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REFLECTIONS ON THE PASSION

BY
F. SERAPHIN PASSIONIST.

VOL. I.

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MORAL SERIES.

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PIOUS REFLECTIONS

ON THE

Passion of Jesus Christ,

TO HELP THE FAITHFUL

TO MEDITATE UPON IT WITH EASE.

BY

FATHER SERAPHIN, PASSIONIST,

NOW SUPERIOR OF THE NOVICIATE IN BELGIUM.

VOLUME I.



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**“CHRIST suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps.”—
1 PET. ii. 21.**

**“CHRIST therefore having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought.”—
1 PET. iv. 1.**

TO THE LAITY
www.libtool.com OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ENGLAND,
THE SUCCESSORS OF
THAT NOBLE LINE OF ANCESTORS
WHO TRACE BACK THEIR ORIGIN,
IN UNBROKEN SUCCESSION, TO THE TIMES WHEN
THE APOSTLE OF ENGLAND,
ST. GREGORY THE GREAT,
BISHOP OF ROME,
SENT FROM ITS PROUD GATES TO ALBION'S SHORES,
ST. AUGUSTIN AND HIS SAINTLY MONKS,
TO PREACH THE CATHOLIC FAITH
IN THESE REMOTE ISLANDS,
AND DURING THE LONG LAPSE OF UPWARDS OF
ONE THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED YEARS,
HAVE PRESERVED, WHOLE AND ENTIRE,
THAT SACRED DEPOSIT,
AND AIDED IN BUILDING
THOSE MAGNIFICENT CATHEDRALS
AND PRINCELY ABBEYS,
WHOSE MAJESTIC RUINS STILL FORM
THE GLORY OF OUR LAND,
THE TRANSLATION
OF THESE SHORT DAILY MEDITATIONS ON
OUR SAVIOUR'S PASSION,
IS HUMBLY DEDICATED, WITH THE HOPE OF
AIDING THEM ONCE MORE TO ENKINDLE
IN THE HEARTS OF THEIR SEPARATED COUNTRYMEN
THE ARDENT DEVOTION OF
THEIR CATHOLIC FOREFATHERS
TOWARDS
THE SACRED PASSION.

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AMONG the numerous works which have been composed on the Passion of our Lord, the one before us claims a particular notice. The four hundred and twenty-six meditations which it contains, are drawn up in a form calculated to attract the attention, and touch the feelings even of those whom a certain bias of education or spiritual apathy too often render them indisposed for this sort of pious practice. While careful to preserve that methodic form which enables the reader to take advantage of the resolutions and fruits deduced from the reflections offered, and to make a ready application to the various solicitations undergone by the soul, the author has succeeded in preserving a constant flow of unction and earnestness of purpose, which is enhanced by his simple and uniform style..... Well nursed in the waters of the masters of a spiritual life, his principal aim has been to impress on the daily habits of the Christian a vivid and efficacious recollection of the infallible mystery of love exhibited by God for man. He has not been satisfied, as he tells us with an amiable candour in his preface, with his own reflections, but has constantly gathered from them others, "for," continues he, "I have no pretensions in a name, no pretensions to originality, but only to promote and preserve the good of souls." The counsels and advice which he gives in this mien, display a profound knowledge of the human species.

Ecclesiastics will find in the work of F. Seraphin, a precious source of edification and encouraging assistance, for the pastoral functions, Religious Communities, and Schools profitable matter for pious reading, and all the faithful Christians of every condition seeking for fresh means of stimulating their efforts of piety, cannot fail to appreciate it, and may be sure of deriving advantage from its presence.

Louvain, September, 1849.

INTRODUCTION.

"OH! everlasting subject of meditation," cries out St. Alphonsus Liguori, "a God dying through love for his creatures!" Yet how few are there who seriously reflect on what the Son of God has suffered for us, and except some chosen souls who take delight in conversing with God their Saviour, it would not be saying too much of Christians in general: "There is no one that thinketh in the heart." Jesus Christ has suffered and died; his blood has been shed for the salvation of all; complete and superabundant has been the redemption he has wrought, and each one of us may say, with the apostle, "He has loved me so as to deliver himself up for me." But do we ever think of this his love? Is it the subject of our frequent meditation? Alas! how many live in utter forgetfulness of Jesus, and of what he has suffered for us, without ever calling to mind his love, or reflecting on the gratitude we owe him. The principal portion of man's life is occupied by worldly affairs, and the remaining part is given to amusements, and he has not a moment left to turn his thoughts and heart towards the Son of God, who has done so much for his sake. The artizan excuses himself by reason of his labour; the man of business alleges his continual occupations; the poor man brings forward the necessity of attending to his daily wants; the rich, his important affairs; the unlearned, his ignorance; and the studious, his literary avocations. "There is no one that thinketh in his

heart." Thus are the mysteries of the suffering Saviour neglected by the world. In fact, it is a prevalent opinion that such reflections are incumbent only on those who are in the retirement of the cloister, or, at most, on those who make profession of extraordinary piety. Dangerous opinion, and the fatal cause of the ruin of a multitude of souls, who, were they to think often on the sufferings of their Redeemer, would experience the most salutary effects in their souls, and a means of salvation not less efficacious than the consideration of the truths of Christianity.

Assuredly sin would not be so common, nor the practice of virtue so rare, did we occasionally, during the day, fix our thoughts on the labours and sufferings undergone by the Son of God for our salvation. The least action of our Saviour, during his mortal life, being of infinite value, was more than sufficient for our redemption. Yet in conformity with the will of His heavenly Father, He would suffer and die for us, and by a death the most disgraceful and cruel. By that, he wished to show us the excess of His love for us, and of what value our souls are in his eyes, and how foul is the guilt of sin. He wished also to leave us an example of every virtue we ought to practice, particularly under the trials and sufferings incident to our present state of existence. *Jesus Christ*, says St. Peter, *hath suffered, leaving you an example* : not, therefore, merely purchasing your ransom, *but leaving you an example for you to imitate*. Now, I ask, can we imitate this great Divine model, if, forgetting all he has endured and suffered for us, we let ourselves be dragged along by our vicious propensities, those remorseless tyrants, who are sure always to wound if

they do not at once destroy the life of our souls? Our weakness, we allege, induces us to give way to evil. Certainly we are weak; it is good to own it. But will a mere acknowledgment of our disease operate a cure? Ought we not to make use of the necessary remedies, and to arm ourselves against our spiritual enemies? And what is the armour we should put on against the attacks of our deadly adversaries, the world, the devil, and our passions? The same apostle tells us: *Christ having suffered in the flesh, be ye also armed with the thought thereof*. Let us clothe ourselves with this powerful thought. Let us call to mind all that Jesus has suffered for us; with this weapon we shall have a strong defence, and can bid defiance to our enemies. Let us meditate on the sufferings of the Man-God, who is also our Redeemer and our model, and we shall gain the courage necessary to combat vice and to practice virtue. "Is it possible," says St. Francis of Sales, "to look at the "humility of our Saviour, without becoming humble "and even loving humiliations; to behold his obedience, "and remain disobedient? Certainly not: no one did "ever attentively and seriously think of Jesus crucified "without feeling a desire to imitate his virtues, and "without finding thereby a sure means of being preserved from the death of sin."* And we may add, that all those who have fallen victims to the worst of evils, have perished for having neglected this powerful means of salvation: They have forgotten Jesus crucified.

Let us then meditate on the passion of our Saviour; let us assign for this purpose a daily portion of our time,

* *Sec. de. morte Dom.*

were it only the space of a quarter of an hour; let us, during those moments enter the adorable heart of Jesus, in order to understand the tenderness of its affection in our regard, and thence draw the graces of which we stand in need, and of which it is the abundant source. "The Passion of Jesus Christ," says again St. Francis of Sales, "should be the ordinary subject of every Christian's thoughts. The Crucifix may be termed a book, wherein, beyond any other, the Christian, in every state and condition, will learn the malice of sin, the loveliness of virtue, the mercy and love of God for man, and the rigour of Divine justice. The book of the Crucifix will inspire the sinner with the thought of conversion, and the resolution to set about it. It is in contemplating the Crucifix that the just man finds the courage necessary to maintain his ground in the warfare of life, and to remain attached to the cause of virtue. All may find therein an inexhaustible source of graces, and draw therefrom abundant means for their sanctification. Meditation on the Passion of Christ has ever been the favourite exercise of all the saints. Thereby they acquired that only true courage, which consists in forgiving injuries, bearing with calumny, in patiently submitting to the reverses of fortune, and in even rejoicing in sickness and distress; in a word, in avoiding evil and doing good. This salutary practice filled their hearts with the love of God, and freed them from all attachment to the world. Let us, after their example, make the life and Passion of Jesus Christ the ordinary subject of meditation. It is the shortest and surest way to preserve us from vice, and to lead us to virtue. It is, at the same time, the most unequivocal proof of our gratitude

towards the Man-God, who has done and suffered so much for us. Victim of his love for us, he cannot fail of being delighted at seeing us thus mindful of his sorrows: and we may say, without fear of contradiction, that since he has chosen to suffer so much, to be scourged and crowned with thorns, crucified, &c., it is his wish that we have always before our eyes these mysteries of his bitter passion; hence he has told us never to approach the Holy Table without making a special commemoration thereof.

Let us then meditate on his Passion; let us endeavour to fathom the mysteries of love it contains. It is at the feet of our crucified Saviour that we shall learn how we ought to love God and our neighbour for his sake; it is there also we shall understand that love of ourselves which induces unto salvation.

Let us not allege want of time. We can always find time enough to throw away on trifles, useless occupations, and amusements, fit only for children. It is only when we have to pay attention to the things of God, that we are pressed for an opportunity. Ah! then we are at a loss how to find half or even quarter of an hour throughout the whole of the day. Can there be a clearer proof of the little love, or rather total indifference we feel towards him, who was entirely consumed by the love he had for us?

Neither let any one pretend to excuse himself for want of capacity or ignorance; for the uneducated may easily read this great book of Jesus crucified, and often with more profit than the most learned. "The end of study is knowledge; but the end of meditation is the love of God and the practice of virtue," says St. Francis of

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Sales. The Almighty has given us a heart on purpose that we may love him, and, whatever be our want of learning, we have all this powerful means of obtaining the love of God, we can all meditate on the Passion of Christ. We think and can meditate on our temporal affairs. The sinner can keep his thoughts without being, unhappily for him, weary on the evil he desires to commit, and however ignorant we may think him he succeeds best to dwell in his sinful study. For what reason should we not be able to reflect and meditate on the Passion of our Saviour, a subject so conformable to the natural inclination of our hearts, created for God and his love? A soul that loves God, or is at all disposed to love him, finds no difficulty, is abundantly eloquent when the opportunity offers of conversing with him; she needs no one to suggest words to her; her heart easily finds what to say.

It is for the purpose of rendering easy so salutary a practice that we have undertaken the present work. Several distinguished persons have testified their wishes on the subject, to whom, after mature deliberation, we have thought it our duty to defer; the more so, as the subject is in a peculiar manner conformable to the primary object of our Holy Institute, that of propagating among the faithful devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ.

As it is intended to treat of every circumstance of the Passion, the work will be divided into three parts, or a series of four hundred and twenty-six meditations.

To take the Passion of our Redeemer in its fullest extent, it may be said to have begun at the moment of his conception in the womb of his holy Mother. It is,

however, not in this extended view that we shall treat of it in the present work. We wish to lay before our readers the reflections which have occurred to our minds from a consideration of the sufferings he endured the two last days of his mortal life, and which ended only by his painful death on Mount Calvary. Most ardently did the heart of Jesus long for that day, which was to cost him his life. He was accustomed to call it his baptism, because he was then to be plunged in an ocean of suffering and sorrow. Often did he speak of this eventful day to his Apostles, and always with an effusion of heart, which plainly evinced how eager was his desire to see it arrive. Again and again he told them that he must go to Jerusalem, there to suffer, and to be put to death, after being scourged, spit upon, and enduring every sort of ignominy. These predictions will form, as it were, a starting point, from which we shall accompany our Lord through the whole of his Passion to the place of his burial. As the occasion offers, we shall speak of his Blessed Mother, who had so great a share in his sufferings, and endeavour to show her co-operation in the great work of redemption.

According to the plan we have laid down, we shall not confine ourselves to one meditation only on each mystery, but shall consider and dwell upon every particular circumstance. For this purpose we shall present each mystery under successive points of view, most suggestive of profitable reflections, yet so that each meditation be complete in itself. A few further observations will make our plan more clear.

After proposing the subject matter of each meditation, we shall deduce from it corresponding reflections; and in

order to render these reflections beneficial, and to prevent them from remaining mere idle speculation, it shall be our care to give them a due application, by leading the heart to pious affections, and ultimately to practical resolutions. For the daily improvement of our lives should be the end we have in view in meditating on the Passion of Christ. To obtain this end, it is necessary for the soul to turn over its inmost folds, to compare its conduct with that of its Saviour, and, if fortunately, it has nothing to reproach itself as to the present, it ought, at least, to excite itself to repentance for the past, and to solicit grace for the future. In the different mysteries of the Passion, every circumstance forms a subject from which we may derive useful lessons. For example, the weakness of his apostles, the brutal rage of the soldiers, the hatred of the Jewish chiefs, the barbarity of the executioners, the hypocrisy and cowardice of the judges, &c. Every thing is matter for instruction. All shows us what man is when he suffers himself to be carried away by his unbridled passions. Above all, we should fix our attention on the great sufferer; on the atrocity of the torments he endures; on the cause of his sufferings; on the manner in which he undergoes them, &c. These are some of the subjects that should occupy our thoughts when meditating on the Passion of the Son of God. By studying in this manner in the school of our Saviour, we shall learn how we ought to hate and fly from sin, to practice virtue, to get the mastery over our passions, to submit to and even love sufferings. There we shall be taught the means of destroying pride, the unhappy source of all our evils. We shall then see how we ought to cherish humility,

the foundation of Christian perfection, and how to practice charity, its fulfilment and its crown. Besides these more general fruits, each one should gather what best suits his condition, being especially careful to have an eye to the subduing of his predominant passion, by considering the virtues practised by our Saviour in the different circumstances of his Passion.

We have throughout had especially in view not to discourage, but rather constantly to suggest motives of confidence, and whenever during the course of the work, the opportunity has offered of inspiring this confidence, we have not failed to lay hold of it. It is good for man on many occasions, and for many reasons, to have his heart expanded. Mistrust and despondency often cause him to stop short, to be fearful of advancing, often to stumble in the path of virtue, and sometimes even to throw himself back to the ruin of his soul. Nevertheless, while endeavouring to excite confidence, we have not forgotten that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Christian wisdom; that this holy and salutary fear is produced in our souls, and preserved by the consideration of those eternal truths, which are universal, immutable, and of vital importance for all, such as sin and its deformity, the judgments of God, rigorous as inevitable, hell prepared for impenitent sinners, &c. Wilfully to forget these great truths so often recommended to our consideration by the spirit of God, would be wilfully to blind ourselves. In all our works, they ought to be always before our eyes, lest we be carried away by the torrent of our vicious inclinations. And since these important truths are most forcibly illustrated through every stage of the Passion of Jesus Christ; as

one of its principal ends was to recall these truths to our minds, it was not for us to pass them over in silence, but rather to present them in their true light, without attempting to lessen their importance, either as regards others or ourselves. Nevertheless, while endeavouring to promote that wholesome fear which those awful dogmas of religion were intended to inspire, we have taken care to suggest motives of confidence to the end that, these two dispositions tempering each other, we may be enabled to work out our salvation with that holy fear and confidence, so frequently counselled in the Holy Scriptures. Hence after having meditated on the most awful truths of faith, as unfolded by the Passion of our Lord, we ought always to finish the pious exercise by throwing ourselves in full confidence at the feet of our merciful Saviour. Such has been our aim throughout the present work.

As we have said, each meditation is complete in itself, and we offer the whole series as a prepared repast, where each one may serve himself with the portion he considers best suited to his spiritual wants.

We have carefully abstained from using far-fetched expressions, being persuaded that a style simple and unpretending is more useful and efficacious on such subjects.

The Holy Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church have been our principal sources. We have taken care to adduce the different prophecies and figures bearing on the subject. Besides our own, we have made no hesitation in using the reflections of such others as we have had at our disposal. For we say it with sincerity, we have no pretensions to a name, or to the merit of saying

any thing new, but simply to procure the good of souls. Hence we have considered it our duty to adopt the judicious observations of our friends, willingly subjecting ourselves to additional labour, in order to comply with their suggestions. It will be readily understood, that in a work of this nature an exact observance of the chronological order of events is totally irrelevant to the design we have in view. We have, however, seldom deviated from the order adopted by the most judicious commentators on the gospel narrative. Subjoined are a few remarks on the proper method of meditating on the Passion.

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THE WAY TO MEDITATE

ON

The Passion of Jesus Christ.

It is of the mysteries of the Passion as of the grain of mustard seed, says, judiciously, one of the holy Fathers, writing on this subject. Any one wishing to try the strength of that seed, leisurely chews it over, tastes it, tries to get a full relish of it, keeps it in his mouth, and takes care not to swallow it all at once. By this means he discovers all its inherent pungency, which is such as to bring tears to his eyes. The same may with truth be said of the mysteries of the Passion. When a soul merely considers them in a hurried and general manner, they make little or no impression on the heart. It is impossible for her to feel, therefore, from this hasty and superficial attention. Give yourself time to ruminate on them, examine them at leisure, and pound them, as it were, in the mortar of tranquil meditation: it is then you will perceive the relish they contain, and if they do not force tears from your eyes, which, indeed, is not required, they will not fail of exciting in your soul pious reflections and generous resolutions, which will have the effect of changing your heart and reforming your conduct; you will have a horror of sin, and will begin to cherish true and solid virtue.

To read the subject proposed, with fruit, before making your meditation, you must not be satisfied with merely glancing at it, or hastily running over the reflections it contains, but read it slowly, stopping from time to time for reflection. By this means you will imbibe the truths which the mystery encloses; they will sweetly flow, like a precious balm, through the inmost channels of your heart, furnishing, without any effort on your part, ample matter for entertainment with your Saviour, without having recourse to the words of the meditation.

Whatever be the mystery forming the subject of your meditation, you can always fix your attention on some one of the following points:—

1. The infinite dignity of him who suffers. It is not a mere mortal, much less some degraded criminal, but a Man-God, the Son of the Most High, equal in all things to his heavenly Father, who looks upon him with sovereign complacency.

2. For whom does he suffer? For man, sinful man; for a vile creature and rebel, who has dared to fly in the face of God, from whom he holds every thing he possesses, without being able to offer any return worthy of his Maker's acceptance.

3. What does he suffer? The most cruel pains and torments; the most atrocious insults and ignominies.

4. How does he suffer? With a patience unexampled; without a complaint or murmur; without an effort to revenge himself; tranquil and resigned.

5. Why does he suffer? To reconcile mankind to God; to be loved by men; and by you in particular.

Let the unction flowing from these reflections penetrate your interior, and should one of them, or any other

you find in the meditation, make an impression on your mind, give yourself up to it as long as it remains. For that is the moment you will find it easy to act upon your will, and induce it to form different pious affections, in which you may occupy yourself at leisure, allowing your heart free scope to follow the motions of grace and of the love of God.

You may also form a variety of holy affections while meditating on the Passion of your Saviour, such as :

1st. A feeling of wonder and admiration.—How is it possible that a God of infinite majesty should descend so low as to submit to such horrible torments and ignominies for a being so worthless as I am? What goodness! What love! What condescension!

2ndly. Acts of thanksgiving.—What do I not owe thee, O my Jesus! for the benefits I have received by thy sufferings? Had I the tongues of all men, could I form of all the hearts of the blessed above one heart with mine, I should never be able to make thee a suitable return for all thou hast done and suffered for me.

3rdly. Sentiments of compassion.—Ah! my Saviour! what ought to be my feelings at seeing thee plunged in a sea of bitterness and suffering? Oh! that I had been at the foot of the cross, that I might have taken a part of the pains thou didst endure for the love of my soul!

4thly. A hearty sorrow for your sins.

5thly. Aspirations of love.

6thly. Of prayer, begging your Lord to grant you the grace to love him, to follow his example, and never again to offend him; and this with a full confidence in his infinite merits. But what you should, in a particular manner, beg of him, and with earnest entreaty, is the

grace, not to yield to the sin or defect to which you are most subject, the mastery over your predominant passion, and the practising the virtue you most want, and all with the view of imitating your Saviour, this being the principal end you should aim at in meditating on his Passion.

These affections are to be followed by good resolutions. Promise your suffering Jesus never more to offend him by mortal sin, and that you will do your best to correct yourself of your venial transgressions, so as never again to be guilty of them deliberately. Especially make him a promise of amending such a fault, (which you may mention); of making use of such a means, (which you may specify); for example, to avoid such a person, to keep away from such company, to break off such a connexion, not to frequent such a place; all which you know to be for you occasions of falling into sin. Again, promise him that you will instantly drive away such a bad thought; that you will check at once such an irregular movement; that you will have a guard over your senses, particularly over your eyes; that you will refrain from speaking in such a circumstance; that you will banish from your heart any aversion or bad feeling you may be tempted to entertain towards such a person, &c. This is the way to gather fruit from your meditation, which will be of little service to you otherwise. Deposit these good resolutions in the wounds of your suffering Jesus, and in the hands of his holy Mother; beg for grace punctually to fulfil them; keep them constantly before your eyes during the day, particularly should the occasion offer of testing your fidelity; examine yourself from time to time, to see how you have put them in practice, and

in case you find that you have been wanting on some occasion, do not be discouraged on that account, but, full of humble confidence and holy determination, let such an occurrence serve to renew your good resolutions and to redouble your watchfulness. Rest assured that, with the assistance of grace, which is never wanting to those who seek it in earnest, you will, in the end, succeed in your endeavours.

From what has just been said, it will be easily seen that to derive fruit from meditation, it is not enough to form merely general and vague resolutions; it is necessary to descend to particulars, if we wish to succeed in correcting ourselves. "You must specify and particularize the resolutions you make on the regulation of your conduct," continues St. Francis of Sales. "For example, in thinking on the first word of our Saviour when on the cross, you may, perhaps, feel a desire of imitating him, in pardoning and loving your enemies. But this will be of little advantage to you, unless you come to particulars, as follows:—Yes! I am determined not to be offended at certain offensive expressions of such a person, nor at the disdain another may manifest in my regard. On the contrary, I will do or say such and such a thing, by way of pacifying the mind of one, and to win the heart of the other. This is the true and ready means to correct yourself of your failings. While with only general desires and indefinite resolves you will scarcely reach the point, it will only be after a long time and many a struggle, if you succeed at all."*

The next observation to be made on this subject is

* I. Introduction to a Devout Life, p. 2, c 6.

that in meditating on the sufferings of Jesus Christ, we ought to apply the example of the virtues he practised, in the midst of the bitter punishments he endured, to our particular case, without thinking for the moment of others, unless it be to pray for them. It is principally for *ourselves*—for the good of our *own* souls—that we go to prayer. It behoves then, above all, not to lose sight of our own wants. Consequently, it is not sufficient during meditation, simply to consider what Jesus Christ has suffered; for this consideration to produce its fruits, we must practically convince ourselves that all these sufferings were endured for us in particular. It is undoubtedly true that the divine Saviour suffered for the redemption of all mankind; but it is not less true that he suffered for *you* and *me* in particular. So that while the blessing of redemption is common to all, it is at the same time a benefit peculiar to each one of us. The sun shines on the whole world, but his light is not diminished in my regard from being diffused on innumerable other beings; I enjoy as much of it as if I were alone in the world.

The same may be said of Jesus Christ, the great Sun of Justice, of the sufferings he underwent, and of the examples of virtue he gave to the world, particularly during his Passion. His holy humanity received not a wound; felt not a sorrow that was not on my account. I am beholden to him for all he endured, just as much as if others had no share in his sufferings, and he had gone through all solely for me; to merit for me only the remission of sin; to obtain for me alone deliverance from hell; to restore me to the friendship of God, and to reopen for me the gates of heaven, shut upon me by my crimes; so that *you* and *I* can truly, and ought, to sav.

in the words of the Apostle, *He loved me, and delivered himself for me.** Yes; during his bitter Passion he was thinking of me; his love was fixed on me, as if I had been the only one that stood in need of redemption. When we look on the Passion in this light, if the eye of our faith be thus directed during our meditation, our hearts will not fail to be moved, and to urge us to an imitation of this Divine model. We have endeavoured to follow this method in the present work, and had we swerved from it, we should have kept back much of the fruit to be gathered from meditating on the sufferings of our blessed Redeemer. The meditations we have composed would be altogether barren, and souls without fervour would be left in their carelessness and indifference.

The time we may have allotted for meditation does not appear too long, when we are favoured with celestial consolations, and when a certain sensible grace renders every thing sweet and easy. When you experience this facility and interior satisfaction, be careful to remember that this facility, these consolations, are the pure gift of God, and, consequently, afford no grounds for self-complacency. "When," says the author of the Following of Christ, "God bestows upon you any spiritual consolation, receive it with thanksgiving, but acknowledge it to be his gift, not the reward of any merit of yours. Be careful not to be puffed up, not to give way too much to a feeling of satisfaction on that account, nor to entertain, in consequence, a vain presumption. On the contrary, be more humble, more circumspect in all your actions, because this agreeable moment will pass away, and the time of temptation will return.†

* Galatians ii. 20.

† B. 2, ch. ix. 6, 4.

These consolations, however, are far from always accompanying meditation, nor are at all essential to it; hence the heart should not be too much attached to them. "It is not the consolations of God, but the God of consolation we are to love! Now God is always the same. He always merits our love and service, whether he gives us consolations or not. He does not bestow them uninterruptedly, nor is he in any way bound to do so; but whether he grant them or withhold them, it is our duty always to love and serve him.

It frequently happens to a soul to feel a certain dryness and want of devotion, in the exercises of piety, particularly in meditation, so as to be abandoned to desolation. What is she to do in this case? Is she to remain inactive? Is she to leave off meditating, through an idea of its inutility? This would be to sink under the temptation, and to expose herself to the danger of falling back in the service of God; her devotion would begin to relax, and she might plunge into a thousand disorders. In these occurrences she must keep firm to her good resolution, combat with the enemy, who, on these occasions, is ever ready to take advantage, and to deprive her of the good inferences which accrue from this holy exercise. Should this be your case, examine, in calm recollection, if the dryness you experience arise from your own fault; trace it back to its source in order to see if you may not have given an occasion to it by the dissipation of your heart, which has caused you to fall into many disorders. See if there be nothing which disputes with God the dominion of your affections. Examine whether you have not given way to self-love, which, at one time, inclines your heart too much to creatures; at another keeping you

at a certain cold distance from others, consequent on a certain feeling of antipathy, contrary alike to the charity you owe to God, your neighbour, and yourself. "If, after a mature examination, you find out the source of the evil, you ought to return thanks to the Almighty, the more so as an evil is half remedied, when its origin is discovered. If, however, you cannot perceive any cause, on your part, for this dryness of soul, do not take up your time in a vain and fruitless research but rather humble yourself before God by an acknowledgment of your unworthiness and misery, saying to him : "Alas! what am I when left to myself! Nothing, O Lord, but a heap of dried-up earth, which is full of rents on every side, and gasp for rain to preserve it from being carried away by the wind." . . . "Go to your spiritual director," continues the same saint : "lay open to him your heart ; let him see the inmost folds of your soul, and follow his counsel with humble simplicity. But nothing is more advantageous in this case than abandoning yourself to the disposal of God, to offer to bear this trial as long as he pleases. . Say, along with other ejaculations, that may occur to your mind, amid the rude thorns that pierce your soul : *Oh ! my heavenly Father, if it be possible, remove from me this bitter chalice*, adding, full of courageous resolve, *nevertheless not my will but thine be done*. With this remain satisfied, keeping yourself as tranquil as possible, for you under the circumstances. The Almighty, seeing you thus resigned, will be sure to console you, and recompense your fidelity by bestowing on you the graces he knows you most require. In the meanwhile, hold on steadily your way ; omit not any of your accus-

“tomed exercises of devotion, even add to the number of
“your good works. Offer to your heavenly Father your
“heart, all dry as it is, it will be as acceptable to him as
“when replete with celestial sweetness, provided it be
“sincerely disposed to love him. From this, concludes
“the saint, may be seen how great is the error of those,
“especially women, who imagine that when we feel no
“intense relish in the service of God, it is useless to
“serve him. The satisfaction we feel when our good
“works are accompanied by a certain tenderness of heart,
“may perhaps render them more agreeable to ourselves;
“but the odour wafted up to heaven is more pure, they
“are more meritorious before God, when performed in
“this state of spiritual aridity.”* The advice here given
by this great saint, and which may be said to express
the common opinion of all the masters of a spiritual life,
should be deeply engraved in the mind, and be strictly
followed, whenever we are subject to dryness of soul.
He moreover counsels us not to make use of any violent
efforts during our meditation, but reflect calmly on the
subject proposed. If the head be fatigued, little good
can be expected. All struggling for thoughts is as hurt-
ful to the body as to the soul. The mind must remain
quietly in the presence of God, and the heart will not
fail to employ itself profitably. By quietly renewing our
faith in the Divine presence we shall more easily and
effectually get rid of any distractions that may occur,
than by a formal opposition calculated to disturb our
tranquillity.

What has hitherto been said, refers to the body, as it
were, in general, of meditation; the good resolutions to

* Introduction to a Devout Life.—P. 4, c. 14.

be formed, particularly towards the end, as well as to the more general dispositions necessary for this holy exercise. In order, however, to omit nothing that may be of service on this subject, we will say a few words on the proximate preparation for meditation. We offer what follows, as a kind of form, imperfect, indeed, but which may be used not only for meditating on the Passion, but also when the subject is any other of the great truths of faith. We pretend only to suggest an idea, not to lay down a strict rule to which we would oblige any one to adhere. It may serve as an example, affording a notion of what is to be done; for, after all, when we desire to converse with God, we should be less anxious about words, than about the sentiments of our hearts.

Having fixed upon the subject of meditation, the usual method is one in some book. It may be well to observe that a person need not scrupulously adhere to the passages he has read, when he perceives an interior call to reflect on a different subject. This would be to wish to pray after one's own fashion and opinion, and in some measure to resist the invitation given by the Spirit of God. In such a case, a person ought to pay attention to the voice of the Lord, and to follow submissively its directions. This being understood, we would advise that, before commencing meditation, the following preparatory acts, unless a special intimation of grace suggest a different way of proceeding.

1. A renewal of faith in the presence of God, with a profound act of adoration of his infinite Majesty.
2. An act of humility.
3. A sorrow for past sins.
4. A fervent prayer for light and grace to profit by the

meditation. Should the soul, while engaged in any of these acts, find herself absorbed in pious affections, let her give way to the feeling, as long as it continues, without troubling herself to pass on to the meditation. For after all, (and this should ever be borne in mind,) meditation is nothing more than a means of exciting holy desires. If, therefore, the Almighty, in his good pleasure, bestow them, before we begin to meditate, we have at once obtained what we are to aim at in this holy exercise, consequently we have no need of going any further, and to continue our search might be even hurtful to our souls. The following acts may be adopted as a form of preparation :

ACT OF FAITH AND ADORATION.

Where art Thou, O my God? I see thee not with the eyes of my body, yet faith tells me Thou art here, and faith cannot deceive me. Yes! my soul instructed by faith, beholds Thee every where. Whichever way my thoughts turn, I am sure to meet Thee; I am never alone. Thou art always with me; but at this moment, in an especial manner, because Thou art always near to those who address Thee by prayer, in order to grant their requests. Thou knowest me more intimately than I know myself. Thou beholdest every thing passing in the inmost recesses of my heart, and not a movement of my soul is hidden from Thy all-penetrating eye. Ah! what ought I to do in Thy presence? How shall I conduct myself before Thy awful majesty? Behold me, O Lord, prostrate before Thee! I profoundly adore Thy infinite greatness!..... Thou art my God, my beginning and end, my supreme good, and my all! Oh! that I could

adore Thee in a worthy manner! Ah! Thou art too great for mere creatures to offer Thee a worthy homage! Yes; on this very account do I rejoice; the thought fills my heart with gladness. Thou art too great for the united homages of all-created beings; none, nor all can adore Thee as Thou deservest.

ACT OF HUMILITY.

O Lord of majesty, since Thy goodness equals Thy greatness, deign to suffer me here in Thy presence, and grant me to experience the effects of thy bounty. Behold a wretched sinner at Thy feet. I confess the misery to which my unfaithfulness has reduced me. I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned against Thee! I, a vile nothing, an abyss of wretchedness. and degraded by my sin beneath the brute destitute of reason. . . . In this state, to which my oft-repeated transgressions have brought me, I acknowledge myself unworthy to come before Thee. I have merited to be annihilated on account of the constant rebellions I have been guilty of against Thee, after so many indignities towards thy Divine Majesty, after so much ingratitude. It is this, Thy indulgent forbearance in my regard, that emboldens me to come into Thy presence, and to confess my sins. It is because I am a sinner that I approach Thee to implore Thy pardon, trusting to Thy great mercy, ever ready to forgive the repenting sinner.

ACT OF CONTRITION.

I detest my sins, O my God, I am heartily sorry for them, and with the assistance of Thy grace, I am firmly

resolved never more to be guilty of them. Oh! that I had died before I had even offended Thee! Why should I offend Thee, who art so good, and who hast so many and such great claims to my love? Who, having no need of any creature, and, least of all, of me, hast bestowed on me so many favours and graces! But have pity on me, O Lord! show Thy mercy towards me, unworthy as I am. Wash my soul from its iniquities. Give me a new heart, a heart detached from every other object, and fixed solely and eternally on Thee.

ACT OF PETITION,

Grant, O Lord, that the meditation I am going to make may be of profit to my soul. Enlighten and assist me therein. Give me to understand how Thou hast always loved me, and the return of love that I owe Thee.... How little have I loved thee hitherto?... Bestow on me the grace of being more grateful for the future.... Oh! Most Blessed Lady, intercede in my behalf, though I am not worthy to be called thy child.... And thou, my good angel guardian, obtain for me the assistance I need, in order to profit by the meditation I am going to make, &c.

After these acts of preparation, follows the meditation, containing the mystery selected, on which are to be made some pious reflections, for the purpose of exciting in the heart, holy desires conducive to the formation of good resolutions appropriate to each one's particular requirements.

And now let me exhort you, ye Christians, who are anxious for your eternal safety, not to neglect this holy exercise of meditation. It is with the desire of rendering

it easy, that we have composed the following pages, on the sacred Passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Be assured that this salutary exercise, is no ways impracticable or even difficult. It only requires a little good-will, and no more time than you have at your disposal without interfering with the duties of your state of life. Doubtless, you have other obligations to fulfil, but you should not forget that meditation is a duty equally incumbent upon you, the neglect of which will expose you to the danger of failing in the due performance of your other duties. To have a lively sense of a truth of religion, of a mystery of the Passion of your Saviour, that is to say, to ponder on and examine his actions, his words, and his thoughts, with reference to our own thoughts, words, and actions, to form some practical resolution in consequence, accompanied by a prayer to the Giver of all good gifts for his grace to put this holy resolve in force, behold, in a few words in what meditation consists. When also there are many books furnishing a store of already prepared reflections, books which like the present give the form of the resolutions to be taken in each one's particular case, what becomes of the pretexts alleged for neglecting this salutary exercise? Begin with only half a quarter of an hour's quarter, but that regularly every day at least. If you offer these few moments with a good-will, and a sincere desire of pleasing God, you will soon observe the happy results in your interior, and it will not be long before you experience a pleasure in occupying yourselves for whole half hours together. *Taste, and see how sweet is the Lord!* Yes! taste, make a trial, and you will quickly find how delicious it is to converse with God. Above all, meditate on the Passion of your Saviour. Therein

you will discover a treasure of benedictions, a source of graces, by means of which your life will become more holy, and your salvation made sure. And here we may remark the beautiful expression of St. Augustine. Sit nobis fixus in corde, qui pro nobis fuit fixus in cruce. *Let him be fixed in our hearts, who for our sake was fixed on the cross.* He is our mediator; let us place our hopes in him. He is our father; let us show ourselves as his true children. He is our master; let us practice his lessons. He is our model; let us imitate the example he has left us. He will one day be our judge; let us fear his justice. All the precepts of morality, all the doctrine he had previously taught were exemplified during his Passion. In quality of master and instructor, he unfolds to us the true knowledge of good and evil. Every word he utters is an instructive lesson, his every action is a model of virtue, and all he suffers is of infinite price. *Let him be fixed in our hearts, who for our sake was fixed on the cross.*

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PRAYER OF ST. AUGUSTINE,

IN HONOUR OF THE

Passion and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

O GOD, who for the redemption of lost man, didst vouchsafe to be born as man, to be circumcised, to be rejected by the Jews, to be betrayed by the kiss of Judas, bound like a lamb for sacrifice, dragged before the tribunal of Annas and Caiphas, of Pilate and Herod, and accused by false witnesses; who didst suffer thyself to be scourged, covered with foul spittle, mocked and insulted, to be crowned with thorns, buffeted and struck with a reed, while in derision they blindfolded Thee; who didst allow thyself to be stript of thy clothes, to be nailed to a cross, to be lifted up between two thieves, to be drenched with gall and vinegar, and pierced with a lance; I humbly beseech thee, by so many and such cruel torments endured for the love of me, and which shall be ever present to my mind; I conjure Thee, by Thy cross and painful death, to deliver my soul from hell, and to receive me into the abode of the blessed, where Thou didst admit the penitent thief who was crucified with thee, O my Jesus, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, world without end.

Amen.

Five Our Fathers, five Hail Marys, and five Glories, &c.

N.B. They who recite the above prayer once a day, may gain each time an indulgence of three hundred days; and a Plenary Indulgence, if, having recited it every day of the month, and having confessed themselves, they receive the Holy Communion on one of the days of the same month, saying some prayers according to the intention of the Church.

These indulgences were granted by Pope Pius VII., and may be applied to the souls in Purgatory.

PIOUS REFLECTIONS

ON

The Passion of Jesus Christ.

PART THE FIRST.

JESUS CHRIST NARRATES HIS PASSION TO HIS
APOSTLES.

MEDITATION FOR THE FIRST DAY OF THE MONTH.

THE Son of God, having come on the earth, for our salvation and to reconcile us to his heavenly Father, he showed himself in the form of man, and announced to the world that the important moment was at length arrived, and that he himself was to accomplish the great work of human redemption, by sufferings and at the cost of his precious life. After having made choice of his apostles, destined by him to be the principal supports of his Church, he spoke to them on repeated occasions of his Passion and death, revealing to them all he should have to go through in achieving the great work for which he had been sent. It may, however, be remarked that he did not mention it till they had acknowledged his divinity. "Whom do you say that I am?" said he, while one day walking with them on the borders of the

Lake of Galilee. St. Peter, taking up the word, made answer for the rest. "Thou art Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God."(*) Or, in other words, after the prodigies I have seen Thee work, my dear Lord and Master; after so many proofs of Divine power which Thou hast shown; I cannot refuse acknowledging that Thou art truly the Son of God.

Behold, my soul, the first truth which faith unfolds in the mystery of the Passion; a truth of the utmost importance to be remembered in meditating on the sufferings of our Saviour. He who came to pay our ransom was not a simple mortal, like the other children of Adam; he was God as well as man, although, by an effect of his love for us, the dazzling brightness of his Divine essence was concealed under his human form. It is a God made man, the Son of the Most High, the beloved of his Father, the Desired of all nations, who has deigned to suffer for our sake; and sufferings which, were we to see a vile slave condemned to undergo, we should be struck with horror and melted with compassion. How is it, then, that we can, unmoved, look at the Son of God nailed to a cross? It is because this truth, which faith so clearly teaches, has no hold on, or has become extinct in, our souls? We know that he is the Son of God, and yet we regard him with indifference, his sufferings make no impression on our hearts. Hence it is no wonder that our courage fails us when the occasion offers for us to imitate his example. Is this the conduct of a soldier, on beholding the bleeding wounds of his chief, while exposing his life for the welfare of his country? Yet we, soldiers of our

* Matthew xvi. 15.

crucified Chief, almost blush to appear to be his disciples, and imitators, follow him, we fly away at the mere sight of sufferings and difficulty, after our great Captain has suffered so much, and voluntarily submitted to so many insults and trials for the purpose of inspiring us with courage.

What sayest thou, my soul; may not these reproaches be deservedly applied to thee? Art thou not one of those who, content with a lifeless and faint belief, take no trouble about the acquisition of that lively faith which alone makes saints and true disciples of Jesus Christ? Sometimes thy thoughts stray on the Passion of thy Saviour; but art thou ever really impressed with this great truth—that he who has undergone all these sufferings for thy redemption, is indeed the Son of God?

I acknowledge it, O Lord! to my shame do I confess it. My faith, on this point, has been weak, and if I have occasionally thought of thy pains, it has ever been without due reflection, and without that faith necessary to derive benefit from the remembrance of thy sufferings. Shall I always go on in the same manner? Forbid it, O Lord! Grant me a lively faith. I humbly crave it of thy infinite bounty. Yes! *Thou art truly the Son of God*; this I will repeat on every occasion, particularly when I apply myself to meditate on thy Passion; to the end that this truth, sinking deeply in my heart, may strengthen me to suffer every thing for Thee, who, God as thou art, hast endured so much for the salvation of my soul.

FRUIT.

In meditating on the Passion of your Saviour never forget that he who suffers is God, and that the sufferings

of this God are caused by your sins. No consideration will more effectually detach your heart from a life of sensuality, or render you more willing to suffer anything for his sake.



MEDITATION FOR THE SECOND DAY.

HE FORETELLS HIS PASSION (*continued*).

Our Saviour was so satisfied with the answer given by his apostle, that to show how truly he had spoken, and as a token of his approbation, he says to Peter: *Blessed art thou Simon Barjona*. Happy art thou in knowing the great truth thou hast just confessed. This knowledge has not come to thee from the school of carnal and sensual men; nor is it by any effort of thy own natural understanding thou hast discovered this important truth. Thou hast received it from my heavenly Father. He it is who, in bestowing on thee a docile heart and a spirit of sincerity, has enabled thee to see from my doctrine and my works that I am in truth the Messiah, notwithstanding the lowliness of my birth and the poverty of my condition of life. Thou art Peter, a Rock in name and in strength, and upon thee I will build my Church as upon a rock, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail; moreover I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, in such a manner that whatever thou bindest on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever thou loosest on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Learn hence, my soul, how bounteous is the liberality of God to those who give heed to his inspirations and serve him with fidelity. Whenever he infuses a ray of

celestial light, we may be sure that it is a grace intended as the commencement of a thousand other blessings and favours provided we faithfully correspond with it. My soul, hast thou fully understood this truth? What has been thy attention to the inspirations of heaven? Hast thou not too often disregarded the gracious calls of thy loving God? And by this neglect hast thou not dried up the source of so many other bounties which his liberality had prepared for thee; but which by thy own fault are perhaps for ever lost to thee?

I have here, O my God, great reason to be confounded. I can find no excuse for my misconduct; I have too much cause for trembling. Grant that this fear may be unto my salvation. Thou art continually pouring forth thy blessings on all creatures, and I have not been the last to experience the effects of thy bounty. Thou hast manifested thy goodness towards me in an endless variety of ways, and a thousand times have I understood in my interior the beneficent purpose of thy inspirations. What has become of all these graces? Where is the benefit I have derived from them? For fear of opposing my irregular desires; to satisfy my whims and caprices, and for the pleasure of following my own will, I have stifled those interior voices, and have placed a wall of separation between thy love and my soul. I have turned aside the course of those numerous and inestimable blessings that would have flowed into my heart had I duly corresponded with preceding graces. The world's voice, the suggestions of the flesh, the voice of human respect, of vanity and self-love, have stunned my ears against that other voice which called me to virtue and happiness. The thought of these infidelities makes me fear that I am of

the number of those to whom it was said: *You hear not the word of God, because you are not of God.*(*)

Fearful sentence, O Lord, for a soul like mine, which has hitherto taken so little notice of thy inspirations, and turned away from thy blessed light, which showed me the path to heaven. I have fancied myself to be rich and to stand in need of nothing, and I now find that I am miserable and destitute. It is my own fault, I confess it, O Lord, in confusion, here prostrate at thy feet. I have refused to be enriched by thee; I spurned thy gifts; I have been unfaithful to thy calls. Like an unworthy servant, I have neglected my duty to thee. I acknowledge it in bitterness of heart, but I trust to thy great mercy to have regard to the sincerity of my repentance, and to the resolution I here take of changing my conduct, and of being more attentive in future to thy gracious calls, to the end that I may draw down an abundance of those special graces, which are the reward of fidelity, and by the help of which I may work out my salvation.

FRUIT.

The least inspiration from God, is a grace worth more than all the treasures of the world. Weigh well this truth at the feet of Jesus Christ; and, for the time to come, let it cause you to be more exact and faithful in his Divine service.

MEDITATION FOR THE THIRD DAY.

JESUS FORETELLS HIS PASSION (*continued*).

That noble profession of faith made by Peter was so pleasing to the heart of Jesus Christ, that the Divine

* John viii. 47.

Saviour at once declared him, in the presence of the other apostles, the head of his Church. While, however, expressing his satisfaction in so striking a manner, he strictly forbade them to divulge the important secret. *He commanded his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.*(*) After his resurrection his language was very different. He then enjoined them to publish his name and character to the uttermost ends of the earth. For what reason, therefore, did he, on the eve of his Passion, so strictly forbid them to mention it? My soul, there is some hidden mystery in this proceeding of thy Redeemer, and from which thou mayest derive instruction. If the Son of God enjoins his apostles not to publish his sacred character, it was, says St. Luke, because he was to be exposed to sufferings, to be derided by the people, rejected by the Scribes and Pharisees, and to be condemned to a cruel death.(†) Ah! the reason then is made clear; his humility explains all. By his astonishing humility he began, from the first moment of his incarnation, to render that worthy homage which had never before been given on earth to the Deity by his creatures, and he would continue it unto the end. In thus *charging his apostles to remain* silent on the subject, he would not have the knowledge of his divinity form any obstacle to his sufferings and death; anxious, not for the praises of men, but for the accomplishment of his Father's will.

Reflect, my soul, on the lesson here given thee by thy Saviour, and which he will so often repeat during his Passion. He is so attached to suffering, that he forbids his apostles to say that he is the Messiah, lest this truth

* Matt. xvi. 20.

+ Luke ix. 22.

becoming known should hinder him from being put to death; and he makes so little account of the esteem of men, that he prefers passing his life in neglect and obscurity to receiving the applauding homages of the world.

Truly sublime lessons! and as they come, O my Jesus, from Thee, who art the Eternal wisdom, there can be no doubt of their truth and importance; I ought, long since, as thy follower and disciple, to have attended to them. But has such been the tenor of my life? Alas! on an examination of my heart, I find therein a great love of ease and comfort, with a strong sentiment of pride, which makes me look upon crosses and sufferings as insupportable. Hence, too, I have no relish for a quiet and obscure life, but a continual desire of appearing before the world. How long shall I refuse to see how hateful is such conduct in thy eyes? Should the disciple wish to be thought more of than his master? the slave than his lord? Shall I still hesitate to enter on the road which Thou hast opened before me, the road of crosses and humiliations? Oh! my amiable Redeemer! if Thou, who art innocence itself, hast not taken possession of that glory to which Thou hadst so many claims, but after being humbled and subjected to the most cruel torments, it is just that I, a guilty criminal should, by humiliations and sufferings, make some atonement to thy offended justice, and by the same means strive to regain possession of that heavenly kingdom which I have so often forfeited by my sins. Yes! it is right that the guilty should suffer, that he should be willing to be humbled here on earth, in order to escape the eternal degradation and torments of a miserable hereafter. Shall I then dare to murmur, when I have something to put up with in the

merciful designs of Thy Providence, I, who have deserved long ago to be now burning in the flames of hell? Shall I think of complaining when I see Thee thus overwhelmed in a sea of tortures and afflictions? Shall I, dust and ashes, dare to exalt myself with vain self-complacency after the lessons and examples of humility thou hast shown me?

FRUIT.

Be not satisfied with a mere general and vague submission to humiliations and sufferings. Call to mind, at leisure, the particular occasions, on which you are apt to be puffed up with pride, or to indulge in a fondness for ease, and endeavour to be prepared against them, by keeping constantly before your eyes the example of your humble Saviour.



MEDITATION FOR THE FOURTH DAY.

JESUS CHRIST FORETELLS HIS PASSION (*continued*).

After strengthening their faith in his Divinity with an injunction, however, not to speak of his being the Messiah, our Lord lays open to his apostles the mystery of his approaching Passion; lest being unadvised thereof they might be shocked at the sight of his sufferings and death, and might be scandalised in him. He tells them plainly that he is to go to Jerusalem, there to be ill-treated by the Scribes and Pharisees; adding that he should be put to death, but that on the third day after his death he should rise again. (*) Convinced as they were of his Divinity, it might be expected that they would have at once, on hearing him speak in that manner,

* Matt. xvi. 21.

pledged themselves to follow him happen what might. This, however, was not the case. Peter, who had been always the first to speak, commenced on this occasion, and, either from a suggestion of the Evil Spirit, or from an erroneous affection for his Divine Master, Peter opposed the design manifested by our Saviour, and having taken him aside, sought to divert him from putting it in execution, considering such sufferings incompatible with his quality of the Son of God. He never wished to put obstacles in his way. *Lord*, said he, *far be this thought from Thee; No! it shall not be thus with Thee.* (*) Such was the language of Peter, but what was the answer of Jesus Christ? Frowning with indignation and with a threatening voice: "Get thee behind me, Satan," said he, "thou art a scandal to me, "because thou dost not understand the things that are "of God, but only the things that are of men." (†) Hardly a moment has passed since the Son of God told Peter that he was happy among men in having gained the knowledge of what flesh and blood were incapable of teaching him, and now he calls him Satan. Whence this sudden change? It was, says St. Augustine, that in the former instance Peter spoke by the Spirit of God, and repeated what he had received from the Father of lights; whereas, he speaks here from his own spirit, and expresses himself conformably to the suggestions of flesh and blood. Such is the desire of Jesus Christ to save lost man, that he is indignant at the prince of his apostles attempting to divert him from the endurance of the sufferings which are to work out an object so dear to his divine heart.

* Matt. xvi. 22.

† Matt. xvi. 23.

See, my soul, how thy Saviour has loved thee! So ardently did he long to suffer for thee, that he reproached his apostle for merely wishing to save him from the horrors of his Passion, in a manner so bitter as to call him Satan, that is to say, an enemy's seducer.

Here let us turn our thoughts on ourselves. Have we not acted like Peter; has not our language been but too similar? Occasions of suffering and humiliation frequently occur, indeed, almost every day. How often do we say, *Far be this from me*. It is too painful, too degrading for me; these humiliations and indignities are not becoming a person of my rank, they are derogatory to my station of life, and hurtful to the position I occupy in society. Sheltering ourselves behind the pretexts, we have given way to the pride that tempted us. Its power over us has been fortified, so as ever to show itself in our exterior to the scandal of those whom it was our duty to edify. Thus have I also but too often conducted myself. I now see it, O Lord, and confess it to my confusion. I have been hitherto little better than a slave of pride, basely following its lying suggestions. Ever puffed up with the idea of my own consequence, I have taken offence at every thing. The least word said about me has filled me with trouble. A disparaging smile I may have perceived has disturbed my temper. Even a hint given in charity has wounded my sensitiveness, and has too often even embittered my feelings towards my neighbour. I have become at once unsociable, lost all propriety and demeanour, and retorted with expressions of bitterness. Frequently I have not been able to brook the slightest contradiction, and have recoiled from the most trivial humiliation. It is pride, O my God, which causes all

these disorders in my soul, and which has fixed its roots like an evil tree in my heart. Extirpate, O Lord, its baneful influence, which, like a foul leaven corrupts all the powers of my soul, and disables me from following Thee in Thy humiliations and sufferings. Grant me resolution to root it from my heart, and that for the future I may endeavour to become humble of heart like Thee.

FRUIT.

As long as we give way to pride, we shall never be free from vice; for pride was the commencement, and has ever since continued to be the source of all sin. While it holds dominion over our souls we shall remain sinners, whatever appearance of virtue we may assume. It behoves me to reflect well on this at the feet of my Saviour.

MEDITATION FOR THE FIFTH DAY.

JESUS CHRIST FORETELLS HIS PASSION (*continued*).

In order to arrest the erroneous notions still entertained by Peter and the rest of the apostles respecting humiliations and sufferings, our Saviour does not merely give the severe rebuke to this apostle as seen before, but causing the crowd of people to come closer around him, he declares in the hearing of all, that he, who wishes to be his disciple, must renounce his own will, must be ready to suffer every thing for his name and follow Him everywhere. "He that will be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me."(*) These

* Matt. xvi. 24.

words of our Redeemer deserve our serious consideration. He will have us then to deny ourselves and to follow Him with our cross on our shoulders; and that we may not deceive ourselves with the idea that he means to address himself only to his apostles, he expressly orders the multitude that was following him to draw within hearing of his word, in order to show what he is going to say he intends for all without exception. It is not the cross he himself is to carry that he imposes on us. It is our own cross, which not he, but our present state of existence renders it necessary for us to bear, if we will be his disciples. His wish is, that we make a virtue of necessity, by carrying our cross to advantage. When we bear our cross in this manner, following his footsteps by imitating his patience and courage, he never fails to lighten it for us by grace, and even shares the burden with us. On the contrary, those who have not these dispositions, are deprived of the balmy assistance of heavenly consolations, and groan under its heavy weight, anticipating the misery which their perversity is preparing for them in the dungeon of hell hereafter.

It behoves me to examine to which of these two classes I belong. Alas! my conscience too plainly tells me that I have hitherto been of the number of those whom the apostle calls *enemies of the Cross of Christ*.(*) I have often perversely wished for another cross, which seemed to me light and easy to be carried, but have always submitted unwillingly to my own. I have even sought after crosses which appeared honourable, and which promised indulgence to my pride and self-love. In such a pursuit

* Philip. iii. 18.

I have made light of and even welcomed sufferings; but as for those which threatened humiliation, for those every-day crosses allotted to the situation or rank in which it has pleased the Almighty to place me, and which solicited my acceptance, but at the same time would cause me some little humiliation before men, these crosses, O my God, I have either repelled or borne with feelings of disgust and repugnance. What treasures of grace have I lost by thus frustrating Thy gracious intentions in my regard! I have suffered willingly to please the world, which has done nothing but deceive me, while I could not prevail on my perverse heart to endure anything for Thee, my God and Saviour, although having Thy example before me, and aware of the promise Thou hast given me of repaying all I suffered for Thy sake by a crown of everlasting glory. When shall I be delivered from a blindness so prejudicial to the interests of my soul? When will these crosses become dear to me for thy sake, O my God? My life is passing away, eternity is drawing near, and I have yet to begin to profit by Thy doctrine and example, so practically ignorant am I of the obligation of renouncing myself, of carrying my cross and following Thee. Deliver me, O Lord, from so dangerous a delusion, and grant me, I beseech thee, a true love of sufferings.

FRUIT.

I must suffer and carry a cross, since whatever be my disposition, it is certainly, then much wiser to work out my salvation by the means of sufferings endured with merit, than by suffering perhaps more, and without merit, to be eternally lost. When my crosses seem to

bear heavily upon me, I will call to mind the weight of that which my Saviour had to carry, and thus rouse myself to a good resolution of heart. The first thing I have to do is to mortify my own will, otherwise the smallest cross will be too heavy for me to bear with profit.



MEDITATION FOR THE SIXTH DAY.

JESUS CHRIST FORETELLS HIS PASSION (*continued*).

So intimate is the connexion of the Passion of Jesus Christ with all he had previously taught that we are often compelled, as it were, while meditating on his sufferings to fix our thoughts on his doctrine. In fact, his Passion is the exemplification of his doctrine, which, in its turn, is but the prelude and basis of his Passion. He has just declared to the assembled multitude that to be his disciple, it is necessary to renounce self-will, to take up each one his cross and to follow him; when he continues in words well deserving the deepest reflection : *What doth it profit a man, says he, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul ? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul ?*(*)

Behold, my soul, a language unheard in the schools of the world, and which eternal Wisdom alone could utter, a language unfolding what we are in the eyes of God, and how dear we are to Him. The above words reveal the dignity of man and the value of his immortal soul, destined, after passing a few days on earth, for another and never-ending state of existence. Should, however,

* Matt. xvi. 26.

man by unchanging, a strange perversity, employ these his few short days on earth in effecting his own ruin, by what covenant, by what exchange, will he repair his disaster? Were he to succeed in amassing all the goods of the world, were he to subject the universe to his sway, and to end his days in the undisputed possession of all the earth contains, what will all avail him if he lose his soul? Let us endeavour to appreciate the full force of this capital truth. What would be said of a man who should give his life, for the supposed possession of any one, or of even all the goods the world contains? There would, doubtless, be but one opinion of his folly, as in forfeiting his life, he would put himself out of the power of enjoying what he had thus acquired. But is not my folly much greater, if, misusing the temporal life which has been given me, or even saving it to the prejudice of my soul, I sacrifice the future and immortal bliss of both body and soul to the short-lived satisfaction of the present? In acting thus I make sure of nothing; for the moment will ere long arrive when all I may appear to have saved will slip from my grasp, and leave me nothing but the never-dying thought that I have lost all. Can I for a moment expose myself to the hazard of such a misfortune, knowing as I do, that it were far better to suffer death than preserve my life by transgressing, in the slightest instance, the law of God? And if to ensure the salvation of my immortal soul, I ought to be willing to give up my life, incomparably of the most value to me in this world, what can earth offer me that should induce me to peril the safety of my soul? Shall then a vile passion, a momentary gratification, a lump of gilded clay, a mere whim out-

weigh the regard I have for my soul's everlasting welfare? Is this the price at which I am content to make it over to the infernal demon?

Yet, alas! on examining my past conduct, I find that on repeated occasions I have recklessly gone to this excess of folly. I have needlessly suffered myself to be bewitched by my passions and seduced by wicked company, so as to be led to the very brink of the precipice; and that I did not therein fall headlong, I owe to Thy merciful hand, O my God, which snatched me from destruction. Yes! on *me*, Thou hadst pity, while so many others perhaps less criminal have been irretrievably lost! A thousand times blessed be Thy goodness towards me; and may I know at least for the time to come how to profit by Thy bounteous elemency, and by a sincere conversion persevere in this salutary knowledge to the last moment of my life.

FRUIT.

When the tempter allures you to sin, imagine you hear the voice of Jesus Christ repeating to you these words: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he lose his soul." Seriously reflect on their fearful meaning and grace will not be wanting to render you victorious in the combat.



MEDITATION FOR THE SEVENTH DAY.

JESUS CHRIST FORETELLS HIS PASSION (*continued*).

The above was not the only occasion on which our Lord spoke of his Passion to his apostles. After his glorious Transfiguration on Mount Thabor he returned to the subject, repeating that he should be delivered ~~into~~

the hands of his enemies, who would put him to death. (*) The gospel, however, here remarks, that the apostles were unable to comprehend his meaning; and fearful of knowing more than they wished to believe, were unwilling to ask for further information. *This word was hidden from them; they understood it not.* (†) They knew well enough what was meant by being delivered into the hands of enemies, and being put to death; but they could not comprehend how Jesus Christ, whom they knew to be the Messiah, and the Son of God, and consequently immortal, yea, eternal, could be subject to death, or exposed to injuries and outrages from men. They could not reconcile such an astonishing degradation with the dignity of their Divine Master. The chief cause of their embarrassment, and that which has reference to our present subject, arose from their false notions with regard to the character and qualities of the Messiah. Not yet having received the fulness of the Holy Ghost, the apostles partook of the errors of those carnal Jews, who regarded the Messiah in the light of a conqueror, destined to re-establish the temporal dominion they had lost. Full of these ideas, and aware of the Divine nature in the person of Jesus Christ, they too looked forward to the time when their great Master would manifest his power by the restoration of the kingdom of Juda; hence the words *sufferings, ignominies, and death*, mentioned by our Redeemer, disconcerted the views of ambition, which saw little to hope from a Messiah who was to be crucified.

Behold what we are! No matter how clear and evident the truths we are told, if they be disagreeable

* Mark ix. 30.

† Luke ix. 45.

to our inclinations, we can always find them to be obscure; and once they clash with our carnal ideas, we hope to prove them to be false. Nothing is so unintelligible as that which we do not wish to understand. We trace out a plan of conduct, to which, however whimsical and arbitrary, we are resolved to adhere; and should even a prophet preach to us, though a minister of God, a sincere friend, or a zealous superior, charitably admonish us, or thunder in our ears the words of Nathan to David: "Thou art the man;" or those words of the great Precursor: "It is not lawful for thee to do it;" we remain unconvinced, solely because we do not wish to understand, and refuse to give up our cherished notions; we are wedded to our prejudices, to follow which, more at ease, we are ready to cast the prophet into prison; we enchain his tongue, we put him away, or keep at a distance from him; or if we consent to listen to him, it is with a cold indifference, plainly indicating our settled resolution of following the gospel after our own way.

Has not this been my conduct? Charitable admonitions I have not wanted; I have frequently read in pious books; the word of God has often sounded in my ears; and I have seen and heard the same never-varying truths at every period of my life, and in every situation. What use have I made of these graces? Where is the profit I have derived from them! *Ah! Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that stonest the prophets!* I have been like that faithless and ungrateful city, to which the Lord sent his messengers, but which put them to death, in order to stifle the voice that called her to repentance. I too have preferred listening to my prejudices and vain caprices. I have shaken off the yoke of God; I have

refused to alter my ways, or to follow any other guide but the will of flesh and blood, careless of walking right before God.

Am I not still in this dangerous state? And may I not, by any further delay, expose myself to the danger of being surprised therein by death, as has been the case of so many others? Grant me, O Lord, a heart more attentive to thy gracious calls, that for the future, at least, my conduct may be different. Much do I want that docility which may induce me to conform to the truth, however distasteful to my self-will.

FRUIT.

A love of the truth denotes an earnest desire of salvation. To love the truth is to possess the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of truth. I ought to love the truth, not only as opposed to falsehood, but as a powerful weapon in my struggle against my passions and caprices. I will examine myself well on this point, and use my best endeavours to amend.

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MEDITATION FOR THE EIGHTH DAY.

JESUS CHRIST FORETELLS HIS PASSION (*continued*).

Jesus Christ was fully aware that the intimations he was so often giving relatively to his Passion, would not be of much use to his apostles till they had been replenished by the Holy Ghost, who would impart to them a knowledge of all truth. He wished, nevertheless, to lessen the surprise and dismay he knew they would experience when they beheld the period of his sufferings arrive. He moreover was desirous of making

them understand, that his being delivered into the hands of his enemies was the free act of his own will. The least doubt on the subject would have been a disparagement to the glory of his character. Accordingly, a few days previous to his celebrating, for the last time, the Paschal solemnity, and while on his way to Jerusalem, followed by a crowd of people, he took his apostles aside and spoke to them again concerning his Passion. "We go up to Jerusalem," said he, "and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and to the scribes, who will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles, to be mocked, and scourged, and crucified."(*) Still the result was the same as on former occasions; they understood him not. Indeed, that no impression was made on the minds of the apostles by what he had said, may be clearly seen from the strange request which two of them had the presumption to make. Scarcely had he finished speaking of the contumelies of his Passion, a subject so calculated to suppress every feeling of ambition, when James and John said to him: *Master, grant that, in the kingdom of thy glory, we may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand.*

Some time before our Saviour had promised them all to sit with Him on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Assured, then, of all obtaining thrones, each became anxious of possessing the first; and their ambition was mortified at the thought of securing only a secondary place. Different reasons served to foster their error. He had announced to them his approaching reign and the overthrow of his enemies. He had told them

* Matt. xx. 18, 19.

that he should appear in glory, surrounded by angels, and seated on a resplendent throne. Imbued with worldly ideas of greatness and glory, and looking on the Messiah as a powerful prince, destined to free Israel from the yoke of its enemies, they shut their eyes on the passages of Holy Writ, which represented him suffering and debased while accommodating to their own notions, those other prophecies in which he was foretold as the conqueror of death, sin, and hell. Hence originated the strange proposition made by the two above-named apostles.

Am I free from this abominable race of ambition? or aware of its enormity and malice? There are no bounds to its desires: it never ceases from seeking further elevation. When seemingly confining its pretensions with a sphere of moderation, it stops only from being malice for the moment, to rise higher; but let this first step be once assured, a fresh rise will be aimed at, and so on for ever. Objects appear different according to the position whence they are beheld; but ambition is always the same, in every grade and condition.

Here may be seen pride in its highest degree of influence and the fatal cause of the ruin of thousands of souls. Withdrawing, however, my attention from others, it will be of more advantage to me to turn my thoughts on myself. Although possibly not of the number of those who boast of being regarded ambitious, and who to satisfy their ambition, run madly into the most extravagant expenses, and submit to the most debasing servilities, do I in no ways cherish that more subtle ambition so common among men? Have I no secret idea of my own excellence inducing me to think myself deserving of

certain rewards and distinctions, or post of honour, so as to adopt occasionally some skilful manœuvres to secure it? Do I always tranquilly look on others' merit, nor feel any vexation at seeing them preferred before me? Have I not on the contrary sometimes tried to lower their claims in the eyes of those called upon to decide? I have not indeed been destitute of zeal; but it has not been the zeal according to God. Hence, I have paid more attention elsewhere, than to the particular charge confided to me, because I have regarded it beneath my merits, and was even covertly aiming at something more worthy my fancied talents, or employing my time in endeavours to depreciate the conduct of those above me. What is all this but ambition, and which, O my God, has indeed degraded me before Thee? Men may have supposed me to have been actuated by virtuous motives, because I continued to deceive them by an extension of apparent regularity or pretended zeal, while in reality I have been an object worthy of vengeance in thy eyes, since I was all the time fostering that hateful vice, which compelled thee to drive the rebel angels from heaven. Grant me, I beseech thee, O Lord, to be truly humble for the future, and henceforth to have no other ambition but that of pleasing thee, and accomplishing thy holy will.

FRUIT.

Ambition is never alone. It is always accompanied by envy, spite, and uncharitableness. Hypocrisy is its eldest daughter. By these marks I may easily ascertain if I am enslaved by it; and should this be the case, I should lose no time in expelling the tyrant.

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MEDITATION FOR THE NINTH DAY.

JESUS CHRIST FORETELLS HIS PASSION (*concluded*).

The above was not the first occasion on which the apostles had manifested a desire of pre-eminence, or betrayed the ambition which lurked in their hearts. Already had they given unmistakeable proofs, and our Saviour had constantly endeavoured to disabuse them of their dangerous notions by repeated lessons of humility. As yet, however, they had derived little benefit from his instructions. The projects dictated by ambition, were constantly reviving in their minds, and after the promise made them of sitting with him in his kingdom on twelve thrones, they had conceived an exalted idea of their own importance. The only thing which still perplexed their gross imagination, was to know who among them should have precedence. They might, indeed, suppose the question resolved in favour of Peter, declared by their Master the foundation of his church. But then Andrew had priority of vocation, John a particular intimacy with the Redeemer, and James, his elder brother, had received tokens of especial confidence. The other apostle, called James, with those who were termed *the brethren of the Lord*, seemed to have strong claims by reason of their relationship. The greater number appeared to possess some peculiar right to the first place, and each one confided in his own superiority. But the only true title, humility and a love of sufferings, was wanting to all. And perhaps the two apostles, who had the hardihood to propose for the first place, in the kingdom of their Master, were the most deficient. Hence our Lord, to break down their pride, and to impart to all

a salutary lesson, said to them, "You know not what you ask. Can you drink of the chalice which I am going to drink?" We can, answered they, and without a moment's reflection. "He saith to them: My chalice you shall indeed drink; but to sit on my right or left hand, is not mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared by my Father."(*)

Let us weigh well the import of the words of our Saviour, for what he said to his apostles he repeats to us all. His meaning was, "Do you know what it is to sit on my right hand and on my left? Do you suppose it to be something in the ordinary meaning of honour? You imagine that I am going to found a temporal kingdom here on earth, and that its dignities are to be like those bestowed by the world. You are as yet ignorant of what I am going to do, and of the nature of my kingdom. The goods and honours which I have promised you are for your immortal souls, and you seek for what is only temporal and frail; you knew not what you ask. Again, it is not by favour and by the claims of flesh and blood that are obtained the first places in my kingdom, but by means of humility, of sufferings, and of crosses. Since you are desirous of the first places in my kingdom, are you prepared to act in a manner that will merit them? Are you really determined to drink of my chalice? Provided you remain faithful to me and my gospel, you may look forward to a share in my sufferings. In this case, I can promise the fulfilment of your wishes, but on any other condition, to sit on my right hand and on my left is not for me to give; these places are for those only who

* Matt. xx. 22.

shall have thus deserved them, and for whom they have been destined by my Father, whose desire it is not for me to oppose."

These lessons, my soul, are also intended for thee. The kingdom of heaven is to be secured by violence, and to the violent only has it been promised. It yields only to those who have merited it. It can be obtained only on this condition, which is directly opposed to all indulgence in vice. Preserve me, then, O Lord, from giving way to my passions, and grant me strength to adhere to the rule thou hast laid down for my salvation. Alas! I have hitherto gone astray after my vicious propensities. Grant that, seeing now the folly of my past life, I may be freed from this shameful servitude, and may never more become its victim.

FRUIT.

All our passions are prone to evil, and if indulged, will assuredly lead us in sin. Crush at once these rising monsters, if you would escape at once becoming their prey. *The lion's whelp grows up into a lion, says the prophet; it soon learns to devour its prey and to destroy men.*(*) Combat your passions while they are yet feeble; by so doing you will avoid many a painful struggle, you will escape their tyranny, and each victory over them will add to your treasures in heaven.

* Ezech. xix. 8.

MEDITATION FOR THE TENTH DAY.

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JESUS CHRIST FORETELLS HIS PASSION (*continued*).

Our Saviour recommends humility and the love of sufferings as being his own characteristics, and as indispensable qualities in every member of his Church. Having appointed his apostles its rulers, he was apprehensive of their being puffed up with the dignity to which he had raised them, and of lording it over those committed to their charge. He therefore admonished them in words of profitable import for them, and for all others invested with authority. *The princes of the Gentiles lord it over them, and they that are the greater, exercise power upon them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister. (*)* Then offering himself as a model, he added: *Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a redemption for many. (†)*

If you, who are meditating on these words, are entrusted with the guidance of others, or have reason to expect any such appointment, study well the lesson here given. In either case you should bear in mind the gospel truth exemplified by the Son of God, that he who is at the head of the fold of Jesus Christ, ought to beware of ruling like a despot, but should guide like a father, ever ready to perform, without fear of debasement, the lowest services for the good of others. To wish to rule in our own way, and to force others to acquiesce in our fancies; to expect every knee to bend before us, while refusing to allow for human weakness; to be fond

* Matt. xx. 25.

† Ibid, xx. 28.

of a pompous display of authority; in a word, to enact on every occasion unlimited submission, is not to govern in the spirit of Jesus Christ nor his gospel, but to imitate the rulers and tyrants of the heathen world. As for them, says he, they wish to domineer without controul; they command with haughtiness, maintain themselves by force, and invest submission by violence. *It shall not be so with you.* In my kingdom, he who will rule must employ only meekness, moderation, and humble forbearance. He who is anxious to preserve his authority must endeavour to win the heart by gentle treatment, disarm resistance by patience, and subdue men by the force of calm reason, and the power of truth. In the house of God, says St. Augustine, superiors are in effect, and should conduct themselves as the servants of others, for they are not to command in a domineering spirit, but with the desire of being useful to their brethren.*

It is in this mirror I ought to look at the use I have hitherto made of the authority which the Almighty has given me over others. How often have I harshly repelled those subject to me, and wounded their feelings by an excess of authority? With a little more of mildness and charity I should have healed their wounds, instead of which I have only exasperated them. Had I shown somewhat more moderation I should have gained them to Jesus Christ, whereas, by my impetuosity of temper, I have driven them entirely from the good way. If I had been more attentive in watching over them, they would have escaped the jaws of the infernal lion; but owing to my love of my own ease, and want of vigilance, they have

* Deciv. Dei. lib. 19, c. 14.

become the prey of hell. What an account shall I have to render at the tribunal of God? What excuse shall I plead when beholding so many souls lost through my misgovernment? What compensation shall I be able to make those with whose welfare I had been entrusted, but whom I have ruined by my bad example?

I shudder, O Lord, at the thought of the terrible judgment reserved for those in authority. *A heavy judgment to those who govern*, says the Book of Wisdom.* And I have more reason to tremble when I reflect how often I have wanted that vigilance, humility, and mildness required by thee in those whom thou hast invested with a share in the government of thy Church. Have pity on me, O merciful God! I am resolved to enter into myself and thoroughly sift my past conduct, with a determination to correct my failings.

FRUIT.

In order to rule others, it is necessary to have a command over yourself. Master first your own passions, and you will have the power of controlling the passions of others under your authority. Cure effectually your own wounds, and the Almighty will bless your endeavours for the healing of others. Above all, labour to acquire humility of heart and meekness of disposition by meditating on the example of your Saviour, and on the lessons he has given. *Learn of me*, says he, *because I am meek and humble of heart.*(†)

* Wisdom vi. 6.

† Matt. xi. 29.

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MEDITATION FOR THE ELEVENTH DAY.

THE PHARISEES RESOLVE ON THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST.

Three days before his death, our Saviour again spoke to his apostles concerning his Passion; but the gospel does not inform us of the impression which that, his fourth prediction, made upon their minds.(*). It simply relates that, on the following day, the priests and elders of the people assembled together to hold a discussion on the best means of seizing the person of Jesus Christ and putting him to death. A few days previous he had raised to life Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, and the miracle was published on every side, and was the occasion of many of the Jews believing in our Saviour, and acknowledging him to be the Son of God. But the greater number persisted in their blindness, and became more embittered against him on hearing how rapidly that prodigy had spread his fame. This vindictive feeling brought them together at the house of Caiphas, for the purpose of conspiring his ruin. Already, indeed, had they sought to destroy him, but they had not hitherto been able to succeed. They were now determined on a final resolution, and to consult together on the most efficient way of accomplishing their blood-stained purpose. Though it was impossible for them to deny the truth of the miracle, or controvert its publicity, they repelled the light it offered, and even took occasion therefrom to plunge deeper in their blind obstinacy. Terrible example of the fatal consequences of giving a loose to our passions,

* Matt. xxvi. 22.

and repeated with melancholy frequency during the course of our Lord's Passion!

In looking at the Passion of Jesus Christ with the eye of flesh and blood, it seems but a natural result of the hatred of the Jews, particularly of the chief priests and the Pharisees. But when considered with the light of faith, it shows but too clearly what the same faith teaches us, that his sufferings and death were caused by our sins; and whence do they come but from our neglecting to restrain our passions within proper limits? Our passions are not of themselves essentially evil, for the saints, now in the possession of everlasting glory, made use of these very passions whereby to mount up to heaven. If they lead us to evil, we have given them this power over us by neglecting to keep them within the bounds of duty. The Almighty placed them under our control, and we have voluntarily allowed them to gain the mastery, by lending them to vice, while, in the designs of God, they were intended as means to practice virtue and enrich us with merits. Provided, therefore, we make a proper use of them, they will become for us what they have been to so many others, who have rendered them conducive to sanctification; while, if we yield to them, they will prove our ruin.

It is but too true, O my God! a sad experience leaves me no room for doubt. If I have been too often the slave of my passions, it has been my own fault. They have demanded what I was bound to refuse; I have given way and fallen under their shameful bondage. I have thought to pacify them by yielding for the once, and I have found, to my cost, that they were not to be satisfied. The more I granted, the greater their demands; and in

return for my foolish weakness, they have deprived me of peace of heart, and stripped my soul of the gifts of thy grace, leaving me but remorse and poverty of soul. Ah! since I have yet time left me, grant me to break, once for all, their chains, and to become master, and never again to become their slave. What a shame for me to remain under so degrading a thralldom? Is it not sad to see him who should be master, reduced to the necessity of obeying the unruly caprices of the slave. I am determined to burst these disgraceful fetters, and with the assistance of thy grace, O Lord, I feel assured of succeeding.

FRUIT.

No one becomes a slave of his passions all at once. It is link by link, and imperceptibly, that the chains of this vile servitude is formed. It behoves me, therefore, carefully to avoid the smallest concession, which can only be done by constant prayer and flight of all occasion of danger. How have I hitherto attended to prayer? Have I not also been negligent in keeping away from dangerous occasions? Let me examine, to see where I have failed.

MEDITATION FOR THE TWELFTH DAY.

THE PHARISEES RESOLVE ON THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

(continued).

Let us return to the house of Caiphas, where are assembled the enemies of Jesus Christ. What are the proceedings of these judges of the peace and guardians of the public welfare? What are the heads of accusation alleged against the pretended culprit? His miracles;

particularly the one he had just wrought in favour of Lazarus. "What are we doing?" say they; "what need of deliberation? This man is constantly working miracles!" Not a word is said of his being a blasphemer, a seducer of the people, or a rebel to the law of Moses, or the authority of Caesar. All that was very well to tell the multitude, but they themselves well knew that the Saviour could not be reproached on any of these points; any such assertions would have made them appear to one another as weak as the vulgar crowd on whom it was sought to impose. "He works miracles!" This is his crime. "And if he goes on much longer," they added, "the whole world will believe in him." Another word remained to be pronounced. This was: *He must be got rid of; we must sacrifice him for the public safety.* This, however, would have too clearly expressed the crime of these men of blood, hence it is for the present suppressed. Gladly would they have seen the deed accomplished, but they wished to save appearances, in order to be able to say, in case of its being done, that others, not they, were the authors of it; in a word, to fix elsewhere the odium, while they came in for a share of the expected advantages.

Alas! we too often act as the Jews did on that occasion, self-love causing us to appear outwardly different from what we are interiorly, and in our hearts. We wish to appear virtuous, while strangers to it in reality; for there is a charm in being thought virtuous, and whatever may be our guilt we are not desirous of being regarded criminal. Hence, when we cannot screen our vices entirely from the observation of others, we do our best to throw over them the garb of probity or to fix the blame on others.

How often has this been my conduct? I have sinned, and even taken a pleasure in vice, but anxious of a reputation before men, rather than of pleasing God, and regardless of His displeasure, I have thought only how to pass for an upright and respectable person in the eyes of the world. I have returned to my evil ways, and with increased complacency I have even led others into wickedness, and after all I have pretended to be innocent, and have endeavoured to fasten the guilt on some one else. I have eaten the forbidden fruit, and then quietly wiping my mouth have tried to make the world believe that I had not touched it, but that all the harm was to be attributed to others.

But thou, O my God, didst know all. Nothing was hidden from thee! Thou didst see all my injustice, my criminal thoughts and desires. Thou wast fully aware of the end I proposed in my actions. Thou didst easily sift out every vitiating particle, and while men, deceived by my hypocrisy, absolved me from all blame, thou didst thunder in my guilty conscience the sentence of condemnation. And in truth I have deserved it, O Lord, for I have hitherto been but a false Christian, a perverse child of thy church, and the greater my elevation, the more inexcusable have I been before thee. Hadst thou definitely passed sentence against me, and abandoned me to the doom I merited, of what avail to me would have been the good opinion of the world? Eternal praise be given to thee, O Lord, for thy great forbearance towards me, and for having waited for me so long. And now, acknowledging by the light of thy grace, my sinfulness, I implore thy forgiveness for the past, and beseech thee to grant me sincerely to repent and amend my conduct *for the future.*

FRUIT.

Whether men praise or blame me, I shall always be such as I am before God, who sees and knows the bottom of my heart. I will therefore accustom myself to walk always in the presence of God, who beholds me in all my ways. By this means avoiding what is offensive to God, I shall be just in sincerity before my neighbour, and no longer a deceitful hypocrite.



MEDITATION FOR THE THIRTEENTH DAY.

THE PHARISEES RESOLVE ON THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST
(continued).

Let us again return to the assembled foes of our Saviour, and endeavour to profit by contemplating the hypocritical movements of their dark and malicious designs. It has been remarked above that they do not accuse our Lord either of robbery, blasphemy, or any other similar crime. "He worketh many miracles, and "if we suffer him to go on the whole world will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away "our name and nation." This is his crime in the eyes of these haughty rulers of the Synagogue. They beheld with spiteful jealousy the ascendant which his wondrous works were acquiring him over the minds of the people, and the consequent diminution of their own credit. Hence the expression, "If we suffer him to go on, the whole world will believe in him." They apprehended seeing themselves abandoned, and left ignominiously alone. This was the humiliating conclusion come to in their hearts, but their pride would not let them acknow-

ledge it openly. Hence, carefully hiding the self-interest they dare not avow, they profess to be solicitous only for the public welfare, alleging the immediate ruin of the state unless a stop were put to the progress of so dangerous a person, whose proceedings if suffered to continue, would draw upon them the anger of the Romans. Thus, the language of patriotism is on their lips while the voice of passion speaks in their hearts, and which borrows the mask for the purpose of more securely dealing the blow they meditate. But could there be a mode of proceeding more senseless and extravagant? Their passion hindered them from seeing its absurdity and rendered them blind to its ridiculous falsity. In truth, passion stops not to reason, or if sometimes it pretend to argue it serves only to show that the soul has already quitted, or is on the point of leaving the way of truth. If the wonders wrought by Jesus Christ were such as to cause the whole world to believe in him, and of he had the power of restoring the dead to life, of winning over every heart, what had they to fear from the Romans? Had they anything to fear under a leader whom all nature obeyed? If all the world was to be gained over to his side, what could the Romans do against him? But if indeed Jesus was the Messiah, if his miracles were sufficient to convince ever one, why not receive him? Why not acknowledge him were it even to cost their city, their name, and their nation? Was he not in this supposition their only hope, their only deliverer? Thus ought they to have reasoned; but it is vain to look for any reason from men enslaved to their passions. They fall from error into error, all the while fancying themselves to be in the right.

Alas! the delusion is but too common. Have I never

fallen into it? When under some foolish apprehension, or under the influence of a feeling of antipathy; in a moment of excitement, or lured by some selfish consideration have I not acted like the Jewish chiefs? A friendly and charitable warning has been given me, but I have resented it as an insult to my character and station of life. Stubbornly tenacious of my own opinion, I have refused to bend to the injunctions of authority, I have spoken disparagingly of those placed over me, I have done my utmost to obtain a preference for my caprices over what good order required from me. Often has the danger to which my errors exposed me been pointed out to me, but instead of being grateful for the salutary warning, I have taken offence at the charitable admonition, or flatteringly told my conscience there was no harm, that my intentions were upright, whatever wrong might appear in my conduct. Ah! my God! why need I continue? I have said enough to confound me in thy presence. Yes! it is too true that I have given way to these delusions, from which, now prostrate before thee, I implore thee to deliver me. For to what purpose shall I solicit pardon, if I still remain the same? Am I always to be the dupe of my passions and the victim of self-deception? No! my God! it is done! I will no longer shut my eyes to thy heavenly light. I will listen no more to passion, but give ear only to the voice of faith and religion.

FRUIT.

Whenever reason deviates from, or is at variance with faith, it is going astray, or rather, is carried away by passion. I will make it my duty to be guided in every thing by the principles of religion, and sacrifice self-love, inclination, or opinion, to the maxims of the gospel.

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MEDITATION FOR THE FOURTEENTH DAY.

THE PHARISEES RESOLVE ON THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

(continued).

It was evident that, throughout the whole affair, they pretended to deliberate on at the house of Caiphas, the Jewish chiefs were actuated by some passion, nor is it difficult to discover what that passion was. They were unable to adduce a single reason that deserved a moment's consideration. "It was pure envy," says St. Chrysostom, "made them plot against Jesus Christ."(*) They saw the influence which his prodigious works gave him over the public mind, and the consequent diminution of their importance. This was the secret spring of all their hostile machinations. They were compelled, in spite of themselves, to confess their weakness, and they would brook no longer the humiliation. *See, said they one to another, we have no longer any power.*(†) "All our efforts are to no purpose. Our prohibitions are disregarded, and our threats derided. No notice is taken of all we say against this man; the whole world runs after him on account of his miracles. It is time to resolve on a final determination." To these lengths did the envy arising from their avarice and ambition carry them. "So true is it," says St. Chrysostom, "that the soul becomes blind through envy, so as to be incapable of discerning the plainest truths, obstinately holding out against the most overwhelming facts."(‡) It is one of

* Hom. 67, in Joan. xii. 19. † John xii 19

‡ Hom. 67, in Joan.

the most degrading passions, yet too often yielded to without remorse. We imagine its suggestions to be inspirations of zeal, while in reality, and before God, our proceedings are but efforts to satisfy the envy that devours us.

On examining my interior movements, I now find that I am far from being clear of this passion. From what other source arises the opposition I feel interiorly for whatever is said or done by certain persons? How is it that I can no longer see in them what every one else beholds, and what was so visible to myself before envy blinded me. Dare I own what it is that displeases me in them? Do I consider their talents, their reputation, their influence, their good fortune, so many defects or crimes? Are these so many titles to my animosity? Alas! how easy it is in this case to be deceived? And I fear that I have not always escaped its baneful influence, when I consider how adroitly envy can assume the mask and pass current for zeal and charity.

As this vice is a secret avowal of our own inferiority, it always appears under a deceitful exterior, which makes it difficult to detect the illusion. But in this moment of serious reflection, if I sound my heart in thy presence, O my God, my conscience will tell me that, on many occasions, envy was the real motive of my proceedings, causing me to take a false view of the character and conduct of my neighbour. Whoever in any way surpassed me, or thwarted by their superiority my ambitious aims, were sure to displease me; I would allow those only to be amiable who had no pretensions of disputing my claims; but whom, in reality, I was ever ready to despise and turn into ridicule. All above me, or on a level with

me, oppressed and annoyed me. How much have I to answer for on this point? Yet for want of reflection I have believed myself innocent, notwithstanding the gall and bitterness I was conscious of feeling towards my neighbour, and which was nurtured in my heart by the envy that enlaved me. Oh! true Physician of my soul! Thou alone canst deliver me from a disease pregnant with such fatal results; but in order to avoid a rash presumption in thy all-curing power, I will do my best to co-operate with thy healing grace.

FRUIT.

Charity envieth not, says the apostle; it seeketh not its own, is not angry, nor thinketh evil. () If I am subject to opposite vices, I am destitute of charity. And what am I without charity? *Take away charity, says St. Augustine, and all else is of no use.* (†) Here is abundant matter for serious reflection and examination of conscience.



MEDITATION FOR THE FIFTEENTH DAY.

THE PHARISEES RESOLVE ON THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

(continued).

An attentive perusal of the gospel discovers envy to have been the ruling passion of the Jews in the persecution which they carried on against our Saviour, and the principal cause, as remarks St. Cyprian, of their own ruin. The wide prevalence of this vice, and little notice taken of it, are motives which should induce me to take every precaution against its insinuating attacks. Had the Jews detected anything really criminal in the conduct of

* 1 Corinth. xiii. 4.

† Serm. 50, de Verb. Dom.

our Saviour, they would have been excusable in their otherwise irregular proceedings against him; but here they were at fault. It was simply because he was doing good, because he was working miracles of charity, that they were incensed against him, and resolved on his destruction. Such is envy, which springs from an inordinate love of glory and esteem. An enemy rejoices at the harm happening to another because he hates him; but the envious is affected at others' good, because all his love is for himself. He looks upon the merits or advantages of another as a disparagement to his own. *They have given ten thousand to David, but to me only one thousand,* exclaimed Saul, in a transport of jealousy. The same happens daily, says St. Augustine; an equal is jealous of an equal, because he is an equal; an inferior is jealous of a superior, because he is above him; and a superior is jealous of an inferior, lest he become an equal. Such is envy, which once gaining a hold in the heart soon appears outwardly in a raging thirst for distinction, without regard to propriety, merit, or lawfulness of means.

And now let me examine my interior, in order to find out the source of this vice to which I have too often given way. Why have I been envious? Because pride made me foster a constant passion for glory and distinction. In proof of this have I not endeavoured on every occasion to attribute whatever merit there might be in any action to myself, ceaselessly striving after my own interests, while manifesting constant ill-will towards all, whom I knew to be my equals in talent, and superior to me in merit? I have been ever trying to depreciate those whom I supposed to be my rivals, by setting them down as persons full of vanity, as seeking only to please men

and gain a reputation at my expense, while guilty myself of the very charge I have made against them. It is true I have often proposed the glory of God as the motive of my actions, and as often flattered myself to have acted conformably, and to have in view only his glory and the good of my neighbour. Alas! this was but a veil to hide from myself the turpitude of my heart; for under the seeming pretence of promoting the divine glory, or of procuring the good of my neighbour, I was seeking only my own praise and the esteem of men. Yes! I am still ambitious of the first place, and the good done by others annoys me. I had rather see them idle, or, at least, looked upon as inferior to myself. How, O my God, hast thou borne with so much pride? How have I remained so long in a state so hateful in thy eyes? Alas! I have been too blind to see what I really was before thee! But at length thy light has dispelled the darkness that enveloped my heart. Grant me thy grace to profit by its salutary rays, that henceforth in all my ways my sole desire and intention may be the advancement of thy glory.

FRUIT.

When we seek sincerely the glory of God, and not our own, we feel no repugnance or difficulty in saying with Moses, as the occasion offers, *Would that all the people prophesied, (*) and that the Lord shed his spirit in them, I should not then be left alone to labour.* I must enter into these dispositions before I can truly say that I seek only God's glory in all I undertake. I will examine myself in order to form proper resolutions, meditating on the example of my Saviour, who passed his life in seeking in all things the glory of his heavenly Father.

* Num. xi. 29.

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MEDITATION FOR THE SIXTEENTH DAY.

THE PHARISEES RESOLVE ON THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

(continued.)

The first crime committed by the children of Adam was suggested by envy. Abel, its victim, was a figure of the Son of God made man. When every circumstance is taken into consideration, it is difficult to conceive how the Jews could come to the resolution of plotting against Jesus Christ, assemble together for the purpose of devising the most effectual means of taking away his life, and, in fine, execute the atrocious deed, after the proofs he had shown of his divinity. Hatred alone would never have driven them to such lengths. Once, however, that envy has gained the ascendant, the soul is hurried away with such violence as to be incapable of all restraint. Neither justice, nor even self-interest are any longer regarded. St. Chrysostom hesitates not to affirm, *every evil comes of envy*.(*) St. James says: *Where envy is there is every wickedness*.(†)

Think well on this, ye slaves of envy. Nothing can be more worthy of consideration. Envy is capable of leading the soul to the most dreadful crimes. It corrupts the powers of reason, and perverts the most upright judgment into a false and unjust prejudice. From the hour in which Saul became jealous of the valour of David, *his eye was no more good towards him*.(‡) The envious employs all his time in thinking how to effect the ruin of a rival: like the Jews with regard to our blessed Saviour. Lies,

* Hom. 64 in Joan. † James iii. 16. ‡ 1 Kings xviii. 9.

slander, calumny, treachery, intrigue, even flattery, everything is put in force: nothing comes amiss, any means are good to this base passion.

Have I ever reflected on this? Any other passion productive of evil, counteracts, generally speaking, some other passion: it yields to restraint and knows where to stop, being not always perversely indifferent to the nature of the means it employs to attain its ends, but envy knows no bounds and is capable of any excess or crime. "Whatever you see evil, comes of envy." It is a diabolical vice, for the envious, like the devil, are afflicted at what is good, and rejoice at the sight of evil: the envious man sins not through weakness, or inadvertence, but from sheer malice, designedly and with reckless perversity, as he all the while pretends to be immaculate. Envy is a poison which reaches even the marrow of the bones,* and when in its worst form becomes a sin against the Holy Ghost; consequently the hope of repentance for a person arrived at such an excess of malignity, is all but gone. And indeed can it be expected that the Spirit of God will bestow grace on a soul, which turns into poison, against itself, the gifts and virtues granted to others by the Father of Lights.

Behold, my soul, the vice of envy and its baneful fruits. Yet remember that the moment thou hast taken umbrage at another's virtue thou hast admitted this monster into thy bosom. Thenceforth all he did piqued thy jealousy. His edifying conduct, which before won thy esteem and praise, disappeared, and although he continued on doing good, and his many claims to thy respect remained equally

* Proverbs xiv. 30.

strong, or became even more numerous and more powerful, envy would not permit thee to acknowledge them. His piety became in thy vitiated judgment, hypocrisy, his prebity but dissimulation, and his exertions in the cause of religion but vagaries of a false zeal. His prudence thou hast set down as artful scheming, his resolution was blind rashness, his courteousness as mere affectation, in fine, thou could see nothing but intrigue and selfishness in all he did. He has ceased, as it were, to be a man in thy opinion. What hath destroyed him? *A savage beast hath devoured him.*(*) Yes! thy envy, my soul, hath devoured him. If he no longer appeared to thee the same, it was because thou regardest him with the jaundiced eyes of envy, for when he became a David, thou becamest a Saul, thenceforth seeking only to supplant and ruin him by detraction and calumny.

Alas, O my God, I am forced to acknowledge myself guilty, and here, covered with confusion and prostrate before thee, I implore thy forgiveness. The good of another has, through my perversity, been to me an evil, while by a virtuous sympathy even his misfortunes might have been a means of increasing my merit. But instead of exercising charity, I have been devoured with envy. Strengthen me, O Lord, by thy holy grace now at least to get the mastery over this detestable passion, so as effectually to extinguish every spark of the devouring fire I have so madly nourished in my breast.

FRUIT.

To render the good done by another an occasion of harm to myself, while I can turn it to my advantage and

* Gen. xxxvii. 20.

make it, as it were, my own good, is the height of madness. Yet such is the proceeding of envy. Henceforth I will take care to arrest its first movements in order to avoid the dreadful excesses on which I have been reflecting in this meditation. I will often call to mind the words of St. James : " Where envy is, there is all wickedness."



MEDITATION FOR THE SEVENTEENTH DAY.

THE PHARISEES RESOLVE ON THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

(continued).

Adam had no sooner plunged himself and his posterity in the gulph of sin, when the Almighty touched with compassion at his fall, promised him a Liberator. During succeeding ages the promise was frequently renewed. Prophet after prophet was sent to repeat the glad tidings to the world. The Patriarchs of old securely trusting to its fulfilment, told it to their children, and by their sighs and prayers hastened its accomplishment. Far more information than the rest of the world, had the Jews received respecting this great event, they had been fully instructed in its importance, and they knew well it was their only hope of salvation. The moment arrives, the long looked-for Messiah appears, he passes his life among these same Jews, he works before their eyes prodigies more than sufficient to prove himself to be the envoy of God, the Son of the Most High, yet in place of acknowledging him, and following him as their long wished-for Messiah and the glory of their nation, they meet together for the purpose of contriving the readiest way of putting him to death.

Behold a type of what takes place every day, yea, of my own conduct on too many occasions. The Jews looked anxiously for the coming of the Messiah, even fervently praying for his arrival; but the moment he appears, they disown him, and reject him, as a plague, from their hearts. So it is with me. I wish for perfection; I pray for humility, patience, charity, meekness, and all other virtues I am told are necessary to salvation; but when God offers me a favourable opportunity for the practice of any of these virtues, at the same time prompting me by his holy inspirations to make a good use thereof, and promising me the assistance of his grace, I refuse to co-operate, I let slip the precious moment, I turn a deaf ear to his inspirations, and make light of the blessing he holds out to me. Justly may he apply to me the reproach he made to the Jews: *You were always rebellious(*)* to my lights and graces. The truth was, the Jews wished for a Messiah, who should save them without touching their worldly interests or opposing their vicious appetites. In like manner I desire all things necessary for my salvation, without being thwarted in my corrupt inclinations, or obliged to contradict my passions.

What can I say of myself, O Lord! after so much perversity in my past conduct? My notions of a Redeemer have been like those of the Jews. I have wished him to save me after my own way, and while allowing me to indulge my passions, to obtain for me the requisite virtues; to procure for me the kingdom of heaven, on the condition of my enjoying, beforehand, the pleasures

* Deut. ix. 24.

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(continued).

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abused? What intervened to keep back thy holy angels, those blessed spirits who clearly see and know the greatness of thy infinite Majesty, from hurling down thy vengeance upon me before I had time to repeat my first crime, and give another mortal stab to my unhappy soul, which it cost thee so much to redeem. Ah! I know too well it was thy excessive goodness! On reflecting on the enormity of my guilt, I see clearly it was that thou mightest have the satisfaction of pardoning me, that thou hast waited for me so long. For the same reason, time is yet allowed me to repent and be truly sorry for the disorders of my past life. Behold, then, O Lord, my detestation and abhorrence of them, humbly and earnestly imploring thy forgiveness, I beseech from thee the grace of avoiding all relapses.

FRUIT.

Whenever you are tempted, arm yourself with this reflection, that sin brings death into the soul, and crucifies again the Son of God. Temptation falls powerless before a soul duly impressed with these truths of faith.

MEDITATION FOR THE TWENTIETH DAY.

THE PHARISEES RESOLVE ON THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST.

(continued).

The assembled chiefs of his own favoured people decide on putting to death their Messiah. Caiphas had given the wished-for word, and the whole assembly applauded the sentiment he had uttered. There was no longer any question of what ought to be done, the resolve was unanimously agreed upon. The death of Jesus is pro-

nounced a measure of public safety: the innocent is sacrificed to a wicked policy, and to that envy and hatred which the impious ever bear towards the truth that condemns them. In taking even a merely human view of this assembly, it appears neither more nor less than a packed conventicle of iniquity, but in the designs of God it becomes a means of testifying his love for us, for he alone knows how to draw good from the evil intentions of men. When Caiphas said that it was expedient for one man to die for the salvation of many, he and his hearers thought only of the perverse meaning of the words he uttered, namely, that they ought to make no scruple of sacrificing the innocent to their own interests. But this detestable maxim, these impious words enclosed a profoundly mysterious import, of which he was not aware or suspicious. It was that the death of the innocent Jesus was to be the salvation of the world. The perverse thoughts of the wicked Caiphas were fixed only on the obvious meaning of what he said; but under cover of those expressions, the Holy Spirit announced an ineffable truth. Such is the meaning of the gospel, when it tells us that Caiphas, being that year High Priest, prophesied, saying, *That Jesus was to die for the salvation of the nation, and to gather together and unite the children of God that were dispersed.*(*) Thus does the Almighty mock at the pretended wisdom of those who think to resist his inspirations; their very perversity becomes the instrument of his eternal decrees; their very tongue serves to make them known. Here two subjects present themselves for our consideration.

* John xi. 51-2.

First, the love of God for man ; a love unfolded to us even by the mouth of the wicked Caiphas. It was expedient for us that the Son of God should die. A life so precious was to be sacrificed before due reparation could be made to the offended Justice of God, or man receive pardon. Have we a proper idea of what sin is, since its expiation required the incarnation and death of the Son of God ? Do we rightly understand our obligations to the goodness of God, in giving us his only Son, and what we owe to this God-Man for having sacrificed his precious life to deliver us from sin ? Do we think of the ingratitude we are guilty of by continuing to commit sin after being redeemed at such a price ? . . . The second point of consideration, is, the manner in which the Son of God offers himself to sufferings and to death for our sake. He was fully aware of the plot forming against him in that meeting of the Jewish chiefs, as well as of the decree passed in heaven. But he adores the Justice of God, concealed under the iniquity of men. What an example for us ! I am troubled, and give way to vexation, if an unkind word be spoken of me, or at the least of ill-usage : a reverse of fortune seems to me the sole effect of others' malice. Whence this impatience, these complaints, but from neglecting to elevate my thoughts to heaven, and from forgetting that nothing happens, nor can happen to me here below, without the secret but ever-just ordaining of the all-wise Ruler of the universe. Ah ! impress on my soul, O Lord, this important truth. Grant me always practically to feel that all things are under thy absolute control, and that whatever thou ordainest is ever just and adorable. Without thy permission the united malice of men cannot

make fall a single hair of my head. If sometimes thou permit me to be exposed to their malevolent attacks, or to suffer from them in the goods of this life, thou hast some beneficent design in view, which I ought consequently to adore with grateful submission, well knowing that as the best of Fathers, thy love can never intend me any harm. Great has been my deficiency on this point, I have looked at tribulations and sufferings with the eyes of flesh and blood. I have stopped to examine the blow which wounded my self-love, and too great sensibility of feeling, instead of piercing through the mists of human motives and beholding in the light of faith the hand of thy loving Providence, which strikes but to heal and save me. I have sinned; a thousand times I have deserved hell; how then can I complain when in exchange, thou art willing to accept the trivial sufferings to which I am subjected during the present life? Supposing even that what I suffer proceeds from the malice of men, thou dost turn it still to my benefit provided I submit with proper dispositions. To doubt of this truth would argue the loss of all faith. I fear, however, that my faith is very weak, strengthen it, O Lord, in order that henceforth I may be ever resigned to thy holy will in all the occurrences of life, however trying and painful to my natural feelings.

FRUIT.

Amid contradictions, and tribulations let us, like the Saints, enter into the views of the Almighty, and refrain from dwelling on the evil intentions which men may have in our regard. Let us ever bow with respectful homage before the mighty hand of God, and be practically persuaded that He it is who strikes us, but who, ever Just and ever merciful, strikes us for our good.

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MEDITATION FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

THE PHARISEES RESOLVE ON THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST
(continued).

The death of Jesus Christ once decided on, they had done with persons and pretexts, and had only to look out the readiest means of accomplishing their project. This fresh step in the affair, is alluded to by St. John: *From that day forward they sought how to put him to death.*(*) Thenceforth their sole occupation was in search of the best means, and in devising the surest plan of putting to death the Just, the Holy, the Envoy of God, Him whose crime was to have done good to all around him, and to have wrought too many miracles. What an employment for the rulers of the nation, the princes of the Synagogue! Have I never done the like?

From that day forward.—That is to say, from the hour in which I yielded to the passion that tempted me, my whole time has been taken up in finding out the means of gratifying it; my thoughts have been on sinning, and my life a tissue of crimes succeeding each other in rapid succession. *From that day forward.*—After reading such a bad book, or indiscreetly listening to the discourse of such a libertine, I have contracted a dangerous friendship, have neglected to profit by such a good thought; I have disregarded the dictates of my conscience, have banished the thought of death from my mind, and neglected to meditate on judgment and eternity; I have even endeavoured to efface in myself and others all sen-

* John xi. 53.

timents of religion, and to blot out to the utmost all
 traces of my baptism. *From that day forward.*—From
 the time I abandoned myself to error, associating with
 persons of suspicious character, joining in their impious
 conversation, I have thought only of outraging the Church
 of Christ, rejoicing at the sight of persecutions, holding
 up her ministers to ridicule, pursuing with insult and
 calumny all who adhered to the practice of virtue, or
 defended the cause of religion. *From that day forward.*—
 Since I had the misfortune to give way to a false shame,
 in concealing some sin in confession, I have heaped sacri-
 lege on sacrilege, have profaned the holiest of sacraments
 and trodden under foot the blood of my Saviour. *From*
that day forward.—After such an interview fatal to my
 innocence, I have plunged deeper and deeper in the mire,
 and multiplied my offences beyond measure; I have
 sought out dangerous occasions, corrupted the innocence
 of others, some of whom I have too much reason to fear
 have died in their sins and will one day call down ven-
 geance on my head. *From that day forward.*—From the
 day my heart became attached to wealth, its acquisition
 has been my only occupation; I have made gold my idol,
 thence avaricious, without pity for the distressed, I have
 thought only how to oppress my neighbour without
 betraying my deceit and injustice.

O my God! into what an abyss have I fallen? And
 what hope of deliverance but from thy infinite goodness?
 Have pity on me, according to thy great mercy. Mul-
 tiply thy mercies, O Lord, for great is the multitude of
 my sins. The remembrance of a life so criminal makes
 me shudder, and, with fear and trembling, I fly to thy
 boundless mercy as my only resource. Since thou hast

borne with me until this moment, continue, O Lord, thy forbearance in order to allow me time to repent and obtain pardon for my manifold transgressions which I here detest from the bottom of my heart, and am firmly resolved, by thy grace, to be guilty no more of the like.

FRUIT.

Resist your passions at the first onset, or they will drag you down the precipice. Have recourse to prayer as the surest means of obtaining the grace of which you have need.



MEDITATION FOR THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

THE ENTERTAINMENT AT BETHANIA—MARY FOURS A FRAGRANT OINTMENT ON THE HEAD AND FEET OF JESUS CHRIST.

The hour was drawing near when the Son of God was to offer to his Father, the sacrifice of his life for the redemption of the world: but a short interval remained. Jesus Christ, who had so often manifested a power superior to all the adverse efforts of man, wished however, knowing that his death was decided on by the Jews, to teach his disciples that there were occasions when it was the part of wisdom to apprehend, and prudent to fly. From the day on which the Jews held their meeting, he ceased to appear in public, retiring with his disciples to the small town of Ephrem on the borders of the desert. Some short time previous to his celebrating for the last time, the Paschal solemnity, he went to the village of Bethania. There a person called Simon the leper, received him into his house, and prepared a repast in his

Honour. Martha served at the table, and Lazarus, raised a short time before from the tomb, was one of the guests.

Oh! how happy is it to be with Jesus! What a blessing to have him in our company! The most trifling actions are rich in merits, when Jesus is at our side. Every thing goes aright, and we are sure of not being led astray as long as we do not let any bad passion distract our attention or blind our heart to the happiness of being in the company of so loving and generous a friend.

What a fund of instruction have I in this consideration. I cannot always remain in the sweet intercourse of prayer at the feet of my Saviour. I am obliged to attend to the duties of my state of life; my corporal necessities call me away, and the engagements which charity requires of me towards society, render my presence necessary elsewhere. But in these circumstances, and in the midst of my employments, I ought to keep myself as much as possible in the company of Jesus, having my heart united to him, being ever on my guard against my corrupt inclinations, and on all occasions maintaining a proper and edifying decorum.

But here, alas! I am wanting, as a retrospect of my past life too plainly shows. I have not displayed in my conduct, on occasions of daily occurrence, any of the virtues, of which thou, my meek Saviour, hast left so bright an example. In my necessary meals I have been a stranger to mortification, thinking only of gratifying my sensual appetite. During recreation my mind has been full of frivolous, dangerous, and often criminal thoughts. I have purposely prolonged useless

and idle conversations, losing therein much precious time, which I ought to have employed to better account. When in the company of others, I have often occasioned bickerings and disputes, frequently casting out remarks injurious to my neighbour's reputation, corrupting the minds of others by expressions of a loose or double meaning, often wounding charity by a base servility to the dictates of some would-be leader of society, and at other times by a spirit of party, odiously destructive of peace and harmony. How frequently have I indulged in a feeling of contempt or ill humour for some persons, while displaying a marked predilection for others, whose dispositions or manners were servilely accordant with my own! In the interchange of social duties I have, at one time, been meanly complaisant; at another, vain-glorious and overbearing, full of exaggeration in my language, and careless of the truth. Which ever way I turn my eyes, O my God, I behold only faults, and the more I scrutinize my conduct the more forcibly I am compelled to own that I have never seriously, and from my heart, tried to imitate thy virtues in any one circumstance of my life. Instead of conducting myself as became a Christian, I have lived like an infidel, reflecting in my actions nothing but pride, vanity, ill-humour and uncharitableness, with my heart full of dissipation and bent on earthly pursuits. What a store of merits have I lost by such conduct? All my duties and occupations might have been rendered conducive to my sanctification, while, by my own fault, they have been so many occasions of harm to my soul, and I have become thereby, O my God! an abomination in thy eyes.

Change my heart, O Lord! I beseech thee, that I may not lose a moment in returning to thee, and dedicating myself, without reserve, to thy love and service.

FRUIT.

All things, even the most indifferent, turn to the advantage of those who have but a spark of God's love in their hearts. But where this love is wanting, every thing goes wrong, even virtue itself ceases to have merit. Let us walk always in the presence of God; we shall then find it easy and natural to copy in our actions the virtues of our blessed Redeemer, and, like him, to do every thing *well*.



MEDITATION FOR THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

THE ENTERTAINMENT AT BETHANIA—MARY POURS A FRAGRANT OINTMENT ON THE HEAD AND FEET OF JESUS CHRIST.

(continued).

Our Lord, while at Bethania with his disciples, was entertained at the house of Lazarus, whom he had raised from death. While Martha, the sister of Lazarus, was engaged in serving the guests, Mary, another sister, resolved on offering Jesus a testimony of her love, which was to pour precious ointment on his head and on his feet. She poured it on his head, to testify her faith in his Divinity; and on his feet, as a confession of his human nature. This double anointing denotes the sum of Christian perfection to consist in the love of God and the love of our neighbour. In fulfilling her pious office, Mary did not escape contradiction. Several of those who had come to the entertainment for the

purpose of paying a visit to Lazarus, raised a complaint against her for thus wasting so precious an article. How should we have acted in Mary's situation? Feeble as is our love of God and of our neighbour, we should have revolted against our accusers, or, through fear of appearing ridiculous or weak-minded, we should have quailed beneath the voice of human respect, and discontinued the work. Not so Mary. She does not give way to passion against those who blame her; she suffers them to go on with their remarks, and rising above all human consideration, disregards what is thought or said about her; she holds on in her pious undertaking, which she knows to be so agreeable to her dear Lord. She makes no account of the speeches of men; enough for her that it pleases her Saviour.

What a contrast between myself and Mary! At a public entertainment, in the presence of the Chiefs of the Synagogue, on occasion of a numerous assembly of persons of distinction, Mary determines on anointing the head and feet of her Saviour, and nothing that men say against her is capable of daunting her; she continues with perfect tranquillity her pious exercise. How should this confound me, who, in the practices of piety and religion, in the works of charity, act so differently? It is not only when men actually cry out that I am deterred from a good action, but the mere apprehension of what they may possibly say or think causes me to omit numberless duties which I owe to God. This is not all. Yielding to the corruption of my heart, I sink under temptation, and in spite of the warning of my conscience, I go on committing sin. And why? My heart will tell me because I am the slave of human

respect. Of this comes my poverty in virtue, and the frequency of my relapses. Through fear of the remarks of men, I have deprived myself of treasures of merits, and for the sake of pleasing the world I have done evil; have persisted and added sin to sin. A silly—*What will be said of it*, has made me neglect the most essential duties. An idle—*What will people say*, has driven me headlong on the road of destruction in spite of the clear view I had all the while of the right way, and in which, O Lord, I knew it to be thy will that I should walk. When tempted to go astray, I ought rather to have asked myself this question: "What will my Angel say at seeing me thus hurrying on to the gulph of ruin? What will be said by the Saints in heaven who are expecting and praying for my arrival to share in their bliss, at beholding me driven further off every day by human respect? I should ask myself what the blessed Mother of my Redeemer will say, after all the graces she has obtained for me; all which I have basely trampled under foot at the bidding of human respect! What will be said by my God, my Creator, and heavenly Father, who has placed me in the world to serve Him, and not to gratify the caprices of men? What, in fine, will Jesus Christ, my loving Saviour say of me at seeing my soul for whose freedom and salvation he became man, suffered and died, thus become the degraded slave of human respect? What will the demon himself say in his fiendish satisfaction, when he beholds me constantly neglecting, through a vile apprehension of the thoughts and sayings of men, the essential obligations of religion, letting slip a thousand occasions of merit, and madly plunging into the depths of iniquity?

Such, O Lord, is the wretched state to which a soul sooner or later is reduced, when once having given way to human respect, and such, alas, is the history of my life during the past. Ah! my dear Saviour, seeing now by the light of thy grace the deplorable condition of my soul, deign, I beseech thee, to grant me deliverance therefrom, so as hereafter to fear thee alone, without regard to the thoughts and speeches of men.

FRUIT.

If I seek to please men, I am no longer the servant of Jesus Christ, says St. Paul. I will, then, reflect on this important maxim as often as the devil suggests the temptation of human respect.



MEDITATION FOR THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

THE ENTERTAINMENT AT BETHANIA—MARY POURS A FRAGRANT OINTMENT ON THE HEAD AND FEET OF JESUS CHRIST

(continued).

Our Saviour did not leave the courage of Mary without reward, openly testifying his approbation of her conduct. At first repelling the malicious attacks directed against her by those whom he knew opened their mouths but to blame. "Why," says he, "do you molest this woman? She has done a good action; she has to the best of her power, by pouring on me this ointment, honoured my approaching Passion, and embalmed beforehand my body unto sepulture: and I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached her name shall be in honour on account of what she has just been doing." The prophecy has been fulfilled; the fame of Mary has

been borne to the farthest limits of the earth. It has been told to the past, and future ages will hear of it; the most eloquent tongues have made it a theme of praise, and it shall be lauded to the end of time. Further, the less the action seemed worthy of celebrity, the more remarkable appears the prophecy. The boasted deeds of heroes have failed to achieve a like renown, and the glory which this lowly action of Mary has obtained on earth, is but a feeble image of what it will receive eternally in the kingdom of heaven. Yes; so shall they be honoured whom the King of glory chooses to honour. But it must not be forgotten that what is done for his glory will alone be praised; all else will be condemned by him. Brilliancy of talent, deeds of prowess, or the splendours of conquest; all the mighty actions which dazzle the world, but are destitute of worth before God; all the efforts made, or toils undergone, to gain the applause or esteem of men, for the sake of acquiring a perishable glory here below, or to augment one's influence and power, or, in fine, to advance one's prospects in this passing world, all these will be forgotten or buried in contempt and shame.

See then, my soul, nothing is lost that is done for God. There is a reward for all. For he knows well how to recompense even the most apparently insignificant action performed in his honour. He forgets not the penny thrown into the treasure of his temple, and takes account of the glass of water given in his name. Actions seemingly of no worth, and disregarded by carnal men, he the just Judge treasures up, for the purpose of bestowing in due time a reward worthy of himself.

But here, O my God, what a subject of reproach for

me! Great has been my negligence in thy service, with regard to duties which seemed to my false notions of little consequence; sometimes from a slothful indifference and tepidity; at others, through fear of incurring the censure of persons who understand nothing of the things of heaven. Because those duties appear trifling, I have paid no attention, or if I observed sometimes a scrupulous exactness, it arose more from caprice than from a sense of what I owed to thy glory; more to gain the good opinion of men than to please thee. Alas! my adorable Saviour, how often have I been deficient in those seemingly small matters, through motives of flesh and blood, conscious all the while how displeasing such conduct was before thee, and how it grieved thy divine heart to behold my shameful neglect. I have, indeed, willingly practised virtues that attracted notice, or might gain praise; but those unpretending and hidden good works which offered nothing alluring to self-love, those lowly practices which revolt the false notions of worldly pride and passion, but which are so meritorious in thy eyes, O Lord, I have passed over with neglect, or wanted courage and resolution to observe, still flattering myself that all was right, and that I had every claim to be styled a good Christian. What an illusion! Have regard O Lord, I implore thee, to this humble acknowledgment, which I make in thy presence. I am firmly determined to open my eyes to the light which I now, though unworthy of thy grace, supplicate thee in thy infinite bounty to bestow upon me.

FRUIT.

In the question of vice or virtue all is of importance before God. The smallest act of virtue performed for

the love of God, may be the commencement of our predestination: while the least failure in duty, whether from carelessness or human respect may be the first link of a chain that will one day drag us down into the pit of eternal ruin. Assuredly, these truths ought to prevent us from neglecting even the most trifling circumstances connected with our obligations.



MEDITATION FOR THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

THE ENTERTAINMENT AT BETHANIA—MARY POURS A FRAGRANT
OINTMENT ON THE HEAD AND FEET OF JESUS CHRIST

(continued).

Among those who cried out in condemnation of the pious office which Mary was rendering to our Saviour, Judas was particularly conspicuous; he, indeed, appeared to urge on the others. He was not ignorant of the value of so precious an ointment, which wafted its delicious fragrance throughout the entire apartment; and unable to contain his rage and disregarding all propriety exclaimed in a tone of indignation: *Why this waste? For this might have been sold for more than three hundred pence and given to the poor.*(*) The expression was caught up and repeated by others which caused our Saviour to take up Mary's defence. *Woe to thee, miserable man,* says St. Augustine, *a good and sweet-smelling odour is death to thee.*(†) The perfume which was so salutary to Mary, was a deadly poison to the soul of that unhappy apostle. Judas spoke of the poor, but they were

* John xii. 5.

† Tract 50 in Joan.

the least of his cares. It was not any sympathy that he had for the distressed that made him cry out, but his avarice, because, as St. John tells us, he was a thief, and carrying the purse kept what was put therein.* It was something very different from charity that caused him to show his indignation. Besides, he had not been appointed as the almsgiver; our Lord dispensed them himself, or enjoined others to do it, as the occasion offered. Having however, been entrusted with the regulation of the necessary expenses, he received the offerings of the faithful destined for the wants of the sacred College, and abusing the confidence of his Divine Master, he secretly put aside what he could without detection, with the intention of quitting, on a favourable opportunity, the society of the apostles, or wishing perhaps to provide for the adverse circumstances he apprehended would arise in case of our Lord being arrested, and put to death; a casualty which the well-known sentiments of the Jewish chiefs seemed to render but too probable. Avarice then suggested all that burst of indignation, and caused that apostle to give such scandal to others. He had the audacity to reproach Jesus Christ before all the company for having allowed a box of ointment to be used in his honour! Notwithstanding too all the miracles he had witnessed, he flattered himself that our Lord would not be able to pierce through the veil of his hypocrisy, nor discover the dark malignity of his envenomed heart.

What a lesson for me! I imagine myself full of charity to my neighbour, while in fact, I am a stranger to its genuine sentiments: or at most my charity is little more

* John xii. 6.

than outward show, like the sterile philanthropy of the heathen. It has not a trait of that active charity which forms the characteristic of the true disciple of Jesus Christ. It is not that perfect charity which extends to all without excluding any single person from its benevolence; I aim at being thought charitable, while I am all kindness and generosity for some, but reserved and even disdainful for others, as if all were not equally the cherished members of Jesus Christ. If I sometimes stretch out a hand to suffering humanity, I compensate my pride for the generous effort by indulging my vindictive feelings towards those who may offend me. My pretended charity is but the mere handmaid of my propensities; being chained up on the approach of all who happen not to chime in with my humours, and opinions, and giving place to feelings of acrimony and to expressions of slander and detraction. In such persons I can see nothing but defects, matter for my uncharitable remarks, pointing them out to the observation of others, and under the very pretence of charity trying to lessen their good name without regard to their rank, age, or circumstances. What a mockery, O my God, of this lovely virtue, and nevertheless I flatter myself to be even a model of charity. Dispel from my heart, O Lord, this dangerous delusion, and make me from this moment thy true disciple, by enabling me to practice a sincere, universal and never-failing charity.

FRUIT.

My charity is not true and sincere before God, if it be not universal. It must embrace all without exception in its ample folds, whatever may be their qualities or the rank and condition they occupy. I ought to take

especial care not to assume like Judas the mask of charity to strike a deadly blow at charity itself. Have I never acted in this manner? Let me seriously examine, and see if there be no need of reformation on this point.



MEDITATION FOR THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

THE ENTERTAINMENT AT BETHANIA—MARY POURS A FRAGRANT
OINTMENT ON THE HEAD AND FEET OF JESUS CHRIST

(continued).

From Jesus Christ we may best learn how to exercise the lovely virtue of charity. He offers us a striking example on this occasion; in his conduct towards Judas. He knew well that Judas was a thief, that devoured by avarice, money had become his idol, and that it was not from compassion for the poor, that he had cast blame on Mary. He might have degraded him at once from the dignity of an apostle, and have exposed before the whole assembly the base passion which had made him break out in that audacious and scandalous manner. Never did hypocrite more richly deserve exposure, never had any one more right to express his indignation than our Saviour on that occasion. But how does he act? Yearning with compassion for the wretched apostle, instead of unmasking his hypocrisy and laying bare his avarice, he had consideration for his character, and permitted him to enjoy the reputation of being charitable, of which he was so ostentatious, and contented himself with simply justifying what Mary had done, at the same time, as justice required, refuting the reasons alleged by the traitor for

the purpose of inducing the company to join with him in his censure, and to applaud his motives. Further, our blessed Lord avoided addressing the unhappy apostle in particular, lest any pointed allusion might fix odium upon him, but spoke in general terms, as if unaware of the author of the discontent which had been shown.

The meek answer of our Lord on that occasion is well worthy our imitation. Do we show any such consideration for the weakness of our neighbour in his errors? Do we act in that way when an indiscreet and thoughtless word has escaped him to our prejudice? Do we evince any such mild and charitable forbearance to those under our charge in their failings? Oh! my soul, examine well thy conduct herein, and unless thou art bent on being deceived, make no hesitation in acknowledging thyself wanting.

O God of charity! I am confounded at the sight of my interior! My charity is no better than self-love, or at best a false zeal, very different from thine. My aim has been rather to humble my neighbour in his failings and that with the most unfeeling harshness: I have shown no pity for his weakness; treating him with rigour on every occasion, wounding his feelings by words of bitterness, and by my looks and gestures endeavouring to humble and mortify him. I have reproached his want of charity, but in a manner that clearly indicated that I myself had little of that heavenly virtue. Intent more on showing my authority, than on exercising charity, I have proved, by my rigid bearing and disdainful looks, that I was observing only the mote in my brother's eye without thinking of the beam in my own.

Whence then did all this rigour and severity arise but from pride? Yes; this it is, which engenders that constant antipathy towards others, that haughty disdain in my language and demeanour. I know not charity, because I am a stranger to humility: but without these virtues can I expect salvation? Grant me then, O Lord, to be humble, in order to gain possession of charity.

FRUIT.

The astonishing charity of Jesus Christ, came from his being humble of heart. If I would therefore possess that lovely virtue, I must gain a true knowledge of myself: my rigour will then be turned on my own defects: and I shall soon learn to treat others with meekness and forbearance.



MEDITATION FOR THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY

THE ENTERTAINMENT AT BETHANIA—MARY POURS A FRAGRANT
OINTMENT ON THE HEAD AND FEET OF JESUS CHRIST

(continued).

The resurrection of Lazarus occurred at a time and place peculiarly favourable for divulging the miracle by which he had been recalled from the tomb. It took place at the very gates of Jerusalem, and when the approach of the Paschal solemnity drew to that city an innumerable multitude of Jews. Every one was naturally anxious to behold a man who had been raised from the dead. Their curiosity was doubtless increased by the report that the author of the prodigy was arrived in the neighbourhood, at Bethania, where it was easy to obtain a sight of those two interesting persons, and to

behold them conversing and eating together. A great number in consequence repaired to that village, not only, says St. John, for the purpose of "seeing Jesus, but more especially Lazarus whom he had delivered from the tomb."(*) As might have been expected the spectacle they witnessed produced a powerful conviction on all. The upright of heart yielded to the truth and became believers. Those, however, who had come only to criticize, acknowledged indeed the truth of the miracle, but like all whom the truth offends, they took occasion therefrom to augment their rage, and redouble their malice. What they could not deny, they were determined to counteract, and in order to blot out every trace of the miracle, having already decided on the death of Jesus, they began to deliberate on the means of putting out of way Lazarus, the living proof of the prodigy, and on whose account many were leaving them and adhering to Jesus. Blind and foolish men! The power of the Redeemer disconcerts your views, and instead of paying him the homage of your approbation, which reason demands of you, you proceed to fresh excesses of cruelty. What will you gain by putting Lazarus to death? Cannot he who recalled him out of the tomb when he had been four days in corruption, give him back the life you wish to destroy? But what will you say, what will be your advantage in condemning Jesus himself to death, when three days after he will rise again by an effort of his own inherent might.

Alas! once the soul has become hardened in the way of iniquity, and the passions have obtained predomi-

* John xii. 9.

nance, reason is at an end, the most absurd suggestions of malice are listened to, and crime is heaped on crime.

I have reason to tremble, O Lord, at seeing so many others perish for having given ear to their passions. Their career of ruin has commenced by what seemed a trifle, by an unguarded look, a too confiding indulgence, by a friendship apparently without danger, by a secret aversion seemingly of no consequence, by things of which they took no notice, have they begun, but those trifles have swelled into a torrent, which has carried them on to reprobation, they have added crime to crime, till the weight of their iniquities has engulfed them in the abyss of hell. Shall I not fear, knowing that I am of the same frail mould as they?

Instead, however, of being impressed with a salutary fear, have I not begun the way that leads to destruction? I am not yet arrived at the end, but am I sure that I have not advanced too far to afford a probable hope of return? Do I not, without reflecting on the fatal consequences, listen willingly to my passions, flatter and gratify their criminal propensities, although I am not ignorant that a single passion perversely indulged, is sufficient and will assuredly cause my perdition. Shall I be so foolish as not to think of a remedy before my ruin is irreparable? O my God withdraw me from the fatal path on which I have entered, and preserve me from the misfortune of those unhappy Jews, who, from neglecting to check their passions, became blindly reprobate in their sins. I feel my passions are far from being in due subjection, and without a careful vigilance they will lead me to perdition. May I from this moment begin the work; and, that I may gain the victory, aug-

ment, in my soul O Lord, thy succouring grace, to enable me to master my weakness and render me a faithful observer of thy law.

FRUIT.

The more we give way to our passions the more undeserving are we of grace, without which we are lost for ever. This consideration should induce me to live in the fear of the Lord, in a constant watchfulness over myself.



MEDITATION FOR THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

OUR LORD ENTERS JERUSALEM IN TRIUMPH.

The most glorious day of the mortal life of our blessed Saviour, the day on which he was to be publicly acknowledged as the long expected Messiah, at length arrived. His glory required that the great bulk of the people should come to that point, in order that if they afterwards fell away and ended by neglecting him, they should be doomed to give testimony against themselves of having been compelled by the sole force of truth to testify thus openly to his having afforded ample proof of his great mission. This signal triumph took place in the capital city of the nation, in Jerusalem itself, which he chose to enter in a solemn and public manner. The public mind was already disposed to welcome him. No emissaries were sent by him to bias the multitude in his favour, no canvassers for their suffrages, nor did he employ any of those means of intrigue and bribery which were afterwards made use of so industriously by his enemies

against him. He let his virtue, his doctrine, his miracles alone speak for him. These were his titles to honour, these the only preparations for his triumph. Countless indeed, were his claims, but he takes not a step to gain applause and secure a triumph. Ah! how admirable is this conduct of the meek and humble Redeemer, how worthy our imitation! Alas! how little is it understood by the children of this world amid their agitation and strife! What they look after is outward show; their thoughts are on titles and distinction, public notice and favour, consideration and influence. Such souls are ever intent on getting the start of one another, regardless of the order established by Providence or the interests of religion, forgetful of the perils which environ stations of eminence, and still less mindful of the requisite qualifications. They consult only their passions, and the insatiable desire they have of seeing themselves above others. They long to appear on the stage of distinction. The greater the tumult and dangers the more worthy does a situation appear of their endeavours to acquire it. They wish to have their names inscribed on the pages of history; and to what base servility will they descend to reach the wished-for goal of their pride and ambition. They can submit to the whims and caprices of others, provided they can succeed, and readily put up with the degradation of being beholden for their good fortune to others' vices and passions. Oftentimes though naturally parsimonious and saving, they become all at once liberal and prodigal to excess, scattering on every side their gifts and largesses. Although passionately fond of praise and adulation, they are willing to swallow the most galling insults; often too adding hypocrisy to ambition they blush

not to assume the garb of piety, play off the saint, and make no scruple of rendering religion itself subservient to their projects.

If my conscience here pleads guilty, the state of my soul is indeed miserable before God. Supposing that I have not actually reached this excess of folly, have I escaped entirely the contagion? At this moment has ambition no place in my heart? Does the hope of promotion no way influence the fulfilment of my duties? I flatter myself on being zealous, but is not my zeal frequently actuated by a secret wish of lowering others, and of displaying off to advantage in the view of enhancing my reputation? In the respect and submission I pay to superiors, too often insinuates itself the hope of acquiring their favour and of inducing them to bear me in mind at the fitting opportunity. Ah! my humble Redeemer! I know that I am not guiltless in thy eye; my conscience speaks too plainly to deny it. Deluded by the comparison I often make of my own apparent moderation with the excesses of others I imagine myself spotless, and am too often tempted to say with the Pharisee—*I am not like the rest of men*. Dangerous error! They are not my models; but I should look at thee, my divine Saviour, as my model, it is not with their conduct but with thine, O my Jesus, I should compare my own. Were I to do this, I should soon find, wherein I am deficient; I should discover in fact, that I am a mass of pride and ambition. Heal my wounds, I beseech thee, O Lord, thou who art the physician of my soul. May I learn of thee to be humble of heart, to be content with the station thou hast allotted me, and of myself to choose always the lowest place.

www.libtool.com.cn FRUIT.

I shall reap no benefit from comparing myself with proud and worldly-minded souls, I may seem to have the advantage, which after all may arise only from wanting an occasion. I ought to look upon Jesus Christ; and contrast his humility with that to which I make pretension. I shall soon discover in this case the real state of my soul. This, however, I neglect to do, hence I am so often deluded.



MEDITATION FOR THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

OUR LORD ENTERS JERUSALEM IN TRIUMPH (*continued*).

Jesus Christ was already on the way with his followers, and was drawing near Jerusalem. On arriving at Bethphage, at the foot of Mount Olivet, he said to two of his disciples. *Go into the neighbouring village, and as you enter you will find an ass tied, with its colt, on which no one hath sat, loose them, and bring them: if any one say to you, why do you loose them? You shall answer; the Lord hath need of them, and immediately he will let them go.* This was to speak like a prophet, and command like a master. This together with other instances similar which seemed to happen casually on the part of our Saviour, revealed even in the most trivial occurrences, his divine nature. Every thing happened as he had foretold, the two went on their errand and brought the ass and colt.

Let me reflect a moment on the prompt obedience shown by these two disciples. Such a commission must have appeared to them strange, if not absurd: they might indeed have termed the undertaking an act of rashness,

and have objected the danger of attempting to execute such an order, in fact on a mere exterior view of the matter, they might have added that it was neither just nor edifying. But no; when Jesus commands all remark is out of the question; it remains but to obey. They hesitate not a moment, but comply with the will of their Divine Master: the people of Bethphage make no objection; enough for them that the Lord hath need of the two animals, which are let go on the spot.

Here are true lessons which hitherto I have much studied, but which nevertheless I am bound to understand and put in practice. Whenever the world or the flesh require any thing from me, I am all obedience. I think nothing burdensome or difficult: I can brave all obstacles; my days and nights are at their service. I am ready to undertake the most wearisome journies, seek out the best advice, submit to the will of others, in short I am prepared for any sacrifice. I am lavish of courage for a world which has so often deceived my expectations, and mocked my obsequiousness; I can, too, do any thing for this body of mine so soon to be the food of worms. But for Jesus, my Saviour and my God! Am I as ready to serve him? He asks of me an alms in the person of the poor, he wishes me to be silent on my neighbour's fault; to pardon an injury; to forget an affront; to break off a dangerous connexion; to perform well and never to omit my religious duties; not to retain what belongs to others; to pay due respect to the authority of superiors, and to execute with promptitude what they enjoin me, unless it be in evident opposition to his holy will. Now, how do I act in all these matters? Alas! my resolution too often fails me: every thing appears intolerable, I am dismayed

at the least trifle; I can see nothing but insurmountable obstacles conjured up by my imagination; I look on every side for pretexts to free me from what the law of God and the duties of my state of life enjoin; I cling to my own ideas, and listen only to the suggestions of flesh and blood; I cannot resolve on obeying, and prefer continuing on a life of dissipation, irregularity, and lukewarmness, sure to end in crime; if such be not already my dreadful case.

Behold, O my Saviour, the kind of life I have hitherto been leading; full of ardour for the world, and my self-love; cold and indifferent towards thee! The world and my flesh are esteemed as something precious, while thou art neglected, although thou hast sacrificed thy life for my eternal salvation. I feel not the heaviest chains which the world or my flesh may impose upon me, their most oppressive burdens are light and easy; but the moment the slightest sacrifice is solicited by thee, I become weakness itself, all is insurmountable. The world and the flesh have only to drop a hint, and they are obeyed without demur: while thy most positive orders are unnoticed and neglected. All my liberality is for the world and my corrupt inclinations, but at the first intimation of any demand from thee, my hand and heart are instantly closed. What infatuation! I am truly poor and blind, and sick, and that too with a disease which will be soon incurable, if I continue on as I have hitherto done. Come to my assistance, O Lord, I beseech thee. Let thy grace break the bond which attaches me to the world and my corrupt flesh, in order that henceforth I may belong entirely to thee, who alone canst make me happy.

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Never refuse any thing to a God, who has given himself entirely to you. Since he has given his life for the love of you, can you dare to say, that what he requires of you is too much? Yet such is the language of your heart; when you prefer before him the world, the flesh, and your own caprices.



MEDITATION FOR THE THIRTIETH DAY.

OUR LORD ENTERS JERUSALEM IN TRIUMPH (*continued*).

In obedience to the command of their Divine Master, the two disciples went and fetched the ass and colt, and having thrown their garments upon the colt, placed our Redeemer upon it. The people on learning that our Lord had left Bethania, and was approaching Jerusalem went out in crowds to meet him. As soon as he appeared in sight the multitude seized with a sudden feeling of respect, and overpowered with delight, began to cut down branches from the palm and olive trees, and holding them aloft in their hands, cried out: "Hosanna to the King of Israel, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." And by whom is this unbought and extraordinary honour paid? By the common people, men, women, and children—they form his escort, his guard and retinue. No bristling of arms, no glittering pomp is seen around him: he drags after him no wretched captives groaning beneath their chains. No proud display of wealth or grandeur. Men of upright and grateful hearts, the simple and the poor compose his train, and before, and behind, on every side unite in one loud shout

of praise and thanksgiving to God, and grateful acknowledgment for the beneficent deeds of the Son of David. Borne away by the raptures of a holy joy, again and again do they repeat: "Hosanna to the Son of David, "blessed is he, who cometh in the name of the Lord; "Hosanna in the highest."(*)

Oh! my soul, had we been there in the midst of that triumph of our dear Lord, assuredly we should not have remained indifferent at the spectacle. We too should have joined in those shouts of applause, and have esteemed ourselves happy in contributing to the glory and triumph of our great King. But of what use the supposition, if our faith be dead? Let us examine.

On occasion of any festival of the Church, when the bells summon to the temple of God; how do I act, what are my dispositions? Alas! I prefer the noisy scenes of the world, to joining in the sacred songs of Sion, and remain at home in listless unconcern for the service and glory of the Most High. Should I, indeed, perchance go so far, it is in expectation of not being long detained there, and of getting away as soon as I can to save appearances. During the short time I am there, I am mute and unmoved, my mind being too full of worldly vanities to pay attention to what is going forward. I present myself in the house of God with an air of haughty indifference, plainly indicative of the little relish I feel for his worship, or pleasure in hearing his praises. In a cold and unedifying posture, yawning with uneasiness, a smile of thoughtless flippancy on my lips, and gazing indecently around, I am tired before the service is half

* Matt. xxi. 9.

over, I wish to get back to an interview with the world, and to join in its pleasures and parties in which I can spend my time cheerfully, and always feeling fresh and joyous. Where, O Lord, is my faith? Do I not know the Church to be thy especial dwelling-place, and the appointed house of prayer? Hast thou not chosen it as thy tabernacle in which to receive my petitions, and to impart to me the graces of which I stand so much in need? Have I forgotten that it is the abode of thy habitation, wherein thou art constantly inviting me to come, that I may partake of the riches of thy bounty. Ah! should I chance to hear of any one desirous of conferring some favour upon me, with what eagerness should I proffer my services, how unremitting would be my attentions, with what reserve and circumspection should I appear in his presence? How different my conduct before thee, O my God? I appear in thy presence as if having no need of thee, nothing to expect from thee; as if I were, in fact, an entire stranger to thee! Rouse my dormant faith, O Lord, enlighten me, that I may see my poverty, and the great need I have of thy succouring grace, to be obtained only by humble and assiduous prayer.

FRUIT.

Prayers which are said in common, particularly at the the different offices of the Church, are more efficacious than in any other circumstances. This consideration should induce us to attend as often as possible in the temple of God; and while there, to behave with the utmost respect, employing the time in fervent and earnest prayer. Thus shall we honour God, and the homage will be the more agreeable to him in proportion as our hearts are pure and free from all affection to sin.

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MEDITATION FOR THE THIRTY-FIRST DAY.

OUR LORD ENTERS JERUSALEM IN TRIUMPH (*continued*).

The prophet Zachary had long before told Jerusalem that the Messiah would enter within its walls riding on an ass. "Rejoice, daughter of Sion; send forth a shout of gladness. Behold! thy king cometh to thee; the just, the Saviour. He is meek and riding on an ass, and on the colt of an ass."(*) According to the prophet he is King, and as such powerful in might; he is the Just by excellence, consequently without the smallest stain of sin; he is the Saviour, with a heart overflowing with goodness towards those who are gone astray.

My soul! this invitation of the prophet, so full of motives of confidence, and so calculated to inspire a love of sufferings, is addressed also to thee. But it is no longer a prophet, but Jesus Christ in person who invites thee to rejoice. He comes with benign tenderness to meet thee, and notwithstanding all thy sins and misery he bids thee not to fear, for he is thy King and Saviour. As thy King, he has the power to draw thee from the abyss of misery, into which thy sins have plunged thee. As thy Saviour, his only wish is to procure thy happiness. He is just, he is innocent, he is to be delivered up to torments and to death, that at the sight of his sufferings thou mayest learn courage to throw off the load of thy sins and to do penance, ever uniting thy sufferings with his.

If, instead of addressing us in these tender and consoling accents, he had, as he had every reason, said to

* Chap. ix. 9.

to us, "I am your King; I am come to punish the
 "offences you have been guilty of against me; there is
 "no longer place for pardon. I will not be your Saviour
 "but your judge." Had this been his language, what
 would have become of us? But no; in spite of our
 repeated transgressions his goodness brings him to our
 rescue. He speaks of his power only to give us to under-
 stand that he is able to save us. He calls himself our
 Saviour, in order to show us how desirous he is of our
 welfare; and if, notwithstanding his innocence, he has
 suffered so much, it is to remind us of the justice of our
 being obliged to endure something, at least, for the atone-
 ment of our sins, and to obtain reconciliation with
 the offended justice of his heavenly Father.

Why then, my soul, be discouraged? Is it not thy
 Saviour himself who invites thee to come to him for
 pardon? Has he not told thee that he is come into the
 world on purpose to save sinners? Be thy sins more
 numerous than the sands on the sea shore, if thou be
 sinking under their oppressive weight does he not with
 the bowels of compassion cry out to thee, "Come to me
 all you who labour and are heavy burdened and I will
 refresh you?"(*) Has the like tenderness and generous
 feeling ever been witnessed in any of earth's kings
 towards those who have offended them? Yet to this
 extent is the goodness of thy Saviour. Thou hast sinned,
 my soul, against him, and he seeks to grant thee pardon.
 Thou keepest away from him, but he comes after thee.
 He is the first to speak, and makes thee overtures of
 reconciliation, and all he requires from thee is for thee to

* Matt. xi. 28.

be sorry for thy sins, and to make what satisfaction thou art able. Can any thing be more reasonable? Wilt thou still hesitate?

O my Lord, and my God! what shall I say? Thou so great and so good, while I am a worm of the earth, thus braving thy power and insulting thy goodness! The malicious suggestions of my infernal enemy, and the number and enormity of my sins fill me indeed with dismay, but I will not fill up the measure of my iniquities by the crime of despair. Thy goodness is without bounds, and, sinner as I am, I have already experienced the effects of thy bounty. To this infinite goodness I again appeal? I throw myself with confidence on thy mercy, and great as is the multitude of my sins, I have a firm hope of obtaining forgiveness. But preserve me, O Lord, from falling, on the other hand, into presumption, and grant me grace, I beseech thee, to set about in good earnest doing the works of penance which thou requirest from me, in order to satisfy thy justice, and thus escape becoming a prey to that eternal but unavailing repentance, otherwise my doom is certain in the abode where the worm never dies and the fire is never extinguished.

FRUIT.

We must do penance, or hope will lead us into presumption. It should also be carefully remembered that one of the essential parts of penance consists in avoiding relapse, sure to occur if we do not fly from all dangerous occasions. To act otherwise is to tempt God by an abuse of his mercy, which, though great and indeed infinite, will not be mocked.

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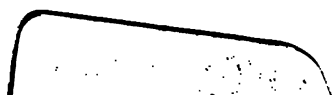
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