blaspheming, has turned to God's inanimate works, and said: *May the sun and the moon, the light and the darkness bless the Lord.*

B. *There was darkness.*

On a sudden, the bright noon of the Judean springtide begins to be overcast. It is not the gloom that precedes a coming storm. It is a darkness novel and quite unexpected. The people, already little pleased with the work of their Rulers, are murmuring aloud: "What have our Rulers done? They have brought on us the blood of the just Man. Now what crime had Jesus of Nazareth committed to deserve death?" A little while, and the screaming of frightened birds and the lowing of the cattle helps very much the spread of consternation among the multitude. The Priests and Ancients are struck dumb in the midst of their harangues to the people. For *wickedness is fearful*: and their conscience tells them how wicked above measure they have been. *Their countenances were changed and their thoughts troubled them, and the joints of their loins were loosed* (Daniel v.).

However, they are obliged to rouse themselves and put on a bold face, and force their tongues to speak assurances that the darkness means nothing at all; is perfectly natural; that all learned men are quite prepared for it, and that only the ignorant are terrified. "You are not alarmed, Annas, are you?" The great leader answers with a smile of scorn. "Is any one of the Rulers alarmed? or we the High Priests?" All the while, *they who (are promising) to drive away fear from the sick soul are sick themselves of an excessive fear; for a troubled conscience forecasteth grievous things* (Wisdom xvii.). They have no mind to continue their speeches to the multitude. The people are scowling on them. There may be danger near. Therefore the Rulers retire on their mules towards the place of Calvary, where the line of guards is a protection.

STATION II.

And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him (St. Mark xv.).

The self same thing the thieves also that were crucified with Him reproached Him with (St. Matt. xxvii.).

And one of those robbers who were hanged, blasphemed Him, saying: If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us (St. Luke xxiii.).

A. *The thieves that were with Him reproached Him. . . . One of those robbers blasphemed Him.*

Did both the thieves join in reviling Jesus, or did only one blaspheme? As St. Luke writes, *one of the robbers*; while St. Matthew and St. Mark have: *the thieves—they that were crucified*, some writers think that only one blasphemed. They argue that historians sometimes say: "The bystanders threw stones," when perhaps only one did it; and that therefore we need not interpret St. Matthew's and St. Mark's words literally. But is there any good reason for thus explaining away the words of St. Matthew and St. Mark? The more common interpretation reconciles sufficiently well these two Evangelists with the narrative of St. Luke.

According to the common opinion, both thieves, after being scourged, come out of prison exasperated against Jesus, and join in reviling Him as the cause of their troubles. But later on, at the moment to which St. Luke alludes, only one robber blasphemes against Him. A great change has by this time been wrought in the soul of Dismas.

B. *And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him.*

We may then contemplate both thieves in their anger reviling Jesus, and His humble Heart answering meekly: *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter* (St. John xiii.).

And we may watch our Blessed Lady praying with a most tender compassion for the two sufferers, now become

companions to her Son, "My Son, *they have no wine.* The poor suffering sinner only wants Thy grace, and all his sorrows will be changed into a holy martyrdom. By Thy holy Cross, have mercy on the crucified sinners at Thy side."

"Blessed Mother of God, pray also for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death."

STATION III.

One of those robbers who were hanged, blasphemed Him, saying: If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying: Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done no evil (St. Luke xxiii. 39—41).

A. *One of those robbers blasphemed Him.*

One: for Dismas does not any longer join. He speaks not; for some time he has become silent and thoughtful.

With amazement he has been listening to the prayer of his Companion, again and again repeated: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Despite his excruciating pains, he turns, and fixes his eyes on the pale, disfigured face of Jesus. He notices the tears that are trickling down His cheeks mixed with the drops of blood. He marks too how this malefactor in the middle does not howl, does not utter curses, as he and his comrade have done. No imprecation, not one, has passed His lips.

Then, too, Dismas also rests his eye on the gentle and sorrowful face of the Blessed Mother; and marks her eyes, sometimes resting on him, and her lips moving as if in prayer. Then he turns back again and gazes on our Lord, without being conscious that he is now fixing his eyes on Jesus because Jesus has first turned His eye of mercy towards him. The night before, Peter did not begin to weep till *the Lord turning looked on Peter.* Now, in like manner, Jesus has turned and looked on Dismas, and

the blessed prophecy of Palm Sunday is beginning to be fulfilled: *I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself (St. John xii.).* While Jesus is making His prayer: *Father, forgive:* His blessed Mother can do nothing but join heart with Heart. She too is crying, *Father, forgive.*

In that hour, the Soul of Jesus Crucified has begun to commune silently with Dismas, and the robber's heart of stone is being changed into a contrite heart of flesh. The unexpected darkness helps on the growth of that fear which is *the beginning of wisdom.* In his secret soul Dismas is saying to his God: "O my God, be merciful to me a sinner. I will repass with Thee my unhappy years gone by." In anguish he is thinking how far away his God is from him. Ah! little he knows how near, how very near He is!

B. *One of those robbers.*

Dismas is silent now. Never again will he utter one word against this most patient Sufferer, Jesus of Nazareth. For surely, he argues within himself, this meek and humble-hearted Man cannot be suffering for any sin of His own. No! Nor ever again will he wound the heart of that gentle and desolate Mother.

For the first time, tears from a contrite and humbled heart are beginning to flow down his rough cheeks; when suddenly he hears his impenitent comrade burst out again: *If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us.* Strongly moved by the grace of the *plentiful redemption* which is working in him, Dismas rebukes his old accomplice, saying: *Neither dost thou fear God, seeing that we are under the same condemnation?* Holy fear has entered into his soul, and is *piercing his flesh*, and makes its wonderful power felt above the cruel agonies of his crucified body.

Neither dost thou fear God? The fear of the coming Judgment is stronger now in Dismas than the sense of present pain; and the grace within him, like a fire, seeks to spread itself into the soul of his comrade.

Neither dost thou fear God, seeing we are in the same condemnation? Whatever these other men may do and say, wagging their heads and crying, *Vah!* we two, who are doomed, and so near our death, we cannot join in their wickedness. We must fear God.

As he speaks, grace is growing rapidly in his soul.

C. *And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds.*

"O vos omnes." O all you Christian men and women who go by the way, stay a little while and listen to the wonderful word spoken by a robber who has spent his days in sin and is now for the first time penitent. We must consider in our hearts, and wonder, as we watch what grace can do, and with what speed it can work. For it is easy in the eyes of God on a sudden to make the poor man rich (Ecclus. xi.). Oh, it is good for Dismas to be here on Calvary. For in one short hour he has learned what oftentimes we do not learn in long years. Our Blessed Lady remembers the promise spoken to her: *No word shall be impossible with God.*

Is it a common thing, or is it a rare thing among us, to hear those who are suffering severely, though suffering far less grievously than Dismas, say, *We indeed justly, we are receiving the just reward of our deeds?*

If I can get so far as to say with the penitent prodigal: "I am not worthy to be treated as Thy child, my God. Make me one of Thy poor hirelings": if I can bring myself to believe and to say, after my sins, that ill-usage is good enough for me, that my heart ought to expect *reproach and misery*: oh, what a comforting assurance this is that my absolutions are thoroughly valid and ratified in Heaven!

Sometimes, immediately after absolution from very heinous sins, and a long course of sin, men murmur: Now that I am serving God well, why does He not bless me? Why does not my business prosper? Why do not Catholics deal with me? *In vain have I justified my heart, and washed my hands among the innocent* (Psalm lxxii.).

Or, again, too often, even when one confesses grievous sin and begs forgiveness, he has no mind at all to allow his neighbour to treat him as a sinner, or even say one disrespectful word to him. "I may be a sinner in God's sight," he says, "but this man does not know that: he has no right to insult me. I will not stand it."

Is this contrition? Is this the genuine loving contrition that covereth a multitude of sins? *I counsel thee to buy gold fire-tried.* We who have grown old amid the good things of Christ's charity find it so hard, even when we know our guilt, to accept punishment as well deserved—so quick are we to resent even a word of correction, so inclined to screen ourselves, even by a lie, from blame—and yet this malefactor is able to say in the first hour of his conversion, although enduring agonising torture: *We are receiving the due reward of our deeds.*

D. *We indeed justly.*

"*Est homo marcidus*"—"There is a sorry man, wanting restoratives, his strength far gone; abounding in need: and yet the eye of God hath looked upon him for good, and hath lifted him up from his low estate, and hath exalted his head: and many have wondered at him, and glorified God" (Ecclus. xi.).

Here then we see the thief lifted up from the dunghill, and already established in a degree of virtue precious in God's sight. For a humble and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. Dismas has already a contrite and humble heart, since in the extremity of bodily agony he is able to say, *We indeed justly: we are receiving the due reward of our deeds.* Now he has planned in his heart a further ascent, and from one virtue he will mount to another: *In his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps . . . (he) shall go from virtue to virtue. The God of gods shall be seen* (by him) *in Sion* (Psalm lxxxiii.).

E. *But this Man hath done no evil.*

He does not yet recognise his Hidden God; only a suffering man in sore need. And out of his own poverty he gives this fellow-sufferer great alms.

Silver and gold have I none, but what I have, I give thee. (Acts iii.).

Even if he were rich in gold and silver, Dismas cannot stretch out his crucified hand to offer it. "The thief," St. Gregory writes, "had nothing now free from torment except his heart and his tongue. Touched by Divine grace, he offers all that remains at his disposal to the service of his fellow-sufferer."

F. *This Man hath done no evil.*

Dismas gives a great alms:

1. Because, when a man is himself suffering great pain, it costs him much to rouse himself to work for another. And alms become more precious in God's sight in proportion to what they cost us.

2. Because "a friend in need," we say, "is a friend indeed". Our Saviour in this hour is in extreme necessity. Till now He has been saying: *I looked on My right hand, and beheld, and there was no one that would know Me* (Psalm cxli.). At last He has found on His right hand a friend who feels for Him.

We need not envy Dismas. Jesus remains always poor and needy among us, that each of us may be a friend in need to Him.

3. Then again, it is a great alms, because the battle against Jesus is raging on Calvary, and it requires much courage to utter such a word as this. Heretofore, when the blind man after his cure spoke up for Jesus, these Priests and Ancients had no words bad enough for him. They cast him out of the Synagogue as an excommunicated reprobate. To-day their rage, like the furnace in Babylon, *is heated seven times more than it had been accustomed to be heated* (Daniel iii.). They are in such a state of frenzy—so little, their terror tells them, is wanting to stir up the people in favour of Jesus—that they are ready to tear in pieces any one who shall dare to take His part. Consequently, several of the holy Fathers of the Church, considering the courage

with which Dismas—in presence of the Rulers, and after hearing all their denunciations of Jesus—proclaims His innocence, are not afraid to speak of him as a martyr.

"He began his chastisement," St. Augustine writes, "as a robber, but ends it as a martyr." This word of the Good Thief is the strongest possible condemnation of the Rulers. For if Jesus has done no evil, evil indeed must be they who have crucified Him.

Contemplate, then, the surprise, the indignation, the fury with which the Priests and Scribes hear this public profession from Dismas and scowl upon him. Why do they not fall upon him? (1) Because Jesus from His Cross, though He does not choose to save Himself, is well able to defend whom He pleases.

And (2) because the Centurion in charge is not so much the slave of the Rulers as his master Pilate has been, and he knows how to repress disorder. *Many dogs have encompassed Me: the council of the malignant hath besieged Me, and they have looked and stared upon Me* (Psalm xxi.). They can stare wildly on Dismas, and gnash their teeth, but no more.

G. *This Man hath done no evil.*

4. Another reason why this well-timed alms is so consoling to the agonised Soul of our Lord, is that it comes from a contrite and humbled heart. The immediate effect of contrition in the heart of Zacheus was: *If I have wronged any man, I restore him four-fold*. Dismas is now bent on making all the reparation in his power. Grievously, he now sees, grievously he has wronged this innocent and patient Man, Jesus of Nazareth: cruelly, too, that disconsolate Mother. And most earnestly he desires to make some poor amends.

"O Mother of God, Refuge of Sinners, pray for us sinners as you prayed for the first-born of your sinful children, that we too may have a great desire to make good, four-fold, every wrong we have done."

H. *This Man hath done no evil.*

Give alms—our Saviour said, not long ago, to His enemies, the Pharisees—*give alms, and behold all things are clean to you* (St. Luke xii.). Alms, holy Tobias said, *deliver from all sin, and from death : and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness* (c. iv.).

When St. Raphael had rendered such great services, the good old man, filled with gratitude, said to his son : *What can we give to this holy man that is come with thee ?* Father, his grateful son answered, *what wages shall we give him ? or what can be worthy of his benefits ?* (Job xii.).

Sursum corda ! We may contemplate the infinite gratitude of our Saviour communing now with His Eternal Father, and asking in profound humility of heart : “ My Father, what can we give to Dismas ? ” We say, “ *Quid retribuam Domino !* ” But He says with infinitely greater humility and reverence and gratitude : *Quid retribuam latroni ?* “ What shall I give in return to the penitent for the good alms he has given to Me ? ” And the Blessed Mother knows her Son’s secret thoughts, and, consoled ineffably, waits, and watches to see what His grateful Heart will do, and His blessed angels, with their Queen, wait and watch in admiration.

They have not long to wait. Jesus has promulgated this law : *Ask and you shall receive*. Therefore He puts it Himself into the mind of Dismas to ask, in order that He may be able to give.

I. *This Man has done no evil*.

Dismas said no more. This seems a passing word. But never through time or in eternity shall it pass away. Mark how the little grain of mustard-seed grows into a great tree that shall live for ever, because gratitude in our Lord’s Heart is infinite.

STATION IV.

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 (vv. 42, 43).

A. *Lord, remember me*.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, as it were, the soul of the sinner has been wafted across the chaos that lay between him and his God, and full of filial hope draws near and says, Remember me, my God, my Father. Dismas could not make this prayer unless the grateful Lord had already done great things for him. St. Thomas writes that it is a miracle when a sinner without passing slowly through intermediate stages is so strongly moved by grace that he suddenly arrives at the perfection of sanctity. Of his great faith St. Chrysostom says : “ He sees Jesus a condemned man, but invokes Him as a King ; sees Him on a Cross, but prays to Him as if enthroned in Heaven ”. He and other Fathers call St. Dismas, “ Prophet, Apostle, Evangelist ”.

When Dismas gave his alms to Jesus a short moment ago, he was only befriending one under the same condemnation as himself. Since then, faith, hope, and charity have been poured into his soul. His impenitent companion scoffs at the royalty of Jesus. Dismas now believes firmly in Him as his King and his Lord. He believes, and hopes also ; and asks with great trust, and with love, too, “ My Lord, remember me ”. St. Augustine writes : “ To faith like this what can be added, I know not. For while those are shaken who saw Christ raise the dead, he believes, though he sees Him crucified by his side. Truly no faith like this hath our Lord found in Israel ; nay, nor in the whole world.”

St. Bernard writes, *Bonus Jesus cito exaudit, cito promittit, cito dat*.

"Quickly our good Lord Jesus hears this prayer, quickly He promises, quickly He gives."

"Who," he adds, "who is there that will not hope in one Who hears so lovingly, promises so readily, pays so promptly?"

B. *This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*

This day—for though the gates of Heaven are not yet open, yet wherever Jesus shall be, there shall Paradise be. *The city hath no need of the sun nor the moon to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof* (Apoc. xxi.).

We must keep a little time to contemplate the unspeakable comfort given to our Lady's heart while she listens to her Son's word to St. Dismas: *This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.* "O my Son, my God, according to the multitude of my sorrows, Thy comforts hath given joy to my soul" (Psalm xciii.). And as she knows that her prayer for Dismas has won the great mercy, she adds: *My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. He that is mighty hath done great things for me.* Mark how her tears are falling and how Dismas weeps abundantly, as his eye meets hers, and he looks on his Mother and his Queen, and she fixes her eyes on the dying Saint, her first-born on Calvary.

C. *This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*

And it is our Blessed Saviour Himself Who tells us that there is among all His holy legions a gladness such as eye on earth hath never seen, nor ear heard of, nor heart conceived, in the hour when they hear their King from His holy Cross canonise the Blessed Saint that was, till this holy hour, a castaway. "All ye angels of the Lord," their Queen is saying to them, "bless the Lord, bless my Son Jesus. *Who is like to God our Lord, Who looketh down on the low things, raising up the needy from the earth, and lifting up the poor out of the dunghill?*" (Psalm cxii.).

"True indeed it is, my Son, my Lord: Thyself Thou wilt not save, but Thou wilt save and glorify others."

D. *This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*

"O vos omnes, attendite." Oh, do not yet hasten away. Tarry a little longer, to consider in your hearts, how the Good Thief came to be so blessed as to hear this word: *Thou shalt be with Me.* We are familiar with the legends which tell us that either he or his mother befriended Holy Mary when she was fleeing with her Divine Child from the cruelty of Herod. But we need not build our theories on any uncertain foundations.

We have certainties before us.

E. *This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*

First, then, Dismas was a sinner found out in his sin and punished by man for his sin. And there is always hope for a sinner found out and subjected to chastisement.

For (1) a sinner detected, when his sin is now exposed, is a man cast down and humbled. Pride is often cast out of him.

Then (2), when God strikes in this world, it is a sign that He does not intend to chastise us in the next life. He is a Father, Who *hath compassion on His children* (Psalm cii.). *For the Lord will not cast off for ever. For if He hath cast off, He will also have mercy, according to the multitude of His mercies. For not from the heart hath He afflicted nor cast off the children of men* (Lament. iii.).

St. Augustine tells us how earnestly as a child he prayed that he might not be chastised for his delinquencies. Later on, his thoughts changed, and he cried out: "O God, spare me not here, that Thou mayest in eternity spare me".

Happy the day and blessed the hour when our good God chastises us here, in order not to be compelled to take vengeance in eternity.

Happy the sinner who wisely chastises himself, for God will not cast him off. *Sacrifice a sacrifice of justice, and hope in the Lord* (Psalm iv.).

Weep not over the prisoner in his dungeon nor the condemned man on the scaffold; but weep over him who sins and prospers. *Their houses are secure and peaceable, and*

the rod of God is not upon them. Their little ones go out like a flock, and their children dance and play. They take the timbrel and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down into Hell (Job xxi.).

Dismas, then, has sinned; but in the dungeon he has been scourged for his sin, and starved for his sin, and trampled on, as an outcast, for his sin. And now, on Calvary, for his sin he is to die, and to die crucified. And even when sorrow and suffering are a consequence of our own sin, our Lord has a fellow-feeling for the sufferer, and is very willing to sanctify the suffering. *I am with him in tribulation* (Psalm xc.). If Gesmas died impenitent, his overwhelming despair at the Judgment will be that he did not use offered graces as Dismas did. *We fools! Behold how (he is) numbered among the children of God, and (his) lot among the saints* (Wisdom v.).

F. *Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*

(3) While studying the grace given to St. Dismas, we must, in the next place, bear in mind the words of Isaias, the Prophet of the Sacred Passion: *Thus saith the Lord: In an acceptable time I have heard thee, and in the day of salvation I have helped thee* (c. xlix.). There never has been since the beginning of the world an acceptable time such as this Good Friday. The Passion of our Lord covers up entirely the multitude of sins committed throughout the world. And the dark moments, from the sixth to the ninth hour, are so beautiful in the eyes of the Eternal Father, that He cannot remember man's transgression. He can only look on the face of His Christ.

There are, then, acceptable times; there are special days of salvation.

Whenever our Blessed Lord is lying on the altar and the Sacrifice of Calvary is being represented in the Holy Mass, that is an acceptable time.

All the feasts of the Blessed Mother of God are acceptable times. For her *the King desires to honour.*

When God wishes to show special honour to a saint, then is an acceptable time.

As has been said already, the time of suffering is an acceptable time. For our Lord cannot help having much compassion for those who suffer.

Again, the time we spend charitably by a sick-bed, or with the poor, or helping a sinner to rise, these hours are always acceptable times. *For the merciful shall find mercy.*

Are there, on the other hand, times specially unacceptable? Yes; the days when we are sinning and prospering are specially odious in God's sight. The hour in which I am sinning myself, and yet hard and unmerciful to others, is also a very unpropitious hour for finding mercy.

G. *This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*

(4) Observe, also: as there are acceptable times, so are there acceptable places. When Naaman, the Syrian leper, was bidden by Eliseus to go wash in the Jordan, he was angry. *Are not the rivers of Damascus*, he said, *better than all the waters of Israel?* (4 Kings v.). But his servants counselled him better than his own anger. *Wash*, they said, *and thou shalt be clean.*

God is Lord and Master of all. If He chooses water for Baptism, oil for the dying, bread and wine for the Eucharist, we are fools if we rise up and ask why must it be water or oil or wine? If He chooses to say to His priests: What you absolve shall be absolved: fools are we if we determine to have forgiveness in some other way of our own. If our Blessed Lord chooses to give grace in the Jordan or in Jerusalem, or at the tomb of a martyr or a shrine of our Lady, who shall gainsay God's good pleasure?

Calvary is God's chosen spot. In consequence of the words of the 73rd Psalm, *God is our King before ages; He hath wrought salvation in the middle of the earth*, many early Fathers assumed that Calvary is the centre of the earth. This at least is certain, that it is the centre of Christian life. At Holy Mass each day the priest says: *I will compass Thy altar, O Lord, that I may hear the voice of Thy praise, and*

tell of all Thy wondrous works (Psalm xxv.). Do not the words give us a picture of what Christian life ought to be?

I will compass Thy altar, O Lord. Whatever my walk of life may be, my heart shall ever continue going round about Thy altar, shall ever be looking towards Thy altar. For Thy altar is Calvary; and Calvary is Thy altar.

One of our favourite poets writes to his loved brother:

Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,
My heart untravell'd, fondly turns to thee.

Many children of Holy Church are so blessed as to be able to say that whatever their work may be, and whithersoever duty may call them, their souls untravell'd turn to Calvary, the centre of the Christian world. *If I forget thee, O Calvary, let my right hand be forgotten.*

Some spiritual writers have thought that the mystery of the Blessed Eucharist will be in some ineffable way perpetuated in Heaven, in order to add to the delighted gratitude of the blessed; and to keep fresh and perennial the memory of Calvary, and all the holiness and loveliness of the first Good Friday.

I will compass Thy altar, O Lord. I will frequent Calvary. I will go often in spirit to the *mountain of myrrh* and the *hill of frankincense*. With what object? The Psalmist tells us: (1) *To hear the voice of Thy praise*; to hear the hymns and songs of Holy Church on earth in praise of Jesus Crucified; to hear what the blessed in Heaven are saying or singing of Jesus Crucified; to hear, too, what the Holy Souls in Purgatory are lovingly sighing out concerning Jesus Crucified.

And then, also, (2) *to tell of Thy wondrous works*; to get so warmed with that fire that comes from the Heart of our Lord Crucified, that this Divine fire may spread as it ought from our hearts to others.

Good Friday, then, is an acceptable time, and Calvary a chosen spot for the miracles of God's mercy, far beyond the waters of Jordan, far beyond the Pool of Siloe or

Solomon's Temple. Our Lord said of Solomon's Temple: *My eyes shall be open, and My ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place. For I have chosen and have sanctified this place, that My name may be there for ever, and My eyes and My heart may remain there perpetually* (2 Paral. vii.).

How much better do these holy words suit Calvary!

I have chosen and have sanctified this place. For His Birth He chose the stable, to be cradled there between the two animals, the ox and the ass, and to sanctify that place. For His Death, for His Passion and His Blessed Mother's Compassion, He chose Golgotha, the place of the skull, to die there, *between the two robbers*, Dismas and Gesmas, and to sanctify the place ineffably.

Much against his will, and with a heavy heart, Dismas came to Calvary. By the ninth hour he is able to say, *Better is one day in Thy courts, Lord Jesus, above thousands* (Psalm lxxxiii.). *It is good for me, O Lord, that Thou hast humbled me* (Psalm cxviii.). It is good for me to be here.

H. Lord, remember me. *This day thou shalt be with Me.*

"Quickly He hears, quickly He promises, quickly He pays," St. Bernard tells us. We often suffer much because our Lord is slow in hearing our prayers, or seems not to hear at all.

"Attendite." Let us stay here a little, and fix in our mind the method adopted by the Good Thief, which succeeded so well in obtaining a speedy hearing for his prayer. *Look well, and do according to the pattern.* Try to find out what plan he followed, and *go thou and do the like.*

First, then, Dismas is a suffering man, and the Heart of our Saviour, as has been said, always inclines towards sufferers. *I am with him in tribulation.* The sick and the suffering are often depressed because they cannot work. They may be comforted unspeakably. For suffering makes us more like to Christ Crucified than work does. Consequently, though there has ever been so much work to do in His vineyard, He was more pleased to see His martyrs

die suffering with Him and for Him, than to leave them on earth to work in His vineyard.

Secondly, the heart of St. Dismas has become bruised and humble. *We indeed justly.—We are receiving the due reward of our deeds* (St. Luke xxiii.). *The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds* (Ecclus. xxxv.). The heart of Dismas has been bruised by a great contrition. He is wonderfully humble—we must admit it—to be able to accept with such singular resignation the terrible agony of the crucified.

Let us remember what a power pain has to blot out entirely from our mind the sense of our guilt, and the conviction that we deserve much chastisement. At times, it only makes us more impatient if friends remind us of such thoughts.

Let us, then, do justice to the wonderful grace come from the Heart of Jesus into the heart of His companion in suffering.

Thirdly, Dismas, before he makes his short prayer, gives a great alms. Now, on this point, what is our Saviour's promise? *Undo the bundles that oppress; let them that are broken go free; and break asunder every burden. Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and the harbourless into thy house. When thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning and thy health shall speedily arise. Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall hear: thou shalt cry and He shall say, Here I am* (Isaias lviii.).

Dismas has done his best to ease the burden of injustice and malice that is oppressing Jesus. Let us try to do according to the pattern. We can take off a heavy burden from our absent neighbour by defending him when maligned and oppressed by evil tongues. But if, on the contrary, we by unkindness, by detraction, by calumny, add to the load that is burdening one of our brethren, what chance have we of a speedy hearing when we pray? Or, again, if we have not entirely forgiven from our very

hearts, if there is some one of our brethren labouring under the weight of our displeasure, how can we hope for a speedy answer to our prayer? If with an unforgiving heart we are saying, "Our Father, forgive as I forgive," can we expect a blessing to come quickly?

Fourthly. Then, besides, Dismas has Jesus and Holy Mary near him when he prays, and praying with him; and they are ever ready to pray with us now. The priest at the altar turns round and says to the faithful: *Oremus—*"Let us pray". Jesus, Who is *ever living to intercede for us*, turns also to us and says: "Let us pray together to *My Father and your Father, My God and your God*". Before we begin to say, Our Father, let us prepare our souls, by bringing close to us on one side those whom we dislike, or are inclined to condemn, who are the children of our Father as well as we are; and on the other side, let us have near us Jesus our Brother, our Surety, the first-born of our Father, and the first-born of our Holy Mother. If we pray in this companionship, our prayer will be very pleasing.

I. *Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*

The holy Fathers of the Church find great contentment in dwelling on the grace given to St. Dismas. "Not one will you find," St. Chrysostom writes, "before the Thief who was judged deserving of a promise of Paradise; not Abraham! not Isaac! not Jacob! not Moses! not the Prophets nor the Apostles! You will find the Robber favoured above them all." O blessed St. Dismas, when thou wert grieved this morning, Jesus of Nazareth passing by said to thee: "*What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*" Take up thy cross and follow Me."

J. *To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*

"Notice," writes St. Augustine, "our Lord died, taking with Him neither gold nor silver nor precious raiments, nothing but the soul of one thief." This is His treasure.

K. *Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*

Shall we say then that we can all wait and make our
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peace with God on our death-beds? *Absit!* Far be that thought from us. It was not the thought of the Good Thief. He was not one who knew, but would not do. "Till he was on the cross beside our Lord," St. Augustine writes, "he knew nothing of religion, nothing of Christ." "When once he became aware that it was the acceptable time, he made no delay, nor deferred his cure to the last moment. Let not any one say: I see how the Good Thief obtained in a brief space pardon of his crimes. The devil inspires this confidence only that he may secure our perdition. Beyond all counting are they who have been deluded by this empty phantom of hope."

One is converted on his death-bed, therefore I must not despair. Few are converted on their death-bed, therefore I must prepare beforehand.

Delay not to be converted to the Lord; and defer it not from day to day (Ecclus. v.).

Arise, make haste and come (Cant. ii.), our Blessed Lord says to us from His Cross.

L. *Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*

St. Augustine, reflecting on the humble patience of the Thief in his terrible penance, prays: "Do Thou, O Lord, Who sendest the outward scourge, give me always a never-failing patience, that so Thy praise may never depart from my mouth".

St. Bernard prays: "Oh, if Jesus would also remember me, a sinner! Remember me, Thou Who didst not spurn the Thief who confessed to Thee."

Holy Church prays:

Qui Latronem exaudisti Thou Who didst the Robber hear,
Mihi quoque spem dedisti. Biddest me with hope draw near.

M. *Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*

Christ changed the fishermen into fishers of men. So, too, a holy Father writes, He taught the Robber to follow his trade in a new and better way, and by violence to carry away the Kingdom of Heaven.

STATION V.

One of those robbers blasphemed. . . . But the other said to Jesus: Lord, remember me (vv. 39, 43).

A. *One shall be taken, the other left* (St. Matt. xxiv.), our Lord said three days ago, and He added His usual earnest warning: *Watch ye therefore.*

The scene on Calvary, St. Leo the Great tells us, is a picture of the Judgment that is to come. The Judge is in the middle, the elect on His right hand, the wicked on the left.

"One goes before Peter into Paradise," St. Jerome writes, "the other follows Judas into Hell."

B. *One blasphemed; the other said, Lord, remember me.*

If we ask, why one is thus taken and the other left: why God draws one and does not draw the other: St. Augustine gives one answer:

Noli investigare,	Do not search too long,
Si non vis errare.	For you may go wrong.

God Himself gives this answer: *I will have mercy on whom I will, and I will be merciful to whom it shall please Me* (Exodus xxxiii.).

Therefore grace is always God's free gift. But still, if we might get behind the scenes, as we say, and see all that passes before the hour in which the two Apostles sin, St. Peter and Judas, we should understand better why God is pleased to be merciful to one, and is constrained against His will to let the other perish in his sins. And so, too, at the Judgment, when Jesus Christ makes known His secret, we shall understand why Dismas finds mercy and Gesmas does not.

And then, Lord Jesus, Thou (shalt) be justified in all Thy words, and (shalt) overcome when Thou art judged (Psalm l.).

C. *Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*

Let us contemplate the peace that this world cannot give, but which Jesus can give—which is now in the soul

of this crucified Saint since he heard that word, *Thou shalt be with Me.* "*In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam. Quoniam tu, Domine, singulariter in spe constituisti me*"—*In peace I will sleep, and will rest. For Thou, O Lord, singularly, wonderfully, most marvellously, hast settled me in hope.*

In the eleventh hour, just as God's Angel is about to swear that for him *time shall be no more*, Jesus on His Cross calls Dismas from eternal death to Paradise and life everlasting.

"Blessed Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death."

SCENE III.

THE DIVISION OF THE GARMENTS.

STATION I.

The soldiers, therefore, when they had crucified Him, took His garments (and they made four parts, to every soldier a part), and also His coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said then one to another: Let us not cut it, but let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled: They have parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture they have cast lots. And the soldiers indeed did these things (St. John xix.).

And crucifying Him they divided His garments, casting lots upon them what every man should take (St. Mark xv.). And they sat and watched Him (St. Matt. xxvii.).

A. *The soldiers, therefore, took His garments.*

The growing darkness affects the soldiers somewhat as it affects all others around Golgotha. They are no longer so well pleased with their work. They are glad to withdraw a little from the Cross. They cannot retire altogether and go back to their barracks, for they are bound to keep watch to the end and see the condemned expire; but they are well content to go aside and look after

the spoils that have fallen to them through the Crucifixion. Some writers tell us that the Centurion, already touched by Divine grace, orders them to retire, in order that the Blessed Mother may be undisturbed. They leave, therefore, the plateau and take their seats, a little below the level. There they spread out the garments of our Blessed Saviour, and, according to their usage, bring out their dice, in order to settle the partition amicably. It is, moreover, time for their noon-day meal. They are tired, and glad of some rest and refreshment. Perchance too they reckon up the fees and bribes which they have received for services rendered.

They made four parts, for every soldier a part.

These words bear out the opinion of those who tell us that four executioners were appointed to take charge of each doomed criminal.

They divided His garments, casting lots.

Did they cast lots over all the garments, or only for the woven tunic? Some writers gather from the words of St. Mark that the whole distribution was settled by the cast of the dice. Others think that St. John's words imply that nothing but the woven tunic was determined by lots. One method proposed for reconciling the two opinions is to say that in the first place the soldiers divided the garments as well as they could into four equal portions, setting aside, however, the woven tunic; that then they cast lots to decide which of the four portions each is to have; and that lastly they cast lots for the woven tunic.

B. *They said then one to another: Let us not cut it.*

Holy writers wish us to learn a lesson from the prudence of these rough men. Charity ought to be in our eyes, like a precious robe, much more sacred than the woven tunic is to them.

Sometimes we are in doubt which of two courses to pursue. Worldly prudence, or resentment, or some other passion may urge one course; St. Paul, however, earnestly presses on us an opposite advice: *Before all these things have charity* (Coloss. iii.). If a rent is once made in heavenly charity, who shall mend it?

A mild answer, the Holy Ghost tells us, *breaketh wrath; but a harsh word stirreth up fury* (Prov. xv.).

One harsh word often makes a breach in holy charity, which cannot for many long days be repaired.

Again, the Holy Spirit cautions us all very strongly against the tongues of tale-bearers and mischief-makers. *The tongue of a third person hath disquieted many. . . . He that hearkeneth to it shall never have rest : neither shall he have a friend in whom he may repose. The stroke of a whip maketh a blue mark ; but the stroke of the tongue will break the bones* (Ecclus. xxviii.). And yet he who strikes with a whip shall be shut up in prison ; while he who with his mischievous tongue has destroyed long-standing friendships, and set at variance a peaceful family, is allowed to walk abroad unmolested and to visit house after house as an apostle of discord. Let us not cut and rend and tear asunder the unity of charity.

C. *They said one to another : Let us not cut it.*

The holy Fathers also see in this coat *without seam, and woven from the top throughout*, a picture of our Lord's revelation, that is, of His Gospel, or the one faith committed to His Church, which is *woven from the top throughout*, so as to make one indivisible whole. It ought never to be cut. For St. James writes : *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all* (c. ii.). So too, evidently, if I accept all God's teaching, except one doctrine which I reject, faith is wholly destroyed. For it is clear that, if I accept my neighbour's testimony in other matters, but on one point believe firmly that he is a liar, what I accept can never efface the stigma I fix upon him by accusing him of one grave lie.

D. *Crucifying Him, they divided His garments.*

"*Attendite.*" Let us not fail to mark this contrast : Jesus throughout the whole course of His agonising torments is unmindful of Himself and thinking of us. But we can sit down under the shadow of His holy Cross, and forget our Surety Who is giving His life for us. We can be so absorbed in a little gain, or a passing pleasure, that we forget entirely His Passion and Holy Mary's compassion.

SCENE IV.

THE THIRD WORD.

STATION I.

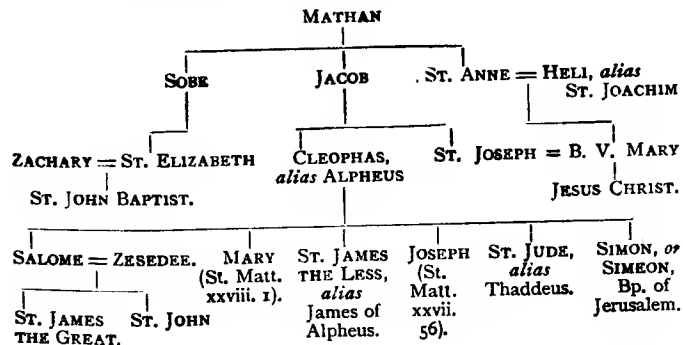
Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother, and His Mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen (St. John xix.).

And there were many women afar off, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him. Among whom was Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee (St. Matt. xxvii.).

His Mother, and His Mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas.

i. Mary of Cleophas is here called *His Mother's sister*, in the same way that St. James is called by St. Paul *the brother of the Lord*, and St. Mark writes : *His Mother and His brethren came and sent to Him, calling Him* (c. iii.). The names of brother and sister are given to cousins. The more immediate relatives of our Lord can be seen in the following table. We start from Mathan, whom we find in St. Matthew's genealogical table (c. i.) as a descendant from David and Solomon. Mathan, as we see, was father of St. Anne, and grandfather both of our Lady and of St. Joseph.

N.B.—The sign = means married to.



From this table we see that Holy Mary, St. Elizabeth, St. Joseph, and Cleophas (called also Alpheus) are all first cousins : that Salome, and one of the three Marys, and the

Apostles, St. James the Less (called also James of Alphaeus), and St. Jude (called also Thaddeus), were the children of St. Joseph's brother, Cleophas, and would therefore be considered first cousins of our Lord. Two other Apostles, St. James and St. John, are younger. They are sons of Zebedee and his wife, Salome, who is St. Joseph's niece.

2. *His Mother and His Mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen.*

Mary of Cleophas, mentioned by St. John, is Mary the mother of James and Joseph mentioned by St. Mark.

3. St. Mark speaks of Mary of Cleophas and Mary Magdalen and Salome (Zebedee's wife) as *afar off*. St. John places them with our Lady beside the Cross. They may have been at first *afar off*, and afterwards, when the darkness cleared the ground around the holy Cross, drew as near as they could to the Blessed Mother.

A. *Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

This is well. She is now in her place. The darkness, we are told, is come at her prayer: *Glorify Thy Son, O God, that Thy Son may glorify Thee*. It is come at her prayer to silence the enemies of Jesus, and also to scare them away, and to leave her place within the sanctuary, during the Holy Sacrifice, free for her. The darkness secures a sacred privacy for her sorrow. In the moment of the Incarnation no eye on earth witnessed her ineffable gladness; no ear on earth heard the melody made in her heart. No thought of man pictured her ecstasy. So is there now a sacred veil spread over her sorrow, her sorrow *great as the sea*.

For if it be written: *According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul* (Psalm xciii.), we may safely say that according to the multitude of those midnight joys in the hour of the Incarnation and in the hour of the Nativity, so are these sorrows, *great as the sea*, which, in this untimely midnight, enter unbidden into the soul of this admirable Mother.

Let them be confounded and ashamed that seek my (Son's) Soul (Psalm lxi.). This prayer has been heard. The scoffing Priests and Ancients are struck dumb by the darkness and have slunk away from the place of Calvary. And

Holy Mary has come into her own position close to the holy Cross.

Ordinatione tua—Entirely according to Thy will and ordinance, Lord Jesus, this holy day of grace and salvation is going on. She is near to the Cross.

B. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

"*Attendite.*" Look at her near to the Cross, standing in front, her eyes fixed on her Divine Son. There is nothing now on Calvary to disturb her contemplation. She can see, she can hear, she can suffer. The sword can enter silently and leisurely, without let or hindrance, into her soul and pierce it through and through. "She is given up," says the theologian Cajetan, "to a wondering contemplation, comparing the high things heretofore witnessed with the depths of the present hour."

C. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

She is not here to nurse her Son. She will not dress His wounds, nor bind them up, nor foment them with oil. She is here that the Divine decrees may have their fulfilment. In this hour, the great enmity, so long foretold, between her and the serpent is to come to its height, and she is to crush his head under her virgin foot. In this hour, her Son is *set as a Sign to be contradicted*, and to become *the fall and the resurrection of many*; and her own soul is to be *pierced with the sword of sorrow, that out of many hearts different thoughts may be revealed* (St. Luke ii.). Many will scoff at her; many will venerate deeply, and love tenderly this Blessed Mother of the thrice Blessed Son.

In Bethlehem she was a Mother to Him, and nursed Him and fed Him with her milk. To-day she is here as the second Eve, to help the second Adam, by suffering at His side, to repair the great wrong done to His Eternal Father by a man and a woman in the Garden of Eden.

D. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

St. Bernardine writes that in the very hour of the

Incarnation she knew and accepted what was to come. For she had, with the Holy Ghost as her Master, studied the sacred pages. When, therefore, she said: "*Fiat*"—*be it done to me*, she consented to all.

Then, as has been already said, in those hours of blessedness which they spent together at Nazareth, the Divine Child was ever perfecting more and more her *supereminent knowledge* of Him. He Who said of old: *Can I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?* had much more vividly imprinted on His Heart this thought: *Can I hide from My Blessed Mother any of the things that are to come to her and to Me?*

As she is My Eve, and My helpmate, is it well, is it right for Me to be alone through My long Passion of foreknowledge? Can I eat My morsel and drink My chalice alone for so many years and not share with her? It is impossible. This may not be.

Now His hour is come and her hour is come. They are together. *Lovely and comely in their life*, in this hour of death they must not be divided.

E. There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.

A holy Father writes that, as in the Incarnation the Son of God willed to share with His Human Nature all that could be shared; so in His Sacred Passion Jesus wills to share with His Blessed Mother all His sorrows, as far as ever He can share them. They are to be two in one, with *one heart and one soul*.

He has given to her the right of sharing everything with Him—draining with Him the chalice to the dregs: *The Lord hath sworn and will not repent* (Psalm cix.).

This must be so, for otherwise St. Paul's argument would fail: *He Who delivered His only Son for us all, how hath He not also with Him given us all things?* (Rom. viii.).

To her pre-eminently and in a manner quite ineffable, God has given His only Son. How then can He hold anything back? How can He help sharing with her every sorrow of His Son?

F. There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother.

Moreover, unless He shares with her every morsel of the *bread of tears*, and every bitter drop in his chalice, He cannot rightly do all His own work. For it is in His design that He shall be able to say: *What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard, that I have not done to it?* (Isaias v.).

If then He does not suffer in her, and by seeing her in agony endure an anguish such as we cannot measure, there will be something which He could do for His vineyard and has not done it.

Those who love truly on this earth often say: I can bear my own pain, but I cannot endure to see my wife and my child starving. The tender and most sensitive Heart of Jesus would escape far more than half of His Passion were He not to endure to the end—to the very end—the agony of seeing His Mother suffer.

G. There stood by the Cross, His Mother.

He must, then, bear all the pain of seeing her pain; and, what is worse, He Himself must inflict every wound. Neither Jew nor Roman shall touch one hair of her head. He Himself will inflict wound after wound, anguish upon anguish, by revealing and laying bare to her heart every wound and anguish of His own.

The words of Jeremias are often applied to Holy Mary's sorrow: *Great as the sea is thy contrition*, thy crushing grief. St. Bernard figures to himself two seas, to represent these two Hearts of Jesus and of Mary. The Heart of our Lord, he says, overflows, and the overflow pours into the heart of His Mother.

Her heart becomes full, too full, much too full, and the great overflow pours back into the Heart of her Son.

To St. Bridget our Lady made this revelation: "Whenever my Son from His Cross looked down on me, to such a degree was He filled with bitter grief on account of my sorrow, that all the pain from His wounds was, as it were,

lulled to rest, on account of my sorrow which He was witnessing."

"His sorrow," she added, "was my sorrow, because His Heart was my heart."

H. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

We call her "the Mirror of Justice". So was she also a mirror reflecting most perfectly all the sufferings of her Son.

A mirror or speculum reflects faithfully, if (1) there be light sufficient; if (2) the mirror be sufficiently near; if (3) its surface be bright, and not sullied.

1. *The light on Calvary is strong.* Through the years gone by she had a prophetic knowledge that was more dim. Now, on Calvary, she sees clearly every wound, hears every breathing, every sigh, every word; feels most vividly all His weariness, all His distress, and His cruel pains. Her knowledge is most complete. She is in the full light.

Moreover, besides seeing with the eye, she understands; she penetrates into His secret suffering. She can say: *I am come into the depth of the sea* (Psalm lxviii.).

Applying these words of our Saviour, *By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved; and he shall go in and go out and find pastures* (St. John x.), St. Laurence Justinian writes: "She went in through the openings in His hands and His feet, she came out through every wound in His Body, and everywhere found pastures of sorrow".

The heart of the Virgin Mother became the bright speculum of the whole Passion. St. Augustine writes: "By seeing, she shared every pain". With good reason may she use Job's words: *My eye abideth in bitterness* (c. xvii.). And, as has been said, she not only sees the wounds on the surface, but understands every inward anguish, and all the aggravating circumstances: she understands fully not only how suffering He is, but also how innocent, how blameless, how undeserving of all this cruelty and unkindness.

My beloved is white and ruddy (Cant. v.). White—that is, pure, innocent, guiltless. For *what evil hath He done?* No one can accuse Him. No one can condemn Him. Yet when was ever a malefactor so stained with red drops of blood, and so covered with wounds and bruises and swelling sores?

A holy writer applies these words also of the Cantic of Canticles: *The hairs of thy head (are) like the purple of the King* (Cant. vii.). *The hairs of the head*, he writes, are the Blessed Mother's thoughts, and her thoughts are become quite like the blood-stained Body of the King. "The flesh of her Son was dyed in the blood of His Passion, and her Mother's thoughts are dyed, so to say, in the blood of her compassion."

With her weeping eyes she travels from wound to wound, and as she gazes, St. Gregory Nazianzen writes, "each wound produces in her uncounted wounds". St. Cyprian adds: "All that marvellous martyrdom which torments effected in Him, the active watching of her eyes reproduced in her".

1. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

2. *On Calvary the Mirror is near enough.*

Maternal love brings her close, unspeakably close, to her Son. "*Non fallunt viscera matrem.*" A mother's bowels of compassion cannot be mistaken. Nothing can escape them.

In her case motherly love is in its perfection. And, moreover, she has a Son in Whom every loveable perfection is most perfect; perfect beyond the reach of our thoughts.

We are moved to pity when we read of Agar's sorrow in the wilderness over her starving son: *She cast her boy under one of the trees that were there: and she went her way, and sat over against him, a great way off, for she said: I will not see the boy die. And sitting over against, she lifted up her voice and wept* (Genesis xxi.). Holy Mary cannot thus retire a great way off. She cannot sit down to rest—she must stand, and stand near the Cross. Oh, yes, and

far, far more united in spirit even than in body; and she must see her Son die.

St. Ambrose, preaching at his brother's funeral, tells how a brother laid his lips upon those of his dying brother to receive the parting breath. The Blessed Mother's heart is still more closely joined to the Heart of her Son, inhaling, drawing in every sorrow of His.

"*Anima Jonathæ conglutinata est animæ David*" (1 Kings xviii.). If this can be said, that Jonathan's soul was knit, was glued to the soul of David, where are we to find a word that shall express the close, intimate union of these two Hearts on Calvary, the Immaculate Mother's and her Divine Son's?

Nullus dolor amarior, St. Bonaventure writes, *quia nulla proles carior*.

Oh, ne'er was shed so sad a tear;
For never died a Son so dear.

As our Blessed Lady expressed it to St. Mechtildis: "The sorrow of my Son was my sorrow, because His Heart was my heart".

A devout writer on the Passion applies the word in the Lamentations: *He hath set me as a mark for His arrows* (c. iii.). "Each time," he writes, "Jesus looked upon His Mother, a fresh arrow is fixed in her heart. Each time her eye rests on Him, an arrow goes through His Heart." To St. Bridget the Holy Mother made known that while the Holy Child was young at Nazareth neighbours when in trouble used to say: "Let us go and look at the Son of Mary, that for a little while at least we may be comforted". But in this hour, on Calvary, to look on Him brings to her not joy nor consolation, but only comfort in the original sense of the word, that is, an increase of strength, a growth of that love which is *strong as death*, stronger than death, stronger than all the malice of Satan, stronger than all the horrors of Golgotha.

We say that she *stood by the Cross*. "Nay," answer some of the holy Fathers, "she is fastened to the Cross

with Him." Who else can say so truly as she can, *With Christ I am fixed to the cross*? St. Bonaventure writes: "The Son and the Mother are crucified together; and, on account of their intense love for one another, out of their mutual compassion there is engendered in each of them distress unspeakable: precisely on this account, that each is suffering because of the other". St. Thomas, enumerating in detail the pains our Lord suffered through His senses, says that His eyesight was afflicted by seeing His Mother. "*Abyssus abyssum invocat*" (Psalm xli.). One abyss of sorrow is for ever calling up another.

J. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

3. *The reflecting Mirror on Calvary is bright and resplendent.*

Holy Mary is not only an eye-witness, not only the Mother of the Crucified, but she is *full of grace*. And through the abundance of grace in her soul, she suffers more than through her eyesight or her Motherhood. Jesus crucified is more to her as her Lord, than as her Son. She loves Him and magnifies Him and exults in Him more because He is Son of God than because He is her Son.

Were she only a mother, and an eye-witness, she would not understand all the worst, the most crushing of all His sorrows and sufferings. For the Psalmist rightly asks: *Who understands sins*? We poor sinners, who are ever inclined to say that forbidden word: *I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me*? how can we form any conception of that load under which Jesus is *bowled down* to-day, because He hath taken on Him sin—the sins of the world, and all that displeasure with which His Eternal Father necessarily abhors sin? None other than the Heart of the Lamb of God Himself adequately understands sin; and next to Him the immaculate and sinless heart of His Mother.

St. Bernard calls Holy Mary, *Primogenita Redemptionis*—the first-born, the eldest child, the first-fruits of Redemption. On her beyond all others is poured out the plentiful redemption in all its abundance. Theologians distinguish

three measures of grace to which Christ Jesus is entitled: (1) *Gratia unionis*—the grace of hypostatic union with the Divinity; (2) *Gratia capitis*—the grace that accrues to Him as Head of all creation; (3) *Gratia singularis personæ*—that personal grace that belongs to Him as the Holiest of the holy. Now, when He gave Himself to her, all other things, as St. Paul argues, He necessarily gave with Himself. Hence all His prerogatives He shared with her; and to-day, He ratifies and amplifies a thousand-fold all her rights, all the original covenant between them. And as He so scrupulously shares with her every one of His sorrows, so does He in abundance share with her all His rights. She has what may be said to correspond to the *Gratia unionis*—the internal union of Mother with Son. She too has all that grace which belongs to the Mother of the living, the Mother of the Church: *Gratia capitis*. She too has in abundance all the grace that befits the Immaculate, the sinless one, who from the beginning was full of grace, and, by her diligent traffic, has through life been multiplying the graces showered on her, every hour and every moment. *Gratia singularis personæ*.

In the very first beginning she was set above the holiness of saints and angels. (Her) *foundations are on (the top of) the holy mountains*. Where their perfection ends, there hers begins.

Her holy soul, then, understands sin, and she divides the Sacred Passion into two parts—the sufferings laid on her Son by the Eternal Father; and, unspeakably more intolerable, the sins committed against Him by men. It is chiefly this presence of sin on all sides of Him that in the Garden drew from His Heart that cry: *My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me*. And this is now the mountain that has fallen on her, the hill that is covering her. *I beheld the transgressors and I pined away, because they kept not Thy word* (Psalm cxviii.). *His fire is in Sion, His furnace is in Jerusalem* (Isaias xxxi.). The fire of His zeal for the Eternal Father's glory, the furnace

burning in His Heart, is to-day in Sion, in Jerusalem, on Calvary, all reproduced in her heart.

K. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

Three witnesses call her Blessed—the devout woman who heard Jesus preach: *Blessed is the womb that bore Thee*; St. Elizabeth, when Mary came to visit her: *Blessed art thou that hast believed*; lastly: *All generations* (she herself tells us) *shall call me blessed*. Three times is she blessed, and three times over is she crucified—crucified by being present; crucified by her motherly love; crucified by her holiness, and her horror of sin.

L. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother.*

Theologians ask: What recompense does Jesus, Who so richly rewarded Dismas, give to-day to His Mother on Calvary? As the words, *Of whom was born Jesus Who is called Christ*, they say, convey to us briefly, as it were in epitome, the story of her sanctity and a catalogue of all her graces; so too this short word, *She stood by the Cross*, is, as it were, a new compressed volume, a new abridgment, telling succinctly of all her fidelity, and all its rich recompense.

"Never did she forsake Thee," writes St. Bernard; "not in Thy infancy, not in Thy childhood, not in Thy young manhood, and never throughout Thy Passion has her sympathy, her service, ever failed Thee. Thy infancy she suckled; Thy preaching she followed, and heard it all; Thy Passion she witnesses and accompanies, contemplating every outrage."

What recompense, then, is she to have?

We know the answer of the Angelical Doctor when our Lord put the question to him: "What reward, Thomas, do you desire of Me?" "None other, O Lord, but Thyself."

With our poor human thought we may try to soar a little way towards the sense and the intensity with which she makes the same answer on Calvary: "No reward, my Son and my God, for me, but Thee Thyself."

And we may also perchance in contemplation try to understand the meaning those words of our Lord's parable have when addressed to His Holy Mother: *Thou art always with Me (Mother), and all that I have is thine.*

All that I have is thine. Her great reward is that with true filial fidelity He keeps His word to her, and does not keep back any sorrow from her, but lets her share them all. *Can I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?* There is nothing that He hides from her, nothing that He does not share. They are drinking the chalice together drop by drop.

As a matter of course, then, it follows that as she shares all His sorrows in such good measure—*pressed down, shaken together, and running over*—so too in the same abundant measure will she share every other prerogative of His that can be shared. *All that I have is thine.*

M. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother.*

What recompense, then, shall she have to-day?

Till now she has been *the Mother* of Jesus. But on Calvary, spiritual writers tell us, she is made in a spiritual and mystical, but most true and real sense, *His Spouse also.*

Every Christian is called by the Apostle, the bride of Christ. Strange would it be indeed if the Blessed Mother was the one exception. But, on the contrary, to her supereminently belongs this title which includes so many others. Whom does the Water and the Blood from the side of the second Adam first reach, if not her?

Who is the Eve built up out of the Sacred Side, if not Holy Mary? True, in another sense, Holy Church is the second Eve; but as Christians have their visible Head on earth, and their invisible Head, Christ Jesus, in Heaven, so too they have as their visible Mother Eve, the Holy Church on earth, and their invisible Mother Eve in Heaven, Holy Mary, Mother of God and Mother of men.

Christ Jesus is, as the inspired Prophet tells us, both the *Child that is born unto us, and the Father of the world to come* (Isaia ix.).

On Calvary He is *the Father of the world to come*, and she, His Spouse, and the Mother of the new creation.

Explaining this new relationship, holy writers observe that as the first Eve could be—not in the ordinary sense indeed, but still in a true and unique sense—an offspring of Adam, *bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh*, and yet become also his spouse; so also Jesus, though the Child of Holy Mary, could be in a spiritual and mystic and most true sense, supereminently her Bridegroom—He the Father, and she the Mother, of the world to come.

And therefore, when the ten virgins who represent the Kingdom of Heaven—that is, the Church on earth, as St. Gregory teaches us—go out to meet the Bridegroom and the Bride, who are the Bridegroom and the Bride?—a devout commentator asks. Doubtless, he answers, Christ and Holy Mary, the King and the Queen. And as there are so many holy saints, brides of Christ, he applies the words of the Canticle of Canticles: *There are threescore queens: one is My Dove; My perfect one is but one* (c. vi.).

Three espousals are therefore noted in which our Lord has part: (1) The espousals between the Divine and Human Nature before His Birth; (2) the espousals between Christ and His Church after His Death; (3) the espousals between Jesus, the Father of the world to come, and Holy Mary, the Mother of the living, on Mount Calvary.

She has, St. Thomas of Villanova writes, two sons: *Homo Deus, et homo reus; ambo nati ex Virgine*—"Man God and man guilty, both sons of the Virgin Mother". Of her first-born, Jesus, God is the Father and she the Mother. Of her second family, Christ is the Father, she the Mother. And it is on Calvary that she goes through, as the holy Fathers observe, the anguish and travail of the second childbirth.

"The travail she escaped in Bethlehem," St. Peter Damian writes, "all came on Calvary."

At the first birth there was no sorrow, but great joy to all the nations. On Calvary, when she gave birth to her

second son, the sinner, *homo reus*, her agony is unspeakable. Of Rachel we read, that when she was dying after childbirth, *when for pain her soul was departing, and death was now at hand, she called the name of her son Benoni, that is, the son of my pain. But his father called him Benjamin, that is, the son of the right hand* (Gen. xxxv.).

The sinner, then, *homo reus*, who becomes on Calvary the son of Holy Mary, is *the son of my pain*, as Jesus, *homo Deus*, is the Son of her joy. And yet both by the Eternal Father and by her, the sinner, *homo reus*, is, as it were, made *the son of the right hand*; set in the place of honour. For Jesus, the Divine Son, is sacrificed and delivered up for the sinner.

N. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

All My things are thine. How hath He (God) not also with Him given (her) all things? (Rom. viii.).

From the infinite courage and fortitude with which our Saviour continues to the end to share all the horrors of His bitter Passion with His Mother, we may safely argue that there is nothing that can be shared with her that He will not share. If He gives her pain and suffering above all measure, though to see her suffer is such infinite agony to Himself, who can believe that He will withhold any gift or privilege that He can give in gladness? The Prophet Jeremias tells us that *not from His Heart hath He afflicted the children of men*. He, then, Who never from His Heart afflicts even the wicked sinner, He Who never breaks *the bruised reed*—what infinite pain does it cost Him to afflict His Blessed Mother!

Abraham, strengthening his breaking heart to inflict the death-wound upon his unresisting and obedient and blameless son, is but a very faint image of our Lord inflicting with all the resolution of His infinite love wound after wound on the soul of His Mother. But these wounds are not to remain for ever undressed, and not fomented with oil. *According to the multitude of my sorrows, Thy consolations, my Son and my God, have gladdened my soul.* For so

it ever shall be. Whenever our Lord gives bitter wine, He has the good wine to follow.

In this hour, therefore, they ineffably—far more than ever before—become two in one, having one Heart and one Soul. The *Sponsus et Sponsa*: the King and the Queen.

O. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

"*Attendite.*" O Blessed Mother, say to us: "*Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what great things He hath done for my soul* (Psalm lxxv.), in consequence of these espousals knit together between our two suffering Hearts on Calvary."

First, then. In this hour she becomes His helpmate, as a spouse ought to be, in His work of redemption.

That Christ our Lord is the one Redeemer is certain beyond all doubt. Holy Church never ceases preaching this from the house-tops. *Neither is there salvation in any other.* For beside the name of Jesus *there is no other name under Heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved* (Acts iv.). *For, if by one man's offence death reigned through one, much more they who receive abundance of grace shall reign in life through one Jesus Christ* (Romans v.). *There is one God, and one Mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus* (1 Timothy ii.).

This is all most true; but, as St. Bernard writes: "Although Christ was sufficient for us, it is not (according to God's design) *good for man to be alone*. It is more befitting that both sexes should take part in our redemption."

The plan of God's providence is clear. Adam fell, and by his fall sin came into the world. Had Eve remained faithful, still Adam's sin would have brought on the fall of our race. On the other hand, if Eve had fallen and Adam remained faithful, we should not have fallen in Eve. Only in Adam, the head and father of our race, did we fall.

Redemption, then, is to be after the form of the Fall. Satan, who conquered by the help of a tree, is to be conquered also with the help of the tree. The first Adam's side is opened as he sleeps. And so shall the side of

the second Adam be opened as He sleeps on the Cross. This being so, what follows? Beyond all doubt, that as Eve, though she could not of herself bring on the fall of the race, yet, by seducing Adam, had a large share in the work of ruin, so that through her the great scandal came; so too, in like manner, though Christ our Lord is the one Redeemer Who restores us all to life, yet, when the time of redemption comes, the Blessed Trinity say once more: *It is not good for Man to be alone, let Us make for Him a helpmate like unto Himself* (Genesis ii.). The one great difference between the form and fashion of the Fall and the form of the redemption, is pointed out by St. Paul: "*Non sicut delictum ita et donum*" (Romans v.)—Not as the sin, so the grace given. The redemption is not to be measured so as to be just sufficient to repair the ruin. The work of grace is to be on a scale immeasurably beyond the work of sin. And therefore the power of helping redemption given to Holy Mary shall surpass, beyond our conception, the power that Eve had for mischief.

P. There stood by the Cross, Mary His Mother.

This design of God, that Holy Mary is to be the helpmate of our Lord Jesus in the work of redeeming, becomes more clear if we think upon another word of 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* (Coloss. i.).

I fill up what is wanting. If Christ, in His charity and humility of Heart, chooses to leave something wanting in His Passion, which men are to fill up; if His humble Heart wishes and wills that His disciples shall do even greater works than He has done, shall we be so unwise, so senseless, as to believe that He has not, in His charity and wisdom, and for the more complete humiliation of the serpent who seduced the woman, made over to Holy Mary a share inconceivably large in the work of redeeming men? If our Blessed Lord had not decreed that the woman was to be with Him to crush the serpent's head,

the father of lies would never have laboured so assiduously to persuade his dupes in this country, to set up a Redeemer without His helpmate, a second Adam without His Eve, a Jesus without His Blessed Mother.

Q. There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.

She herself thoroughly understood all the mysteries of Calvary when she said to her devout servant, St. Bridget, "As Adam and Eve betrayed the world for an apple, so Christ and I redeemed the world, as if with one heart". To a true child of Holy Church, like St. Bridget, who understood the revelations of God, our Lady is not afraid to say, "we redeemed". For even so does Holy Church without scruple encourage her believing children to say to Holy Mary, "Our life, our sweetness, and our hope," and a thousand similar words. In the same spirit holy writers call our Lady Co-Redemptress. Such words scandalise none of Christ's little ones, to whom He giveth understanding. They all know and believe that Christ is the Author and Primary Source of all salvation, and that our Lady, like every other creature, can only work as a secondary, through a virtue derived from Him.

To help us to understand this great mystery, the Lord, as the holy Fathers love to point out, has set in the firmament *two great lights: a greater light to rule the day, and a lesser light to rule the night* (Genesis i.). The moon has all its light from the sun, but yet, by God's arrangement, is nearer to us, and with its borrowed light has a work of its own to do, which is not done by the direct action of the sun. It has its own effect on the waters and the land.

To all the little ones who are willing to be taught, and to whom God giveth understanding, this picture explains very clearly in what way Holy Mary is the helpmate of her Divine Son in redeeming.

R. There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.

One way in which she is our Lord's helpmate is by being our Advocate.

He is Himself our Advocate. *My little children, . . . if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus*

Christ the Just (1 St. John ii.). But, if He and His Mother are full partners in sorrow, so that He keeps nothing back that He does not share with her, so beyond all doubt shall she share all His offices, and all His titles, except the *incommunicable names* (Wisdom xiv.). Whatever the Eternal Word is of Himself, and uncreated, she shall by creation share, as far as may be, being with infinite care created to His likeness, an image admirably conformed to Himself.

She shall be, then, like to Him, our Advocate, our go-between. Is it not His own arrangement that the prayer of two shall prevail better than the prayer of one? If, then, it pleases Him to live on interceding for us, but interceding always with her at His side, as His helpmate, who shall gainsay His plan?

She is to be, as He is, our go-between; so near on one hand to our Lord, and to God's condition, a holy writer observes, that nothing but the Divine Essence is wanting to her, and, on the other hand, so near to our condition, that sin alone parts her from us. On either side, indeed, the dividing gulf is vast beyond all thought, but it is bridged over, so that she can most easily approach to God and plead for us, and approach to us to plead with our foolish hearts the cause of her God.

St. Peter Damian, commenting on her words, *He that is mighty hath done great things to me*, is not afraid to say to her, "and all power is given to (thee) in Heaven and in earth". This holy doctor himself understands and wishes us also to understand that covenant of Calvary: *All My things, Holy Mother, are thine*. Therefore, My power is thine. Hence he goes on: "For how can thy Son's power be ever in opposition to thy power, since it is from thy flesh that He has His flesh?" His conclusion is: "When thou prayest, Mother of God, thou dost not draw nigh the golden altar of reconciliation to ask, but to command; not as a handmaid, but as Queen—*Non rogans sed imperans; Domina, non ancilla*". He is only ascribing to her what another Saint calls *suppliant omnipotence*, or *almighty intercession*.

S. There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.

One thing at least, some one may say, our Lord did not share with His Mother—that is, His Priesthood. *Solis Presbyteris*, St. Thomas writes: To priests alone, only to priests, not to Cherubim or Seraphim, not even to His Blessed Mother, has He committed the office of offering up the Everlasting Sacrifice at the altar.

This is true, but according to the teaching of our holy masters, it is only a part of the truth. There is more to be added. For if our Lady has no share in the Priesthood of Jesus, how does St. Peter say to us all, *You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood?* (1 St. Peter ii.).

First, then, they bid us observe that had Abraham completed the sacrifice of Isaac, he would not only have sacrificed his son, but also himself, the very life and joy of his heart. In truth, we may say that he has already sacrificed himself, though not his son. "Abraham," writes St. Peter Chrysologus, "was immolating himself in his son. So as to be both victim and pontiff, sacrifice and priest." On the other hand, Isaac also, if offered by his father, would have been the victim, but at the same time, while offering himself, in meekness and loving obedience, he also shares the office of the sacrificing priest. There are, then, two priests and two victims.

Now let us turn to Calvary, and what do we find? First of all, the Eternal Father sacrifices His Son. As God said to Abraham, *Thou hast not spared thy only-begotten son for My sake*, so St. Paul writes of the Eternal Father, *He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all*. Therefore, the Eternal Father sacrifices His Son, not as an act of obedience or homage to any higher power, but as an act of love to us His children.

Secondly. In this act of sacrifice of the Eternal Father, the Blessed Mother concurs. If Jesus is the Son of the Eternal Father, He is also truly and really her Son. And the Eternal Father does not repent of His gifts to her, for in Him there is no shadow of change. *The gifts of*

God are without repentance (Romans xi.). Therefore every right given to the Blessed Mother, the Eternal Father reverences and respects and ratifies. If then, supreme as He is, He does not raise her to the dignity of her maternity till she in all humility pronounces her word of consent, "*Fiat*," so neither does He, without her full participation and consent and concurrence, carry out His wish not to spare His only Son, but to deliver Him up for men.

St. Bernardine of Siena, as we have seen, tells us that in the hour of the Incarnation she already gave her consent to the Death of her Son. And St. Bernard, treating of this united action of the Eternal Father and the Most Blessed Mother, writes: "In order to redeem the slave, they sacrificed their Son, their joint possession".

Thirdly. Then, in the next place, if we contemplate what is done on Calvary, we find (1) our Blessed Lord both Pontiff and Victim, Priest and Sacrifice. Moreover, (2) we find our Blessed Saviour sacrificing not only His own Body, but her soul also; not only making Himself the Victim, but with far greater cost to His own Heart making her also a joint victim with Himself, uniting her to Himself in the condition of victim. (3) And this is not all, for if she is suffering with Him as victim, she is also quite as fully sharing in His priestly work of offering the Sacrifice to the Eternal Father. Abbot Arnold writes: "One and the same was the will of Christ and of Mary. One and the same their holocaust. Both were offering sacrifice together to God. She in the blood of her heart, He in the Blood of His Body."

St. Ambrose too speaks of her tears as "the blood of her soul".

T. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

Then, of the other priestly powers given to men, has she any share in them?

Priests have to teach. And Holy Church loves to present the Blessed Mother to us as the "Seat of Wisdom," the "Mother of Good Counsel," and introduces her as saying

to us, *Come, children, and hear me, and the fear of the Lord I will teach you* (Psalm xxxiii.). Again, *Come, and I will tell you what great things the Lord hath done to my soul* (Psalm lxxv.). Again, *Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates. Counsel and equity is mine, prudence is mine* (Prov. viii.). *I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge* (Ecclus. xxiv.).

U. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

Does her Divine Son on Calvary give her any share in the third great power of the priesthood, *Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven?* Here again we firmly believe that it is the Son of Man, Christ Jesus, Who alone, in His own right, can forgive sins. But at the same time, we see how lavishly He shares this power with men His delegates.

As then we find Him on Calvary making her joint victim with Himself, and one with Himself in the work of offering the Sacrifice, it would be strange indeed if He did not find out a method of sharing with her His great power of forgiving sins.

And accordingly, as we have already seen, to her is given an *omnipotent intercession*. So that, in the words of St. Peter Damian already quoted, "she comes to the golden altar, not to ask, but to command, not as a servant petitioner, but as Mistress and Queen".

If then the Saints and Doctors of the Church thus tell us that by her Divine Son's behest the Mother of God comes to the golden altar, not to plead for the sinner, but to order his forgiveness, this surely is only saying in other words, that Jesus Christ has said to her, in a sense peculiarly her own, *Whose sins you forgive they are forgiven them—Whatever thou shalt loose, shall be loosed.*

According to the plan of our Lord, then, in the forgiveness of sins and the dispensation of grace, there is commonly something to be done on earth, and something to be done in Heaven. On the one hand, the absolution pronounced by a priest on earth is void if from some defect it

cannot be ratified in Heaven. On the other hand, the hand of our Lord is often held in Heaven till man on earth fills up what is necessary to the sufferings of Christ.

Thus in the Holy Mass, till the consecrated priest blesses and consecrates the bread and the chalice, the Eternal word does not *leap down from Heaven, from His royal throne*, to offer Himself again in the Perpetual Sacrifice. So, too, in consequence of His compact, till the faithful ask for themselves and for the living and the dead, our Lord in Heaven is oftentimes hindered from giving. So, too, if charitable men and women on earth *do* not nurse the sick, and teach little children, angels from Heaven cannot interfere. All this work of charity is confided as a precious monopoly to us, that we, by being merciful, may win mercy.

No power of the priesthood, therefore, is in any way diminished by our Lady's action. She merely shares our Lord's action in Heaven. If she wishes a sinner to be forgiven, our Lord so certainly forgives, and so immediately, that we may safely say that her will determines the forgiveness; so that what she forgives is forgiven.

And we may here note this difference between her will to forgive and the will of the priest on earth—that here on earth a priest may sometimes be mistaken in his judgment, and loose when he ought to bind, or bind when he ought to loose; he may in ignorance pronounce absolution when true sorrow for sin is wanting, and then the sacrament is void, as Baptism would be if by some mistake the water were not poured. But in Heaven when our Lady wishes a sinner to be forgiven, error or mistake there cannot be; the sinner must be and will be forgiven.

V. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

Let us call to mind other fruits which our Lord and His Blessed Mother will gather together out of their joint sufferings on Calvary. Hither they came in tears, and here they are weeping together while in sorrow they sow the seed. Together hereafter they shall carry home the rich harvest. Of our Blessed Lord the Holy Spirit has said:

If He shall lay down His life He shall see a long-lived seed. At once He shares the reward with her: All that I have is thine. . . . All My things are thine. She, too, then, shall see a long-lived seed. For all who come to the Lord Jesus, shall come through her. *Per Mariam ad Jesum. After her, following her, shall virgins be brought to the King.* And not only virgins, but sinners also. For it is her *omnipotent pleading* that shall win forgiveness for them. And not only virgins and sinners, but the martyrs also shall come to the King following in her wake. For from this hour the Mother of God shall be Queen of Martyrs.

How, some one may say, can this be done? She did not lay down (her) life. Why, then, shall she see a long-lived seed?

The Saints and Doctors of the Church have abundant answer ready.

For she was more a martyr, they tell us, from the very fact that she did not die. Were it given to her to sink down and die, or even to swoon away into unconsciousness, it would be relief unspeakable. As she stands there enduring, with her Divine Son, the burden of sin and the displeasure of the Eternal Father, if the mountains might fall on her, or the hills crush and cover her, they would be to her lower nature welcome beyond thought. Her condition, as she stands by the Cross, is such that by all laws she ought to die. Most truly can she say with her Son: *My soul is sorrowful unto death.* Not once, but a thousand times her heart ought, in the natural course, to break. St. Paul said, *I die daily.* She is dying every minute, on Calvary. "Exceedingly do I wonder," St. Bernard writes, "that through the immensity of her sorrow she did not die." But that she may not fail and die she is strengthened by her Son.

St. Bernardine of Siena tries to describe her condition on Calvary in these words: "Beside the Cross stood the Mother, like one both dead and living. She lived on, dying. She was dying, but still lived. Die she could not, because

though alive she was dead." The two great agonies of a woman, another writes, are in childbirth and in death. Holy Mary goes through both on Calvary. Other martyrs, they observe, were made like to Jesus in some one stage of His Passion. St. Andrew was crucified. Many were scourged. But our Lady is a complete and perfect image of all His Passion. "Whatever," writes St. Bonaventure, "her Son suffered in His flesh, thou, O Virgin, didst suffer in thy heart. All the separate wounds spread over His Body were concentrated in thy heart." St. Jerome remarks that her martyrdom is more intense, because she suffers in her soul, which in the case of ordinary martyrs, persecution cannot reach. Her soul is, as St. Laurence Justinian writes, a most bright mirror that reflects every detail of the Passion without any exception.

W. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother.*

Another contrast between other martyrs and their Queen is this.

They know that death is near, that they are soon to *be dissolved and to be with Christ*. She, on the contrary, has this cruel wound added to all the others caused by the sword of sorrow, that death is coming quickly to separate her Son from her. Who ever had such reason as she has to utter that sad lament: "*Siccine separat amara mors?*" — *Doth bitter death separate in this way?* (1 Kings xv.). "Is bitter death going to take from me my Son, my only joy, my life? And am I to live on without Him? Shall bitter death take out of me my heart and my soul, and yet leave me living? O my Son, and my God, *if it be possible let this bitter chalice of separation pass from me*, that I may die with Thee and not be separated from Thee." When she heard her Son say to the thief: *This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise*, had she been an ordinary martyr she might have pleaded in the words of holy Church for a speedy release from this life.

Qui latronem exaudisti,
Mihi quoque spem dedisti.

O Thou Who didst the robber hear,
Oh, leave me not in exile here.

But the Blessed Mother shares abundantly her Son's patient and enduring love, and with His prayer her heart unites perfectly, as if the two hearts were one: *Not as I will, O Father, but as Thou.*

X. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother.*

St. Bernard writes, *Non sufficiebat Christi passio, nisi crucifigeretur et Mater*—"The Passion of Christ did not suffice. His Mother must also be crucified."

We must dwell a little on these words and see in what sense they are true.

This much is certain, that our Blessed Saviour has good reasons for wishing His Blessed Mother to suffer at His side. We may humbly pray to understand them.

1. First, then, as has been said, a man and a woman helped to bring about the Fall: and therefore it is expedient that a man and a woman work together for the redemption.

2. It is according to the humble and loving heart of Jesus to wish to share His work with those He loves.

3. As Satan and his followers proudly scorned the man and the woman in the Garden of Eden, the wisdom of God saw fit to humble those wicked spirits by enabling the weakness of a woman to take part in the work of conquering and crushing him.

4. Then we have seen what St. Paul says, *I filled up what is wanting to the sufferings of Christ*.

The compassion of our Lady fills up something that is wanting to the Passion of Jesus. For there is one thing which Jesus on His Cross cannot teach us by example. He cannot teach us how to contemplate His Passion and how to feel compassion for Him. If our Lady were absent, how should we learn to contemplate her Son? Who else could teach us what compassion ought to be? What better way have we of trying to understand the Sacred Passion than by watching its effects on her? When do we want her help so sorely as when we are trying to watch and listen on Mount Calvary?

5. Then, too, we know that our eyes will bear to look at the moon, but will not bear to be fixed on the sun.

If we gaze on our Lord we may be bewildered with the thought that He is God: that He is the Giant rejoicing to run His way.

But when we look at her, we know that we are looking on a woman, and a Mother, with all the feelings of a woman and a mother in the highest perfection. Hence in that favourite hymn of Holy Church we say:

Quis est homo qui non fletet,	Who is he that will not weep,
Christi matrem si videret	When he sees the Mother keep
In tanto supplicio ?	Watch beside that agony ?
Quis non posset contristari,	Who, but must be woe-begone,
Piam Matrem contemplari	Watching the Mother of that Son
Dolentem cum Filio ?	Crucified by sympathy ?

Y. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother.*

To sum up. Two thoughts are dominant in the Heart of our Lord, rising above all His sufferings. Both are reproduced in the heart of His Mother, conquering in her, too, all other emotions.

1. *The first is love for His Father; zeal for His Father.*

2. *The second, love for men, the children of His Father; compassion for men.*

The two great commandments which He teaches, He is the first to keep with a transcendent fidelity. And His Mother's soul, the perfect work of God's hand, is a most faithful copy of His holiness, made not by a skilful man, not by angels or archangels, but by the infinite wisdom and charity of God.

She, too, loves God with all her heart and all her mind and her whole strength; and for God's children now given to be her children she has a second love most like to the first great and burning love.

1. Her *zeal for God's honour* rises so high above her motherly feelings that, as the saints tell us, she not only yearns and groans with desire to die herself as a reparation, but—what is far more marvellous—she would herself

direct the crucifixion, and take part in it, if this were needed for the reparation due to God's offended majesty. It helps us to rise up to her high thoughts when we read that as the martyr St. Calliopus was about to be crucified, his mother bribed the executioners to induce them to add to his merit by crucifying him with his head downwards.

We know from St. John's Gospel that the word in the Psalm: *The zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up* (Psalm lxviii.) comes from our Lord's Heart. We may, then, safely assume that on Calvary the zeal for His Eternal Father's glory is consuming Him more effectually than the drain of His Sacred Blood; and this consuming fire of zeal necessarily spreads from His Heart into that of His Mother.

This zeal impels *Him* to say: Father, *behold I come!* and impels her to say, at Nazareth, in Bethlehem, and on Calvary: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word.* The only difference between the Divine Son and the Blessed Mother is, that in Him, as in the sun, the burning and shining fire is ever the same; in her, as in the moon, there can be increase. Throughout her years and days and hours on earth the burning brightness has ever been crescent; waning never. On Calvary, then, Jesus, the High Priest, filled with infinite zeal for the glory of His Father, is immolating Himself. And as St. Peter Chrysologus says, that "Abraham was immolating himself in his son"—*Et immolabat se in filio*; so we can most truly say of Holy Mary: She is crucifying herself while crucifying her Son. While offering up as a most perfect holocaust her Son, she is quite as thoroughly immolating herself.

"O Blessed Mother, teach us to say in union with thy heart: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

Z. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

2. *Her motherly compassion for men.*

The saints never tire of trying to help us to realise that the Mother of God does most truly on Calvary be

come our Mother. St. Paul leads the way, telling us that *no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it. As also Christ doth the Church; because we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones* (Ephes. v.). If, by the water and blood coming from His side, we are through Baptism and the Blessed Eucharist *members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones*, what is there in all the writings of the saints about devotion of Holy Mary that can be called an exaggeration? One saint writes: "The Mother of Christ is the Mother of the members of Christ". Is that an exaggeration? or simply a truth? Can the Mother of Christ be anything else than a true Mother to all who are members or limbs of Christ's body? Another saint writes: "In each of His members, she embraces her only Son". Is there any exaggeration here? She that reflects perfectly all the thoughts of her Son's Heart, can we doubt that she believes most firmly, and realises most thoroughly, that in compassionating each of us she is giving her Son the same consolation as if she were nursing Himself? We do not realise this truth. On us it will burst as a stupendous novelty when, at the Judgment, we find that Christ can love so intensely, as to feel all that is done to His little ones as if done to Himself. But the sinless heart of Holy Mary is not aloof from His Heart as we are. They are two in one. A spiritual writer has said that our two eyes—which act so perfectly together that it is as if only one eye was looking—give us some notion of the perfection in which the Heart of the Divine Son and the heart of His Mother, and His Spouse, beat together and love together.

I to my Beloved, and His turning is towards me (Cant. vii.). The intimate sympathy and communion with which our eyes act together, we may be sure, does not sufficiently represent the joint action of these two Souls and two Hearts, which are *one Heart and one Soul*.

Hence spiritual writers tell us that when she hears from the Cross that word: *Woman, behold thy son*, instead

of feeling as one cast down from Heaven to earth, instead of being thrown into a gloomy depression at seeing the exchange proposed to her, the son of Zebedee in lieu of the Son of God, she can at once respond most truly: *My soul melted when He spoke* (Cant. v.).

How can it be otherwise? Our Blessed Saviour has most solemnly pledged Himself that *every one that hath left children for My name's sake, shall have a hundred-fold*.

How then! Is Holy Mary to be the only exception to this promise? If she gives up her Son Who is God, for God's sake, is she, or is she not, to have her hundred-fold? Joy, great joy, joy ineffable is set before her when she accepts the exchange. She believes most firmly that she will not lose her Son, but *because (her) soul hath laboured*, will see Him and possess Him and be filled with His presence for ever and for ever; and with Him will receive good interest, *pressed down and running over—the long-lived seed*, the countless array of God's children wrested from the jaws of the destroyer, who will become her children, and will be drawn by *the odour of (her) sweetness*, till following her they arrive at the eternal home of God.

And throughout the endless ages our Blessed Lord will say to her for ever and ever: As long as you were a Mother to one of My little ones, you did it to Me.

"I believe, then, O my God, this great mystery. Help, Thou, my unbelief.

"I believe that, as Thy Prophet spoke: *Before she was in labour, she brought forth. Before her time came to be delivered, she brought forth a Man-child* (Isaiah lxvi.). That is to say, I believe firmly that in Bethlehem, without travail, she gave birth to her first-born, but afterwards on Calvary becomes a Mother to me, the mother of many children, the Mother of the sinner who is '*homo reus*'; *the child of my pain*—and that this child of her pain she will cherish and nurse and pity as she would her first-born."

For God, so the saints teach us, whenever He appoints to an office, gives every grace which befits that office.

Therefore, when Mary became Mother of God, St. Gabriel said she was full of grace. In that hour, as St. Bernard writes, she was *plena sibi*—full of every grace which she needed to be the Mother of that Son. But when she becomes a second time a Mother, a sorrowful Mother indeed, out at the same time the joyful Mother of sinful children, she is once more filled with grace, far more full than before. So that now she is, the devout Saint adds, *superplena nobis*—full to overflowing for our sakes.

Sursum corda. "O God, incline unto my aid: O Lord, make haste to help me, that I may believe firmly, that if a child is born to us, and a Son is given to us at Bethlehem, so, too, a Mother, a true Mother, a Mother supereminently loving and compassionate is given to us on Calvary." If the very best mother on this earth could turn hard-hearted and forget the child of her womb, yet she says to us: *I cannot forget you, the child of my pain.*

AA. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother.*

To this second childbirth on Calvary, spiritual writers also apply the well-known description of the *Great Sign* in the Apocalypse: *A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. And being with child, she cried travailing in birth, and was in pain to be delivered* (Apoc. xii.). Already, through the effect of the Incarnation, she is clothed with the sun, and has the moon under her feet. For she is Mother of God and Queen of Heaven and Earth. But this notwithstanding, on Calvary she is groaning in the anguish of another birth and in pain to be delivered.

Let us not forget what the Holy Spirit adds: *When the dragon saw that he was cast upon the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the Man-child.* This is, in the eyes of Satan, her unpardonable crime, that she gave birth to Jesus, the Saviour. *And the dragon was angry against the woman, and went to make war with the rest of her seed who keep the Commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.* Here we have the full story of Satan's war

against ourselves. (1) He hates God. (2) He hates man, as being God's child, and created to fill the thrones of the fallen angels. (3) He hates with an extreme and relentless hatred the Man-God, Christ Jesus, come to wrest from him the victory he has won. (4) Through hatred for Jesus, he must of necessity hate the woman who gave birth to the Man-child—*homo Deus*. (5) And because he thus hates with an insatiable hatred the Divine Son and the Blessed Mother, his hatred spreads to *the rest of her seed*, the second family, the sons of her pain—"homo reus."

The second Commandment, our Lord tells us, is like to the first. In His Heart and in His Blessed Mother's love for men is like to their love for God. We may say it is all one love. For man is loved because he is God's child. It is through love of God our Father that we are loved.

But yet to our imperfect wisdom, at first sight, our Lady's compassionate love for us seems more a mystery than her love for God. For when she freely with her whole heart sacrifices her Son on Calvary to the Eternal Father, she is only giving Him back what He gave to her. As we read in Exodus: *Pharao's daughter said to the mother of Moses: Take this child and nurse him for me; and the mother most gladly nursed her own son, but when he was grown up delivered him back to Pharao's daughter.* So is it on Calvary, Mary gives back to God her Son Whom she has nursed for Him. This is less surprising.

But when we learn that she *did not spare (her) only Son, but delivered Him up for us*, this is a mystery that passeth understanding. Who could ever believe it, did we not know the explanation: that she, the Mother, has before her eyes what the Father of her Son has done, and she is doing according to the Model. *He spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him for us.* She, the ever-faithful handmaid of the Lord, must go and do the like. *She spared not even (her) own Son, but delivered Him up for us.*

See how she loved the *child of her pain*! She makes him her Benjamin, *the son of the right hand*. To save the heartless prodigal, "*homo reus*," she hath not spared her innocent First-born, Who has always been with her—*homo Deus*.

STATION II.

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 hour the disciple took her to his own (St. John xix. 26, 27).

A. *Jesus saith to His Mother: Woman, behold thy son.*

O all you who pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow (Lament. i.).

St. Bernard, so devout and so enlightened a servant of our Lady, thinks that this word from the Cross must have passed through her heart as a most keen sword of sorrow. "What an exchange," he argues; "the son of Zebedee in lieu of the Son of God!—man guilty in place of Man-God!"

This word, she knows, is a farewell word. Bitter death is going to do its work of separation.

This is the parting legacy. The disciple whom He loved, whose head reclined last night on His Heart, He gives to her. But this means that He is going from her, going to die. And she is about to have John instead of Jesus, the son of Zebedee in place of the Son of God.

O quam tristis et afflicta,
Fuit illa benedicta,
Mater unigeniti.

Oh, how sad, how woe-begone
Is that ever-blessed one,
Mother of that only Son.

B. *Jesus saith to His Mother: Woman, behold thy son.*

But once more her Angel is whispering in her ear: "*Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God*. If thy Son Jesus shall lay down His life, He will be with thee still, but because *His Soul hath laboured, and (thy) soul hath laboured, He shall see, and thou shalt see, a long-lived seed*.

Besides thy one Son Jesus, thou shalt be the glad Mother of many other children, all made like to the image of thy Son Jesus; each of them a Christ, a Jesus; each of them a picture, speaking to thy Mother's heart, and saying: *The Lord is with thee, Mother*."

Oh yes, she has a joy, a great joy set before her, which she can see through the darkness on Calvary. There is joy ineffable among the angels of God when they hear this word, that *homo reus* is going to be changed into *homo Deus*, man guilty into man God, that the sinner is given to the Blessed Mother to be nursed by her, even as she nursed her first-born, Jesus.

There is joy among the angels, for they know that the word whispered in the darkness into her ear shall to the very end of time be preached from the house-tops, and all the generations shall in great hope and gladness call her blessed, because her dying Son has constituted her the Mother of all the disciples whom He loves.

There is joy among the listening angels, for well they know that, guided by the never-failing teaching of the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Spouse of Christ Jesus, hearing the dying words from the Cross, will interpret them aright. It is as when old Tobias called his good son to his sick-bed, and said, *Hear, my son, the words of my mouth, and lay them as a foundation in thy heart. When God shall take my soul, thou shalt bury my body. And thou shalt honour thy mother all the days of her life. For thou must be mindful what and how great perils she suffered for thee in her womb* (c. iv.).

Holy Church has ever laid up the dying word of her Lord *as a foundation in (her) heart*. She has considered it a fundamental truth of His Gospel that the Mother of God is to be the Mother of men, and that the woman is to take part with her Son in the divinest of all Divine works, the work of rescuing the souls of sinners out of the jaws of the Destroyer, and that therefore she is to be honoured by the side of her Son to the end of time.

C. *Jesus saith to His Mother: Woman.*

"Why," the saints ask, "why does He call her woman?"

One answer is: To spare her heart. In this hour He cannot add to her agony by letting her hear the name of Mother. But others rejoin: This answer does not suffice. For heretofore also, at Cana, He addressed her by the same title: *Woman*.

Another answer therefore is offered—that it is her title of honour. For as He is pre-eminently the *Son of Man*, so she is pre-eminently the *woman*; the *woman* that was promised; the *valiant woman* that is to be at enmity with the serpent, and to crush his head.

They add, moreover, that in certain Eastern languages, the word is like our word "lady," a title of great honour.

But still remains the question, Is not the name of mother more dear and more honourable too, and more suited to this moment on Calvary?

Another suggestion then is offered by spiritual writers. They observe that Jesus beginning His Public Life at Cana, and still more, now on Calvary, is teaching us this truth, that both His Eternal Father and His Blessed Mother have consented to give Him up. They are both agreed not to spare Him, that is, not to treat Him as their beloved Son, but to sacrifice Him, and let Him be treated as the sinner. Therefore, as His Father and His Mother have for this dark hour ceased, as it were, to recognise Him as their Son, so He does not call her Mother, but Woman, and does not cry out, My Father, but *My God*, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

D. *After that, He saith to the disciple: Behold thy Mother.*

Is not this word superfluous? some one asks. For if he is her son, of course she is his Mother. But the answer is given: Not at all superfluous is this word. For what would it boot that she be told to be a Mother to us, if we also be not told to lift our hearts to her as to a mother? Jesus is the Mediator, the go-between. As He has to

reconcile His Father with men, and men with His Father, so He has to move Mary to be our Mother, and then each of us to be her child. In like manner, what would it avail for the Holy Spirit to teach the Apostles, if He does not also incline the hearts of Bishops, Priests, and laity, to listen to the Apostolic teaching?

E. *Behold thy Mother.*

Those who are duped by the father of lies object and cavil that this word is only for John.

This much, at least, is certain, that it is only the disciples whom Jesus loves who are committed to the care of His Mother. Any one who chooses to believe that our Lady is no Mother to him, let him look to it, and consider diligently whether he be a disciple whom Jesus loves. For Holy Church, always guided by the teaching of the Paraclete, does not hesitate to present our Lady to us, saying: *He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord. But he that shall sin against me, shall hurt his own soul. All that hate me, love death* (Prov. viii.)

She adds a word that ought to move us much to draw others to a knowledge and love of our Blessed Mother: *They that explain me shall have life everlasting.*

F. *From that hour the disciple took her to his own.*

The question is discussed, What is meant by the phrase, *took her to his own*? St. John was doubtless one of those of whom St. Peter testified, *Behold we have left all things*. Therefore, it is argued, he had no home to which he could take our Lady. They who argue thus perchance forget our Lord's answer to St. Peter: *There is no man who has left house, or brethren, or father, or mother, or lands for My sake and for the Gospel, who shall not receive an hundred times as much, now in this time; houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and lands; and in the world to come life everlasting* (St. Mark x.). Therefore, the very fact that John has left all for Christ proves that he always will have a home here on earth for our Lady, and life everlasting, besides, with her in Heaven.

G. Behold thy Mother.

John has left his father Zebedee, and his mother Salome, and in return he is made by our Lord the son of Holy Mary, and has for his Mother the Mother of God.

Had not the Psalmist good right to say: The Lord is faithful in all His words? (Psalm cxliv.). He promised a few days ago that every one who leaves father or mother for His sake, shall have a hundred-fold now in this time. And lo! John, who has left his mother Salome, is in this most sacred hour, by the last testament of the Lord, made the son of Holy Mary, and from this hour has her for his Mother indeed. Is this, or is it not, a hundred-fold? The devout Cardinal Bellarmine writes: *Reliquit matrem uxorem piscatoris: et in matrem accepit Matrem Creatoris*—"The mother he leaves is a fisherman's wife, the Mother he wins is the Mother of God".

Who is like the Lord our God, the blessed angels ask, raising the needy from the earth that He may place them with princes?

Do the kings of this world ever raise a distinguished soldier or statesman to the rank of a prince of the blood royal? If they do, what is this poor honour compared with the dignity, beyond our conception, conferred on John? He is henceforth Mary's son; she is his Mother. He occupies henceforth in the home the place that hitherto Jesus had. And she most cordially and lovingly accepts him as the proxy and the *alter ego* of her Son Jesus. He is from henceforth the disciple whom Jesus loved and the disciple whom the Blessed Mother loves—"Dilectus Jesu, dilectus Maria".

Her short visit to Elizabeth filled that home with blessings. What does she do for John during the long years of her sojourn with him? *For my spirit is sweet above honey* (Ecclus. xxiv.). *I love them that love me. With me are riches and glory.*

H. He saith to the disciple, Behold thy Mother.

In this hour, Salome, who has till now been John's

mother, is somewhere on Calvary, perhaps near enough to hear this wonderful last testament whispered from the Cross. What are her thoughts as she realises this transfer of her son to another Mother? to the Blessed Mother of God? Is her heart racked by maternal jealousies? We need not think so. For He Who speaks from the Cross is the Eternal Wisdom that *reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly* (Wisdom viii.).

Salome has an assurance in her secret soul, that if she gives up her son to be the true and faithful servant of the Mother of God, she too will have her hundred-fold now in this time—yes, even now in this time. The gratitude of Jesus and His Blessed Mother will take care that she has an abundant hundred-fold. And when she goes to the home of her eternity, her Lord will say to her: "When My Mother was childless, you gave your child to her. What you did to her *you did to Me.*" And the Blessed Mother will echo that word: *You did it to me.* And a thousand times a thousand years shall pass, and still this word will be fresh in the Heart of our Lord and in the heart of His Mother: *Come, blessed one; for you did it to Me.*

I. From that hour he took her to his own.

If Jesus and Mary are for ever and for ever grateful to Salome and to John for what they have done, what ought we to do for Jesus and for Mary? For they have done greater things to us than Salome did for them.

Perpendite, rogo! St. Peter Damian writes, *quam debitores simus huic benedictæ Genitrici*—"Oh, weigh well, I pray you, how deeply we are debtors to this Blessed Mother".

J. From that hour he took her to his own.

"Why," asks a spiritual writer, "are we not told that our Lady also accepted this dying testament, and took John for her son?"

Perhaps we have the answer in our Lord's words, when St. Peter asked Him to explain the parable: *Are you also yet without understanding?* (St. Matt. xv.).

There might perchance be found some one to doubt as to St. John's actions, therefore we are told what he did. - Of the Blessed Mother's mind and thought and action no one can doubt; no word need be said.

K. *From that hour he took her to his own.*

Look and do according to the model. Not to John alone is she given to be a Mother; not John alone can take her to his own.

Denis the Carthusian writes: "This chosen disciple represents each of the faithful. When therefore Christ said to John, *Behold thy Mother*, He gave His Mother to be the Mother of every Christian."

Happy, thrice happy, they who in childhood are led to the altar to say: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, I choose thee this day as my Lady, my Queen, my Mother. I promise never to abandon thee. Stand by me, then, in every action of my life, and do not forsake me in the hour of death. Amen."

After Baptism, faithful parents make haste to dedicate their child to the Mother of God. And what better parting word can a dying father say to his children than to remind each of them that he is *the child of her pain*? *Honour thy Blessed Mother all the days of thy life*, for thou must be *mindful what and how great (an anguish) she suffered for thee* in her travail on Calvary.

Now the Mother was to be admired above measure, and worthy to be remembered by good men, who beheld her Son crucified, and bore it with a good courage; being filled with wisdom, and joining a man's heart to a woman's thought (2 Mach. vii.).

Behold thy Mother.

One of the early Fathers of the Church imagined that St. Joseph was still alive, but that our Saviour appointed John to have henceforth the care of the Blessed Mother, that men might know that Joseph was not the real father of her Divine Son. But this opinion is confined to him alone, or to very few. The opinion held, we may say, universally in the Church, is that St. Joseph was dead before the Passion of our Lord.

SCENE V.

THE FOURTH WORD.

STATION I.

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour (St. Matt. xxvii. 45).

Our Blessed Saviour has now completed His last Testament. Yesterday evening He bequeathed His Sacred Body and Blood to His Church, to be her possession *till the consummation of the world*. Now by His word on Calvary He has committed His Holy Church made up of the disciples whom He loves, to His Blessed Mother; and to His Holy Church He has virtually given this parting injunction: *Thou shalt honour thy mother all the days of (thy) life*, that is, *till the consummation of the world*. Thou shalt take care that all generations call her blessed. Be *mindful of what and how great perils she has suffered* for thee in her travail (Tobias iv.).

After this for a time He speaks no more. There is, we read, *a time to keep silence and a time to speak* (Eccles. iii.). During these three solemn hours from the sixth to the ninth, our Lord chooses to be silent. Twilight has settled down dark and heavy over Jerusalem and Golgotha. The busy mid-day is suddenly changed into the silence of night. The voices of men are hushed around the Cross. Neither guards nor the crucified malefactors are disposed to speak. They are awe-stricken. The screams of frightened birds and the lowing of terrified cattle break at times the stillness. Otherwise there is a midnight silence on the place of Calvary. Of this most sacred silence we are reminded by the silence of the priest during the more solemn part of **Holy Mass**.

In secret to the soul of His Blessed Mother the Heart of her Son says once more: *The hour is come* (St. John xvii.). *The prince of this world cometh: and in Me he hath not anything* (St. John xiv.). *A woman when she is in labour hath sorrow, because her hour is come. So also you now*

indeed (shall) have sorrow (St. John xvi.), but have confidence. Now shall the prince of this world be cast forth (St. John xii.).

A. From the sixth to the ninth hour.

It is appointed unto men once to die. And before death we are prepared to witness the agony.

As we have a High Priest tempted in all things like as we are, without sin, He has Himself chosen to have in His bitter chalice all the anguish of the dying man's last agony.

The word *agony* is only another word, as has been said, for a struggle. When we witness the *agony* of the death-bed, it seems to us as if there were a struggle going on between life and death; as if death were labouring to wrench asunder the two that God has joined, the soul and body; and that the helpless soul and body are in vain struggling to hold together, and prevent the dreadful separation. All the pain of this separation our Blessed Lord chooses to endure in its extreme severity. His most blessed Soul, and His innocent Body, have given no cause for this severance. Most perfectly they have worked together to praise, reverence, and serve the Eternal Father.

Never on this earth has there been human soul and body that had such a right to remain for ever intimately united as the Soul and Body of our Lord have: *Siccine separat amara mors?* Is bitter death going to sever and tear asunder this most sacred companionship?

But this is not all. This death-struggle means much more than the separation.

B. *There was darkness.*

And it is in the darkness that the beasts of the woods go about (Psalm ciii.). And it is in these hours of darkness that the prince of this world of darkness goes about, for he, with all others who do evil, hates the light.

There is darkness, and during this darkness the last great struggle between the woman and her seed on the one hand, and the serpent and his seed on the other, is to be decided.

Death and life shall in this hour bring this awful conflict to an end. Our poor souls are the prize for which they contend.

O all you who go by, attend, give heed, and contemplate the supreme hand-to-hand struggle between the two greatest leaders that ever have been or ever shall be on this earth: Christ Jesus, the Leader of all the children of God; and Lucifer, the arch-sinner, and the leader of all the wicked. St. Ignatius encourages us in his meditation on the Two Standards to try in our poor way to form some conception or picture of these two leaders. To the eye of human wisdom the contrast between them looks far more unequal than the fight in the valley of Terebinth between the Philistine giant and the Jewish shepherd-boy. Jesus is, it is true, in the flower of His Manhood, but He is hanging crucified and exhausted. Even when in His full strength He seemed too beautiful, too delicate, far too graceful, to grapple with the huge strength of the savage giant. But now all strength seems gone from Him. He has, apparently, nothing left to do on this earth but to die.

Of Lucifer, on the other hand, we may say: *There is no power on earth that can be compared with him, who was made to fear no one. He is king over all the children of pride. His heart shall be as hard as a stone: and as firm as a smith's anvil. He shall esteem iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The archer shall not put him to flight; the stones of the sling are to him like stubble* (Job xli.).

C. *There was darkness.*

"Attendite." Contemplate Lucifer making every preparation for the final struggle; glaring with his evil eyes upon Jesus on His Cross, and the Blessed Mother by the Cross; the woman and her seed. *The Lord showed me Jesus the High Priest standing; and Satan stood on His right hand, to be His adversary. And Jesus was clothed with filthy garments* (Zach. iii.).

Listen to Satan summoning up his powers: *Prepare war; rouse up the strong; let them come, let all the men of war*

come up (Joel iii.). *The devil is come down, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast upon the earth he persecuted the woman who brought forth the man child* (Apoc. xii.).

Then, if we turn to our Blessed Lord, *the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle*: in this hour He seems to our human eyes no match for the strength and courage and daring of Lucifer. Those who saw Him tell us that He looked like a despised one, *the most abject of men; acquainted with infirmity*; that is to say, one given up to weakness and helplessness in all its extremity. St. Thomas gives us this description of His preparation for this struggle: "On His Head He had a helmet, not of gold, but of thorns. For a breastplate He had His immaculate flesh. In His hands He held no lance, nor sword, but the large nails that crucified Him. On His feet, in lieu of spurs, the nails thrust through them. For a war horse He had His Cross."

We must also for a moment fix our eyes on His Blessed Mother, for she is to take part in this agony, this death-struggle. She *the woman: the valiant woman. On her lips is ever the law of clemency*, but her hands she *hath put out to strong things*. Under her pale features, and her weeping eyes, and her gentle aspect, so full of grace, she has within, *a woman's thought*, a mother's tenderness in its perfection, *joined with a man's heart*.

D. *From the sixth to the ninth hour.*

There is no noise now, no tumult raging on Calvary; but the conflict is at its height. *Mors et vita duello conflixere mirando.*

Grim death, and Heavenly Life,
Grappled in wondrous strife.

From the sixth to the ninth hour, we read, the death-struggle endures. Alas! what do words tell us? What do we learn as we read, *Pilate scourged Him, and they crucified Him*, unless we stay and *consider in our hearts*, and pray that we may *understand concerning our Lord poor and*

needy; and that we may have *the promised spirit of grace and of prayer to look on (Him) Whom we pierced?* So now, too, what notion have we of all the anguish compressed into these three hours from the sixth to the ninth? *Be not ignorant, my beloved, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years* (2 St. Peter iii.).

In these three dark hours, the soul of our Saviour travels, if we may so speak, to every Christian death-bed in the ages to come, seeking if there be anything more that *I ought to do for My vineyard*. Is there any bitterness in death that I have not tasted? any danger to the dying for which I have not made provision?

O stay here a little while, to watch and listen.

E. *From the sixth to the ninth hour.*

1. We may first, as St. Ignatius advises, look with our eyes and try to realise what was in this hour the aspect of our Saviour.

That He is wasted away by fasting and watching and labour and great loss of blood, we know. St. Bridget adds what she heard from our Lady concerning His appearance during this agony.

"His eyes seem half dead; He can only open them, to look on me, by squeezing out the blood that dims them. His cheeks are sunk and cleaving to His jaws. His face all sadness. His mouth stands open. His tongue and His teeth can be seen all blood-stained.

"The stomach and below the stomach, so emaciated as if all the intestines had been taken away, and nothing left but skin adhering to skin. The flesh of His Body—wherever it is not covered with wounds—pale, and worn, from the drain of blood. His arms and legs strained and rigid, and His ribs from the extreme attenuation can be counted. His beard and hair soaked in blood."

F. *From the sixth to the ninth hour.*

Contemplate also the other picture, left us by the inspired Prophet, of what he saw in his vision. In this hour,

especially, it has its full verification. And it sets before us what the bystanders would afterwards say to each other.

"*There was no beauty in Him during this long agony, nor comeliness. We have seen Him. There was no sightliness.* The anguish of the inward struggle so disfigured those beautiful features which even sinners used to look upon in order to find some rest for their souls, that in this hour there was actually *no sightliness* at all: nothing of all that gracefulness which used to attract, nothing to draw us, so that we should be desirous of Him. His looks, His usual gracious aspect, His attractive countenance all hidden. He looked like one whom all men would despise. The high opinion we used to have of Him was shaken: we were scandalised. And worse than all, it appeared to us in that darkness that not only were men all turned against Him, but that, like the poor leper, He was stricken and afflicted by the hand of God."

G. *From the sixth to the ninth hour.*

Yes: *like one stricken by God and afflicted.* Sometimes, when the martyr is covered with wounds, we discover signs of great peace within. But now, our Lord's tears, His sobbing, and the distress that is rendering His Sacred face uncomely and unsightly, make it clear that all the outward disfigurement is only a picture of the inward agony.

Save me, O God, for the waters are come in even to my soul.

I am come into the depths of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed me.

I have laboured with crying, my jaws are become hoarse, my eyes have failed, whilst I hope in my God. My enemies are grown strong, who have wrongfully persecuted me (Psalm lxxviii.).

My enemies are grown strong. "For it is your hour, princes of darkness. Men have had their hour and done their worst. Now it is time that you put forth all your strength."

H. *From the sixth to the ninth hour.*

2. The inward agony.

From what we have already seen, we may perhaps understand a little of the agony and struggle going on in

the most holy Soul of our Lord and in the soul of His Blessed Mother.

Satan employs, as the masters of spirit teach us, two weapons in his warfare against God and men: (1) *Force*; and (2) *Cunning*.

1. *Force.* (a) When so permitted, he employs open force, that is, overt and undisguised warfare. Thus we read: *Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with a very grievous ulcer from the sole of the foot even to the top of his head* (Job ii.).

So, too, we read in Church history, how he urges on persecutors to stamp out Christianity by using unsparingly torments and death. How many have been conquered by the weapon of force we know too well from history. And our Blessed Saviour, speaking of persecutions to come, said: *There shall be then great tribulation . . . and unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved* (St. Matt. xxiv.).

As Satan did not know that Jesus was God-Man, he is assailing Him as he attacks other holy men, but with extraordinary violence. Part of his plan is, as we have seen: *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.* This portion of his design has been carried out with the utmost severity.

(b) To outer force, Satan also joins, when so permitted, that pressure, full of anguish, to which spiritual writers give the name of *Desolation*. We know that when subjected to this torment, holy souls have suffered sometimes so much distress, so strong a foretaste of the pain of loss, which is the worst of the torments of Hell, that they would gladly have welcomed in exchange the torments of martyrdom.

Satan had permission, during the Agony at Gethsemani, as we have seen, to spread over the Soul of our Saviour the darkness of this desolation in its most distressing and oppressive severity.

2. *Cunning.*

Along with brute force, Satan combines the use of the most appalling craft and cunning. When not permitted to stir up persecution, his warfare is carried on mainly by lies and trickery. *The serpent deceived me*, was the lament of our first mother; and it will be the everlasting wail of the lost in Hell.

We may notice two degrees in the craft and cunning of the father of lies.

Sometimes, when dealing with sinners, he tells gross lies, in which he makes little attempt to disguise himself. He promises men pleasures and honours which he cannot give, and they ought to know he cannot give. Thus he told Judas that he could gain the price of his treason without being found out or suffering any loss. But at other times, as St. Paul writes, Satan *transformeth himself into an angel of light*. It is only by using this stratagem that he can decoy innocent and holy souls. If false religions are not disguised under a mask of goodness, the unsuspecting souls of good men cannot be lured to them.

I. *From the sixth to the ninth hour.*

We have seen from the writings of St. Jerome and others that Satan and his legions, from the time when the Crucifixion was completed, as they saw that our Blessed Saviour's meekness and humility of Heart was proof against outrage and torment, began to lose all confidence in their policy. *Do you see that we prevail nothing?* (St. John xii.). We have further seen from St. Jerome and other ancient Fathers, that the cries which were multiplied around the Cross: *If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross* (St. Matt. xxvii.), were inspired by the wicked spirits who now are feeling strongly the power of the Holy Cross, and begin to fear that if Christ dies, His death will be the ruin of their empire.

As then we are taught that it is on Calvary the two great leaders, our Blessed Lord and Satan, put forth their whole strength for the decisive and supreme struggle,

we may assume that during the three long hours of darkness the father of lies and his wicked spirits, being now fully aware that in this warfare against the Woman and the Man they have to deal with sanctity such as they never found on earth before, transform themselves into angels of light, to see whether by any plausible artifice they can induce Jesus to come down from His Cross, and Holy Mary to persuade Him to do so.

During the agony in the Garden, we read: "Satan laid to the charge of our Lord a host of imaginary crimes. He reproached Him with the faults of His disciples; the scandals which they had caused; and the disturbances which He had occasioned in the world by giving up ancient customs. He reproached Him, too, with having been the cause of the massacre of the Innocents; with having brought disunion into families; with having deserted His family, and squandered the property of others." These lies were intended to dishearten our Saviour and make Him give up His work of bettering men.

But as He was not thus to be turned aside from His course, the only plan which now remains is that He be induced by plausible arguments to work a miracle, and come down from the Cross, and that His Mother be moved to use her influence to persuade Him to this course.

What they already said, then, through the mouths of men will now be whispered into the Soul of Jesus, and the soul of Holy Mary, with all the importunate energy and malice of a last supreme effort. *The devil is come down having great wrath—knowing that he hath but a short time* (Apoc. xii.).

"Did you not hear how the Priests and Ancients solemnly pledged themselves that they will believe in you if you come down from the Cross? And if they believe, all the people will believe. The terrible crime they committed to-day will then be blotted out. All your own disciples, too, who have been scandalised, will believe.

"You surely heard, too, the pitiful cry of these crucified thieves, *Save Thyself and us*. When did you ever turn a deaf ear to such a prayer? And will you not take pity also on your heart-broken Mother? What will become of her and of your little flock if the Pharisees triumph?"

J. *From the sixth to the ninth hour.*

The words uttered by Jesus on the Cross are, one after another, adding to Lucifer's scathing fears and misgivings.

That cry: *Father, forgive them*, is something more than the cry of a human sanctity.

That promise, again, to Dismas: *This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise!* Surely, no man ever spoke a word like this.

Again, the solemn transfer of Holy Mary to be the Mother of men. Satan's quick sagacity sees with horror that this means a complete reinstating of the hated fallen race. Men are going to be raised up to be brothers of this Christ.

Satan's quick sagacity! For before the fall of the rebel angels, theologians tell us, God proportioned the gifts of grace in them to their natural gifts. Lucifer was, therefore, both by grace and nature, above all those other spirits whom he persuaded to join him in his proud rebellion. In all of them, after their sin, St. Thomas writes, "the natural gifts remain unimpaired".

They went down to Hell with their arms (Ezech. xxxii.).

The fallen Angel therefore has all his far-reaching intelligence, and it is now becoming quite evident to the proud prince of this world that his empire is destroyed unless he can by stratagem hinder Jesus from completing His victory by death.

To understand what this victory looks like in the eyes of Lucifer, we need only call to mind one fact to show what his position on this earth has been. He has been to such an extent the prince of this world, he has so thoroughly duped men and induced them to transfer to him the worship they owe to God, that while God has found one

faithful servant, Abraham, ready at His command to sacrifice his son Isaac, Satan has persuaded parents without number to become at his shrine *merciless murderers of their own children, and eaters of men's bowels* (Wisdom xii.). Oh, let us not forget, when we hear men blaspheme against the efficacy of Christ's redemption, *those parents sacrificing with their own hands helpless souls*, to the sound of music, and in the midst of dancing and other hideous orgies.

Satan ascended *above the height of the clouds*, and has been *like the Most High* (Isaiax xiv.). *Thy heart was lifted up with thy beauty* (Ezech. xxviii.). But now, his terrible foreboding is that the hour is come when *(he) shall be brought down to Hell into the depth of the pit* (Isaiax xiv.).

Therefore every artifice, every plausible sophistry, every shape of lie must be tried to persuade the second Adam to come down from His Cross; and to induce the second Eve to beseech her Son to deliver Himself from death.

K. *From the sixth to the ninth hour.*

And the dragon persecuted the woman also (Apoc. xii.).

Not knowing how entirely they are *one Heart and one Soul*, and how Jesus is in this hour hiding nothing from His Blessed Mother, Satan thinks it necessary to assail her also; to persuade her to have pity on so many perishing souls, and to move her Son to work this one miracle which will wipe out the disgrace heaped on Him, and will be the salvation of so many.

"Like good Queen Esther, Holy Mother, speak a word for your people. If your Son comes down from the Cross, they will all be saved, and not they alone, but the other nations will by His Apostles be brought to Him, and He shall reign; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end. Oh, mark how the blood of your Son has been poured out; and what has come from it? Nothing, so far, but sin upon sin. Was there ever in Jerusalem wickedness such as there is to-day?"

At every word the wicked spirits are watching, with

their keen intellects at full strain, to see if they make any way. Theologians tell us that from the beginning, the mystery of the Incarnation was purposely concealed from Satan; because had he known that Christ was God, he never would have had courage to compass His death. In the Church's hymn we read that God's plan was:

Multiformis proditoris,
Ars ut artem falleret.

That is, Satan had won by trickery, and to confound his wisdom, stratagem shall be used to overthrow him. For God's design it is necessary that a man shall conquer him by dying. But had not the great mystery of the Incarnation been by stratagem concealed from him, he would never have forfeited his right over guilty man by planning the cruel death of the Sinless Man.

St. Paul explains to us the Divine plan. *The decree against fallen man, Jesus is to take out of the way, fastening it to the Cross. And He is to despoil the principalities and powers, and to expose them confidently in open show, triumphing over them in Himself* (Coloss. ii. 15), *that through death He might destroy him who had the empire of death* (Hebrews ii.). Christ could never have thus conquered Satan and his legions, and exposed them in open show, had He not concealed His Divinity: for Satan would never have advanced to the fight had he known all the truth. In God's design, Satan must be conquered by a man, and at the same time must forfeit his rights over guilty man by usurping a tyrannical power over the guiltless Man. He was duped by holy artifice, and fell into the pit which he had made (Psalm vii.).

St. Augustine writes: "Through the holiness of Christ the devil was conquered; for though in Him he found nothing worthy of death, yet did he kill Him. Surely, then, it is just that the debtors whom he holds in bond be set free, as they believed in Him Whom Satan put to death, albeit He owed no debt."

Had Satan known Who his Adversary was, he would have fled away from the unequal contest. Our Lord, therefore, St. Peter Damian writes, "exposed all His weaknesses, but concealed His strength".

STATION II.

And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: Eli, Eli, lamma Sabacthani? that is: My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? (v. 46).

A. *My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*

To St. Bridget our Lady said: "My Son, seeing me and His friends weeping and inconsolable, with a loud and plaintive voice, cried to His Father: *My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?* This grief, which came to Him from the grief of His friends, went beyond all the other bitterness and tribulation which He was enduring in mind and body, for He loved them tenderly."

But, "beware," St. Bernard writes, "of thinking, because of this cry, that our Lord Jesus has been betrayed into impatience, for all the while that He was enduring the extreme bitterness of the Cross, nothing came out of His Heart but sweetness".

Our Lord then sees that Lucifer has now had his hour, and his opportunity to the full. He has been allowed to employ freely all his weapons, cunning, and fraud, and lying, and plausible illusions. Jesus sees His Blessed Mother tormented and oppressed by the despairing impotency and malice of the wicked spirits. It is no wish of His Heart to see her suffer needlessly.

If the Prophet says of Him: *Not from His Heart hath He afflicted the children of men* (Lament. iii.), what agony must it be to His most filial Heart to give her up to the unspeakable anguish produced by close contact with these loathsome enemies of her God and her Son!

The blessed angels watching the contest are once more saying: "*Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: thy*

soul is knit to His, *as one Heart and one Soul*. Lucifer prevails nothing against Him or against thee." And they turn to their God and plead beseechingly: *Thou shalt arise and have mercy on Sion: for it is time to have mercy on it: for the time is come* (Psalm ci.).

Not then out of any impatient haste, but because He knows His Father's will, and that the appointed hour is come, with a loud and most plaintive voice our Saviour cries: *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*

B. *My God, My God.*

We have already seen that some spiritual writers think that our Lord, instead of crying out, *Father*, as He did in His first word on the Cross, now called on Him as *God*, to signify that during these three hours, both His Eternal Father and His Blessed Mother have, at His own desire, given Him up, if we may so speak, as their Son, that He may personate the sinner, and may grapple with Lucifer as the representative of the sinful race.

He has permitted His Blessed Soul to pine and languish under the sense of His Father's infinite aversion to sin and the sinner. But the dark hour is now to end, and it is by the ordinance of His Eternal Father that it is coming to its close. And therefore not in any opposition, but with a most perfect understanding with His Eternal Father, He once more asserts His right to all the intimate union due to the only-begotten Son: *My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*

When our Blessed Lady, in days gone by, said to her Son in the Temple: *Son, why hast Thou done thus to us?* not the faintest shadow of discontent or murmuring passed over her soul. There was nothing, absolutely nothing in her heart but perfect motherly love. Even so now, and far more now, the Divine Son, and the Holy Mother along with Him, for they are *one Heart and one Soul*, are only saying the very word which the Eternal Father delights to hear. They are asking for that which the Eternal Father longs to give, but wishes to give at their petition,

in order that Lucifer may more thoroughly understand that it is through this Man and this woman, whom he scorned, that he is now conquered and crushed.

C. *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*

But, O compassionate Lord Jesus, Thou Who hast hid Thy heavenly truths from *the wise and prudent*, and hast revealed them to *little ones*, give us grace to understand Thy loud cry, lest through our foolish wisdom we go astray, and Thy words become a scandal to us.

For, like so many other words of our Lord, they have not all their meaning on the surface. We require the light of the Holy Spirit, and the guidance of Holy Church, and our own diligent study, to arrive at the precious truths hidden in them.

"I know not," a holy Father writes, "if any mortal man can understand how many secrets lie hidden under the mysterious words of this expostulation."

"No one must interpret these words," St. Leo warns us, "as if the omnipotence of God His Father had withdrawn from Him, for the nature of God and the nature of man are so become one that never can torments separate, nor death divide."

By the Incarnation the Divine Nature is so united both with our Lord's Soul and with His Body, that not even in death can Body or Soul be severed from the Divinity.

Hence this word of our Saviour is full of mystery and doctrine, so that St. Leo writes: *Vox ista doctrina est, non querela*—"This word is not a murmur, but a heavenly lesson".

D. *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*

What, then, is the meaning of our Blessed Lord's expostulation?

The holy Fathers suggest many interpretations, as we shall see later. Meanwhile, this one may be sufficient which St. Bernard offers us. "He is speaking as Man, and there has been a certain amount of abandonment

since there has been no manifestation of Divine power in such extreme necessity."

Light is thrown on this interpretation if we bear in mind that the words of our Lord, *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?* are the opening words of the 21st Psalm, which is held to be a prophetic Psalm that describes to us the thoughts of our Saviour during His Passion. Therefore, though He only speaks aloud the first verse, yet spiritual writers assume that in His Soul He is adding the other words of the Psalm, as those in verses 5, 6, and 7, where He urges the contrast: *In Thee have our fathers hoped, they have hoped, and Thou hast delivered them. They cried to Thee and they were saved; they trusted in Thee and were not confounded. But I am a worm and no man.* The sense of our Lord's cry may be, as St. Bernard suggests: "Miracles were worked for Moses and other patriarchs in the hour of need, but now when Satan is oppressing with such persevering malice My beloved and Immaculate Mother, no miracle is worked to stop him".

E. *Why hast Thou forsaken Me?*

Then, too, we know from our own experience how hard at times it is to distinguish between sin and temptation; and between sin and certain consequences and penalties of sin, such as heaviness of heart and internal desolation. To us at times temptation seems to be sin. Yet all the while, temptation and sin can be as wide apart as Heaven and Hell. Temptation could come to our Lord, but sin never.

His compact, then, and His will, is to be as like as He possibly can be to us—that is, to subject Himself to all those troubles of temptation and inward desolation which are attendant on sin, and so connected with sin that to us they seem to be sin, though in reality far apart from sin. His object is to be *tempted in all things like as we are*, but always *without sin*.

He hereby teaches us to distinguish all the accompaniments of sin, which go before sin or after, from

sin itself, and from the guilt of sin. The accompaniments He takes to Himself, and therefore, to our eye, looks like the sinner, though all the while He is the all-holy God.

This being so, we can understand how He can by His Divine power check the flow of joy and Divine gladness which by rights ought ever to be flooding every part of His Nature—His Body and His Soul—and instead of allowing Divine grace to produce all its effects in the sensitive part of His Human Nature, He gives up all this region, if we may so speak, that is, all the lower part of His being, to those painful and most distressing emotions of fear and sadness and sorrow, which would naturally abound were sin reigning in His Soul.

St. Laurence Justinian writes: "The Eternal Father forsook the sensitive part of His nature, and left it in man's purely natural condition; for He held back the streams of eternal delight, so that they should not flood the Soul of Christ with the torrent which ought to be". In this sense, then, both He and His Blessed Mother are enduring an abandonment.

F. *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*

These words, as has been said, occur in the opening verse of the 21st Psalm, which is full of allusions to the Sacred Passion. From the fact that our Saviour utters these words now, and a little later the words from the 30th Psalm: *Into Thy hands I commend My Spirit*, some holy writers conjecture that, while on the Cross, He is silently in His Heart crying out to His Father in the inspired words of certain suitable Psalms, and that during the interval which remains between this loud cry and His last word, He is going over the Psalms from the 21st to the 30th. Many words meet us in these Psalms, and in others which are understood of the Passion, but which at first sight we should think it a blasphemy to put into the mouth of our Divine Lord. But the words that we are now considering explain them to us. He is God, but He is Man also, and Man

with the sins of the world laid upon Him : Man *tempted in all things like as we are, without sin* (Hebrews iv.). That is, Man exempt indeed entirely from the guilt of sin, but loaded and oppressed and crushed down under an accumulation of all the effects and consequences and penalties and disgrace of sin. Knowing all things, and with full and eternal deliberation, He has covenanted to personate the sinner, and to endure, in the garb and disguise of the sinner, all that the displeasure of God, and all that the malice of Lucifer and the cruelty of men can in this world inflict on the sinner.

“*Saturabitur.*” He shall be saturated with suffering and pain and anguish and outrage, internal and external. We may therefore contemplate our Blessed Lord in the darkness, not only crying out the first words of the 21st Psalm : *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?* but also in His Heart repeating other words of that Psalm and other kindred Psalms.

Far from My salvation are the words of My sins. That is, wide indeed seems the gulf between peace for Me, the joy of salvation for My Soul, and *the words of My sins*, the words of the sins that are become Mine, that is, all those foul and loathsome words or thoughts in which different vices find their expression. *In Thee have our fathers hoped, they have hoped, and Thou hast delivered them. They cried to Thee and they were saved ; they trusted in Thee and were not confounded. But I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people.*

His Divine Heart is not repining, for He has been offered up *because He wished it.* He is only pleading for us, by reminding His Eternal Father that while the Divine Providence interfered so often in times past to protect the faithful patriarchs and saints, He is given up for the hour to the will of man.

From My Mother's womb Thou art My God, depart not from Me. For tribulation is very near ; for there is none to help Me (Psalm xxi.).

My Heart is become like wax melting in the midst of My bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd ; and My tongue hath cleaved to My jaws.

They have looked and stared on Me. They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture they cast lots.

But Thou, O Lord, remove not Thy help to a distance from Me. Look towards My defence. Deliver, O God, My Soul from the sword : My only one from the hand of the dog.

My only one—“Unicam meam”. Commentators understand that our Lord is praying for His Soul, His life, which is, as it were, His one treasure.

But if He is in these dark hours repeating these words, while He is, as St. Bridget tells us, suffering far more distress from the condition of His Blessed Mother than from His own, doubtless she too is *His only one* whom He wishes to see rescued from *the hand of the dog.*

G. *My God, My God.*

The 68th Psalm is also understood by contemplatives to be a cry of our Blessed Lord's Soul to His Father during His Sacred Passion. We may in this darkness consider some of its sacred words in our hearts.

Knowing how many have been scandalised in Him by the sight of His infirmity, He prays :

O God, let not them be ashamed for Me, Who look for Thee, the Lord of hosts. Let them not be confounded on My account, who seek Thee, O God of Israel. Because, for Thy sake I have borne reproach, shame hath covered My face. I am become a stranger to My brethren, and an alien to the sons of My Mother.

But as for Me, My prayer is to Thee, O Lord, for the time of Thy good pleasure, O God. Let not the tempest of water drown Me : nor the deep swallow Me up. Hear Me, O Lord, for Thy mercy is kind : look on Me according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies. Attend to My Soul and deliver it : save Me because of My enemies.

Pour out Thine indignation upon them, and let Thy wrathful anger take hold of them.

H. *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*

Commentators gather from St. Paul's words a corroboration of what our Lady said to St. Bridget, that her Divine Son uttered this cry, "*Flebili voce*," with the plaintive voice of one Who is weeping. St. Paul writes: *In the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death, (He) was heard for His reverence* (Hebrews v.). Tears then are added to His loud cry, and He is heard for His reverence, that is, for the infinite reverence with which He worships His Eternal Father, and also for the infinite reverence with which His Father regards Him.

I. *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*

The holy Fathers are careful to remind us that the most holy Soul of Jesus could suffer no real separation from His Eternal Father, but was only drinking to the dregs that bitterness which spiritual writers call desolation—a state well known to the saints, in which they are, by the wisdom and charity of their God, permitted to taste with our Saviour something of the most terrible of all the consequences of sin—the pain of loss.

What are we to do when under this suffering? The Holy Spirit answers: *Make not haste in the time of clouds. Humble thy heart and endure: wait on God with patience: join thyself to God and endure. Take all that shall be brought upon thee: and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience. For gold and silver are tried in the fire; but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation* (Ecclus. ii.).

Join thyself to God and endure.

Whither can we go to find strength under this heavy trial, if not to the darkness of Calvary, there to *join ourselves to God and endure, to wait on God with patience?*

There and only there will strength sufficient come to us from the suffering Heart of Jesus. There we learn that we are not cast away in this dread hour, but because we are acceptable men, are with our Lord and His Holy

Mother cast into the fire of humiliation, that we may come out cleansed from some of our dross, and made a little more like the fire-tried gold of their charity.

J. *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*

Many holy Fathers have meditated long on these mysterious words in order to give them an interpretation that fits in with our Blessed Saviour's Divine Nature. *I studied that I might know this thing; it is a labour in my sight* (Psalm lxxii.).

1. Some think it to be a repetition of the cry in Gethsemani: *May this chalice pass from Me*, that is to say, that our Blessed Saviour, seeing the agony inflicted on His Blessed Mother by the profane importunity of the wicked spirits, expostulates humbly and lovingly, "Why, O God, did you not let Me work out redemption without facing all these sorrows?"

2. Others think that our Lord is identifying Himself with His people, and, as if one with the cast-off race, cries out, *My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?* He, our Head, is identifying Himself with His members, and bewailing that so many of them are forsaken through their own fault.

3. Others, again, think that our Saviour says these words for our sakes: that we may all believe that He is a real Man and suffers from this intense desolation far more keenly than any of His saints shall do. He knows that the father of lies will spread this error among so many others, that Jesus, being God, did not suffer really, but only apparently.

4. The fourth interpretation is the one we are following: that the cry of our Lord is a loving petition. When He knows that the time willed by His Father is come, He says: *Why hast Thou forsaken Me?* that is, there is no longer any reason why My Blessed Mother should any more be given up to the power of the malicious tempter!

5. Origen thinks that our Blessed Lord is expostulating and lamenting because so many will not profit by His

Passion. "Why dost Thou forsake Me, so that I am become like a gleaner who can only gather the remnant in the harvest, or the grapes in the vintage when there is no longer the full fresh cluster to be found on the vine?"

6. Others interpret it, that our Lord wishes to proclaim that He is not dying for His own sins, as the thieves are, but for the sins which He has taken upon Himself. Therefore, after asking the question: *My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?* He answers in the Psalms: *For far from My salvation are the words of My sins.* That is, what wonder that Thou hast forsaken Me, since the sins of My people which are laid on Me, take from Me all right to happiness and joy, and set salvation from My present misery far from Me.

7. Lastly, St. Cyprian suggests that our Lord asks the question from His Cross to induce us also to *consider in our hearts* the causes and reasons why the Eternal Father gives up His Beloved Son to all this suffering.

If we do not make leisure for this study, and never understand rightly why the Sacred Passion is so bloody: why the sufferings are so varied, and so cruel: why, also, our Blessed Lady shares so largely in the sorrows, Calvary cannot produce its full fruit in our souls.

Tantus labor non sit cassus.	May Thy pains not fruitless be.
Sancta Mater, istud agas,	Do this for me, O Mother blest,
Crucifixi fige plagas,	Deeply imprint within my breast
Cordi meo valide.	The wounds of Jesus crucified.

K. *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*

Well, then, as we have seen, St. Cyprian thinks that our Lord's hope and wish is that we too will make leisure to ask this question and seek for an answer: "Why, O God, why are Thy beloved Son and His Blessed Mother given up to all this inconceivable agony?"

St. Paul answers this question; and his answer is short and sufficient, if we will only shut it up in our hearts and study till we understand it.

He loved me and delivered Himself for me (Galat. ii.).

For me. He is forsaken on Calvary, that I may not be for ever forsaken *in the land of forgetfulness—exiled from the eternal providence.* *Weep not over Me,* and My abandonment: for it will end. *Weep over yourselves and your children,* that they may seek and find forgiveness, and not be compelled to spend their eternity abandoned; *weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth.*

For me. That I may begin to have some notion of that intolerable pain of loss which my sins deserve; and may say with St. Dismas when the *waters* of tribulation *are come in even to my soul:* *We are receiving the just reward of our deeds.*

For me: that my *heart of stone* may begin to be changed into a *heart of flesh.*

My soul melted when He spoke. I ought to remain in the darkness looking on Him Whom I have pierced, and listening to the sorrowful cry, *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*—till virtue comes out from the Heart of my Lord, and my soul begins to melt.

For me: that at last, seeing my God and my Lord, my Saviour and my Brother in agony for me and my sins, and His agony doubled and trebled and multiplied beyond measure by His Blessed Mother's agony of compassion for Him, and His great compassion for her, I may fall down prostrate and say, *To (me), O God, belongeth confusion of face.* I am the guilty cause of all Thy crushing grief *great as the sea.*

For me: that I may learn to have compassion for the desolate, and for the tempted.

For if I by harshness or neglect persecute the man whose heart is already sore and bruised, "I belong, O Lord Jesus, to the number of those miserable men of whom Thou hast complained: *They have persecuted Him Whom Thou hast smitten: they have added to the grief of My wounds* (Psalm lxxviii.). For most assuredly, what I do to the least of Thy afflicted little ones, that I do to Thee."

For me: that at last my heart may be drawn to Thee *lifted up on the tree* for me, and for me forsaken and deso-

late unspeakably, that I may console Thee by bringing to Thee some of that fire which Thou on Thy Cross art desiring to kindle on the earth.

That I may begin to love Thee, my Lord, and to mourn over Thee, as *one mourneth for an only son*; and to grieve over (Thee) as *the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born*.

Eia Mater fons amoris,
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac, ut tecum lugeam.

O Mother, Source of charity,
Oh, share with me thy agony,
That I may mourn with thee.

For me: that when *bitter death* comes to me, I may find that through the agony of Jesus and His Holy Mother all things are made new on the Christian death-bed.

For it is in these dark hours of agony that our Divine Saviour is earning for us the Holy Viaticum for our last great journey; and the oil of peace, the oil of consolation, the holy oil of gladness for our agony. *Thou hast prepared a table before Me against them that afflict Me. Thou hast anointed My head with oil: and My chalice which inebriateth Me how goodly is it* (Psalm xxii.).

For me: that when as a chastisement of my sins, or, to teach me to live by faith, and not merely by feeling, my Lord withdraws His sensible presence from my soul, I may not lose hope, and give up at once, as if all were lost, but remember the dark hours on Calvary; and how the Divine Son and the Ever-Blessed Mother persevere through all that inward agony in the most perfect love and submission to the Eternal Father, saying always: *Father, not as I will, but as Thou*. For Jesus and His Holy Mother are doing in this hour what He teaches us to do: *In the time of clouds make not haste. Join thyself to God and endure*.

For me: that I may learn two things. (1) How great the cunning, the craft, the plausibility of the tempter is: (2) How all his lying artifices are baffled and rendered void by the Sacred Passion. "O Lord Jesus, *lead us not into temptation: deliver us from evil*. From the snares of the devil, deliver us, O Lord." "Mother of God, and Mother

of poor sinners, pray for us that we may *watch and pray*, and that we may *not enter* into temptation."

Thanks be to God Who has given us the victory over the wiles of Lucifer, through the wisdom and charity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For me: to remind me to have in my prayers a great compassion for the dying, and for all in their agony. For they are every day saying to me: *Remember my judgment, for thine also shall be so. Yesterday for me, and to-day for thee* (Ecclus. xxxviii.).

For me: to draw me to think also of the Holy Souls suffering desolation and abandonment in Purgatory. For eye hath not seen agony like theirs—the vehement, the ceaseless struggle between their desire to be with their God and their humble and faithful resignation. *Oh, may this chalice pass from me; but not as I will, my God, but as Thou*.

SCENE VI.

THE EFFECTS OF THE LOUD CRY.

STATION I.

My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?
(St. Matt. xxvii. 46).

St. Paul tells us the first effect of this cry: *He is heard for His reverence*.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, Satan and all his wicked spirits are rebuked and coerced. They stand, if we may so speak, utterly paralysed and helpless.

Theologians teach us that God sometimes uses His angels to crush the action of the powers of darkness. Sometimes, again, by simply withholding His concurrence, which is necessary for each action of every creature, He at once renders them perfectly powerless.

As, however, in this hour of darkness, the great battle foretold from the beginning between the woman and the serpent, *her seed and thy seed*, Satan, is being fought on

Calvary, we may be quite sure that these holy servants of God are right who teach us that Lucifer is now made to feel that the woman has all power over him and his legions: *She shall crush thy head.*

Accordingly we read, that in this hour of supreme confusion to them, and calamity and disaster and ruin, all this host of rebel spirits are maddened with desire to flee away and hide themselves. *Resist the devil, and he will fly from you* (St. James iv.), the Holy Spirit teaches us. Jesus and Mary, the Man and the Woman, have resisted him thoroughly to the end, have baffled, have conquered the devil and all his host, and these have now no wish but to flee away and hide themselves "in the vast chaos of eternal night," far, far away from Calvary. But the Blessed Mother utters a short word like St. John's: *Non licet.* Trodden down under her Virgin foot, the leader of all the wicked must now lie, cowering and grovelling in his terrible despair. He has taught men to adopt the maxim, *Væ victis*; and as he has meted, *it shall be measured* to him now. *He loved cursing and it shall come unto him.* Even the Blessed Mother's heart joins in this sentence: *Pour out Thy indignation upon them, and let Thy wrathful anger take hold of them; because they have persecuted Him Whom Thou hast smitten, and have added to the grief of My wounds* (Psalm lxviii.).

No; now they may not flee away, but must abide to the end, to the bitter end, and endure the full force of the Death of the Lord which they have brought about. *He hath opened a pit, and dug it; and he is fallen into the hole he made* (Psalm vii.).

STATION II.

At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lamma sabachthani; which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? (St. Mark xv. 34).

A. *With a loud voice.*

Louder far and more wonderful than His cry at Bethany, which reached Lazarus in his grave! One of

the countless miracles of the sacred Passion is this, that Jesus, worn out, quite exhausted, faint and parched, helpless and prostrate, can utter this loud cry. "*Laboravi clamans*, with effort and labour I cried out; for *My jaws are become hoarse, My eyes have failed, whilst I hope in My God* (Psalm lxviii.). . . . *De Profundis clamavi*—Out of the depths of My sorrowing Heart, and with all the energy of My loving Heart, I have cried."

For *love is strong as death*, and much stronger. *The many waters that are come into (His) Soul cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it.*

B. *With a loud voice.*

The voice of the Lord (is) upon the waters; the God of Majesty hath thundered; the Lord upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is in power; the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord shall break the cedars of Libanus, and reduce them to pieces (Psalm xxviii.).

Under the canopy of darkness this cry of our Saviour travels over the heads of the vast crowd, and is heard by every one; and passes across the deep fosse around the walls into the silent streets of the city. More even than the mysterious darkness, it spreads awe and consternation.

When He spoke gently last night in the Garden, and said in humble meekness, *I am He*: who was able to stand it?

"*Attendite.*" Pause, then, to contemplate for a while the trouble and dismay awakened now by this loud cry from the Cross, in the souls of all who have rejected our Saviour; and most of all in the Rulers and Ancients, who have planned and meditated *vain things against the Lord, and against His Christ.*—*The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars.* These strong-minded men are terror-stricken and appalled. *Destruction and unhappiness in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known* (Psalm xiii.). For *the way of peace* is to follow Jesus; to love Jesus; to keep close to Jesus. *The eyes of the Lord are on them that fear Him.*

Though He will not save Himself on Calvary, He can

save all who trust in Him. *He is their powerful Protector, and strong stay; a defence from the heat, and a cover from the sun at noon. A preservation from stumbling, and a help from falling. He raiseth up the soul, and enlighteneth the eyes, and giveth health and light and blessing* (Ecclus. xxxiv.). These unhappy men are among those who *have not called upon the Lord; there have they trembled with fear, where there is no fear* (Psalm xiii.). This loud, strong cry fills them with the fear that after all Jesus is not going to die, for He has all His life within Him still. He may, they think, in this darkness be coming down from His Cross to strike His enemies and deliver the people from their yoke. *We fools! what hath pride profited us?*

From those (O Lord), who resist Thy right hand, keep me as the apple of Thy eye (Psalm xvi.).

"From anger, hatred, and all ill-will, deliver us, O Lord."

STATION III.

At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? (v. 34).

Jesus cried out.

Some spiritual writers present this loud cry to us, if we may so speak, under another aspect.

I have always held My peace; I have kept silence; I have been patient; I will speak now as a woman in labour (Isaias xlii.).

As we have seen, zeal for His Father's glory and for our poor souls is consuming our Lord more actively than torments or loss of blood. And if His Blessed Mother shares every pain with Him through her gift of motherly compassion, immeasurably more, nay, infinitely more, does He by compassion share every sorrow and anguish of her heart. If then she is now, as so many holy Fathers tell us, going through the terrible agony of that second childbirth, which is to make her the Mother of sinners, He must necessarily by His boundless compassion be sharing in her travail. One poor sinner has already been rescued

on Calvary from the grasp of Lucifer, and baptised in the baptism of desire, and, as the holy Fathers rank him with the martyrs, we may perhaps say also, in the baptism of blood. "How long, O God, how long shall we have to wait—My Mother and I—for other sinners to come to life? *My God, why hast Thou forsaken (us)?*"

It is of our Lady's present condition on Calvary that interpreters understand that word written afterwards by the Beloved Disciple: *And being with child, she cried travailling in birth, and was in pain to be delivered* (Apoc. xii.).

When our Saviour, then, utters His loud cry, He is only her mouthpiece, only proclaiming from the housetop before Heaven, the vehement cry of her heart in secret, the yearning of her agonised soul, that she may become quickly *the glad mother of children.*

With one heart and one soul they are both crying out: *As a woman with child, when she draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs, so are we become in Thy presence, O Lord* (Isaias xxvi.).

Cardinal Hugo writes: "In creating, God is our Father and labours not. *He spoke, and they were made.* But He is our Mother when He redeems with agony and labour. He is our Mother, for in anguish on the Cross He gave us birth."

It is His story and Holy Mary's that we read in Genesis. *When death was now near* (they) *called the name of* (their) *new-born son, the redeemed sinner, Benoni, the son of my pain* (Genesis xxxv.). Benoni, yes; but also Benjamin, the cherished last-born.

Joseph had to go and hide himself quickly, because *his heart was moved upon his brother Benjamin, and tears gushed out* (Genesis xliii.). What is this but a faint picture of the tenderness with which from His Cross Jesus is looking on His younger brother, the poor sinner, the last-born of His Blessed Mother, *the son of* (her) *pain?*

Juda, also, the elder brother, spoke out boldly for Benjamin; *I cannot return to my father without the boy, lest I be witness of the calamity that will oppress my father*

(Genesis xlv.). But what is Juda's emotion by the side of our Lord's strong feeling for His Eternal Father? *I cannot return to My (Eternal) Father without the boy*—the last-born of My Mother, the son of her pain, lest I be witness of the sorrow that will oppress Him. *What commutation can I offer Him, if I cannot take with Me Benoni, or Benjamin, the son of My pain, whom I loved, and delivered Myself up for him?*

"Why did He cry out," St. Bernard asks, "if not that His prayer might be loudly heard?" It is on Calvary that we understand best that argument of our Saviour: *Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee* (Isaias xlix.).

From the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour.

1. Commentators discuss a question as to how the darkness was brought about. One approved opinion is that there was a miraculous solar eclipse. This opinion is supported by a statement found in a work purporting to be by St. Denis, but considered by the learned to be of later date, that he and others saw the moon come between the sun and the earth in a miraculous way. Miraculous, because (1) by the ordinary laws of nature the moon could not at that time of full moon cause an eclipse; (2) because a natural eclipse would not have lasted so long.

2. *Over the whole earth.* The question is also asked: Are we to believe that the eclipse was general? or may we understand the Greek and Latin words to mean "over the whole land," that is, the land of Judea, or Palestine? Opinions are divided. Commentators much esteemed hold that the eclipse was general. The word of St. Denis, if genuine, bears out this view, as he states that he was at Heliopolis in Egypt when he witnessed this eclipse.

3. These writers further think that the Prophet Joel is alluding to this darkness in his prophecy: *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood.* They gather this from the context, both before these words and after, where we find the promises of a great outpouring of grace. *I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. . . . And it shall come to pass that every one that shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved; for in Mount Sion and in Jerusalem shall be salvation, as the Lord hath said, and in the residue whom the Lord shall call* (c. ii.).

They add that though the Gospels mention nothing of the moon appearing like blood, certain early Fathers allude to such a phenomenon as having occurred.

STATION IV.

About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: Eli, Eli, lamma Sabacthani? That is, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? And some that stood there and heard said: This Man calleth Elias (St. Matt. xxvii. 46, 47).

A. *My God, My God.*

We have seen the effect of these words on Satan, and on the Priests and Ancients. Their effect in Heaven, as we have also seen, is that our Lord's cry is heard at once, *for His reverence.*

The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds (Ecclus. xxxv.).

When did ever prayer ascend from a heart meek and humble as the Heart of our Saviour is? Therefore at once *it pierces the clouds* and prevails.

A little while then, that is, after a short moment of wholesome terror, the thick veil of darkness is suddenly, quite suddenly, withdrawn, and the sun of the Paschal time is once more shining on Calvary and Jerusalem and the great multitude. All the cries of affrighted beasts and birds are hushed. Calvary and Gethsemani, and Olivet and the Prætorium, and the Cœnaculum, are all reposing in the genial warmth and brightness and freshness of the spring-tide afternoon; as if nothing were going amiss in the Holy City. For our Father in Heaven *maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust* (St. Matt. v.). And we have to imitate His bounty, by loving those who do not love us.

Nay, it chances at times that sinners have even a larger share of the good things of this world than God's children have. Are we to envy them? If there were not another world coming, and coming quickly, and very nigh, we might crave for present prosperity. But knowing, as we do, that we have not here our abiding city, when we see men sinning and prospering, we must keep in mind the sad explana

tion which the Psalmist gives after studying their mysterious prosperity: *But indeed for deceits Thou hast put it to them. When they were lifted up, Thou hast cast them down. They have suddenly ceased to be* (Psalm lxxii.).

B. *Some said: This Man calleth Elias.*

The soldiers with the return of light have come back near to the Cross. Their knowledge of the language used by our Lord may perhaps be imperfect. However this may be, certain it is that even when God speaks, we easily misunderstand His words. Translating from one language into another, men often change the sense. But far more commonly when they are interpreting our Lord's Gospel, they entirely corrupt His revelation, and substitute what suits their passions, or the lies suggested by Satan. If we had not a living and infallible authority to interpret for us, God's revelation would be of little value.

STATION V.

About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice (v. 46).

A. *About the ninth hour*

A tear soon dries up, men say. So does fear quickly pass away, when the cause is gone. It vanishes and is forgotten. Job tells us that man born of a woman, *though living only for a short time—yet never continueth in the same state* (c. xiv.); and in the Proverbs we read: *There are many thoughts in the heart of a man: but the will of the Lord shall stand firm* (c. xix.). Our emotions and feelings come and go, and we become so absorbed in the present thought that we quite forget those that have passed. St. James writes of the man *beholding his own countenance in a glass, and presently forgot what manner of man he was*. It is much more true that our souls, when desolation comes, quite forget that there has been consolation, and when sunshine comes back, feel as if they never had been under a cloud.

The spring sunshine, the pleasant freshness of the afternoon, drives away terror from the souls of the men around Golgotha. The Priests and Ancients lift up their

heads again, and are able once more to speak jauntily and as oracles: "Did we not tell you that there was nothing to fear, nothing whatsoever?" They venture again to draw near to the place of Calvary, and as they find Jesus just as He was, haggard and worn and helpless on the Cross, all their hideous courage returns.

But still one fear remains. "That loud cry is proof convincing that His strength has not left Him. He is not dead yet, and may not be at all near to death." "While there is life," we commonly say, "there is hope." With them, the thought is: "While there is life, there is fear and terror and no peace. He may escape us."

B. *About the ninth hour.*

Contemplate, therefore, these Priests and Ancients once more gathered together in a group to take counsel what they must do to abbreviate this unendurable suspense. "Evidently they must persuade the Governor to give them leave to put an end quickly to the life of Jesus, that is, to complete the murder."

But how can this be done? Their deputies, whom they sent three hours ago, testify that the Governor is no longer approachable; and they are sure that the darkness will have added to his terror, and made him more unwilling to do anything against Jesus. But, as we say, "necessity is the mother of invention". When the will is resolved, it quickens the intellect, and plans and expedients are forthcoming.

The Governor must be solemnly warned that the suspense is highly dangerous: that at any moment there may be a popular outburst in favour of Jesus: that, moreover, Jewish sacred law requires that the bodies of the crucified be buried before the Great Sabbath commences at sunset. The people will be won, if the Governor respects the holy law, and may on the other hand grow very turbulent if the present situation be prolonged.

Their best and wisest, therefore, their men of weight, are despatched in haste to the Prætorium, with the oft-repeated admonition: "*Do it quickly*".

Spiritual writers teach us that the devils help us to sanctity, not only, as the presence of an enemy benefits soldiers, by keeping our souls exercised and on the alert by their temptations, but also by teaching us a great lesson, by their unhallowed courage and perseverance. From His Cross Jesus says to us all, *Be not wearied, fainting in your minds* (Hebrews xii.). See how My enemies do not grow weary or faint. And yet compare the outcome for them with the issue for you. What will they gain by walking in hard ways? and what will be your reward if you labour and persevere?

"Mother of God, pray for us sinners. Show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, that we may *think diligently upon Him that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself*; and may not be wearied. Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and in the hour of our death."

SCENE VII.

THE FIFTH WORD.

STATION I.

Afterwards Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said: I thirst (St. John xix. 28).

A. *I thirst.*

In the account of our Lord's long fast in the wilderness, we observe that it is when the fast is ended, that He is hungry. *When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry* (St. Matt. iv.). *He ate nothing in those days: and when they were ended, He was hungry* (St. Luke iv.).

Again we read that at the sixth hour He sat down weary by Jacob's well, and said to the Samaritan woman: *Give Me to drink*. It does not appear, however, from the Gospel story that He did drink. And when a little later the Apostles who had gone into the city of Sichar to buy

meats, returned, bringing food, and *pressed Him, saying: Rabbi, eat*, He made answer: *I have meat to eat which you know not of*. And when his disciples, not understanding His answer, say to one another: *Hath any man brought Him to eat?* *Jesus saith to them: My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work*.

From these passages we learn that He is Supreme Lord, that *all things serve Him*, that hunger and thirst, cold and heat, and all other created things, affect Him just as much as He wills, and when He wills. In every detail of life, as in His Passion and Death, He suffers, *because He Himself willed it*. As no man can take His life from Him, but He lays it down Himself when He wills (St. John x.), so is it with hunger and thirst. At times He prolongs His fast and abstains from the meat and drink of this earth, and finds His food and nourishment in doing the will of His Father: *Every word that cometh from the mouth of God is His bread*. At other times, again, He lets Himself feel in all their severity the pangs of hunger and of thirst.

We know that men absorbed in an engrossing study, and soldiers eagerly rushing on to victory, can forget hunger and thirst and weariness. What wonder then if Jesus, when praying with intense earnestness for us, and conquering the temptations of Lucifer in the wilderness, or in the Garden, or on the Cross, seems to forget entirely the hunger and thirst of His Body?

But when the long fast is ended He gives up His Body to the sufferings of extreme hunger. And now that the last great struggle with Lucifer is decided, He allows something like what we call reaction to set in. That is, He allows all the natural causes that have been at work to have their full effect.

He has lost much blood, in the Garden, at the pillar of the flagellation, in the courtyard of the barracks where He was crowned, and now, too, on Calvary. And those who lose much blood in sickness tell us that thirst becomes their worst torment. They also who chronicle disasters

at sea have often recorded how those who have escaped drowning have lost their reason through the agony of their thirst.

B. *Jesus said : I thirst.*

"Attendite." Let us look up to the wasted and disfigured face of our Saviour, and mark, too, the extreme emaciation of His Body, and listen to the feeble and languid voice with which He now makes known His secret: *I thirst*—such a contrast with the late loud cry—and try all we can to form some conception of the intensity of His suffering, and the greatness of His distress in the moment when He utters this word. He has had no food, no refreshment, no sleep, no rest since He left the Cœnaculum last night; and it is quite beyond the thoughts of men to reckon up the pain, the weariness, the distress of body that He has endured since then. *My strength is dried up like a potsherd : and My tongue hath cleaved to My jaws : and Thou hast brought Me down unto the dust of death* (Psalm xxi.).

This word: "*Sitio*"—*I thirst*—is a short word, shorter even than the word: *Pilate scourged Him*, or, *They crucified Him*. But oh, what good reason our Blessed Lord and His Holy Mother have to say to us pressingly: "O all you who go by the way, stay a little to listen to this word, and to contemplate this thirst!"

C. *Jesus said : I thirst.*

We must also contemplate our Blessed Lady. For as they *are one heart and one soul*, and are sharing the chalice together, she, too, is thirsty.

Whether her marvellous compassion has drawn the blood from her body, as her devout servants tell us, or has not, we are quite sure that in this hour she is sharing to the full His weariness, His extreme exhaustion, all His prostration, and His sore need of some refreshment.

Quis non posset contristari,
Christi Matrem contemplari,
Dolentem cum Filio ?

Who is there but must condole
With that loving Mother's soul,
Mourning with her dying Son ?

St. Bernard thinks that when she heard that other word, *Woman, behold thy son*, the sword of sorrow must have pierced her heart through and through.

Surely now when she hears her Son make this acknowledgment, *I thirst*, the cruel wound is opened afresh.

D. *Jesus said : I thirst.*

And we must remember also that when He says this word, He knows full well that He is driving the sword of sorrow through the soul of this most beloved Mother, and her compassion is to Him a new anguish, much more oppressive than the thirst. Yet He hesitates not, but utters the word, and causes her this agony on set purpose, because it is His resolve to be able to say: *What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard that I have not done to it?* She is to share everything, both His thirst and all the distress that her compassion is causing to Him.

Quæ mœrebat, et dolebat,
Pia Mater dum videbat,
Nati pœnas inclyti.

Weeping and in woe she stood,
Gentle Mother, by the Rood,
Mourning for her dying Son.

E. *Jesus said : I thirst.*

Contemplate, too, the extreme fidelity and humble obedience of the Blessed Mother. Which is hardest—for Abraham to strike his son? or for Holy Mary to hear her Lord Jesus cry, *I thirst*, and stand there inactive? Which would be easier, to be obedient unto death—that is, to die out of obedience—or through obedience to stand and hear her Son cry, *I thirst*, and not stir a hand to slake His thirst?

In the Holy Mother, as in her Divine Son, *love* (is) *strong as death*; yea, the death of the Cross, with all its agonies.

Fac me tecum pie flere,
Crucifixo condolere
Donec ego vixero.

Mother, let me at thy side,
Sorrow for the Crucified
All the days of my short life.

F. *Jesus said : I thirst.*

Our Saviour has two Bodies, the body of flesh which

He received in the womb of Holy Mary, and the Body built up for Him out of the water and blood that came from His side. *We are members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones.* Therefore the Apostle tries to bring home to us the love that our Saviour has for us, by saying that He loves us as men love their own bodies. *For no man ever hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the Church* (Ephes. v.).

"Attendite."—O all you who go by, stay to consider this truth in your hearts. Who can express the care, the solicitude, the keen and lively sympathy that a man has for his body? In spite of our own badness, we shall be full of hope if we once believe firmly that Christ cherishes us as a man cherishes his own body. We hear sometimes of great saints growing tired of their bodies, and hating their bodies; but these are miracles of grace. In the order of nature, suffering must be intense indeed before a man can desire to part from his own loved body.

Christ our Lord feels more strongly for His Mystical Body than for His natural Body. He says: *Who touches you touches the apple of My eye*; and this is no exaggeration. For He freely sacrifices the apple of His eye and every other sense of His natural Body in order to cherish and nourish us, His Mystical Body. *Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute Me? I am Jesus, Whom thou dost persecute.* Saul was only persecuting His disciples: *But so long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me.*

When He cried out: *My God, My God, why dost Thou forsake Me?* St. Bernard tells us that He was praying—*ut non derelinquatur in membris suis*—not to be forsaken in His members. Therefore, in like manner, when now He says, *I thirst*, He is speaking also for His members. For when His poor are thirsty, He is thirsty. When His poor are sick and weary, and want food and refreshment, He is weary and hungry and sick. St. Paul could say truly, *Who is weak and I am not weak?* And yet his heart, after

all, is only warmed with some small sparks of the infinite charity burning in the Heart of Jesus.

Let us rouse ourselves to win a more lively faith in this truth which we have known from childhood, and also to believe that at the judgment-seat, when we find out that verily and in truth our Lord identifies Himself with His little ones, this fact will burst upon us as a great and stupendous surprise. *Lord, when did we see Thee hungry and thirsty, and did not minister to Thee? Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to Me.*

From His Cross, then, our Blessed Saviour is for ever pleading to us in favour of His little ones, for the limbs of His Body who are in want, saying: *I thirst.*

Blessed the man who understandeth concerning the poor and the needy (Psalm xl.).

As often as we go to the altar to be present while God's minister shows the death of the Lord, we must renew our faith that He says again: *I thirst*, to remind us of His suffering members.

G. *I thirst.*

We may humbly and reverently ask, why our Blessed Saviour reveals the secret of His thirst. For our spiritual masters teach us that it is commendable to suffer in silence. *He shall sit solitary and hold his peace* (Lament. iii.) is the model they set before sufferers. The familiar words of our great poet are quoted to raise us to high and generous thoughts:

She never told her grief,
But let concealment, like a worm i' th' bud,
Feed on her damask cheek.

It is good, they say, to wait in silence for the salvation of God (Lament. iii.).

And again: *In silence and in hope shall your strength be* (Isaiah xxx.). *It is good to hide the secret of (the) King* (Tobias xii.).

One answer to this difficulty may be that our Blessed

Saviour saw on Calvary some one to whom He earnestly wished to give great graces in return for a drop of water.

Another answer we may find in the word of the Holy Spirit: *There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak* (Eccles. iii.).

Patient silence is good; it is great prudence and high virtue. But St. Paul says: *I show unto you yet a more excellent way* (1 Cor. xii.). What is this more excellent way? The Apostle answers: *Above all these things have charity*. Holy men at times give up prayer, and give up penance, in order to do works of mercy. So, too, would they break through humble and holy silence, when by so doing they can help their neighbours' souls. They leave God, for God. Our Blessed Lord, last night, interrupted His prayer in the grotto in order to look after His suffering Apostles in their troubles. So do His faithful servants interrupt their silent communing with God, to speak to men, if by so doing they can serve our Lord in His little ones.

In this hour, then, our Blessed Saviour prefers charity to the silence of His meek and humble Heart. He discloses His secret, and calls our attention to His cruel thirst; because He knows that out of His thirst virtue will come to us.

If He do not speak this word from the Cross, we shall never know this feature of His Sacred Passion; and His followers will lose all the grace which is to come to them from His tortured palate, and His parched tongue, and His fevered lips. A holy writer puts this question to our Lord: *Ergone plus cruciat sitis quam Crux? De cruce siles, et de siti clamas*—"Is Thy thirst more torment, Lord, than Thy Cross? For, of Thy Cross Thou sayest no word, but of Thy thirst, Thou criest: *Sitio*."

The answer perchance is this: We see and know the torment of the Cross, without being told of it. But of the thirst we know nothing, till our Saviour speaks.

H. *I thirst.*

While listening to this sacred word, and contemplating the thirst of our Saviour:

1. Some win for themselves strength to conquer the tyranny of intemperance. Where else can they find virtue enough, grace enough, to break from this slavery?

2. Others plead powerfully with the Eternal Father, *Look down on the face of Thy Christ*, and the thirst of Thy Christ, and thus win a victorious grace for a friend or kinsman given up to the ruinous vice of intemperance.

3. Others, again, remain considering in their hearts the thirst of our Lord till they find in themselves strength to add to prayer that fasting without which certain devils cannot be driven out from the souls of those dear to them.

4. Others, also, while hearing the cry of our Saviour, are put in mind of the agonising thirst of the Holy Souls in Purgatory. For they remember our Lord's most charitable word: *Weep not over Me, but weep over yourselves and over your children.*

If it were possible for us to draw near to Him and moisten His burning lips, He would surely say: "Nay, rather, give Me solace by solacing the Holy Souls of My servants who are enduring in perfect meekness a thirst more distressing than Mine. *I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink.* For so long as you did it to My suffering little ones, you did it to Me." Add to this that our Blessed Lord in Heaven thirsts more for the liberation of His Holy Souls than they themselves do.

I. *I thirst.*

The holy Fathers who *meditate* on the Sacred Passion day and night, teach us that our Blessed Lord is suffering from more than one kind of thirst.

St. Bernard writes, that "by His thirst, the Lord Jesus is setting before us a picture of His burning love for us, the thirst of His Heart. *I came to cast a fire on the earth, and what do I desire but that it be enkindled?*

The zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up. This zeal is not merely a zeal that God's Temple on earth may be duly honoured, but that the everlasting home of His Father in Heaven may be peopled and filled with His children.

Deal favourably, O Lord, in Thy good-will with Sion, that the walls, the living walls, of Jerusalem may be built up (Psalm l.).

My zeal hath made Me pine away, because My enemies forgot Thy words (Psalm cxviii.). We must contemplate our Saviour and His Holy Mother consumed and parched up with the burning thirst of their hearts for our poor souls, and thus enduring all the agony of a mother's childbirth.

St. Augustine puts these words into our Lord's mouth: *Sitis mea salus vestra est*—"My thirst is your salvation; My thirst for your souls torments Me more than the thirst of My Body".

J. *Jesus said: I thirst.*

Micheas the Prophet writes: *Wo is Me! for I am become as one that gleaneth in autumn the grapes of the vintage; there is no cluster to eat; My soul desired the first ripe figs. The holy man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood, every one hunteth his brother to death. The evil of their hands they call good* (c. vii.).

"This," Origen tells us, "is a cry from our Lord yearning for the souls of men. For He came to gather in the whole vintage, but only finds a few clusters."

St. Augustine reasons thus with our Saviour: "In Thee, O Lord, the prophecy has its fulfilment: *All the nations shall serve Thee* (Psalm lxxi.). Why, therefore, art Thou still thirsty? Art Thou not content with such large draughts?"

He answers his own question thus: "Many souls He drinks in, but never shall He be free from thirst". And commenting on the words of the 61st Psalm: *They have thought to cast away My price: I ran in thirst*, he says: "They cast Me away, but I thirsted after them".

St. Laurence Justinian writes: "What Christ said to the Samaritan woman, *Give Me to drink*, this He repeats to all of us from the Cross when He says, *I thirst*".

What He thirsts for by the well is not the cooling water, but, as He explains to His Apostles, He is thirsting

for the souls of men. *Lift up your eyes and see the countries; for they are white already to harvest* (St. John iv.).

K. *Jesus said: I thirst.*

St. Gregory Nazianzen suggests another thought: *Sitit sitiri Deus*—"God thirsts to be thirsted for"—that is, desires to be desired, loves to be loved. He was thirsting at the well that the soul of the sinful woman might begin to thirst after Him.

"This Samaritan woman," St. Augustine says, "found the Lord thirsting, and was herself refreshed by the thirsty One. She first found Him thirsting, that He might afterwards be refreshed by her faith."

Greatly does He thirst that all our thirst may be for Him. *If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink* (St. John vii.). . . . *The water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting* (St. John iv.). *They that drink Me shall yet thirst* (Ecclus. xxiv.).

Of the good things of this world we become sated; for our hearts are not created to be content with them. We are familiar with St. Augustine's word: "My heart was created for Thee, my God, and it must be restless till it rests in Thee". Alas! how easily we lose the thirst for our God, and become accustomed to do without Him!

I have sinned, we say, *and what harm hath befallen me?*

As if it were not an evil to be deplored with tears of blood, that we have lost the hunger and thirst for our God, and are content with the husks of swine.

As if we have no cause to grieve night and day, when our Father in Heaven, and our Lord Jesus Christ from His Cross, are saying in the hearing of the Holy Mother and the blessed angels: *Be astonished, O ye heavens, and ye gates thereof be very desolate. For My people hath done two evils. They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water* (Jerem. ii.).

When we examine our consciences, we are sometimes troubled about many things. We find that we have offended

in many ways; but whether we have gone astray through love of riches, or through love of pleasure, or through love of honour, we have always first committed this sin of sins: *They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters.* Whatever be the creature we adhere to and worship, we first turn our back on our own God, *the Fountain of living waters.* We scorn and reject Him, and choose the *broken cistern that holds no water.* We forsake Him entirely, and take in His stead *the husks of swine.* Yet all the while, He created me to love Him, and to love Him with my whole heart.

Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people? Is not He thy Father that created thee and made thee and possessed thee? (Deut. xxxii.). Will a virgin forget her ornament? But My people hath forgotten Me days without number (Jerem. ii.).

When Anna, afterwards the mother of Samuel, was fretting because she was childless, her husband tried to comfort her by saying: *Why weepest thou? Am not I better to thee than ten children?* (1 Kings i.). Not when we are weeping, but when we are giving our hearts to pleasure and enjoyment of some poor creature, our Lord says to us in sadness from His Cross: *Sursum corda! Am I not better to thee than the works of My hands? Have they loved thee with an everlasting love? I have loved thee, and delivered Myself up for thee. Have they done as much for thee?"*

L. Jesus said: I thirst.

And His faithful servants refresh His thirst ineffably when they say to Him from their hearts: *For Thee, Lord Jesus, my soul hath thirsted.*

My soul hath thirsted after the strong, living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God? (Psalm xli.).

Consider how greatly the thirst of our Saviour is alleviated when He hears St. Paul saying: *I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ (Philipp. i.). I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus (Romans viii.).*

"Mother of God, pray for us sinners; pray for us, 'the children of your pain,' that we may stay here, looking on Him whom (we) have pierced, till grace comes out to our dead hearts, and we find ourselves able to say: My Lord Jesus, *Sitio—I thirst* after Thee, *the strong, loving God.*"

M. Jesus said: I thirst.

St. Bernard adds a thought to help our contemplation. He speaks to our Saviour in this way: "After Thou hast now drained the chalice of Thy passion, Thou sayest, *I thirst*, as if to say: More torments yet, and greater ones, I thirst to undergo, if need be. For there is nothing, O man, that I can refuse to bear for thee." "Let, then," he goes on, "the faithful soul imitate her sweet Jesus, Who thirsted for such a chalice of bitterness and drank it all for her; let her too thirst after hardships for His sake, and drink of the chalice."

N. Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said: I thirst.

In the Cenacle last night, our Lord said to His disciples: *I say to you, that this that is written must yet be fulfilled in Me.* And a few days before, He warned them that many troubles would come, before His Church on earth would have finished her work: *These things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.* Now He knows that all the prophecies respecting His life on earth are fulfilled, except one; and in order that this one may have its fulfilment, He speaks the word: *I thirst.*

The prophecy He alludes to is in the 68th Psalm: *They gave Me gall for My food, and in My thirst they gave Me for drink vinegar.*

O. That the Scripture might be fulfilled.

Observe here, and throughout the Passion, how the foreknowledge of God acts. Sins are not committed by men because God foreknows; but God foreknows the sins, because men will do them. The sin is not an effect of His foreknowledge, but the cause of it. If men are not going

out of their free-will to crucify Him, He will not foreknow the Crucifixion.

Consequently, though He knows every word written concerning Him, and so disposes all things that men will out of their free-will accomplish everything, yet we observe that neither men nor devils are at all adverting to prophecies when they bring about their fulfilment. Judas does not betray Jesus, Annas and Caiphas and the Ancients do not condemn Him, nor deliver Him to the Gentiles, because they know that all this is prophesied. Pilate does not scourge Him nor crucify Him with any intention of carrying out a prophecy.

STATION II.

And immediately one of them running took a sponge and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. And the others said, Let be; let us see whether Elias will come to deliver Him (St. Matt. xxvii.).

And one running and filling a sponge with vinegar, and putting it upon a reed, gave Him to drink, saying, Stay, let us see if Elias will come to take Him down (St. Mark xv.). Now there was a vessel there full of vinegar. And they putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to His mouth. Jesus therefore, when He had taken the vinegar, said, It is consummated (St. John xix.).

A. *One of them running took a sponge.*

From St. Matthew's account, and St. Mark's, we are inclined to think that the order of events was this: as soon as our Saviour cries out with a loud voice, *Eli, Eli*, some of the soldiers standing by, hearing Him, said: *This Man calleth Elias; and immediately one of them running took a sponge.* It is difficult from their narrative to find a reason for thus offering the vinegar. We see no connection between the loud cry of our Lord, either in its true sense, or as the soldiers interpreted it of Elias, and their offering the vinegar. St. John solves the difficulty by telling us that our Lord had said the word: *I thirst.*

The soldiers therefore hear the loud cry, and immediately after, or very soon after, they hear our Saviour add the word: *I thirst.* They join the two words together; and, as St. Matthew tells the story, one runs, and offers the vinegar; but the others say: *Let be; let us see whether Elias will come and deliver Him.*

As St. Mark narrates it, the soldier who offers the vinegar is the one who says: *Stay, let us see if Elias will come to take Him down.*

According to St. John's account, more than one take a part in offering the vinegar: *They putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to His mouth.*

It seems probable, therefore, that at first two or three take part in the preparations, by putting the sponge about the hyssop, and then fastening both to the reed; that one lifts the reed to our Lord's mouth, and then, after a short time, one or two who have taken part in the work say: *Let be; let us see if Elias will come.*

The question is discussed, How then came a vessel full of vinegar, and a sponge, and a reed to be there?

Some commentators think that it was usual to offer vinegar with hyssop to the crucified to hasten death; that the executioners would naturally wish death to come quickly, that they might be set free.

Others think that there is no ground for saying that vinegar and hyssop would hasten death. They think that, on the contrary, the effect of the vinegar would be to counteract exhaustion and restore animation.

Others, again, are of opinion that the vinegar is there for the use of the executioners, and that they applied it to their nostrils, and used it as a disinfectant. If Golgotha was the ordinary place for executions, something of the kind might be needed. Or again, it might be that in the hot weather, the wounds left by the scourging which preceded crucifixion, might soon begin to be offensive.

If the Cross of our Lord had been as low as the crosses usually were, the reed would scarcely have been needed. As the Cross is a tall one, and the reed is there at hand ready, it may have been brought for this purpose. But as they had reeds in the Prætorium wherewith to strike our Lord's face during the crowning, some reeds may also have been brought to the place of Calvary, or found there without premeditation.

Some writers say that the reed is only the stalk of the hyssop. Others hold that the hyssop was fastened to a reed.

B. *Jesus therefore, when He had taken the vinegar.*

From these words it seems that our Blessed Lord does drink some of the vinegar. When they offered Him the myrrhed wine with gall in it, before His Crucifixion, *He would not drink*. Now; St. John tells us, He takes the vinegar.

The explanation may be, that the myrrhed wine was intended to deaden the senses and diminish pain; but that the vinegar is not offered either to shorten life or to refresh, but out of wanton cruelty.

This interpretation fits in with the thought suggested by St. Bernard, that our Saviour, when He says, *I thirst*, is not only parched with bodily thirst, but thirsting also for more suffering, if it may be that He may thus do more for His vineyard.

When He utters the word, *I thirst*, He well knows that the vinegar will be offered, and therefore, from all we have seen during the Passion, we may perhaps fairly infer that He accepts it fully knowing that it will be no refreshment, but one more torment added to the grief of His wounds.

This is the view which St. Laurence Justinian expresses: "Never in any age was it heard of, that vinegar was given to a dying man to quench his thirst. This cruelty passes beyond all the bounds of cruelty, for what would be granted to any brute beast, these wicked men refuse to the Son of God in His thirst."

St. Cyril of Alexandria writes in the same sense. This draught we may consider as one more act of cruelty towards our Lord added to the rest.

What still more confirms this view, and even renders it we may say quite certain, is that in the prophetic words of the Psalm this offering of vinegar is specified as one of the cruel outrages heaped upon our Saviour. *They gave Me gall for My food, and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to*

drink. We may, doubtless, be sure that if the vinegar will hasten death, our Saviour will not drink it.

C. *When He had taken the vinegar.*

We must, then, contemplate our Blessed Saviour with His meekness and humility of Heart allowing them to add thus *to the grief of His wounds*: and accepting this cruel refreshment from the hands of His persecutors.

"Pray for us sinners, Blessed Mother, that while we contemplate the thirst of thy Divine Son, we may learn of Him to be meek and humble of Heart."

D. *When He had taken the vinegar.*

While *considering* in our hearts the thirst of our Lord, we may also bear in mind that His Heart is much more distressed by the unkindness and inhumanity which is reigning in the souls of the men who are afflicting Him than by the torment caused to His Body by the vinegar.

My people, *What have I done to you? in what have I aggrieved you?*

"*Numquid redditur pro bono malum?*" Is it usual, is it necessary, is it the law that evil must be returned for good?

E. *When He had taken the vinegar.*

Remember also, what immeasurable pain our Blessed Saviour is enduring through His compassion for the terrible wound inflicted on the Heart of His Holy Mother when she sees Him in His extreme thirst drinking the vinegar.

O quam tristis et afflicta
Fuit illa benedicta
Mater unigeniti.

O sad indeed, and woe-begone,
Was she the ever-blessed one,
The Mother of that dying Son.

F. *When He had taken the vinegar.*

Oh, who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, and I will weep day and night, while I set in contrast, with what tenderness, *with what circumspection* my Lord Jesus Christ has nursed and cherished me in my hour of need, and delivered Himself up for me; and my heartless inhumanity to Him crucified for me.

"O loving Heart of Jesus, give us some of the fire that burns within Thee."

G. *One filling a sponge with vinegar gave Him to drink.*

Each of us is His vineyard. *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 ?* (Jer. ii.).

When we return Him evil for good, heartless indifference for His love, we give Him vinegar and gall to drink instead of good wine.

They who live badly, Origen writes, give Jesus vinegar instead of wine.

H. *One of them took a sponge and filled it with vinegar.* Again and again we must impress on our souls the truth that every time we help our neighbour by an act of mercy, we refresh our Lord's thirst with good wine. *I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink.*

And if it costs us labour and sacrifice to do the work of mercy, the refreshment we give to our Saviour becomes more and more delightful.

He who was so pleased by the faith of the woman of Chanaan, how ineffably consoled is He when His faithful servants deny themselves, and share His thirst, and His hunger and His weariness, in order to obtain the conversion of a sinner or to give refreshment to the suffering souls.

I. *A sponge full of vinegar.*

So long as we have a disrelish for our Lord Jesus Christ, a dislike to be with Him in prayer ; no desire for Holy Communion ; no keen wish to assist at Holy Mass, our souls are to Him a sponge full of vinegar : *I have no pleasure in you.*

"Blessed," His loving Heart says to us, "*Blessed they who hunger and thirst after justice,*" that is, after Him and His love.

The vehement and excruciating thirst for God in Purgatory, the unbearable separation from Him, the prolonged

banishment are the necessary reparation to be made for our disrelish of God here.

Sitiri sitit Deus. Our Lord thirsts that we may thirst after Him.

SCENE VIII.

THE SIXTH WORD.

STATION I.

Jesus therefore, when He had taken the vinegar, said : It is consummated (St. John xix. 30).

A. *It is consummated.*

"*Attendite.*" We may contemplate how, before uttering this word, our Blessed Saviour most humbly and most lovingly consults His Eternal Father to know whether there is anything more that He wishes Him to do or suffer before He leaves this world. If so, *My Heart is ready, O God, My Heart is ready.*

Then, too, He communes in secret with the heart of His Holy Mother. *Can I hide from Abraham what I am about to do ?* Can I leave her in ignorance, *unicam meam*—My only one, that My hour is come, and that I am about to die ? Always obedient to her and full of reverence, now in this hour, His soul is more than ever united to hers. They are truly *one heart and one soul*. Since then He has from His Cross appointed her to be the nursing Mother of His Church, He takes counsel with her also, and asks : *What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard, that I have not done to it ?* (Isaias v.).

When His Eternal Father answers, *All is consummated*, and when His Blessed Mother also answers in her heart : *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, because He hath visited and wrought the redemption of His people ; as He spoke by the mouth of His Prophets, who are from the beginning ;* then He also speaks aloud the word He had heard from His Father.

B. *It is consummated.*

Last night in the Supper-room our Blessed Lord said: *Father, I have glorified Thee on earth. I have finished the work that Thou gavest Me to do.* When saying this word, He made a distinction in His mind between His working day and His hour of suffering, His Passiontide. He had finished His work of teaching in Galilee and in Jerusalem, and His work of healing the sick and going about doing good. Now His hour is come when He is to suffer and die.

This duty also He has now fulfilled: *It is consummated.*

Now, therefore, in a more complete sense, He has finished *the work* that His Eternal Father gave Him to do. "He specifies nothing," St. Laurence Justinian observes, "but says absolutely: *It is consummated*, that we may be sure that all is completed." "Nothing," writes St. Augustine, "remained to be done before dying." St. Bonaventure, as a Religious, uses the phrases of religious life, and writes: *It is consummated*; that is: Father, "the obedience" which Thou gavest to Me, I have perfectly accomplished.

C. *It is consummated.*

"Attendite." *O all you who go by the way, stay here, on this place of Calvary, a little while, to watch the death-bed of your Saviour, your Brother, the First-born of our fallen race; for it is appointed for all men once to die, as He is dying: and the one thing necessary is that we be each able to say when dying: My God, my Father, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.*

Once to die, and only once. If in that moment my lamp is alight: if I die in God's grace, with His love in my soul, all is well for ever. I have done the *one thing necessary.* *If the tree fall to the south, or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be* (Eccles. xi.).

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, and Virgin, I choose thee for my Lady, my Patroness, and my Advocate. Stand by me in all the actions of my life, and do not abandon me in the hour of my death."

D. *Jesus therefore said: It is consummated.*

We may consider in detail what this word includes.

1. Some time ago, our Divine Master said: *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?* (St. Luke xii.). Mark how thoroughly the baptism has been accomplished. His Sacred Blood has flowed not only on His forehead, but has bathed every part of His Body, as if He had been baptised in blood by immersion.

And by virtue of this most complete baptism, all the members of His Mystical Body can now also be baptised.

"*Te ergo quæsumus*—We beseech Thee, therefore, Lord Jesus, succour Thy servants whom Thou hast redeemed, and baptised in Thy Precious Blood."

"Blessed Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may have some share of the promised *spirit of grace and of prayers*, and may love to look on Him Whom we have pierced, and to contemplate His Sacred Body baptised in His Precious Blood."

E. *It is consummated.*

2. About ten days ago, our Lord made a prophetic revelation to His Apostles: *Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written concerning the Son of Man: (1) He shall be betrayed to the Chief Priests and Scribes; (2) They shall condemn Him to death; (3) And shall deliver Him to the Gentiles (4) to be mocked, (5) and scourged, (6) and crucified.* All these things have been accomplished. *Not one jot, nor one tittle, has been passed over, all is consummated.*

Thanks be to God, Who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. The whole design approved by the Eternal Father in Heaven has been carried out. Redemption is not only sufficient, but abundant. "*Non sicut delictum, ita et donum*" (Romans v.). The Sacred Passion has not been so measured as just to undo the work of the Fall and nothing more. There is between the Fall and the plentiful Redemption a gulf as wide as there is between

the first Adam and the second, between a mere man and a Man-God—*Homo reus et Homo Deus*. *Plentiful redemption* is secured for man.

F. *It is consummated.*

3. That is, the work of *mediation* is perfected.

Not only is the Divine justice satisfied, and the Eternal Father disposed to be reconciled with man—that was easily done—but enough has been done also to draw the hearts of men back to their God. *I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself.*

I will draw all things to Myself. Because our Lord has not only taught, and also practised what He taught, but He has won for us abundant graces to enable us to carry out what He has taught and practised.

G. *It is consummated.*

4. Because every kind of sin is atoned for. *You when you were dead in your sins, (God) hath quickened together with Him (Jesus); forgiving you all offences; blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the Cross (Coloss. ii.).*

Forgiving us all offences. The long and dark calendar of all our sins, of pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth—the sins against God, of blasphemy, sacrilege, malice, despair; the sins against our neighbour, even the worst, murder and scandal and calumny; and all our crimes, too, against ourselves, by which we degrade ourselves—all of them detailed in the handwriting that is against us He hath fastened to His Cross, and in His Sacred Blood washed out the entire record. So that, even when we aggravate our guilt by relapses, still the Beloved Disciple has only this word to say to us: *My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Just. And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world (1 St. John ii.).*

H. *It is consummated.*

5. But we want something more besides forgiveness. We are warned: *Be not without fear about sin forgiven.* When forgiven, therefore, we are still weak, and may grow faint, and fall again, before we reach the top of the Mountain of God. All this our Saviour knows. Therefore besides giving Himself to us as *our ransom*, He has also given Himself to be *our companion on the way*.

Besides this He has given Himself to be *our Food* for the journey.

And then finally, on the shore of Eternity, He is waiting for us, and calling us, and bidding us make haste, that He may be Himself *our reward* for ever.

What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard and have not done it? Redemption is most abundant.

I. *It is consummated.*

6. He gave Himself to be *our companion*.

Therefore it is a part of His plan to share every sorrow and pain that His disciples shall suffer, and sanctify them all. Is there, then, on this earth any kind of pain or sorrow of soul or body which was not in His bitter chalice?

From the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, is there any spot, within or without, that has not its wound, or bruise, or swelling sore?

Is there any shape of mental suffering that He has not fully shared?

(a) Anguish from the treason and faithlessness of friends? from their weakness, their neglect, their disloyalty, or their ingratitude?

(b) All the suffering that can be caused by confusion and shame and public disgrace?

(c) All that crushing pain that can arise out of tyrannical injustice and hypocrisy?

(d) All the agony that may come from witnessing the pain of those much loved?

(e) Still worse, the most oppressive of all anguish—the sense of God's displeasure, and that foretaste of the pain

of loss, which can be tasted on this earth, when desolation visits the soul?

Then pass over also in review all the wounds and bruises and swelling sores on His Sacred Body, and call to mind how men *have added to the grief of His wounds*: and deepened them more and more. (a) What His eyes have endured; (b) how His ears have been afflicted; (c) what He has suffered in His mouth, His tongue, His palate. (d) Think, too, how the sense of touch has been tormented in every part of His Body. Think of His Sacred Head, His bruised face, His back, His arms, His wrists, His hands, His weary legs, His wounded knees, His pierced feet.

Who is there weak in any way, that I am not weak with him? Who is there heavily burdened, that I cannot say to him, *Come to Me, and I will refresh you*? "For I have shared your load."

J. *It is consummated.*

7. Because all the enemies of God and man are conquered.

(1) SATAN is crouching down beside the Cross, with his head crushed under the foot of the Blessed Mother. *Now shall the prince of this world be cast out* (St. John xii.). *Thou hast humbled the proud one, as one that is slain. With the arm of Thy strength, Thou hast scattered Thy enemies* (Psalm lxxxviii.). Origen writes: "To the eye, the Son of God is crucified. But invisibly, the devil with his princes and powers is fastened to the Cross." Spiritual writers apply the words of Jeremias to the struggle, and to the defeat of Lucifer. *The strong hath stumbled against the strong and both are fallen together* (c. xlv.). In a wrestle, both combatants may fall, but one is above, the other beneath. So on Mount Calvary our Saviour appears to be fallen and prostrate, but He is victorious. His enemy is crushed beneath His fall.

(2) THE WORLD, Satan's great ally, without whose aid he can do nothing, is also conquered.

Have confidence, I have overcome the world (St. John xvi.).

As conquerors have for their warfare artillery, cavalry, and infantry, so the WORLD carries on its anti-Christian war with the aid of three strong powers, *The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life.*

All that is in the world is *the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, the pride of life* (1 St. John ii.).

These three powers our Saviour has conquered.

THE LUST OF THE FLESH.

The spirits of darkness and their agents on earth have had leave since last night to *examine Him by outrages and tortures, and to condemn Him to a most shameful death.* But His most patient Body has conquered them.

"Body of Christ, save me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me."

THE LUST OF THE EYES.

Our eyes lust after riches and the varieties which can be bought with gold and silver.

By His poverty and His Blessed Mother's poverty our Lord has triumphed over riches.

He can say from His Cross more truly than Job: *Naked came I out from My Mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither* (c. i.). He has conquered riches; so that a multitude of His disciples will become enamoured of His holy poverty, *having nothing, yet possessing all things* (2 Cor. vi.).

THE PRIDE OF LIFE.

Pride is Lucifer's sin. For the flesh, and for riches, he has only scorn. Pride wants the first places, and show, and pomp, and pageantry, and admiration, and worship. Our Blessed Saviour has triumphed over pride: *He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross* (Philipp. ii.).

K. *It is consummated.*

St. Paul had good reason to say: *Thanks be to God Who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

For by the grace of Christ so thoroughly did he conquer the world that he could say: *To me the world is crucified, and I to the world* (Galat. vi.). That is, to me

the world is as hideous and ghastly as a crucified criminal. So am I to the world.

L. *It is consummated.*

8. "*Attendite.*" O all you who go by the way, stay a little while to consider in your hearts how completely and perfectly our Lord has done the work of redemption.

While on earth, He went about like a physician, teaching publicly what is necessary for spiritual health and life everlasting; but He well knew that this public teaching would avail nothing unless He made a provision by which He could deal with each individual soul.

Men on the first Good Friday pass in front of the Cross on Calvary; some believe, and some cry, *Vah!* Christ is to some their resurrection; to others their ruin. So must it be in all times till the consummation of the world. Every man must pass in front of the Cross and make his choice. Therefore (1) Calvary and the Cross are perpetuated. On the altar we have the *Everlasting Sacrifice*, the *juge sacrificium*. Then, moreover:

(2) There must be a never-failing provision for all the wants of redeemed men. See how abundantly this provision is made. Go and examine a Christian church, the home of our Lord on earth.

(a) HE LIVES THERE ON THE ALTAR, in order at all hours to be a Jesus, a Saviour to men.

(b) There He has ready a special and abundant blessing for the CHRISTIAN BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM when they enter on married life. So that the holiness of Christian marriage is a standing miracle in the Church, akin to the heavenly sanctity of consecrated virgins.

(c) The child of the Christian marriage is indeed born in the degraded and fallen state, but at once is carried TO THE FONT TO BE BORN AGAIN of water and the Holy Ghost. There the baptised child becomes immediately so beautiful an image of the Holy Child Jesus, that if so blessed as to die speedily, the regenerate soul is instantly, without any let or hindrance, admitted among God's

angels for ever. If the soul of a baptised child were to appear to us above the tabernacle, we should think, as St. John thought when he fell down to worship an angel, that we were in presence of the Divine Child Jesus.

(d) The house of God, the house of Christ Jesus on earth, is not only the house where we are born, but it is there that WE ARE NURSED AND FED: fed on the food of angels; fed on the Bread from Heaven, having in It all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste; fed on the Sacred Body and Precious Blood of Christ.

(e) The Church is, moreover, THE SCHOOL where we receive our best education.

The altar teaches us. We are taught from the pulpit. At the altar-rails we learn our catechism. In the confessional we are taught. The sacred font teaches us admirable mysteries. The Stations of the Cross, and the crucifix, and the altars of the saints, and holy images all help to educate us for the everlasting world to come.

(f) The Church is OUR HOSPITAL also.

When our souls are sick even to death, this is the moment when most urgently our Saviour says to us: *Come to Me, you who labour. They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill* (St. Matt. ix.). Say once from your heart, say in secret, say to one man, My delegate, the salutary word, the word privileged ineffably: "*Peccavi*" — *I have sinned*: and if your sins be as scarlet they shall be made white as snow (Isaiah i.). My minister shall at once say: "*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, I absolve thee*". And, *Amen, I say to you*, what he forgives on earth shall be forgiven in Heaven. And if you sin again, and again repent, seven times, and seventy times seven times, and more, even then shall the forgiveness be ratified in Heaven.

(g) And when the poor sinner can come no more to the holy altar, but is waiting on his death-bed for the Judgment to come, then as he cannot come to Jesus, the Good Shepherd will go from the altar to him. In the

dark hour on Mount Calvary, He has earned for the dying disciple the HOLY VIATICUM, the LAST ANOINTING with the oil of peace, the LAST LARGE FORGIVENESS, and INDULGENCE.

(h) And, finally, when death has done its work, it cannot take the Christian soul out of reach of the plentiful redemption. Bring the anointed corpse to the foot of the altar, and let the Everlasting Sacrifice, THE PROPITIATION FOR THE QUICK AND THE DEAD, be offered, and through the green sward of the graveyard there shall descend an abundant refreshment to the Holy Soul in the prison-house. *For it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, and have the Holy Mass offered for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins* (2 Mach. xii.).

M. *It is consummated.*

9. But some one objects—if Christ has so thoroughly redeemed, why have we still so much suffering, so much poverty, so much sickness, so much misery?

One sufficient answer is that it is no part of our Lord's plan to banish suffering from the earth. He has no wish to make the earth once more a paradise of pleasure. He has chosen a much more excellent way. He takes the valley of tears as He found it when He became Man. He with all His Heart embraced poverty and suffering as His portion and His Blessed Mother's portion. He allows death and sorrow and poverty and pain to remain; but He has taken the sting out of death and pain and sorrow, and changed all these things into heavenly blessings. So that He is not afraid now to say: *Blessed are the poor. Blessed they that mourn. Blessed the dead who die in the Lord.*

Suffering has become, since the first Good Friday, a double blessing; a blessing full of grace to the patient sufferer; and a blessing to all the sufferer's household; for it moves them all to compassion and charity and to powerful almsgiving.

N. *It is consummated.*

10. Even the sins of wicked men, and the cruelty of persecutors, and the malicious hostility of the anti-Christian world, are changed into the shortest and quickest and most

direct route to Heaven. *Deny Christ, the tyrant will say. Neither death nor life, the martyr answers, shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.* Sentence is forthwith pronounced, and in a short time—hours, perchance, or days—the martyr does the work of long years, and wins the eternal weight of glory. "*Consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa*" (Wisdom ii.).

O. *It is consummated.*

St. Ignatius recommends us to reflect upon ourselves. *Yesterday for me, to-day for thee.* A little while, a very little while, and my Angel shall whisper to me also: "*Consummatum est*"—*It is consummated.* . . . *Thou canst be steward no longer.* Suddenly, when I am not expecting it, when I am in the midst of my dreams, *the cry is raised: Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him.* Prayer for delay or respite cannot now avail: *The Angel lifted up his hand to heaven and he swore by Him that liveth for ever and for ever, that for me Time shall be no more* (Apoc. x.). *Now is an end come upon thee; and I shall judge thee according to thy ways* (Ezech. vii.). The things of this world are passed away like a shadow (Wisdom v.). *God shall judge both the just and the wicked, and then shall be the time of everything* (Eccles. iii.). Everything shall then have its true value.

"O Blessed Mother of God, pray for us now and in the hour of our death; that we may be able to say, humbly and gratefully, *Thanks be to God Who gave us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ; for we have done the one thing necessary.*"

P. *It is consummated.*

As the princes of darkness were so urgent that Christ should come down from the Cross, so now are they watching eagerly, daily and hourly, for the opportunity to persuade us not to persevere. We must arm ourselves as the saints did with holy thoughts and earnest prayers.

(a) "What shall it avail a man," St. Bernard writes, "if he do not persevere to the end? Of how many once strong in virtue have we read that they fell!"

(b) "Oh," he adds, "how great a fear is awakened by that thought, that a man knows not whether he shall persevere. But we have an efficacious antidote which we can apply to the terror, for we can put our trust in Him of Whom Isaiah writes: *Behold, God is my Saviour. I will deal confidently, and will not fear*" (c. xii.).

"So that I can say, It is through Thy help, O Lord, and not of my strength, that *I have fought a good fight, and finished my course, and kept the faith*" (2 Timothy iv.).

(c) *Be subject to the Lord and pray to Him* (Psalm xxxvi.). *Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus* (Philipp. i.).

(d) St. Ephraim writes: "Knowest thou not, miserable man, that the Lord crucified for thee will from thee demand an account of all thy graces?"

(e) He adds: "Glory be to Thee Who art to come again in the glory of the Father to judge every soul that renders void Thy Sacred Passion. In that hour, may Thy hand, I pray Thee, cover me, and deliver my soul from everlasting fire."

(f) St. Bernard laments: "If I look upon myself, I cannot bear the sight; so many things do I find in myself that deserve confusion. And whereas I ought to bewail and pray, Wo is me! the effect is just the contrary."

(g) But another holy Father supplies this consoling thought: "There is no sin that is not cancelled by Thy love; no crime so heinous that is not chased away by the advent of Thy love".

"In sins I have wasted my days, but do Thou, most compassionate Jesus, vouchsafe to help me: that so I may say: *Omnis consummationis vidi finem.*"

That is, contemplating the perfect consummation of Thy work, may I too be able to say, It is consummated.¹

¹ This, however, is not the usual sense given to these words of the 118th Psalm.

Q. *It is consummated.*

And as we stay here and contemplate, may the Blessed Mother remind her crucified Son of His promise. *I will pour out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of prayer, and they shall look on Me Whom they have pierced; that we may remain here, looking on Jesus, "auctorem et consummatorem fidei"—the author and finisher of faith* (Hebrews xii.), till we find ourselves moved to mourn over Him as one mourneth for an only son, and to grieve over Him as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born (Zach. xii.).

SCENE IX.

THE SEVENTH WORD.

STATION I.

And Jesus again crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost (St. Matt. xxvii.).

And Jesus having cried out with a loud voice, gave up the ghost (St. Mark xv.).

And Jesus crying with a loud voice said: Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit. And saying this, He gave up the ghost (St. Luke xxiii.).

Jesus therefore, when He had taken the vinegar, said: It is consummated. And bowing His Head, He gave up the ghost (St. John xix.).

A. *Jesus again crying with a loud voice.*

St. Matthew's account, and St. Luke's also, make it clear that this loud cry is distinct from the cry, *Eli, Eli.*

From St. Matthew and St. Mark's words we should naturally conclude that there was a last loud cry without any words; St. Luke, on the other hand, gives the impression that the loud cry means that our Blessed Lord said with a loud voice His parting word: *Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.*

From the Greek word in St. Matthew's narrative *κράζας*, and from the comments of some of the Fathers,

we may perhaps infer that this was a loud cry distinct from the words spoken.

B. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

St. Bonaventure writes that our Lord, after saying the word, *It is consummated*, grew faint and began to show the signs of coming death—*ex tunc languere cepit more morientium*. Other writers are of opinion that He preserved His full strength unimpaired to the end, and that the loud cry is not therefore a special miracle.

The opinion commonly held agrees with St. Bonaventure's, that the loss of blood and the torments of the Passion have been allowed to produce their natural effect; that our Lord is consequently reduced to a state of excessive weakness; and that the loud cry is therefore a special miracle.

The author of a work ascribed to St. Jerome, writes: "We children of this earth die speechless, or with a voice that can only whisper; but He Who came down from Heaven, with a loud cry gave up the ghost".

St. Thomas uses language that might accord with either opinion: "In order to show that His Soul was not wrested from Him by the violence of His Passion, Christ preserved His bodily nature in its full strength, so that in the last extremity He might cry out with a loud voice: a fact that must be reckoned among the miracles of His Death".

C. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

"Why this loud cry?" St. Bernard asks.

The answer has been given in a former chapter. The Cross is our Lord's pulpit. He is teaching us. St. Bonaventure writes: "Our Lord hanging on His Cross, to His last breath was not idle, but was doing and saying things useful to us".

This loud cry, accompanied, as we gather from St. Paul, with tears for us, is a last loud cry to His Father on our behalf, and a last loud cry to the hearts of men. If the tears falling from His eyes, as He stood beside the grave of Lazarus, made the bystanders say: *See how He*

loved him, what shall we think when we contemplate our Blessed Saviour forgetting His own extreme need, and crying out with so much energy for us?

D. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

The cry by the grave at Bethany was heard in the prison of Limbo, and brought the soul of Lazarus from thence. This last loud cry is heard in Heaven above, and draws down abundant grace. It fills with dismay all the powers of Hell. It carries refreshing hope to the Holy Souls in Limbo and in Purgatory.

It has not passed away. To the consummation of the world it will plead for us, and be heard by the Eternal Father for *His reverence*.

"Blessed Mother of God, who wilt lay up in thy heart this loud cry, as well as all the other words uttered by thy Son, pray for us poor sinners, that we may not be deaf to it."

E. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

St. Augustine suggests this thought: "If so much power be in His dying cry, what may we expect, and what must we fear when He comes to judge?"

"O Christ my God," he prays, "Thou art my love, my salvation, my mercy and my redemption."

F. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

Other holy writers tell us that it is a cry of pain, and a cry of joy.

A cry of pain.

(1) For bitter death is going to separate. All that men have done is not like the cruel wrench that is about to part the Most Holy Soul from the Sacred Body.

Ordinarily, when death is coming, men's senses are numbed; they are not conscious enough to feel all the agony of the separation. But our Blessed Lord has all His consciousness. Much more truly than Saul He can say: *Anguish is come upon Me, and as yet My whole life is in Me* (2 Kings i.). . . . *Let no particle of the good gift pass thee by.* No jot or tittle of the bitterness of this coming

separation shall escape the eager desires of His Heart. No drop is in the bitter chalice that He will not drain and taste most thoroughly. For He must be able to say for ever: *What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard, that I have not done to it?*

"Attendite." We must try to form some little conception of this bitter parting.

If a man has to lose one limb, he shudders; and drugs are given to him to bring on insensibility.

If many limbs were to be amputated, one by one the suffering and distress would not equal the anguish of this parting between the Soul and the Body of our Lord.

G. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

A cry of pain.

(2) God has joined these two companions together—the Soul and the Body of our Lord; and by all rights the union ought to be indissoluble for ever.

We sinners become through life familiar with our sentence: *It is appointed for all men once to die.* When death comes to us, we must all say with the good thief: *We are receiving the due reward of our deeds.* But our Blessed Saviour's life-long consciousness is that death, which is only the outcome of sins—*per peccatum mors*—has no right, no power over His Soul or His Body. He stands alone among men, "*inter mortuos liber*"—*free among the dead*, and yet *I am become as a man without help, I am counted among them that go down to the pit; like the slain sleeping in the sepulchres, whom Thou rememberest no more* (Psalm lxxxvii.).

"Tradidit semetipsum." When He dies, He betrays Himself, and all the rights of His Soul and Body. If He were not dying by His own consent, it would be a supreme injustice, nay an utterly impossible injustice, to His Soul and Body that He should die—"inter mortuos liber".

H. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

A cry of pain.

(3) O death, Ecclesiasticus exclaims, *how bitter is the*

remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions. Besides His Sacred Body, our Blessed Lord has other possessions which death will take from Him. He must leave His Blessed Mother, whom He loves with a love that we cannot measure. In her He has peace, a great peace. It is delight ineffable for Him to be with His sinless Mother. Oh, bitter indeed is the remembrance of coming death which is going to take her from Him and Him from her: "*Siccine separat amara mors?*"—*Does bitter death thus separate?*

St. Paul writes that it was the will of His Eternal Father that *through the grace of God He might taste death for all* (Hebrews ii.). He is indeed tasting death, and all the bitterness of death, for us all.

I. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

A cry of pain.

(4) Death separates us from the *body of sin*, and from friends and companions who through our own fault, and their fault, have oftentimes not proved true friends to us. Our Lord by death is separated from a sinless Body, and from His little flock, who have remained with Him in His temptations, and who are His joy and His crown.

I have given My dear Soul into the hand of her enemies (Jerem. xii.). He is delivering up His dear Soul, His innocent Body, His well-beloved Mother, His chosen disciples, to be afflicted by the hand of death.

J. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

A cry of pain.

(5) Some one may say: But His Death was *voluntary*, whereas we die out of *necessity*.

His Death, as all His sufferings, is both *voluntary* and *involuntary*.

Voluntary, because He only dies when He Himself accepts death.

Involuntary and *violent*, (1) because it is most painful to His sensitive nature; and (2) because the manner of His

Death and all the malice that brings it about is most abhorrent to Him.

So, too, in like manner, His Death is both *natural* and *miraculous*.

Natural, because He submits to the laws of human nature; and the natural causes of death are having their full effect on Him.

Miraculous, because it is only through a miraculous and stupendous effort of Divine power that the Sacred Soul and Blessed Body, hypostatically united with the Divinity, and possessing more than all the Blessed, the Beatific Vision, can suffer, or be subject to the action of death.

K. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

A cry of pain.

(6) Because death, St. Thomas teaches, though it will not separate the Divine Nature either from His Soul or from His Body, yet will separate the Divine Person from His Manhood—that is, from His composite Human Nature, from His Body and Soul joined together in unity. So that during His term of death, He will not be a man. During His days in the grave, He will not be God-Man.¹

L. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

A cry of pain.

(7) *A three-fold cord is not easily broken*, the Holy Spirit tells us (Eccles. iv.).

Commentators speak of our Blessed Lord as this *three-fold cord*, hard to be broken. His Divinity, His Soul, and His Body are so intimately united as to form one Person.

St. Bernard writes: "The Word, the Soul, the Body, form one Person. The three in unity: and the one Christ composed of three."

And this triple cord, by all rights, ought never to be broken.

¹ St. Thomas, Part 3, q. 50, a. 40, discusses the question: Was our Lord a Man during the hours between His Death and His Resurrection? and his conclusion is: *Ergo non fuit homo*. The opposite opinion he declares to be false.

St. Augustine, writing of this union of three parts in Christ, says: *Homo potius est in Filio Dei, quam Filius in Patre*. His meaning is that the Eternal Father and His Divine Son, though so closely united, yet do not form one Person, but two; whereas the Word and the Body and the Soul of Christ are so united as to form one Person.

M. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

A cry of pain.

(8) A good father feels the bitterness of death much more when he knows that he is leaving his helpless children in the midst of heartless enemies, who will take every advantage of their weakness. Our Blessed Lord knows that He is leaving His little flock as *lambs among wolves*, and that Satan will labour night and day to be revenged on Him, by persecuting His disciples.

The serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman, water, as it were a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the river. And the dragon was angry against the woman, and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (Apoc. xii.).

N. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

A cry of pain.

(9) The presence of the thief on His left hand dying impenitent is affecting strongly the Heart of our Lord. *Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I desire not the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God* (Ezech. xviii.).

Their madness is according to the likeness of a serpent: like the deaf asp that stoppeth her ears, which will not hear the voice of the charmers, nor of the wizard that charmeth wisely (Psalm lvii.).

O. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

A cry of joy.

1. It is, holy writers tell us, the cry of the conqueror, pursuing His enemies.

Applying the words of Amos (c. iii.): *Will a lion roar in*

the forest if he have no prey? Will the lion's whelp cry out of his den if he have taken nothing?—Father Barradius writes that this is our Lord's cry of triumph, because the malicious enemy of God and men now lies crushed beneath the foot of the Blessed among women.

P. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

A cry of joy.

2. Man has been till now subject to three deaths: the death of the body; the death of the soul by sin; the eternal death of soul and body. Our Lord cries out in exultation:

(1) Because He has won for man *resurrection* that will deliver him from the death of the body.

(2) Because He has won *grace* that will raise the soul from death to life; and also preserve the living soul from death.

(3) Because He has won *eternal glory* that will do away with eternal death, and establish man in everlasting life.

Q. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

A cry of joy.

3. For now shall that prophetic word have its fulfilment: *I will deliver them out of the hand of death. I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy death. O Hell, I will be thy bite* (Osee xiii.). Yet the words that immediately follow are: *Comfort is hidden from My eyes.* For so great is the present anguish of death and separation, that it shuts out to a great extent the future triumph.

R. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

A cry of joy.

4. Because His Cross is the pulpit from which He teaches. And this loud cry, He knows, will prove the truth of that word He spoke in the Temple, in Solomon's Porch, last winter. *Therefore doth the Father love Me; because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself; and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of My Father* (St. John x.).

This loud cry proves to all men that torments have not conquered Him and cannot conquer Him. He can, if

He pleases, forbid the approach of death. He can in an instant restore strength to His Body and prolong life for ever.

St. Ignatius advises us to dwell sometimes on this thought, that our Blessed Saviour is suffering everything most voluntarily, and only because He wills it. Holy persons, even when they suffer with resignation, yet are oftentimes most glad to have relief; but our Blessed Lord wills and wishes each new pain and sorrow to come to Him. It is always with His full consent that *they have added to the grief of My wounds.*

The question is asked: If then our Lord lays down His life, and if *no man taketh it away* from Him, how can He be said to be put to death by the Jews or by Pilate? One answer to this question is found in His word to the Roman Governor: *Thou shouldst not have any power over Me, unless it were given from above* (St. John xix.). Men cannot take life from Him against His will. Death cannot come to Him without His consent. But, as He freely gives His consent, men have power to crucify Him and kill Him, and do crucify and kill Him.

By uttering this loud cry when, according to all natural laws, He ought to be powerless as a man at the point of death, He proves that if He so willed, He could retain life, despite all the efforts of men and the princes of darkness.

S. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

A cry of joy.

5. Because He knows that this cry will bring faith to the Centurion. *The Centurion who stood over against Him, seeing that crying out in this manner He had given up the ghost, said: Indeed this Man was the Son of God* (St. Mark xv.).

Doubtless, too, this loud cry makes an impression on the minds of those who retire striking their breasts.

T. *Jesus crying with a loud voice.*

A cry of joy.

6. For He knows how His disciples will learn from His loud cry to cry loudly in prayer from their hearts whenever danger is nigh, and especially when the supreme and decisive hour is near.

Oftentimes we say to God: "*Clamor meus ad te veniat*"—*May my cry come to Thee.* Quickly our prayer would

mount to Heaven, and quickly would the answer come down, if there were indeed a loud cry from our hearts.

The wicked men of this world despise weakness: *That which is feeble is found to be nothing worth* (Wisdom ii.).

Our Blessed Saviour, Who suffered so much from Pilate's weak good wishes, has great reason not to be content with feeble prayers. *That which is feeble is found to be nothing worth.*

SCENE X.

THE PRÆTORIUM.

STATION I.

Jesus crying with a loud voice (St. Luke xxiii.).
Then the Jews, because it was the Parascève, that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day (for that was a great Sabbath-day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away (St. John xix.).

This loud cry doubles and trebles the dismay of the Priests and Ancients. It follows their delegates to the Prætorium. Perchance it is heard by the Governor, and adds to the trouble of his soul.

Most unwelcome to him is the sight of these men who have humbled him to-day to the dust. And the darkness that has terrified him, and this loud cry which they urge as a proof that He has all His life in Him, makes the Roman Governor abhor more than ever these detested masters who have compelled him to shed the blood of a just Man; nay, of one Who may be a God from Heaven, Whose vengeance will surely overtake him.

Most impatiently he listens to their earnest pleading; for they *besought* him. With contemptuous scorn he hears them urge their law and their Sabbath.

At the same time he cannot help sharing their terror lest prolonged suspense may lead to danger and bring on a rising of the people. Therefore they gain their wish.

As usual, *they are meditating vain things against the*

Lord. The suspense shall not be prolonged. *They have trembled for fear where there was no fear* (Psalin xiii.). *There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord* (Prov. xxi.).

SCENE XI.

CALVARY.

STATION I.

And Jesus crying with a loud voice, said: Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit (St. Luke xxiii. 46).

A. Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.

St. Bernard asks: "What is the reason why the Co-Eternal Son thus publicly commends His Soul into the hands of His Father, seeing that even if He had not spoken, His Soul would have been commended none the less?"

St. Bonaventure, as we have seen, gives the answer: "To His last breath our Blessed Lord is not idle, but is working and speaking for our good".

He proclaims Himself with His last breath the true Son of God; the Son of the Eternal Father. And we, as we look up to His sacred face and hear His dying word, must answer devoutly: "*Credo, Domine Jesu—I believe, Lord Jesus*". "Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father."

B. Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.

"*Attendite.*" Last night He said: *I came forth from the Father and am come into the world. Again I leave the world and I go to the Father* (St. John xvi.).

What He then said in secret to a few, He now proclaims with a loud voice, that shall reach the ends of the earth, and to the distant ages to come.

He refutes all the calumnies uttered against Him, and by this bold profession, uttered with no uncertain sound, brings back the faith of His disciples, scandalised by the ignominy of His Cross. The doubt for a time had pos-

session: Is He then an impostor? Are the Priests speaking the truth? But now it is cleared away for ever. *I leave the world, and I go to the Father. Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.*

Truly He is the Son of God. "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ. Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father."

C. Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.

Sursum corda! We must stay here to contemplate this passage of His Holy Soul from the hands of His enemies into the hands of His Eternal Father.

His Spirit, that has been oppressed and afflicted by Lucifer and his wicked partners, and by the malice of the Jewish Rulers, by the cruel weakness of Pilate, and by the treason of Judas, is to pass from the midst of these enemies into the safe keeping of His Eternal Father's love. *Many dogs have encompassed Me, the counsel of the malignant hath besieged Me.* But their hour is past. Father, it is now Thy hour.

D. Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.

We must contemplate too the Ever-Blessed Mother listening to these words.

By rights, they ought to break her heart. She ought to sink down at the foot of the Cross and die before she witnesses what is coming.

But she is full of grace; full now and overflowing with the new graces of Calvary. She can rise entirely above her own bereavement, to be glad with the gladness of her Son. She who could weep whenever He wept, and bleed when He bled; she can now be comforted ineffably, because His Soul is to escape from all His enemies and pass into the loving care of His Eternal Father, *where the wicked (shall) cease from tumult, and the wearied in strength (shall be) at rest* (Job. iii.).

Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb; blessed is thy crucified Son Jesus.

E. Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.

Having loved His own, He loved them to the end.

Holy writers tell us that our Blessed Saviour is commending into the hands of His Father not only Himself, but also His Mystical Body; His *little flock*; His Church; His Bride.

St. Athanasius writes: "When He says, *Father, into Thy hands I commit My Soul*, by that word He commits to the keeping of His Father all men who through Him and in Him are to be brought to the life of grace".

This teaching of St. Athanasius, that our Blessed Saviour when commending *His Spirit* into the hands of His Father is commending to Him His Church also, seems to be founded on St. Paul's words: *He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit* (1 Cor. vi.).

Another early Father writes: "From that hour in which He commended His Spirit into the Hands of His Father, we have regained our liberty, since the devil has no longer power over souls committed to the Eternal Father".

F. Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.

Recall once more St. Bonaventure's words, that "He is not idle on the Cross, but is working and speaking with a view to our good".

Also bear in mind what the Beloved Disciple afterwards wrote: *Having loved His own, He loved to the end.* He is from His death-bed teaching His future Church.

He is preaching quite a new idea of death. It is no longer to be as of old: *Their departure was taken for misery, and their going away for utter destruction* (Wisdom iii.). Death is to be henceforth the going home of God's child out of this world into the hands of his Father. The disciple of Christ is to die saying with his Master: *Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.* "My Lord, and my Saviour, into Thy wounded hands I yield up my spirit, for Thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of truth" (Psalm xxx.).

"Not out of necessity," St. Bernard writes, "but for example's sake, He commended His Spirit into the hands of His Father, that we might learn to commend our souls into the hands of our Eternal Father when we are dying."

St. Jerome also writes: "This practice the Church has learned from Christ. This prayer the faithful also make when the soul is leaving the body."

G. *Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.*

We must consider how wise it is thus to commend our souls in death to the hands of our Lord.

For (1) He has said: *Him that cometh to Me I will not cast out* (St. John vi.).

(2) He has also said: *I give them life everlasting: and they shall not perish for ever, and no man shall pluck them out of My hand* (St. John x.).

What more can we desire? He will not Himself reject us. And no one else shall snatch us out of His hand.

H. *Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.*

(3) For, Lord Jesus, *Thy hands have made me and formed me* (Psalm cxviii.). *Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh. Thou hast put me together with bones and sinews. Thou hast granted me life and mercy. And Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit* (Job x.).

I. *Into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.*

(4) Because *Thou openest Thy hand and fillest every creature with benediction* (Psalm cxliv.). *For, Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made. For Thou didst not appoint, or make anything hating it. But Thou sparest all: because they are Thine, O Lord, Who lovest souls* (Wisdom xi.).

J. *Into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.*

(5) Because Thou hast said, Lord Jesus, *Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee in My hands: thy walls are always before My eyes* (Isaiah xlix.).

K. *Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.*

We have, however, to remember that this word will not come to our hearts in death unless by practice during life we have it ready. Of our Saviour, it is written: *Having loved, He loved to the end.* So shall it be with us. If through life we habitually look upon God as our Father, we shall be able to say at death: *Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.* St. Bernard wishes us "to be during life always praying that He will vouchsafe to us the grace to breathe forth our souls with these words with which He gave up the ghost, and to commend them efficaciously into His hands".

Holy Church teaches her priests to say daily: *Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of truth* (Psalm xxx.).

O Lord God, in Thee have I put my trust. Save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me. Lest at any time he seize upon my soul as a lion: while there is no one to redeem or to save (Psalm vii.).

L. *Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.*

We may call to mind how our Blessed Saviour wishes us to be like faithful servants watching for the coming of their master: *that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately* (St. Luke xii.).

This is only saying in other words, that when He comes to call us away out of this world, *He loves a cheerful giver.* He is glad if we answer cheerfully, Lord, *into Thy hands I yield up my spirit.* His covenant with us is: *Knock and it shall be opened to you.* Greatly does it content Him if we are of the same mind towards Him: ready to open when He knocketh. *The stars were called, and they said: Here we are, and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to Him that made them* (Baruch iii.). Should God's child be less cheerful when called to the Everlasting Home of his Father?

M. *Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.*

Consider, too, how wonderfully the death-bed has been

made new since the Death of Christ. So that our Saviour's holy servants have been able in death to believe that our Lord is saying to them: *Behold, My beloved speaketh to Me. Arise, make haste, My love, My dove, My beautiful one, and come. For winter is now past: the rain is over and gone* (Cant. ii.). The sufferings of this time will then appear momentary and light, if only we can die saying with a strong hope and love, My Lord and my God, *into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit* (Acts vii.).

STATION II.

And saying this, He gave up the ghost (St. Luke xxiii.).
And Jesus, again crying with a loud voice, gave up the ghost (St. Matt. xxvii.).
And bowing His Head, He gave up the ghost (St. John xix.).

A. Bowing His Head, He gave up the ghost.

He died, therefore, (1) with a loud cry: (2) after saying the words, *Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit*: and (3) St. John adds a circumstance omitted by the other Evangelists, that He bowed His Head before He gave up the ghost.

"Attendite." Let us contemplate our Blessed Saviour bowing His Head before He yields up His Holy Soul.

Spiritual writers observe that the ordinary rule is that the head drops after death. But in our Lord's case the Sacred Head does not drop from necessity. He is the Master of life and death, and He arranges every detail.

"Not out of necessity, Lord Jesus," St. Augustine writes, "but when Thou willest and where Thou willest, and in the way Thou willest, Thou dost yield up Thy Soul."

B. Bowing His Head.

First, with infinite reverence and loving obedience He bows His Head to His Eternal Father.

Therefore doth the Father love Me: because I lay down My life that I may take it up again. No man taketh it away from

Me, but I lay it down of Myself. And I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of My Father (St. John x.).

With full consciousness, therefore, He bows His Sacred Head, and makes a most perfect act of obedience; giving up His Soul because His Father has so willed. *This commandment have I received of My Father.*

He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death: even to the death of the Cross (Philipp. ii.).

So must we bow our heads, and in obedience accept of death. We desire to die well. We ask to be taught how to die. Is there any better or safer method of dying than to make death an act of obedience, as perfect as we can? When Thou willest, O my God, where Thou willest; and in the way that Thou willest, may Thy poor servant breathe out his soul.

C. Bowing His Head.

2. St. Augustine writes: *Salvator noster caput inclinavit in morte, ut oscula det suis dilectis*—"Our Saviour bowed His Head in death to give His parting kiss to His beloved ones".

Who so beloved, who so revered as His Blessed Mother? He has revered her, and obeyed her, and loved her through life. He does not change in death. The only change can be that, as on Calvary she has grown immeasurably in grace, so has His love and reverence for her grown beyond measure. To her He bows down with all His filial devotion, and wishes once more to hear her Mother's heart say, "*Fiat*". And with a fervour and a burning love high above the measure of grace that was in her soul in the hour of the Incarnation, she bows down her whole being in most perfect submission to the Divine will, and answers, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to Thy word.*

D. Bowing His Head.

3. *Nobis quoque peccatoribus.* To us also, sinners, He bows down His Head to listen to our cry for mercy.

Incline, O my God, Daniel cries out, incline Thine ear and hear. And Jesus wishes to die with His Head bowed down to listen to us poor sinners, and His arms stretched out to us. He wishes so to die that we may understand that there shall be no change in Him through the time to come. *If the tree fall, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be.* For ever, our Lord will remain as He dies—with His ear bowed down to hear us; His arms stretched out to welcome us; His sacred lips bowed down to kiss His repentant prodigal. *Jesus yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever.*

St. Augustine adds: "We return His kiss as often as through love for Him we are contrite and moved to compunction".

E. Bowing His Head.

4. Jesus is the *Mediator*: the go-between. He is lifted up and hangs between heaven and earth; to bring together the highest and the lowest. His Head is bowed down to us, His Heart is lifted up to plead with His Eternal Father for us. He is loving His own to the end.

Who with a strong cry and tears offering up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death, was heard for His reverence. And being consummated, He became to all that obey Him the cause of salvation (Hebrews v.).

He is praying with a strong cry of His Heart and with tears to Him *Who is able to save Him from death*; but He is not asking to be saved from death. He is speaking to His Eternal Father words akin to those He addressed to the women who wept over Him: "Pity not Me, My Father, pity Thy own children, and for Thy own sake forgive them".

F. Bowing His Head.

5. "He is thanking His Father," St. Bonaventure writes, "for calling Him home." Thanks to the death of our Lord, we poor sinners can also thank our God for calling us away, in His great mercy, at the moment when He wishes.

G. Bowing His Head.

6. St. Athanasius writes: "Death dreads Christ, and dares not approach to Him, but Christ bowed down His Head and bade death come".

"Then at length," another early Father writes, "He gave permission to death to approach to Him."

Neither can death approach to us till He gives leave. Satan could not afflict holy Job till leave was given to him. He cannot tempt us or trouble us without the consent of our Blessed Lord.

STATION III.

And bowing His Head, He gave up the ghost (St. John xix. 30).

A. He gave up the ghost.

"*Emisit spiritum*"—*He sent forth His Soul.* When men die we say: "They gave up the ghost". They do so of necessity. But our Blessed Lord, out of no necessity, but by His own choice, sends forth His Spirit. He speaks the word, and the separation takes place. He commands, and death is completed. He wills, and natural causes produce their effect.

By His own will, and by commanding death to come, He immolates Himself. He is slain by men; but as High Priest He immolates Himself.

B. He gave up the ghost.

When men die, we near commonly a long-drawn breath, and then another, and all seems finished. But after a pause, once again a long breath is drawn with a gasp, and this is the last: and the friends around stand in silence watching, and in suspense, till some one whispers the word: He is dead.

Contemplate Holy Mary watching and listening. She is the first to understand, and says in her secret soul: He is dead. *Non fallunt viscera matrem.* Her Mother's heart can here make no mistake.

Some commentators think that the immediate natural cause of death was the breaking of His Sacred Heart.

C. He gave up the ghost.

The blessed angels follow. They say a word which in time past, they thought, could not have been said without a blasphemy. He is dead. Our God is dead. Since the hour of the Incarnation, *No word shall be impossible with God.*

D. *He gave up the ghost.*

Hear St. Magdalen also say, as her tears burst forth from her eyes: He is dead. Wo is me! *The breath of our mouth, Christ the Lord, is taken in our sins.*

E. *He gave up the ghost.*

He loved to the end. All else He has given to His Father, and to men.

And now loving, *with His whole Heart, with His whole Soul, with His whole strength,* He has given His life to His Eternal Father and to men. He has breathed out His own Soul.

F. *He gave up the ghost.*

The Holy Sacrifice is completed. The High Priest has immolated. The Victim is slain.

Christ hath loved us and delivered Himself for us. An oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness (Ephes. v.).

G. *He gave up the ghost.*

He is dead. St. Ephraim writes: "Let us shudder together as we say to each other: Christ our Saviour has been delivered up to death for us sinners. Weigh well, my brother, what this word means that you have heard."

H. *He gave up the ghost.*

He is dead. But, *O death, where is thy victory? Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is henceforth thy sting?* (1 Cor. xv.).

Rejoice not thou, My enemy, over Me because I am fallen. I shall arise when I sit in darkness (Micheas vii.).

I. *He gave up the ghost.*

Those who are ignorant concerning them that sleep, hasten away from the death-bed. They say: He is gone to God: gone to a better world; and they hurry off from the house of mourning and forget.

We must not hurry away or forget. *Remember Me,* His lips are saying to us still.

Forget not the kindness of thy Surety, our Lady says to us. *For He hath given His life for thee.*

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that the promised grace may be given to us; and that we may mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son, and grieve over Him as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born."

J. *He gave up the ghost.*

"O vos omnes"—O all you who go by the way, turn aside for a little while to see; to look on Him we have pierced. Heaven forbid that it be said of us: *The just perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart* (Isaias lvii.).

END OF PART II.

PART III

AFTER

CHAPTER IV.

THE FOURTH WATCH OF THE DAY.

3 to 6 P.M.

SCENE I.

CALVARY. THE NINTH HOUR. HOLY MARY

STATION I.

There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother
(St. John xix. 25).

A. *By the Cross of Jesus.*

Christ the Lord is dead. Let us look at Him Whom we pierced. His Sacred Passion is ended. His Eternal Father will now *wipe all tears from (His) eyes; and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away* (Apoc. xxi.). The bitter separation shall never come again. Nor ever again shall the loud cry of anguish burst from His lips: *His place is in peace, and His abode in Sion* (Psalm lxxv.).

B. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

Let us fix our eyes on the Blessed Mother; for her passion is not ended. As her Divine Son suffers no more, no new *compassion* will come to agonise her. But now her own peculiar passion begins. For He is dead and she survives.

"Surely," John and Magdalen are thinking, as they gaze on her, "surely the *silver cord* of life will *be broken*, the *golden fillet* of beauty and grace will shrink back upon her brow. The *pitcher* that holds her heart's blood will *be crushed at the fountain*, and the *wheel* of her nativity will *be broken on the*



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cistern. And the dust shall return into its earth from whence it came, and the spirit return to God Who gave it. She shall go into the house of (her) eternity, and the mourners shall go round about the street (Eccles. xii.). The little flock will be left doubly desolate; for she must die. She cannot outlive this hour."

C. There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.

To-night, when all is over, and the still moonlight rests over Jerusalem and Calvary as if there had been nothing but peace, the scared disciples will be whispering together in the Cenacle; and one will say to John or to Nicodemus or to Joseph, or to Magdalen or to Mary of Cleophas: "What happened to the Blessed Mother? Did she seem near to death? Did she swoon? Did she become unconscious?" And the privileged eye-witness will answer: "No, never for a moment was she insensible. When He was drawing His last breath, she too was gasping for breath, and her frame was quivering, and we feared much that she would sink down and not rise again. But in the moment of His Death, it was as if a new life came to her. She stood erect; her tears flowed fast; but there was a heavenly beauty on her face, such as we never saw before. '*Full of grace! full of grace!*' my heart was saying, as I looked on her."

D. There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.

We are allowed in contemplation to try, while gazing on her features and her outward demeanour, to discover some little of what is passing in her soul.

This, then, we know, that our Lord died loving; He was loving His own to the end, till His Heart broke and He gave up the ghost. (For, as we have seen, it is the opinion of learned commentators that the breaking of His Heart was the immediate cause of death.) But death did not put an end to His love. If He ended His life on earth, loving, His Blessed Soul began its new existence, loving. As His holy angels gather around to greet Him, at once He gives them a loving command to watch over His

suffering Mother: "*Angelis suis mandavit de te*"—He gave His angels a charge concerning thee, Blessed among women, to protect thee from all danger of invasion, or of the noon-day devil (Psalm xc.). *There shall no evil come to thee, Holy Mary, full of grace!*

E. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

Holy contemplatives tell us that in this hour, Lucifer and his wicked legions are cast down once more into the lowest Hell, with a fall far more appalling than the first; and that it is the voice of the woman, the Blessed among women, that hurls them down. They are far away now, and cannot molest her.

F. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

What, then, are the thoughts that arise in her heart?

David, when he heard of the death of his unworthy son, said as he went weeping to his chamber: *My son, Absalom; Absalom, my son; who would grant me that I might die for thee? And he covered his head and cried with a loud voice: O my son, Absalom! O Absalom, my son! O my son!* (2 Kings xviii.).

Our Blessed Lady passes beyond all this. At every step of the Sacred Passion her heart has been yearning that she might spare her Son by suffering instead of Him. It would be relief unspeakable if she might bear the wrench of bitter death in place of Him, or even be allowed to die along with Him. But she loves Him too well to urge this prayer. Her one desire now is: *Not as I will, my God, but as Thou.*

The love of her heart is stronger than death, and offers most willingly to do a harder thing than to die, that is, to live on after Him.

G. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

Oh, with what contentment do the blessed angels execute the charge given them concerning her, to comfort her, and watch over her! Once more her own Archangel is whispering into her soul the words that were the beginning of her joy: *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.* More than ever is He with her now, for His word

of promise is ever true: *I am with the one who is in tribulation.*

H. *There stood by the Cross, Mary His Mother.*

And, doubtless, she their Queen makes answer to the blessed angels and gives them a charge in turn concerning her Divine Son: *Angels of the Lord, bless the Lord—sing to the Lord a new song.* And perchance in this hour, with quite a new fervour, and a new meaning, and a new grace, she breaks forth into her own even-song which Holy Church re-echoes still: "*My soul magnifieth the Lord, my spirit exulteth in God, my Jesus. For He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His Name.*"

"Holy, thrice holy is His Name. For I have believed, and those things (have been) accomplished which He spoke to me. He promised me, when He was a Child by my side, that I should be with Him to the end. *The Lord is faithful in all His words and holy in all His works. He hath done great things for me. All generations shall call me blessed. . . . 'Omnis consummationis vidi finem'.* I have witnessed to the end, to the very end, the consummation of all holiness, the consummation of perfect charity, the consummation of the everlasting Sacrifice, the consummation of redemption."

I. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother.*

And as her Divine Son last night allowed His Human Heart to feel most strongly human desires, and to cry out in anguish: *Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me,* it may be that from time to time, as she looks on Him Whom they have pierced, her Mother's yearnings grow strong, and she asks once more with most reverential love: *My Son, why hast Thou done this to me? and she is full of desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ her Son.*

But the blessed angels remind her that she has now other children so precious that her Son gave His Blood for them, and that she must live for them; and they remind her too how her Divine Son has provided for her bereavement by instituting the Most Holy Eucharist, that He may

be with her all her days, and abide with her children to the end of time.

J. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother.*

Her Divine Son last night rose up in the height of His own Agony, to go to watch over His disciples. Will she not do the like? She too can forget her bereavement, to think of her new first-born: to look up into the face of St. Dismas, and speak a word of comfort to him; to pray that the Death of her Son may bring more and more grace to him before he breathes out his soul.

“Mother of God, and Mother of sinners, pray for us also, now and at the hour of our death.”

K. *There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.*

The Venerable Abbess d'Agreda saw in her contemplations that our Blessed Lady, while standing with her eyes fixed upon the Body of her Divine Son, is solicitous about His speedy burial; anxious to have the Sacred Body in her keeping, and out of the reach of His enemies. The tomb of her ancestors is on the other side of the city, beyond the Prætorium, at Gethsemani, beside the Grotto of the Agony. How shall she safely transfer her treasure thither? Who will take out the terrible nails for her? Who will bring down the Body from the Cross and lay it in her arms? In her anxiety, she turns, as usual, to the Blessed Angels, to ask them to befriend her. They, we are told, make known to her that, by the law, the dead Body belongs to the Roman Governor, that without his permission no one can lay it in the tomb.

This is sad news for her. For, if this be so, this Most Sacred Body, intimately united with the Divine Nature, may still be profaned. Most humbly she begs of the Eternal Father to hasten to her aid, and her humble prayer penetrates the clouds; and the response in her heart is: Mother of God, *ask, for I must not turn away thy face* (3 Kings ii.). And she understands that when Jesus said the word, *It is consummated*, one part of His meaning was that the power of His enemies to harm Him was at an end.

Her Heart is consoled, and with all the energy of her love, she repeats the prayer of her Son: O Eternal Father, *glorify Thy Son. May all the works of the Lord bless the Lord.*

SCENE II.

THE NINTH HOUR. THE MOURNING OF CREATION.

STATION I.

And behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in two, from the top even to the bottom, and the earth quaked and the rocks were rent (St. Matt. xxvii. 51).

A. Our Lady's prayer is heard. The Eternal Father begins to glorify His well-beloved Son. And the *works of the Lord* begin to *bless the Lord*. As the sun in the heavens gave its signs of mourning, so now the earth makes its lament for the Death of Jesus and the sins of men.

It is the ninth hour when He bows His Head and gives up the ghost. It is the hour of the evening sacrifice. *This is what thou shalt sacrifice upon the altar: two lambs of a year old, every day continually. One lamb in the morning, and another in the evening* (Exodus xxix.).

It is the hour for the lamb to be sacrificed in the Temple on Mount Moriah. And lo! from the Temple gates, across the deserted streets, comes to Golgotha the sound of the trumpets calling the people to the evening sacrifice. It is all too late. The evening sacrifice is consummated. The Lamb of God has been offered and immolated. All ancient types and shadows are things passed away and obsolete.

Vetustatem novitas,
Umbram fugat veritas,
Noctem lux eliminat.

New things the old and obsolete replace,
Before the truth the shadows hide their face,
The glorious light drives night away.

The people have assisted at the reality; they have no heart to go and witness the unmeaning types. *The ways of Sion mourn, because there are none that come to the*

solemn feast. *The Lord hath cast off His altar, and cursed His sanctuary* (Lament. ii.).

B. *The earth quaked.*

The trumpets sound the call to the Temple; and lo! the only response is the rumbling of the earthquake. And the veil of the Temple, so sacred in the past, is rent in two from the top even to the bottom.

C. *The veil of the Temple was rent in two.*

Through the voice of His creation our Lord's silent lips are from the Cross repeating the sentence which in sorrow of Heart He spoke by the last of His Prophets: *To you, O Priests, that despise My Name, I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts; and I will not receive a gift from your hand* (Malach. i.).

The answer to this trumpet-call has long ago been given in prophecy: *After sixty-two weeks Christ shall be slain: and the people that deny Him shall not be His. And in the half of the week, the victim and the sacrifice shall fail, and there shall be in the Temple the abomination of desolation; and the desolation shall continue even to the consummation and to the end* (Daniel ix.).

D. *The veil of the Temple was rent in two.*

But are there no glad tidings, in this hour, in the voice of creation? When Jesus was born, the Angel was sent to the shepherds to say to them: *I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people.* Even so it is now. The earthquake brings heavy news to the rejected Priests of Jerusalem, but *good tidings of great joy to all the people.* For the veil of the Temple now rent in twain as a thing worn out and worthless, is to make known that the ancient barrier between God and man is gone; that henceforth not one High Priest alone, but every Christian man and woman and child will be allowed to say: *I will go in to the altar of God: to God Who giveth joy to my youth.*

E. *The veil of the Temple was rent in two.*

And the rent brings good tidings of great joy to all the people. For the hour is now come which our Blessed Lord

foretold when He sat weary by the well. *Woman, believe Me that the hour cometh when you shall neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, adore the Father.* There is no longer to be a monopoly for Jerusalem. For in every place there is Sacrifice, and there is offered to My Name a clean oblation (Malach. i.).

F. *The veil of the Temple is rent in two.*

Another holy Father suggests that the veil in front of the hidden Sanctum Sanctorum is rent, as a pledge that henceforth our good God will make known to us all the mysteries of His law. *The uncertain and hidden things of Thy wisdom Thou hast made manifest to me* (Psalm l.). *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children* (Isaias liv.).

Oh, how enviable is our condition under the law of love compared with the state of the Jews under the old covenant!

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all that He hath done for thee.

How lovely are Thy tabernacles, now, O Lord of hosts, when we compare them with the coldness and severity of the Temple on Mount Moriah.

In the old days, *all Mount Sinai was in a smoke, because the Lord was come down upon it in fire; and the smoke arose from it as out of a furnace, and all the mount was terrible. And behold thunders began to be heard, and lightning to flash, and a very thick cloud to cover the mountain.* And the edict was promulgated: *Take heed ye go not up into the mount, and that ye touch not the borders thereof; every one that toucheth the mount, dying, he shall die* (Exodus xix.).

In our days of privilege, not only is there no forbiddance to come to the altar where our Lord has His abode, but from His tabernacle He is ever inviting us: *Come to Me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you* (St. Matt. xi.).

Nay, what is wonderful beyond all thought, He lays a commandment upon us: *Except you eat the Flesh of the Son*

of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you (St. John vi.).

"We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee. Because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world."

G. *The veil of the Temple was rent in two.*

St. Cyril, and other holy Fathers, suggest this thought, that as the Jewish Priests rent their garments when they heard a blasphemy, so the sanctuary of God rends its garment in token of horror at the great scandal committed on Calvary.

There were, we are told, two veils in the Temple; one, the outward veil near to the entrance, the other, more in the interior, shutting off the sanctuary, or Holy of Holies, into which the High Priest alone entered, and only once in the year. Commentators discuss the question which of the two veils was rent. Some of great weight think that it was the outer veil. The more common opinion seems to be that it was the veil of the Holy of Holies.

The earth quaked.

St. Chrysostom, with other Fathers, takes for granted that this earthquake was felt throughout the world. "Then was all the earth shaken, that everywhere might be recognised the power of the Crucified, and that He Who suffered was God, and not a mere man." Early writers mention local earthquakes that bear out the opinion of St. Chrysostom. His Death proved Him to be a true Man, the miracles after His Death prove Him to be true God. His prayer is heard. *Father, the hour is come. Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee* (St. John xvii.).

H. *The earth quaked.*

We may contemplate with what gentleness our Lord uses His power. The ungrateful city that rejected Him is not laid in ruins. The earth does not open now to swallow up the impious men who have crucified Him. *But executing Thy judgments by degrees Thou gavest them place of repentance.* If then Thou didst with so great deliberation punish (Thy) enemies, that deserved to die, *with what circumspection (wilt) Thou judge Thy own children?* (Wisdom xii.). *For I know that Thou art a gracious and merciful God, patient and of much compassion, and easy to forgive evil* (Jonas iv.).

I. *The rocks were rent.*

St. Thomas writes: "The rocks were rent, to show us that through His Sacred Passion the stony hearts of men would be softened".

St. Bonaventure: "Wo to me, the most unhappy of men, who am not able to have even a little relish for the Passion of Christ. I will humble my life down to the earth until I can go into the sanctuary of God."

St. Ephraim: "Every creature is smitten with terror, because our Saviour has suffered, but we sinners for whom He was delivered up, make light of it. Oh, may thy heart tremble, may thy soul be filled with horror."

St. Bernard: "Who is this, that heaven and earth show their compassion for Him? Acknowledge Him, O my soul; this is the Lord Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God."

"We adore Thee, O Christ, in acknowledgment of the multitude of Thy goodness which Thou hast shown to us wicked and abandoned."

"Holy Mother of God, pray for us sinners; remind thy Divine Son of His promise:

"I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh (Ezech. xxxvi.). And now, O Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, Lord Jesus, dead upon the Cross, the soul in anguish, and the troubled spirit crieth to Thee: Hear, O Lord, and have mercy, for Thou art a merciful God, and have pity on us, for we have sinned before Thee (Baruch iii.).

"Remember Thy gracious promise: *I will pour out the spirit of grace and of prayers, and they shall look on Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son, and they shall grieve over Him as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born*" (Zach. xii.).

St. Bonaventure writes: "O heart truly bad, how long wilt thou resist the infinite generosity of Divine love? What must my hardness be that is not softened by all the Blood of the most innocent Lamb!"

Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friend (St. John xv.). Why did Christ, when as yet we were weak according to the time, die for the ungodly? For scarce for a just man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man some one would dare to die. But God commendeth His charity towards us, because when we were as yet sinners according to the time, Christ died for us (Romans v.).

The rocks were rent.

A fissure in the rock on the place of Calvary is still pointed out. Tradition tells us that it opened between the Cross of Christ and the cross of the impenitent thief. Eusebius, the historian, states that Lucian, a holy Priest of Antioch, when brought before the judge, mentioned this cleft in the rock as an abiding proof of the truth of the Christian religion. The mediæval traveller, Adrichomius, who is considered by the commentators a trustworthy witness, writes that this fissure is wide enough to admit the body of a man, and that they had not been able to fathom its depth.

STATION II.

And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints that had slept, arose, and coming out of the tombs after His Resurrection, came into the Holy City, and appeared to many (St. Matt. xxvii.).

The rocky ground around Jerusalem abounded with graves and tombs; some with the slabs laid over them horizontally, others hewn in the rock with upright doors. Some commentators tell us that the graves were opened immediately after the Crucifixion, but that the dead did not arise till after the Resurrection. According to this view, the graves stood open from the Friday to the Easter Sunday. We are told that among the heathens this miracle was well known, and excited great attention. The Jews may, through fear of legal uncleanness, have been afraid to enter these open tombs to look at the dead.

The question is discussed among students of the Sacred Scriptures, whether they whose bodies were raised, died again or were admitted with their bodies into Heaven.

Each of the two opinions is supported by Fathers of great weight. St. Thomas, at first, inclined to the second opinion, but later, considered the first more probable—that is, that they died again. St. Jerome also takes it for granted that they rose like Lazarus, to die again, after they had borne witness to our Lord's Resurrection.

One strong argument adduced for this opinion is, that it does not seem probable that any of the saints would have their bodies glorified in Heaven before the Assumption of the Mother of God. St. Bridget writes that it was revealed to her by our Lady, that no human bodies were in Heaven except her Son's and her own.

A further question discussed is, Who were the saints whose bodies were restored to life?

Different conjectures are suggested. Some writers think that, as the object was to strengthen the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the belief of the Resurrection, those saints rose and appeared who were still remembered in the Holy City, such as St. John the Baptist, St. Joseph, Zachary, and St. Elizabeth. Others suppose that Abraham, and David, and some of the Patriarchs and Prophets were selected.

SCENE III.

THE NINTH HOUR. "I WILL DRAW ALL THINGS TO MYSELF."

STATION I.

And the Centurion who stood over against Him, seeing that crying out in this manner He had given up the ghost, said: Indeed this Man was the Son of God (St. Mark xv.).

Now the Centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus, having seen the earthquake, and the things that were done, were sore afraid, saying: Indeed this was the Son of God (St. Matt. xxvii.).

Now the Centurion, seeing what was done, glorified God, saying: Indeed this was a just Man. And all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned striking their breasts (St. Luke xxiii.).

A. And the Centurion, and those that were with him, seeing these things that were done, were sore afraid, saying: Indeed this was the Son of God.

First then, the Centurion, hearing the loud cry, and seeing that crying out in this manner He had given up the ghost, said: *Indeed this Man was the Son of God.*

Then secondly, when, following on the loud cry, the earthquake comes, and the rending of the rocks, the Centurion is still more moved, and the soldiers that are

keeping watch with him, influenced doubtless by the demeanour of their leader, are also much moved. They too are sore afraid. *For the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. It shall go well with him that feareth the Lord, and in the days of his end he shall be blessed. The fear of the Lord driveth out sin* (Ecclus. i.).

B. *They were sore afraid, saying: Indeed this Man was the Son of God.*

Holy fear draws this good confession from them.

Some pious persons have a dislike to holy fear. They wish their teachers to discourse to them of love, always love. But is love genuine if it has no value for holy fear? Calvin pretended that to act from fear was sinful. St. Ignatius writes more correctly:

"Although it is above all desirable that we serve God our Lord very much through pure love, yet ought we highly to approve of a fear of His Divine Majesty. For not only is filial fear something righteous and most holy, but so too is servile fear, when a man reaches to nothing better and more useful, because it helps him much to rise out of mortal sin, and when once a soul has thus risen, it easily arrives at filial fear, which is in every way acceptable and pleasing to God, because it is inseparably united with Divine love."

C. *The Centurion, and those with him.*

1. Again and again we are reminded of the power for good and for evil that a leader possesses. And each of us is in a certain degree a leader. For the sake of those around us we ought to sanctify ourselves.

2. If we are so prone to follow a leader, why, Lord Jesus crucified, are we so slow to follow Thee? What other leader is so true to us, so devoted to us, so wise, so loving, so able to lead and to protect us, and keep us safe against all enemies?

The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing (Psalm xxii.).

I will feed My sheep. I will seek that which was lost, and that which was driven away I will bring again: and I will

bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was weak, and that which is fat and strong I will preserve (Ezech. xxxiv.).

D. *The Centurion and those with him, saying, This Man was truly the Son of God.*

Contemplate our Blessed Lady; and try to realise how unspeakably she is consoled when she hears her Son well spoken of. His prophetic promise is coming true: *If I be lifted up I will draw all things to Myself*. She heard her Son teaching His disciples to say: *Our Father, hallowed be Thy Name*. Her heart is now saying: "O Jesus, my Son, my Lord, and my God, may Thy Name be hallowed". And her prayer is prevailing.

A few drops of rain fall at first, afterwards the great shower floods the earth. So is it here. Now, a few confess Christ, but in the ages to come Christian men and women and children, *whom no man can number*, will gather round the Cross, and say, with the Centurion and his little group of followers, as they look upon Him Whom we pierced, *Indeed this was a just Man. Indeed this Man was the Son of God.*

E. *Indeed this was a just Man.*

That our Lord was just to His Eternal Father is certain. That He was just, and more than just, unspeakably loving to us, is equally certain. But, was He just to Himself? The Apostle writes: "*Tradidit se met ipsum*"—He betrayed Himself. He gave up His own rights, and sacrificed Himself entirely in order to rescue us. Was this justice to Himself? Yes; because He knew that if He humbled Himself on Calvary for three hours, His Father would exalt Him throughout Eternity. *He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a Name that is above all names* (Philipp. ii.).

F. *Indeed this Man was the Son of God.*

Did the Centurion and his soldiers believe in Jesus as God? Some commentators think not, but that they had

heard the Priests and Ancients scoffing at Him because He called Himself the Son of God; and now seeing the miracles wrought, they consider it certain that He is a just Man, and a holy Man, and a Prophet, and in this sense, a Son of God. St. Jerome, however, and other commentators of high authority, think that the Centurion believed in Christ as God.

We at least must make a profession most full and hearty as we look upon the crucified Body. *Indeed this was a just Man, an innocent Man; no malefactor; Indeed this Man was the Son of God.* And His only crime was that by His own choice *the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all* (Isaias liii.).

I live in the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and delivered Himself up for me (Galat. ii.).

St. Augustine writes: "All my hope is in the Death of my Lord, His death is my life and my salvation. The more power He has to save, the more secure am I."

"I cannot be terrified at the multitude of my sins, if the Death of the Lord comes to my mind, and I love Him."

St. Bernard writes: "Already, O my soul, you have seen His weakness and pitied Him. Now contemplate His majesty and you shall be filled with admiration."

G. *Indeed this Man was the Son of God.*

A little while ago, our Saviour said in Galilee: *I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones. Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight* (St. Luke x.). From the Priests and the learned Scribes, these things are hidden. To the Roman Centurion, who has been ignorant as a babe, the truth is revealed: "The last are become the first". *Many that are first shall be last, and the last first* (St. Mark x.).

St. Jerome writes: "The Gentile confesses. Judea is blinded and denies."

Venerable Bede adds: "The Gentile confesses aloud. The Jews only strike their breasts in silence."

"Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may be enlightened with the humble little ones and not left in blindness with the proud and the wise."

H. *The Centurion glorified God, saying, Indeed this was a just Man.*

If his confession began in fear, grace soon grew, and he gave glory to Jesus Christ in gladness.

The common opinion is that the Centurion's name was Longinus, and that he afterwards died a martyr. One annalist states that he was a Spaniard, named Oppius, who was the first to announce the Death of Christ to the Spaniards, and was afterwards Bishop of Milan. This account is not accepted by some of the best commentators.

I. *Truly this is the Son of God.*

"See," St. Bernard writes, "how sure-sighted faith is. It recognises God at His Mother's breast. It recognises Him hanging on the tree. It recognises Him in death. The thief knows Him on the Cross; the Magi at the Crib; and the Centurion discovers life in death. The robber proclaims Him a King. The Centurion, true Son of God and true Man."

Our virtue sometimes depends on circumstances. We can be good, we say, in the country, and not in the town. Some are Catholics on the Continent, and Anglicans here. True faith and true charity do not change with times and places.

SCENE IV.

THE NINTH HOUR. COMING TO BREAK THE LEGS.

STATION I.

Then the Jews (because it was the Parasceve), that the bodies might not remain on the Cross on the Sabbath-day (for that was a great Sabbath-day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came: and they broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with Him (St. John xix. 31, 32).

A. *The Jews besought Pilate that their legs might be broken.*

The Law prescribes that *when a man hath committed a crime, for which he is to be punished with death, and being condemned to die is hanged on a gibbet, his body shall not remain upon the tree, but shall be buried the same day, for he is accursed of God that hangeth on a tree; and thou shalt not defile thy land (Deut. xxi.).*

Does this case come under the Law? Has Jesus committed a crime? Is it for a crime committed that He has been punished with death? Is His death a punishment? He is hanging on the tree, but is He accursed of God? Does His crucified Body defile the land?

Ave verum corpus natum	Hail, Sacred Body, truly born
Ex Maria Virgine,	Of Mary's virginity;
Vere passum, immolatum	Truly bruised and truly torn,
In cruce pro homine.	And truly crucified for me.

Not then, because guilty of crime, not because accursed; not because His Body will defile the land, but because by His own wish he is *reputed with the wicked*, let His Body be taken down and His burial hastened.

B. *For that was a great Sabbath-day.*

Oh, yes, it will be a great Sabbath-day; the greatest of Sabbath-days: for after completing His work on the sixth day, the Lord will rest.

But not from true reverence to the Sabbath do the

Ancients and the Priests press to have the Sacred Body taken down. For in what way could the people better spend their day of rest than in looking devoutly on Him Whom they have pierced?

Their one wish is to break His legs, that they may see Him dead. They cannot breathe in peace till He is dead. And the argument that prevails with Pilate is not the near approach of the Sabbath, but that he will be answerable to Tiberius if any rising of the people takes place. He has given his consent. The Rulers lose no time. *Do it quickly*, is still their ceaseless inculcation.

C. *The soldiers therefore coming.*

These are either some of the Temple Guard, or some Roman soldiers put at the disposal of the Rulers for the completion of their work.

From the place of Calvary, John and the holy women see the Priests on their mules, followed by the soldiers, coming through the Judgment Gate on the south, and rapidly advancing towards Golgotha. They are carrying ladders, and have heavy bludgeons in their hands, spades also and shovels wherewith to open the grave for criminals. When John whispers to Holy Mary what he sees, her Mother's heart is filled with sadness. She interprets truly; *Non fallunt viscera matrem*—A mother's heart is not easily mistaken. She is sure that the enemies of her Son are not satisfied, but mean more outrage. St. Bonaventure writes that she turned herself towards the Sacred Body and said: "My beloved Son, wherefore are they coming back? What more do they wish to do to Thee? Have they not killed Thee? My Son, I thought they were contented: but I see that they still persecute Thee after death." He adds that she placed herself at His feet to be between Him and His enemies, and that Magdalen and John stood beside her, as if to protect the Sacred Body.

"*Attendite.*" *O all you who go by the way, stay a little while and see if there be sorrow like to my sorrow.* She

revealed to St. Bridget something of her feelings for her Son. "He was to me as my own heart. So that when He was born from my womb I felt as if half my heart was born and had gone out of me. When He suffered, it was as if my heart was suffering. For if it were possible that there should exist a being, half in, and half out; if the part outside were hurt, the part inside would feel the hurt as much as the part outside. So when He was scourged and wounded, my heart was scourged and wounded."

She is, then, full of anxiety now, for her inspired heart tells her truly that enough has been done, that there is no reason for fresh outrage.

To add to her trouble, the Centurion, who has been kind to her, is absent. He has been summoned by the Governor.

SCENE V.

THE PRÆTORIUM.

STATION I.

And when evening was now come (because it was the Parasceve, that is, the day before the Sabbath), Joseph of Arimathea, a noble counsellor, a good and a just man, who was also himself looking for the Kingdom of God (because he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews), came and went in boldly to Pilate, and begged the Body of Jesus. But Pilate wondered that He should be already dead. And sending for the Centurion, he asked him if He were already dead. And when he had understood it by the Centurion, he gave the Body to Joseph (St. Matt. xxvii.; St. Mark xv.; St. Luke xxiii.; St. John xix.).

A. Pilate wondered that He should be already dead.

Delight in the Lord, the Psalmist writes, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart. Commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in Him, and He will do it (Psalm xxxvi.).

Our Blessed Lady has been pouring forth her heart in prayer that the Sacred Body may not be any more

outraged, and after the cry of her heart, she commits her way entirely to the Lord. And the Lord, true to His word, is taking care that the Blessed Mother, who delights in Him, shall have the request of her heart.

Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God.

B. He was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews.

We must mark how the Death of our Lord brings grace to so many. Many more are moved by His Death than by His preaching and His miracles during life.

Joseph is no longer paralysed by fear. The Priests and Ancients have only just retired from the presence of the Governor, when Joseph goes *boldly* in to beg for the Sacred Body.

"By Thy Cross and Passion," dear Lord, "deliver us from weakness and cowardice."

It is while we look at the brazen serpent that we shall be cured. While we contemplate Jesus dead upon the Cross, virtue will come out to us.

"In the Cross, salvation," we read in the *Imitation*; "in the Cross, life; in the Cross, protection from our enemies."

C. He begged the Body of Jesus.

"Attendite." Oh, stay a little while, to contemplate the sacred poverty of Jesus.

His Body is the property of the Roman Governor.

Man, holy Job asks, when he is dead and stripped and consumed, I pray you, where is he? (c. xiv.). He is on Calvary, He is on the Cross. Jesus is *dead, and stripped, and consumed*. His executioners possess His clothes, His Body is the possession of the Roman Governor. He is not indeed consumed, or to be consumed in the grave. God *will not give (His) Holy One to see corruption (Psalm xv.).* Under Thee, Lord Jesus, the moth shall not be strewed, nor shall worms be Thy covering.

Still He is consumed. For *the fire came down and consumed the holocaust*. Never was whole burnt-offering more thoroughly consumed.

Poor Jesus Christ! the poorest of all the blessed poor. So *needy, yet enriching many; having nothing, yet possessing all things.*

"Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may also say, *Blessed are the poor*, and may love the rich poverty of thy Son."

D. *Pilate wondered that He should be already dead.*

1. For he has witnessed so many strange and wonderful things to-day, that it often occurs to him that Jesus will not die; the fears of the Jews are well grounded, He may escape.

2. Moreover, they have just been to tell him that as yet His whole life is in Jesus, that He is crying out like a giant in full strength. Can He then have died so suddenly? He forgets the scourging, he forgets the crown of thorns, he forgets how often He was dragged up and down the Scala Santa, and through the streets. He did not witness His extreme feebleness as He carried His Cross along the Way of Sorrows. If Pilate knew all, and *considered in (his) heart*, his wonder would be that Jesus had lived so long.

But the great wonder of all is, that *He loved me and delivered Himself up for me.*

E. *Sending for the Centurion, he asked him.*

Learn a lesson, when we can, from the children of this world, and from their prudence. The Roman Prætor is a soldier accustomed to discipline. He sends for the officer on duty, who will give him correct official information. *Go thou and do likewise.*

Men would all arrive at the truth if they would seek it from the mouth of Christ's appointed delegate. And we should be spared much sin and much misery if we would imitate the wariness of Pilate, and not believe every hearsay about our neighbour till we have sure evidence.

F. *And when he had understood it by the Centurion, he gave the Body to Joseph.*

Nothing knows he of the priceless value of the Sacred Body. He gives it away as worthless.

What wonder? When His own disciple gave Him away, and delivered Him up to death for thirty pieces of silver, how can Pilate know better? *Thy own nation and the Chief Priests have delivered Thee up to me. What hast Thou done?*

To us our Lord says, *You are the light of the world.* It is from our practice that unbelievers are to get their light, and come to the faith.

Alas! shall we prove a scandal to them instead?

G. *Joseph went in boldly to Pilate, and begged the Body of Jesus.*

St. Anselm writes, that our Lady revealed to him, that among the reasons which Joseph urged, one was that the Mother of Jesus, a good and holy woman, will die of grief if the Body of her Son be cast into the pit of the criminals.

If Pilate had compassion on the Blessed Mother, it is no wonder that some early Fathers had hopes of his salvation, and believed in his conversion.

One other ground of hope is, that he was disgraced before he died. He did not sin, and prosper to the end. When God takes away the husks of swine from a sinner, there is more hope that He will draw him back to his Father's home.

H. *Joseph went in boldly.*

The Death of Christ is bringing courage to Joseph, courage to Nicodemus, grace to the Centurion, contrition to so many who are striking their breasts. Jesus lifted up on His Cross is drawing all things to Himself. Shall I alone remain unmoved? What is the cause of my hardness and blindness? "Wo to those," St. Bonaventure writes, "in whose souls the Death of Christ works no effect. Wo again to those whose hearts cannot be moved to gratitude." But he adds: "Acknowledge that on account of your crimes you are unworthy of such a grace. Perchance if you humble yourself, He that looked on the humility of His handmaid will give you a new heart."

St. Bernard adds: "Pride is found in me. Hence that lack of devotion from which I suffer."

St. Augustine says: "Dear Christ, good Jesus, give me Thy holy love, to fill my heart, and possess it entirely. Have mercy on me, and do not despise my soul for which Thou hast died."

I. *Joseph went in boldly.*

Metaphrastes, in the Life of Holy Mary, writes: "The Virgin Mary came to Joseph, and said to him, 'Ask for His Body, that it may be taken down and buried'".

What wonder if our Blessed Saviour wished him to have this grace through His Blessed Mother? "All things He wishes us to have through Mary." Through her the Eternal Father gives us His own Son, and with Him He gives all other graces through her.

J. *Joseph went in boldly.*

Joseph, we read, was a *rich man*. An early Father writes: "This is a bold and noble venture. He does not stop to think, I am rich, and may forfeit all my riches."

St. Chrysostom adds: "Greatly to be admired is his courage, for through love for Jesus, he faced the danger of death, and exposed himself to the hatred of all the Rulers".

His desire was to do honour to the Sacred Body. Do I owe nothing to it?

"See it," St. Bernard writes, "hanging naked, all torn by the scourges, and remember the copious stream of blood that flowed from His wounds."

SCENE VI.

CALVARY. THE BREAKING OF THE LEGS.

STATION I.

The soldiers therefore came, and they broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with Him (St. John xix. 32).

A. Obeying the often repeated command, *Do it quickly*, the soldiers march up rapidly to Golgotha. They bring

as has been said, heavy bludgeons to break the legs, ladders to bring down the bodies, spades and shovels to open the common grave for criminals.

Magdalen and John and the devout women, who have had peace till now on Calvary, are thrown into great consternation. They have heard our Lord say in another sense, *Give not that which is holy to dogs*. In their hearts they are crying out to the Father in Heaven, "Oh, give not the Holy Body to the dogs". St. Bonaventure represents them placing themselves at the side of Holy Mary to protect the Sacred Body from outrage.

Our Blessed Lady, though her heart trembles at the thought of further profane insult, yet is strengthened by a sure trust. She is persevering in her prayer, "O Eternal Father, *glorify Thy Son*, for He has glorified Thee". *It is not good to take the Bread of the children*, the Body of Thy own Son Jesus, *and give it to the dogs* (St. Mark vii.).

B. *And they broke the legs of the first.*

Do it quickly. There is no delay. A heavy blow from the bludgeon is heard, answered by a loud howl from the man who has no hope to comfort his death-bed. Another blow and another, another despairing cry and another, and Gesmas is dead. And his last cry is the sword of sorrow once more driven into our Lady's heart, leaving there an anguish more bitter than all before.

C. *They broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with Him.*

Dismas at once understands what he has to expect. But neither the howling of his companion, nor the sound of the heavy blows of the clubs, can take peace and hope out of his heart. He can truly say, as his tears flow down, *Singularly* (wonderfully) *hast Thou, O Lord, settled me in hope* (Psalm iv.). The words of Jesus are being whispered into his soul by his good Angel, *This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise*.

And now his eyes instinctively turn to his new Mother, for this word also his Guardian Angel is saying to his

heart, *Behold thy Mother!* And her eyes are for the time turned away from her own Divine Lord, to look on this first-born of her new family. Once more our Blessed Saviour is bidding her be a Mother to the disciple whom He loves. *Behold thy son, Holy Mother.* And her eye is fixed on him, and her heart is praying with a Mother's earnestness that he may have to the end every grace he needs.

She now is beginning her work of standing by the death-bed of those disciples whom her Divine Son loves.

Dismas utters no despairing cry as his bones are crushed by the blows. He retracts nothing of what he said to his companion: *We are receiving the just reward of our deeds, but this Man, my Lord and my God, He did no evil.* He dies with his own short prayer in his heart: *My Lord, remember me,* and possibly may have been the first to say words akin to our own familiar prayer: "Mother of God, pray for us sinners".

Happy, thrice happy they who in early childhood are taught to consecrate themselves as perpetual servants to Holy Mary, and to say to her often and often: "Stand by me in all the actions of life, and do not abandon me at the hour of my death".

SCENE VII.

THE OPENING OF OUR LORD'S SIDE.

STATION I.

But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, one of the soldiers with a spear opened His side, and immediately there came out blood and water (St. John xix. 33, 34).

A. *After they were come to Jesus.*

Quickly the executioners have done the bidding of their masters. The bones of the first and of the other that was crucified with Him, are broken, and they are dead. And

now: "Make haste, make haste to the work that is most important of all. Strike, and strike heavily, and make all sure. Crush the bones of Jesus of Nazareth, that we may see Him also dead, quite dead, and bury Him before the festival-day."

But no, this shall not be. The Centurion is come back, and he will not permit one blow. A Higher Power also than the Centurion has pronounced that this must not be.

Neither shall you break a bone (Exodus xii.), was the command given to Moses when the paschal lamb was for the first time immolated in Egypt, and to the Beloved Disciple it was afterwards revealed that this command, uttered in days long gone by, was intended also for the Lamb of God slain on the first Good Friday (St. John xix.).

B. *One of the soldiers opened His side with a spear.*

"It is useless," he tells the Rulers, "to strike. He is dead; you have your wish to the full. He is dead."

It is commonly assumed that the Centurion was himself the soldier who opened our Saviour's side. Some think he does it maliciously. Others that he acts rashly perhaps, but in a friendly spirit, to prevent worse outrages from the Rulers. Be this as it may. One thing is certain: that his act fits in with the design of God.

We are told that as he withdraws his spear, our Blessed Lady says gently to him, "May God forgive the pain that thou hast caused me," and with her forgiving heart she prays for him.

We are further told, that a drop of the Precious Blood falls upon his face, and cures the disease in his eyes from which he is suffering.

C. *One of the soldiers opened His side with a spear.*

Whatever the spirit may have been that actuated Longinus, we may assume that he no more understands the import of his act than Caiaphas understood when, as High Priest, he uttered the word, *It is expedient for you that*

one man die for the people,¹ or Pilate, when he wrote the title for the Cross. Utterly unconscious was he that He Who hangs dead had in days long gone prophesied this hour: *They shall look on Me Whom they have pierced* (Zach. xii.).

Here, as in every other detail of the Sacred Passion, we see how the Divine Providence is ever overruling the storm, and allowing the raging tide to roll just as far as suits the designs of God, and no further.

Two things have been from the beginning decreed: (1) that *no bone shall be broken*; but (2) that the side of our Saviour shall be opened, and that water and blood shall come out from the wound.

D. *One of the soldiers opened His side with a spear.*

What then is the import of this sacred ceremony? Briefly this: The second Adam is to be after the form of the first, and the battle fought in the Garden of Eden is to be fought over again, and on the same lines, by the Man and the Woman who defy Satan on this place of Calvary.

1. First, then, in a garden the first battle was fought and lost. In a garden, therefore, our Saviour begins the second struggle, and in a garden, when He has won the victory, He is buried.

2. Our Saviour is not to die of a broken Heart in Gethsemani, nor under the lash at the pillar. He is to die on a tree, because a tree gave help to Lucifer in Paradise. Jesus is to hang as fruit on the tree, and draw all men to God.

3. A woman was prominent in the first struggle, and befriended Satan. A woman is to be in the very thick of the second struggle on Calvary, to help her Son.

4. The first Adam fell asleep, and his side was opened. The second Adam hangs asleep on the Cross, and His side

¹ We ought often to explain carefully to Protestants, that God, whenever He sees good, can incline even bad men to speak and act rightly. On this point they are ignorant, and imagine that the infallibility of the Pope necessarily implies impeccability also.

must also be opened. A bone was taken from the side of the first Adam, out of which his helpmate was built up. From the side of Jesus water and blood is to come out; and of the water men shall be born again at the font of Baptism, and with His Blood their souls shall be nurtured; so that as the first Adam said to Eve, *This now is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh*, so our Blessed Lord inspired His Apostle to write the word, *We are members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones* (Ephes. v.). 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, a Christ.

Little does the future martyr, St. Longinus, know, when he shows his first movement of sympathy to the Holy Mother and her persecuted Son, how great a tree will grow out of the small mustard-seed.

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.).

E. *One of the soldiers opened His side with a spear.*

(a) 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."

(b) He adds: "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 than this wound!"

(c) Again he writes: "Consider the side which was opened by thee and for thee, and yet thou wilt not enter in".

(d) St. Laurence Justinian: "Through an excess of love He opened His side, in order to give you His Heart".

(e) 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".

(f) He adds: "Therefore was Thy side pierced, that an entrance might stand open for us".

(g) St. Anselm: "Admit me, O Lord, into the chamber of Thy love".

(h) Abbot Guericus comments on the words of Isaias, *Enter thou into the rock, and hide thee in the pit from the face of the fear of the Lord, and from the glory of His majesty* (Isaias ii.). "That is, make thyself a hiding-place in the wounds of the Crucified. Fly from thy Judge to thy Redeemer, bury thyself in the pit dug in His side."

(i) St. Augustine: "Longinus opened for me the side of Christ with a lance, and I went in, and there I rest secure".

(j) St. Bonaventure tells us that it was the right side that the soldier pierced, and that the wound was large.

(k) St. Bridget, in her contemplations, saw that the spear was driven in with such force that it clove the Heart in two, and touched the ribs on the opposite side.

(l) Jesus says to us, as to St. Thomas, *Bring hither thy hand, and put it into My side.*

(m) St. Bernard: "Therefore was the side wounded, that by the visible wound the invisible wound of love might be revealed".

Again: "Through love He was wounded on account of our sins. Through the openings in the Body the secrets of His Heart are disclosed to me, and the bowels of His mercy too."

Again: "That Heart so wounded, who will not love?"

(n) *They will look on Me Whom they pierced, and they will mourn and will grieve* (Zach. xii.).

(o) *One of the soldiers opened His side.*

St. Cyril: "Perchance having still some doubt whether He was dead". Another of the early Fathers suggests that it was perhaps done to gratify the Jews. We have already seen that Longinus may not have acted in malice, but rather to save the Sacred Body from outrage.

F. *They did not break His legs.*

(a) On account of the prohibition, as we have seen: *Neither shall you break a bone thereof* (Exodus xii.).

(b) The bones, a holy writer observes, are emblems of strength and firmness. The Passion was not to conquer the courageous meekness of Christ. *Many are the tribulations of the just, but out of them all will the Lord deliver them. The Lord keepeth all their bones. Not one of them shall be broken* (Psalm xxxiii.).

(c) *God hath scattered the bones of those that please men. They have been confounded because God hath despised them* (Psalm lii.).

G. *One of the soldiers opened His side with a spear.*

"*Attendite.*" We must stay to consider the effect of this wound upon our Lady.

(a) St. Bernard writes: "Since Jesus had given up the ghost, it is clear that the cruel lance that opened His side could not reach His Soul, but her soul most certainly it reached".

(b) Simeon had prophesied: *Thy soul the sword of sorrow shall pierce.*

(c) St. Bernard adds: "His Soul was no longer there, but thine could not be torn away".

"The sword of sorrow, therefore, pierced thy soul through, so that with good reason I may proclaim thee more than martyr."

(d) St. Bonaventure: "As she looks on her wounded Son, she feels all the crushing sorrow of death".

(e) He adds: "Thou, O Lady, in thy heart art pierced by the lance. O heart of most tender love, why art thou changed into a heart of sorrow?"

H. *Immediately there came out blood and water.*

(a) St. Thomas writes: "The water flowing from the side of Christ was pure water, and came by miracle out of the dead Body, as did also the blood".

(b) Euthymius: "It was something quite beyond nature, which showed clearly that He Who had been pierced was more than Man, since never from a dead man,

though he were pierced a thousand times, could blood flow forth ”.

(c) Theophylact: “That blood should come from a dead body is marvellous. But the water flowing is a miracle that silences all controversy.”

(d) He adds: “Through these two elements the Church is created and maintained. For through water we are regenerated, through the Blood and the Body we are nourished.”

(e) St. Athanasius: “There flows out blood and water, that through blood we may have redemption, and by the water be cleansed ”.

(f) St. Cyprian: “Out of this fountain flows all the sweetness of God’s mercies, and all the tenderness of His love ”.

I. *One of the soldiers opened His side with a spear.*

But if they cannot wreak their vengeance on Jesus dying, they can at least, so they hope, dishonour His dead Body. With a murderous resolve to take vengeance, as soon as they can, on the arrogant Centurion who has baffled them, and full of chagrin and bitterness, they bid their gang make haste to place their ladders, and take down the bodies, and cast them into the unhallowed pit reserved for criminals. But here again *the desire of the sinners shall perish*, and they will have to gnash with their teeth, and pine away with vexation.

They forget that He Who gave them power last night in the Garden, when He said, *It is your hour*, cancelled their grant when He said the word, “*Consummatum est*”. Their little day of power is past and over.

Neither do they know, though as Priests of the Most High they ought to know the secrets of the Law, that the same Providence which pronounced the command, *Neither shall you break a bone*, also uttered the decree, *There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise up to rule the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope, AND HIS SEPULCHRE SHALL BE GLORIOUS* (Isaias xi. ; Roman. xiv.).

SCENE VIII.

THE TAKING DOWN FROM THE CROSS.

STATION I.

Joseph of Arimathea besought Pilate that he might take away the Body of Jesus. And Pilate gave leave. He came therefore and took away the Body of Jesus. And Nicodemus also came (St. John xix. 38, 39).

A. *He came therefore, and Nicodemus came.*

“*Attendite.*” The Blessed Mother seems quite helpless. *Tribulation is very near. There is none to help me. Many dogs have encompassed me. The council of the malignant hath besieged me. But Thou, O Lord, remove not Thy help to a distance from me. Look towards my defence. Deliver my soul from the sword, and my only one from the hand of the dog* (Psalm xxi.). The Centurion can give no help, as the Priests and Ancients have the law on their side. The bodies must be taken down and buried in the pit. But the watchful wisdom of God *reacheth from end to end mightily, and disposeth of all things sweetly* (Wisdom ii.).

B. *He came therefore, and Nicodemus came.*

While the soldiers put at the disposal of the Priests are hurriedly loosing the body of St. Dismas and the body of Gesmas from their crosses, the Rulers from the place of Calvary see a party of men passing through the Judgment Gate and hastening rapidly towards them. What does this mean? *Wickedness is fearful. A troubled conscience always forecasteth grievous things* (Wisdom xvii.). “Has Pilate found out our conspiracies? Are we to be seized and dragged to judgment?” Or is this the beginning of a rising of the friends of Jesus?

Our Blessed Lady, on the other hand, sick at heart with solicitude, asks John anxiously: “Who are coming? Are they more enemies?” All are straining their eyes. They can see that the men are bringing ladders and many other things. At last, when they are near enough, John

whispers to the Blessed Mother that she has nothing to fear. He recognises Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus leading the party. He is quite sure that they are no enemies of Jesus. The Blessed Mother is at once relieved of her oppressive fear. *When I called on Him, the God of my justice heard me. O ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Know ye also that the Lord hath made His Holy One wonderful* (Psalm iv.).

C. *He came therefore, and Nicodemus came.*

The Priests also and the Ancients have now recognised Joseph and Nicodemus, and their trouble grows exceedingly. Joseph and Nicodemus are men not to be despised; men in every way their equals, men much more respected than they are. *Joseph*, St. Mark tells us, *was a noble counsellor*. Nicodemus also belongs to the Sanhedrim. And they are known to dissent entirely from their colleagues with regard to Jesus. *The same had not consented to their counsels and doings* (St. Luke xxiii.).

What do they want? What are they coming for? They have ladders. They have many servants bearing burdens. They have funeral torches. These must be preparations for a burial. We must crush this attempt. We must browbeat them into submission, as we did the Governor. Their courage is not greater than his.

D. *He came, and Nicodemus came.*

Joseph and Nicodemus have arrived, but they are imperiously bidden by the High Priest to retire at once. Their presence is not wanted. The law provides for the interment of the malefactors. They must withdraw.

Joseph and Nicodemus had both in times past a share of Pilate's weakness.

Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews (St. John xix.). *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a Ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night* (St. John iii.).

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. *Let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head. For my prayer shall be against the things with which they are well pleased* (Psalm cxl.).

Joseph answers the High Priest's mandate by handing to the Centurion the Governor's warrant by which the Body of Jesus is given to him.

The Centurion gladly reads it aloud to Priests and Ancients, and once more the Psalmist's words are verified: *The wicked shall see and shall be angry. He shall gnash with his teeth and pine away: the desire of the wicked shall perish* (Psalm cxi.).

! But rage makes them bold: "This is a forgery," they exclaim; "they will not submit to it". But the Centurion knows his duty, and stands firm. This is Pilate's signature. There is no forgery.

Then they will forthwith send deputies to Pilate, to talk him over once more. But their hearts fail them. He will only again insult them, and say: *What I have written, I have written.*

They take the Centurion aside, to flatter him and offer him bribes.

But he is a soldier, and when his commander says, *Do this, he doeth it*. The Governor has given the Body to Joseph, and Joseph shall have it. Any one who gainsays, let him look to it, for it will be at his peril.

St. Gregory of Tours hands down a narrative, taken from the Gospel of Nicodemus, which shows that the Jewish Rulers did not forgive Joseph for this interference with their malicious design. This Gospel of Nicodemus has never been accepted as an authentic, inspired Gospel by Holy Church; but that does not prove, so commentators remark, that it does not contain many true statements.

St. Gregory writes:

"Joseph also was apprehended who had embalmed Jesus with spices, and buried Him in his own tomb. He was shut up in a dungeon, and, to render escape impossible, was guarded by the

Rulers themselves, and had to endure treatment more cruel than the Lord Himself had suffered; because, whereas the Lord had soldiers for His guards, Joseph had the Priests and Ancients. Afterwards, however, when the Lord rose, and the guards were affrighted by a vision of angels, and He was no longer found in the sepulchre, during that same night the walls of the dungeon in which Joseph was confined were lifted from the ground, and he was by an Angel set free and let out of the prison, and the walls were then restored to their places.

"When, therefore, the High Priests vehemently reprimanded the guards of the Holy Sepulchre, and, with severe menaces, demanded from them the Sacred Body, the soldiers answered them: 'Do you give back Joseph, and we will restore Christ; but, as we now well know that you cannot give back the man that befriended God, neither are we able to give back the Son of God'. So the Priests were silenced and the soldiers escaped punishment."

Another tradition tells us that Joseph was one of those afterwards sent adrift in an open boat with Lazarus and Magdalen and others; that he arrived with them in Gaul, and afterwards preached the Gospel in England.

Some writers add that Joseph was well known to Pilate, and was an exception to his strong dislike and contempt for the Jews. This seems probable enough, as he was both rich and of high position, and at the same time a good and upright man.

E. *He came, and Nicodemus came.*

The prayer of the Blessed Mother is heard: *Deliver my only One from the hand of the dog* (Psalm xxi.).

Annas and Caiphas and the rest have no longer any wish to remain near the Cross. They are as anxious to escape as they were when Jesus was stooping down to write their sins in the dust. *They went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest.* Beyond the others, Annas and the more ancient feel this bitter humiliation, and shrink away in haste from the Cross, from the presence of the Blessed Mother, and from the calm fearlessness of Joseph and Nicodemus. They will wreak their vengeance when the time serves, but for the present they are ashamed and silenced, like the prophets of Baal in presence of Elias.

F. *He came, and Nicodemus came.*

Contemplate how He Who feeds the ravens and clothes the lilies of the field, takes good care of the Blessed

Mother; how His angels have charge over her, to see that she who is poor, and the Mother of the Poor Man, and possesses nothing, be provided with *all things*.

A rich man and one of position is needed to go in to Pilate. Joseph answers in gladness: *Ecce adsum*—"Here I am, send me".

Courage is wanted in that hour when all are scared and scandalised. From the Cross of Christ courage is come into the souls of the timid. Jesus does not fail to do what He exhorts us to do. *Strengthen ye the feeble hands, and confirm the weak knees. Say to the faint-hearted, Take courage and fear not* (Isaias xxxv.).

G. *He came, and Nicodemus came.*

The Sacred Body, therefore, now belongs to Joseph, and is safe from all further outrage. *Consummatum est.* The work of Satan and Satan's ministers is ended. The Priests and Ancients have turned their mules homeward. Their servants are carrying back the ladders and the bludgeons. The crosses of the two thieves have been taken down, and cast into the pit, and covered up. Such of the soldiers as still remain on guard, have retired a little from the sacred sanctuary now established in the centre of the earth. None but friends remain on the holy ground of Calvary.

In Judea God is (now) known: His name is (suddenly become) great in Israel. And His place (His sacred place, His battle-ground, the field of His triumph) *is in peace.* The Priests and Ancients, baffled and utterly conquered by the meekness of Jesus, are *not* going home in peace. Their troubled conscience forecasteth grievous things. But there is peace on the hill of frankincense and on the mountain of myrrh (Cant. iv.). *There hath He broken the powers of bows, the shield, the sword, and the battle. Thou enlightenest* (Lord Jesus) *wonderfully from the everlasting hills.* (For Calvary is from this hour to be the everlasting hill, perpetuated on the altars of Christendom.) *All the foolish of heart were troubled* (Psalm lxxv.). For the enemies of

Christ, while for their raging anger they are compared in the sacred writings to roaring lions, at the same time for their senseless folly are likened to calves (Psalm xxi.).

STATION II.

And Joseph, buying fine linen and taking Him down, wrapped Him up in the fine linen (St. Mark xv.). He came, therefore, and took away the Body of Jesus. And Nicodemus also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pounds' weight (St. John xix.).

A. He came, therefore, and took away the body of Jesus; and Nicodemus also came.

Holy writers tell us that Joseph and Nicodemus, as soon as they can get near to the Cross, kneel to adore the Sacred Body, and that when, on their arrival, the Priests and Ancients retire, all the friends of our Lord, now met together, remain for a long time weeping, and speechless through grief.

Eia Mater, fons amoris,
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac, ut tecum lugeam.
Juxta crucem tecum stare
Et me tibi sociare
In planctu desidero.

Mother, fount of charity,
Let me share thy agony;
Make me weep with thee.
Let me stand where thou hast stood,
Mourning with thy Motherhood,
By the Holy Rood.

B. He came therefore.

We may contemplate Joseph, as soon as he is able to speak, drawing near to our Blessed Lady, to tell her with great reverence that the Sacred Body now belongs entirely to her; that the Roman Governor has ceded it to him; and that he is only her servant, come to fulfil any orders or wishes of hers with regard to the burial.

C. He came therefore.

We may also fix our thoughts on our Blessed Lady. In the first place, she raises her heart to thank her God for taking care of her in her poverty. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me bless His Holy Name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, who crowneth thee with mercy and com-*

passion (Psalm cii.). The poor and the needy shall praise Thy Name (Psalm lxxiii.).

Then she turns to Joseph, and with a most grateful humility gives him great thanks for running so much risk, and braving the anger of the Rulers in order to render service to his Master. "When the Divine Child was pursued, and we were fleeing away, Joseph, my spouse, protected us. You are now come in his place, in my present distress. My Son will not forget your fidelity."

D. He came therefore.

Isaac said to his father: My father. And he answered: What wilt thou, son? Behold, said he, fire and wood; where is the victim for a holocaust? And Abraham said: God will provide Himself a victim for a holocaust, my son (Gen. xxii.).

Lo, now, the Sacred Body is hers: she can bury it. Here, too, are ready true and devout mourners. But where is the tomb? and where are all the many things needed for the funeral?

The tomb in which the Body of Jesus ought naturally to be laid is in Gethsemani, on the other side of the city, in the garden belonging to Holy Mary, where last night He was *sorrowful unto death*. It would be very dangerous, the Most Prudent Virgin sees, to go thither with the funeral. The enemies of Jesus might waylay the procession and attempt outrages. Moreover, the law forbade, we are told, the bodies of executed criminals to be buried in the ancestral tomb. Besides this, the sundown is near, when the great Sabbath will begin.

Joseph is able to comfort her. In a little garden belonging to him, not more than twenty yards from the Cross, he has a tomb, which he made ready for his own death. It is far too poor, he thinks, for the Sacred Body of his Divine Master: but it is new, *no man has yet been laid in it*. If she thinks fit to permit it, they can in all security make the interment there. The Blessed Mother hears with great consolation this new proof that the eye of the Divine Providence is watching, and that she is

not forgotten in her hour of need. And moreover, it is a right and specially fitting arrangement. For in a garden man fell; in a garden began the Sacred Passion; in a garden it shall end. *By Thy ordinance, O Lord, the day goeth on.* Add to this, that it is well that the tomb of the *Poor Man* be an alms.

E. *He came therefore.*

Her heart is filled with still further consolation and wonder when Joseph, as we read, tells her further how both Nicodemus and himself have been strongly urged by an inward inspiration to bring to Calvary all that is needed for embalming and for a becoming funeral.

He points out the ample store of aromatic powder made from myrrh and aloes, which the servants of Nicodemus have brought.

He shows her too the winding-sheet of fine linen, and the sudarium for His Sacred Head, and the swathing-bands which he has provided. They have also pails for water, and sponges, and everything needed for washing away the dust and dirt adhering to the holy wounds, and they have too the funeral torches. Nothing has been forgotten.

"It is," the Holy Mother says most devoutly, "the word that my Son spoke: *Be not solicitous for your body what you shall put on. If the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe, how much more you? For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things* (St. Matt. vi.). . . *The poor and needy shall praise Thy Name, O God* (Psalm lxxiii.). *Who maketh grass to grow on the mountains, and herbs for the service of men* (Psalm cxlvi.). *The Lord is faithful in all His words and holy in all His works*" (Psalm cxliv.).

Contemplate, too, with what reverence and delight the holy angels are watching how the providence of God furnishes in abundance all that the Blessed Mother wants, and how devoutly they add those other words of our Lord: "*Multis passeribus meliores estis vos*"—*Better than many*

sparrows are you (St. Matt. x.). "O Sovereign Lady, and Mother of God, He Who feeds the birds of the air, shall He forget any want of thine?"

STATION III.

And Joseph, taking Him down, wrapped Him up in the fine linen (St. Mark xv. 46).

A. *And Joseph, taking Him down.*

Our Blessed Lady, we are told, now gives Joseph the commission to do all that is befitting, and to arrange everything carefully, and most reverently.

St. Luke writes of him (c. xxiii.): *He was a counsellor, a good and just man (the same had not consented to their counsels and doings). Blessed, the Psalmist writes, the man who hath not walked in the counsels of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the chair of pestilence. He shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters. His leaf shall not fall off, and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper* (Psalm i.).

Blessed, thrice blessed, O faithful counsellor, O good and just man, chosen that thou mightest be ready in such a time as this (Esther iv.).

If St. Dismas has fared so well for giving Jesus an alms in His hour of need, what shall be done for Joseph and Nicodemus, who have exposed their lives in order to give fitting honour to Jesus unburied?

"Attendite." "*Defunctus adhuc loquitur,*" St. Paul writes. From His Cross, the silent lips of our dead Lord are still speaking to us: "Envy not Joseph. Give help to the very least of My brethren, and you will give burial to My Body."

B. *And Joseph, taking Him down.*

"Take note," St. Bonaventure writes, "of the manner of the deposition. The ladders are placed at each side of the Cross. Joseph and Nicodemus go up the steps."

The opinion is held by some that Joseph and Nicodemus, and their helpmates, among whom perchance is Longinus the centurion first loosened and removed the

wedges that held the Cross firm in the rock, and then laid it on the ground, and took out the nails; but the common opinion is that followed by St. Bonaventure, that they set up ladders against the Cross. St. Mark's words, *Joseph, taking Him down*, might fit in with either view, but to most persons probably they would suggest the opinion generally adopted.

C. And Joseph, taking Him down.

Holy servants of God tell us that Joseph and Nicodemus, before beginning their sacred task, beseech our Lady to retire to a little distance. This they do wishing to spare her pain, but John makes known to them that she has watched everything, that nothing has escaped her, that her desire is not to miss one jot or tittle of the holy mystery, not to *let one particle of the good gift overpass her*.

Omnis consummationis vidi finem—"Of all this perfect work of immolation I have seen the end".

D. Joseph, taking Him down.

Observe how all is made new by the Death of our Lord. This morning, outrage was heaped on outrage. Now all is most reverent and devout and loving.

Whenever before this hour did rich and leading men, like Nicodemus and Joseph, climb up ladders to take down the body of one crucified as a criminal? They do not entrust this work to their servants.

They begin their task, so holy writers tell us, by drawing most carefully the thorns out of the wounds, and bringing the holy crown down to the Blessed Mother. Watch how fast her tears flow upon it, and with what profound humility she kisses it.

It is not an easy task to loosen the nails driven through the wood, and clenched at the other side, but they have been inspired to bring every necessary implement, and all is done becomingly. They are full of anxiety not to increase our Lady's sorrow by any clumsiness, or blundering, or anything unseemly. Oh, may we too be earnest never to add to her sorrow!

No words are spoken while they do their work, nothing but sobs are heard.

St. Bonaventure writes, that Joseph on the ladder supported the Body by the arms, while Nicodemus came down to draw out the nails from the feet.

One thing renders their task more easy, namely, that the Sacred Body is so worn out by hunger and loss of blood that it is not heavy, but a very light burden.

"Happy," the Saint adds, "the men who were so privileged as to clasp in their arms the Sacred Body."

While contemplating the devout care with which they handle the Body of our Saviour, is it not a fitting time to beg of the Blessed Mother to intercede for all priests, who, despite unworthiness, are commissioned to hold in their hands at the altar her Divine Son, that we may have some of the reverent devotion of Joseph and Nicodemus?

May Thy priests be clothed in justice, and have grace to say truly, "Devoutly I adore Thee, O Hidden God". "Body of Christ, save me," and, "Be not unto me to judgment and condemnation".

E. And Joseph, taking Him down.

Devout writers tell us that the Blessed Mother helped in the holy work of taking down the Sacred Body, and that as soon as they were within her reach, she took the holy hands, and with great devotion kissed the sacred wounds.

*Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas,
Cordi meo valide.*

*Do this for me, O Mother blest,
Deeply imprint within my breast
The wounds of Jesus Crucified.*

SCENE IX.

THE STONE OF UNCTION.

STATION I.

And Joseph, taking Him down, wrapped Him up in the fine linen (St. Mark xv. 46).

A. *And Joseph, taking Him down.*

THE STONE OF UNCTION is still shown in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre. A table of hard stone, about twenty-five feet lower down than the level where the Crosses stood. It was convenient for the work of embalming, and therefore, while Nicodemus and Joseph are taking out the nails, other disciples of Jesus are spreading cloths upon the Stone of Unction, and opening the packets of the aromatic myrrh and aloes, and fetching water from the cistern.

"All you holy Saints on Calvary, pray for us that we may be moved to make devout preparation when the Body of the Lord is about to be committed to our care."

John meanwhile is always in charge of the Blessed Mother. She has now the Sacred Head in her hands, and Magdalen is allowed to carry the Sacred Feet, Joseph and Nicodemus support the Body; and so, with great care and reverence, and grieving *as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born*, and helped through their holy task by many special graces, they carry the sacred treasure down to the STONE OF UNCTION, and there lay it down. St. John then arranges a seat for the Virgin Mother, where the Sacred Head reposes on her lap. St. Magdalen is once more kneeling at the feet, where she has found so many graces. The other devout men and women, we are told, all kneel and adore the Sacred Body, presented to them by Holy Mary.

"We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee."

"Because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world."

Paraphrase.

Pange lingua gloriosi	Adore, my soul, on Calvary,
Corporis mysterium,	Adore the wondrous mystery,
Sanguisque pretiosi,	God's glorious Body crucified.
Quem in mundi pretium.	Adore, my soul, God's Precious Blood
Fructus ventris generosi	Outpoured upon the holy Rood,
Rex effudit gentium.	From head and hands, from feet and side.
	Adore the fruit of Mary's womb,
	Before they lay it in the tomb.
	Jesus her Son, the King of men,
	Lies dead to give us life again.

B. *And Joseph, taking Him down.*

Some writers hold that it was the custom among the Jews that men embalmed the bodies of men, and women the bodies of women. If this were so, the commonly received opinion is, that on this occasion an exception was made for the Sacred Body of the Lord.

One fact that seems to support this common opinion is that undoubtedly the devout women came to the Sepulchre on Easter Day prepared to continue the work of embalming.

One writer on the Sacred Passion tells us that in order to relieve the agonised heart of our Lady, the wounds on the Sacred Body were by a miracle disguised during the washing and embalming, so that they did not appear in all their ghastliness; but this opinion does not seem to find favour. It seems more in keeping with the other scenes of the Sacred Passion, to adopt the common persuasion that while she sat bathing the sacred face with her tears, she was studying most carefully every wound, the length, the breadth, the depth of each, and laying them up one by one in her heart. For each of those precious wounds is saying to her, *Set me as a seal upon thy heart.*

Sancta Mater, istud agas,	Do this for me, O Mother blest,
Crucifixi fige plagas,	Deeply imprint within my breast
Cordi meo valide.	The wounds of Jesus Crucified.

C. *And Joseph, taking Him down.*

We read that some horsemen from the country pass by Calvary while they are washing and embalming the

sacred wounds, and stop for a time, gazing appalled on the crucified Body. Their question is like that asked heretofore by the disciples, *Who hath sinned—this Man or His parents?* to bring down such a curse. John, or Joseph, or Nicodemus, explains to them that Jesus was no malefactor, but a Prophet, *mighty in word and work*, and pointing to the Most Holy Mother, asks, “Do you see any sign of wickedness in her?” “Then what is the cause of all this cruel butchery?” the strangers urge. *What evil hath He done? This Man hath done no evil*, is the answer. *But the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all*. The only cause in Him is this: *He loved me, and delivered Himself up for me—If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema* (1 Cor. xvi.).

D. *And Joseph, taking Him down.*

When there shall be found in the land the corpse of a man slain, and it is not known who is guilty of the murder, the Ancients of that city shall come to the person slain, and shall wash their hands, . . . and shall say: Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it (Deut. xxi.).

Our hands did not shed this Blood. With my lips I dare not say this impious word, but my life says it.

(a) So long as I have no deep contrition for my sins, I practically deny that they are the cause of His Death.

(b) So long as I live indulging myself, seldom denying self, I virtually deny that I am the cause of these wounds.

(c) So long as I am not strongly impressed with gratitude to my Lord and Saviour, my life is denying that He died for me, and that I am the cause of His Death.

(d) So long as I remain cold and insensible, and have not that fire enkindled in my heart which He came to cast on the earth, I am living as if He has not died on my account.

(e) Worst of all, if by wilful sin I am *crucifying again the Son of God, and making Him a mockery* (Hebrews vi.), I am proclaiming aloud that I am not the cause of His Death.

(f) If I do not hope strongly and firmly that He will pardon me, and give me every necessary grace, I am denying that His death is for me, and on my account, and to cancel all my sins.

(g) *Amantissime juvenis*, St. Augustine writes, “most loving of men, in the flower of Thy youth, what has caused Thy Death? What gave occasion to Thy condemnation? I, I must bear all the blame of Thy bloody Death.”

E. *Joseph, taking Him down.*

Contemplate our Blessed Lady.

(a) St. Bernard writes: “The most sorrowful Mother is bathing the face of her Son in an abundance of tears, and gazing upon His head, His hands, His feet, His side, and all His mangled limbs”.

(b) And oftentimes she kisses His forehead, His cheeks, and His lips.

(c) St. Bridget describes what she saw in her contemplation: “The loving Mother is seated, and supporting His head on her knee, and with her linen veil is carefully cleansing the wounds”.

(d) St. Ephraim makes her say: “Where is now all Thy beauty, my Son? Have pity on Thy bereaved Mother, my most sweet Son.”

(e) St. Laurence Justinian: “The heart of the Virgin Mother is become a most bright mirror of the Passion of Christ, and a perfect image of His Death”.

(f) He adds: “As she surpasses all saints in grace, in holiness, in merit, so too in her sorrow, in her anguish, in her suffering”.

(g) St. Bernard: “I do not believe it possible to form a conception of the sorrow of the Virgin Mother, unless we believe it to be as great as such a Mother could ever suffer for such a Son”.

F. *Joseph, taking Him down.*

While contemplating our Lord's Body thus resting on the lap of His Mother, call to mind the words of Isaiah, *A throne shall be prepared in mercy* (Isaiah xvi.).

He is now on the throne of His mercy.

"Run to the Virgin Mother," St. Bernard counsels us. "She bears in her hands the King of glory, and is ready to give Him to all that ask."

G. "*Defunctus adhuc loquitur.*" The dead is still speaking to me. He is saying: *Remember My judgment, for thou also shalt be so. Yesterday for Me, to-day for thee.*

STATION II.

Nicodemus also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes
(St. John xix.).

A. IN THIS HOUR WE CAN PREPARE FOR OUR LAST ANOINTING AND FOR OUR CONFESSIONS.

Lord Jesus, crucified in the presence of Thy Blessed Mother, I beseech Thee:—

(a) BY THY CROWN OF THORNS AND THY CLOTTED HAIR,
Give me a true contrition for the sins of my head, my sins of thought.

Sins of commission.—Uncharitable thoughts, impure thoughts, irreligious thoughts, despairing thoughts.

And sins by omission.—The absence of grateful thoughts, compassionate thoughts, lively faith, strong love, thoughts of praise, thoughts of reverence.

By Thy bloodstained and clotted hair, pardon the sinful vanity of the hair.

(b) BY THY SACRED EYES CLOSED IN DEATH, AND THE TEARS THEY SHED IN LIFE,

Give me true contrition for the sins of my eyes.

Sins of commission.—Uncharitable curiosity, scowling, angry and contemptuous looks, impure curiosity, idle and distracting gazing about.

Sins too of omission.—Not looking at Thy crucifix, at Thy tabernacle, not reading holy books, turning my eyes away from the needy.

(c) BY THY SACRED EARS,

Give me true contrition for the sins of my ears.

Sins of commission—listening to and encouraging detractions and calumny; listening to immodest words, irreligious words, disobedient murmurs against the Church, against legitimate authority.

Sins of omission—by not giving ear to good advice, to sermons, to the cry of the poor.

(d) BY THY SACRED MOUTH, DRIED UP AND PARCHED,
I beseech Thee, Lord Jesus, in Thy Holy Mother's presence, give me true contrition for the sins of my tongue.

Sins of commission—by uncharitable words, immodest words, irreligious words.

Sins of omission—by uncharitable silence, not defending the absent, not helping by good advice, not daring to check indecent words and irreligious conversation.

Give me true contrition also for sins of the palate in eating and drinking.

Give me also, for Thy Holy Mother's sake, hearty sorrow for want of fervour, for all negligence, when Thy Blessed Sacrament has been on my tongue.

By Thy Sacred Lips, cold in death and livid,

Forgive also, Lord Jesus, every sin of the lips by sensual kissing.

(e) BY THY HOLY FACE, DISFIGURED WITH WOUNDS AND DIRT AND SPITTLE,

Forgive all sins of vanity, and all wicked desires to attract unduly attention and admiration.

(f) BY THY SACRED HANDS, NAILED TO THE CROSS AND POWERLESS IN DEATH,

Give me a true contrition for all the sins of the hands.

Sins of commission—every uncharitable or sinful word written, all deeds of revenge, all wicked actions.

Sins of omission—all my neglect to open my hands to help those in want.

(g) BY THY SACRED FEET, NAILED TO THE CROSS, COLD AND MOTIONLESS,

Grant me a true contrition for my sinful footsteps.

Sins of commission—when I have knowingly gone into occasions of sin.

Sins of omission—when I was unwilling to stir a step to honour Thee, to win grace for my poor soul by going to Holy Mass, or to the Sacraments, or to visit Thy poor and Thy sick servants.

(h) BY THY SACRED SIDE PIERCED, AND BY THY BROKEN HEART,

I beseech Thee, in Thy Holy Mother's presence, give me a true contrition for all the sins of my heart.

Sins of commission—desires of revenge, thoughts of malice and hatred against men, or against Thee, my God.

Sins of omission—all my habitual heartlessness towards my God, my Creator, my Father, my most loving Redeemer; my lifelong want of love for my Lord on His Cross, for my Saviour in the tabernacle, for His Blessed Mother who has been so devoted a Mother to me; all my ingratitude to my Guardian Angel; all my want of compassion for the needy, for the Holy Souls in Purgatory; all my want of the spirit of forgiveness.

(i) BY THE WOUNDS, BRUISES, AND SWELLING SORES ALL OVER THY SACRED BODY, FROM THE SOLE OF THE FOOT TO THE CROWN OF THE HEAD,

I beseech Thee, in presence of Thy most sorrowful Mother, grant me a true contrition for all the wickedness of the sinful flesh.

Sins of commission—by impurity, by sensuality, by gluttony, by excessive indulgence in sleeping.

Sins of omission—neglect of duty, and neglect of works of mercy, through the sloth of the corruptible flesh that weighs down the soul.

(j) BY THE DEEP WOUNDS ALL OVER THY BODY,

Give me also a true contrition for all my relapses into sin. For as the lash deepened each wound, so have I by relapses aggravated each sin.

B. AND NOW WE COME TO THE SECOND VOLUME OF OUR LORD'S PASSION.

His second Passion He suffered in our Blessed Lady by witnessing the agony of her compassion.

BY THY BLESSED MOTHER, AND THY SACRED PASSION DOUBLED AND TREBLED BY HER SORROW,

Give me a true contrition for the second volume of my sins—the sins I have occasioned in others, my parents, my brothers and sisters, my companions in youth; those with whom I have dealt in after years, some older, some younger; some above me, some below; some now dead, some still living; some of one sex, some of another.

Sins of commission—by provoking them to anger, by filling them with uncharitable thoughts, by advising revenge, fomenting quarrels, by flattery, by encouraging wickedness or impurity, by leading others to worldliness, by harshness to those in want or trouble, by shaking faith and hope, by teaching others by example to violate the holy laws of the Church, to neglect Mass, not to observe days of abstinence and fast, by discouraging almsgiving.

Sins of omission—by grave neglect, by not correcting those under my charge, by not chiding bad words, by not helping poor sinners, by not giving alms.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my iniquity.

From my hidden sins cleanse me, and from the sins of others spare Thy servant.

“Give me grace, O God my Lord; that I may repay four-fold to all whom I have wronged.”

C. *Joseph wrapped Him up in the fine linen.*

All is ready now for the winding-sheet, but we read that to give contentment to the Holy Mother, they forbear for a little while longer, that her heart may still continue to contemplate.

“Attendite.” For we too must continue to look on Him

Whom we have pierced. Whither else need we go? Have we not all here?

"*Defunctus adhuc loquitur.*" *I am the Bread of life, the cold and livid lips are saying to us. This is the Bread that cometh down from Heaven; not indeed prepared without labour; but having in it all that is delicious, and the sweetness of every taste, serving every man's will; and, it may be, turned to what every man (likes) (Wisdom xvi.).*

What grace is there that we cannot draw from the fountains of our Saviour?

I. HOLY FEAR.

(a) St. Bonaventure: "Here, *I know my iniquity.* Wo to me that crucified Christ by my sins and have added grief to the grief of His wounds."

(b) St. Augustine: "I the sinner, as I stand here beside Thee, my heart is terror-stricken, my face turns pale, over all my flesh I tremble, while with the eyes of faith I gaze on this too appalling spectacle".

Again: "Man sins, God bears the chastisement. I did the wickedness, the penalty is laid on Thee."

(c) St. Paul: "This is Christ Jesus—'*Quem proposuit Deus . . . ad ostensionem justitiæ Suæ*'—Whom God has set before us as a manifestation of His justice" (Romans iii.).

(d) St. Bonaventure: "So greatly does God abhor our sin, that He chose to endure His Death rather than tolerate sin". *He did not spare His own Son.*

(e) St. Thomas of Villanova: "If you spread out before me a thousand Hells, I am not so terrified as when I see God dying for me". "What can better strike terror into a sinner, than to see the Son of God atoning by His Death for the guilt of sin?"

(f) St. Thomas Aquinas: "As there is in God infinite majesty, therefore is sin, in a sense, something infinite, and consequently an atonement is needed that has infinite efficacy, the work of a God-Man".

(g) St. Bonaventure: "Is it not quite detestable and intolerable to sin against Thee after Thy Passion?"

II. HOPEFUL CONTRITION.

(a) Look down, infinite clemency, on me most miserable, and blot out my countless sins in the multitude of Thy tender mercies.

(b) St. Thomas: "Christ has, in His Passion, delivered us from sin, by instituting a process by which all manner of sins can be forgiven. It is as if a physician invented a medicine by which all diseases, future as well as past, could be cured."

(c) St. Augustine adds: "There is no antidote so powerful against the fire of lust as the Death of my Redeemer".

III. GRATITUDE.

"*Attendite.*" Stay yet a little while beside the crucified Body and the most sorrowful Mother.

"*Defunctus adhuc loquitur*"—*I have yet many things to say to you.*

(a) "*Quid retribuam Domino.*" Our Blessed Mother asks us this question, "What return shall we make to God our Saviour?" *For (we) are bought at a great price.*

(b) St. Bernard: "O most sweet Lord of all things, and our Saviour, good Jesus, what manner of fitting thanksgiving can I offer Thee?"

(c) St. Anselm: "Consider the state thou wast in, and what has been done for thee. Ponder on thy necessity, and His benignity."

"Thou wast rapidly going downward into the abyss, whence there is no return, and a burden unbearable was weighing thee down. Such wast thou, and utterly helpless. Oh, what was then thy doom? Shudder as thou rememberest, tremble as thou thinkest on it.

"O good Jesus, that was my position, when, without my asking it, or expecting it, Thou didst lift off the load that was crushing me. Bent and bowed down as I was, Thou didst raise me from earth, and say, Have confidence, I have redeemed thee, I have given My Life for thee.

"I was in darkness, and Thou didst dawn on me like

the sunlight, and say, If thou cleave to Me thou shalt never fall into the depths, whither thou wast hastening; but I will guide thee into My Kingdom."

He Who did thus by thee, oh, weigh well what manner of love He deserves, and understand how much thou owest to His love.

(d) St. Bernard: "With my whole heart must He be loved, Who vouchsafed to die for me; but how shall that be done in me unless by Thee, my God?"

St. Augustine: "Give me what Thou wishest me to do. Perfect the work begun by Thee; and grant to my unworthiness the grace which by Thy preventing inspirations Thou hast made me desire."

(e) *I will praise Thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify Thy name for ever. For Thy mercy is great towards me, and Thou hast delivered my soul out of the lower Hell* (Psalm lxxv.).

IV. A KNOWLEDGE OF OUR VALUE IN GOD'S EYES.

They are going to cover up the sacred face. "But *come, my children,*" our Lady says to us, as we take our farewell look; "*come, my children,* and know your worth. *For you were bought at a great price.*"

"And remember that the all-wise God could never pay a great price unless your souls were worth a great price."

(a) St. Bernard: "Not little is the dignity of a soul that approaches so nearly to the Eternal Word by the simplicity of its essence, and by its deathless life.

"A great creation is the soul of man, redeemed by the Blood of Christ. Grievous indeed must have been the loss of a soul which could only be recovered by the Blood of Christ."

(b) St. Augustine: "The Son of God shed His Blood for thee. O soul of man, lift thyself up, see what thy worth is.

"Let man recognise what expectations God has of him, and how chastened in his conversation He wishes him to be whom He has loved with so much condescension.

"Let man understand what his worth is, and what his duty, and as he reflects on what he has cost, let him no longer think meanly of himself, but rather study how to make a return to his Saviour for preserving him."

(c) If any man were to give his life for me, it would be a great price; but St. Thomas writes: "The Body of Christ is not to be rated at the natural value of a body, but as the Body of Christ".

(d) St. Bernard: "O soul, stamped with the likeness of God, redeemed by the Blood of Christ, what hast thou to do with the flesh? Why, O man, dost thou so underrate thy soul, and set thy flesh above it?"

(e) St. Augustine: "Carefully then let us keep what Christ purchased with such an expenditure of His Blood. It is not a thing of small value, but the Blood of Christ, that he wantonly wastes who defiles his soul, which was cleansed by the Blood of Christ and by His Passion.

"Wo to my wretched soul, which seeks not Christ, nor loves Him.

"Most merciful Jesus, to Thee I commend myself, to Thee I give myself back, to Thee I yield myself up."

STATION III.

And taking Him down, he wrapped Him in fine linen (St. Luke xxiii.).

And Joseph, taking the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth (St. Matt. xxvii.).

A. *He wrapped Him in fine linen.*

Now everything has been done reverently and most fittingly. We may then contemplate them lifting the Sacred Body with great care, in order that the winding-sheet may be spread under it, and wrapped round it.

The winding-sheet is a *clean linen cloth*, a new winding-sheet just bought; made of the finest cambric or muslin, manufactured in Egypt for the purpose—fine linen such as Dives wore.

As soon as the shroud hides from their eyes the face so beautiful in its disfigurement, and the form so beloved, silent tears change into a loud lament, the sobbing of their choked hearts.

St. Thomas wishes to have round the altar of the Blessed Sacrament a harmony that is full, and loud, and sweet, and becoming. So is it here. The grief is full and loud, and sweet to the ears of God and most befitting. The winding-sheet, too, and the aromatic herbs, and all other details in this funeral are most becoming.

B. Joseph wrapped Him in fine linen.

Jesus is described in the 108th Psalm as *the poor man broken in heart*. Contrast Him with Dives. This rich man had his fine linen and honour and flattery during his life on earth. *Thou didst receive good things in thy life.*

Jesus is poor through life, but in death has the fine linen and much true honour, and wants for nothing. Neither Dives, nor any other man, before or since, is honoured in death by such a funeral as this, for the heart-felt sorrow of mourners is the glory of the dead.

C. Joseph wrapped Him in fine linen.

Consider the vigilant solicitude of Holy Mary. At Cana of Galilee her careful eye detected every want. Much more now her heart is keeping heedful watch, and sees that nothing is neglected; and most gratefully she reminds her Father in Heaven of every kindness shown by each of these faithful servants round the Sacred Body.

We have no cause to be envious of them. We can show honour to the Body of the Lord in the Most Holy Eucharist, and we can care for Him in the person of His poor little ones.

D. Joseph wrapped Him in fine linen.

It is in this hour, when Jesus dies poor, more poor than He was at His Birth, dies having nothing at all, and yet suddenly possessing all things necessary, and enriching many; it is in this hour that the faithful learn the meaning and the value of Christian poverty, and are urged on to

say from their hearts, "Blessed are Christ's poor: I vow poverty".

For we call it poverty, and our Lord, Who loves to make the most of all we do for Him, calls us His blessed poor. But if we speak accurately, according to our human wisdom, where is our poverty, when God undertakes to watch over us with special care, and to provide us even in this life with a hundred-fold for all we give up?

Blessed indeed are they who trust God, and commit themselves to His care.

E. Joseph wrapped Him in fine linen.

So, too, *in this hour* we learn to love almsgiving.

For if those who give up all for God are so well taken care of, need we fear to lend our Lord a little when He is in want?

For almsgiving, as we call it, is not in reality giving, but only lending; and lending to Him Who is rich enough to repay with good measure, pressed down, and running over.

Give, and it shall be given to you, is His word.

Therefore, He only asks us to lend. For to give to God what is to be given back, is only lending; and to give what is to be given back with large interest is not real giving, nor even lending, but investing most profitably and most securely.

Still our Blessed Lord, Who is accustomed to *reproach and misery*, and quite unaccustomed to be trusted by men, when He finds one ready to trust Him, and lend to Him, is unbounded in His gratitude.

F. Joseph wrapped Him in fine linen.

Not long was the Sacred Body to remain wrapped in the winding-sheet, but long enough to leave its image, with all the wounds, imprinted on the fine linen.

"So many years," our Saviour says to us, "so many years have you known Me, and yet My image is not imprinted on your heart."

G. Joseph wrapped Him in fine linen.

Here we have a specimen of the way in which our

Lord returns what is lent to Him. The winding-sheet, when it has done its work, comes back with the true image of the crucified Body upon it, and an image not made by the hand of man, but by Divine power. Where was there ever in this world rich cloth, or tapestry, or embroidery, to compare with the priceless value of this sacred shroud?

SCENE X.

PREPARATION FOR THE FUNERAL.

STATION I.

And Joseph taking the Body, laid it in his own new monument, which he had hewed out in a rock (St. Matt. xxvii.). Now there was in the place where He was crucified, a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein no man yet had been laid. There, therefore, because of the Parasceve of the Jews, they laid Jesus, because the Sepulchre was nigh at hand (St. John xix.). It was the day of the Parasceve, and the Sabbath drew on (St. Luke xxiii.).

The **STONE OF UNCTION** lies to the west of Calvary and south of the Tomb; and about fifteen feet below the level of the place where the crosses stood. From this stone to the new Tomb in the garden, the distance is about forty yards, to the north-west. The path is probably rugged, and up a very slight incline. We are told that the Jews carried lighted torches when they accompanied a corpse to the grave.

A. The Sabbath drew on.

We may contemplate St. John whispering reverently to our Lady that the great Sabbath will soon commence, and that it is time to carry the Sacred Body to the Tomb. This is heavy news for her heart; but now, as always, she is full of grace. As he is now God's angel to her, once more she answers most devoutly: "*Fiat mihi*"—*Be it done to me according to Thy word.*

Oh, how truly might she say: *My soul is sorrowful even unto death.* How heartily she could say: "*My Son, my*

God, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," if she might sink down on the Stone of Unction, and die.

"My Son Jesus, my Lord and my God, *who will give me that I might die for Thee?* or that I might die with Thee, and be with Thee, and not separated from Thee? *Nevertheless, not as I will, my Son and my Lord, but as Thou.*"

B. *There, therefore, because of the Parasceve of the Jews, they laid Jesus, because the Sepulchre was nigh at hand.*

As we have seen, it is the Parasceve, the preparation day; that is to say, it is both the festival-day of the Pasch, and the preparation day or vigil of the great Sabbath, the Sabbath that occurs during the days of azymes, or unleavened bread.

One reason, therefore, why they do not carry the Body to Gethsemani, is the distance. The Sabbath is drawing near; the time is short.

Another reason doubtless is, *that the poor Man, broken in Heart*, wishes to be poor to the end, and to have the embalming, and His funeral, and His tomb, all as an alms.

Our Lady is therefore well content with this new tomb that is near.

"Blessed Mother of God, pray for all men and women consecrated by the vow of poverty, that they may love their poverty unto death."

"Pray, too, Holy Mother, for all disciples of Christ, that they may ever give alms in gladness to the poor Man, broken in Heart."

C. *There was in the garden a new sepulchre.*

All then is ready; the Admirable Mother has given the sign; and Joseph and Nicodemus, helped, doubtless, by the future martyr, Longinus, bend down devoutly, and with great care and reverential tenderness lift the Sacred Body. We are told that commonly the women mourners headed the funeral procession.

But at this funeral, we find it assumed that the Blessed Mother chooses rather to walk behind the bearers, with her eyes resting on the shroud and her hands supporting

the Sacred Head. St. John is at her side, and Magdalen too perchance, to take care of her as she walks; and the Holy Angels are watching and bearing her up, that she strike not (her) foot against a stone.

"O vos omnes." O all you who go by the way, pause on your journey a little while, and follow this holy funeral. For never before has there been on this earth such a spectacle for angels and for men. The mourners are few; but not again till the end of time will there be gathered round a grave, mourners so blessed, so holy; and never again shall there be laid in the tomb a Body like this crucified Body, the Divine Body of God made Man.

All the blessed choirs of Heaven are here with their Queen, taking their part in this new Paschal solemnity; and all are saying: *This mother is to be admired above measure, and worthy to be remembered by good men, who bore with a good courage, for the hope that she had in God; joining a man's heart to a woman's thought* (2 Mach. vii.).

STATION II.

THE FUNERAL PROCESSION.

There, therefore, because of the Parasceve of the Jews, they laid Jesus, because the Sepulchre was nigh at hand (St. John xix. 42).

A. The Sepulchre was nigh at hand.

The procession is formed; the torches are alight; and, better than the torch-light, there is heavenly love burning in every heart.

Contemplate at leisure the great solicitude of the bearers, lest by any want of care on their part there should come some disturbing accident. Their Guardian Angels are devoutly helping them at every step.

Mark how they all turn their eyes upon the Sorrowful Mother before they start, for they never tire of looking on the Blessed among women, full of grace. "*Qui bibit me, adhuc sitiet*" (Ecclus. xxiv.). Holy Church puts these

words into the mouth of Holy Mary: *They that drink me shall yet thirst for more.*

B. The Sepulchre was nigh at hand.

In contemplation we have not only to look at the Admirable Mother's outward appearance and demeanour, as she walks with her hands bearing up the Sacred Head, and her eyes fixed on the holy shroud in which her treasure lies; we are allowed, too, to try to enter into her secret thoughts. *Sursum corda!* Our Guardian Angels whisper to us: "Lift up your hearts and endeavour to form some notion of the heavenly yearnings in her heart". Her Divine Son, as we have seen, used the holy Psalms while on His Cross. What psalm, what canticle, what sacred song is ascending from her heart—more sweet than fragrant incense to God on high?

She, we may say, is "eminenter," that is, transcendently, the Church of her Son. On her the Holy Spirit has already poured out the gifts He has in store for the Church to come. Holy Church, therefore, presents her to us saying: *Counsel and equity is mine; prudence is mine; strength is mine.*

She, then, may be now filled with that inspiration which afterwards Holy Church communicates to her priests. When the Sacrifice is consummated, and they come slowly down from their Calvary bearing within them the Body of the Lord, because they have within them the burning fire, the furnace of love, they are taught to repeat the holy Song of the Children in the furnace of Babylon.

So now may the Blessed Mother, as she bears her loved burden, her light burden, be from the very depth of her soul and with all the energy and power of her heart, calling on all God's works to bless the Lord: *All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord. Sing to the Lord a new song.*

For this is now an entirely new Canticle. In the years gone by, God's works were the works of His creation; all the works of the six days. But since the sunset yesterday God is become known in Judea in His new character of

Redeemer. New works more wonderful than those of the six days have been crowded into this Good Friday from the First Vespers to the Second.

"O Blessed among women, bid us come round you and learn of you how to make our thanksgiving when we are bearing within us the Body of thy Son."

THANKSGIVING AFTER COMMUNION.

In her heart, then, the fire is burning more actively than in the furnace of the three children. Let us listen most attentively to what she says.

"Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino"—All ye works of the Lord, all ye works of my Divine Son, bless the Lord Jesus.

Ye angels of the Lord, ye twelve legions who stood by and saw Him suffer, and recorded diligently every thought and word and work of His from His Conception to His Death, *bless the Lord*; bless my Son with me.

All ye powers of the Lord ("*virtutes Domini*"), all ye wonders of His courage and fortitude, manly and more than manly, all Divine, *bless the Lord*, bless my Son Jesus.

O ye sun and moon, *bless the Lord*: for He worked for us in the sunlight, He watched for us when the moon shone.

O ye stars of heaven, *bless the Lord*, for you were witnesses of His tears and His prayers for men.

May every shower and dew bless my Son: for every refreshing shower and dew has been bought anew for us, and, thanks to His death, will bring refreshment to our souls also.

All ye breezes, *bless the Lord*: for ye are laden now with fragrance from Calvary.

May fire and heat bless my Son: and ever put men in mind of the fire and heat which burned in His Heart.

O ye cold and heat, *bless my Son*: for in the cold and in the heat He bore the burden of the day, and He sought and He saved the lost sheep.

O ye frost and cold, *bless the Lord*: for cold was the night as He lay prostrate praying for men.

May the ice and the snow *bless the Lord*: for hearts colder and harder than the ice shall be melted now, and the soul of the sinner shall become white as snow.

O ye nights and days, *bless the Lord*: may every watch of the night and every watch of the day bring to men's minds the Passion of my Son. For He loved them at the sunset, He loved them in the midnight, He loved them at the cock-crow, He loved them as the day broke, He loved them in the noonday, He loved them in the Vesper hour of the evening sacrifice, when He bowed His Head and died. He loved His own to the end.

O light and darkness, *bless my Son*: for He has by His Passion sanctified the light and sanctified the darkness.

Oh, let the earth *bless the Lord*: for He lay upon the earth to pray and weep for men; and the drops of His Blood bedewed and sanctified the earth.

O ye mountains and hills, *bless my Son*: and tell to the hearts of men how He loved them, and prayed for them, and suffered for them, and died for them on the mountain and the hillside.

Four hills at Jerusalem especially invite us to bless the Lord. Mount Sion, on the south, where stands the Cenacle and the houses of Caiphas and Annas. Mount Olivet, on the east, with Gethsemani on its slope. Mount Moriah, also on the east, where was the Temple and Pilate's Prætorium. Mount Calvary, on the west, on the slope of Mount Gareb.

All ye things that spring up in the earth, *bless the Lord*: remind the hearts of men how weary His feet were when they trod upon the grass and the herbs that grow, and how His tears, and the sweat of His brow, and the drops of His Blood, blessed and sanctified the flowers and the herbs.

Ye seas and rivers, *bless my Son*: tell my children how in the river He was baptised as their brother, as if one of their sinful selves: and bid them, too, not to forget with what supremacy He hushed to rest the stormy sea.

O ye fowls of the air, bless my Son, and keep in men's memory that they are dearer to His Heart than the birds of the air, of which He has so much care.

O ye beasts and cattle, bless the Lord: and say to men, your masters: *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel hath not known Me, and My people hath not understood* (Isaia 1.).

But, more than all these, ye sons of men, now given to me to be my children, bless my Son Jesus: for at a great price He bought you.

And may Israel bless the Lord: may His chosen people, may His disciples, may the children of His Church, may all whom He calls to follow Him closely, know and love and bless my Son.

And oh, above all, ye Priests of the Lord, who are henceforth to offer the clean oblation, to hold in your hands the Body of my Son, may you reverence, may you love, may you serve, may you bless my Son Jesus, Who has shared with you His eternal Priesthood.

And ye servants, ye faithful servants of the Lord who follow Him closely in meekness, in humility, and in poverty, bless my poor Son, my meek Son, my humble Son, for He has made your yoke sweet and your burden light.

O ye spirits and souls of the just, in Heaven, on earth, and in the cleansing fires, bless my Son Jesus: for from His Calvary and His altar joy will go up to Heaven, peace to men on earth, and refreshment to the suffering souls.

"Blessed Mother of God, be with us and help us when we have within us the Body of thy Son Jesus, that we may glorify Him with thee. Mother of God, pray for us sinners."

C. *The Sepulchre was nigh at hand.*

Though the way be short, make leisure to contemplate carefully. "*Attendite*," our Lady says to us most kindly;

"for, *defunctus adhuc loquitur*, my crucified Son has still many things to say to you."

This is the hour in which He impresses this truth upon us, *My yoke is sweet, and My burden light*. "Go ask those loving men who bear My Body: Have I laid a heavy load upon them? Ask any disciple who loves Me whether My yoke is heavy."

D. *The Sepulchre was nigh at hand.*

"Hearken, My child," our Lord says, for His silent lips are speaking to you:

"Do not envy these chosen ones". For "who is more privileged, they who carry Me in their hands, or you who have Me as your Food?"

E. *The Sepulchre was nigh.*

"*Defunctus adhuc loquitur*." From His winding-sheet our Saviour says to us: "Why do you stand gazing on My funeral? Have I not said it: Go treat My little ones as reverently and lovingly as these disciples treat Me, and it shall be as if you did all to Me?"

HOLY OBEDIENCE.

F. *The Sepulchre was nigh.*

"*Defunctus adhuc loquitur*." His lifeless lips are speaking to us.

"O all you Christian fathers and mothers who pass by, and still more, you Fathers and Mothers who, in monasteries and convents and religious houses, are in charge over My consecrated ones who for My sake have left father and mother, and hence have a right to their hundred-fold—that is, to a hundred times more charity and tenderness, than they have left behind: oh, stay, not a little while, but tarry long, till you fix deeply on your minds and hearts the care, the tenderness, the reverence, the humility, the charity, with which these disciples carry My Body. For you must do according to this model."

To our Guardian Angels, the Lord hath given a commandment concerning us that they bear us in their hands,

even as mothers carry their infants. What are Christian parents and Christian superiors but the guardian angels of their charge? What is to be their constant solicitude? Surely that Christ's little ones committed to their keeping do not strike their foot against the stone of scandal and fall.

G. The Sepulchre was nigh.

If parents and religious superiors can learn from this scene, so may children, and still more, so may those consecrated by vow to obedience, here contemplate with profit. St. Ignatius of Loyola, a great master of obedience, tells us to be in the hands of God's delegates like the Divine corpse in the hands of the bearers. They may carry it whither they will, and it makes no resistance. The lifeless Body here in the winding-sheet is thus our most holy model. *Look, and do according to the pattern.*

If we vow obedience, and are faithful to our covenant, God on His side will be infinitely faithful: and with a Providence that never sleeps or slumbers will see that our vowed obedience brings us nothing but good. Alas! what multitudes of men have been crushed and ruined under the unbearable and unblessed yoke of slavish obedience to a tyrant! But nothing on earth is more safe or secure, nowhere a shorter or more blessed path to eternal life, than a wise and loving obedience to our Lord in His delegates.

SCENE XI.

THE TOMB.

STATION I.

Joseph laid it in his own new Tomb, which he had hewed out of a rock (St. Matt. xxvii.).

Joseph laid Him in a Sepulchre that was hewed out of a rock (St. Mark xv.).

This man laid Him in a Sepulchre that was hewed in stone, wherein never yet any man had been laid (St. Luke xxiii.). There was in the place, where He was crucified, a garden, and in the garden a new Sepulchre wherein no man yet had been laid. There, therefore, they laid Jesus, because the Sepulchre was nigh at hand (St. John xix.).

1. The Tomb is situated, as has been said, about forty yards from THE STONE OF UNCTION, and a few yards less from the spot where the crosses stood. It stands about fifteen feet lower than the level of Calvary, to the south. St. John's words support the existing tradition as to the site. According to him, the garden in which the new Tomb stood, is in the place where He was crucified: and the Sepulchre was nigh at hand.

2. St. Luke writes: *A Sepulchre that was hewed in stone.* Some students have understood these words to mean, "built out of hewn stones". But the words of St. Matthew and St. Mark render this interpretation improbable.

St. Matthew writes: *A Sepulchre hewed out in a rock*; St. Mark, *hewed out of a rock.*

The tradition so generally accepted agrees better with these words. According to this tradition the Holy Sepulchre was hewed out in a solid rock.

3. As we have seen in former chapters, the tombs in Judea were sometimes like our graves, hollowed out in the ground and covered with a slab; sometimes hewn out of a projecting rock, and with an upright doorway; sometimes, again, they were built of cut stones.

4. The tomb of our Lord is hewn out of the rock, with an upright doorway between three and four feet high.

At the time of the burial it consisted of two parts: an outward vestibule or ante-chamber, about a yard in depth, and then an inward chamber, entered by the low door mentioned above.

The outward porch, or vestibule, was cut away, it is supposed, in St. Helen's time by those who were building the Basilica.

The inward chamber is about nine feet from east to west, that is, from the entrance doorway to the opposite wall, and about seven feet from south to north. The height of the inner chamber was probably about nine feet. Venerable Bede writes that in his time travellers could scarcely touch the ceiling with their lifted hands. The stone bed on which the Sacred Body was laid, stands on the right hand of the entrance door, from east to west; that is, along the right hand wall of the chamber as you enter.

5. A question is discussed whether the Holy Sepulchre remained united with the rock behind, or was detached from it. Some careful writers think that at the time of the burial it was attached to the rock, but was separated and isolated by the builders who worked for St. Helen's Basilica.

6. Some modern critics who assail the traditions regarding the Holy Sepulchre, adduce the argument, that there is no rock on the ground from which the Tomb could have been hewed. The supporters of the tradition answer, that the rock was necessarily cleared away when the workmen were levelling the ground for the great Basilica.

7. The opponents of the tradition likewise argue that if the Tomb now venerated be the true one, the foundations of the city wall ought to be found at about two hundred or two hundred and fifty feet to the east.

The answer given by careful explorers is that some portions of those foundations have been discovered; but that as the eastern wall of the Basilica stood on the western wall of the city, some of the foundations of the wall were cleared away, and in other parts, the foundations of the wall and the foundations of the Basilica became confounded together.

A. *There, therefore, they laid Jesus.*

In front, then, of the Holy Tomb they lower the bier. Students of Jewish antiquities tell us that funeral processions, as soon as the bier was laid down, walked round it reciting the 90th Psalm.

We may contemplate this holy company of mourners observing the prescribed rite. We can listen to the Admirable Mother, *worthy to be remembered by good men*, saying in most devout sorrow: *He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of Jacob.* And we can listen to the response from tearful and broken voices: *He shall say to the Lord: Thou art my Protector and my Refuge; my God, in Thee will I put my trust.*

Most attentively we must give ear, and join our hearts with this holy choir as they continue their song of hope.

He hath delivered Me from the snare of the hunters. He will overshadow Thee with His shoulders, and under His wings Thou shalt trust.

Thou shalt not be afraid of the terrors of the night; of the arrow that flieth in the day.

There shall no evil come to Thee (now). Neither shall the scourge (any more) come near Thy dwelling.

He hath given His angels charge over Thee. Because He hoped in Me I will deliver Him. I will protect Him because He hath known My name.

I am with Him in tribulation. I will deliver Him, and will glorify Him.

I will fill Him with length of days, and I will show Him My salvation.

B. *Joseph laid it in his own new Tomb.*

Joseph, therefore, and Nicodemus, bending down enter through the low door into the Tomb, and then the bier is drawn by the others close to the doorway.

With great care and reverence, those outside, without difficulty, lift the emaciated Body and deliver it into the hands of Joseph and Nicodemus inside, who devoutly lay it on its last resting-place; and at once come out, to make room for the Blessed Mother. Helped by John and Magdalen, she bows herself down and enters with them. There she kneels, as they kneel, to adore the Sacred Body.

"*Attendite.*" We must stay here to form, in our poor way, some conception of her holy thoughts.

Most reverently and lovingly she gazed in days gone by on her Child as He lay in the crib. In after years day by day, and hour by hour, her holy eyes rested on Him as *He grew in grace with God and with men*; and now she kneels and fixes her motherly eyes on the shroud that contains, what we call, the mortal remains of her Son, the lifeless Body of her God.

As she enters the Tomb and kneels, the blessed angels are watching their Queen with reverence and love ineffable. "*Dominus custodiat introitum tuum et exitum tuum*"—"Hail, full of grace! May the Lord keep thee and bless thee and enrich thee with more and more graces at thy coming in and at thy going out of His holy Tomb."

With admirable diligence she has trafficked ever since the hour when she first looked on her Son. Every hour, every minute, she has grown in grace. In every act and every word and every thought she has been *full of grace*; full with a fulness ever growing in her heart, which grace is always enlarging—"Dilatasti cor meum" (Psalm cxviii.). Full of grace she enters into the holy Tomb; more full she goes out. For her heart traffics with all the diligence of perfect love while she is there.

Our Lady's devout servant, St. Bonaventure, suggests to us thoughts such as may have been in our Lady's mind in this hour.

"My Son, I clasp Thee in death to my heart. Hard indeed is this separation made by death. Sweet and full of delight was our intercourse. To others we never gave cause of complaint or quarrel, though Thou, my Son, art now slain as if guilty. Faithfully, my Son, I served Thee and Thou me. But in Thy supreme agony and conflict Thy Father willed not to give Thee help, and I had not power to help Thee.

"For the sake of mankind whom Thou wouldst redeem, Thou didst betray Thyself. Hard indeed and cruel exceedingly was Thy task of redeeming. For man's salvation I rejoice in Thy Passion. But over Thy pain and Thy Death I grieve beyond measure. For I know well that Thou hast done no evil, and altogether without cause wast cruelly put to death, a death so shameful.

"Now, therefore, my Son, our intimate union is rent asunder, and I must needs be separated from Thee. I, then, Thy disconsolate Mother, must bury Thee. But after that whither shall I go? Where shall I dwell, my

Son? How shall I be able to live without Thee? Gladly indeed would I be buried with Thee, that wherever Thou art there I might rest. But as for my body, that may not be; but my spirit can be buried. My soul I can bury with Thy Body within Thy Tomb."

As she thus pours out her heart, her tears are flowing fast upon the winding-sheet.

But the Most Prudent Virgin knows she may not tarry longer; she rises up and once more clasps in her arms the Sacred Body, and most humbly and lovingly kisses it, and, remembering her Son's parting prayer, lifts up her eyes and says with all the fervour of her heart: "O Father, into Thy hands, into Thy keeping, I commend His Divine Body. I go, whither I must go; but my heart will remain where my treasure is."

Once more her Archangel whispers to her soul: *Fear not, Mother of God. Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with thee. He is not dead, but sleepeth.*

STATION II.

And the women that were come with Him from Galilee, following after, saw the Sepulchre, and how His Body was laid (St. Luke xxiii.).

And Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of Joseph beheld where He was laid (St. Mark xv.).

And Joseph rolled a stone to the door of the Sepulchre (St. Mark xv.).

And Joseph rolled a great stone to the door of the Monument (St. Matt. xxvii.).

A. And the women that were come with Him from Galilee, following after, saw the Sepulchre, and how His Body was laid.

Our Blessed Lady, doubtless, shortens her visit to the Tomb, because her humble charity wishes the other devout mourners to come in and see how they have laid Him.

When, therefore, John has helped her to go out through the low door, Magdalen remains within, and Mary of Cleo

phas, the mother of Joseph, and her daughter Salome, and other devout women from Galilee enter, to see how the Sacred Body is laid. For as we have seen, if *fear neglects nothing*, love is still more accurate, and keen to know every detail. When reminded by Joseph that the sunset is not far off, they all fall on their knees to adore and with reverent obedience retire. Sorrow when not so blessed and so holy is at times unreasonable; but this is an acceptable hour, and Calvary is an acceptable spot. Grace is being poured out in abundance.

B. *And Joseph rolled a great stone to the door of the Monument.*

Joseph and Nicodemus roll, along the groove prepared for it, the large round stone that is to close up the doorway. From the fragment of this stone still preserved in the small chapel at Jerusalem belonging to the Armenians, which is supposed to stand on the site of the house of Caiphas, we can see that it was circular like a millstone.

Forget not that this great stone barrier can make no separation between the hearts of these mourners and the crucified Body. They can all say: *I am sure that neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is Christ Jesus our Lord.*

STATION III.

And there was there Mary Magdalen, and the other Mary, sitting over against the Sepulchre.

And Joseph rolled the great stone to the door of the Monument and went his way (St. Matt. xxvii.).

And the women that were with Him, returning, prepared spices and ointments; and on the Sabbath-day they rested according to the commandment (St. Luke xxiii.).

A. *The women returning prepared spices.*

Some of the women, therefore, hastened away to procure spices and ointments.

From this fact we learn that all has been accomplished

at the Tomb some time before sundown, when the Great Sabbath begins.

Mark the loving devotion of these women. They have gone through much toil to-day. They are worn out with grief. Nicodemus has provided a very ample store of aromatics: but their hearts are not content. Enough has not been done for the Lord Jesus. What wonder? Was He content with what He had done for us, as long as more could be done?

What is the angelic St. Thomas's counsel to us with regard to the Body of our Lord hidden in the tabernacle?

Quantum potes, tantum aude,
Quia major omni laude,
Nec laudare sufficit.

Whate'er thou hast, O give it all;
For still thy gift shall be too small,
And never canst thou give enough.

B. *And there was there Mary Magdalen and the other Mary, sitting over against the Sepulchre.*

All then did not hasten away. As we often observe, the Evangelists are reticent about our Lady. *It is good*, St. Raphael said, *to hide the secret of a King* (Tob. xii.). What passes between our Lord and His Mother is surely the secret of the King. But still, we are allowed and encouraged to conjecture. We may then assume that Magdalen remains there because she too is there as well as the other Mary.

C. *There was there Magdalen and the other Mary.*

St. John in the Apocalypse, writes: *I saw a Book sealed with seven seals: and I wept much because no man was worthy to open the Book, or to see it* (Apoc. v.).

Doubtless the Holy Mother and Magdalen and the other Mary begin again to weep, and weep much, now that the great stone is rolled and the door closed, and no one can open it for them.

The breath of our mouth Christ the Lord is taken in our sins; to Whom we said: Under Thy shadow we shall live among the Gentiles (Lament. iv.).

Could our Lady say these words, or only Magdalen? Perhaps she also might, for if her Divine Son can identify

Himself with His sinful brethren, and pray as if He were the sinner, so, doubtless, can the Blessed Mother make herself one with her sinful children, to plead with them, and for them.

How earnestly Abigail pleaded with David for her foolish husband, and took his sins upon herself: *Upon me let the iniquity be, my lord. Let not the lord, my King, regard this naughty man, Nabal* (1 Kings xxv.). So may the Most Holy Mother unite herself with her new family and say: *The breath of our Lord, Christ the Lord, is taken in our sins.*

And Magdalen and John and others can add: "When He was with us we felt secure, and said: *Under Thy shadow we can go anywhere on the earth and live among the Gentiles*".

D. Mary Magdalen, and the other Mary, sitting over against the Sepulchre.

"Blessed Saints, now seeing in Heaven the Lord face to face, pray for us exiles, that we may have grace to tarry over against the Sepulchre thinking on Him Whom we have pierced, and listening to what He speaks to us from the Tomb."

HOLY COMMUNION.

"*Attendite.*" When the Most Holy Eucharist is given to us, each of us becomes the Sacred Tomb.

"Holy Mother of God, be with us in that hour. And ye, too, blessed Saints of Calvary, St. John and St. Magdalen, St. Joseph and Nicodemus, St. Dismas and St. Longinus, intercede for us that once more your beloved Lord may have a fitting tomb to rest in."

(a) THE SEPULCHRE ON CALVARY IS NEW AND CLEAN. *Create in me, O God, a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within my bowels.*

(b) THE TOMB ON CALVARY IS HEWED IN THE ROCK. Alas! blessed Saints, my heart, too, is of stone. Beseech the Holy Mother to remind her Son of His promise: *I will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness. And I will put a new spirit in their*

bowels. And I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh (Ezech. xi. and xxxvi.).

(c) THE TOMB OF JOSEPH IS A RESTING-PLACE FOR JESUS. *There the wicked cease from tumult, and the wearied in strength (is) at rest* (Job iii.). The cry of Vah, and Away with Him, does not reach Him here. Alas! shall His enemies be in my soul to molest Him and offend Him during His short stay with me?

(d) THIS TOMB IN THE ROCK IS COLD. "Mother of God, pray for us poor sinners, that the fire of anger may be quite extinct when we go to the altar; and that no unhallowed fire of concupiscence may be burning."

(e) IN THE TOMB ON CALVARY THERE IS SILENCE.

"Blessed Mother, pray for us, that when we are preparing for the Holy Table we may with thee have the words of thy Son laid up in our hearts, but not the idle and sinful words of the world disturbing us."

(f) THE DOOR OF THE TOMB ON CALVARY IS CLOSED AND SEALED.

"O Admirable Mother, pray for us poor sinners, that when thy Divine Son is with us, we may have a lively faith, and close the doors of our senses, and love to remain with Him; and not be in haste to scatter our thoughts and to have our souls poured abroad like water."

Alas! our Blessed Lord described our souls when He said that the good seed fell upon the open highway, and the birds of the air came and carried it away.

(g) THE SEPULCHRE OF THE LORD IS GLORIOUS. Why? Because His Sacred Body there reposed once, and for a short time. How glorious in the sight of the angels, how pure, how holy ought to be the Christian soul and the Christian's body, which has been so often, so often, the resting-place of the Lord. *So long a time am I with you, and not yet have you known Me* (St. John xiv.). The tongue on which My Body reposes, is it still to be a *restless evil*? The body now become the Sepulchre of the Lord, is it still to be a *body subject to sin*?

THE VOW OF CHASTITY.

E. And there was there Mary Magdalen, and the other Mary, sitting over against the Sepulchre.

Above all others, consecrated Religious ought to love to sit here with Magdalen over against the holy Tomb, for it is a picture of the consecrated soul of the Bride of Christ.

(a) There was in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein no man had been laid.

If to all Christians St. Paul writes: *I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God. For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ* (2 Cor. xi.), what words would He speak to hearts consecrated by the vow of chastity?

(b) And what all good Christians desire to be on the day of Holy Communion, the consecrated must be habitually.

Therefore, fires of passion must not burn in that soul—THE TOMB IS COLD.

(c) The noises of this world must not intrude there—THE TOMB IS SILENT.

(d) There Jesus must find a resting-place—THE WICKED MUST NOT TROUBLE HIM. *Jesus weary in strength MUST THERE AT LEAST BE AT REST* (Job iii.).

(e) There must the gate be closed and guarded—*A garden enclosed: a fountain sealed up* (Cant. iv.).

All the senses are gates, to be opened when the Lord wills, but not at the bidding of His enemies—the world, the flesh, the devil.

My consecrated Spouse is a garden enclosed and a fountain sealed up.

A garden enclosed: for whenever the soul is kept in holy recollection, then fragrant virtues send up their perfume to the Lord.

A fountain sealed up: for whenever the powers of the soul are not weakened by dissipation, the consecrated

surely becomes a plentiful fountain whence grace flows forth to other souls.

This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it; because the Lord hath entered in by it, and it shall be shut (Ezech. xlv.).

My house shall be called a house of prayer. You shall not make it a den of thieves.

A wise spiritual Father used to say: "Shut up a good Religious in a prison and his soul will do something great for God". On the other hand, the dying Patriarch said to his son: *Thou art poured out like water, grow thou not* (Genesis xlix.).

When the gates of the senses stand always open, the heavenly seed of grace can always be carried away by the birds of the air; there can be no growth of heavenly strength.

(f) *A fountain sealed up.* All the rules and regulations of religious life, the prescribed discipline of the house, and the walls of enclosure, are only the seals set upon the Tomb where our Lord rests.

(g) Observe, too, the Body only of our Lord is imprisoned; His Divine Soul is at large, multiplying works of mercy. And so in religious life, even where enclosure is most strict, while the wise of this world exclaim against the idle recluse, the consecrated soul can range over the earth, praying with tears for every sinner in need. Yes, and it can travel beyond the bounds of the earth, to give relief to the Holy Souls in Purgatory, and to give glory and joy to our Lord in Heaven.

F. And there was there Mary Magdalen, and the other Mary, sitting over against the Tomb.

"O vos omnes"—O all ye who go by the way, stay here a little while, watching with the Mother of God and with Magdalen; watching and listening, for, "*defunctus adhuc loquitur*". Words will be whispered into your soul from the silent Tomb.

For from His Tomb He reminds us of the word He afterwards taught to His Apostle.

(You) are buried together with Him by Baptism unto death (Romans vi.).

In Baptism the old man of sin dies and is buried: and we rise out of the heavenly waters to walk in newness of life (Romans vi.).

Stay by My Tomb, and look at the dead Body crucified for you, and do according to the pattern.

Stay here contemplating, till from My Sepulchre a virtue goes out to your soul to extinguish the lust of the flesh.

Stay here till from My closed eyes grace goes out to cure in you the lust of the eyes for riches.

Stay here beside My Tomb till through My Death and Passion your soul is delivered from the pride of life.

G. There was there Mary Magdalen sitting over against the Tomb.

Because many sins are forgiven her, she stays here, loving much. Look thou and do according to the pattern.

H. Sitting over against the Tomb.

St. Paul, in after years, wisely tarried here considering in his heart this lifeless Body, till death became dear to him, and he was able to say with gladness, *I die daily*. He was daily going through the bitterness of death.

St. Ignatius tells his disciples that their chiefest and most earnest endeavour ought to be to win grace to die daily and hourly by self-denial. For in proportion as self dies, Christ Jesus lives and reigns in our hearts.

I. Sitting over against the Tomb.

His Sepulchre shall be glorious (Isaias xi.). Already the fulfilment of the prophecy has begun. It is not costly marble or rich carvings that make a tomb glorious, but the hearty and holy mourning of the faithful who survive. When survivors have in their hearts a good word to say for the dead, as they had for Dorcas, we may believe the old proverb, *Vox populi, vox Dei*; and have a strong hope

that it has fared well with the departed one at the judgment seat.

Our Blessed Lord counsels us all to make friends of the poor by works of mercy and by charity, that when we fail they may receive (us) into everlasting dwellings (St. Luke xvi.).

Blessed are ye poor, He says, for yours is the Kingdom of God. It is yours, to possess it yourselves; and it is yours, to give it by your suffrages to those who have been your friends.

J. Sitting over against the Tomb.

His Sepulchre shall be glorious to the end of time. For He has taken measures for our sakes and for His own, that it shall not be forgotten. He hath made a memorial of His wonderful works. The Tabernacle is His glorious Sepulchre. There He lies as if dead, as if He did not see nor hear, that we may live by faith, and merit by believing. But every instant He is watching for us, yearning for us, hearing most gladly every desire of our hearts, and ever inviting us, *Come to Me you who labour*.

How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!

With what contentment of heart would they who now sit over against Thy Tomb remain also before Thy holy Tabernacle saying:

O memoriale mortis Domini!

Panis vivus, vitam præstans homini!

Præsta meæ menti de te vivere,

Et Te illi semper dulce sapere.

O sweet memorial of my Saviour

dead!

O ever living and life-giving Bread!

Grant that my soul on Thee may ever live,

And taste the sweetness it is Thine to give.¹

My soul longeth for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God. For the sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself where she may lay her young ones: Thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Better is one day in

¹ Father Eyre's translation.

Thy courts above thousands. I have chosen to be an abject in the courts of the Lord rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners (Psalm lxxxiii.).

Till the day break, and the shadows retire, I will go to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense (Cant. iv.).

St. Bernard teaches that as often as we think devoutly on the Passion we make a good spiritual Communion.

SCENE XII.

FAREWELL TO THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

STATION I.

And Joseph rolled a great stone to the door of the monument, and went his way (St. Matt. xxvii. 60).

A. We need not believe that Joseph went away before our Blessed Lady retired. Doubtless he would stay with her to the end, to be her servant.

Before his departure, therefore, at a sign from the Blessed Mother, he leads the way from the Sepulchre back to the Cross on Calvary, for the Cross of Jesus is still standing.

The Holy Ghost has given us a picture of the valiant woman who *hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle (Prov. xxxi.).* Holy Mary is the valiant woman, and she wishes to look carefully to see in what state she leaves everything on the mountain of myrrh, the hill of frankincense. Worn and weary as she is, she has no mind to eat her bread idle.

We may contemplate our Lady, with her devout companions, kneeling down to adore and kiss the Holy Rood.

"We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee. Because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world."

By her direction, Joseph and Nicodemus again set their ladders, and carefully wash with their sponges every part of the Cross that is stained by the Sacred Blood.

And then they take out the wedges that fix the Holy Rood in the rock, and most carefully lower it. So that the Blessed Mother and all the rest can devoutly kiss the places of the nails, and the glorious title in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

B. *Joseph went his way.*

The servants of Nicodemus and Joseph are still here, and very gladly will they, if so it may be, do service to the Holy Mother, by carrying away the Holy Rood. But the centurion, Longinus, has not, because of his conversion, lost the sense of duty, nor ceased to be an obedient soldier. He represents to Joseph that the Governor's warrant has only given the Sacred Body; that he, therefore, is bound to carry out the law, and bury in the appointed grave the instruments of death, the Cross and the nails, and the title also which belongs to the Cross.

Some devout writers think that our Lady had the holy nails with her in her solitude; but the tradition is that they were found by St. Helen with the Cross and the title. The crown of thorns was not included in Pilate's sentence. therefore need not be buried.

"O Eternal Father," the Blessed Mother's breaking heart once more sighs out, "*if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.* Must I part with the Holy Cross of my Lord? with this loved death-bed of my Son? And must these precious nails too be buried deep down in the earth?"

"*They have laid me in the lower pit, in the dark places, and in the shadow of death. Shall Thy wonders, my Son, be known in the dark, and Thy justice in the land of forgetfulness? (Ps. lxxxvii.).* Shall Thy love, my God, be buried and forgotten? But, O my Father, *not as I will, but as Thou.*"

But her blessed Angels made known to her that not for ever shall the Holy Cross and the nails lie buried; that for a season concealment will be a necessary protection against her enemies; but in due time, one walking in her

footsteps, one *joining a woman's thought to a man's heart*, will recover the lost treasure for Holy Church.

Contemplate our Blessed Lady with most humble obedience giving up the holy nails which she has been carrying in her bosom.

STATION II.

AT THE GRAVE OF ST. DISMAS.

Joseph rolled a stone, and went his way (v. 60).

A. The grave used for the crucified malefactors on this occasion, we are told, was a wide cleft, a fissure in the rock, possibly caused by the earthquake. It stood between 40 and 50 feet below the level of Calvary, in the city ditch that lay to the east, between Golgotha and the fortifications, about two hundred feet from the spot where the crosses stood.

Down to this grave Nicodemus and Joseph and St. Longinus devoutly carry the Holy Rood and the nails. There they cover them up in the earth, to wait the hour when the dark night of persecution is ended, and a Sabbath-day of rest is granted to Holy Church.

Dulce lignum, dulces clavos,	Dear Cross, dear nails, lie buried there,
Dulce pondus sustinet.	Dear was the Burden that ye bare.

B. *Joseph went his way.*

After she has noted carefully where and how they have laid the Holy Cross and the Nails, and the Title, she prays them to show her the exact spot where the body of the good thief is lying with his cross. Then, knowing her wishes, they reverently arrange, as best they can, his resting-place also. And now the deep wound of her heart is opened afresh, for there, close beside, is the body and the cross of the impenitent.

The word of holy Simeon is weighing her down: *He is set for the fall and the resurrection of many.*

Alas, alas! she knows too well, this is only the first example of the Christian graveyard, where saint and sinner shall lie side by side. Both have looked on the

crucifix: both have knelt at the altar; both have been fed with the Body of the Lord.

Sumunt boni, sumunt mali,
Sorte tamen inæquali,
Vitæ, vel interitus.

The wicked and the good,
Both taste the Heavenly Food,
One is the Food; not so
The outcome—weal and woe.

All did eat of the same spiritual food, and all drank of the same spiritual drink. And they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. But with the most of them God was not pleased (1 Cor. x.).

C. *Joseph went his way.*

Contemplate Holy Mary gazing through her tears on the grave of St. Dismas.

When David, in the early days of his reign, stood in Hebron by the grave of his murdered General Abner, he *lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people also wept. And the young King moaning and lamenting over Abner said: Not as cowards are wont to die, Abner died. The King also said to his servants: Do you not know that a prince and a great man is slain this day in Israel?* (2 Kings iii.). The Blessed Mother now says a loving word to let her companions know how great a Saint lies buried there with the Holy Cross.

STATION III.

RETURN TO THE PLACE OF CALVARY.

Joseph rolled a great stone and went his way (v. 60).

A. From the grave of the good thief and of the holy Cross, our Blessed Lady wishes to return to the *place of Calvary*. The rough pathway is up a very steep incline. Her companions express their great anxiety lest the effort be too great for her wasted strength, but she gently reassures them, and they most reverently and lovingly help her to ascend.

Arrived at Calvary, they all kneel with her to kiss the spot where the Cross was planted in the rock. *Look unto the rock whence you are hewn, and the hole of the pit whence*

you are dug out. Look unto Abraham your father, and to Sara that bore you. (Isaias li.). Out of this rock sprang for us the tree of life. Here Jesus hung for us, "and there," close by, they whisper to Nicodemus and Joseph, "the Blessed Mother stood motionless during the dark hours".

All the ground near is consecrated by the drops of blood and water that fell upon it.

Blood of Christ, inebriate me.

Water from the Side of Christ, wash me.

Passion of Christ, strengthen me.

B. *Joseph went his way.*

They move on a few yards, and again kneel, saying nothing, but weeping much.

"On this spot," Longinus the Centurion tells Joseph, "the Cross was laid on the ground. It was here they crucified Him." The Blessed Mother knows exactly where the blood flowed down from the feet, the exact spot where the right hand was nailed, and where the left hand. They help her to move, in order that she may again and again kiss each sacred spot. *Non fallunt viscera matrem*—"Her mother's heart forgets nothing".

"We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee; because by Thy holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world."

C. *Joseph went his way.*

Again they lift her up reverently and move on a few paces. Once more she stays her steps and bows her head. It was on this spot they forced off the crown of thorns from His Head, and dragged from His wounded Body His woollen tunic. It was here she saw Him stand naked and shivering.

O quam tristis et afflicta,
Fuit illa benedicta,
Mater unigeniti.

Alas! Oh, how sad, how woe-begone
Was, in that hour, the blessed one,
The Mother of that only Son.

D. *Joseph went his way.*

And now before they leave the level of Calvary, she gently reminds John of her Divine Son's words: *Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost* (St. John vi.). She

earnestly begs of him to see that not one of the sacred relics of Calvary be left behind.

And now, with her own eye, that has ever looked *well to the paths of her house* (Prov. xxxi.), Holy Mary surveys carefully all that they have collected together. She is that admirable and prudent woman who *considered the field and bought it* (*ibid.*); and poor as she is to-day, the watching providence of her God has taken care that from Joseph and Nicodemus and loving Magdalen, alms come in plenty to enable them to buy for her the precious relics she had so well *considered*. Part of her treasure, indeed, is gone; the sacred nails, which they had purchased, and which she carried in her bosom, are gone, but many things remain of which her heart now makes a faithful inventory.

Here is the holy crown. John promises to carry it most carefully; not a thorn shall be lost.

Here is the seamless tunic, the *dyed garment, the apparel red* and stained, like theirs *that tread in the wine-press*; Magdalen will keep it safely.

Here is the purple mantle the soldiers put upon Him, for it also has been secured.

Longinus cannot as yet give up the sacred lance that opened the Master's side. Duty forbids it, it is not his to give. *'Tis well, 'tis well*, the Blessed Mother commends his fidelity; "fear not, it will come later to be the treasure of His Church".

But they have the hyssop, and the sponge that moistened His lips; and they have the reed that was His sceptre. "Here, too," St. John says, "are the sponges that helped to wash His Sacred wounds."

"These are the cords that bound His hands and arms last night and this morning; and these the cords used to fasten Him to the Cross while they were nailing Him."

STATION IV.

DESCENT FROM THE PLACE OF CALVARY.

And Joseph went his way (v. 60).

A. When the Admirable Mother is satisfied that no sacred relic is missing, and has confided each to its faithful keeper, they begin to descend from the Sacred Sanctuary. Joseph leads the way southward towards the city, but the Holy Mother points to one spot very near on the north side, and thither they first bend their steps.

Longinus explains to Joseph and Nicodemus: "In this grotto they imprisoned your Master while they were preparing the holes in the rock for the crosses. *They humbled His feet in fetters.* If the Greek tradition be true, the Blessed Mother finds there the stone stocks in which His legs were fastened that He might not escape. Here, too, they offered Him the wine mixed with myrrh and gall, which *when He had tasted He would not drink.*

"Blessed Mother and holy Saints of Calvary, obtain for us grace to imitate the abstinence of our Lord."

B. *Joseph went his way.*

From the prison they begin to go southward; and passing between Calvary on the left hand, and the Holy Sepulchre on the right, arrive in a few minutes at the *Stone of Unction*, and pause a little while, remembering all they witnessed there.

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas,
Cordi meo valide.

Do this for me, O Mother blest,
Deeply imprint within my breast
The wounds of Jesus crucified.

SCENE XIII.

FAREWELL TO CALVARY.

STATION I.

Joseph went his way (St. Matt. xxvii. 60).

A. Their backs are now turned on Calvary, and they are moving southward.

"*O vos omnes.*" Oh, let us all take notice how in body only the Blessed Mother is leaving Calvary. Her heart will remain *where her treasure shall be.* Look well, and *do according to the pattern.*

Whenever we go into the Holy Altar and the Tabernacle, *may the Lord guard (our) going in and coming out* (Psalm cxx.). Holy Simeon went into the Temple *in the spirit.* Alas! shall we go in only in body? And when there in body, shall our hearts be elsewhere? Shall our souls haste away from thence even before our bodies retire?

B. *Joseph went his way.*

Very soon they halt once more. Magdalen and John and Longinus know well the reason. Here for the third and last time Jesus fell, to adore His Eternal Father before going to the Altar of Sacrifice.

"Blessed Mother and holy Saints, pray for us sinners who have fallen, not only three times, but many times."

C. *Joseph went his way.*

Here are the crossroads. It was here that He said to the daughters of Jerusalem: *Weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.* Oh, with what unspeakable emotion the Blessed Mother now does His bidding, and pleads for her poor children—the children of her pain; the children of Calvary. "I have delivered up my first-born, Eternal Father, to save my other children. *Tantus labor non sit cassus*—Let not all this agony be void."

D. *Joseph went his way.*

Walking slowly southwards, they have reached the Judgment Gate.

Here they all turn round with the Holy Mother; for this is the last point whence they can see Calvary; and here on their knees, they breathe their farewell to the Sepulchre and the holy Cross.

"We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee; because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world."

When they have lifted her up, Joseph, as St. Bonaventure writes, with great humility, approaches our Lady to tell her that there is hard by a cottage belonging to him of which she can take possession as her home. She will then be near to Calvary and the Tomb. He reminds her how greatly she needs repose, and how relieved all her companions will be if they can see her having a little rest. The Blessed Mother thanks him most heartily and most reverently for his great charity; but answers that she is confided to the keeping of John, and wishes only to go wherever he leads. John replies that it seems to him that the proper resting-place for the Holy Mother is in the sacred Coenaculum where she spent the last night.

Magdalen, too, St. Bonaventure tells us, earnestly entreats our Lady to come to her dwelling-place, where she will be safe.

If St. Magdalen makes this offer, either she has a lodging in town, besides her home at Bethany, or she intends to provide some kind of carriage for the Blessed Mother. We can scarcely believe that she would propose that Holy Mary, in her state of extreme weakness, should go either on foot or on horseback to the loved home at Bethany, beyond Mount Olivet.

To Magdalen's affectionate entreaties, John's answer is that it will be better if she accompanies the Holy Mother to the Coenaculum. Magdalen, with the impetuosity of her love, answers at once that most surely she will go wherever the Blessed Mother goes, and nowhere else.

E. Joseph went his way.

Joseph, therefore, now bids a sorrowful farewell and retires; and the Holy Mother, with her companions, passes through the Judgment Gate into the city.

Here they see the stone near the gate where the written sentence was affixed in the forenoon.

Immediately after, they make a short stay on the spot where the Lord fell for the second time. There His sacred face was bruised by the pavement, and all the wounds in His Body renewed.

Eia Mater, fons amoris,
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac, ut tecum lugeam.

O Mother, Fount of charity,
Let me share thy agony,
Make me weep with thee.

They have to take great care of the Holy Mother, as she descends the steep pavement and arrives at length at the door of Veronica. This faithful disciple is, we are told, a most intimate friend of our Lady, and possibly prevails upon her to enter into her house; not indeed to rest, but to contemplate the image of the sacred face left upon her veil. Gladly she offers the relic to the Blessed Mother, but Holy Mary cannot consent to rob her of her treasure, but with great gratitude accepts the use of it for this hour of sorrow.

Whether Veronica was able to induce her to cool her burning thirst even with a little water, we know not.

After the cruel murder of Abner, David, when pressed to take food, answered: *So do God to me, and more, if I taste bread or anything else before sunset* (2 Kings iii.). Our Lady has made no vow, but she could safely say with her Son: *I have meat to eat which you know not* (St. John iv.). Her love, strong as death, is supporting her; and, moreover, it is possible, as we are told by holy servants of God, that the Blessed Eucharist is still miraculously preserved within her, giving her strength.

Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.

As the Blessed Mother will not remain, Veronica goes with her on her sorrowful pilgrimage.

The direct road to the Coenaculum from Calvary runs south for about three-quarters of a mile, or perhaps less. But the holy company of mourners are going with our Lady by a circuitous route in order to visit all the stations on the Way of Sorrows.

The devout Carthusian, Ludolf of Saxony, tells us that when the Holy Mother enters Jerusalem, many Jewish women feel much compassion for her and follow her. We remember how the women of Bethany showed so much sympathy to Magdalen when Lazarus was dead.

"Mother of Sorrows, pray for thy sinful children, that we may not be more hard than those women of Jerusalem."

Fac me vere,	Mother, with those tears of thine
Tecum flere.	Grant that I may mingle mine.

And now here at these crossroads it was that Simon of Cyrene was found to take up the Cross. How glad by this time is he of his privilege! Perchance, he is following the Blessed Mother home from Calvary; his heart burning within him as she thanks him most warmly for being such a friend to her Son in His hour of need. Beyond doubt, her heart is now pleading most tenderly for him.

At these crossroads they are in the Tyropœan valley, and immediately reach the spot where Holy Mary met her Son as He was coming from the Governor's house laden with the Cross.

Quis non posset contristari,	Who will refuse to bear a part,
Christi Matrem contemplari	With the sweet Mother's aching heart,
Dolentem cum Filio?	Grieving for her Son?

Now they must climb the steep road leading to the Prætorium; and as slowly and with much fatigue, they ascend, once more for a short while they halt. It is the spot where Jesus first fell to the ground under His Cross.

"Holy Mother, pray for the innocent, who are tempted to commit their first grievous sin."

A few yards further they are in sight of the balcony

where she heard the terrible appeal of Pilate: "*Ecce Homo!*" and the far more terrible response: *Away with Him! Crucify Him!*

"Mother of God, plead for us sinners, that we may bitterly bewail every sin committed against thy Most Blessed Son Jesus."

And now, here is the gate of the Lithostrotos. It was at this point Dismas and Gesmas, carrying their crosses, met our Saviour, and reviled Him. St. Dismas is now with Him in Paradise. *Who is like the Lord our God?* Dismas reviled Him, and His answer was: *Father, forgive them.*

This is the spot where the soldiers laid the heavy Cross on Jesus.

"O Blessed Mother, win grace for us that we may willingly take up our cross."

Here is the tribunal where Pilate so often declared Him innocent, yet after all, sentenced Him.

"Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, oh, make us meek like Thee, *Led like a lamb to the slaughter.*"

Slowly now, they move across the red pavement, to the far corner where the column of flagellation stands; and there they tarry long, saying nothing with their lips, but much with their sighs and tears.

Sancta Mater, istud agas,	Do this for me, O Mother blest,
Crucifixi fige plagas,	Deeply imprint within my breast
Cordi meo valide.	The wounds of thy beloved Son.

They find their way, too, into the court where He was crowned.

"Holy Mother, with thy consent this crown was put upon His Head, that my pride might be forgiven."

Here is the Scala Santa stained with His Blood.

"Oh, may His footsteps win grace for us to climb the mountain of God."

'It was down this steep street from the north that He came from Herod's palace dressed as a fool.

"O Blessed Mother, obtain for us a share of His folly."

From this gallery Pilate put the question : *Which of the two : Barabbas or Jesus ?*

"Have mercy on me, O Lord, for often have I said : *Not this Man, but Barabbas.*"

Longinus, too, perchance, can point out the window whence the disconsolate wife of Pilate, Procla, watched in anguish the proceedings in the Lithostrotos. She may, perchance, be wandering about in this hour to find rest for her troubled spirit, and be so blessed as to hear from her who is the Comforter of the Afflicted, some words of consolation which send her home calm and full of hope.

From the Prætorium their way lies through the Temple grounds to the Beautiful Gate. This morning Judas hurried away through this gate, when his despair was brought to a climax by the hard word of the Priests : *What is that to us ? Look you to it.* And through this Gate, John tells them, the soldiers came last night to seize our Master.

Most anxious are they all when they see the rough and precipitous pathway which the Blessed Mother must traverse to reach Gethsemani which lies below them.

They cross the Cedron ; and "here," John tells them, "all the soldiers fell to the ground last night when the Lord spoke a word. On this spot the traitor kissed Him. Here He was standing when they bound Him, and, *wo is me*, when we fled away." They go a little further and kneel in the Grotto of the Agony. This, John tells them, was the bed of stone on which we slept while He suffered. Alas ! we gave Him no comfort.

Once more they urge the Holy Mother to go no further, but pass the night here in a cottage near her garden and the tomb of her forefathers ; but she answers kindly in her Son's word : *Sinite modo*—"Suffer me to go on a little longer". Therefore with all care and tenderness they help her to re-cross the torrent of Cedron, and to climb the very steep side of Mount Moriah, along the road of the captivity

by which Jesus was dragged last night. As they walk, her Mother's heart knows every spot where He suffered outrages, where He fell to the ground, and was covered with blows.

Do this for me, O Mother blest,
Deeply imprint within my breast
The wounds of thy beloved Son.

The sun has gone down before they reach Ophel, the lower quarter of the city, where the poor live, who used to love her Son. And now her Mother's heart is pleading strongly for them. "Eternal Father, *forgive them, for they know not what they do. The serpent deceived (them).*"

The ascent up Moriah was more toilsome than all the rest of the journey, and then they have to mount again by a long flight of steps to reach Mount Sion from the lower town.

They are now passing by the desecrated palace of the Priests. This is the house of Annas. There the servant bruised His face. That is the Judgment Hall of Caiphas ; and below is the terrible dungeon underground where our Lord spent the fourth watch of the night.

The daylight is gone ; and the moon is risen when they reach the Coenaculum.

As the Blessed Mother walks on, the last night that is past is telling to the night now come (Psalm xviii.) a story of suffering and sorrow never heard on earth before, and this Good Friday has a record to hand on to the day that is coming of tribulations, such as no eye but the Blessed Mother's hath seen, nor any ear but hers heard of, neither hath it entered into any other heart to apprehend grief like hers.

She knows it all, as she walks, where the tightened cords caused agony ; where the clubs of the servants bruised and wounded ; where He struck His foot against a stone ; and where the coarse ribaldry of the soldiers gave anguish to His ear. *Non fallunt viscera matrem*—"Nothing is hidden from her Mother's heart".

SCENE XIV.

THE CENACULUM.

STATION I.

GOOD-NIGHT!

On the Sabbath-day they rested according to the commandment
(St. Luke xxiii. 56).

A. *On the Sabbath-day.*

The Parasceve or day of Preparation is ended by the time they arrive at the door of the Cenacle. The Great Sabbath-day is begun. A greater Sabbath-day than God's day of rest in the beginning.

By this time the company following the Ever-Blessed Mother of God has grown larger. Some will follow her into her new home. Many will part from her at the door.

Before they go, she turns to them with a heart full of motherly love for them, such as no other mother on earth has for her children; and she begs of John to thank them most humbly in her name for their great charity to her Son and to herself. And as they press round her, and kneel to kiss her hand, and ask a blessing, she comforts each one of them, and, full of grace, wishes them good-night, and many blessings.

They go away thus consoled unspeakably; and absorbed in the thought of this Admirable Mother. *Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel; thou art the honour of our people. For thou hast done manfully; and thy heart hath been strengthened. The hand of the Lord hath strengthened thee, and therefore thou shalt be blessed for ever. So be it.* (Judith xv.). What wonder that they bless her? (Were they) *to hold their peace, the stones (would) cry out* (St. Luke xix.). Cardinal Baronius cites an older writer who gives us this early tradition about our Lady: "From the beginning to the end she bore herself with fortitude, and constancy, expressing indeed the emotions of her heart, but so that all was graceful, and nothing unseemly;

proving by her acts that she was a Mother, but at the same time, to the full height the Mother of Him Who restrained all the emotions of His Soul within their fixed boundary". This writer adds that when Jesus expired, she said in her heart: "In this hour, my Lord, the Great Mystery decreed before all ages is come to its end".

B. *On the Sabbath day.*

Several devout disciples, men and women, now enter into the holy house with the Mother of God. Some have been her funeral companions. Others have only heard when all was over, the appalling tidings: "Jesus of Nazareth is crucified". With all haste they have come to gather round the Admirable Mother.

All was done so quickly, according to the Master's command: *Do it quickly*: that Jesus had perchance said, *It is consummated*, before the news had reached Bethany or Bethlehem.

There were, however, on Calvary many whose names are not recorded.

St. Mark mentions *Mary the Mother of James the Less, and of Joseph, and Salome*: and then adds: *Many other women that came with Him to Jerusalem* (c. xv.). We may be quite sure that Martha and Lazarus would not be absent, nor Simon the Leper, nor Zacheus, if the strange tidings reached them in time. A holy contemplative tells us that in her prayer she saw Bartimeus, the blind man cured at Jericho, earnestly pleading the cause of Jesus in the Lithostrotos. It may be, too, that Simon of Cyrene and Longinus are here to-night.

C. *On the Sabbath-day.*

For the Blessed Mother's use they have reserved the holy chamber where the first Mass was celebrated. Thither they bring in, as they arrive, all the holy relics which they have been able to rescue on Mount Calvary. Here on the holy table or altar where our Lord consecrated, are now reverently laid the sacred treasures. One by one, she devoutly watches them as they are presented; the holy

crown, the reed, the cords that bound Him: some of the rods and scourges that tore His Body, some of the staves, too, with which He was bruised. This is the sponge that contained the vinegar to slake His thirst. These are the sponges used to cleanse the sacred wounds. This cup contained the myrrhed wine that He tasted, but would not drink. This is the holy tunic woven for Him by herself, over which they cast lots with their dice. These are the other portions of His dress that were divided into shares.

Beside these Sacred treasures arranged under the lamps which, we read, were hanging overhead, they prepare a couch for the Blessed Mother, and most tenderly urge her to give herself some repose. She, full of grace, full of motherly charity, thanks them and blesses them for their goodness, and in return begs of them all to retire and refresh themselves and take rest. She also prays them not to omit any observance prescribed by the Law for the Sabbath in the azymes.

Leaving her, then, with John and Magdalen who wish to wait on her—and she cannot refuse their petition—the others retire to different apartments.

The women to the supper-room where last evening they celebrated the Pasch with the Mother of God. The men to another apartment, where they prepare to fulfil the rites which, as we have seen in a former chapter, are enjoined for each of the seven evenings of unleavened bread (Numbers xxviii.).

SCENE XV.

THE GOVERNOR'S HOUSE.

STATION I.

And Herod and Pilate were made friends that same day. For before they were enemies one to another (St. Luke xxiii. 12).

Herod and Pilate were made friends.

A mediæval writer tells us, that after sending Jesus away in a fool's garment, Herod went over to the Governor's house, to show his friendly feelings, and there sat by him, and was a witness of the proceedings. Both of these miserable men have had a day of restless remorse and fear: *For wickedness is fearful, (and) a troubled conscience always forecasteth evil things.* They are both men *who have peace in their possessions*; men described by the Prophet Sophonias, as *settled on their lees*. But the voice of nature has spoken loud enough to-day to awaken their deadened consciences. Now, however, the storm, they flatter themselves, is passed. These two Rulers have sinned, but they have survived their sin, and are able now to harbour that forbidden thought, so common: *What harm hath befallen (us) ?*

It is the hour of supper, and they can, on the occasion of their reconciliation, recline in joyfulness at the banquet. Herod's family, as we have seen, have ever been devoted to Rome, from whence they have all their honours. Antipas, therefore, and Pilate are both well pleased at this restoration of an old friendship.

Herodias, the notorious, may also be a guest, and her dancing daughter, Salome. Some writers, however, tell us that she is now crippled.

The banquet, doubtless, is befitting the occasion. The Roman after a hard and anxious day is now *discinctus*, ungirdled, taking his rest in his flowing robe.

Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present; let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments

(Wisdom ii.). Herod is the luxurious son of a most luxurious father. *I made me singing men and singing women, and the delights of the sons of men* (Eccles. ii.). He brings some of his gifted retainers to help the festivity.

They drank wine and praised their gods of gold and silver, of brass, of iron, and of wood, and of stone (Daniel v.). The gods whom these reconciled potentates praise and worship are probably not idols of iron and wood, but the three great gods of this world: *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.*

They drink wine, and as the Psalm of the Sacred Passion (68th) tells us, *They that drank wine made Me their song.*

Their conversation turns often on Jesus of Nazareth and the scenes of the day. Herod thinks that Pilate need have no scruple; he could not have acted otherwise.

The pressure put upon him was simply irresistible. He had himself to yield to the same force when he cut off the head of John the Baptist, who was a truly great man. This Jesus seemed to be only a simpleton. "What can we do? We cannot go against the will of all the people."

Is the Governor's wife, St. Procla, compelled to be present at this revelry? If here in body, her thoughts and her heart are elsewhere.

STATION II.

Herod and Pilate were made friends that same day (v. 12).

A. An attendant enters the banquet-hall to tell the Governor that a large deputation of Jewish Priests and Ancients ask to see him at once on urgent business. Their very name brings imprecations to his lips. How gladly would he order his horsemen to serve them as they served the Galileans! Herod counsels a peremptory dismissal. They can come to-morrow. This is not a reasonable hour. But Pilate knows that his own life is in danger. These Rulers are his masters; and they know it.

They must have a hearing. He has perforce to conceal his vexation and his humiliation in presence of his scornful guests.

Besides, action may be necessary. The Jews may be rising in rebellion. He goes forth, therefore, and asks what their business is? From St. Matthew's narrative we know what the answer is: *Sir, we have remembered that the seducer said while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day, lest perhaps His disciples come and steal Him away, and say to the people: He is risen from the dead: and the last error shall be worse than the first* (c. xxvii.).

Pilate cannot suppress his bitter vexation when he hears their errand. "Is it on such business that you intrude at such an hour?"

They cringe, and lick the dust; and protest that they are quite sure that He never will rise, but they have great fear that His crafty and daring followers may steal away the Body and persuade the senseless mob that He is risen; and then the situation will be worse than ever. Sedition will be inevitable. It is merely out of friendly feeling to the Governor, to prevent the trouble that will come to him if disturbances break out, that they venture to intrude at an unseasonable hour. They are loyal to Cæsar: they wish to have no king but Cæsar, but they cannot answer for the multitude gathered together in Jerusalem.

They have again touched the chord most sure to rouse Pilate to activity. They have wakened up the two great fears that haunt him: (1) Jesus may after all be a God and may rise; but much more urgent, (2) Tiberius at Rome will certainly visit on him any sedition that may take place out of the events of this day.

Cursing the hour when he first listened to them this morning, he answers sullenly, *You have a guard* (or, as some interpret the Greek, "You can have a guard"), you

have your own police, the guard of the Temple; go to guard it as you know.

Can the wine, can the dancer, can Herod's jests bring back peace to-night to his miserable conscience?

He returns to the banquet-hall with all the terrors of this morning alive again. Procla's warning: *Have nothing to do with this just Man*; the words of Jesus: *Thou sayest it: I am a King: My Kingdom is not of this world*. So, after all, He may rise again, and proclaim himself King, and draw the people after Him.

Herod is one who has sinned with more light than Pilate. One of those against whom, in sorrow of heart, the Lord has passed this sentence: *Blind the heart of this people, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them* (Isaiah vi.). He therefore makes merry over the news.

"As for His rising again," he exclaims, "that is exactly what they said when I cut off the head of John, another of their great prophets. Nay, they were quite sure that he had risen again. *But what evil hath befallen me?* (Ecclus. v.). Dead men don't rise again so easily. I remember that in one of their books it is written, *Shall a man that is dead, thinkest thou, live again?* (Job xiv.). And they have a saying that a living dog is better than a dead lion."

"Yes," chimes in another guest, learned in the Jewish Law, "they ought to know better than listen to the mob. For there is a well-known sentence in their Books: *The dead knoweth nothing more: the memory of them is forgotten. Their love also and their hatred and their envy are all perished; neither have they any part in this world, and in the work that is done under the sun*" (Eccles. ix.).

These words delight the voluptuous ruler of Galilee. He banters the Governor for his fears. "After all, you cannot be in a worse plight than I am, for John, as I have said, was really a holy man and a clever man; but this Jesus, from what I saw this morning, was a fool and a

mere simpleton. It is very little matter whether He lives or dies." And so the murderer of the Precursor tries to lull to rest the conscience of him who has slain "the Christ," "the Son of God," "the Author of life".

But this view gives little comfort to the Roman. He has the pale face of Jesus before him; and the calm majesty of His words, His tones, His demeanour, do not pass away. "Jesus was no simpleton," is his short answer, as he rises to leave the banquet-hall. The word is come true: *I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation* (Amos viii.).

Pilate's fears are not lessened when he hears from his officials the rumour that the graves of the dead in the valleys round the city are standing open.

St. Procla too, if present, will return with a heavy heart.

B. *Herod and Pilate were made friends.*

The Psalmist writes concerning men who, like Pilate and Herod, sin and still prosper.

They are not in the labour of men: neither shall they be scourged like other men.

If our Lord had been what He seemed to be, only a persecuted man, He might well have complained: *I have been scourged all the day, and My chastisement hath been in the morning* (Psalm lxxii.). *Why do the wicked live? (Why) are they advanced, and strengthened in riches?* (Job xxi.). *I studied that I might know this thing, it is a labour in my sight: until I go into the sanctuary of God, and understand concerning their latter end. When they were lifted up Thou hast cast them down. They have* **SUDDENLY CEASED TO BE** (Psalm lxxii.).

But the end of Herod and Pilate did not come suddenly. In their case, *executing Thy judgments by degrees*, O Lord, *Thou gavest them place of repentance* (Wisdom xii.).

"Sweet are the uses of adversity." Many prodigals have by sorrow been brought to God. Both Pilate and Herod were afterwards cast down from their position, and died poor and banished men. The "Mount of Pilate,"

standing by the Lake of Lucerne, preserves the tradition that from its crags the Governor flung himself into the lake, and was drowned. But other accounts of his latter end are given; some much more favourable.

In the Gospel it is written: *The next day which followed the day of preparation, the Chief Priests and the Pharisees came to Pilate.* In a modern book, the words, *The next day after the day of preparation*, would clearly mean that the Jewish Rulers did not disturb Pilate at his banquet; but came next morning. But as among the Jews the Great Sabbath began at sunset, the words may have the interpretation given to them above. And as the Priests and Pharisees were tormented with the fear of a pretended Resurrection, it is not likely that they would leave the Tomb unguarded all the first night.

SCENE XVI.

THE CENACLE.

STATION I.

On the Sabbath-day they rested (St. Luke xxiii. 56).

A. God maketh His sun to rise on the good and bad (St. Matt. v.). His sun by day and His moon by night give their light to the just and the unjust. It is the time of full moon; and Jerusalem, the city of perfect beauty, the joy of all the earth, is reposing in the stillness and brightness of the moonlight, as if it were a paradise of innocence enjoying a Great Sabbath; a great tranquillity.

It is possible that from the high ground on Mount Sion where the Cenacle stands, a view can be had of Golgotha.

B. *On the Sabbath-day they rested.*

Within the Cenacle, the disciples, men and women, have carefully observed all prescribed rites for the repetition of the paschal supper (Numbers xxviii.). And now they are gathered together in groups with closed doors; talking in a low voice of the events of the day.

Occasionally a knock is heard at the gate; and not without alarm and great precaution do those inside answer the knocking. For they are in fear and trouble.

Sometimes it is a disciple who has only just heard the tidings. Sometimes it is one of the Apostles who is recovering from the great terror and is longing to know something of what has happened; and how it fares with the Holy Mother.

We may assume, with St. Bonaventure, that Peter is one of those who knocked at the wicket in the gate. For certainly he is here with John thirty hours later, on the morning of the Resurrection; and, moreover, holy contemplatives give us the details of his arrival.

Not full of grateful gladness does he come to-night as he will come out of his prison in after years, probably to this same wicket. For now he is heart-broken; and covers his head as he knocks; and humbly begs with tears for admission. When John comes to meet him, his only word is: "I am not worthy to be one of you, let me be as a hireling".

As soon as John makes known to the Blessed Mother that Peter is come overwhelmed with grief, her motherly heart answers: "Oh, make haste to let him come to me, for he is heavily burdened". As he falls at her feet confessing his sin, and telling her with sobs and sighs: "I denied Him, and said: *I know not the Man*," her heart pleads with all-powerful earnestness for him, and she gives him the assurance inspired into her soul by her Divine Son, that as far as the east is from the west the Lord has removed his sin from him, and will only remember his love and fidelity. She reminds Peter how in the Supper-room her Son had assured him that his faith would not fail: that he would be converted, and not cast down from his apostleship.

The Venerable Abbess d'Agreda writes that in her contemplation she sees our Lady, when Peter enters, full of veneration for him as the future Vicar of Christ, and that her wish is to throw herself at his feet and beg for his blessing; but that out of compassion for his condition, she forbears, and contents herself with kneeling by his side

and praying with him, and for him, with all the force of her "suppliant omnipotence," till strong hope and burning love are again in full possession of his heart.

When Peter retires, John, full of the Blessed Mother's spirit, goes with him to be a comfort to him, to the chamber where the other disciples are gathered.

STATION II.

On the Sabbath-day they rested (v. 56).

A. Naturally they who were not so blessed as to be on the place of Calvary to-day, or last night with Jesus in Gethsemani or in the Palace of the Priests, have many, many questions to ask; and with breathless attention listen to the answers.

St. Peter and St. John can tell of what passed in Gethsemani. St. John can give some details of the early morning hours after Peter had gone out to weep bitterly.

As St. Peter calls himself, in his first Epistle, *a witness of the sufferings of our Lord* (c. v.), we may perhaps assume that he was near to Calvary to-day, watching, as well as his tears would allow him, what was going on; but not presuming to draw near. John, therefore, has many things to relate to him.

Contemplate the contrite Apostle, as the Beloved Disciple is telling him the story of Dismas; how he weeps and sobs as if his heart would break, and striking his breast, cries out: "O holy Saint! You never saw the Master in His glory as I did. You never saw Him raise the dead as I did; you only saw him crucified as a malefactor: and yet you confessed Him, and I denied Him! Ah me! I said: *I know not the Man.*"

B. On the Sabbath-day they rested.

After this, one tells how he met Judas in the valley of Hinnom, and went towards him, but the traitor fled. Another just come in adds: "Alas! I have been there too, and found his lifeless body lying on the ground,

stripped, and ruptured, under the broken branch of a tree, with a rope round his neck. Some robbers must have taken all his clothes away." This terrible news strikes them dumb, till Peter sighs out the word: "Oh, why did he not come to our Blessed Mother? I, too, was a traitor. I, too, should have been cast off."

C. On the Sabbath-day they rested.

"Do you remember," one asks, "how a week ago, near Jericho, our Master foretold to us exactly everything that has come to pass: *The Son of Man shall be betrayed to the Chief Priests, and the Scribes: and they shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to be mocked, and scourged, and crucified?*"

"Every word has proved true; and yet, at the time, we did not give heed to what He said."

"But," one suggests, "did He not say, too, that He would rise again after three days?" To this there is no response. They have not taken in this word. They only remember that He is dead; their faith has been weakened.

D. On the Sabbath-day they rested.

Peter adds: "Wo is me! Again and again He warned us to *watch and pray*: and said that danger was coming. I heeded Him not. I even boasted in my folly that I would die with Him, and in the first moment when a woman spoke to me I denied Him."

E. On the Sabbath-day they rested.

A knock is heard, and one comes in who has just been to Golgotha and seen the tomb. "Guards are there. Seals are set on the door. A large iron bolt is affixed to it which no one can remove." (Nicephorus the historian mentions the iron bolt as an old tradition, and describes how it was riveted.)

There is no wisdom, there is no counsel, there is no prudence against the Lord. The guards and bolt and seals will all hereafter witness to the Resurrection.

And so the night wears on, till exhaustion compels them to seek the repose of sleep.

STATION III.

MARIA DESOLATA. GOOD FRIDAY NIGHT.

On the Sabbath-day they rested (v. 56).

A. They rested. And, according to our human way of measuring, who ever needed rest as the Holy Mother does? Her Divine Son, but no one else, has gone beyond her in weariness.

"Attendite." It behoves us all to stay and watch her, and listen to her during her extreme exhaustion. We must look well, and try to *do* a little, at least, *according to the pattern*.

The time of great weariness is often a time of danger. Men will undergo for a while very great labour, but they expect as compensation a large measure of self-indulgence after. Those who nurse at night are not unfrequently drawn into intemperance. It seems to them reasonable to use stimulants to refresh their tired bodies, and so the habit is formed. Our Lord says to us: *Do not the heathens this?* Heathens will toil for a certain time, if they can have a season of great luxury after.

Our Blessed Saviour and His Holy Mother teach us, in these times of great fatigue, that *not in bread alone doth man live*. Our Lady can say to-night, when pressed to refresh herself, words akin to her Son's words: *I have a food which you know not*.

The labours of apostolic men would become a snare, if they could not find some refreshment in prayer; if, like the heathen, they must always have much indulgence to compensate much toil.

"Passion of Christ, strengthen me."

B. *On the Sabbath-day they rested.*

Of what kind is our Lady's rest?

Of her Divine Son we read that *He loved to the end*. Is love rest? *He loved to the end*, means that to the end love was conquering all the pain and anguish heaped upon Him. His love was *strong as death*; stronger than death; stronger than all agony; ever working and conquering;

never idle and reposing. Such love is not, according to our human notions, rest.

Our Lady's love is most like to this. *She hath not eaten her bread idle. Her hand she hath put out to strong things.* Love makes her *the valiant woman*, joining all the tenderness of a mother's thought with a *man's heart*; that is, with the manly fortitude of her Son. She rests, as the Law directs, from all servile work, from bodily work; but her heart is not resting. The Spouse says: *I sleep, (but) my heart watcheth* (Cant. v.). The love of Jesus Christ, burning in the heart of Holy Mary and the saints, often conquers natural laws; conquers weariness; conquers sleep.

"To us poor sinners, O Lord, give some part and fellowship with Thy martyrs."

C. *On the Sabbath-day they rested.*

Last night, in the Grotto of Agony, Jesus could think of His Apostles; His love was much stronger than the agony. So now our Blessed Lady has a true Mother's heart, and when she hears Magdalen sobbing, and sees John pale and weeping, she takes good care of them and comforts them. For devout writers suppose that she allows John and Magdalen to remain with her in the Holy Chamber.

How hard *we* find it, when weary and in trouble, to devote ourselves to others! *Many waters cannot quench (her) charity*.

D. *On the Sabbath-day they rested.*

But if at times she is quite in solitude, even then she can say with her Divine Son: "*Yet I am not alone; my Son is with me, my God is with me*".

"*Hail, Blessed Mother, full of grace: the Lord is with thee.*"

Consider how, more than ever before, the Archangel can now say to her: *The Lord is with thee*. The Lord is more closely with her now: first, according to His promise, because she is *in tribulation*; secondly, because she is more than ever *full of grace*. *She hath tasted and seen that her*

traffic is good. She has to-day trafficked with wonderful industry and diligence, and multiplied ineffably her store of grace.

"Mother, full of grace, and overflowing, pray for us poor sinners."

E. *On the Sabbath-day they rested.*

Her heart is not resting. *In (her) heart (she) hath disposed to ascend by steps* (Psalm lxxxiii.). Before the day breaks, she will, by multiplying the fervent acts of her soul, have climbed much higher up the mountain of God. Holy Church compares St. Cæcilia to the busy bee, always gathering more honey from flower to flower. But who gathers graces and merits and increase of love as the Holy Mother does?

Alas! we let the privileged hours go by unused. By fervent ejaculations we can always give alms to sinners on earth, and to the Holy Souls in Purgatory. We can give glory to God and peace to men.

F. *On the Sabbath-day they rested.*

But we are allowed to wish to know more of what our Blessed Lady's heart and her mind are doing. How is she spending these watches, *when all things are in quiet silence, and the night is in the midst of her course?* (Wisdom xviii.).

(1) First, then, we are sure that in her, beyond all others, the promise has its fulfilment: *I will pour out the spirit of grace, and of prayer; and they will look on Me Whom they pierced; and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for an only son; they shall grieve as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born.* Jesus is her first-born, and no other Mother ever had such a first-born. And no other first-born ever had such a Mother. She is therefore grieving and mourning over her Son, with a motherly tenderness such as *eye hath not seen.* Neither has human ear heard on earth sighs so heartrending as the sighs of her sorrow. Nor has the thought of man ever measured the depth of her motherly feeling: *Weeping, she hath wept throughout the*

night, and her tears are on her cheeks (Lament. i.). *To what shall I compare thee, or to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? To what shall I equal thee, that I may comfort thee, O Virgin daughter of Sion? For great as the sea is thy (contritio) crushing sorrow.*

Eia Mater, fons amoris,

O Mother, fount of charity,

Me sentire vim doloris

Oh, let me share thy agony,

Fac, ut tecum lugeam.

That I may grieve with thee.

G. *On the Sabbath-day they rested.*

With our rosaries in our hand we sometimes travel over the scenes of our Lord's Passion; sometimes, too, we go round the Stations, pausing a little space at each.

The Blessed Mother, then, has spread out beside her the relics of Mount Calvary which her children have brought to her as their present on this new and strange birthday. For to-day, after her long and sore travail on Calvary, she is become the joyful mother of children, the children of her pain. And so it is a birthday.

Her eyes and her heart are making the Stations as she stands looking at her relics, one by one, and pressing them to her lips and moistening them with her tears—the crown, the tunic, the reed, the wine cup, the hyssop, the sponge, the cord, the scourges, and the Sacred Face upon the veil of Veronica.

Sancta Mater, istud agas,

Do this for me, O Mother blest,

Crucifixi fige plagas,

Deeply imprint within my breast

Cordi meo valide.

The wounds of Jesus crucified.

H. *On the Sabbath-day they rested.*

(2) Then, again, this Good Friday, from the First Vespers at sundown yesterday to the end of the Second Vespers to-day, is the day which the Lord our Redeemer hath made; the model day. "*According to Thy ordinance, O God, it hath gone on to the very end.*" And henceforth every day is to be somewhat after the pattern of this day—a Good Friday. Good Friday is to be perpetuated by remembrance, so now the Blessed Mother is living over again the hours of last night.

Now the First Night Watch is closing (9 p.m.), and He is leaving Mount Sion and going down the way of captivity to Gethsemani. He has left His eight Apostles by the brook. He is entering the Garden, and bending His tottering steps towards the Grotto. An hour is well-nigh past (10 p.m.), when He comes to speak sad words and kind words to His three Apostles. Again another hour (11 p.m.), when after His long prayer He is with them once more. The Second Night Watch is far spent (11.45), when He visits them for the third and last time to wake them, and goes to meet Judas and the multitude.

It is now midnight. At midnight He became Incarnate, at midnight He was born, at midnight He is seized and bound.

O Jesu, mi dulcissime,	Jesus, my Lord, my Son most dear,
Spes suspirantis animæ,	Hope of my soul that's yearning here,
Te quærunt piæ lacrymæ,	For Thee they watch, these weeping eyes,
Te clamor mentis intimæ.	To Thee my inmost spirit cries.

The first hour of the Third Watch is far spent (12.45), and Thou hast climbed, my Son, the way of captivity, and Thy holy face is bruised by the servant. Another Night Watch is drawing to its close (2.45), and they condemn Thee to death as a blasphemer, and Thou art looking in pity on Thy Apostle. The Fourth Night Watch is nearly at an end (5.30), when they come to find Thee bent down in Thy dungeon.

Nil canitur suavius,	No song so sweet to hear,
Nil auditur jucundius,	No word delights the ear,
Nil cogitatur dulcius,	No thought was e'er so dear,
Quam Jesus Dei Filius.	As Jesus, Son of God.

STATION IV.

MARIA DESOLATA.

On the Sabbath-day they rested (v. 56).

A. (3) We can help ourselves to understand a third train of thought that occupies the soul of the Blessed

Mother during this holy night, by calling to mind the scene enacted before King David by the wise woman of Thecua (2 Kings xiv.).

She came into the King's presence, wearing mourning robes, and not anointed with oil; in all respects, like a woman lamenting for the dead. And she fell down before the King and worshipped and said: *Save me, O King. And the King said to her: What is the matter with thee? She answered: Alas! I am a widow woman; for my husband is dead. And thy handmaid had two sons, and they quarrelled with each other in the field, and there was none to part them, and the one struck the other and slew him. And behold, the whole kindred rising against thy handmaid saith: Deliver him that hath slain his brother, that we may kill him for the life of his brother whom he slew, and that we may destroy the heir; and they seek to quench my spark which is left. And the King said to the woman: Go to thy house and I will give charge concerning thee. If any one shall say ought against thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more. And she said: Let the King remember the Lord his God that they may not kill my son. And he said: As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth.*

Here we see something of our Lady's position. The children of her second family have slain her First-born, the only-begotten Son of God. And now the cry of Eternal justice loudly demands that her second child, the poor sinner, the child of her pain, who crucified her First-born, his own elder Brother, shall be delivered up for chastisement. Alas! if this must be, *the last state becomes worse than the first* (St. Luke xi.), for the life and the death of my Son Jesus will be made void. And I shall also lose the child of my pain, for whom I was in travail on Calvary. Therefore her mother's heart is employed in pleading with irresistible groanings. She is weeping, as her Son bade her to do, for herself and her children, till a far better response comes than David's: *Not one hair of thy (sinful) child shall fall to the earth.*

B. *On the Sabbath-day they rested.*

Again, we may help ourselves with another comparison. When David was provoked to great wrath by Nabal's churlish insolence and was about to take severe vengeance, with what powerful pathos did Abigail, Nabal's wife, plead for her husband! *Upon me*, she said, as she lay at the feet of David, *Upon me let this iniquity be, my lord; let thy handmaid speak, I beseech, in thy ears, and hear the words of thy servant. Let not my lord the King regard this naughty Nabal, for according to his name he is a fool, and folly is with him. Wherefore receive this blessing which thy handmaid hath brought thee, my lord, and forgive the iniquity of thy handmaid. (For then) this shall not be an occasion of grief to thee and a scruple of heart to my lord, that thou hast shed innocent blood or hast revenged thyself.*

And David said to Abigail: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, Who sent thee this day to meet me, and blessed be thy speech. And blessed be thou who hast kept me this day from coming to blood and revenging me with my own hand. Go in peace into thy house; behold, I have heard thy voice and have honoured thy face (1 Kings xxv.).

What are the pleadings of Abigail compared with the irresistible cry for mercy and forgiveness that comes from the heart of the Mother of Sorrows, when she pleads as if she were one of us? The Lord God knew well what a power would be vested in the *suppliant omnipotence* of His Immaculate Mother, full of grace, when He spoke that word to her: *Woman! behold thy child!* From this hour, *no word of mercy shall be impossible with God.*

"The hour of mercy may not be come, My Mother, or, because of sins multiplied, it may be past; but in whatever hour thou shall plead, Mother Mine, and Mother of My brethren, *I cannot turn My face away.*"

Memorare, O piissima Virgo. Remember this, most tender-hearted Virgin Mother.

Our Lord, in the Psalms, prays as if He were the sinner. What can withstand Holy Mary's prayer when

she makes herself one with her sinful children, and cries out: *Upon me let this iniquity be. Forgive the iniquity of Thy handmaid.*

STATION V.

MARIA DESOLATA. DAYBREAK. HOLY SATURDAY.

That was a Great Sabbath-day (St. John xix. 31).

A. The night watches have passed away. The day of the Great Sabbath is dawning. No greater has been; no greater shall be. The Lord Jesus is resting after His work of Redemption.

We have been trying to gain some faint notion of our Lady's thoughts during the watches of the night. Let us humbly try to contemplate her on the Great Sabbath-day, the first Holy Saturday.

B. *That was a Great Sabbath-day.*

Some of the faithful, as we know, when they awake in the early morning, turn their hearts and their eyes towards the Tabernacle of the Blessed Sacrament. Our Lady's heart, we may assume, is, when the dawn comes, at the Holy Sepulchre. Oh, with what intensity does her heart break out into her Matins and Lauds: *O God, my God, to Thee am I watching at break of day. For Thee my soul hath thirsted, for Thee my flesh, O in how many ways! Thy mercy is better than (many) lives. Thee my lips shall praise. Thus will I bless Thee all my life long; and in Thy name I will lift up my hands (Psalm lxii.).*

SCENE XVII.

THE GREAT SABBATH-DAY. EARLY MORNING.
A RETROSPECT.

STATION I.

That was a Great Sabbath-day (St. John xix. 31).

A. *That was a Great Sabbath-day.*

The sun riseth and man shall go forth to his work (Psalm ciii.).

Our Blessed Lady, some holy writers tell us, goes forth soon after daybreak, to resume her work of studying more and more carefully every spot hallowed by the footsteps of her Son, by the sweat of His brow, by His tears, by the drops of His Precious Blood, by His sorrows, by His love.

Every word and work and thought of His is crying out to her: *Set me as a seal upon thy heart.*

If she has always in times past *looked well to the paths of her house, and not eaten her bread idle* (Proverbs xxxi.), oh, how intensified in this hour is her keen desire to look well to the paths trodden by her crucified Son! *If the fear of God neglects nothing*, will the burning love that consumes her heart overpass any flower or blade of grass or any stone consecrated by His footprints, by a tear from His eye, by a drop of His Blood?

B. *A Great Sabbath-day.*

Our Blessed Lady is, moreover, the Seat of Wisdom. *I am the Mother of knowledge* (Ecclus. xxiv.). Through her a large part of the *supereminent knowledge of Christ Jesus* will reach the Evangelists and Holy Church.

With great earnestness, then, she begs of John, who accompanies her in her pilgrimage, to fix well in his memory every jot and tittle: *Let no particle of the good gift overpass thee.*

Her diligent search will doubtless be aided by much light and by many exceptional graces from above. But she will also gladly avail herself of human helps. Nicq-

demus is with her, and Joseph, we may perhaps assume, is come back to her; and their position and revered character will doubtless unlock many doors to them.

Their alms, too, and Magdalen's, for she is with the Mother of God, will secure some more of the holy relics of the Sacred Passion.

Simon Peter dares not join himself to the holy company, but the Blessed Mother wishes the future Vicar of Christ to be with her. Others, no doubt, either accompany her, or set out apart on the same errand.

Do it quickly is still the watchword, as the Blessed Mother wishes to be back in her retirement before the streets are crowded.

C. *That was a Great Sabbath-day.*

THE NIGHT WATCHES (12 to 6 a.m.)—THE CLOCK OF THE PASSION.

The desecrated Priests are still sleeping in the palace when Nicodemus and Joseph gain admittance into their precincts. As they pass through the gates, Peter sobs out the words: "Here it was that I first denied Him" (1 a.m.).

"It was to this olive-tree," a servant tells them, "that they bound Him till Annas was ready. On this spot He fell to the ground when the servant struck Him in the face."

As they pass through the court, *Wo is me*, Peter sighs out, "there was the fire burning at which I warmed myself" (2 a.m.).

These steps lead up to the judgment-hall.

"On this spot," John tells them, "He stood when they pronounced Him guilty of death, and the Priests spat in His face." It was then the end of the Third Watch (3 a.m.).

A servant shows them the underground dungeon where they shut Him up. "It was half an hour from the end of the Fourth Watch" (5.30), he tells them, "when they

unbarred the door, and saw Him bent down and chained to a low pillar." For a very small price they secure the filthy cloth that blindfolded His eyes, and cords that bound Him, and sticks that bruised Him.

A few minutes before the First Morning Watch (5:50), the Great Council was gathered in the judgment-hall, and condemned Him again as a blasphemer.

D. *That was a Great Sabbath-day.*

FIRST MORNING WATCH—a retrospect.

Most carefully now they follow His track, and call to mind each incident that occurred during the First Morning Watch (6 to 9 a.m.).

The First Watch was only just commenced (6 a.m.) when He started from the Priests' Palace for the Prætorium.

Going down this long flight of steps from Mount Sion He fell heavily; it was on this spot. A few minutes later (6:15), He crossed the Tyropœon and entered the Temple grounds. It was here that Judas flung down the money given to him.

"Alas, alas!" St. Peter says, weeping, "why did he not come to the Blessed Mother? He would have found mercy. I deserved to be cast off, but she has prayed for me."

"One hour of the First Watch was gone (7 a.m.) when we reached these steps up to the Governor's house (the Scala Santa). Oh, with what pain was our Master dragged again and again up and down them."

Here in the Lithostrotos, on this chair of Judgment, Pilate sat.

It was up this narrow street they dragged Him (7:30 a.m.) to the Palace of Herod Antipas, but they brought Him back by other crowded streets to show Him to the people in the fool's dress (8:30 a.m.).

The First Watch was closing (8:45) when standing here chained and bound, the Master heard the cry: *Not this Man, but Barabbas.*

E. *That was a Great Sabbath-day.*

THE SECOND WATCH (9 to 12 a.m.)—a retrospect.

During the whole of the first hour of the Second Watch they were scourging Him. At the end of the hour (10 a.m.) He was lying here on the ground in His Blood, and trying to clothe Himself: *A worm and no Man.*

Nicodemus and Joseph easily gain admittance also into the inner court where they crowned Him with thorns. A soldier tells them: "This low pillar was the throne they used when they crowned Him". Perchance they are able to secure for money the scarlet mantle.

"It was mid-way in the Second Watch when Pilate from the balcony called out, *Ecce Homo* (10:30), and we heard the terrible response: *Crucify Him.*"

Longinus, perchance, is there to tell them of Procla's message and Pilate's trouble of mind.

"Two hours of the Second Watch were gone (11 a.m.), when the Priests and Ancients raised the cry: *If you release this Man, you are no friend of Cæsar.*"

"A very few minutes later the Governor washed his hands and wrote the sentence."

"Here, on this spot, they laid the Cross on our Master, and here the two malefactors met Him and reviled Him."

"It was a little more than half an hour to noon (11:20) when the procession started from this gate. Three minutes later, going down the hill, He fell under the Cross. This is the spot."

"It was here," they whisper, "at the bottom of the hill, on the great road through the Tyropœan valley, the Blessed Mother met Him."

"A few paces further where the steep road to the west begins they laid the Cross on Simon, and three minutes later, on this spot, half way up the incline, Veronica wiped His sacred face."

"His second fall was here, near the judgment-gate. It was half an hour from noon when He passed through the gate and left the city for the last time" (11:30).

"At these crossroads He spoke to the women of Jerusalem. One hundred and sixty paces further, He fell, for the last time, at the base of Calvary."

"By this path they led Him round to the north side." "This cave is the prison," Longinus tells them, "where they shut Him up and put fetters on His feet lest He should escape while they got the place ready for the Cross. Here, too, they gave Him myrrhed wine to drink, but they also mingled gall with it." "Did He drink it?" one asks. "No, He tasted, but did not drink."

"It was on this spot they stripped Him. Close by the Cross was laid on the ground, just here."

"At fifteen minutes before noon we heard the first nail driven into His sacred hand" (11.45).

"Some minutes later they were dragging Him with His face downward along the ground; and lifted the Cross, and we heard Him say: *Father, forgive them.*"

F. That was the Great Sabbath-day.

THE THIRD WATCH (12 o'clock)—a retrospect.

"It was the sixth hour, and the thick darkness was setting in when Dismas said aloud: *This Man hath done no evil.* The Priests and Ancients seemed ready to beat him to death: but the darkness came on quite suddenly. They were terrified and hastened away."

"Then the Blessed Mother and John and Magdalen, who had been a little lower down, came up hither close to the Cross. The Blessed Mother stood here in front of her Son, her eyes fixed on Him."

"I drew the soldiers away," Longinus tells them, "and down here near the prison they sat, and cast lots for His clothes. It was close upon the ninth hour (2.50) when He cried out so loud, *My God, My God, why hast Thou abandoned Me?* A minute or two later, in a very faint voice, He said: *I thirst,* and then, after a very short pause: *It is consummated.*"

"Almost exactly, I think, at the ninth hour *He bowed His Head and gave up the ghost:* for the trumpets from the

Temple announced the hour of the sacrifice, just as He died" (3 p.m.).

G. That was the Great Sabbath-day.

THE FOURTH WATCH (3 to 6 p.m.)—a retrospect.

"He had not been dead more than seven minutes when the Priests and their servants came to break His legs.

"Before ten minutes more were past, Dismas was dead and the soldier pierced the Master's side. 'O Blessed Mother, forgive me,' Longinus says, weeping, 'I did not do it in malice. I was afraid they would insist on breaking His legs.'"

"It was not yet half an hour after His Death when Joseph and Nicodemus arrived (3.30). At the end of the hour (4 p.m.) the Sacred Body was laid on the stone for embalment. We spent one hour round that stone. We were very slow in embalming; but for grief we could not work."

"Two hours after His Death (5 p.m.) we laid Him in the Sepulchre. It wanted still half an hour to sundown when the great stone was rolled, and the door closed (5.30). It was quite two hours later when after dark the Holy Mother and her companions reached the house on Mount Sion where the Master supped the night before."

H. That was the Great Sabbath-day.

It is still early when the Blessed Mother and her companions have thus completed their pilgrimage. How truly may Holy Mary say as she bends her steps homeward, *I have lifted my eye to the mountains whence help shall come to me.* For she is standing on MOUNT CALVARY. Before her, to the south, lies MOUNT SION and the Supper-room; on her left hand stands MOUNT MORIAH and Pilate's Prætorium, and a little beyond in the background, MOUNT OLIVET, with Gethsemani, and Bethany.

What other mountains or hills are there on this earth whence help can come to us so abundantly? *I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains.*

And the choirs of Heaven around their Queen take up the Psalm :

Behold, He shall neither slumber nor sleep that keepeth Israel.

The Lord is thy Keeper: the Lord is thy protection on thy right hand. The sun shall not burn thee by day, nor the moon by night: the Lord keepeth thee from evil. May the Lord keep thy soul. May the Lord keep thy coming in and thy going out, from henceforth now and for ever (Psalm cxx.).

SCENE XVIII.

THE CŒNACULUM. HOLY SATURDAY AFTERNOON.

STATION I.

On the Sabbath-day they rested according to the commandment (St. Luke xxiii. 56).

A. They rested.

They have once more returned to the sanctuary where our Saviour instituted the Blessed Eucharist. What is their occupation there? St. Bonaventure suggests that they are gathered round the Sorrowful Mother, and that she begs of St. John to tell them all the things that were done, and the words her Divine Son spoke at the Last Supper. He further represents her listening with most reverent attention to the narrative.

We may then contemplate this scene, and note how St. Peter's grief bursts out again when John is telling how the Master chid him, and insisted on washing his feet.

Further, we may think how affected they are when they hear all the pains that the Lord took to soften the heart of Judas.

"Eia ergo advocata nostra. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

B. They rested.

Then, too, John and Peter make known to them some of the things that happened in the Garden: How broken

down the Master seemed to be when He went to the Grotto, and came to visit them; how pale His Face was, and how His tears ran down His cheeks when He bent Himself to kiss Judas; how His garments were as much stained as if He had been treading grapes in the wine-press; how all His depression seemed to pass away when He went forward to meet the soldiers, and in a calm voice, heard across the torrent, said: *I am He.*

C. They rested.

Then, too, perchance, the Ever-Blessed Mother, *the Mother of Knowledge*, begs of St. John to read to them the prophetic description of the Passion written by Isaias (c. liii.). They have ere now heard it in the Synagogue, but never understood the meaning. Now the scene breaks with full light upon their astonished souls. Every word they realise, and every word renews the grief of their hearts.

There is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness. We have seen Him, there was no sightliness.

Despised, the most abject of men, a Man of sorrows, acquainted with infirmity.

Surely He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows: we have thought Him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted.

But 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.

A long time may be spent over this prophetic picture; and the reading be often interrupted by sobbing, and they remind each other in amazement, how true, how exact the picture is.

Eia Mater, fons amoris,
Me sentire vim doloris,
Fac ut tecum lugeam.

O Mother, fount of Charity,
Oh, let me share thy agony,
That I may mourn with thee.

STATION II.

On the Sabbath-day they rested (v. 56).

A. *They rested.*

Holy writers tell us that our Lady's habit in the past had been to have, with St. Joseph and her Son, their scanty repast at the ninth hour.

Perchance then at this hour she gently urges them all to go to the large room, and refresh their exhausted strength. As she wishes to be alone, they leave her. *I have meat to eat which you know not* (St. John iv.).

While they are at their simple meal, and afterwards, they think and talk of the Admirable Mother. Mary of Cleophas has known her from infancy, and can tell some details such as our Lady herself afterwards revealed to St. Bridget: How from childhood her soul was ever full of a filial fear lest she should in any way displease her Creator; how she most rigidly abstained from all things that seemed likely to give her any pleasure that might lure away her soul from God; how, as soon as she knew that the Messiah was to be born of a virgin, she prayed most earnestly that she might live to see Him, and be perchance permitted to wait on the Virgin Mother as her handmaid.

B. *They rested.*

The current of their thoughts is suddenly changed when a disciple enters to tell them that Joseph has been seized by the Priests, and cruelly used, and cast into a deep dungeon, perhaps the same where our Saviour was imprisoned in the Palace of Caiphas.

In great trouble and full of pity for Joseph, they run to our Lady.

But she consoles them, and explains that this is a special grace granted to Joseph, in reward of his great charity to the Lord. She assures them all that Joseph will not be forgotten. *Fear not.*

And so the great Sabbath-day goes on according to Thy ordinance, dear Lord.

*Pac cor amans Jesu mei,
Fac ut nos amemus Te.*

"Grant that our poor souls may find their Sabbath and their rest in remembering Thee and Thy Blessed Mother."

SCENE XIX.

THE CŒNACULUM. THE END OF THE GREAT SABBATH.

STATION I.

And when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Salome, bought sweet spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus (St. Mark xvi. 1).

Do three go out to buy the spices, or only two? This depends on punctuation. For James and Salome were brother and sister, both children of Mary of Cleophas. If therefore we write, *Mother of James, and Salome*, there are three devout women going out; if we write, *Mother of James and Salome*, there are only two.

When the Sabbath was over. •

Contemplate the earnest devotion of these holy women. They are all very much exhausted; but love, if it be *strong as death*, is stronger much than weariness. As long as more precious spices and ointments can be found, enough has not been done for the Sacred Body. Has Mary sent to Bethany for all that remains of her *right spikenard*? *Let her alone, that she may keep it against the day of My burial.* Be this as it may, we can watch their diligent search for the very best aromatics.

"O Lord our God, and our most loving Redeemer, give us Thy love, that in all our works we may work for Thee, and try to give to Thee the best of everything." *In omnibus operibus tuis præcellens esto—"in all Thy works keep pre-eminence"* (Ecclus. xxxiii.).

STATION II.

Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Salome, bought sweet spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus (v. 1).

A. *They bought sweet spices.*

They have come back; they have opened out their parcels; they have begun at once the work of bruising and mixing the spices and herbs.

To their surprise, our Blessed Lady enters in from the Sanctuary with John: and with her mantle and her veil upon her as if she intends going forth at this late hour.

With gentleness and much motherly affection she watches their work. Well she knows how superfluous it all is, according to human wisdom. But she knows, too, that even if the judgment go astray at times, the work that a loving heart does is not superfluous.

He that begs of me may be an impostor, but what do I lose if I give to him because I believe him to be one of Christ's little ones? *He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what the spirit desireth* (Romans viii.).

She says no word then at all to blame them for not believing the assurance of Christ that He will rise again. For she knows well how, both now and when risen, He will delight in this devotion of their hearts.

B. *They bought sweet spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus.*

They are busy at their work, but they interrupt it, to ask in surprise if the Blessed Mother is going forth at such a late hour? and, if she is, may they accompany her?

Many writers assume that our Lady remained all that night in the Cenaculum, and from there witnessed the Resurrection.

The local tradition in Jerusalem is that she was near the Tomb when the Lord rose. In the writings of holy contemplatives too, such as Sister Emmerich, we find her going about by night to the holy places.

We may therefore contemplate her thanking very warmly the devout women, and saying to them words like those of her Divine Son: "*What I do, you know not now, but you will know hereafter; I shall go whither I am going; John will take care of me for his Master's sake, but do you remain and finish your holy work*".

Oh, with what fervour their hearts follow her, saying: *May the Lord guard thy coming in and thy going out, now and for ever.* For indeed she is *blessed among women; and a Mother to be admired above measure, and worthy to be remembered by good men.* Ever joining a man's heart with a woman's thought.

SCENE XX.

THE WAY OF SORROWS. NIGHTFALL AFTER THE GREAT SABBATH.

STATION I.

When the Sabbath was past (v. 1).

A. With the Beloved Disciple then at her side, the Blessed among women, the Admirable Mother, goes out into the moonlight. For, as after a violent storm at sea the moon may rise and shed its tranquil light over the wrecked fleet of ships, and over the waves that have stifled the drowning cries of so many victims, so is God's moonlight shedding loveliness on the city of sin and sacrilege, the city of rejected graces; the city that was till now the city of God. This is indeed a spectacle of sadness for the Mother of Jesus crucified for sinful men.

My eyes have failed with weeping, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured out upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people (Lament. ii.).

B. *When the Sabbath was past.*

In silence, then, the Blessed Mother and St. John follow the path trodden by our Saviour when He went early yesterday morning from the Palace of the Priests to the Prætorium.

Through the gate of Sion they are descending the long flight of steps that lead them through the Tyropœan valley to the Temple.

It was further on in the night when Judith passed through the gate of Bethulia, and went down the hill to the camp of Holofernes.

As she passed through the gate, we read: *Oxias and the Ancients of the city were waiting (to see her). And when they saw her they were astonished, and admired her beauty exceedingly. But they asked her no questions, only they let her pass, saying: The God of our fathers give thee grace, and may He strengthen all the counsels of thy heart with His power, that Jerusalem may glory in thee. And they that were there said, all with one voice: So be it, so be it* (Judith x.).

This picture may give us some faint idea of the delight with which the choirs of Heaven are gazing on their Queen, the Mother of God, as she goes down to-night from Mount Sion to Golgotha.

For they know what she knows, the secret of the King.

C. *When the Sabbath-day was past.*

If the Sabbath-day is past, then the third day is come, and on the third day, as she knows, her Son, her Lord, her God will rise. *He will rise on the third day: "Juravit Dominus, et non pœnitebit eum"—The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent* (Psalm cix.). *Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One to see corruption* (Psalm xv.).

Blessed art thou, Holy Mary, that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord (St. Luke i.).

D. *When the Sabbath was past.*

We have tried to find out for ourselves, according to our poor fashion, what manner of thoughts occupied the soul of Holy Mary during her solitude and desolation; how she went over days gone by; how she contemplated the relics of Calvary; how she pleaded for her second family, the children of her pain.

We must now contemplate other absorbing thoughts

in her soul. She has been looking back on the past; now she is looking forward.

She is, as she walks along over the Way of Sorrow—the glorious way of salvation—consumed with desire that the hours be shortened, and that justice be speedily done to the lifeless Body and to the Most Holy Soul of her Divine Son.

At every step the prayer of her humble heart is penetrating the clouds (Ecclus. xxxv.). And as she has ever delighted in the Lord, the Lord is bound by His promise to give her *the petitions of her heart* (Psalm xxxvi.).

O Eternal Father, *look on the face of Thy* (lifeless) *Christ. O Lord, hearken, and do; delay not for Thy own sake* (Daniel ix.).

Full of these irresistible yearnings, she walks to the Prætorium, and from the Prætorium down into the valley, and up the steep Way of the Cross to Golgotha.

We have seen that Joseph offered her his house near the Sepulchre to be her home. Does she now repair thither? Some holy writers think that she did accept Joseph's kindness. However this be, we may contemplate her begging of John to go back to console Magdalen and the rest, and assuring him that God's angels will take care of her.

Holy writers assume that during the Sacred Passion, and still more at the time of the Resurrection, the veil of separation between the blessed angels and their Queen was to some degree drawn aside, so that they could commune with her and she with them.

Till now, then, we have been contemplating the Sacred Body of our Lord in the Tomb and the desolation of Holy Mary.

Now we must go back to follow for a time His Holy Soul that went forth from the Body at the ninth hour.

SCENE XXI.

NEAR THE TOMB.

STATION I.

He descended into Hell.

A. At the ninth hour yesterday our Lord died loving, *loving to the end*; giving alms by word, by incessant prayers with tears, and by every extremity of suffering. No sooner is His Blessed Soul separated from His Sacred Body than, without any break, He continues at once His work of loving and giving alms; for with infinite love He gives His angels a command concerning His Blessed Mother; and then on an errand of love long desired by His Heart, He descends into Hell, to the Limbo of the Fathers, where He has been for ages the *desire of the everlasting hills* (Genesis xlix.). This name given by the dying Patriarch Jacob to Jesus Christ, according to some learned commentators signifies that Christ would be the desire of the holy Patriarchs who in their sanctity out-topped the people, like hills upon the plain.

B. *He descended into Hell.*

He goes down then to the place called Limbo, where all the ancient saints are detained. But He is not to remain there. *Thou wilt not leave My soul in Hell, nor wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption* (Psalm xv.).

If there are also Holy Souls in Purgatory, doubtless to them also Jesus crucified brings indulgence and eternal rest.

The Prophet Zachary, who foretold the humble triumph of Palm Sunday—*Behold the King will come to thee, the just and Saviour. He is poor and riding on an ass*—and who also bequeathed to us the precious promise—*They shall look on Me Whom they have pierced*—seems also to tell us something of our Saviour's visit to His patient servants in Limbo: *Thou also by the blood of Thy Testament hast sent forth Thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water. Return to the*

stronghold, ye prisoners of hope. I will render thee double, as I declare to-day (c. ix.). How justly may these blessed souls, who have so patiently waited for the *desire of the everlasting hills*, be called *prisoners of hope*!

They have been exiled from God's home and their home; and now our Saviour is coming to say to them: *Return to the stronghold. Come out of the land of oblivion, and take your place in the Church of Christ; not now to suffer in the Church militant, but to enter into the joy of your Lord in the Church triumphant. There I will render thee double.* Yes, the long, long delay will seem but a short dream, when they are once in the *house of their eternity*.

C. *He descended into Hell.*

The words of Ecclesiasticus also may be a prophecy of this visit. *I will penetrate to all the lower parts of the earth, and will behold all that sleep, and will enlighten all that hope in the Lord* (c. xxiv.).

All that sleep: because the Holy Souls in Limbo are not tormented, but "sleep the sleep of peace". But still, they are not in possession; they are only hoping and desiring. And assuredly, here on earth at least, *hope that is deferred afflicteth the soul* (Prov. xiii.).

The inspired writer adds: *Desire when it cometh is a tree of life.*

The coming of our Lord Jesus is *the tree of life* to these saints. Hence Jesus said to St. Dismas: *This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.* He knew that Limbo as soon as He entered there would become Paradise. *For what have I in Heaven* (Psalm lxxii.) better than the Lord Jesus? *The Lamb is the lamp thereof* (Apoc. xxi.). *The Lord shall be to thee for an everlasting light, and thy God for thy glory* (Isaias lx.).

D. *He descended into Hell.*

St. Peter also writes: *Christ died once for our sins, being put to death indeed in the flesh, but enlivened in the Spirit; in which He preached to those spirits who were in prison, which had been some time incredulous* (1 St. Peter iii.).

He preached to those (who) had been some time incredulous.

From these words some ancient writers inferred that certain more exemplary heathens who died without faith received the gift of faith at this visit of our Lord, and were saved. One of these writers relates that when a certain Christian had been reviling Plato, that philosopher appeared to him by night and said: "Do not revile me; for no one embraced the faith, when Christ preached to the dead, more readily than I did".

But this opinion and this story are not accepted by our holy Doctors. St. Gregory writes: "Christ going down to Limbo only delivered those by His grace who had believed in Him to come, and in their lives adhered to His precepts". A more common interpretation is that those *some time incredulous* were those who would not believe Noe's warning that the Deluge was coming; but afterwards when it came became penitent and were saved.

He preached to those spirits: explaining to them the mystery of the Redemption.

SCENE XXII.

LIMBO.

STATION L

And Jesus having cried out with a loud voice, gave up the ghost (St. Mark xv. 37).

It is the ninth hour, the hour of the evening sacrifice, and in that same hour His Blessed Soul descends into Hell.

Of a sudden is heard the loud cry of the angels of the Lord who attend upon Him from Calvary, as knocking at the long-closed gates they say with unspeakable jubilation: *Lift up your gates, O ye princes; and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in* (Psalm xxiii.).

From inside, the bright spirits who have charge of the *prisoners of hope*, make their thrilling answer that resounds through the prison and is heard by all there: *Who is the King of glory?* Promptly from the outside comes the reply:

The Lord Who is strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle (Psalm xxiii.). For the blessed legions have been watching with glad amazement how the strength, the *virtus*, the manliness, the ineffable power of Christ's suffering meekness, and His Blessed Mother's untiring compassion, baffled and conquered and crushed under foot Satan and all his rebellious spirits. Once more, therefore, they repeat their exulting challenge: *Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in.* And once again with increasing delight the angels of the prisoners cry out: *Who is the King of glory?* in order that all may hear the grand response: *The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory!* Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God and the Son of the Virgin Mary, at Whose name *every knee shall bow, in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth—He is the King of glory.*

The devout women will be asking, at daybreak: *Who will roll away the stone? for it was very great.* Year by year, and age by age, the blessed angels, in their charity for the *prisoners of hope*, have been looking wistfully on these huge everlasting doors, and saying: Who can ever roll these barriers away? But now, *no word shall be impossible with God.* Instantly, *in the twinkling of an eye*, they are lifted up, and the King of glory, Jesus crucified, is in the midst of His *prisoners of hope*. And as they sink down overwhelmed with the excess of the unexpected joy, He says to them, as holy Joseph to his brethren: *Be not afraid: come nearer to Me* (Gen. xlv.). I am Jesus, your Brother. My Mother is your Mother. My brethren, *see that it is My mouth that speaketh to you.*

But, alas, alas! these are but foolish words. What can we do but again and again make use of the words St. Paul borrowed from a Prophet before him? The manner of that meeting between Jesus crucified and His prisoners, *eye hath not seen.* The tones of His greeting, and the music of their response, no ear on earth hath ever heard. And how the

gladness crowded into that moment obliterated all remembrance of the ages of their exile and imprisonment, no heart in this world can conceive!

STATION II.

He descended into Hell.

A. *He that (sowed) in tears* is now come to reap with infinite gladness and contentment the beginnings of His harvest.

B. *He descended into Hell.*

Great as is the gladness of these prisoners now that hope long delayed is changed into fulfilment, yet the gladness in the Heart of our Lord is greater inconceivably, as He says to these holy captives: "*Come, ye blessed of My Father: Come, ye faithful and prudent servants: Come, ye well-tried friends, come and share the joy of your Lord and your Brother*".

C. *He descended into Hell.*

And now, helped by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we may in contemplation try to conjecture what manner of special greeting He has for each of those who had been most faithful and devoted. With what words of love, for instance, does He now in one moment give back to St. Joseph a thousand-fold for all the fidelity with which he guarded the family of God committed to him, and acted as the proxy of the Eternal Father!

D. *He descended into Hell.*

Star differeth from star, St. Paul writes (1 Cor. xv.). So now, also, no two saints in all this company have the same joy poured into them. In each one our Lord creates a new heart; and the gladness of one heart, though like, is still different from the gladness of another.

The martyred Precursor has his own full outpouring of love. Abraham and Isaac and the chaste Patriarch Joseph, and each of the Prophets slain in Jerusalem, all become at once wonderful images and counterparts of

Christ Jesus, yet each with his own individual glory. What word of special welcome has our Saviour for the faithful mother of the seven martyrs, for Judith, and for Esther, the types of Holy Mary? for His own St. Anne, and for Elizabeth, the holy mother of His Precursor? And what manner of tenderness has He ready for the patient suffering of holy Job and the faithful charity of Tobias?

E. *He descended into Hell.*

Then, a little while, and suddenly into the prison of hope, now changed into a Paradise, is ushered by the crowd of blessed angels, their new companion, the first-born on Calvary, the first child of the new family of the second Eve, the penitent and purified and sanctified soul of Dismas, washed in the Blood of the Lamb. Oh, wonder! Our Blessed Lord's gratitude to Dismas for having pleaded for Him is greater beyond measure than the redeemed Saint's thanksgiving to his Redeemer.

F. *He descended into Hell.*

But among all the vast gathering of the Blessed here to-day, there are two on whom all eyes are fixed: our first father, Adam, and our mother, Eve. They have a reason beyond all the rest to lie absorbed in grateful adoration, saying: "We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee; because by Thy Death Thou hast undone the evil wrought by us, and hast redeemed the world".

SCENE XXIII.

PARADISE ON CALVARY.

STATION I.

Thou hast sent forth the prisoners out of the pit (Zach. ix. 11).

How long does the Soul of Christ tarry in Limbo? Some commentators answer, only an instant, and straight-way leads out the prisoners of hope. Others argue from the words: *So shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth*

three days and three nights (St. Matt. xii.), that the Most Holy Soul remains in Limbo till near the moment of the Resurrection. But the argument does not seem weighty, as these words may be sufficiently verified by the fact that the Sacred Body remained buried till the third day. We are therefore free, in contemplation, to assume that it is at the Sacred Tomb that our Blessed Saviour, in part at least, preaches to the Holy Spirits, explaining to them as they gaze on the crucified Body, and also on the second Eve, the desolate Mother, the Admirable Mother, the Mother of God, and Mother of men, how grace and salvation has been won for the fallen race.

STATION II.

Thou hast sent forth the prisoners out of the pit (v. 11).

A. The third day then is come, and the prophecy must be fulfilled: Three days and three nights the Son of Man shall be in the heart of the earth.

Three days and three nights! If this be so, our cold-hearted human wisdom will calculate, not till the ninth hour of the second day of the week can the Resurrection take place. But there is a power at work strong enough to upset all human calculations.

To Daniel, the Blessed Virgin's Archangel, Gabriel, said of old: *I am come to show it to thee, because thou art a man of desires*, (that) *seventy weeks are shortened upon thy (captive) people* (Daniel ix.). The soul of this man of desires is present now, yearning with a longing that he never felt on earth, that the Resurrection may come speedily. But Daniel is only one of the gathering of Holy Souls from Limbo; and the blessed angels from Heaven who are gazing on the Body of the second Adam and the bruised heart of the second Eve, are all consumed with a longing that justice may be done quickly to the Sacred Body and to the separated Soul which are awaiting their reunion. God joined these two together, and no

other power had right to sever them. Love alone, Infinite love, above all law, broke the sacred bonds, and in death they are divided.

B. *Thou hast sent forth the prisoners.*

And then, too, all the immense choir of Blessed Spirits are pleading with an irresistible concord for justice to the bruised heart of the Immaculate Mother, who, with the Eternal Father, *so loved the world* that she gave her only Son for man's redemption.

C. *Thou hast sent forth the prisoners.*

Add to this longing for justice to their King their own bereavement. They cannot be at rest till they possess Him; and, if they may not yet have their Queen also, till at least they see her consoled ineffably. *Thou wilt arise (O God)*, is their cry, *and have mercy on Sion; for it is time to have mercy on it, for the time is come* (Psalm ci.). "If we may not yet possess our Queen, it is time that we be allowed to look on the face of Thy Christ, our Lord, our Redeemer, our King, our God."

STATION III.

There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother
(St. John xix. 25).

But there is a cry going up to the throne of the Eternal Trinity more powerful than this stupendous supplication of all the choirs of angels and all the liberated just. Ever since that ninth hour, wherever she bent her steps, the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of Sorrows has been, with groanings unspeakable, pleading that the Holy Soul and Sacred Body, which had paid a debt they did not owe, and been afflicted by a parting so cruel and so undeserved, may be most speedily brought together again.

Once before, the Lord Jesus said to the Blessed Woman of desires: *Woman, My hour is not come* (St. John ii.): and yet her will prevailed, and it was done according to her wish, for her grateful God never forgets the hour when

she said: *Be it done unto me according to Thy word.* Now, therefore, when her heart cries out: "O God, O Lord, O my Son Jesus, *incline unto my aid, make haste to help me; O Lord, hearken, and do; delay not for Thy own sake,*" He answers: Mother, *My hour is not come*; but all the while He does not forget His promise: *No word shall be impossible with God*, now that the second Eve is become My Mother. And the adorable Trinity, in their wisdom and loving charity, see how the hours can be abbreviated and truth remain undamaged.

Now, therefore, as has been said, for His own sake, for the sake of His Divine Son made Man, for the sake of the Blessed Mother of God, for the sake of the expecting saints and angels, for the sake of the afflicted Church on earth, the days are shortened, as far as may be consistently with the due fulfilment of prophecy. The Vesper hours of Good Friday, from the ninth hour to sundown, are accepted as one day. The Great Sabbath is the second. And now the hours from the end of the Sabbath to the beginning of the early twilight of the first day after the Sabbath, are admitted as the third day.

STATION IV.

Return to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope. I will render thee double (Zach. ix. 12).

A. *Ye prisoners of hope.*

The Holy Souls, then, released from Limbo, and all the choirs of angels, are now around their Queen, near the glorious Sepulchre. We have a saying that "coming events cast their shadows before". In this hour, it is not a shadow that is the harbinger, but a growing hope, and a joy becoming every moment more intense. The hour of suspense is a heavenly day-dawn such as this world has never seen, preparing the way for a glorious sunburst such as angels or men have never conceived.

To the soul of Holy Mary her Archangel is sent to

whisper the message: *Yet a little and a very little while, and He that is to come will come, and will not delay* (Hebrews x.). Meanwhile we may in our poor way contemplate these hoping and expecting and desiring saints and angels, whose eyes are ever turning to the Mother of God, to learn of her what they are to wish, and what to do. If we may use a human word, she is the leader, and ruler, and precentor of this vast and glorious choir which the Eternal God has prepared for Himself and His own home.

Holy writers assume that at the Resurrection, angels and the liberated souls are visible to our Lady.

B. *Prisoners of hope.*

What, then, are the thoughts of this expecting company *which no man can number*?

As we have already seen, one dominant thought is an intense longing that the hours be abbreviated.

But besides this, we know enough from revelation to be able to penetrate a little more behind the veil that hides these blessed choirs from the eyes of this world. The recording angels have, without failing for one moment, kept most diligently an exact register of every deed, every word, every thought of Jesus, God made Man, from His conception to the ninth hour, when He bowed His head and died. Not for one moment have they slumbered or slept over this task of love and joy. Now all the blessed spirits know, and they remind one another of it, that His own teaching was that not even one cup of cold water given as an alms shall lose its reward.

What manner of reward, then, they ask, in transport of reverent wonder and delight, will the adorable Trinity create for all the works of the Lord Jesus? For all His words and thoughts while on earth are, not only an almsgiving, and an almsgiving of that kind which is most precious, the almsgiving that costs much, but also an almsgiving raised to an infinite value by the love that burns in the Heart of Jesus, God made Man.

And God, Who is the true Father, the good Father, the most loving Father of all this large family of His children, is not displeased at their holding happy counsel together on this question. *Let the just feast and rejoice before God, and be delighted with gladness* (Psalm lxxvii.). And so they consider in detail what shape and form of recompense will have been planned in the eternal counsels of their God, for the Son of Man, Christ Jesus.

We read how King Assuerus, when he was enduring a night without sleep, commanded the chronicles of his reign to be brought to him, that they might help to pass the weary hours. There, on a page long overlooked, they read for him how Mardochai, the Jew, had saved his life from traitors. *What honour and reward, he asked, hath Mardochai received for this fidelity? His servants answered: He hath received no reward at all.* He called therefore his chancellor, Aman, and put this question to him: *What ought to be done to the man whom the King is desirous to honour?* (Esther vi.).

This is precisely the question that occupies this vast assembly of the blessed now, and the question which the Eternal Trinity wish them to meditate.

We too are permitted, in our poor contemplation, to consider in our hearts the same question: *What ought to be done to our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus crucified, Whom our God is desirous to honour?* What reward do we wish Him to have?

C. Prisoners of hope.

Leaving aside, then, that immense record of His thirty-three years on earth, which the *whole world could not contain*: "What manner of recompense," the blessed saints and angels are wondering, "will be given to our King even for His last night and His last day on earth?"

The Eternal Father has, if we may use our human language, through ages that had no beginning, been meditating on this same question: *What shall I give (My Son) for all He hath given to Me?* (Psalm cxv.).

"If the cup of cold water is to have a lavish reward," the Cherubim and Seraphim argue, "what shall be given for each drop of His own life-blood?" "We have numbered," the recording angels say, "most faithfully, all these wounds upon His Body; in what way, think you, will each of them be made good and compensated with ample measure, flowing over?"

"And all those times when He fell down helpless!"

Perhaps even we here on earth know already something of the way in which this weary exhaustion is to be made right. For we see in the great mystery of His existence in the Blessed Eucharist, how His Sacred Body which was on the Way of Sorrow so powerless, henceforth can be in every corner of the world at the same moment.

"Blessed be the Holy and Undivided Trinity, that has planned this recompense for this lifeless and motionless Body."

"What," asks one, "shall be the joy and delight given to His eyes for every tear they shed?" "Yes," another adds, "and for the charity of His eyes? and for the reverence also of His eyes when closed in prayer?"

"And can any one conjecture what can be done to glorify His sacred mouth for every word He spoke, and for His admirable silence? For not one word spoken nor one word meekly held back can pass away without its eternal recompense."

"And what kind of delight will be created to make compensation for His thirst?"

"And His sacred feet that were so weary, and yet so untiring! and His hands, ever open to bless and to give! Even if the nails had never passed through these feet or hands, what can be thought of to pay all that they have earned?"

"But above all, His Sacred Heart that loved with a boundless love from the moment of His conception till He expired! What new kind of honour have the adorable Trinity planned to make up to It for all Its sorrows and the sorrows of His Ever-Blessed Mother?"

"Then besides, what think you will be done as a recompense for the *gratitude* of His Heart? for the *meekness* of His Heart? for the *humility* of His Heart? and for the never-ceasing *obedience* of His loving Heart?"

What can be done? "O Lord, our God, Thou knowest. It is well: for we know not." And then, that last wrench of separation which parted the Sacred Body and the Holy Soul! O mystery! How shall that parting ever be made up to both?

D. Prisoners of hope.

So do they wonder and contemplate, and they turn their eyes to the Blessed Mother.

But here, instead of finding help, they have to begin again a new range of wonder and calculation. For is it not written: *According to the multitude of My sorrows, Thy comforts have given joy to My Soul*? (Psalm xciii.). If her sorrows have been great as the ocean, how will her heart be enlarged to hold the joy in store for her? O Lord our God, Thou knowest. Blessed be our God. He is faithful in all His words and holy in all His works. The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord (Psalm cxliv.).

Thus do the blessed spirits muse in boundless gladness in presence of their God; and the Blessed Mother, united with them, is from the depths of her heart crying out: *Come, Lord Jesus* (Apoc. xxii.); and her cry prevails.

E. Prisoners of hope.

But first, the Holy Spirit breathing where He wills, sweetly whispers into her soul, as to the precentor of the heavenly choir, the answer to all their musings, and at the same moment inclines them too to take up from her the new anthem which answers their own manifold questions. Beginning, then, with the Ever-Blessed Mother of God, and rising sweetly and solemnly, and "full and loud, and most becoming," from this vast choir, the new canticle is on a sudden heard: *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction* (Apoc. v.). And in that

hour, with a full comprehension, they grasp the special reasons for every word in that glorious and unanimous verdict.

Power He shall have, because He was so helpless and so subject.

Divinity must burst forth in a perfect revelation, because His aspect was so hidden, and He was known only as a Man, and as a Man of Sorrows—a worm and no Man.

Wisdom must shine as the sunlight, because He was mocked as a fool.

Strength shall beyond measure be multiplied, because He lay down powerless upon the ground, and became as a Man without help.

Honour shall be His, because He was glutted with reproaches; and *glory* He shall have, because as the sinner He endured all shame.

Yes, and *Benediction*! Blessing be for ever to His Name above all names, for He was hooted by His people whom He loved.

F. Prisoners of hope.

And now the heart of the Blessed Mother with supreme earnestness cries out: *Arise, O my glory. O Lord, make haste to help me. Arise, my Son, and have mercy on Sion, for the time is come to have mercy on it.*

With one heart they respond, "Amen, amen".

SCENE XXIV.

THE TOMB.

STATION I.

The third day He shall rise again (St. Matt. xvii. 22).

And now His will Who stilled the winds on the lake, and lulled the waves to rest, in an instant hushes the jubilant anthem. There is silence, a holy happy silence, throughout the host of Heaven, and all that vast assem

blage, and the prisoners of hope gaze in rapture on the Most Blessed Soul of Christ, as it enters into the Sacred Tomb, and in an instant is united once more, indissolubly now and for ever, with its faithful partner, the sinless, and most obedient helpmate which rendered to His Soul good, and not evil, through all the days of (its) life. Thus, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, as the Apostle afterwards wrote (1 Cor. xv.), Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, and the Son of the Ever-Blessed Virgin Mary, He Who is Master of power (Wisdom xii.), and reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly (Wisdom viii.), and with tranquillity (Wisdom xii.), awakes from the sleep of death, and on His new birthday is once more made Man—Jesus Christ, God and Man.

"O God, O My Father, to Thee do I wake at the dawning of the new Sabbath-day. I give Thee thanks, My Father, because Thou (hast) not left My Soul in Hell; nor given Thy Holy One to see corruption."

No hand does He need to unbind Him, and let Him go. With tranquillity He lays aside the grave-clothes. No angel comes to roll away for Him the stone, though it is great. In silence and with tranquillity He rises, and passes in His glorified Body noiselessly through the stone vaulting of the Sepulchre. The Body sown in dishonour rises in glory; sown in weakness, it rises in power; sown a natural Body, it rises a spiritual Body (1 Cor. xv.). O death, where is (now) thy victory?

Silence, deep silence still reigns throughout the great company of angels and of blessed souls gathered from Heaven and from Limbo to witness the glorious Resurrection. All are waiting and watching for what the Lord will do and say.

STATION II.

He is risen, as He said (St. Matt. xxviii. 6).

A. And what does the Lord do or say as He rises from the Tomb? Of the strong man, Samson, we read, that when

he found the honeycomb in the dead lion's mouth, he ate of it, and coming to his father and his mother, he gave them of it, and they ate (Judges xiv.).

A stronger and a better and a more loving Son is here. From the jaws of death He has taken back the honeycomb, the sweetness and the joy of life. Whither shall He go but to share it quickly with the same Mother who has shared all His sorrow? The first Adam, as he woke out of the deep sleep cast on him by God, saw coming towards him the woman that God had formed to be his helpmate. So now the waking eyes of the second Adam, as He rises through the rock, are resting on His Blessed Mother. He sees her draw irresistibly towards Him, and He makes haste to meet her, and most reverently and lovingly embraces her, saying: "My Mother, '*Resurrexi, et adhuc tecum sum*'—I am risen, and am with thee still" (Psalm cxxxviii.).

Then it is that an alleluia loud and full and perfectly becoming, bursts from the delighted choirs. Alleluia! alleluia! For hope is changed into ineffable fulfilment.

Sit laus plena, sit sonora,	Oh, full and loud the song shall be,
Sit jucunda, sit decora,	Seemly and sweet the minstrelsy,
Mentis jubilatio.	The anthems of the soul.

And as the Ever-Blessed Mother sinks down to adore, saying once again, "*Ecce ancilla Domini!*" He adds: "Arise, My Mother, arise; make haste, My love, My dove, My beautiful one, and come. For the winter is now past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers have appeared in our land" (Cant. ii.).

Louder and fuller and more jubilantly bursts out again the response of the entranced spirits, Amen, amen, alleluia, alleluia!

And as the Lord goes on: (She) is My dove! My perfect one is but one! (Cant. vi.); thou art all fair, My loved one, My faithful one, Mother ever Blessed; thou art all fair, and no spot is in thee" (Cant. iv.); their irrepressible gladness breaks forth once more: "*Hail, full of grace, the Lord is*

with thee. Worthy is our Queen, the Mother of the Lamb that was slain, to receive with her Son *benediction, and honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever* (Apoc. v.). For God has joined them, and parted they must not be."

And Holy Mary, overflowing with perfect love, which drives out all fear and all sorrow, responds in that same hour, as she gazes on the beauty of her glorified Son: *It is enough for me if my Son and my Lord be living* (Genesis xlv.). My God, my Lord, my Son, already in this hour, *according to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy consolations have given joy to my soul* (Psalm xciii.). *My spirit exulteth in God my Saviour.*

B. *He is risen, as He said.*

Our Blessed Lord will be well pleased, and His Holy Mother will be well pleased, and the rejoicing saints and angels will be well pleased, if *we* also try to take part in this great gladness for the Resurrection and glorification of Christ Jesus crucified.

Gratias agimus Tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam—
"We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory".

St. Ignatius teaches us in his Exercises, when he comes to this mystery, to pray earnestly that *we may rejoice intensely on account of the great joy and glory of our Master.*

This is not at all a selfish prayer. For if it is love to weep with those who weep, so is it love to rejoice with those who rejoice. Loving compassion does both.

"*Cantate Domino,*" the Holy Ghost says to us, "*canticum novum.*"

This scene at the Sepulchre calls for a new canticle. But if we sing with a new heart the old songs, they become a new canticle.

Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Every word is new, and has to-day a new meaning. The Lord is with her now in quite a new way.

And we can practise our souls too in learning how to say better and better her canticle, *My soul magnifieth the Lord, blessing God for what He has done for Holy Mary.*

For thus we can give her a help which she needs; since there is one thing that she never can do as much as she wishes. She cannot bless and thank her God sufficiently.

Regina coeli, lætare, alleluia.

Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia.

Resurrexit sicut dixit, alleluia,

Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.

Rejoice, O Queen of Heaven and earth, alleluia.

For He to Whom thou gavest birth, alleluia,

Is risen as He said, alleluia,

This third day from the dead, alleluia,

Oh, pray for us for whom He bled, alleluia.

C. *He is risen, as He said.*

Look attentively at Jesus risen: the same Jesus, as on the Good Friday; and yet how changed! *Death is swallowed up in victory.* And not only death, but all that went before death. For we remember, there was *no beauty* in Him then; *nor comeliness, nor sightliness.* We were not drawn to Him. We could not *be desirous of Him.* Now He is *beautiful above (all) the sons of men;* and the angels and blessed saints are *desiring to look on Him:* and, in quite a new sense, are crying out, *O God, look on the Face of Thy Christ,* the beautiful Face of Thy Christ, and out of love for Him, be propitious to His poor sinful brethren—the children of His Mother.

D. *He is risen, as He said.*

St. Ignatius counsels us to note well the great change wrought in Him.

When we see a martyr mangled and tortured, or a holy servant of God suffering on a death-bed, it is hard to believe that they are soon, very soon, to be blessed in Heaven.

Is this calm and beautiful and majestic Lord Jesus the same that on Friday was writhing on the ground in His Blood, *a worm and no Man?*

He was crucified through weakness, St. Paul writes, *yet He liveth by the power of God* (2 Cor. xiii.). And while looking on His beauty, and strength, and majesty to-day,

we understand better that the weakness of Good Friday was all voluntary. *He loved me and delivered Himself up for me.*

E. *He is risen.*

He was dead, truly dead: but it was He Himself Who said of Lazarus: *(He) is not dead, but sleepeth.* And what to Him now is His Passion, His Death, nay, His whole weary Life, but a short dream? *As the dream of them that awake, O Lord* (Psalm lxxii.). *The things that are seen are temporal: but the things that are not seen are eternal* (2 Cor. iv.).

St. Chrysostom writes: "The glory of the Resurrection has buried in oblivion all the bitterness of death".

F. *He is risen.*

We have to believe by faith that He is the same Jesus; the scourged Jesus; the crowned Jesus; the crucified Jesus of Good Friday "*Ecce Homo!*" He is the same Man; God made Man; the Son of God and the Son of Holy Mary.

St. Leo writes: "The Resurrection did not put an end to the former Body, but only changed its condition. The substance is not destroyed. Some qualities have passed away; but its nature is not gone. That which could then be crucified is now a Body impassible. That which could then be slain is now become immortal. That which could be wounded is made invulnerable."

And St. Paul writes: *If we knew Christ according to the flesh: but now, we know Him no longer.* St. Leo, to explain these words, adds: "With reason it is said: that the flesh of Christ is no longer recognised as what it used to be. Because now there is nothing left passible, and nothing that is weak. So that in nature and essence it is the same; but in its glorious condition not at all the same."

G. *He is risen.*

St. Paul, the Apostle of the Resurrection, suggests many holy thoughts to entertain our souls while we contemplate our Lord Jesus risen, and His Holy Mother's consolation.

(a) *We are buried with Him by baptism unto death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life* (Romans vi.).

The old man of sin was buried in the waters of Baptism. This was more clearly signified in the Baptism by immersion. The Christian rises out of the water regenerated, and a new man. All through my life, then, I ought to have been *walking in newness of life.* Have I lived the life of a risen man, such as Lazarus lived after coming to life? Has my heart been clean? Has a *right spirit* been renewed in my bowels?

H. *He is risen.*

(b) But not to stand alone and exceptional. *Christ is risen from the dead, the FIRST FRUITS OF THEM THAT SLEEP. For by a man came death, and by a Man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so ALSO IN CHRIST ALL SHALL BE MADE ALIVE* (1 Cor. xv.).

One cause, then, of the great joy to-day of Christ our Lord and of His Holy Mother is that we are all, through His Death and Resurrection, to rise again.

They are rejoicing for our joy. Is it much if we rejoice at their joy?

Our poor sinful bodies are to rise. Let us not be slaves to them in their corruption, now; but reverence and cherish them as they will be when risen.

I. *He is risen.*

(c) And therefore our bodies shall rise. *If the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again* (1 Cor. xv.). *Credis hoc? Credo Domine.*

(d) But what boots it that our bodies rise, if our souls be not risen?

Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall all indeed rise again: but we shall not all be changed. Why not? *Because flesh and blood cannot possess the Kingdom of Heaven; neither shall corruption possess incorruption* (1 Cor. xv.).

Alas! alas! Are we to rise with our bodies still quite

capable of suffering and of corruption; immortal indeed, but suffering such everlasting misery, that *oetter had it been for him if that man had not been born?* (St. Matt. xxvi.).

Is that to be the outcome of Christ's Death and Resurrection? *Absit! Domine. Absit! Mater Dei. Tantis labor non sit cassus.*—"Not so, O Lord, not so, Holy Mother. May the Passion of thy Son and thy compassion not be made void."

J. *He is risen.*

(e) *Christ our Pasch is sacrificed* (1 Cor. v.). *Our Pasch, our Passover.* The name was to remind Israel of the crossing over the Red Sea from slavery into freedom. Christ is *our Pasch*: because He has made it possible for our souls through His plentiful redemption and all the provision He has earned for His Church to pass from death to life.

St. Bernard writes that if we go back to sin, "We rob the Resurrection of Christ of its name of Pasch, since we do not pass over, but go back". To each of us He says most compassionately: *Arise, make haste, My beautiful one, and come. For winter is now past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land.* For each one of us is His Bride, built up out of the water and the blood from His Side; and, though perchance disfigured now, yet He sees us as we are to be: *Make haste, My beautiful one, and come.*

K. *He is risen.*

(f) *Christ rising from the dead, dieth now no more.*

Therefore, under either kind in the Holy Eucharist Christ must be living. Men sometimes say that Holy Church only gives half the Sacrament to the faithful. As long as this heresy prevails, Holy Church fears to countenance it by giving the Blessed Sacrament to the faithful under both kinds. For if Christ is divided, and he who receives the Sacred Body does not receive also the Precious Blood, then Christ is still dead, for His Body and His Blood are separated.

Christ rising from the dead, dieth now no more. Death

has no more dominion over Him. The Blessed Mother has obtained for many of her children to rise from sin and die no more. They persevere till death, walking in the newness of life. *The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life have no more dominion over them. Thanks be to God, Who gave us the victory through Christ our Lord.*

"O Holy Mother of God, thy power is still the same. Thy Mother's heart, too, is unchanged. Pray for us sinners, that we may die no more."

L. *He is risen.*

(g) *Who was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification* (Romans iv.).

The sense is not that Christ by His Death merited forgiveness for us, and by His Resurrection merited an infusion of sanctifying grace. For after His Death our Lord *no longer merited.* But St. Paul teaches us that His Death and His Resurrection are both to be useful to us; both teach us; both are our models.

His Death teaches us to die to sin, to destroy sin. His Resurrection, to *walk in newness of life.*

M. *He is risen.*

If you are risen with Christ, seek the things that are above: mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth (Coloss. iii.).

Our good Angel is ever whispering: *Sursum corda.*

Where is wisdom to be found? Job asks. Where are peace and happiness and hope and love to be found?

And where is the place of understanding? If I go down into the rich mine, *the depth says: it is not in me.* If I look for it on the sea-shore, *the sea saith: it is not with me.* If I try to buy it, *the finest gold will not purchase it, neither shall silver be weighed in exchange for it. Gold or crystal cannot equal it: neither shall any vessels of gold be changed for it.*

Whence, then, cometh wisdom?

Sursum corda! Our Angel whispers, *God understandeth the way of it: and He knoweth the place thereof* (Job xxviii.).

N. *He is risen.*

(h) *Christ our Pasch is sacrificed: therefore let us feast: not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth* (1 Cor. v.).

That is, let us in our Paschal time use *unleavened bread*: not the bread seasoned with the old leaven palatable to our nature. Let us not indulge in conversations leavened with *malice and wickedness*; but let us feast our minds and hearts with innocence and truth.

O. *He is risen.*

An early Father, Minucius Felix, writes: "Observe how, for our consolation, all creation is ever contemplating (and imitating) the future resurrection. The sun sets in the sea, sets to rise again. Stars disappear and return. Flowers droop and die, to come to life again. Shrubs are withered by age, but blossom again. Seeds must die in the ground before they spring up in beauty. It is with our bodies in this world as with those trees which in the winter season hide all their vigour under a feigned decrepitude. Why wish impatiently that the tree come back to life and burgeon while the winter is still bleak? Even so, must we wait for the spring-time of our bodies."

SCENE XXV.

THE TOMB. THE EARTHQUAKE.

STATION I.

And behold there was a great earthquake (St. Matt. xxviii. 2).

A. *A great earthquake.*

Very loud, but perhaps not of long continuance. Holy Church applies to it the words of the 75th Psalm: *The earth trembled and was still, when God arose in judgment, to save all the meek of the earth.*

To save all the meek of the earth. The earthquake is not a chastisement sent in anger to destroy; but a voice announcing that the kingdom of this world is no longer

under Satan's power: that Christ the King has conquered all His enemies; and, to-day, the last of them, death—and the enemy death shall be destroyed last (1 Cor. xv.). He is risen now to continue His work of *saving all the meek of the earth.*

B. *A great earthquake.*

1. The loud earthquake awakes the drowsy guards and tells them the tidings, and fills them with terror.

2. The loud earthquake, coming unexpectedly, awakens the attention of the disciples, and prepares their minds to believe.

3. The earthquake, short, loud, and without preparation, speaks to the sleeping city. *He who hath ears, let him hear, our Lord used to say.*

C. *A great earthquake.*

At the ancient Pasch, the deliverance out of Egypt, nature spoke more loudly: *The sea saw and fled: Jordan was turned back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the hills like the lambs of the flock. At the presence of the Lord, the earth was moved* (Psalm cxiii.). O God, *when Thou didst go forth in the sight of Thy people the earth was moved, and the heavens dropped at the presence of the God of Sinai* (Psalm lxxvii.). Why is there less demonstration now? Perchance, because less is wanted now. Christ has wrought better wonders and quite sufficient wonders on Calvary. He, on His cross, with His Blessed Mother by His side, is the wonder that will awaken and attract the hearts of men. *I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself* (St. John xii.). He is the Fruit hanging on the tree of knowledge and of life, that will lure us all.

The Psalmist speaks of the God of the first Pasch as the God of Sinai. He spoke in the thunder and lightning of Sinai. Our Lord Jesus, the God of Calvary, says: *I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love; and I will be to them as one that taketh off the yoke on their jaws; and I put his meat to him that he might eat* (Osee xi.).

"By Thy glorious Resurrection, deliver us, O Lord. Do

not, on account of graces abused and our hardness of heart, cease to speak; do not be silent."

Alas! after having loved us with an everlasting love, and drawn us to Calvary to witness His Death and Resurrection, and to know Him and His Blessed Mother, shall our Lord be obliged to say to us in the end: *The Lord thy God hath carried thee, as a man is wont to carry his little son, all the way that you have come, until you came to this place. And yet for all this you did not believe the Lord your God?* (Deut. i.).

STATION II.

For an Angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and coming rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. And his countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow. And for fear of him the guards were struck with terror and became as dead men (vv. 2—4).

A. An Angel of the Lord descended.

The context is: *There was a great earthquake. For an Angel descended.*

Hence commentators conclude that the earthquake is produced by the action of God's Angel. Some men, deluded by the father of lies and by their own pride, deify the laws of nature. Nature is with them supreme. We believe firmly that our God is the Creator and Lord of nature and nature's laws. *He commandeth both the winds and the sea, and they obey Him.* So does the earth: *The world is Mine, and the fulness thereof* (Psalm xlix.); and the firmament above: *And all things serve Thee* (Psalm cxviii.). *For great power always belonged to Thee alone; and who shall resist the strength of Thy arm? For the whole world before Thee is as the least grain of the balance, and as a drop of the morning dew, that falleth down upon the earth. But Thou hast mercy upon all, because Thou canst do all things* (Wisdom xi.).

B. The guards became as dead men.

Our Lord is risen: *to save all the meek of the earth.* The

voice of the earthquake is really a message of peace. *The guards, indeed, were filled with terror; but this fear will to many be the beginning of wisdom, and perchance afterwards to themselves.*

The shock of the earthquake and the aspect of the Angel leave no room for doubt in their souls, whatever bribes the Priests may offer. "Great is the truth, and it gains the day." These guards set by the Priests and Ancients will be most useful apostles of the truth. *Unjust witnesses have risen up against Me, and iniquity hath lied to itself* (Psalm xxvi.), that is, against itself, to its own confusion. *There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord* (Prov. xxi.).

C. An Angel of the Lord descended, and coming rolled back the stone.

Some commentators think that the earthquake caused by the Angel rolled back the stone. But perhaps this may have been a distinct effort of the Angel's power.

D. The guards became as dead men.

See the guards, at the sound of the earthquake, starting to their feet and grasping their swords; but at the sight of the Angel, all their courage and strength is gone, they sink down to the earth and swoon away through excessive fear. The Resurrection is intended to bring life to the dead, *but here we see the living fall down as if dead men.* This is Simeon's prophecy concerning Jesus Christ: *This Child is set for the fall and the resurrection of many.*

Mors est malis, vita bonis—"Death to the wicked; Life to the good".

"Mother of God, show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, that to us He may be Life."

E. The guards became as dead men.

If the earthquake and the aspect of the Angel can cause fear like to death, what wonder that when *the great day of the Lord shall come, and men shall see the sign of the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty, they shall be withering away with fear?*

To-day He rises in mercy, only to save all the meek of the earth. But then He will come to judge justly.

Quantus tremor est futurus,	Oh! what trembling then shall be,
Quando Judex est venturus,	When the Lord in majesty,
Cuncta stricte discussurus.	Comes to judge the sins of men.

"O Lord, my God, pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear"
(Psalm cxviii.).

We must not forget that the Angel does not roll away the large round stone in order that the Lord may come forth. The Resurrection is already accomplished. The Body that was a natural Body has risen a spiritual Body, and can pass through walls and rocks and bolted doors.

SCENE XXVI

EASTER DAY, VERY EARLY.

Before contemplating each apparition of our Blessed Lord, we must give a little time to clearing up certain difficulties, which we meet in the narratives of the Evangelists.

1. What is the meaning of St. Matthew's words: "*Vespere autem Sabbati quæ lucescit in prima Sabbati*"? (St. Matt. xxviii.).

Our Douay version translates these words thus:

In the end of the Sabbath, when it began to dawn towards the first day of the week.

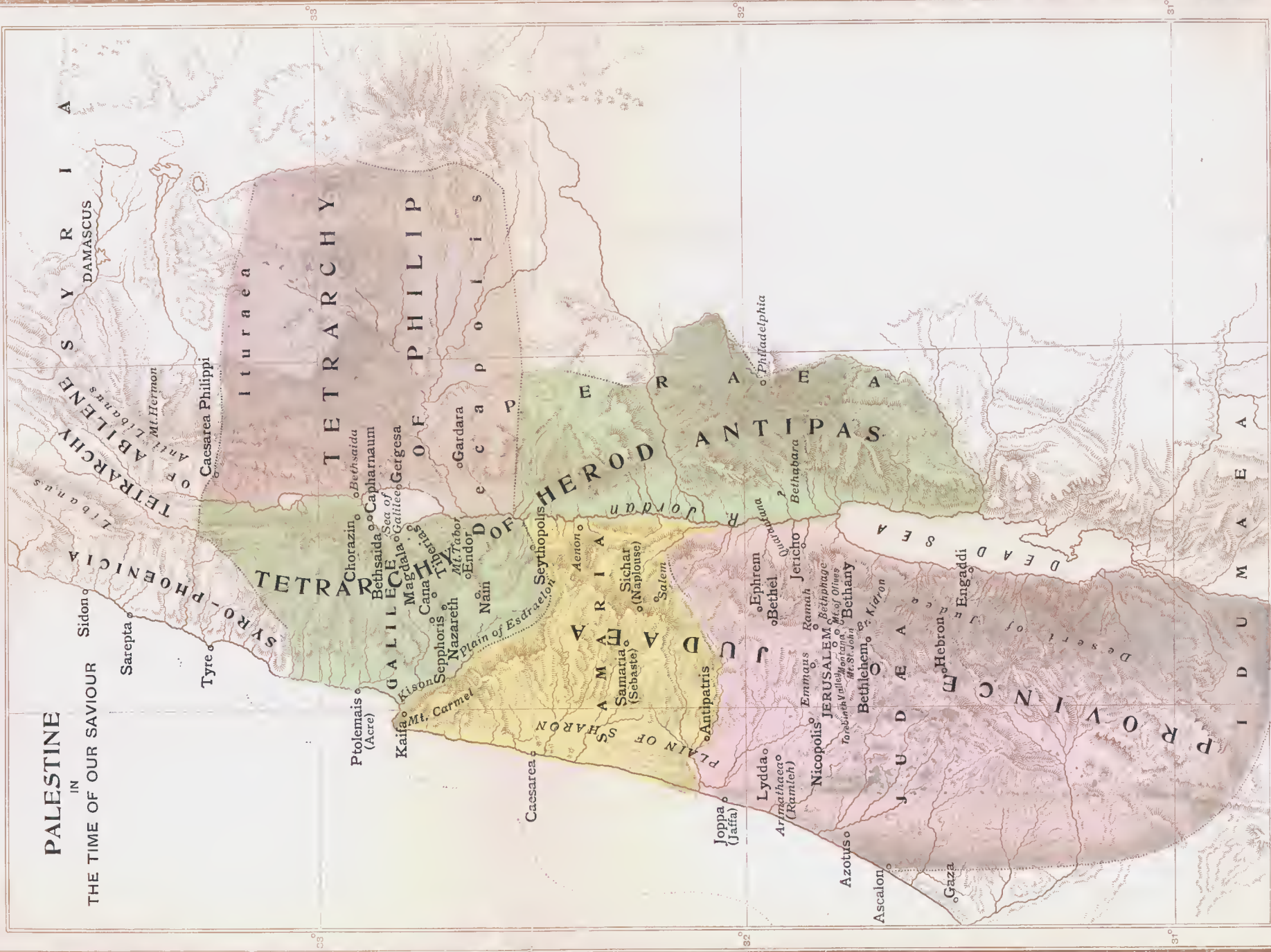
The Greek text is: Ὅψι δὲ σαββάτων, τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων. This passage has given trouble to students. From the words "*Vespere Sabbati*," which they render "in the evening of the Sabbath," some commentators conclude that the devout women came to the Tomb on Saturday evening after sunset, when the Sabbath was over. This supposition does not fit in with the context. For at that hour the guards were in possession, and the Sepulchre was sealed, and the Resurrection had not taken place.

2. Others observe that the Greek word Ὅψι need not necessarily be rendered "in the evening of the Sabbath," but may mean late in the night of the Sabbath.

3. It may help us if we bear in mind that as in our ecclesiastical calendar each festival has two Vespers, first and second, so each Sabbath had two evenings and nights, one preceding, one following the Sabbath-day. Either of these might be called the evening or night of the Sabbath. Among the Jews especially, as they began the Sabbath at sunset on Friday, what we call Friday night might well be called the night of the Sabbath.

PALESTINE

IN
THE TIME OF OUR SAVIOUR



4. But we have already had to notice what some careful commentators say, that though the Jews began the Sabbath at sunset, yet in their ordinary conversation they did not always adhere to this ecclesiastical reckoning, but spoke of the Sabbath much in the way that we do; for (1) sometimes we reckon our Sunday as beginning from midnight and lasting till the following midnight. Again (2), sometimes in common conversation we speak of our Sunday as beginning at sunrise and ending with sunset, or at midnight. Lastly (3), for those who keep choir and chant the Divine Office a festival may be considered as lasting from First Vespers on the Vigil to the end of Second Vespers on the Feast.

5. Hence St. Matthew, seeing that the phrase, *in the night of the Sabbath*, was ambiguous, and might mean our Friday night or our Saturday night, adds words to make clear which night he means: *Late on in the night of the Sabbath*, namely, *that night which has its dawn on the first day of the week*. Literally from the Greek: "Which night twilights towards the first day of the week". This means clearly our Saturday night, the night following the Sabbath-day. This is the rendering adopted by St. Augustine, and seems satisfactory.

In the next place, we have to harmonise the narratives of the different Evangelists, and reconcile some apparent discrepancies.

The chief of these apparent discrepancies are the following:

(1) St. John makes Magdalen arrive at the Tomb *while it is dark*; St. Mark writes: *The sun being now risen*.

(2) According to St. Luke and St. John, two angels are at the Tomb, whereas St. Mark and St. Matthew speak of one.

(3) St. Matthew represents the Angel as sitting outside the Tomb on the stone door; St. Mark speaks of the Angel sitting in the Sepulchre on the right side; St. Luke writes that while the women were inside the tomb, *two men stood by them in shining apparel*; St. John represents two angels in white sitting inside the Tomb, *one at the head and one at the feet, where the Body of Jesus had been laid*.

Again (4), St. John makes St. Magdalen come alone by herself to the Tomb, whereas St. Matthew writes: *Came Mary Magdalen and the other Mary to see the Sepulchre*. By the *other Mary*, he seems to mean Mary of Cleophas, of whom he has been speaking. She was mother of St. James the Less. St. Mark puts Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James and Salome, together, and writes that *very early in the morning they came to the Sepulchre*.

(5) St. Mark tells us that the women fled from the Sepulchre in terror, and they *said nothing to any man for they were afraid*. St. Matthew writes that *they went out quickly with fear and great joy, running to tell His disciples*.

(6) St. Matthew records that our Lord appeared to these women as they *were on the road*. St. Mark says nothing of this apparition.

Let us spend a little time on these difficulties.

As to the hour when the devout women arrive at the Tomb.

In the end of the Sabbath, when it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalen and the other Mary to see the Sepulchre (St. Matt.).

And when the Sabbath was ended (Saturday evening), Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James and Salome, brought sweet spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they come to the Sepulchre, the sun being now risen (St. Mark).

And on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the Sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared (St. Luke).

And on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalen cometh early, when it was yet dark, unto the Sepulchre (St. John).

Commentators have found some trouble in reconciling these narratives one with another. St. Luke's words, *very early in the morning*, offer no difficulty: they agree both with St. John's words, *while it was yet dark*, and St. Matthew's, *when it began to dawn*, and St. Mark's, *the sun being now risen*.

St. Matthew's words, *ὥσπερ*, etc., which we are rendering *late on in the night*, may mean what we sometimes call the small hours of the morning, towards the morning twilight. This agrees with St. John's phrase, *while it was yet dark*, and with St. Luke's word, "*valde diluculo*," in the Greek, *ὁρθοῦ βαθεῖος*. The chief difficulty, therefore, is in reconciling St. Mark's *the sun being now risen*, with St. John's *when it was yet dark*.

One clue to the solution of this difficulty, and of the other also, we find in St. Luke's Gospel (c. xxiv. 10). There we read: *It was Mary Magdalen and Joanna and Mary of James and the other women that were with them who told these things to the Apostles.* This sentence we may connect with the closing sentences of the foregoing chapter and the first verse of c. xxiv. : *And the women that were come with Him from Galilee, following after saw the Sepulchre and how His Body was laid. And returning, they prepared spices and ointments, and on the Sabbath-day they rested. And on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the Sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared.*

Here we have three women mentioned by name, Mary Magdalen, Joanna, who was wife of Chusa, Herod's steward, and Mary of James, that is, Mary, mother of St. James the Less, and wife of Cleophas. Besides these three, St. Luke says that there were also *the other women who were with them*, who probably had also followed our Lord from Galilee. Salome, the mother of St. John, would certainly be one of these. St. Luke, in c. viii., mentions another, Susanna. From what we have seen in the Introduction to these Watches, Martha would also be considered one of those who followed Jesus from Galilee. It is therefore not at all improbable, from St. Luke's words, that as many as

six or seven or eight of the holy women, if not more, may have hastened to the Sepulchre very early on Easter Day. If this be so, are we bound to believe that they all went in one party, or from the same house? It seems much more probable that they went in different companies of two or three, and not all from the Cœnaculum. It was pre-arranged, no doubt, among them, that they would go, and go very early, in order to finish their work of embalming before the people were abroad. But it is highly probable that they would not all start from the same place, or all at the same time, or all arrive together. Still, however, they would arrange so that no long time would elapse between the arrival of one party and the arrival of the other, as they all intended to take part in the same work.

If this conjecture be correct, all the difficulties fall to the ground. Some arrive while it is yet dark; others after the sunrise. One angel appears to one party, two to another. When one company arrives, the angel is outside the tomb; afterwards, when others arrive, one is inside, or again, two are inside. The women of one company run away terrified, and say nothing. The others are full of joy, and run to tell the Apostles. To one company our Lord appears on the way, but not to all the others.

With regard to the first difficulty, viz., the apparent discrepancy between St. John's words, *while it was dark*, and St. Mark's, *the sun being now risen*, some writers, in order to reconcile the two statements, say that it was dark when they started, but that, as they had about a mile and a half to walk, it was after sunrise when they arrived. But this explanation does not fit in very well with St. John's words: *Mary Magdalen cometh early, when it was yet dark, unto the Sepulchre.*

It will help us to solve the difficulty correctly if we bear in mind what Father Coleridge and other commentators so often impress upon us, (1) that St. Matthew and St. Mark often, for brevity's sake, throw together into one sentence, or into one or two sentences, incidents that did not happen at the same time. Their object is to bequeath to us words that our Lord spoke and works that He wrought, without putting them in their exact order, and without telling us when and where He delivered each discourse or worked each sign.

(2) They also further remind us that St. John in his Gospel, besides wishing to bring out very clearly the Divinity of Christ our Lord in order to silence the heretics of his day, had also in view to render the other Gospel narratives more complete, and to clear up some ambiguities.

Whereas, then, the other Evangelists, for brevity's sake, seem to gather the devout women into one group, and record all the events of the morning without any attempt at distinguishing what happened to one company from what happened to another, St. John, who had been informed accurately by Magdalen of what concerned herself, wishes to make it clear that she went earlier to the Tomb than some of the others. She may have

had companions with her. If so, hers is the first company that arrives at Calvary.

After this we have in St. Mark's Gospel the arrival of a second company who fled away affrighted, and said nothing to any man.

Then, thirdly, we have in St. Matthew's account the arrival of a third company, who went back with fear and great joy to tell the disciples.

In contemplating we shall follow this order: first giving our attention to St. John's company; then to St. Mark's; and lastly to St. Matthew's.

There remains this question—to which of these three companies does St. Luke's narrative allude?

One circumstance seems to indicate that he is writing concerning St. John's company.

He writes: *Two men stood by them in shining apparel. St. John writes: She saw two angels in white.* Here they agree.

St. Luke ends his account with these words: *And going back from the Sepulchre, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. And it was Mary Magdalen, and Joanna, and Mary of James, who told these things to the Apostles.*

In these words he is apparently speaking of more than one company.

STATION I.

THE FIRST COMPANY OF DEVOUT WOMEN. MAGDALEN.

On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalen cometh early, when it was yet dark, unto the Sepulchre (St. John xx. 1).

Mary Magdalen cometh early.

All, as we have seen, had probably arranged to come early; but her heart loves more intensely, because much has been forgiven her. *My soul hath thirsted after the strong, living God. My tears have been my bread, day and night, while it is said to me daily: Where is thy God? (Psalm xli.).* "My heart is restless, Lord Jesus, till it rests in Thee."

Contemplate her setting out in the dark hours before daylight, and walking with hurried steps, and carrying her burden of spices and ointments. Those used by Nicodemus and Joseph were not for her heart good enough or sufficiently abundant; and if, as some versions of the Gospel

tell us, she heard our Saviour say at Bethany: *Let her alone, that she may keep it against the day of My burial,* we may be sure that her heart would treasure that word, and she has now ready some of her ointment of right spikenard of great price. But besides this, she has, as St. Mark states, bought a fresh store of sweet spices late on the Saturday evening, and she has been spending the night in bruising and mixing them.

Of all these sweet spices, we may consider, none are so sweet or agreeable to the Heart of our Lord as her tears which mingled with her work. Little she knows, as she hurries northward through the dark and silent streets to Golgotha, how her loving Master is watching every step and listening to every sigh from her strained heart. He, Who called His disciples together a few days ago, to notice the alms put into the box by the poor widow, is now bidding His blessed angels note most carefully for His day of recompense, every alms, every fresh offering that comes from the contrite heart of this loving penitent.

"Holy St. Magdalen, pray for us sinners, that we may embalm the sacred wounds of thy Lord and our Lord, and keep them fresh by remembering them with a contrite and humble heart."

1. *Mary Magdalen cometh early.* Whence did she come? Some answer, from Bethany, whither they make her go after the burial on Good Friday. The common opinion—that she went with our Lady to the Cenacle—fits better with St. Mark's account, that on the Saturday evening she and Mary of Cleophas bought sweet spices, apparently together.

2. Is Magdalen walking alone, or has she a companion? As St. John wrote his narrative to complete the others and to throw light on some passages in the other Gospels, we are inclined to say that she was alone when we read his words: *On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalen cometh early.* No companion is mentioned in this later account. Again, it would be in keeping with her vehement love to be on her way earlier than all the rest, and consequently alone.

Still, St. John's words are not conclusive. He might well single her out on account of what followed, in which she stands alone, but his words would not necessarily mean that she had no companion on the road. Besides this, we have St. Matthew's

words: *In the end of the Sabbath, came Mary Magdalen and the other Mary; and St. Mark's words: Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Salome came to the Sepulchre.* At first sight they seem to make it clear that she was not on the road alone. But from what we have seen, it is quite evident that St. Matthew and St. Mark are crowding all the incidents at the Tomb into a few sentences, and therefore we cannot conclude from St. Matthew's words that Magdalen and the other Mary and Salome all came together.

One sentence in St. John's narrative, as we have already seen, seems to show that Magdalen has at least one companion. For she says to the Apostles: *They have taken away the Lord out of the Sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him.* If she had been alone, she would have said: "I know not".

We may perhaps then assume that Magdalen has with her the other Mary and Salome, who are mentioned with her by St. Mark.

3. Who was the other Mary? St. Matthew first uses the expression in c. xxvii. v. 61: *There was there Mary Magdalen and the other Mary sitting over against the Sepulchre.* A few verses above, speaking of the women who followed Jesus from Galilee, he writes: *Among whom was Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Joseph (that is Mary, wife of Cleophas, the brother of St. Joseph, and father of St. James the Less and Joseph), and the mother of the sons of Zebedee (that is, Salome, mother of St. James the Great and St. John).* From these passages it seems reasonable to conclude that the other Mary was Mary of Cleophas,¹ or as she is also called, Mary, mother of James, or Mary of James.

Some commentators, however, think that the other Mary was a daughter of Mary of Cleophas, and therefore a sister of the future Bishop of Jerusalem St. James the Less, who was also author of the Catholic Epistle.

STATION II.

And she saw the stone taken away from the Sepulchre. She ran therefore and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith to them: They have taken away the Lord out of the Sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him (vv. 1, 2).

A. *She saw the stone taken away.*

When she arrives at Golgotha it is still dark, but there is a faint glimmer of the dawn. She has light enough to

¹ We find St. James the Less called (St. Matt. x). James of Alphaeus. Hence commentators conclude that Alphaeus and Cleophas are the same person.

see that the stone is rolled away; that the door of the Tomb stands open; that the Body is not there; that the guards are lying as if dead on the ground. She is too alarmed and excited to make any stay. She must at once give warning to those who may be able to recover the Body.

Jesus and His holy angels are watching her sore distress, and yet they are silent. Why, dear Lord, dost Thou not hasten to console this troubled heart? So was it also when her brother was lying ill at Bethany, Jesus did not come in haste to bring her comfort. He tarried a while, but with a good reason, that so He might give more glory to God and more peace to men. *Patience is necessary for you, that doing the will of God you may receive the promise. For yet a little and a very little while, and He that is to come, will come and will not delay (Hebrews x.).*

B. *She ran therefore and cometh to Simon Peter, and the other disciple whom Jesus loved.*

Therefore, though doubtless she had heard our Lord foretell His Resurrection, and though she has so lately seen her brother Lazarus raised to life, the thought that He is risen does not seem to enter her mind. She is full of fear, and fear is nothing else but a yielding up of the succours from thought (Wisdom xvii.). She cannot help herself with memories of the past. She must run in haste to find help and counsel and protection from the two chief Apostles, St. Peter, our Lord's Apostle, and St. John the Beloved, the Apostle of our Lady.

C. *She ran therefore.*

In the fright, what becomes of the precious spices and ointments? Is one companion left in charge of them while Magdalen runs back? It seems not probable that under the circumstances one would have courage to remain. But possibly and probably the costly aromatics have in an instant lost for her all their value. Her heart is entirely intent on the Body of her Master. She will let everything go if she can recover that treasure. *If a man shall give all*

the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing (Cant. viii.).

Therefore, though her faith is not perfect, yet she loves most ardently.

"Blessed St. Magdalen, intercede for us sinners, that our many sins may be fully forgiven, and that we may begin to love much."

D. She ran therefore.

Contemplate her haste through the narrow, dark streets, over the very rough pavement. Yet is she not without protection. For the Lord, always the same, gracious and compassionate, hath given His angels a command concerning Magdalen; *they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night.* Though for wise reasons our Saviour does not as yet appear to her, or send an angel to speak with her, yet He is not forgetting her. He speaks words to her heart to sustain her. *I am with (her) in tribulation.* How blessed are they who thus dwell in the aid of the Most High, and are able to say to the Lord: *Thou art my Protector and my Refuge, my God, in Him will I trust. He will overshadow thee with His shoulders, and under His wing thou shalt trust. His truth shall compass thee with a shield (Psalm xc.).*

E. She ran therefore and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved.

Breathless, then, with haste and anxiety, she arrives and knocks at the wicket, and when admitted, goes at once to find Simon Peter. She finds him with John—the Apostle of our Lord with the Apostle of our Lady.

It is from this passage that we conclude that Simon Peter, after the Crucifixion, made haste to join the mourning disciples who were gathered round our Blessed Lady in her retirement.

F. She saith to them: They have taken away the Lord out of the Sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him.

We are not told how her tears are falling fast as she speaks, and how her sobbing chokes her utterance.

"Blessed Saint, obtain for us a great grace that we may deplore our loss; for our sins have taken away the Lord from us, and we know not where they have laid Him. He is not with us. He is not present to our hearts. He is not the beginning of our joy—He is not King within us. Christ does not live in us; self is ruling there still."

Meanwhile, about half an hour has elapsed since Magdalen left the Sepulchre. According to the pre-arranged plan, other devout women have also started for Calvary to take part in the holy work of embalming. Veronica, perchance, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, and Martha, may have been in this company.

STATION III.

THE SECOND COMPANY OF HOLY WOMEN.

And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they come to the Sepulchre, the sun being now risen. And they said one to another: Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the Sepulchre? And looking they saw the stone rolled back, for it was very great. And entering into the Sepulchre they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe: and they were astonished: who saith to them: Be not affrighted: you seek Jesus of Nazareth Who was crucified. He has risen, He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him. But go tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee. There you shall see Him as He told you. But they going out fled from the Sepulchre. For a trembling and a fear had seized them: and they said nothing to any man, for they were afraid (St. Mark xvi. 2—8).

A. Who shall roll us back the stone? How are we to explain the fact that neither these women, nor Magdalen and her companions, seem to have thought of the guards? It is possible that the women of this party have not been in the Cœnaculum, and have not heard that a guard had been stationed at the Sepulchre. Or again, it may be that the state of excitement in which they all are has made

them forget what they heard of a guard. Or the explanation may be that yesterday and the day before they had found out that the guards became very yielding if won over by money. Then, moreover, love *hopeth all things*.

B. *They said one to another: Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the Sepulchre?*

Therefore they have not met Magdalen; for she would have told them that the stone was rolled away. They have come along other streets.

C. *Who shall roll us back the stone? for it was very great.*

They had good reason to ask the question. The stone is, as we know, a heavy circular stone door, which ran in a groove and closed the doorway. It is much too heavy for their weak arms.

D. *Who shall roll us back the stone?*

Had these holy women loved less they would certainly have said: "Why go forward? We cannot possibly roll back the stone." But *charity*, that is, love, *hopeth all things* (1 Cor. xiii.). *I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me* (Philipp. iv.). Those who love much hope against hope, their strong will tells them that a way will be found; and because they are so earnest they prevail. *The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away* (St. Matt. xi.). Alas! alas! What long and intense acts of contrition we shall make in Purgatory for those miserable hours when we have hardened our hearts against some call of our Lord, because the father of lies assured us that there was in our way a stone that we never could roll back; and we believed him: *The serpent deceived me*.

Some will not enter into the Church: some will not embrace religious life: some will not confess their sins: some will not rise early to hear Holy Mass or receive Holy Communion: some will not give up a sinful attachment: some will not spend half an hour in contemplating the Life and Death of our Lord: some will not even win mercy and peace by giving an alms: all because the tempter says that there is a stone in the way, and that it

is very great. Poor, weak little ones, our Lord says compassionately to us: *Why do you doubt? O ye of little faith*. Have I not twelve legions of angels ready to roll back the stone? The serpent is deceiving you. Did I not create you? Did I not die for you? How can I then stand by and not help you?

E. *They saw the stone rolled away.*

So shall it be if we do not allow ourselves to be duped by Satan, but persevere and go forward. The great stone that we saw in the distance has, we find, when we reach the spot, been rolled away. To the question, therefore: "*Who shall roll back the stone?*" the wise answer is Abraham's answer to his son, "*God will provide, my son*" (Genesis xxii.).

1. "If I become a Catholic, who will furnish me with bread?"

Jesus answers meekly: *Behold the birds of the air. Your Father in Heaven feedeth them. Are not you of much more worth than they?* (St. Matt. vi.).

2. "If I enter the Church, it will break my mother's heart, and how shall I live after that?"

Jesus answers with compassion: "If I call you, I am responsible. Shall evil come to you or your mother through My act, because I call you?"

3. When death is near, the panic-stricken family round the death-bed say: "You must not mention Extreme Unction, the shock will certainly kill him; the doctor says so. How could we afterwards forgive ourselves?"

Our Saviour answers earnestly: "Oh, beware! I instituted the Extreme Unction to soothe the soul of the dying man, or perchance to raise him up to health. Have I not understood what I was doing? Am I, Who created this man, mistaken as to his formation? or am I, Who died for him, less concerned than you are for his well-being? *O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?*" (St. Matt. xiv.).

The slothful man saith, he is for ever saying it, *there is a lion in the way and a lioness in the roads* (Prov. xxvi.). But has not our Saviour His twelve legions of angels ready?

They are well able to chase away the lion and the lioness. As soon as we pass out of this life many details about health, wealth, news, money, and the rest are forgotten for ever, but the Wise Men from the East never throughout eternity will forget this one thing: *We saw the star and we came*; and the rich young man of the Gospel will never forget one thing: I was called by the Lord, and did not follow the call.

F. *And entering in they saw a young man sitting on the right side clothed with a white robe.*

Daylight has now come. They are not afraid to enter the Tomb, and they can see what is within. The Sepulchre, as we have seen, consists of an inner chamber and an outer small ante-chamber. If these devout women go into the ante-chamber and no farther, and merely look in through the low doorway into the inner chamber, they may be said to enter into the Sepulchre.

Sitting on the right side.

That is, on the slab where the Sacred Body had rested, which, as we have seen, ran along the northern side of the Tomb, from the door to the opposite wall.

G. *And they were astonished. Who saith to them: Be not affrighted.*

Their astonishment is great: and as we see from the context, the words of the Angel do not calm their fears.

The Jews said to Moses: *Speak thou to us and we will hear: let not the Lord speak to us lest we die* (Exodus xx.). But St. Ignatius teaches us that when God speaks Himself, He can suddenly create peace and joy in the soul in a way that not even an angel can do.

It is better for us to say with Samuel: *Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth* (1 Kings iii.).

O my God, be not Thou silent to me, lest if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit (Psalm xxvii.).

H. *Be not affrighted.*

If the words of an angel do not prevail, is it a wonder that my unpremeditated words do not produce effect when

without any previous prayer I rebuke children or servants, or a neighbour, or argue with a Protestant? The words that do good are those that begin from God and by Him are happily ended. When I pour out words that cost me nothing and which I do not myself put in practice, how can such cheap words work wonders?

I. *Be not affrighted, you seek Jesus of Nazareth Who was crucified.*

So will the blessed guardian angels say in the end to the elect, when men are withering away for fear, *Be not affrighted, for you* (during life) *sought Jesus of Nazareth Who was crucified.*

"Blessed Mother of God, the Lord is with thee. Thou didst seek and find thy crucified Son. Pray for us poor sinners, who habitually seek not for Jesus crucified, but for self."

J. *He is not here, He is risen.* What joy there is among the angels and saints when they can now say of a poor sinner: *He is risen, he is no longer in the grave!* Am I endeavouring by example, and by earnest prayer and by persuasion and by tact and charity, to give these loving guardian angels the gladness of being able to say of the poor prodigal, committed to their care: *He is risen, he is not here?* How grateful will they be to me if I give them this unspeakable gladness!

K. *Go tell His disciples and Peter.*

Sometimes, as the head and leader of the Apostles, Peter is mentioned by name: *Peter standing up with the eleven* (Acts ii.), as we might say, the Prince of Wales and the other royal princes.

But in this present instance there may be another reason. St. Peter is in great sorrow on account of his sin, and therefore the Angel may be directed to send a special message to him, that he and all may know that he is not to be cast away, but is still to be our Lord's chosen one.

L. *Tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee.*

Why does our Lord take His disciples into Galilee? The Lake of Tiberias is more than one hundred miles from Jerusalem. The Apostles and disciples, even the devout women, travel all this distance and return again before Ascension Day, when they are back on Mount Olivet. *By Thy ordinance, O Lord, the day goeth on.* It is by our Lord's arrangement that these movements are guided.

Why, then, in the joyful days of Resurrection have they so much toil?

1. For Himself and His Mother He chose lifelong poverty and labour. If there had been anything better, He would have chosen the better part for Himself and His Most Blessed Mother. Ever since His disciples joined Him He has trained them to labour by day and by night. *In journeying often: in labour and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness* (2 Cor. xi.).

2. In Jerusalem the disciples are in terror. They know how enraged against them the Priests and Ancients are. Tradition tells us that already, before the Resurrection, on the great Sabbath-day, they have seized Joseph of Arimathea, and have him now shut up in their dungeon, watching him themselves, that he may not get out by bribery.

In distant Galilee, their own home, where the Priests of Jerusalem have less power, they will be more secure.

M. There you shall see Him as He told you.

Why does the Angel make special mention of the apparition in Galilee? Did not Jesus appear several times in Jerusalem?

During the Last Supper our Lord had said: *But after I be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee* (St. Mark xiv.). And it was immediately after this prophetic word that Peter uttered the boasting word: *Although all shall be scandalised in Thee, yet not I*, which drew forth the sad rejoinder, *Even in this night thou shalt deny Me thrice.* It is in Galilee,

by the Lake of Genesareth, that He designs to repair entirely St. Peter's denials, and to constitute him the Shepherd of all the sheep. This is, therefore, the special and most important apparition.

Moreover, there is a tradition that it was on Mount Thabor, in Galilee, that He appeared, as St. Paul tells us, to five hundred disciples. This tradition fits in with St. Matthew's words: *And the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them* (c. xxviii.).

This then is also a solemn apparition of special importance.

N. But they, going out, fled from the Sepulchre. For a trembling and fear had seized them; and they said nothing to any man, for they were afraid (St. Luke xvi.). There is no good reason for fear, there is much reason for joy. But we remember the familiar words, *Fear is nothing else but a yielding up of the succours from thought* (Wisdom xvii.). It is ordinarily useless to argue with one who is in a great panic.

Doubtless, too, these women also have caught a sight of the terrified guards, and on this account are more hasty in their flight.

"By Thy glorious Resurrection, deliver us, O Lord, from all sin, that at Thy second coming we may not seek to fly in terror from Thy face, but may meet Thee in hope and love."

They said nothing to any man, for they were afraid. They may have met Peter and John coming, or the other women, and in their terror passed them without a word; but this does not seem probable.

STATION IV.

THE THIRD COMPANY OF DEVOUT WOMEN.

In the end of the Sabbath when it began to dawn, . . . an Angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and coming, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it, and his countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow. And for fear of him, the guards were struck with terror, and became as dead men. And the Angel answering, said to the women: Fear not you: for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified. He is not here, for He is risen, as He said. Come, and see the place where the Lord was laid. And going quickly, tell ye His disciples that He is risen. And behold, He will go before you into Galilee: there you shall see Him. Lo, I have foretold it to you. And they went out quickly from the Sepulchre with fear and great joy, running to tell His disciples (St. Matt. xxviii. 1—8).

Some of these details are so like those of the last Station, that there are commentators who take for granted that St. Matthew and St. Mark are narrating the same events. But as the two stories differ in some points, we may in contemplation follow the opinion that the two Evangelists are writing of two separate companies of holy women. These women find the Angel seated on the stone door outside the Tomb, the former company saw the young man sitting inside. Here, however, it is possible to understand the two Evangelists as speaking of the same apparition; for the low, thick, and heavy stone door is inside the outer porch, and it has been closing the low entrance into the Tomb properly so called. Therefore, even when rolled back, it would still probably be in the vestibule, or porch.

A. *Fear not you.*

The sense may be: the guards are terrified, but you need not fear. Or, your companions who were here have fled away in fear, but there was no cause for fear, neither need you fear.

"O holy Angels, who are our Guardians, pray for us poor sinners, that when death comes you may be able to say to us, *Fear not you.*"

B. *Fear not you, for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified.*

Our greatest fears come from the dread of suffering. Those who seek Jesus crucified gradually lose this horror of suffering. They no longer believe that suffering is necessarily a curse. They realise that it is a high and special privilege to be allowed to taste the chalice with our Lord and His Blessed Mother.

C. *Fear not you, for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified.* To those who are eagerly and wantonly seeking for pleasure and the good things of this world, their Angels do not say, *Fear not you.* In such souls they strive to waken fear and alarm, by reminding them of the Judgment that is coming. But if we are so blessed as to seek and love Jesus crucified, our good Angel through life and most of all at death, will say to us, *Fear not you.*

D. *Going quickly, tell His disciples that He is risen.*

Our Saviour loved to the end His own who were in the world, and He has been loving them ever since His Death. His hours in the grave have been abbreviated, that all who are mourning may more quickly be comforted. Therefore He must wish the good news to reach His sorrowful disciples quickly.

How grateful His Heart will be to us, if we help to bring back peace and hope to His little ones, who are depressed and tempted to lose courage; and peace also and eternal rest to the Holy Souls.

E. *And they went out quickly from the Sepulchre, with fear and great joy, running to tell His disciples.*

"Sacred Heart of Jesus, risen from the Tomb, fill us with Thy charity, that we may have a zeal to spread among those who sit in darkness the good tidings that Thou art risen, and that we Thy brethren can all rise with Thee."

STATION V.

PETER AND JOHN AT THE TOMB.

Peter therefore went out, and that other disciple, and they came to the Sepulchre. And they both ran together, and that other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the Sepulchre. And when he stooped down, he saw the linen cloths lying, but yet he went not in. Then cometh Simon Peter, following him, and went into the Sepulchre, and saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin that had been about His Head not lying with the linen cloths, but apart, wrapt up in one place. Then that other disciple also went in who came first to the Sepulchre: and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead. The disciples therefore departed again to their home (St. John xx.).

Peter went away, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass (St. Luke xxiv.).

A. Peter therefore went out, and that other disciple. And they both ran together.

Contemplate them running, and Magdalen also and the other Mary also running, all in anxious haste. Why so? Because *they have taken away the Body of the Lord.*

How am I affected if by some mischance the Body of the Lord in the Blessed Eucharist is removed far from me? Some for pleasure sake, and some for profit, fix their abode far from the altar and far from the Body of our Lord, in some home whence they cannot hear Mass or receive Holy Communion. Others, remembering the word of our Saviour, *Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added to you* (St. Matt. vi.), make it a sacred rule to dwell, whenever the choice rests with them, near the Body of the Lord, near the altar of the Blessed Sacrament. When they are travelling, and arrive at a town, their first question is not, "Where is the theatre?" "Where is the most luxurious hotel?" but, with the Wise Men from the East, *Where is He that is*

born? "Where is the Body of the Lord?" "Where shall I be near His church and the altar and the daily Mass?" Christian tourists who thus travel, seeking first the Kingdom of God, have a right to hope that *all other things shall be added to them.* They will not lose the necessary share of healthful recreation because they have adopted as their sacred rule: *Let my right hand be forgotten if I make not the altar and the tabernacle the beginning of my joy* (Psalm cxxxvi.). *Better is one day in Thy courts above thousands* (Psalm lxxxiii.).

B. That other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the Sepulchre, but yet he went not in.

St. John, recalling all these incidents in his old age, takes a pleasure in recording how Peter, with his usual eager love, though he arrived last, is the first to go in to make a diligent examination. Perhaps St. John is timid, as some holy Fathers think, or as others conjecture, he waits out of deference to Peter, to allow him to investigate in a case of such great moment.

St. Gregory makes the reflection that the earlier Jewish Church, which arrived first at a knowledge of the Lord, did not go in, that is, did not penetrate the sacred mysteries, as the Christian Church of the Gentiles, which came last, has since done.

They saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin that had been about His Head, apart, wrapt up into one place.

Full daylight has come. They are able to see clearly the cloths in the tomb. These cloths are the winding-sheet and the usual swathing-bands. The sudarium, or napkin for the head, lying apart, was, as Venerable Bede learnt from some travellers in his day, a veil eight feet in length. It is recorded that the Christian who possessed this treasure was a rich man, and on his death-bed asked his two sons to choose whether they would have his riches or this sacred relic. The elder chose the riches, and gradually became very poor; the younger preferred the holy treasure, and with it, all other good things came to him. It is also handed down that, when flung into a fire by a scoffing heathen, it was preserved miraculously and remained unburnt.

C. They saw the linen cloths.

These linen cloths, carefully laid by, help to convince the Apostles that the Sacred Body has not been carried away. The swathing-bands, from the natural action of the spices used in embalming, would have been cleaving to the Body. If any persons had taken away the Body, they would have taken it in the grave-clothes.

D. *Then that other disciple also went in, and he saw and believed.*

Is the meaning of these words that John now believed the report of Magdalen, that the Body had been taken away? Some so interpret, and they support their opinion with St. Luke's words, that when the Apostles heard the story of Mary Magdalen, and Joanna, and of Mary, mother of James, *these words seemed to them as idle tales, and they did not believe.* But these words of St. Luke refer to what came later in the day, when the devout women brought the news to the other Apostles that they had seen angels, and that the Lord was risen. They cannot apply to St. Peter and St. John, who, after having been to the Tomb, could not treat the whole story as an idle tale.

Other commentators, therefore, understand that St. John, when looking at the cloths laid carefully by, is suddenly enlightened from above, and believes in the Resurrection. *For as yet, that is, until now, they knew not the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead.* Our Blessed Saviour had indeed more than once clearly foretold His Resurrection; but, alas! how often we *have ears and hear not.* How easy it is to be, with our eyes, a reader of the Bible, without understanding the true sense of God's revelation! Hence in retreat St. Ignatius so often reminds us to pray for an *inward or intimate sense* of truths with which we have long been familiar, but which do not come home to us.

Some holy writers think that St. Peter, who goes in first, is the first to believe fully in the Resurrection, and that after him John enters and believes.

E. *But Peter went away, wondering in himself.*

The words that our Lord spoke to him in the supper-

room are now again true: *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.* His wonder at the things that have come to pass will grow greatly before nightfall.

"Blessed Saint, obtain for us too grace to *consider in the heart* with faith, and hope, and charity, and contrition, and holy astonishment, the things that came to pass on Calvary."

F. *Peter went away wondering.*

What became of St. John? Some holy writers tell us that he went to seek our Lady where he left her yesterday evening, and found her resplendent with light, as if glorified.

Before continuing our contemplations of the different apparitions of our Lord, we may pause for a little while to call to mind two or three short instructions given by St. Ignatius, which will help our work.

1. In the first place, he directs us to make in the third prelude, before beginning the contemplation, the petition: "Grant me grace that I may rejoice and be glad intensely on account of the glory and joy of Christ our Lord".

He wishes us to pray for intense gladness. Some shrink from making this prayer. "What right have I," they say, "to be glad?" They pray earnestly during the contemplations on the Passion for sorrow and compassion; but it seems to them too presumptuous and too selfish to pray for intense gladness, more especially because certain spiritual books, and certain severe teachers, they tell us, inculcate that we ought always to desire and pray for lifelong desolation. Our Lord may lead some of His chosen souls along this difficult path; but St. Ignatius does not consider it the ordinary road for all of us. One of his rules for a person in desolation is this: "He must believe that he is soon to be consoled, if he makes use of the prescribed methods or industries to battle against the desolation". And now he bids us, during the contemplations on the Resurrection of our Lord and His apparitions, which make up what is called the Unitive week, pray earnestly for intense joy and gladness.

Moreover, in order to keep the soul in this spiritual gladness, he directs those who are following in Retreat his Spiritual Exercises, to suspend during these contemplations the use of bodily austerities and penances, excepting of course the prescribed fasts and abstinences of the Church. And, whereas in the earlier part of the Retreat, he recommends the room where we meditate to be darkened, and directs us to keep strict custody over our eyes, and to rise at midnight for an hour's meditation,

now he makes a notable change. He says that it is more suitable not to rise for a meditation at midnight, and, if we think that the sunlight and the scenery around will help to spiritual gladness, not to deny ourselves this help. In like manner, if it is winter time, and we judge that a fire and the warmth of the sun will conduce to spiritual gladness, he wishes us to avail ourselves of such aids. He is in all this following out one of his great leading principles: "Means to the end". Your end and aim is good and holy, and therefore use all lawful and innocent means to gain it. He does not believe in a piety that will not most industriously use both the natural and the supernatural means which can advance God's work.

Again, it is worthy of notice that in the early meditations of the Retreat, when we make a repetition of any one of the Exercises, St. Ignatius advises us to dwell on those points in which we felt greater consolation or *desolation*. Now during these contemplations of the Unitive week, he directs us, when we are making repetitions, to dwell on the thoughts which gave us more emotion and spiritual relish. He knows that all things have their time, that if clouds are sometimes good for the soul, so also is cheering and invigorating sunshine in its season. It is related of Blessed Colette, whose soul was now walking in the Unitive way of spiritual gladness, that on one occasion when she was ill, a friend sent her some grapes to refresh her. The bystanders took for granted that, as a matter of course, she would, through the spirit of self-denial and penance, refuse them; but to their surprise she began to eat them, saying: "See how our good Lord takes care of me," or words to that effect.

When some lovers of comfort light on this passage in her life, they clap their hands and say with a look of triumph: "That is the devotion I like: there you have true piety, none of that odious, pharisaical, sour-faced severity that will not allow us to eat, or drink, or smile".

But these comfortable spiritualists take one detached sentence and leave aside all the context. St. Ignatius carefully sets before us the whole doctrine on this point. The grapes, like all other creatures on the earth, are God's work, and therefore good. But they are all only means to an end. They, like all things else, are, in the present state of the world, only useful medicines. Therefore, before we can safely use the grapes, or money, or books, or other creatures, we must first so train ourselves, that we may be really willing either to abstain from the grapes, or books, or money, or to use them, as our case may require. If by prayer and practice we have gained habits of self-conquest, and can with a firm will use such creatures as are at this moment helpful medicine for us, and abstain from such as are at present not helpful but injurious, then we are in a healthy spiritual state, and can, as St. Paul directs, *use the world as if we used it not* (1 Cor. vii.). But men who are sinning and leading an unregulated life,

eating and drinking, buying and selling, and enjoying all things according to their humour, are at present utterly incapable of doing what Blessed Colette did: they never do use the good things of this earth merely as means to help them to praise God and reverence God and serve God. They are using the good things of this earth not as helps to a future Heaven, but enjoying them as their present Heaven; and if they cannot get their fill of these husks of swine, they are apt to repine and lose all hope, as if they had no good God to care for them.

Neither is there any danger at all that if, following St. Ignatius' advice, we pray earnestly for intense gladness and joy, we shall be fostering selfishness.

For observe, he wishes us to rejoice "on account of the great glory and gladness of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ". When our Lady, when Magdalen, when St. Peter look with intense gladness on Him risen, and think with unspeakable relief of heart on what He was on Friday last, and what He is to-day, this is not at all a selfish gladness. It is one and the same charity to *rejoice with those in joy and to weep with those who weep*. Compassion in the broad sense, is a power of sharing another's feelings, whether joys or sorrows. Old faithful servants, long attached to a family, rejoice with a very unselfish joy when some good news comes to their master and mistress or the children.

Therefore we may safely pray with St. Ignatius for intense joy and gladness on account of the glory and joy of our Lord, and we ought to do so most earnestly. For spiritual gladness helps us to run along the way of God's commandments. Moreover, other men, when they see that we find happiness in serving and praising God, are themselves drawn to His service and to prayer. No wonder, then, that St. Paul says that we are not to sow *with sadness or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver* (2 Cor. ix.).

2. After thus advising us to pray earnestly for intense joy and gladness, St. Ignatius sets before us five points or topics to dwell upon, or if I may so speak, five dishes or courses for our spiritual feast. We need not partake of them all, but may confine ourselves to any one in which we find nourishment and relish.

First, then, we may contemplate the persons in the scene, watch their outward demeanour, and try to read their inward thoughts, and gain some food for our souls in that way.

Secondly, we may listen to words and see if we can draw from them any heavenly sense that will gladden us; or thirdly, we may watch actions, if there are any, and see if from them we can draw spiritual joy.

Then, besides these three ordinary points or topics, St. Ignatius adds these other two.

Fourthly, consider how the Divinity, which seemed to hide itself during the Passion, now appears and shows itself in the Resurrection by so many true and most holy proofs and effects. It is highly useful thus to contrast what our Lord was on Good

Friday with what He is now. By dwelling on this contrast, it becomes gradually more easy when we see great suffering on a death-bed, or during life, to lift our hearts to the belief that this sufferer is soon to be a most happy saint.

Fifthly, watch the office of a comforter, or consoler which Christ our Lord now exercises towards His disciples, comparing His ways with what friends ordinarily do to console friends.

At the Last Supper, as St. John reminds us, Jesus *loved to the end*. After death, we have seen that He went on loving without any interruption. At His Resurrection, as we have also seen, He began at once showing love to His Ever-Blessed Mother; and now we shall see that He devotes the great day of His Resurrection, His birthday, His coronation-day, His wedding-day, to loving His own whom He has left behind in this world. No shadow of change has come, through prosperity, over His loving and humble Heart. This is not always the way with our corrupt nature. *Man when he was in honour did not understand* (Psalm xviii.). A little prosperity often turns the head and makes a man condemn his former friends.

STATION VI.

ST. MARY MAGDALEN.

The disciples therefore departed again to their home. But Mary stood at the Sepulchre without, weeping. Now as she was weeping, she stooped down and looked into the Sepulchre, and she saw two angels in white, one at the head and one at the feet where the Body of Jesus had been laid. They say to her: Woman, why weepest thou? She saith to them: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him (St. John xx.). *Behold, two men stood by them in shining apparel. And as they were afraid and bowed down their countenance towards the ground, they said to them: Why seek you the living with the dead? (St. Luke xxiv.).*

A. Woman, why weepest thou?

The blessed angels ask, as if they did not know: *Why weepest thou?* and call her "Woman," as if she whom they love and venerate so much were only a stranger to them. They are in our Lord's secret, they are acting in concert with Him. They see our Saviour waiting till the moment shall come for the glad surprise. With what loving reverence are they meanwhile contemplating their future com-

panion in Heaven, the Saint whose white robe was some time torn and disfigured, but now is washed in the Blood of the Lamb, and adorned with the heavenly diamonds and pearls of loving contrition.

B. *Why weepest thou? "Attendite."* Stay a little while. Come you who are sad and sorrowful and shedding tears, come to the side of Magdalen. Answer the angel's question and compare your answer with hers.

No. 1. *Why weepest thou?* Because I have just heard that I have lost money.

No. 2. *Why weepest thou?* What else can I do? They have been slandering me cruelly.

No. 3. *Why weepest thou?* Because my marriage is broken off.

No. 4. *Why weepest thou?* Because the doctor has just told me that I cannot recover. I must die.

These are all sorrows, and cause tears to flow.

But (1) they are all sorrows that must at the very latest, cease to trouble, when my eyes are fixed in death and my last breath drawn and my soul is gone to another world.

(2) They are selfish sorrows. I am weeping only because some suffering is come to me. There is another sorrow that better deserves tears. *Who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes?* (Jerem. ix.).

C. *Why weepest thou?*

Because they have taken away my Lord.

For behold they have caught my soul, the mighty have rushed in upon me (Psalm lviii.), or rather, not the mighty, but the crafty: *The serpent deceived me*, and by my permission and with my full consent they have taken away my Lord from me, and for ever, unless He shall have mercy on me according to His great mercy, and, according to the multitude of His tender mercies, shall blot out my iniquity, and create a clean heart in me, and renew a right spirit within my bowels.

Blessed are they that mourn for their own sins, and the sins whereby others offend our good God, our loving Father, our most compassionate Redeemer, Jesus our Saviour.

STATION VII.

When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing; and she knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith to her, Why weepest thou? She, thinking it was the gardener, saith to Him: Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away (St. John xx. 14, 15).

A. *She turned herself back.* Why did she turn? Perhaps she saw the angels directing their eyes towards Him and showing Him some reverence; or perhaps our Lord let her hear His footsteps to call her attention. This last supposition fits in better with the local tradition in Jerusalem. According to this tradition, Magdalen is about twelve yards from the Tomb when our Saviour appears to her. She is wandering to and fro in a restless state.

B. *She knew not that it was Jesus.*

Why does our Blessed Saviour use disguises? Some rigid Puritans affect to be very indignant at all manner of deception; but St. Paul says to them: *Thou dost the same things that thou judgest* (Romans ii.), nay, things much worse. The unjust judges who shed so much innocent blood under Elizabeth affected to be deeply shocked if any prisoners did not answer with most confiding sincerity and without any equivocation, their murderous interrogatory. Their questions might well shock and scandalise, but not the martyr's answers.

C. *Jesus saith to her: Woman, why weepest thou?*

How glad our Lord always is if, in our troubles, we come to Him and tell Him why we weep. *Come to Me all you who labour and are heavily burdened. My delight (is) to be with the sons of men* (Prov. viii.), and not with men who prosper, but rather with those who mourn. *Blessed are they*

that mourn: they shall be comforted. But the Eternal Wisdom, the Son of God, is not found in the land of them that live in delights. He loves much better to be with those in sorrow, if they will only come to Him. Willingly He listens and asks them: *Why weepest thou?*

D. *Why weepest thou?* Holy Church makes the priest at the foot of the altar, before the Holy Sacrifice commences, put this question to his soul: "*Quare tristis es, anima mea? quare conturbas me?*"—*Wherefore art thou sad, O my soul? Why dost thou trouble me?*

It is by watching our joys and our sorrows that we find out where the treasure of our heart is.

"Holy Mary, *the Lord is with thee.* Obtain for me grace to mourn, and not to be comforted, so long as He is not with me."

E. *Whom seekest thou?*

If she knew, dear Lord, Who it is that questions her, well might she answer with the Prophet: *Lord, Thou knowest. What have I in Heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire on earth?* (Psalm lxxii.). *My soul hath thirsted after the strong, living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?* (Psalm xli.).

"Blessed Saint, pray for us sinners, who so easily content ourselves with the husks of swine, and have no hunger and thirst for Christ Jesus."

The intense longing for God in Purgatory, the cruel torment of hope deferred, is the necessary expiation of our little relish and desire for our God here.

Fac Cor amans Jesu mei,

Fac ut nos amemus Te.

F. *Whom seekest thou?*

Mark how our Blessed Saviour takes delight in hearing our wants and wishes from our own lips, though He knows them already. *We* soon tire of beggars. *He* never tires when we come to beg of Him. "Ask, seek, knock," is His unceasing counsel to us. His urgent inculcation is that *we ought always to pray and not to faint* (St. Luke xviii.).

If He could tire of us, never would He have given us such a direction.

G. *Whom seekest thou?*

Our Lord is saying this word to us from the tabernacle. St. Paul tells us that we are supposed to be men running in the arena for a prize. The prize is God our Lord. Our eye, our heart, our intention ought always to be fixed on Him. *Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord? The generation of them that seek the face of the God of Jacob* (Psalm xxiii.).

"O God our Father, O Lord Jesus our Saviour, may Thy Kingdom come in our hearts."

Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. x.).

H. *Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence.*

With her, there is only one HIM in the world. She thinks that every one knows who HE is. So was it with the Wise Men from the East. They were intent on one treasure, and thought that every one could tell them *where is He that is born?*

Alas! we know well that but *one thing is necessary*. Why are we troubled about many things? And, what is worse, why do we quite forget our God and run after a painted bubble, the bewitching of trifling? (Wisdom iv.). *O ye sons of men, how long will ye be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity and seek after lying?* (Psalm iv.). *My people have done two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and dug to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns which hold no water* (Jerem. ii.).

"Hail, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Thy Son Jesus is ever reigning in thy heart. Mother of God, pray for us poor sinners, who are so full of self and far away from Him."

I. *Tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.*

We have seen how a cold, unloving, slothful heart, sees always phantom lions in the way, when exertion is

needed. Here, on the contrary, we see St. Paul's words exemplified, that *charity believeth all things, hopeth all things* (1 Cor. xiii.). She is sure, if she can only find the Body, that she will be able to take Him away: *I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me* (Philipp. iv.). *He that believeth in Me, the works that I do he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do* (St. John xiv.). Alas! what a small part have I accomplished of the great work my Lord wished me to do on earth!

A voice whispers that you are presuming, and attempt too much; but oh, how glad God is to work with one who is a man of desires (Daniel ix.), and attempts more and more for the salvation of His little ones. Even if I have no other debt to pay in Purgatory, how long shall I tarry there merely to weep and lament over the work I might have done for our Lord, and have not done it?

STATION VIII.

Jesus saith to her: Mary! She turning saith to Him: Rabboni! which is to say, Master (v. 16).

A. *Jesus saith to her: Mary!*

So shall My word be, which shall go forth from My mouth: it shall not return to Me void, but it shall do whatsoever I please, and shall prosper in the things for which I sent it. For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace, the mountains and the hills shall sing praise before you, and all the trees of the country shall clap their hands: and the Lord shall be named for an everlasting sign, that shall not be taken away (Isaiah lv.).

Our Lord speaks but one word, but it is, as we say, a premeditated word, a prepared word, a word of great power. It is the outcome of those long hours during which He has by His Life and Death won so much grace for penitent Magdalen.

It shall not return to Me void. It shall do whatever I please, and shall prosper in the things for which I sent it.

He sends this one word to work a miracle such as He worked for Mary once before at Bethany. It is like the

loud cry : *Lazarus, come forth* ; for, though she is moving and walking, she is as one dead. Others die when their heart breaks. She is, as it were, living on with a crushed and broken heart within her. And into this word our Lord puts a Divine power to bring back life, and peace, and contentment, and joy unspeakable.

Here again we can do nothing but fall back on the Prophet's words. Painter cannot picture the scene. For his eye hath not seen such a creation, such a return to life. Chronicler cannot rightly tell the story, for his ear has heard nothing, nothing like the tones of our Saviour's voice when He calls her by her name, *Maria*, and nothing like the tenderness and music of the response that comes from her ecstasy : *Rabboni*, Master, Master mine !

It is but one word, *Maria* ! but we have seen in contemplation on the Sacred Passion that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive all that is contained within the height and the depth, the length and the breadth, of one of these Divine words that come from the mouth of God : *Pilate scourged Him ; they crucified Him : Maria !*

My word which shall go forth from My mouth shall not return to Me void. No ! for the word of God is living and effectual and more piercing than any two-edged sword, and reaching into the division of the soul and the spirit (Hebrews iv.). Surely our Blessed Lord can say : *This word from My mouth (has) done what I pleased, and has prospered in the things for which I sent it.*

B. *Jesus saith to her : Mary !*

And now, thus saith the Lord that created thee and formed thee : Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, and called thee by thy name : thou art Mine.

When thou shalt pass through the waters I will be with thee ; and the rivers shall not cover thee ; when thou shalt walk in the fire thou shalt not be burnt, and the flames shall not burn in thee.

For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.

Since thou becamest honourable in My eyes, thou art glorious. I have loved thee : fear not, for I am with thee (Isaias xliii.).

Since thou becamest honourable in My eyes. Mary became honourable in His eyes in that hour when her contrite heart began to love much.

C. *She turning.*

Probably, after saying, *I will take Him away*, she had begun again to go back to look for the Body in the Tomb. But, as soon as ever she hears our Lord call her by her name, quickly she turns again to Him, and falling at His feet, utters the word, *Rabboni*.

"He has heard your petition, loving Saint ; you want to know where they have laid Him, He is come Himself to tell you."

D. *She turning saith to Him : Rabboni !*

Rabboni, Hebrew scholars tell us, expresses greater veneration and affection than the word Rabbi, Master. In our language she would say : O good Master ! dear Master ! O Master mine ! As our Blessed Lord takes delight in calling Magdalen by her name, so is He much consoled when we call Him by His name : "Father, Jesus, Saviour, dear Master, my God and my all".

Therefore at the least from this time call to Me : Thou art my Father (Jerem. iii.).

How well spent is the time we devote to practising, in order to learn how to utter these names rightly : *Our Father, hallowed be Thy name ! Jesus, hallowed be Thy name ! Master, hallowed be Thy name !*

"Mother of God, show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, that with our whole hearts we may venerate and love His name, above all names."

Who is like the Lord our God ? Who understands the art of consoling the sorrowful as Jesus the Man of Sorrows does ? Who can weep with those who weep as He can ?

E. *She turning saith to Him, Rabboni.*

Observe that He does not utter one word of censure

against her want of faith in His assurance that He would rise. He sees nothing but her tears, her sorrow for Him, her regret for the loss of Him, her desire to possess Him.

I know that Thou art a gracious and merciful God, patient, and of much compassion, and easy to forgive evil.

"I know too that prosperity does not change Thy Heart. Neither does sorrow change Thy love into selfishness. Thou dost remember us when things go well with Thee, and when things go ill with Thee, still Thou dost remember us."

I cannot forget thee. I have graven thee in My hands—God is faithful.

Whence is this to me that thou shouldst come to me!

STATION IX.

Jesus saith to her, Do not touch Me, for I am not ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them: I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God (v. 17).

A. We may assume that Magdalen had fallen on her knees, and was clasping His sacred feet.

Why does our Lord say, *Do not touch Me*? He allowed her to kiss His feet after her first conversion, and again during the Supper at Bethany. To-day also He allows the other devout women to hold His feet. Why, then, does He say to Magdalen, *Do not touch Me*?

The question is evidently a difficult one, as nothing but mystical interpretations of the words are suggested by the holy Fathers. But, according to later commentators, the literal and correct meaning may probably be this: He does not mean to forbid her to touch His sacred feet, but merely says: "Do not wish to stay here holding My feet; do not seek the consolation of clasping My feet; but go to My brethren, and say to them that I am risen". He wishes her to forget her own happiness, and to set out at once on her errand of charity.

B. For I am not yet ascended to My Father.

Do not be afraid to go on the errand which I entrust to you, because I have not left you yet. *I am not ascended to My Father*; you shall see Me again soon, and often.

C. Go to My brethren, and say to them: I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.

"*O vos omnes, attendite.*" O all you who pass by, make some leisure to listen to these words, and to lay them up in your hearts. For in this world of ours it is the rule that *man placed in honour* loses his good sense and right feelings, and becomes like one intoxicated (Psalm xlviii.), or giddy, like one standing on a pinnacle. Because he is become somewhat wealthy, he no longer has any relish for old companions and friends of childhood. A chaos that cannot be passed is set between them and him.

Look a long time at the loving and humble Heart of our Lord Jesus; all the inconceivable glory of the Resurrection day sets no distance at all, nor any barrier, between Him and His poor fishermen from the Lake of Galilee.

Go tell My brethren; for they are My brethren, bone of My bone, flesh of My Flesh. I am one of them. Go say to them that *I ascend to My Father and your Father, My God and your God.*

"O good Lord Jesus, what wonder your Apostles, when you send them to preach what you have said and you have done, come back and say to you: *Who hath believed our report?* (Romans x.). Who believes what they hear from us? Who can believe and realise that you are one of ourselves? Our eldest Brother, the representative of our fallen family, Who have taken on yourself all our iniquity? Who identify yourself so thoroughly with us, that our sins are your sins; that he who touches us touches you in the apple of your eye? that whatever is done, kindly or unkindly, to us is done to you?"

"Sacred Heart of Jesus, give us grace to dwell on this great truth that your Father is our Father, your God our

God; till we believe firmly, and have an unbounded hope because of our close connection with you."

D. Whenever we say the *Pater noster*, we must say it in union with our eldest Brother, our Lord Jesus, our Saviour. Gladly will He join; and His prayer, like a burning fire, will spread a warmth over our cold words.

STATION X.

Mary Magdalen cometh and telleth the disciples: I have seen the Lord, and these things He said to me (v. 18).

Contemplate Mary Magdalen hastening on her errand of charity, and with her heart burning within her. Our Blessed Lady, after the Annunciation, went off with haste to greet her cousin Elizabeth. The same spirit of charity is now come from the Heart of our Lord into the heart of Magdalen.

As she hastens onward, some commentators think she overtakes one of the companies of devout women that had left the Tomb some time before.

STATION XI.

And behold Jesus met them, saying: All hail. But they came up and took hold of His feet and adored Him. Then Jesus said to them: Fear not, go, tell My brethren that they go into Galilee; there they shall see Me (St. Matt. xxviii. 9, 10).

A. Not alone for the exceptional love of Magdalen has He had thought and compassion. The poorest shall not be forgotten. *There is no one that can hide himself from the fire of His Heart (Psalm xviii.).* The Blessed Eucharist is for all. Whole and entire, Jesus gives Himself to every one; His whole Life and His Death is for each one. He is each one's companion and yoke-fellow, as if there were no other.

"*Quis sicut Dominus Deus noster?*" Where shall we find a friend like our Saviour and our Brother Jesus Christ?

Do not hasten away. Stay looking at Him, and listening to every word and watching every action, in order to know and understand better the friendship of His meek and humble and loving Heart.

B. *Go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see Me.*

Did not our Saviour know, when He spoke those words, that they were to see Him that very day, long before they went into Galilee? This is His way. He promises a certain measure of good things, but delights in surprising His disciples with sudden unexpected gifts over and above. So does a good husband fix a certain allowance for his wife in marriage settlements, but takes every chance of adding presents over and above.

STATION XII.

She went and told them who had been with Him, who were mourning and weeping. And they hearing that He was alive, and had been seen by her, did not believe (St. Mark xvi.).

And going back from the Sepulchre, they told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest. And it was Mary Magdalen and Joanna and Mary of James, and the other women who were with them, who told these things to the Apostles. And these words seemed to them as idle tales, and they did not believe them (St. Luke xxiv.).

A. *They told all these things to the eleven and the rest.*

The eleven, therefore, have come back again from their hiding-place, full of anxious suspense. Peter and John have told them what they had seen at the Tomb. They are in great sorrow, *mourning and weeping*; but fear is still robbing them of the succours from thought. They are bewildered.

Contemplate the holy women full of emotion, delivering their messages; Mary Magdalen repeating word for word: *Go tell My brethren I ascend to My Father and your Father,*

My God and your God. She has no doubts, no hesitations. Her tears are flowing fast, tears of consolation and great love.

B. They hearing that He was alive, and had been seen by her, did not believe.

Observe the great attention of the disciples while they listen; but they are incredulous. Perhaps some little pride renders them unwilling to believe that these women have seen the Lord before themselves. They cross-question the witnesses, and in the end shrug their shoulders, and retire with expressions of disbelief. Their fears are not allayed: their tears are not dried.

Magdalen is not angry that they disbelieve her. She has great pity for them, and knows that her Master can soon console them.

C. They hearing, did not believe.

Do not, then, Peter and John believe in the Resurrection? They, as we have already seen, do believe in the Resurrection. We are not bound to think that they are incredulous as the rest of the eleven. In fact, we cannot conclude from the words: *They told the eleven*, that all the eleven were present at the moment. The name, *the eleven*, *the twelve*, is only another word for the Apostles. If the Evangelist writes, "They told the Apostles," it would not follow that all the Apostles are listening.

And again, it is one thing to believe that the Lord is risen, another to believe the stories told by the women, that they have seen the Lord. Even Peter and John may be on this point not fully satisfied. But the words of the Evangelist may only mean that many of the eleven expressed disbelief.

SCENE XXVII.

THE PALACE OF THE PRIESTS. COUNCIL CHAMBER.

STATION I.

Who when they were departed, behold some of the guards came into the city, and told the Chief Priests all things that had been done. And they being assembled together with the Ancients, taking counsel, gave a great sum of money to the soldiers, saying: Say you, His disciples came by night, and stole Him away when we were asleep. And if the Governor shall hear of this, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they, taking the money, did as they were taught. And this word was spread abroad among the Jews even unto this day (St. Matt. xxviii. 11—15).

A. Who when they were departed, behold some of the guards came into the city.

Do these words mean that the guards remained at the Tomb till the holy women had come and gone again? The words will bear this interpretation. The guards may have kept their station at the Tomb. If so, the question arises, how were the devout women bold enough to approach them and confront them? The answer may be, that the guards, if still there, are overpowered by great fear, and so far from molesting the holy women, are more inclined to sympathise with them and tell them of the earthquake and the apparition of the Angel that had so scared them.

Another explanation might be that the terrified guards either remain paralysed and helpless on the ground, or have, as was natural, withdrawn to some distance from the Sepulchre, but still do not go back into the city till after the departure of the holy women.

B. Some of the guards came and told the Chief Priests.

Contemplate the scene in the Council Chamber. The guards, thoroughly panic-stricken, relating all the details

of what they have witnessed—the great earthquake, the rolling back of the stone door, the appearance of an Angel sitting on the stone: *his countenance as lightning, his raiment as snow.*

Mark the features of the Priests and Ancients who have been suddenly called together by Caiphas. They listen in fear, but try to hide their terror by scoffing at the guards. "Brave soldiers indeed you must be, to be frightened out of your senses by the tricks of some women! Why, you say yourselves that these women were there. Evidently they bribed you. When the Governor hears of this, your position will not be pleasant. You have grossly neglected duty. You will pay with your heads for your crime."

These guards were probably the Temple guards, for when the Priests applied to Pilate for a guard, he answered them: *You have a guard, go guard it as you know* (St. Matt. xxvii.). Whether the Temple guard was composed of Roman soldiers is disputed. Some commentators think that they were, but were put at the disposal of the Jewish rulers to act as police. Others think that they were a body of Jewish police tolerated by the Romans.

A tradition is recorded, as has been said, that when the Jewish Rulers the day before seized Joseph of Arimathea, who had incurred their wrath by rescuing the Body of Christ out of their grasp, they would not trust him to the guards, but kept watch themselves.

C. *They taking counsel, gave a great sum of money to the soldiers.*

Fear makes them liberal; they were not generous to Judas, but now they see clearly that the Resurrection makes things much worse for them than they were before. The people may rise, and wreak their vengeance on those who caused the death of Jesus. It is all-important to win over these guards. They have already tried to strike terror into them by threatening to accuse them to Pilate of grave neglect of duty. Now, after going aside and taking counsel, they unexpectedly come back with a great sum of money and distribute it among them with many

fair words. They have done their work well, and have been quite faithful. The Ancients will take care to persuade Pilate. No harm shall come to the guards if they will only firmly stick to this assertion, that the disciples came while they were asleep and carried off the Body. If they don't adhere to this account, they will certainly be accused to Pilate of having allowed the disciples to break the seals of the Tomb and carry off the Body.

D. *They gave a great sum of money to the soldiers.*

Pity the misery of these weak men, corrupted by a bribe. No doubt a grace has been offered to them when the Resurrection took place and the Angel appeared. Had they been true to grace they would now have part and fellowship with the martyrs. They preferred to have for their portion the sum of money shared among them.

E. *They gave a great sum of money to the soldiers.*

Take notice too of the grievous wickedness of these Priests and Rulers. If even now they would retrace their steps! But they harden their hearts, and, as our Lord said to them, *shut the Kingdom of Heaven against men. For you yourselves do not enter in, and those that are going in you suffer not to enter* (St. Matt. xxiii.).

F. *They taking the money, did as they were taught.*

We are reminded of the fatal power that bribes possess to poison the soul. When Samuel had anointed Saul king, and was resigning his office of judge, he said to all Israel: *Speak of me before the Lord and before His Anointed, whether I have taken any man's ox or ass; if I have wronged any man; if I have oppressed any man; if I have taken a bribe at any man's hand; and I will despise it in this day, and I will restore it to you. And they said: Thou hast not wronged us, nor oppressed us, nor taken aught at any man's hand* (1 Kings xii.). *Before the time of the end of his life in the world, he protested before the Lord and His Anointed: Money or anything else, even to a shoe, he had not taken of any man, and no man did accuse him* (Ecclus. xlvi.).

So, in like manner, when the King of Sodom wanted to

load Abraham with presents for having rescued him from his enemies, Abraham answered: *I lift up my hand to the Lord God the Most High, the possessor of Heaven and earth, that from the very woof thread unto the shoe latchet, I will not take of any things that are thine, lest thou say, I have enriched Abram* (Genesis xiv.).

Baltassar offered Daniel large presents if he would interpret his dream for him: *Thou shalt be clothed with purple, and shalt have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third prince in my kingdom.* But Daniel also loved that holy liberty and independence which belongs to the children and servants of God, and he answered: *Thy rewards be to thyself, and the gifts of thy house give to another* (Daniel v.). The great Saints of the New Testament strongly commend to Priests that word of our Saviour: *Freely you have received, freely give* (St. Matt. x.). One reason why they dread presents and bribes is, because the Holy Ghost warns us that *presents and gifts blind the eyes of judges, and make them dumb in the mouth, so that they cannot correct* (Ecclus. xx.). Who has courage enough to reprove earnestly the man who has enslaved him by giving him a rich gift? And, once courage is gone, we are glad to become blind, in order not to see sins which call for reproof.

Seek not to be made a judge, unless thou have strength enough to extirpate iniquities; lest thou fear the person of the powerful, and lay a stumbling-block for thy integrity (Ecclus. vii.).

Another reason why the Saints will not accept gifts, is that they wish to have their reward from the hand of their generous and loving Master, and dread hearing from His lips that withering word: *They have received their reward* (St. Matt. vi.). Have I lost my liberty by receiving gifts? Am I receiving my reward here?

G. *And this word was spread abroad among the Jews even to this day.*

It is said to have been a maxim of Voltaire's: "Throw mud enough, and some is sure to stick". Assuredly Satan

finds that he gains his ends by lying boldly and with perseverance. Cardinal Newman has left us a vivid picture of the tenacity with which prejudice against the Church keeps its hold on the minds of men.

Ought we to be silent, and think that it is no use to refute lies? The great Saints have not thought so. St. Augustine, we are told, never ceased refuting the Donatists till he cleared Africa of their heresy. This is St. Paul's inculcation to St. Timothy: *I charge thee before God and before Jesus Christ, preach the Word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine. For there shall be a time when they will not endure sound doctrine* (2 Timothy iv.). As the children of this world are sometimes more prudent than the children of light, so also are they sometimes more courageous, more energetic, more persevering. *My brethren, these things ought not so to be* (St. James iii.).

SCENE XXVIII.

ST. PETER'S CAVE. SOUTH OF JERUSALEM.

STATION I.

Peter went away wondering in himself at that which had come to pass (St. Luke xxiv. 12).

Peter went away.

We may perhaps assume that Peter and John secure the sacred winding-sheet, the *sudarium*, and the other linen cloths, and carry them to the Cenaculum, to present them to the Blessed Mother when she returns.

These two Apostles may still be there when Magdalen and the other devout women arrive with their tidings. If so, it is not necessary, as we have seen, to believe that they are included in St. Luke's words: *They did not believe them.*

After this, St. John, perhaps, goes to find our Blessed Lady in the house, or place near the Tomb, to which she went yesterday.

A. *Peter went away.*

St. Peter then goes forth alone, *wondering in himself at that which had come to pass*: wondering too, in contrition

and humility, what is to happen to himself. Shall he ever be permitted again to see his beloved Master? The women have told him so. Can it be true? If so blessed, what manner of meeting shall it be? What will the Lord say to him? What answer shall he make to his Divine Master? Full of these thoughts he wanders on.

Possibly he bends his steps once more towards Calvary. Or, perchance, wishing to let his tears flow in solitude, he goes from the Cœnaculum down the hill to the south, to the Grotto still shown as the spot where he hid his sorrows after the cock-crow, when Jesus looked upon him.

STATION II.

The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon
(St. Luke xxiv. 34).

It was late in the evening when the disciples spoke these words, but commentators think that probably the apparition to Peter took place early in the day, before the apparition to Cleophas and his companion, or to any other man among the disciples.

We are not told one word of what passed at this meeting. The short history is this: *The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.*

We must go back once more to the familiar words: *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what God hath prepared for those who love Him* (1 Cor. ii.).

St. Peter always loved his Master, but contrition has doubled and trebled his love. And in this interview our Blessed Lord once more looks on Peter, and this look shall be stamped indelibly on his heart. If contrition has doubled and trebled his love, this meeting, and the aspect of his most loving Master, and the words that come from His tender Heart into the heart of His penitent Apostle, double and treble contrition. It shall endure till he has at last his will, and expires crucified, and with his head

downwards, because he does not deem it right that he should be so honoured as to die quite after the manner of his Master.

“Blessed Saint, you who sinned once and wept often, pray for us who have sinned often, and seldom grieve for our sins.”

What happened to-day to St. John the Gospels do not tell. If, as holy writers relate, he found our Lady transfigured, something after the manner of what he had seen on Thabor, this vision may have strengthened and consoled him sufficiently, even without an apparition from his Divine Master. St. Jerome tells us that St. James the Less had made a vow not to taste food or drink till he had seen the Lord come to life, and that our Saviour contented his ardent desire by appearing to him to-day. St. Paul (1 Cor. xv.) seems to put this apparition later. *After this He appeared to James.* Some early Fathers also state that Jesus appeared to-day to Joseph of Arimathea in his dungeon.

SCENE XXIX.

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS.

STATION I.

And behold, two of them went the same day to a town which was sixty furlongs from Jerusalem, named Emmaus. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass that while they talked and reasoned with themselves, Jesus Himself also drawing near, went with them. But their eyes were held that they should not know Him (St. Luke xxiv. 13—16).

A. *It came to pass that while they talked and reasoned with themselves.*

They talked and reasoned about the things which had happened.

Many persons are persuaded that meditation is to them an impossibility, but they find no difficulty in talking and reasoning with another about things that have happened. Oftentimes, if such a conversation could

be taken down, it would be found to contain a good and complete meditation.¹

B. *They talked together of all those things which had happened.*

Contemplate our Blessed Lord listening most attentively, and with great compassion.

While they are talking and reasoning about His Passion, He hears every word, not one escapes His loving attention. How much we console the Sacred Heart of our Lord when we converse together about Him, or think of Him alone by ourselves! He Who loves us with so intense a love cannot help desiring to be remembered by us.

Our Blessed Saviour called His Apostles together to share His gladness when He saw the poor woman put her mite into the alms-box. So does He now call His angels and saints to share His gladness when we remember Him and talk of Him. He is not used to meet with sympathy and remembrance.

C. *They talked together.*

Our conversation always shows us where our treasure is, *for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh* (St. Matt. xii.).

St. John Columbanus used to say that if he could regulate well the recreation hour of his Religious, he would feel sure of the rest of the day. This too is the teaching of St. James in his Catholic Epistle, that, as a small helm can turn about a large ship, so the tongue, a little member, determines the condition of the whole man. A man that offends not in word *is able with a bridle to lead about the whole body*; and, on the other hand, a foul tongue *defileth the whole body* (St. James iii.).

D. *They talked together.*

We must not then forget how we can give great joy to our loving Lord by remembering Him, and still more by speaking of Him to others. Holy writers say, that when

¹ See Introduction.

we think of the Sacred Passion, even in a way that seems to us not very devout, we greatly please our Lord, and are sure to win good graces.

E. *They talked together.*

Satan, knowing how much our Saviour desires to be remembered by us, adopts as his war-cry the words: *Let us cut Him off from the land of the living, and let His name be remembered no more* (Jerem. xi.). The world, Satan's ally, unceasingly presents shows and pomps, amusements, and the *bewitching of trifling*, to hinder us from remembering Christ Jesus.

What a triumph it is for this hateful enemy of Christ when the day goes by, and no one thinks of Jesus, or speaks of Him!

F. *They talked together.*

Such forgetfulness is a sure sign that love is not strong. Three things, they say, cannot be hidden—a fire, a cough, and love. They must betray themselves. When the Holy Spirit came down on the first Whit Sunday, and filled the hearts of the faithful, they began at once to speak of God's wonderful works.

G. *They talked together of all those things which had happened.*

We can imagine the blessed angels, when they witnessed the Sacred Passion, and the Institution of the Blessed Eucharist, making sure that Christians would be filled with fervent love, and saying: *Generation and generation shall praise Thy works; . . . they shall speak of the magnificence of the glory of Thy holiness, and shall tell Thy wondrous works. They shall speak of the might of Thy terrible acts, and shall declare Thy greatness. They shall publish the memory of the abundance of Thy sweetness, and shall rejoice in Thy justice* (Psalm cxliv.).

And the Lord hath looked down from Heaven, and is always so looking down, upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand and seek God, and remember Him and think of Him. Alas! how deep, how intense the

disappointment when He is obliged to say: *They are all gone aside; they are become unprofitable* (Psalm xiii.).

Will a virgin forget her ornament? But My people hath forgotten Me, days without number (Jerem. ii.).

H. *Their eyes were held that they should not know Him.*

Our eyes also are held. We do not see our Blessed Lord watching us, and anxiously waiting to be remembered by us in order that He may bless us. *Fac Cor amans Jesu mei, fac ut nos amemus Te.*

STATION II.

And He said to them: What are these discourses that you hold one with another as you walk, and are sad? (v. 17).

Domine, tu nosti. "Most loving Lord Jesus, you well know what your disciples are thinking of, and what makes them sad, for you have been with them, helping them to think devoutly and to mourn over your Passion."

Why, then, does He ask them and make them tell their story? Because He loves more than fathers and mothers love their children. His delight is to be with the children of men, and to have them conversing with Him.

Therefore has He established that law, which we sometimes think hard, that we must ask, and continue to ask, if we would receive. If we do not seek to converse with Him through love, He wishes that at least through the pressure of our wants we may be compelled to come to Him.

"O loving Heart of our Saviour and our God! If Thy delight is to be with us, bring about, in the multitude of Thy tender mercies, that our delight may be to be with Thee."

When tempted to yield to disrelish for our Lord, we may recall this thought: If Jesus Christ is to be the joy of our Heaven, surely He can content our hearts here.

STATION III.

And the one of them whose name was Cleophas, answering said to Him: Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that have been done there in these days? To whom He said, What things? And they said: Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, Who was a Prophet, mighty in work and word before God and all the people; and how our Chief Priests and Princes delivered Him to be condemned to death and crucified Him (vv. 18—20).

A. *One of them whose name was Cleophas.*

Cleophas was a brother of St. Joseph, the spouse of our Lady, and the father of two Apostles, St. James the Less and St. Jude, and grandfather of St. John and St. James the Great. It is well worthy of note how many of our Lord's more intimate disciples were connected with Him by blood or by affinity through marriage. How greatly are the chances of salvation multiplied if we belong to a holy family! How truly wise are parents who, by prayer and alms, endeavour to secure for their children the grace to reject all marriages that are not blessed by God!

Who the companion of Cleophas was is not known. Many writers suggest St. Luke himself, who gives us this narrative. Others mention Nathanael.

B. *Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which have been done there in these days?*

Listen to these words. Such a question may well awaken emotion in the Heart of our Lord and among His blessed angels. "Alas! who knows what was done in Jerusalem, if you do not, Lord Jesus?"

C. *Art thou only a stranger?*

"Lord, hast Thou not known the things that have been happening to me in these past days?" We often imagine that our Saviour is but a stranger to us, and has no knowledge, no consciousness of what is being done to us, no thought of what we are enduring, no compassion

for our condition. And all the while He is tenderly watching and measuring the chalice for us, taking all care that there be not one drop too much of bitterness, not one drop too little of comfort and strengthening grace. *I will not forget thee. I have graven thee in My hands* (Isaias xlix.).

D. *Art thou only a stranger, and hast thou not known?*

Alas! we are not strangers; we are His own familiars, His intimate friends. It is not through ignorance that we forget how much our Blessed Saviour wishes us to have in our hearts, and on our lips too, the story of His Passion, *how our Chief Priests and Princes delivered Him to be condemned to death and crucified Him. Oh, if I forget Thee, Lord Jesus crucified, let my right hand be forgotten. Let my tongue cleave to my jaws if I do not remember Thee and Thy sorrowful Mother; if I make not Calvary the beginning of my joy* (Psalm cxxxvi.).

E. *How our Chief Priests and Princes delivered Him to be condemned to death and crucified Him.*

They word it correctly; they delivered Jesus to the Gentiles, but at the same time they crucified Him, as it was their will that coerced Pilate. Mark how the sins of others may become our sins. *From the sins of others, spare Thy servant, O Lord* (Psalm xviii.).

F. *Our Chief Priests and Princes delivered Him to be condemned to death and crucified Him.*

It is always an evil to speak recklessly of the sins of priests and princes. We are only spreading scandal and doing harm to the souls of those who hear. But, on the other hand, it is a most excellent work of mercy to deplore before God with sorrow the sins of priests and rulers, and during the Ember-days to join earnestly with Holy Church and endeavour by prayer and penance to secure good and faithful priests for His Church.

STATION IV.

But we hoped (were hoping, *sperabamus*) *that it was He that should have redeemed Israel* (v. 21).

A. They reveal in these words the imperfect and incorrect idea which they and many other disciples had of the Messias and His work. They share the delusion under which the Jews still labour, that Christ was to be a mighty conqueror, and drive out the Romans. They hope also, perchance, that they will have high places in the new Kingdom.

A much greater conqueror than their most ambitious thoughts could conceive Jesus truly is. But His method of conquering is altogether new and unearthly. By enduring all that the world could inflict, He conquered the world. By dying He conquered death. By loving, He conquered our selfishness: *Domine Jesu noverim Te.*

B. *We were hoping*—"Sperabamus".

A very holy man, Father Roothaan, the General of the Society of Jesus, used to say that this word "*sperabamus*" contained the source of many of our troubles and sorrows. *We were hoping* for a legacy, for an invitation, for an appointment, and none has come. *We were hoping* to be well enough to travel to-day, and we are not. Blessed they who to all their hopes and wishes can add our Lord's word: *Nevertheless, not as I will, my God, but as Thou wilt.*

STATION V.

And now, besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company, affrighted us, who before it was light were at the Sepulchre, and not finding His Body, came, saying that they had seen a vision of angels, who say that He is alive. And some of our people went to the Sepulchre, and found it so as the women had said, but Him they found not (vv. 21—24).

Yea, and certain women also.

Contemplate our Lord listening most kindly to all

these details. He makes plenty of leisure for them, though this is such an exceptional day. For it is His Birth-day, His Wedding-day, His Coronation-day, His Resurrection-day. Human wisdom would surely pronounce that on such an unique day, He has work more important to attend to. But He knows of no other work more urgent than this work of consoling His disciples.

As He could in the wilderness multiply the loaf of bread, so can He now multiply Himself and be whole and entire for every one; living and dying for each of us, and giving Himself all to each in the Blessed Eucharist. If, therefore, I do not respond, I render void, in a true sense, all His Life, all His Passion and Death, and all His Eucharistic life.

"Mother of God, pray for us sinners."

Tantus labor non sit cassus. So much toil, and so much pain,
O may they not be rendered vain.

We must learn from our Saviour how we may show kindness by listening, and by making leisure for those who are in want of comfort, and by not interrupting nor answering before we have patiently heard all.

STATION VI.

Then He said to them; O foolish, and slow of heart to believe in all things which the Prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning Him (vv. 25—27).

A. *Then He said to them.*

Oh, how blessed the hour when at last, after bearing long with our foolish complaints, our Blessed Saviour begins to speak and to teach us truth! *Make haste, O Lord, to help me.* Say, on behalf of our souls, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do: till at last we begin to see and understand.*

B. *O foolish and slow of heart to believe!*

And yet men are often persuaded that they are very wise, and very clever, and very strong-minded, because they will not believe.

The very highest talent, the greatest wisdom, the most perfect good sense, is to believe Jesus Christ, and to be most docile to His teaching and His injunctions.

"Why should I confess to men?" the strong-minded asks; "why be taught by a Church when I have my own intellect and my Bible? Why use oil? why use water?"

The servants of Naaman proved their good sense when they said to their master, who was going away indignant because Eliseus sent him a message to wash in the Jordan, *Father, if the Prophet had bid thee do some great thing, surely thou shouldst have done it, how much rather what he now hath said to thee, Wash, and thou shalt be clean (4 Kings v.).* Be God's command little or great, the height of good sense is to do it; and as for those who will not, their wail throughout eternity will be, *We fools, we fools! the serpent deceived me.*

A highly-gifted officer understands that to obey his general is true wisdom. A mediocre man may think it more brilliant to try to show that he knows better than his commander.

C. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?*

That is, if you carefully study the Prophets, and all they have said concerning Christ, you will see clearly that He was not to be one of the Princes of the nations who lord it over them, nor one whose kingdom is of this world, but a *Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity, and (that) the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaias liii.).*

D. *And beginning at Moses, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning Him.*

"Attendite." Contemplate the two disciples listening with earnest astonishment while our Lord teaches them. Mark how their features are lit up with the fire which His words are enkindling in their souls. *Was not our heart*

burning within us whilst He spoke in the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?

Where else in the world can we find consolation and happiness and peace such as Jesus is giving to-day to these who have been mourning? *Blessed indeed they that mourn if their sorrow is to be thus turned into joy.*

Satan persuades men that to find pleasure they must follow him, and turn their back on God. *Alas, we fools!* Who made all the good things of this earth which Satan wishes us to accept as from him? Did he create them for us? If it rested with Satan we should not have one joy either in time or eternity. He urges us on to run after pleasure here, simply because he hates us with insatiable malice, and wishes us to have nothing but despair throughout eternity. If the things of this earth, O man, so allure you that you are willing to take them as your God and your Heaven, understand that *He Who made them is more beautiful than they* (Wisdom xiii.).

Our Blessed Lord does not allow His enemies to have all the good things even here below. To His disciples, when they will listen to Him, He speaks words which set their hearts on fire, and let them have here a foretaste of Heaven. This is that peace *which the world cannot give*, that peace which *passeth understanding*, that peace which on Thabor so entranced St. Peter that all things else faded away, and the thought of his heart was, *It is good for us to be here, let us make here three tabernacles*—three resting-places.

Bear in mind how He has promised to all who give up the world for His sake, that even here on earth they shall have a hundred-fold, besides all that is to come in the long eternity.

It is our own fault, à Kempis tells us, that we do not more frequently taste this joy of our Lord. It is no part of His design, no wish of His Heart, that we should live here without happiness. He is our true Father, our good Father; and His continual complaint is that we choose to feed on husks of swine at a distance from Him, rather

than stay with Him and share all that He possesses. *My people, He laments, have done two evils. They have forsaken Me, the cistern of living water, and digged unto themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which hold no water* (Jerem. ii.).

SCENE XXX.

EMMAUS.

STATION I.

And they drew nigh to the town whither they were going, and He made as though He would go farther. But they constrained Him, saying: Stay with us, because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent. And He went in with them (St. Luke xxiv. 28, 29).

If the tradition commonly received be correct, Emmaus, now called Kubeb, stood on a steep hill about sixty furlongs to the west of Jerusalem. A deep valley separates it from the Holy City, so that although the distance is less than eight miles, yet a good walker takes three hours to climb the high hill and accomplish the journey.

Some diligent students are at the present time contending that the modern Kubeb cannot be the ancient Emmaus. They have in favour of their contention the testimony of St. Jerome and other early and later writers who frequently and clearly assert that Emmaus stood on the site of the city of Nicopolis, afterwards built. Modern explorers also have found monuments that favour this theory.

The main difficulty against it is that Nicopolis was not sixty stadia or furlongs from Jerusalem; but one hundred and sixty stadia—twenty miles. Those, however, who identify Emmaus with Nicopolis answer this difficulty by stating that in some ancient manuscripts the distance is stated as one hundred and sixty stadia; and they therefore contend that the other reading, *sixty stadia*, is a copyist's error.

Tradition tells us that Cleophas had his home at Emmaus.

A. *But they constrained Him.*

Contemplate the two disciples, now strongly attached to their new companion, pressing Him, at the door of the house of Cleophas, to accept their hospitality. They know not as yet that He is their Lord; but they know that they owe Him hospitality, (1) because He is a stranger, and (2)

out of gratitude, because He has given them so much heavenly instruction on the way.

We must try to realise our Lord's secret contentment because these acts of charity give Him the plea that He longs for, and, if we may so say, a right to open His Heart and pour out graces on them.

The holy Fathers wish us to notice that they not only offer hospitality to this stranger, but *constrain* Him to stay with them : *look and do according to the pattern.*

And observe, too, not because He is well born or rich do they invite Him, nor in the hope that He will in turn invite them to some better entertainment. They have found out on the road that He is a good and holy man. And moreover, as has been said, they are grateful to Him because He has taught them much heavenly truth. Therefore are they most desirous to show Him some kindness as a proof of their reverential gratitude. By giving this hospitality to a holy man because He is holy, they become entitled to the reward of a holy man (St. Matt. x.).

B. They constrained Him, saying : Stay with us.

What a joyful surprise beyond all expectation, for these disciples when they at last find out that while befriending a poor traveller they are befriending their good Lord Jesus Christ! What a moment of transport it was to St. Martin of Tours, when Christ appeared to him clothed in the half mantle he had given to the poor man!

But what is St. Martin's transport? what the delight of the two disciples, compared with the overwhelming gladness that will burst upon our souls if our Saviour at judgment is able to say to us the word He so much longs to say: *Come, ye blessed! For as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren you did it to Me.*

I believe, O Lord, help my unbelief, that I may realise this wonderful truth.

C. They constrained Him.

Observe the different degrees in our way of doing works of mercy and kindness.

(a) The son in the Gospel, when his father wants a service from him, at first grumbles and refuses, but afterwards does it. So, too, the man who had retired to rest only gives the loaf of bread after much earnest entreaty, and to get rid of troublesome importunity. Even so we sometimes give an alms after long resistance, and after extorting a promise that the petitioner will not come again.

(b) Then we sometimes give more promptly, when asked, and with outward civility, though inwardly reluctant and wishing we had not been asked.

(c) Then sometimes with a better charity we give at once what is asked and give willingly.

(d) Charity and kindness are still more perfect when we do not wait to be asked, but look out for opportunities of giving.

(e) Then better still, some, like these disciples, will not take a refusal, they lovingly, and with charitable tact, constrain those in need to accept help. They sometimes hinder them from knowing where the alms comes from, so that they cannot return it.

"Mother of God, pray for us sinners that we may draw from the Heart of thy Son some share of His charity."

D. They constrained Him, saying : Stay with us.

Even on this glorious day when all the holy angels and the liberated *prisoners of hope* are greeting our Lord with ceaseless benedictions, these words from two of His disciples have their own peculiar sweetness. For as He tells us how the lost sheep attracts His Heart more than the rest of the flock, so in like manner, the Alleluias of the blessed, now safe in a better world, in one sense affect His Heart less than the cries of His loved exiles on earth: *Stay with us, O Lord!* For they are not yet secure. He is not sure of preserving them for ever.

E. Stay with us, O Lord.

Alas, how often is all reversed! It is He that is saying to us earnestly: "*Stay with Me*": but we begin *all at once to make excuses.* "I have to go to my five yoke of

oxen—I pray you hold me excused: I cannot come; I cannot stay.”

This is the treatment to which He is far more accustomed; so that He says sorrowfully: *My Heart hath expected reproach and misery* (Psalm lxviii.). Consequently He is surprised and delighted when He hears us say to Him earnestly: *Stay with me, Lord Jesus*. For habitually He is *the reproach of men; and the outcast of the people* (Psalm xxi.). *What have you done, dear Lord, we may well ask with Pilate, that your own people have for you nothing but disrelish and coldness and contempt? He Himself asks sorrowfully the same question: My people, what have I done to thee? In what have I molested thee? Answer thou Me* (Micheas vi.).

F. *They constrained Him, saying: Stay with us.*

A mother hides herself at times from her child, in order to have the pleasure of watching the efforts he makes to find her. Our Lord hides Himself and makes as if He wished to go away from the soul; but all the while *not from His Heart is He afflicting the children of men* (Lament. iii.). *For His delights are to be with (them)*. He is hiding, that we may by seeking compel Him to come back and bless us abundantly. “*Sitit sitiri*”—*He thirsts to be thirsted for*.

Alas! how often we let Him go without an effort to keep Him, and comfort ourselves with some creature; a newspaper, our food, or conversation with a friend!

Stay with us, because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent.

In the controversy that has arisen about the true site of Emmaus, use is made of this sentence. Those who maintain the common opinion, which we may call the theory of the Franciscans, rely with good reason on the text of St. Luke, as we have it in the Vulgate, that Emmaus was sixty furlongs from Jerusalem; and that though it is now *towards evening* when they arrive at Emmaus, yet the two disciples will be able easily to reach Jerusalem that night after our Lord has left them. They argue that they could not have got back to Jerusalem that evening had the distance been one hundred and sixty stadia,

equal to twenty miles. The writers who are advocating the other theory that Emmaus stood where Nicopolis was afterwards built, defend their view by saying, (1) as we have seen, that in certain ancient manuscripts of the Gospel the reading is one hundred and sixty furlongs, not sixty; (2) that St. Jerome states clearly that Nicopolis was built on the site of the Emmaus of the Gospel; (3) that the evening of the Jews, like our ecclesiastical Vesper hour, began early in the afternoon. *Towards evening*, therefore, might mean between 2 and 3 p.m.; (4) that though the high-road to Emmaus was one hundred and sixty stadia or twenty miles, the shorter footpath across the hills is not more than sixteen miles; a distance which two disciples accustomed to a laborious life would easily accomplish between 4 p.m. and 9 p.m.

STATION II.

And He went in with them. And it came to pass whilst He was at table with them, He took bread, and blessed and brake, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him: and He vanished out of their sight (vv. 29—31).

He took bread, and blessed and brake, and gave it to them.

Did our Blessed Lord reward these two hospitable disciples by giving them His Sacred Body in the Blessed Eucharist? Some holy writers think not, but the more common opinion held, among others, by St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and Venerable Bede, is that Cleophas and his companion did receive Holy Communion. St. Jerome, writing of St. Paula, has these words: “Setting out once more she went to Nicopolis which was formerly called Emmaus, where our Lord, recognised in the breaking of bread, consecrated the house of Cleophas into a church” (Epist. xxvii.).

Those who believe that the Franciscan theory about the site of Emmaus is wrong, lay great stress on this and similar passages in the writings of St. Jerome, where he emphatically repeats that Nicopolis was the Emmaus of the Gospel.

A. The breaking of bread.

Contemplate these two favoured disciples receiving Holy Communion from our Saviour. If their hearts were burning in the way when He spoke to them, how much more now!

Jesu, spes poenitentibus,
Quam pius es petentibus!
Quam bonus Te quaerentibus!
Sed quid invenientibus!

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O Jesu, hope of the contrite,
To them that seek how kind Thou art!
How gracious to the yearning heart!
When found at last, O what delight!

B. *The breaking of bread.*

What was their preparation for this Communion?

Earnest prayer is doubtless the ordinary preparation for Holy Communion. And if through sloth we neglect such preparation we are much to blame. But there may be other good preparations.

1. *Labour.*

According to St. Jerome's opinion they had, as poor men, travelled on foot sixteen or twenty miles. Labour, especially when undergone through charity or duty, may well supply the place of prayer. Those who nurse the sick laboriously and charitably are preparing well for Holy Communion.

2. *Listening to the burning words of our Lord.*

He has been explaining to them the prophecies concerning Himself and His Passion.

Reading, then, about our Saviour, meditating on His words, and above all on His Sacred Passion, is an excellent preparation for receiving the Blessed Eucharist.

3. *They did a good work of mercy, and did it very well.*

Let us go and do likewise. For works of mercy are heavenly jewels, which adorn the soul for the Sacred Banquet.

C. *And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.*

Oh, what a good reward! "*Melior est misericordia Tua super vitas,*" we say in Psalm lxii.: "One moment of Thy merciful grace, O Lord, is better than long lives without". Thrice blessed shall we be if by holy labour, and by much study of our dear Lord's Life and Sacred Passion, and by works of hospitality and mercy, we deserve to have a great increase of faith, hope, and charity, and to know Him at Holy Communion and in prayer.

Let us charitably pray for priests, who often hold in their hands the Sacred Body of the Lord, that they may know Him *in the breaking of bread.*

D. *And He vanished out of their sight.*

"Why so soon, O Lord? why so short a visitation?"

It is as in the case of Magdalen: "Do not tarry here clasping My feet". When He sees fit He reveals Himself clearly for a little while and then retires, because (1) the rule is that *the just man lives by faith* (Romans i.); *blessed they who have not seen and have believed* (St. John xx.). Moreover (2) He desires that they make haste to tell the good tidings to His disciples.

STATION III.

And they said one to the other: Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way, and opened to us the Scriptures? (v. 32).

A. Many are persuaded that on this earth sinners have all the delights, and Christ's disciples the hard lives.

And, no doubt, at times the prophecy of our Lord in the Supper-room has its fulfilment: *You shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice.* But it is not to be always so, for He adds: *Your sorrow shall be turned into joy. You now have sorrow, but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you* (St. John xvi.).

And there are innumerable passages in Holy Writ which show us that even in this world God gives the best to His children.

Better is one day in Thy courts above thousands (Psalm lxxxiii.), one rejoicing soul exclaims.

My spirit exults in God my Saviour, our Lady tells us. *I superabound with joy* (2 Cor. vii.), St. Paul testifies.

And it is over and over again inculcated that in spite of the trials of this life, our habitual state of soul is to be joy: *Rejoice in the Lord always, again I shall say rejoice* (Philipp. iv.).

It is not honourable to our Lord if we serve Him in sadness, as if He were a hard master.

We must bear in mind His solemn promise that those who leave all for Him, shall have IN THIS WORLD A HUNDRED-FOLD.

And we remember also the lament of the wicked in Hell: *We have walked through hard ways. We have wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity* (Wisdom v.).

STATION IV.

And rising up the same hour they went back to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven gathered together, and those that were with them, and they told what things were done in the way, and how they knew Him in the breaking of bread (vv. 33—35).

A. *And rising up the same hour.*

How is it, some one might ask, that they did not kneel down and make a thanksgiving after Holy Communion?

Doubtless a fervent thanksgiving at such a moment is a sacred duty. But, surely, if they were well prepared for receiving the Blessed Eucharist while walking, so may they also make a good thanksgiving while travelling hastily to do a great act of charity.

Our Lady, we read, after St. Gabriel's departure, when *the Word was made Flesh*, went away with haste to the mountains on an errand of charity. We may be well sure that on the road the Lord was with her; and she was making a perfect thanksgiving. Would that we could make kneeling as fervent acts as the loving servants of our Lord make while walking or working!

The two disciples have good reason to feel tired; rest would naturally be very agreeable to them. To set out when the day is far spent on a walk of sixteen or twenty miles (if St. Jerome is correct) in order to console the mourning Apostles and disciples with the glad news, is a very good act of mercy; and when did our Divine Master ever complain of those who make thanksgiving to Him by showing mercy to His little ones? If you love Me, *feed My sheep; feed My lambs*. We may add that the fire that was burning in their hearts on the road to Emmaus is there still. Our Lord is not, indeed, visibly present to

them now, but He has united His Sacred Body and His Blood with them.

SCENE XXXI.

THE CENACULUM ON MOUNT SION.

STATION I.

Now when it was late that same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them: Peace be to you (St. John xx. 19).

A. *That same day, the first of the week*, and, we may add, the first of the "new created world". *The day pre-eminently which the Lord hath made* (Psalm cxvii.). *Let us be glad and rejoice therein*, the inspired Psalmist writes: *Let us be glad and rejoice therein*, Holy Church gladly echoes.

"*Attendite.*" Do not hurry away; we must give ourselves leisure to find gladness in the remembrance of all that this day is to us; our Easter day; our Resurrection day; the birthday of our fallen race; the first day of our heavenly life; the dawning of the bright eternal day which, if we are true to ourselves, shall never have a sunset; shall never change into night; shall never be robbed of its heavenly glory.

B. *The disciples were gathered together.*

Contemplate the Apostles, the disciples, the devout women gathered together with the doors closed; some whispering to each other; some still *mourning and weeping* (St. Mark); some much terrified by the rumours they had heard that the Pharisees have already imprisoned Joseph, and will wreak their vengeance on all who took part in the burial of Jesus. Others, again, are filled with ineffable consolation because He is risen and they have seen Him.

Our Lady is, perhaps, in an inner chamber, alone, or with John and Magdalen. They are saying little with their lips, but *speaking to themselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles; singing and making melody in their hearts to our Lord, and giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God and the Father* (Ephes. v.).

C. *Jesus came and stood in the midst.*

Led by the Holy Spirit, our Lady joins the rest in the Coenaculum; and on a sudden, while they are all turning their eyes to her, the *blessed among women*, gently and noiselessly and with *great tranquillity*, Jesus enters through the closed doors and stands in the midst of them, and says: *Peace be to you.*

St. Ignatius teaches us that when He speaks to His friends, His words are like water dropping into a sponge. When He speaks to His enemies, *men shall wither away for fear.*

Is thy coming peaceable? the Ancients of Bethlehem said to Samuel, when in their surprise they saw him arriving. *It is peaceable* (1 Kings xvi.), he answered.

Is Thy coming peaceable, Lord Jesus? Yes! most peaceable. He keeps no remembrance at all of their want of faithful courage. All these things He has cast behind His back. His Heart is full to overflowing of that thought which was there during the Last Supper: *I have called you friends* (St. John xv.). *You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations* (St. Luke xxii.). He knows well how the father of lies is ever troubling the souls of His disciples by whispering this lie, that their falls are all kept in remembrance and not forgotten, and therefore He makes haste at once to confound the malice of Satan by uttering the word of greeting: *Peace be to you.*

How unspeakably consoled the Heart of our Lord is when we allow Him to speak this word to our hearts: *Peace be to you.* The enemy of God and man has filled our souls with calumnies against our God, so that mistrust of Him has become deep-seated and ingrained. Our Saviour

tries to expostulate with us, and says: *My people, what have I done to you? In what have I been troublesome to you? Why did you doubt (Me)? Why are you afraid? for I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord. Thoughts of peace, and not of affliction; and you shall pray to Me, and I will hear you* (Jerem. xxix.).

But oftentimes we are so besotted that we will not believe that our own God, our own Father, Who has given to our earthly parents and earthly friends only a little drop of the compassion and love He has for us, has Himself any love and pity for us. *This madness*, He complains in His sorrow, *is according to the likeness of a serpent; like the deaf asp that stoppeth her ears, which will not hear the voice of the charmers nor of the wizard that charmeth wisely* (Psalm lvii.).

D. *Peace be to you.*

Not only in Paschal-time, but in all seasons of the year, we so far imitate our Lord as to greet our neighbours when we meet them with a peaceful word: "Good-morning," "good-evening". And again, when we leave them: "Good-bye," "good-night," "farewell". This universal custom is no doubt one of the effects produced by our Lord's Gospel of peace and charity. It is a good Christian practice.

But it is to be feared, that too often we are only creatures of habit when we say these melodious words: "Good-morning," "good-evening," "farewell". For we are prone to adopt blindly any prevailing fashion. Hence, in Holy Scripture we are compared to sheep who follow, without reasoning, the bell-wether.

We who will not listen to our Blessed Saviour's voice when He is *charming us so wisely*, are at times quite willing to set up a man as our idol; to worship him; to do his bidding; and follow his lead even to the everlasting charnel-house.

What wonder masters who understand spiritual life warn, with such intense earnestness, even cloistered

Religious to arm their souls daily against the fatal weakness of human respect!

Great philosophers, great painters, great musicians, great conquerors, have sometimes had a large following. But who has had so many followers and imitators as that most weak and foolish man, Pontius Pilate? He, though Jesus Himself was there answering his difficulties and teaching him, deliberately chose to become one of the senseless sheep, and, with the Jewish rabble, to follow the lead of Annas and Caiphas.

We, then, are often only following a fashion when we say, "Good-morning," or "Farewell!" Nay, sometimes when after an angry altercation we say "Good-bye," and slam the door, our hearts are far enough from what our lips are saying.

E. *He said, Peace be to you.*

So shall My word be which shall go forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but shall do whatsoever I please, and shall prosper in the things for which I sent it (Isaias lv.).

"Attendite." We must not hurry on. It is worth our while to consider in (our) hearts how our Lord's words do what He pleases, and prosper.

Why so? (1) Because, if we may say it, they are premeditated with an everlasting care.

(2) By His prayers and tears and labours and bitter Passion, He has earned for His words that they shall be efficacious and shall prosper.

We sometimes think that when He heals the sick or forgives the sinner, His works of mercy cost Him little, as when a very rich man gives a small alms. We forget that our Saviour has paid a great price for every grace He gives to us. A poor mother sometimes watches and works all night to be able to give to her heartless son the money he clamours for. So, too, our Blessed Lord earned with the sweat of His brow, and the Blood of His Body, the mercies that He lavishes on us.

"Attendite et videte." Let us stay long looking at this

Model. For we are madly prone to pour out words (1) without premeditation; (2) without taking any trouble to earn by prayer and penance a blessing on them, that they may do what we wish and prosper in the things for which we send them.

We utter, impromptu, rash opinions on all subjects. We give advice to all comers; nay, we intrude advice that has never been asked for. To children and servants, and to the poor who are guilty of begging, or to an obstinate Protestant, we pour forth, like a torrent, a moral or controversial lecture; and when at length we are tired, or out of breath, we sit down to rest, soothed by the thought that we have given them a wholesome lesson which ought to keep them good for the rest of their lives.

Alas! *They know not*, our Lord is saying, *they know not what they do*. If the world could have been saved by unprepared discourses, My Death and My Mother's compassion were all superfluous.

First, then, we must try to fix in our minds that these unblessed and idle words are plentiful as the sands on the shore and far less useful. For God has put the sand there for a purpose; but it is not by God's appointment, nor according to His will, that these random words are being poured out.

Secondly, they are not only plentiful and cheap and worthless, but they are most mischievous. When one malicious tongue is speaking, it is spreading infection among many listeners. If the French *mitrailleuse*, that was to kill so many with one discharge, had done all that its inventor proposed, and if its firing could have been made perpetual, it would have fairly represented the tongue, *the restless evil*, the *world of iniquity*, as St. James calls it (c. iii.).

We know, too, how over-cheap food is often found to be tainted and unwholesome. No meat or fish is so cheap or so poisonous as the foolish words poured out by the tongue. Why, then, do we listen eagerly to cheap words,

which cost the speaker nothing, and can be of no use to us? We can by thought, by prayer, by penance, win efficacy for our words, so that they *shall prosper in the things for which we sent them.*

By such industry Apostolic men have won the graces which make their words reach the *division of the soul.*

And if before visiting a poor sick man, I by stinting myself, or by labour, get ready an alms for him, then when I say "God speed!" my word is not an idle word, it does what I wish.

If the long hours wasted in uttering idle words and listening to such were spent in preparing some useful words, how different would be the condition of the world! *With desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart.*

F. *Peace be to you.*

"*Attendite.*" Stay a little while and try to understand what manner of peace our Saviour gives. *My peace, He said at the Last Supper, I give to you. Not as the world giveth do I give unto you.*

Compare the peace which the world gives with the peace which the Lord gives. It is with peace as with health.

A doctor sometimes says to his patient, You must not ride, you must not walk, or run; you must not go out in the winter, nor in spring, nor in the early morning, nor at night, nor in the late evening. You must not eat any solid food, and you must not drink wine. You must not talk much nor attend to business, nor study. You must have no worries, you must spend the winter in Egypt, and the summer on the top of the Alps.

If you do all this you will keep your health.

So it is with the peace which the world gives.

If you are tolerably rich, if you are in good health, if your wife is all devotion, if none of your children are troublesome, if all your servants are faithful, if your rents are duly paid, if no robbers steal your plate, if your

steward is not dishonest, if your neighbour brings no lawsuit, if no rival is outshining you, if the Prince invites you, if no Mardochai refuses to salute you, if your appetite keep good by day, and you can sleep soundly at night, if the weather is not too hot or too cold, if the east wind is not blowing, and above all if you are guaranteed against cholera, influenza, small-pox, and cancer; then perhaps you can have peace till a disturbing cause comes.

Here, then, is what the world can do. If it can keep you from the winds of heaven, and the rain and the weather and all the disturbing causes which surround you on every side, your most fragile and rickety peace may from time to time subsist for a little while. But frail and feeble and unreliable as it is, you must part with it entirely when your clock strikes for the last time, and the hand points to your allotted hour, and the undertaker comes in, so obsequious and obliging, to hurry your remains quickly and decently out of sight.

This is not the peace which our Lord calls, *My peace.* His peace is like a strong robust health of the soul, which does not require to be sheltered every moment from change of wind and weather. The moth cannot consume it. The thief cannot steal it. If there are a thousand Mardochais who will not take off their hats, it is not shaken. Envy and jealousy cannot gnaw it away; time does not damage it; ingratitude, unkindness, angry words, detraction and slander cannot destroy it. Even the mighty hand of death cannot reach it. Through the winter and the summer, the autumn and the springtime of this world, it survives. Through the heat of the day and the darkness of night, in health and in sickness, through honour and dishonour, in abundance and in poverty, it lives on like an evergreen of Heaven. And when death wrenches soul from body, and the poor cherished flesh is given over to the worms, the peace of Christ passes with the blessed soul into a better world, there to be eternal and unchangeable for ever.

"Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, dona nobis pacem."

STATION II.

But they being troubled and frightened, supposed that they saw a spirit. And He said to them: Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? See My hands and feet, that it is I Myself; handle, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have. And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and feet (St. Luke xxiv. 37—40).

A. *They being troubled and frightened.*

Therefore, our Blessed Lord's word, *Peace be to you*, has not yet produced its effect. What wonder that our words have not always an instantaneous effect? And yet we are sometimes surprised and displeased if our words are not attended to most promptly.

B. *They supposed that they saw a spirit.*

All things co-operate unto good for them that love God. Therefore still more all things work together to carry out the wish of our Lord. The doubts and incredulity of the Apostles all help our faith; their fears put great obstacles in the way of their believing; they think they see a spirit. If they had not thought this, others would afterwards have said that they did see nothing but a phantom.

C. *He said to them: Why are you troubled?*

We can see now that they had no reason to be troubled; but when we are ourselves in trouble, we cannot see how groundless our fears are.

D. *Why are you troubled?*

What answer can we make to our Lord if He puts this question to us?

I am troubled because my health is failing.

I am troubled because I am so poor.

I am troubled because my parents are unkind to me.

I am troubled because I find no comfort in prayer.

To these troubles our Saviour answers: *Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things (St. Matt. vi.).*

E. *Why do thoughts arise in your hearts?*

Let us try to answer this question: Why, during prayer, do distracting thoughts arise in our hearts?

One answer is: *Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also (St. Matt. vi.).* Masters of spirit tell us that we can find out our predominant passion by watching our favourite day-dreams

The great Macedonian conqueror in his day-dreams—

Fought all his battles o'er again,
And thrice he slew the slain.

The sensual in their day-dreams are occupied with dances and theatres.

A litigious man is full of controversy and law-suits.

F. *See My hands and feet, that it is I Myself.*

"O Lord Jesus! Grant us grace not to be afraid of Thee! Oftentimes we are full of fright if Thou say to us, *It is I*. How many dread to go to Thee in the Blessed Eucharist!

"Many dread to die because they must go to Thee at the Judgment-seat.

"O my Lord Jesus, grant us the great grace to be full of hope and joy when we hear Thee say: *See My hands and feet, that it is I Myself.*"

G. *See My hands and feet.*

"Some are recognised by their faces, some by their dress; you will know Me by My wounded Hands and Feet. I am the only one that was ever crucified for you."

H. *Handle and see.*

St. John writes in his First Epistle: *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, AND OUR HANDS HAVE HANDLED, of the Word of Life . . . we declare unto you (c. i.).*

From these words some holy writers conclude that when our Lord said, *Handle and see*, the Apostles took courage and did fall down and touch and kiss His Sacred Wounds.

Passion of Christ, strengthen us. Within Thy Sacred Wounds hide us.

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas
Cordi meo valide.

Do this for me, Mother blest,
Deeply imprint within my breast
The wounds of Jesus Crucified.

I. *For a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have.*

Commentators tell us that, when angels appear in human form, their bodies are only apparent, not real; but our Lord's Body is real. He has flesh and bones.

But His flesh and bones need not always be palpable; they can be so when He wishes, but if He so pleases, His Body, which is a Spiritual Body, will not be felt.

J. *He showed them His hands and feet.*

Observe what pains He is taking to allay their doubts and convince them that He is really risen. He well knows that on the fact of His Resurrection His Church is to be established, and that their incredulity, when once conquered, will be most useful evidence. *If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. If Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. But now Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep. For by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead* (1 Cor. xv.).

"I believe that He rose again on the third day, according to the Scriptures, and I believe in the resurrection of the dead."

STATION III.

But while they yet believed not and wondered for joy, He said: Have you here anything to eat? And they offered Him a piece of a broiled fish, and a honey-comb. And when He had eaten before them, taking the remains He gave to them (vv. 41—43).

A. *While they yet believed not and wondered for joy.*

Sometimes men believe not through fear; they see that if they believe, they will be obliged to make sacrifices. Therefore they are unwilling to believe.

But these disciples are hindered from believing through excessive joy; it seems too good to be true that their Master is with them again. It is well to observe that we often are slow to believe, because God's words seem too good to be true. It is hard to believe with a vivid faith, that our Blessed Saviour will really accept as done to Himself the little kindness we do to a poor man. It is hard to believe firmly when He assures us that He loves us, and has loved us with an *everlasting love* (Jerem. xxxi.). It is hard to believe, with a strong and lively faith, that He truly gives us His Sacred Body and His Blood.

St. Elizabeth said to our Lady: *Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord* (St. Luke i.).

Till we believe the promises of Christ He is unable to accomplish them in us.

When the disconsolate father begged Him to drive out the wicked spirit from his son, *Jesus saith to him: If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth* (St. Mark ix.).

We must, with that afflicted father, earnestly answer: *I believe, Lord; help my unbelief.*

B. *Have you here anything to eat?*

Commentators ask, Did our Lord really eat?

They answer: (1) A glorified body does not require food: it would be an imperfection if it did; but

(2) A glorified body can taste food and relish it: it would be an imperfection if it could not.

Our Lord has bones and teeth, and therefore really eats; but the commentators teach that the food does not remain in His Body, but vanishes and is consumed in some miraculous way.

C. *They offered Him a piece of a broiled fish and a honey-comb.*

We may observe the poverty and simplicity of this repast. The Resurrection of our Lord will bring them great joy and a *peace which this world cannot give*, but not much of that bodily comfort and luxury which the world offers.

D. *When He had eaten before them, taking the remains He gave to them.*

And, no doubt, He presses them to take refreshment, and sits with them at the table while they do so. He is labouring gently to bridge over that wide gulf of separation which has been set between Him and them by His Death. From this example we see what our Lord's work as Mediator is. He very quickly can arrange matters with His Father and move Him to forgive; but then He has to turn to us and deal with each of us, and gradually overcome, with much patience and skill, our fears, our repugnances, and all our passions.

E. *When He had eaten before them.*

Holy writers remind us to notice the intense consolation of our Lady when she sits beside Him at this humble banquet, and observes with what meek charity He allays the fears of His weak disciples, and draws them all to Himself.

"O Blessed Mother, turn thine eyes of mercy towards us, and show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

Fac cor amans Jesu mei,
Fac ut nos amemus Te.

O burning Heart, O Jesu mine,
Oh, make us love with love like Thine.

STATION IV.

And He said to them: These are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you: That all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures (vv. 44—45).

A. *He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures.*

Observe how the Scriptures are like a sealed book till they are rightly understood. Of what use is a will, signed and sealed though it be, till the true sense is determined by a competent tribunal? The Sacred Scriptures would not be to us a treasure, if we had not the light of faith and the infallible Apostolic voice to teach us their true sense.

B. *He opened to them the Scriptures.*

Prayer becomes very easy and very delightful if our Blessed Lord in His mercy speaks to us and opens the Scriptures to us.

Till He thus speaks and gives us what St. Ignatius calls an intimate sense of the meaning of His words we have nothing but the letter written with ink. St. Paul writes: *The letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth* (2 Cor. iii.).

STATION V.

He said therefore to them again: Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you. When He had said this, He breathed on them; and He said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain they are retained (St. John xx. 21—23).

A. *He said again: Peace be to you.*

He is thinking now not merely of the disciples present in the Cenaculum. He remembers the promise: *If He*

shall lay down His life for sin, He shall see a long-lived seed (Isaia's liii.); and the promise concerning His Blessed Mother: *After her shall virgins be brought to the King, her neighbours shall be brought to thee* (Psalm xlv.); and the prophetic description of His Holy Church: *The Gentiles shall walk in Thy light; and Kings in the brightness of Thy rising* (Isaia's lx.). Therefore He is saying: *Peace to you all*, to those at table with Him, and to all who shall hereafter believe through them: and therefore immediately makes provision that His peace shall reach all in ages to come.

B. *As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you.*

Mardochai said to Queen Esther: *Think not that thou mayest save thy life only* (Esther iv.). We are none of us called merely to save our own souls; nay, we shall not save our own souls unless we love our neighbours as ourselves, and help to win salvation for them also. The Apostles have all this Easter joy not for themselves only: *As the Father hath sent Me, I send you. I go to the Father*, but I send you in My place. *When the Paraclete cometh, the Spirit of Truth, He shall give testimony of Me, and you shall give testimony because you are with Me from the beginning* (St. John xv.).

C. *As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you.*

"Shall we then, dear Lord, be obliged to listen to your Apostles, as if we were listening to you?"

"Yes," He answers, "for I have said to them: *He that heareth you, heareth Me; he that despiseth you, despiseth Me*" (St. Luke x.).

"Suffer me to speak again, my Lord. What if your Apostles become wicked? Must I still believe in them?"

"Yes," He answers, "for I guarantee their teaching, whether their private life be good or bad. *The Scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses; all things therefore whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do: but according to their works do ye not*" (St. Matt. xxiii.).

"Once more, my Lord, suffer me to speak *whereas I am dust and ashes* (Genesis xviii.). When your Apostles die, whom shall I then believe?"

"Never shall their office die," our Lord answers, "I have died for *all men* and wish *all to come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Timothy ii.). Therefore I am with My Church *all days, even to the consummation of the world.*"

D. *When He had said this, He breathed on them, and He said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost.*

By breathing on them and saying: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*, He teaches us that the Holy Spirit proceeds from Him as well as from the Father.

Veni Creator Spiritus. Veni Sancte Spiritus.

E. *Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained.*

In this hour He gives to them the second great power of the priesthood. At the Last Supper He had already given to them the marvellous power given only to His priests: "*Solis presbyteris*": the power of consecrating and offering up the Everlasting Sacrifice. A few days later, He will add the third power: *Go and preach the Gospel to every creature.*

F. *Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them.*

"Now indeed," the Blessed Mother's heart responds, "*according to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul* (Psalm xciii.). *My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For according to the multitude of (His) tender mercies He hath made redemption plentiful. The sinner need not die, for to sinners who have a fellow-feeling for him, because they are themselves sinners, my Son hath said: Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven.*"

"*Juravit Dominus et non pœnitebit eum*"—*The Lord hath sworn and He will not repent* (Psalm cix.). *All you that thirst come to the waters, and you that have no money make haste, buy and eat: come ye, buy wine and milk, without money and without any price* (Isaia's lv.).

G. *Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven.*

We may contemplate the blessed angels watching in wonder and delight this scene in the Supper-room, the

boundless charity of our Lord's Heart, and the wonderful joy and contentment of the Blessed Mother's heart that the poor sinner, the *child of (her) pain* is not to die, but to be forgiven. "*What have we in Heaven better than our King and our Queen? The earth is no longer the valley of tears; but the dwelling-place of God: the gate and outer court of Heaven*" (Genesis xxviii.).

St. Bonaventure, with his usual piety, sets before us this scene in the Cœnaculum in these words:

"Behold how full all these things are of joy and gladness: *The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord.* They who before were affrighted, now rejoice in His presence. Oh! with what delight did they set meat before Him, that He might eat! How diligently did they serve Him! How gladly did they stand around Him!

"Contemplate also how our Lady is there likewise, for the disciples had gathered themselves unto her. See, then, with what unspeakable gladness she beholdeth these things, and sitteth familiarly beside her Son, and ministereth to Him with joy according as He hath need. And with great content doth the Lord Jesus receive service from her hands, and most reverently showeth her honour before the disciples.

"Neither shalt thou, in thy contemplation, forget Magdalen, the Beloved Disciple, the Apostle of the Apostles. See, how after her wonted fashion, she sitteth at her Master's feet, and eagerly listeneth to His words, and if in aught she may, doth most joyfully and most heartily minister unto Him. Oh! what has this poor little house now become, and how blessed a thing it were to dwell therein!

"And, if thou hast in thee any little share of devotion, doth this not seem to thee to be a great Pasch? I think it must.

"But the Lord doth tarry but a short time with them, for it is now late. And perchance they constrained Him to stay a little longer, begging Him not so quickly to

withdraw Himself from them. Dost thou not think that Magdalen, seated at His feet, would with trust and reverent boldness lay hold of the hem of His garment that He might not leave them? (For He was clad in vesture exceeding white, the raiment of His glory.) She held Him thus, not from presumption, but out of confidence; neither did one so loving and so loved displease the Lord. For the Lord, as He showed in the case of the disciples going to Emmaus, desireth to be held. At length, having done reverence to His Mother, and obtained her leave to go, He gave His blessing unto all, and departed from them. But they falling on their face before Him besought Him that He would return right speedily. For they were a-hungred and a-thirst for the Lord of Whose presence they were wont to have such plenty, and full often did they call Him back with sighings and desires."

SCENE XXXII.

THE CŒNACULUM. ST. THOMAS.

We have come to the close of the first Easter Sunday, the day of Resurrection. Sin and death are conquered; sin on Good Friday, death to-day.

This is the day the Lord hath made, Holy Church says to us, *let us be glad and rejoice therein.* Surely if any time on earth is to be a time of joy and peace, it is this new Paschal-tide.

Yet now, as always on this earth, *mourning taketh hold of the end of joy* (Prov. xiv.). One disturbing thought that mingles with the gladness is fear of the Jews. *Their doors are shut (barred) for fear of the Jews.*

Another trouble comes upon them when Thomas returns. *For Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came* (St. John xx.).

Some of the early Fathers think that he had not yet recovered from the great panic, or returned from his hiding-place to the Cœnaculum. Others contend that he must have been there in the morning when the women brought the news from the Sepulchre, because St. Luke writes, *they told all these things to the eleven.* This argument, however, does not appear conclusive to some of the best commentators, as the words, "the twelve," "the eleven," had by this time become generic names, like "the family," "the regiment". If one visits a family, it does not

necessarily follow that every one of the family is present when he comes. If a regiment is said to have won a battle, we cannot conclude that all the men of the regiment took part in the action. A considerable part stands for the whole.

What is certain is, that *Thomas was not with them when Jesus came*. But now he is returned.

STATION I.

The other disciples said to him: We have seen the Lord.

But he said to them: Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe (St. John xx. 25).

A. I will not believe.

It is asked: "What sin did St. Thomas commit by his refusal to believe?" Some of the early Fathers excuse him from all sin. They say that his love was very strong, and that his words are only an expression of his bitter disappointment because he had not seen the Lord. Others think that there was some sin, but not a grievous sin against faith; because he was not denying a dogma fully promulgated. He was merely asserting that he would not give his adhesion till more sure of the evidence.

How did St. Thomas come to think, it is asked, that the wounds would be preserved in His glorified Body? Probably the other Apostles had told him that they had seen and touched them.

B. I will not believe.

For a whole week Thomas remains in this disposition; and consequently a cloud hangs over the Paschal gladness of the others. So must it ever be. When things go well with us, we have always near us on earth, and also in Purgatory, brethren whose need is sore and whose sorrows we must share.

C. I will not believe.

How well for Thomas that he has so many friends to intercede for him. If a young prodigal goes astray, yet if

he have good parents, like St. Monica, or many pious friends praying for him, there is always great hope. "The child of many tears will not be lost."

D. I will not believe.

But the loving and grateful Heart of Jesus, and the compassionate heart of Holy Mary, are thinking much more of his past fidelity and generous love than of his present resistance to graces. Happy those who by many works of charity and mercy deserve, as Peter did, to find mercy, even when they fall. They will not be cast off with Judas the unmerciful.

SCENE XXXIII.

THE CŒNACULUM. THE OCTAVE DAY.

STATION I.

And after eight days, again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be to you.

Then He saith to Thomas: Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing.

Thomas answered and said to Him: My Lord and My God. Jesus saith to him; Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed (St. John xx.).

A. After eight days, again Jesus cometh, the doors being shut.

Is this apparition in Galilee, or in Jerusalem? The common opinion is that of St. Jerome, that the Apostles are still in Jerusalem, in the Cœnaculum. Possibly our Lord delayed their journey to Galilee till their prayers had obtained grace for St. Thomas.

B. After eight days.

Therefore this is on the octave day of the Resurrection. Some commentators suggest that already the Apostles

had been taught to keep the Sunday holy. St. Thomas has learned by his experience to keep close to the rest.

C. *Jesus stood in the midst, and said, Peace be to you.*

May we not try to form a habit of saying continually in our heart to all with whom we deal, *Peace be to you*. They who understand St. Ignatius' method of the Particular Examen, have helped themselves with it to form this habit of continual almsgiving to all persons with whom they have intercourse.

D. *Then He saith to Thomas : Put in thy finger hither.*

When He now says, *Peace be to you*, Thomas is included in the fervent wish of His Heart ; He has come specially to bring peace to Thomas. Contrast His meekness and compassion with the way in which men sometimes treat a servant that is refractory, and stands out against them. Their wisdom says, "It would be madness to give in to him". But mothers are very patient and indulgent with a perverse child, and our Lord's love goes infinitely beyond the love of a mother, *Even if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee* (Isaias xlix.).

E. *Put in thy finger hither.*

Our Saviour doubtless requires St. Thomas to do His bidding now. We may therefore contemplate the Apostle, filled with astonishment and a most humble gratitude, putting his finger into *the place of* (all) *the nails*, and looking, as his tears fall fast, upon the sacred wounds, and then putting his hand, too, into the sacred side.

"Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Within Thy wounds hide me."

F. *Put in thy finger hither.*

Contemplate our Blessed Lady ; all the gratitude of her motherly heart for the mercy shown to her wayward son, *the son of my pain—for I know that Thou art a gracious and merciful God, patient, and of much compassion, and easy to forgive evil* (Jonas iv.). *My soul melted when He spoke* (Cant. v.).

We may contemplate also the joy of the other Apostles,

and of Magdalen and of the rest, because Thomas is now again entirely one of them.

By this shall men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another (St. John xiii.).

G. *Be not faithless, but believing.*

With these words a grace goes into the heart of the Apostle. The word of his Master, like *the two-edged sword*, reaches the division of (his) soul. "Speak, O Lord, also to my heart." *Be not Thou silent to me, lest if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit* (Psalm xxvii.).

H. *Thomas answered and said to Him : My Lord and my God.*

Contemplate the faith, the humility, the contrition, the gratitude, and the love of St. Thomas, when he utters these words. Beyond the Jordan he said, when Jesus was going to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead : *Let us also go, that we may die with Him*. From this hour till his martyrdom his heart will swerve no more from this loving thought.

"Blessed Apostle, pray for us that we may, as so many servants of our Lord have done, grow fond of thy short prayer : *My Lord and my God.*"

I. *Jesus saith to him : Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed.*

Thomas has acted much in the same way as most of the other Apostles. We are not sure that any one of them believed till he had seen. Our Lord would have been more content if they had accepted the Resurrection on the testimony of His Holy Mother and Magdalen, and others. This would have been more humble. Still the charity and wisdom of the Divine Master draws good for us out of the incredulity of His Apostles. St. Gregory the Great writes : "We are more helped to faith by St. Thomas' incredulity than by Magdalen's prompt belief". Had the Apostles made less difficulty in accepting the fact of the Resurrection, sceptics in after ages would have scoffed more at their pious credulity.

J. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed.* "Attendite." Oh, stay to consider this word, so entirely favourable to us. We are the blessed ones who have not seen, and can believe. Each of us can be *the just man that liveth by faith*. We often say: "I do not feel contrition, I do not feel fervour when receiving Holy Communion". A holy priest, in the days of persecution, thought it useful to write a book to explain to the faithful the difference between faith and feeling. Faith can be very strong without either seeing or feeling.

After this apparition, we may assume, the Apostles and disciples start on their way for Galilee. The news has gone abroad that the Lord is to appear to them there, so that all who can possibly leave Jerusalem bend their steps towards the loved places near the lake.

We may doubtless assume that the Blessed Mother goes with them, seated, perhaps, once more on the ass.

Besides the Apostles, therefore, and the devout women, whom we have been contemplating, we may be sure that Lazarus and Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, now miraculously delivered from prison, and Zacheus and Bartimeus, cured of blindness, are joining this pilgrimage to Galilee. Veronica also, and Martha and Joanna and Susanna, and many more whose names we know not, are on their way.

It was the custom, we are told, for men to travel together in one party, and women in another.

Their journey lies due north, over a succession of hills. The continual ascent and descent adds to the fatigue of the journey. As we travel now-a-days, we can form little idea of the hardship of these long journeys on foot over bad roads, and with no comfortable inns to give shelter. If the rain chance to be falling, travellers are stopped in the valleys by swollen torrents, and have to wait for some

days till they can cross them. At this Easter-time, however, it is probable that the rain is not falling. We may be sure that the presence of our Lady greatly lightens the burden of the journey. She is now the glad Mother of many children, and from time to time on the road she is gladdening and warming the hearts of the disciples by giving them details of the early life of their Master.

We must not fail to notice the poverty of this journey, how simple and scanty their meals are, how poor their beds at night.

On their way to the north, they pass through many places that awaken recollections full of emotion. Here is the town of Ephrem, where Jesus lay hid with some of them after the raising of Lazarus. After journeying another day, they possibly rest at Sichar, where He sat by the well. Journeying on further, they arrive in great gladness at Nazareth. We can imagine with what feelings they visit every corner of the Holy House, and the Grotto of the Annunciation, and the workshop of St. Joseph, at a little distance. It is quite possible that St. Luke is one of this holy company. Some commentators argue from his words, in the beginning of his Gospel, that he never saw our Lord in the flesh, but his words (c. i. 2) only prove that he had not been an eye-witness from the beginning. As he narrates so many things concerning the Annunciation, and the early mysteries of our Lord's Life, we may assume that our Blessed Lady taught him much that he has written, and it is quite probable that she points out to him on this occasion the spot on which St. Gabriel stood, and the spot on which she received his message. According to tradition, the Archangel was in the grotto when he delivered his message, our Lady in the Holy House. We have seen in a former chapter, that this grotto joined on to the house like an inner room.

From Nazareth, their journey lies through Cana of Galilee, and it is quite possible that the bride and bridegroom of the happy wedding are there to point out where

our Saviour sat at the feast, and where the Blessed Mother pleaded for them.

Bending now to the north-east, they pass by what is still called the Mount of the Beatitudes, the spot where our Lord opened His mouth and said: *Blessed are the poor in spirit; Blessed are the meek.* With what persuasive earnestness our Blessed Lady speaks to them of her Divine Son, and reminds them of His holy words.

Journeying on a little further, they come to the brow of the hill from which they look down on the beautiful Lake of Genesareth. When they arrive on the shore of the lake, they are about one hundred miles distant from Jerusalem.

The lake, or sea, as it is sometimes called, is about sixteen miles in length from north to south. On the western shore, the land is tolerably level. On the opposite shore there are high hills. The town of Tiberias, so called by the Herods to flatter Rome, lay to the south-west of the lake, and was perhaps the most important town on the shore. But the towns and villages with which the Apostles are more familiar lie at the northern extremity. From the Gospel context we gather that thither the pilgrims direct their steps.

Here at the top of the lake is Capharnaum; a little to the west Bethsaida;¹ at a short distance south from Bethsaida, under the shelter of a little hill, lies Magdala, the birthplace of Magdalen, and where she probably had considerable possessions.

Doubtless they find here a suitable resting-place for our Blessed Lady; and then, as they are not rich, the fishermen are obliged to have recourse to their old trade to procure maintenance for some of the pilgrims.

¹ There seems to have been another town or village called Bethsaida, on the east side of the lake. Philip the Tetrarch enlarged it, and gave it a Roman name, Julias.

SCENE XXXIV.

THE LAKE OF TIBERIAS AT THE NORTH.

STATION I.

There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas who is called Didymus, and Nathaniel who was of Cana of Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples. Simon Peter saith to them: I go a fishing. They say to him: We also come with thee. And they went forth and entered into the ship: and that night they caught nothing (St. John xxi. 2, 3).

A. Simon Peter saith to them: I go a fishing.

Some pious persons, when full of consolation on a great festival, might think it hard if obliged suddenly to undertake a long and wearisome journey and then spend the night in fishing. All this labour and drudgery seems to them out of keeping with their devout emotions and their foretaste of Heaven. But according to our Lord's plan, the best spiritual consolations most frequently come as a solace to hard labour.

B. I go a fishing.

Commentators observe that the fishermen go back to their trade after the Resurrection, but St. Matthew, the Publican, does not. One calling is innocent, and the labour is salutary; the tax-gatherer's work is too often an occasion of sin.

C. We also come with thee.

The Apostles are now, since the Death of our Lord, much changed. They are full of humility and charity. Prouder men might say to St. Peter: "We will not follow thee who denied the Lord".

D. I go a fishing. We also come with thee.

"Attendite." Let us stay here to learn from this model to be very obliging and accommodating when we can be so.

E. And they went forth and entered into the ship.

Our Lady doubtless wishes them God speed! The others are gathered on the shore to see them start. The lake is lying still in the moonlight; and our Blessed Lady perchance reminds them how their Master used to tell them that it is a picture of His future Church. It has not always been, they remember, as calm as it is now; they have had to face the storm in their boat: *And what is it that hath been? the same thing that shall be* (Eccles. i.). They will have to face worse storms in the future.

F. *That night they caught nothing.*

Yet they are all dear to our Lord. At the Supper He said to them: *You are clean, but not all.* Now, there is no traitor. Why then is not their work more prosperous? Some, who have been great sinners, as soon as they have been to confession and are absolved, have been heard to complain: "Now that I am trying to serve God, why is not my trade blessed? Why am I left out of work?" Some converts, also, after being reconciled with the Holy Church, have murmured because Catholics do not immediately deal with them. The answer is, *Sursum corda*—"Lift up your hearts!" "*Æmulamini charismata meliora*"—*Be zealous for the better gifts* (1 Cor. xii.). *Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall in good time be added unto you.*

Your sins have been absolved indeed, but may you not still have to pass through a Purgatory?

G. *That night they caught nothing.*

It is handed down to us from early times that between midnight and the morning, at the cock-crow, St. Peter always rose from his hard bed to weep for his sin. "Alas! I said: *I know not the Man.*" We may be sure, then, that in the fishing-boat he does not forget his contrition. Perchance he humbly thinks that he, the sinner, hinders the blessing of Heaven from coming down on the work of his holy companions.

"Holy Apostle, pray for us poor sinners, that we may have a lifelong contrition for our many sins."

STATION II.

But when the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore said to them: Children, have you any meat? They answered Him: No. He saith to them: Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find. They cast therefore; and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes (vv. 4—6).

A. *When the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore.*

The holy servant of Christ says: *Till the day break, and the shadows retire, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense* (Cant. iv.), that is to say, till the day of eternity dawns, and the dark shadows of this world retire, the home of my heart shall be on Calvary, *the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense.* If life is spent in this way, we can see on the Lake of Genesareth a picture of what will happen to us in the end. When we shall have passed through the storms of life, lo! Jesus is waiting for us on the shore of eternity.

B. *The disciples knew not that it was Jesus.*

"*Attendite.*" Stay long considering this word. For a thousand and a thousand times the same shall happen to us through life; Jesus will stand near us in the person of His delegates—as a poor man He will beg from us; as a Superior He will command us; by His Vicar He will teach us; as a neighbour He will live with us—and whatever we do to them we do to Him. As our Hidden God also He will ever be near us in the Most Holy Eucharist.

Alas! in our Purgatory how deep our contrition will be that we did not know it was Jesus. "I ought to have believed it, but did not."

C. *He said to them: Children, have you any meat? They answered Him: No.*

As we have often seen already, He must hear our wants from our own lips; He puts aside all His infinite knowledge, as if He had it not, and listens to us.

As His *delights are to be with the children of men*, in order to keep us near Him He makes this binding rule, that we must tell our own wants, and perseveringly tell them. Ask, seek, knock.

D. *He saith to them: Cast the net on the right side of the ship and you shall find. They cast therefore.*

A wise man of this world might toss his head and say: "Who are you that teach me? Why should I cast my net on the right side?" How many of the so-called strong-minded say: "Why am I to confess to a priest?" "Why am I to wash in the Jordan?" "Why am I to believe in a Pope?" The disciples on the lake are now happily in a more humble frame of mind. For it would have been an evil hour for them if they had proudly rejected the advice of Jesus in His disguise.

Let us bear in mind that the Vicar of Christ, when he teaches, is also, we may say, Jesus disguised. The priest, when he absolves, is, we may say, Jesus disguised, for surely no man of his own power can forgive sins.

E. *They cast, therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.*

Who is like the Lord our God? (Psalm cxii.) for all things serve Thee (Psalm cxviii.). For all the beasts of the wood are Mine, the cattle on the hills and the oxen. I know all the fowls of the air (Psalm xlix.). The eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep. For all things were known to the Lord God before they were created. So also after they were perfected, He beholdeth all things (Ecclus. xxiii.). For wrath is in His indignation and life in His good-will. In the evening weeping shall have place, and in the morning, gladness (Psalm xxix.). Oh, how blessed, O Lord, is the man that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High (Psalm xc.), who always casts his net according to Thy word! Blessed is the man whose will is in the Law of the Lord: whatsoever he shall do shall prosper (Psalm i.). Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it (Psalm cxxvi.).

F. *They were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.*

Men would wonder at the greatness of this miracle; but when our Lord gives us good gifts of this kind, they are only forerunners, and sometimes types, of better things to come. When He created bread and wine for man, He saw that they were good, but He knew that they were only emblems of other gifts to come, heavenly and ineffable. So, too, the oil of the olive is good, but yet merely a type of that holy oil of grace which soothes the soul of man when the terrors of the Judgment are at hand. So now, the Lake of Genesareth is beautiful, but it is only a shadow of His beautiful Church. The catch of the fishermen is wonderful, but utterly insignificant when we think of what they are to do as fishers of men.

STATION III.

That disciple, therefore, whom Jesus loved, said to Peter: It is the Lord. Simon Peter, when he heard that it was the Lord, girt his coat about him (for he was naked), and cast himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the ship (for they were not far from the land, but as it were two hundred cubits) dragging the net with fishes (vv. 7, 8).

A. *That disciple whom Jesus loved.*

Why did Jesus love John specially? The holy Fathers tell us that it was on account of his innocence; he was Christ's virgin disciple. *Thou hast upheld me by reason of my innocence, and hast established me in Thy sight for ever. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from eternity to eternity; so be it! so be it! (Psalm xl.).*

Oh, how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory; for the memory thereof is immortal, because it is known both with God and men. When it is present they imitate it, and they desire it when it hath withdrawn itself, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts (Wisdom iv.).

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God (St. Matt. v.).

B. *That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter : It is the Lord.*

Therefore, there may be in the Church of God disciples whom Jesus loves more than His Vicar ; and who have graces given to them not given to His Vicar. The Pope will always be infallible in his teaching ; but some of his subjects may be higher in holiness than he is.

C. *Simon Peter, when he heard it was the Lord, cast himself into the sea, but the other disciples came in the ship.*

We may contemplate the exceptional ardour of St. Peter's love. Others can go slowly in the ship to Christ ; but he cannot bear the delay. He forgets, too, how once before terror came upon him when he cast himself into the sea. *Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it.*

Moreover, to swim is more difficult for him, as *he girt his coat about him (for he was naked, that is to say, he was partly undressed, and now put on his coat or tunic).*

STATION IV.

As soon as they came to land, they saw hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith to them : Bring hither of the fishes which you have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, one hundred and fifty-three. And although there were so many the net was not broken (vv. 9—11).

A. *They saw hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread.*

When a rich man comes home, his servants are expected to have his rooms comfortable for him ; so, too, a fond mother makes preparations for her son's return. See how our dear Lord is both servant and mother to His disciples. St. Paul the Hermit was deeply affected when St. Antony came to visit him, because the raven that

usually brought him half a loaf, on that day brought him a whole one. "How loving," he cried out, "is the Heart of our Lord to think so carefully of our wants." The three children in the furnace cry out in our hearing : *O every shower and dew, bless ye the Lord ! O all ye breezes of God, bless the Lord ! O ye cold and heat, bless the Lord.* "What are all these things but gifts from Thy hand, sweet Jesus ? *It is by Thy ordinance that the day goeth on.* Every time the fire warms me, and the heat refreshes me, Thou, my God, art the Servant Who brings to me the heat and the refreshment."

Our Father, hallowed be Thy name.

B. *Although they were so many the net was not broken.*

Men, overwise, sometimes think that the providence of God does its work forgetfully, as we do ; that when He gives the holy oil to the dying He forgets how nervous dying people may be. But we see here that when He gives the one hundred and fifty-three great fishes, He at the same time strengthens the net that it may not be broken.

STATION V.

Jesus saith to them : Come and dine. And none of them who were at meat durst ask Him : Who art Thou ? knowing that it was the Lord. And Jesus cometh and taketh bread and giveth them, and fish in like manner (vv. 12, 13).

A. *Jesus saith : Come and dine.*

And when we hear these words, we exclaim : *Oh, how good and sweet is Thy spirit, O Lord, in all things ! (Wisdom xii.).* But how much more sweet is the word He says to us : *I am the Bread of Life ; My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed. He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me (St. John vi.).*

"O Mother of God ! pray for us sinners, that we may not be among those who, when invited by thy Son to His Banquet, begin at once to make excuse."

B. *And none durst ask Him : Who art Thou ? knowing that it was the Lord.*

Why should they ask Him if they already know it is the Lord? These words show that there is knowledge and knowledge. There is a dim knowledge that does not content us.

“Grant us, O Lord, lively sentiments of faith, hope, and charity.”

Commentators discuss the question whether our Lord alters His features when the disciples do not recognise Him, as on the road to Emmaus, and when Magdalen thinks that He is a gardener, and now here, when the Apostles do not fully recognise Him. From St. Luke's words: *Their eyes were held*, they infer that the cause of their not knowing was in themselves, not from any alteration in Him.

C. *Jesus cometh and taketh bread and giveth them, and fish in like manner.*

Contemplate our most loving Saviour, the King of glory, and our own God, serving His servants; the great Creator waiting on His creatures. *Which is greater, He asked, 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* (St. Luke xxii.). Hear Him also saying to us all: *Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching. Amen, I say to you, He will gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister unto them* (St. Luke xii.).

STATION VI.

When therefore they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter : Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these ? He saith to Him : Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him : Feed My lambs. He saith to him again : Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me ? Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him : Feed My lambs. He said to him the third time : Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me ? Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, Lovest thou Me ? And he said to Him : Lord, Thou knowest all things ; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He said to him : Feed My sheep (vv. 15—17).

A. *Simon, lovest thou Me more than these ?*

There are two parts to this question: (1) *Lovest thou Me ?* (2) *More than these ?* Our Blessed Lord is preparing His Apostle for his high office by humbling him. He is reminding him of his presumptuous words: *Although all should be scandalised in Thee, yet not I. Oh ! it is good for me (O Lord) that Thou hast humbled me* (Psalm cxviii.). The contrite Apostle will never say again: *I love more than these*; but he will say once, twice, thrice, and a thousand times: *Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee.*

Alas! are we to rest contented till we too are able to say: *O Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee ?* Is it presumption in us to say: *Thou knowest, O Lord, that I love Thee ?* Presumption it cannot be; we surely are not aspiring too high; for the first and great commandment laid upon us is: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.*

B. *He saith to him : Feed My lambs.*

“*Attendite.*” Oh, stay here, to consider these words in our hearts. “If you love Me, if you are sure that you love Me, prove your love, not by staying at My feet, but go and feed My lambs.”

Our Blessed Saviour has told us the complaint that He

will make to some who profess love to Him: *The weak you have not strengthened; that which was sick you have not healed; that which was broken you have not bound up; and that which was driven away you have not brought again; neither have you sought that which was lost* (Ezech. xxxiv.).

These words are especially addressed to priests, but every Christian is to a certain extent a Christ, a Jesus, a Good Shepherd, to whom God hath given a commandment concerning his neighbour.

C. *Peter was grieved because He had said to him the third time: Lovest thou Me?*

Oh, what a holy grief! I can be grieved for the loss of goods, for the loss of health, for the loss of reputation; but alas! if by venial sins love for Christ has grown faint and feeble in my heart, I can laugh and still say: *What harm hath befallen me?* (Ecclus. v.).

D. *He said to him: Feed My lambs, feed My lambs, feed My sheep.*

The lambs are His little ones, the great body of the faithful; the sheep are the parents of the flock, priests and bishops, whom the faithful call by the name of "Father". In this hour, then, our Lord constitutes St. Peter the chief Shepherd of His entire flock, and His Vicar upon earth. When our Lady was exalted to the ineffable dignity of Mother of God, she was so rooted in humility that she could only call herself *the handmaid of the Lord*. Contrition, a loving contrition, is so crushing the heart of St. Peter, that the wonderful office entrusted to him does not elate him. *O Lord! my heart is not exalted: nor are my eyes lofty. If I was not humbly minded, but exalted my soul; as a child that is weaned is towards his mother, so reward in my soul* (Psalm cxxx.).

The wise of this world sometimes argue: "Simon Peter denied Christ, therefore he cannot be His Vicar". If he had not denied Christ and been forgiven, he might never have been humble enough for the sublime office. *It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me.*

STATION VII.

Amen, Amen, I say to thee: When thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not. And this He said, signifying by what death he should glorify God (vv. 18, 19).

A. *When thou shalt be older, another shall gird thee.*

The young, when they arrive at manhood, think it time that they have more liberty. Christ's saints become fonder of the yoke as they grow old.

B. *Another shall gird thee and lead thee.*

This is a prophecy that, in his old age, Peter will be bound and led out to be crucified. How the bitter and the sweet are mixed together in his chalice! And how the Passion of Christ has made all things new! Peter is to sit on the very highest throne in this world, and yet to die crucified. With his cross before him, though placed in honour, he shall not be turned giddy and cease to understand (Psalm xlviii.).

C. *This He said, signifying by what death he should glorify God.*

"Attendite." Oh, let us stay here to consider in our hearts. For a conviction has grown with our growth that every suffering is a curse and a chastisement. But here our Lord preaches to us all that He sends suffering and a cruel death to His chosen one, that by them he may glorify God. So long as I am unwilling to suffer, I practically say of my crucified Saviour, *I know not the Man*. His thoughts are not my thoughts; nay, *He is a censurer of my thoughts*, so that there cannot be close love between us.

STATION VIII.

When He had said this, He saith to him, Follow Me. Peter turning about, saw that disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also leaned on His breast at supper, and said: Lord, who is he that shall betray Thee? Him, therefore, when Peter had seen, he saith to Jesus: Lord, and what shall this mando? Jesus saith to him: So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou Me. This saying therefore went abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die. And Jesus did not say to him: He should not die; but, So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee? (vv. 19—23).

A. *When He had said this, He saith to him, Follow Me.*

Contemplate our Divine Lord, with care and diligence, giving private instructions to His future Vicar. Why do we fear to obey a man, when that man is specially instructed and enlightened by the Eternal Wisdom?

B. *Peter saith to Jesus: Lord, and what shall this man do?*

"Attendite." Oh, stay here to note how his contrite and humbled heart has become unselfish, and thinks of his companion. *What shall this man do?*

"*Fac Cor amans Jesu mei.* Sacred Heart of Jesus, grant us to love, to love Thee, and to love Thy brethren and our brethren for Thy sake."

C. *Jesus saith to him: So I will have him to remain till I come.*

Many interpretations of these words have been offered. One perhaps may be that Peter hearing that he was to die by martyrdom, wished to know what was to happen to John; and that our Lord answers that no violent death is to come to him. *So I will have him to remain till I come.* Or it may be that Peter hearing that he is to be shepherd over sheep and lambs wants to know what dignity there is for John, and that our Saviour answers: He is to have no other official position beyond what he has. He is the guardian of the Blessed Mother. He is priest, bishop,

apostle. He is to be Evangelist and Prophet; but not to have any higher position in the Church.

D. *What is it to thee? Follow thou Me.*

"Attendite." Oh, that these golden words may be imprinted on our souls! When men are telling us worldly news, or political struggles, of rich legacies, and the rest, our Saviour is whispering: *What is it to thee? Follow thou Me. One thing is necessary.*

E. *This saying went abroad that that disciple should not die. And Jesus did not say to him he should not die.*

It is worth our while to observe how easily words are changed as they pass from lip to lip. Hence careful rulers, both in domestic life and public life, have often made it a practice to send no verbal messages, but to write their commands and instructions.

St. Matthew writes: *The eleven disciples went into Galilee unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them, and seeing Him they adored* (c. xxviii.). St. Paul writes: *Then was He seen by more than five hundred brethren at once, of whom many remain until this present* (1 Cor. xv.). It is thought by commentators that this apparition to the five hundred took place on Mount Thabor. If so, we can understand St. Matthew's words, *They adored, but some doubted.* For those who doubted can scarcely have belonged to the eleven, who had all seen our Lord in Jerusalem.

While, then, the disciples are at the Lake of Genesareth, the news is spread abroad in Galilee—at Cana, and Nazareth, and Naim, and elsewhere—that all the followers of Jesus are to assemble on Thabor. Thabor is a beautiful mountain, not very high, but very steep, and well wooded. It lies about a day's journey to the south-west of the Lake of Tiberias. From the top of Thabor, the lake could be seen to the north-east: and on the southern side the town of Naim and the town of Endor and the large plain of

Esdraelon. Nazareth lies to the west of Thabor, at a distance of not more than six or seven miles. But, on account of the ranges of hills that lie between, a traveller requires two or three hours to accomplish the journey.

St. Mark writes : *At length He appeared to the eleven as they were at table, and He upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart, because they did not believe them who had seen Him after He was risen again* (c. xvi.). Commentators find great difficulty in determining when this apparition took place. They are not agreed. Perhaps a tradition still existing in Galilee may give a little light.

In a small chapel at Nazareth there stands a large block of stone about seven feet long, three feet in height, and three or four in width. This stone is still called the *Mensa Christi*, and the chapel is still called the Chapel of the *Mensa Christi*. The tradition is that Christ there dined with the eleven. This dinner may have taken place on the return from Tiberias to Jerusalem, after leaving Thabor. In this supposition the words : *He upbraided them with their incredulity*, would mean that our Lord there explained to them, that as He had foretold to them His Resurrection, and as they had seen Him raise Lazarus to life, they ought to have accepted with more docility the message of the angels that He was risen. As men will have to accept their testimony by faith, so ought they to have believed without seeing.

SCENE XXXV.

THE CENACULUM. ASCENSION DAY.

STATION I.

And eating together with them, He commanded that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father, which you have heard (saith He) by My mouth. For John indeed baptised with water, but you shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence (Acts i. 4, 5).

A. *He commanded that they should not depart from Jerusalem.*

Here, then, our Lord directs them to remain with His Blessed Mother in a Spiritual Retreat, preparing themselves for the coming of the Holy Ghost. She doubtless will teach them how to contemplate, and tell them many things which as yet they know not concerning her Son's Hidden Life. In compliance with His direction, *they were*, we read, *persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with His brethren* (Acts i.).

B. *Eating with them.*

"He wishes," St. Bonaventure writes, "before His departure, to dine with them, and this repast will be in after years a recollection full of love and joy." While, then, they are at table, in great gladness, during this last dinner with their Master, the Lord said to them : "It is time that I return to Him that sent Me, but do you remain in the city until you are clothed with strength from above. Afterwards you will preach the Gospel to every creature, baptising them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world (St. Matt. xxviii.). And these signs shall follow them that believe. In My Name they shall cast out devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take

up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands on the sick, and they shall recover (St. Mark xvi.).

We may contemplate the great gladness awakened in the hearts of all present by these affectionate words of our Lord; and above all, the wonderful motherly joy that abounds in the soul of Holy Mary when she hears all that her Divine Son has won for His Church by His Passion and Death.

C. Eating with them.

But in the midst of this great gladness her tears are falling, because she knows that this is the parting-day. "What shall I say," St. Bonaventure writes, "of His Mother who is at table by His side, and loves Him above all others so intensely? Do you not believe that when she hears Him speak of His departure, all her motherly love is awakened and set in motion, and that she leans her head upon her Son and rests upon His breast? For if John had this privilege at the Supper, much more may we assume it for her now. Sighing, then, and with many tears, she beseeches Him, saying; 'O my Son, if it be Thy will to leave us, take me with Thee. But, my Son and my God, not as I will, but as Thou!' Then our Lord consoles her, saying: 'I pray thee, My beloved Mother, do not grieve for My departure, since I go to the Father. But it is expedient that thou for a time still sojourn here, to strengthen those who believe in Me. Then will I come to thee and take thee to My glory.'"

SCENE XXXVI.

THE ROAD TO OLIVET. ASCENSION DAY.

STATION I.

And He led them out as far as Bethania (St. Luke xxiv. 50).

A. From these words it seems clear that our Blessed Saviour did not, as some writers think, disappear after this dinner in the Cenacle, and then reappear on Mount

Olivet; but, in order to show His affection, walked with them on this last journey.

How changed all is since the last time He went with them, on Holy Thursday night, down from the Cenacle to Mount Olivet.

Contemplate His tender affection in these last hours. *The goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared* (Titus iii.).

B. He led them out as far as Bethania.

He does not therefore take them by the direct and shortest path to the top of Mount Olivet, but He goes round the base to pay a last visit to the loved home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, and to the house of Simon the Leper, and ascends Mount Olivet on the eastern side.

St. Ignatius bids us mark how well our Lord understands how to cheer and comfort His disciples, even as one friend comforts another.

C. He led them out.

Emboldened by His wonderful condescension and kindness, and full of their happy thoughts, the Apostles begin once again to give expression to the notion concerning the Messiah which had so long taken possession of their minds. St. Ignatius of Loyola, in his admirable Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, warns us that even when God Himself visits our souls and speaks to us, we are very apt to mix some of our own imaginations with His inspirations; and if we do not afterwards, with the aid of some wise master, sift carefully and separate the wheat from the chaff, we may pass off as God's revelations conceptions of our own.

They therefore who were come together asked Him, saying: Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?

Here we have the delusion so widespread among the Jews that the Christ would drive out the Romans and restore the Jewish supremacy.

But He said to them: It is not for you to know the times

or moments which the Father hath put in His power. A golden sentence! Our Father in Heaven is Lord of all, and Father of all; we can safely leave ourselves and all things else in His care. If He keeps His secret, and will not let us know how long our present suffering is to last, or when we are to die, most reverently we must say: *Not as I will, my God, but as Thou. It is not for (us) to know the times and moments.*

D. *He led them forth.*

We see in this instance how our Lord combines all the tenderness of perfect charity with all the strength of perfect charity. True charity is not weak; does not ever sacrifice God's honour to human respect; knows how to *weep with those who weep* and to *rejoice with those who rejoice*, and to be all to all; but also can be strong as death when any one craves for indulgence not salutary.

E. *He led them forth to Bethania.*

We may contemplate the affection and gratitude awakened in the hearts of Magdalen and Martha and Lazarus and Simon the Leper, as they pass by the blessed home at Bethany, and by the grave of Lazarus, and how heartily the Blessed Mother takes part in their consolation.

F. *He led them forth.*

They pass on, mounting the steep side of Olivet, walking through Bethphage. Here the scene of our Lord's humble triumph on Palm Sunday is all brought back. *Fear not, daughter of Sion*, was the prophetic watchword on that day; *thy King cometh sitting on an ass's colt* (St. John xii.).

To-day the triumph will not be poor and mean. The Lord Jesus will appear in His glory; but His word to His disciples is still the same: *Fear not*. His meekness, His humble Heart, His charity is unchanged.

SCENE XXXVII.

MOUNT OLIVET. ASCENSION DAY.

STATION I.

Jesus coming, spoke to them: All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth (St. Matt. xxviii.).

You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you (Acts i.).

Going therefore, teach ye all nations, . . . and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world (St. Matt. xxviii.).

Jesus coming, spoke to them.

"*Attendite.*" Let us listen to every parting word, and lay them all up in our hearts. Let us also with our eyes watch the burning charity that lights up our Lord's sacred face in this last hour, and from Him spreads to all present. Let us note too how our Blessed Lady's eyes are riveted upon Him, and how fast her tears are falling—tears of perfect love.

Once more He consoles them all by the assurance, *I will not leave you orphans. I am ascending to My God and your God, My Father and your Father.* But I leave My beloved Mother to be a Mother to you all. And in a few days My Father will send another Comforter to perfect the work which I have begun. *I have many things yet to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when the Paraclete shall come, He will teach you all truth.*

He interrupts these words from time to time to embrace each of His Apostles, and He does not forbid Magdalen and the devout women now to clasp His sacred feet and kiss the wounds imprinted there. Last of all, with most perfect filial love, He takes leave of His Holy Mother, and asks her full consent that He may leave this earth, and hears once more her word, so full of reverence and service and love: *Be it done to me according to Thy word.*

It is, He says to them all, expedient that I go.

STATION II.

And when He had said these things, while they looked on He was raised up (Acts i.).

And lifting up His hands, He blessed them. And it came to pass that while He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up to Heaven (St. Luke xxiv.).

And the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up to Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God (St. Mark xvi.).

A. And lifting up His hands, He blessed them.

We may be sure that this word of blessing is no empty word. A great parting grace goes with it into the hearts of all present. For this is an acceptable time, a day of salvation. *Ascending on high, He led captivity captive, He gave gifts to men (Ephes. iv.).*

B. Lifting up His hands, He blessed them.

We may contemplate the Holy Mother falling on her knees, and all the others kneeling round her to receive His last blessing. And their eyes are fixed on the Lord as He slowly ascends, their hearts burning with a stronger love for Him than ever they felt before. As they gaze He enters into a cloud, and all is over. They see Him no more. *A cloud received Him out of their sight.* The first career of our Lord on earth, which began in Nazareth in the house of the Annunciation, closes in this hour. His Eucharistic life will still go on.

He is gone, but, as we read, the parting was not in bitter sorrow. His disciples were full of joy. *They adoring, went back with great joy.*

And one grace given to them all in this last hour is a firm belief that the Blessed Mother is their Mother. The glorious sunlight has passed away from this earth, but the loveliness of the moonlight is come to preside over the night and cheer away the darkness. They all turn their eyes to her, more beautiful and full of grace than

ever. For if the Lord had parting gifts for all, what an outpouring has there been into her soul!

"Ave gratia plena."

All the heavenly choirs of angels and men are contemplating her with a most loving and admiring compassion, and wondering at her humble charity that so cheerfully consents to remain in exile. *The Mother was to be admired above measure, and worthy to be remembered by good men; being filled with wisdom, and joining a man's heart with a woman's thought.*

STATION III.

While they were beholding Him going up to Heaven, behold two men stood by them in white garments, who also said: Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to Heaven? This Jesus Who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into Heaven (Acts i. 10, 11).

A. Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to Heaven?

Alas! would that the blessed angels had to chide us for looking up to Heaven! We have to cry out with the Psalmist: *My soul hath cleaved to the pavement; quicken Thou me (Psalm cxvii.).* To us the angels say: *Sursum corda! O ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity, and seek after lying? (Psalm iv.).* "Let not your hearts find their peace in your possessions here below. Look up to the home of your eternity. The Lord Jesus is your Brother, gone up to His God and your God, His Father and your Father. You are to follow."

B. This Jesus will so come as you have seen Him going into Heaven.

On the wedding-day, the bride and bridegroom are reminded that death will come to part them. And on this day of the admirable Ascension, the disciples are reminded of the Judgment.

C. This Jesus will so come as you have seen Him going.

Therefore waste not the short and precious hours; re-

deem time past. Let man go forth to *(do)* his work till the evening. For the night cometh when no man can work. Trade till I come. Save your own soul, by helping to save others. Help to feed My lambs. Go and make your promise to the Ever-Blessed Mother of mankind: *I will seek that which was lost; that which was driven away I will bring back; and I will bind up that which was broken; and I will strengthen that which was weak* (Ezech. xxxiv.).

St. John ends his Gospel with these words: *But there are also many other things which Jesus did: which if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written* (St. John xxi.).

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