

MEDITATIONS & READINGS

ST. ALPHONSUS

VOLUME II – PART I
SEXAGESIMA EASTER

Edited by Rev. J. B. Coyle, C.S.S.R.

VISITS TO THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT and TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, with Prayers for Mass, Preparation for Communion, Thanksgiving, etc. By ST. ALPHONSUS.

PRAYER. By ST. ALPHONSUS. Jubilee Edition.

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL SUCCOUR AND IRELAND. (ΔΗ ΜΑΡΙΣ-
τοαν Σιοη-εαθηαε ηρ εηηε). S. u. a. c., O'Δηρ-
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Meditations and Readings

FOR
EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

Selected from the Spiritual Writings of

SAINT ALPHONSUS

*Doctor of the Church and Founder of the Congregation
of the Most Holy Redeemer.*

VOLUME TWO.
PART I.

Edited by
JOHN BAPT. COYLE, C.S.S.R.

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MEDITATIONS & READINGS
FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

VOLUME II.—PART I.

SEXAGESIMA :: EASTER

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KANSAS CITY, MO.

It is unnecessary for me to add anything to these words of two Popes. I wish only to say that this infinite amiability of Jesus Christ is particularly well shown in the present volume, for, in addition to the Meditations and Readings on the Religious State and on other subjects, there are given about forty Meditations on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, in which are contained some of the most beautiful and devotional pages written by the Saint. Moreover the division of the ascetic writings of the Saint into two Meditations and a Spiritual Reading for every day of the year, and this arranged in such a way as not to interrupt the sequence of any work of the Saint, will please many, both in the Cloister and in the world, who desire to know and follow in their spiritual life the teachings of this great Doctor of the Church and Director of Souls.

In conclusion, in the name of St. Alphonsus, I bless you and these Meditations and Readings with the hope that they may be everywhere known and read and well thought on so that all may know the infinite amiability and mercy of Jesus Christ and the unspeakable amiability and mercy of His Blessed Mother, and that they may thus seek and love and serve Them alone.

Your devoted servant and confrère,

PATRICK MURRAY, C.S.S.R.,

Sup. Gen. and Rector Major.

REV. J. B. COVLE, C.S.S.R.,

St. JOSEPH'S,

DUNDALK.

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

IN this volume of *Meditations and Readings*, which embraces the eight weeks from Sexagesima to end of Lent, we have set forth, as matter for the Evening Meditations on the Passion of Our Lord some of the most beautiful and devotional pages St. Alphonsus ever penned. Truly, as Pope Benedict XV. said, "they make known the infinite amiability of Jesus Christ."

The loving Saint himself writes: "Oh, what beautiful flames of love has Jesus not enkindled in many souls, especially by the sufferings He chose to undergo at His Death, in order to prove to us the immeasurable love He bears us! And what multitudes of souls, happy in the Wounds of Jesus, as in burning furnaces of love, have been so inflamed that they have not hesitated to consecrate to Him all their goods, their lives, their entire selves, surmounting with great courage all the difficulties they had to encounter in the observance of the Divine law, filled, as they were, with the love of that Lord, Who, though He was their God, chose to suffer so much for the love of them!"

The Saint writes in another place. "Happy you, O loving souls, who frequently meditate on the Passion of Jesus! *You shall*, says Isaias, *draw water with joy out of the Saviour's fountains.*—(xii. 3). From the blessed fountains of the Saviour's Wounds you shall draw the waters of love and confidence . . . And how can even

the greatest sinner, if he repents of his sins, ever des- pair of Divine Mercy when he beholds Jesus crucified, and knows that the Eternal Father placed all our sins on His own beloved Son that He might atone for them. *And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*—(Is. liii. 6). . . . Let us beseech the Divine Mother Mary to obtain for us from her Son that we may enter into those furnaces of love, the Wounds of Jesus, in which so many loving hearts burn, in order that, our earthly affections being consumed, we also may burn in those blessed flames of love which render souls holy on earth and blessed in Heaven. Amen."

May the fire of God's love that filled St. Alphonsus' own heart fill the hearts of all the readers of this volume of MEDITATIONS AND READINGS.

THE EDITOR.

St. Joseph's, Dundalk.
Feast of the Holy Family, January, 1926.

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MEDITATIONS AND READINGS

Sexagesima Sunday

Morning Meditation

“GLADLY WILL I GLORY IN MY INFIRMITIES.”
—(Epistle of Sunday. 2 Cor. xi. 19, 33).

What greater joy can there be than to suffer some cross and to know that by embracing it we give pleasure to God? St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi felt such consolation in suffering whatever came to her by God's will that she used to be lost in an ecstasy of Divine love.

HOLY THURSDAY—

I.
He who is united to the will of God, enjoys a perpetual peace, even in this world: *Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad.*—(Prov. xii. 21); and it must be so, because a soul cannot have more perfect content than to see its every wish fulfilled; and he who wills nothing but what God wills, has all that he wishes, since whatever happens must be by the will of God. Solinus says, that when resigned souls receive a humiliation, they will it; if they suffer poverty, they wish to be poor; in short, they will whatsoever happens, and therefore they lead a happy life. Be the weather cold or hot, let the rain or the storm come, he who is united to God's will says: “I wish for this cold or heat (etc.), because God so wills

it." If loss or persecution, sickness or death, should come, he still says: "I am willing to be poor, persecuted, sick, or even to die, because such is the will of God." He who rests on the Divine will, and is pleased with whatsoever God may do, is as if he were placed above the clouds, and saw tempests raging below, but remained unhurt and undisturbed by them. This is the peace which, as the Apostle says, *surpasseth all understanding*—(Phil. iv. 7); which exceeds all the delights of the world, and is so steadfast as to admit of no change: *A holy man continueth in wisdom as the sun; but a fool is changed as the moon.*—(Ecclus. xxvii. 12). The fool, that is, the sinner, changes like the moon, which increases to-day, and wanes to-morrow; one day he laughs, the next he weeps; at one time he is mild and cheerful, at another violent and sad; for he changes according as pleasing or adverse things happen to him. But the just man is like the sun, even and uniform in his tranquillity whatever may happen; for his peace rests in conformity with the will of God: *And on earth peace to men of good will.*—(Luke ii. 14). We cannot help feeling some sting of pain from adversity in the inferior part of our souls; but peace will always reign in the superior part, when our will is united to that of God: *Your joy no man shall take from you.*—(John xvi. 22). How foolish are those who resist God's will, since what He appoints must nevertheless be fulfilled! *Who resisteth his will?*—(Rom. ix. 19). Those poor creatures must therefore endure their cross, but without fruit, and without peace: *Who hath resisted him, and hath had peace?*—(Job ix. 4).

My Divine King, my beloved Redeemer, come, and from this day forward reign alone in my soul: take complete possession of my will that I may desire and wish nothing but what Thou wilt. In whatever shall befall me, I will always say: My God, I will only what Thou dost will. May Thy will be always done in me! *Thy will be done!*

II.

And what else does God will but our good? *For this is the will of God, your sanctification.*—(1 Thess. iv. 3). He wishes to see us holy by being content in this life, and happy in the next. Let us understand that all the crosses which come to us from God *work together unto good*—(Rom. viii. 28). Even punishments are not sent in this life for our destruction, but that we may amend, and thus gain eternal happiness: *Let us believe that these scourges of the Lord . . . have happened for our amendment, and not for our destruction.*—(Judith viii. 27). God so loves us, that He not only wishes, but eagerly desires, the salvation of each one among us: *The Lord is careful for me.*—(Ps. xxxix. 18). *He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also with him given us all things?*—(Rom. viii. 32). Let us, then, abandon ourselves always into the hands of that God Who ever desires our good while we are in this life, *casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you.*—(1 Pet. v. 7). "Think of Me," said our Lord to St. Catherine of Sienna, "and I will always think of you." Let us say with the sacred Spouse: *I to my beloved, and my beloved to me.*—(Cant. vi. 2). My Beloved thinks of what is good for me, and I will think of nothing but of pleasing Him, and uniting myself to His holy will. And we should never pray, as the holy Abbot Nilus tells us, that God would do what we wish, but that we may do what He wills.

He who always does this will lead a happy life, and die a holy death; he who expires completely resigned to the Divine will, leaves a moral certainty of his salvation.

O Jesus, my Redeemer, Thou didst give up Thy life in agony on the Cross, that Thou mightest be the cause of my salvation; have pity on me, then, and save me; do not suffer a soul which Thou didst redeem with such anguish and such love to hate Thee for ever in hell. Thou canst do no more to make me love Thee, and Thou didst give me to understand this when, before

Thou didst expire on Calvary, Thou didst utter those loving words : *It is consummated.*—(Jo. xix. 30). But how have I acknowledged Thy love? For the past, I may truly say that I have done nothing but displease Thee, and force Thee to hate me. I thank Thee for having borne with me with so much patience, and for now giving me time to repair my ingratitude, and to love Thee before I die. Yes, I wish to love Thee, and do whatever is pleasing to Thee. I give Thee my will, my liberty, all that I have. I sacrifice to Thee from this moment my life, and accept that death which Thou shalt send me, with all the pains and circumstances which may accompany it. I unite this sacrifice with that great sacrifice which Thou, my Jesus, didst offer for me upon the Cross. I desire to die, to fulfil Thy will. Grant me, I beseech Thee, by the merits of Thy Passion, the grace to live always in resignation to the disposition of Thy providence; and when death arrives, grant that I may embrace it with the same submission to Thy good pleasure. I wish to die, my Jesus, in order to please Thee. I desire to die, saying : *Thy will be done.* Thus didst thou die, O Mary, my Mother; obtain for me the grace that I also may so die.

Spiritual Reading

THE UNHAPPY LIFE OF SINNERS.

And that which fell among thorns are they who have heard, and, going their way, are choked with the cares and riches of this life, and yield no fruit.
—(Gospel of Sunday. Luke viii. 4, 16).

In the Parable of to-day's Gospel, we are told that part of the seed which the sower went out to sow, fell among thorns. The Saviour has declared that the seed represents the Divine word, and the thorns, the attachment of men to earthly riches and pleasures,

which prevent the word of God bearing fruit for time or eternity. Oh, the misery of poor sinners! By their sins they not only condemn themselves to eternal torments in the next, but to an unhappy life in this world.

The devil deceives sinners, and makes them imagine that, by indulging their sensual appetites they will lead a life of happiness, and enjoy peace. But there is no peace for those who offend God. *There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord.*—(Is. xlvi. 22). God declares that all His enemies lead a life of misery, and that they do not even know the way of peace. *Destruction and unhappiness in their ways: and the way of peace they have not known.*—(Ps. xiii., 5).

Brute animals, as they have been created for this world, enjoy peace in sensual delights. Give to a dog a bone, and he is perfectly content; give to an ox a bundle of hay, and he desires nothing more. But man, who has been created for God, to love God, and to be united to God, can be made happy only by God, and not by the world, though it should enrich him with all its goods. What are worldly goods? *All that is in the world, says St. John, is the concupiscence of the flesh, or sensual delights, and the pride of life—that is, earthly honours.* —(1 Jo. ii. 16). St. Bernard says a man may be gluttoned with earthly goods, but can never be made content or happy by them : *Inflari potest, satuari non potest.* And how can earth and wind and fith satisfy the heart of man? In his comment on these words of St. Peter—*Behold we have left all things*—(Matth. xix. 27)—the same Saint says, that he saw in the world several different classes of fools. All had a great desire of happiness. Some, such as the avaricious, were content with *riches*; others, ambitious of honours and praise, were satisfied with *rank*; others, seated round a furnace, swallowed the *sparks* that were thrown from it,—these were the passionate and vindictive; others, in fine, drank *fetid water* from a stagnant pool,—and these were the voluptuous and unchaste. Oh, fools!

adds the Saint, do you not perceive that all these things, from which you seek content, do not satisfy, but, on the contrary, increase the cravings of your heart? Of this we have a striking example in Alexander the Great, who, after having conquered half the world, burst into tears because he was not master of the whole.

Many expect to find peace in accumulating riches, but how can these satisfy their desires? St. Augustine says: "Great wealth does not close, but rather extends the jaws of avarice." That is, the enjoyment of riches excites, rather than satiates, the desire of wealth. *Thou wast debased even to hell; thou hast been wearied in the multitude of thy ways; yet thou saidst not: I will rest.*—(Is. lvii. 9). Poor worldlings! They labour and toil to acquire an increase of wealth and property, but never enjoy repose: the more they accumulate riches, the greater their disquietude and vexation.

The rich have wanted, and have suffered hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good.—(Ps. xxxiii. 11). The rich of this world are, of all men, the most miserable; because the more they possess, the more they desire to possess. They never succeed in attaining all the objects of their wishes, and therefore they are far poorer than men who have but a competency, and seek God alone. These are truly rich, because they are content with their condition, and find in God every good. *They that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good.* To the Saints, because they possess God, nothing is wanting; to the worldly rich who are deprived of God, all things are wanting, because they want peace. The appellation of fool was, therefore, justly given to the rich man in the Gospel, who, because his lands brought forth plenty of fruits, said to his soul: *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer.*—(Luke xii. 20). But this man was rightly called a fool. *Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?* And why was he called a fool? Because he

imagined that by these goods—by eating and drinking—he could be content, and could enjoy peace. *Rest, he said, eat and drink.* Says St. Basil of Seleucia: "Hast thou the soul of a brute, that thou expectest to make it happy by eating and drinking?"

But perhaps sinners who seek after and attain worldly honours are content. All the honours of this earth are but smoke and wind. *Ephraim feedeth on the wind.*—Os. xii. 1). And how can these content the heart of a Christian? *The pride of them,* says David, *ascendeth continually.*—(Ps. lxxiii. 28). The ambitious are not satisfied by the attainment of certain honours: their ambition and pride continually increase; and thus their disquietude, their envy, and their fears are multiplied.

They who live in the habit of sins of impurity feed on filth. How can this content, or give peace to the soul?

Ah! what peace, what peace can sinners at a distance from God enjoy? They may possess the riches, honours, and delights of this world; but they never shall have peace. No; the word of God cannot fail: He has declared that there is no peace for His enemies. *There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord.*—(Is. xlvi. 22). Poor sinners! They, as St. John Chrysostom says, always carry about with them their own executioner—that is, a guilty conscience, which continually torments them. St. Isidore asserts that there is no pain more excruciating than that of a guilty conscience.

Evening Meditation

"MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE."
(Epistle of Sunday).

I.

Man knows not the value of Divine grace, and hence he exchanges it for a mere nothing. It is a treasure of

infinite value. *An infinite treasure to men, which they that use, become the friends of God.*—(Wis. vii. 14). The Gentiles said it was impossible for a creature to become the friend of God. But, no; Divine grace induces God to call the soul that possesses it, His friend: *You are my friends*—(Jo. xv. 14)—said our Blessed Saviour to His disciples.

When, therefore, O God, my soul was in the state of grace, it was Thy friend; but by sin it became the slave of the devil, and Thine enemy. I give Thee thanks for affording me time to recover Thy grace. I am sorry, O Lord, with my whole heart, for having lost it; in Thy pity, restore it to me, and suffer me not to lose it any more.

How fortunate should that man esteem himself who becomes the friend of his king. It would be presumption for a vassal to expect that his prince should make him his friend; but it is not presumption for the soul to aspire to be the friend of God. "If I would become a friend of Cæsar," said a certain courtier, as St. Augustine relates, "I should have great difficulty in becoming such; but if I would become the friend of God, I am already His friend." An act of Contrition and of Love makes us the friends of God. St. Peter of Alcantara said: "No tongue can express the greatness of the love of Jesus for a soul in the state of grace."

O my God, am I in Thy grace or not? I certainly know that at one time I had lost it, and who knows whether I have regained it? O Lord, I love Thee, and am sorry for having offended Thee; make haste to pardon me.

II.

Oh, how great, on the contrary, is the misery of a soul that is fallen from the state of grace! It is separated from the Sovereign Good. It belongs no more to God, and God belongs no more to it. It is no longer loved by God, but hated and abhorred by Him. Before, He blessed it as His Child; but now, He curses it as His enemy.

Such is the unhappy state in which I was, O God, when I had forfeited Thy grace. I hope I have arisen from my unhappy condition, but if I have not, hasten, O Jesus, to rescue me from it. Thou hast promised to love those who love Thee: *I love them that love me.*—(Ps. viii. 17). I love Thee, my Sovereign Good; do Thou love me; and may I never again be deprived of Thy love. Holy Mary, succour me, thy humble client; I commend myself to thy patronage.

Monday after Sexagesima

Morning Meditation

THE WILL OF GOD TO SAVE ALL MEN.

Our holy Redeemer has ransomed us from eternal death at the price of His own Blood, and He does not wish to see these souls of ours lost which have cost Him so much. When He sees souls that are constraining Him by their sins to sentence them to hell, He, as it were, weeps with compassion for them and says: *And therefore will ye die, O house of Israel? Return ye and live!*—(Ezech. xviii. 31). My children, why will you destroy and damn yourselves when I have died upon a Cross to save you? Return to Me as penitents, and I will restore to you the life you have lost.

I.

The Apostle, St. Paul, teaches that God willeth the salvation of all: *He will have all men to be saved.*—(1 Tim. ii. 4). And St. Peter writes: *The Lord*

death patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance.—(2 Peter. iii. 9). For this end the Son of God came down from Heaven, and was made Man, and spent thirty-three years in labours and sufferings, and finally shed His Blood and laid down His life for our salvation. And shall we forfeit our salvation?

Thou, my Saviour, didst spend Thy whole life in securing my salvation, and in what have I spent so many years of my life? What fruit hast Thou hitherto reaped from me? I have deserved to be cut off and cast into hell. But Thou *desirest not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live.*—(Ezech. xxxiii. 11). Yes, O God, I leave all and turn myself to Thee. I love Thee, and because I love Thee I am sorry for having offended Thee. Accept of me, and suffer me not to forsake Thee any more.

How much did not the Saints do to secure their eternal salvation! How many nobles and kings have forsaken their kingdoms and estates, and shut themselves up in cloisters! How many young persons have forsaken their country and friends, to dwell in caves and deserts! And how many Martyrs have laid down their lives under the most cruel tortures! And why?—to save their souls. And what have we done?

Woe to me, who, although I know that death is near at hand, yet think not of it! No, my God, I will no longer live at a distance from Thee. Why do I delay? Is it that death may overtake me in the miserable state in which I now am? No, my God, do Thou assist me to prepare for death.

II.

O God, how many graces has my Saviour bestowed on me to enable me to save my soul! He has caused me to be born in the bosom of the true Church; He has many times pardoned me my transgressions; He has favoured me with many lights in sermons, in prayers; in meditations, in Communion, and spiritual exercises;

and often has He called me to His love. In a word, how many means of salvation has He granted me which He has not granted others!

And yet, O God, when shall I detach myself from the world and give myself entirely to Thee? Behold me, O Jesus, I will no longer resist. Thou hast obliged me to love Thee. I desire to be wholly Thine: do Thou accept of me, and disdain not the love of a sinner who has hitherto so much despised Thee. I love Thee, my God, my Love, and my All. Have pity on me, O Mary, for thou art my hope.

Spiritual Reading

THE POWER OF THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST TO ENKINDLE DIVINE LOVE IN EVERY HEART.

Father Balthassar Alvarez, a great servant of God, used to say that we must not think we have made any progress in the way of God until we have come to keep Jesus crucified ever in our heart. And St. Francis de Sales said that “the love which is not the offspring of the Passion is feeble.” Yes; because we cannot have a more powerful motive for loving God than the Passion of Jesus Christ, by which we know that the Eternal Father, to manifest His exceeding love for us, was pleased to send His only-begotten Son upon earth to die for us sinners. Hence the Apostle says that God, through the excess of love wherewith He loved us, willed that the death of His Son should convey life to us: *For his exceeding charity wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ.*—(Ephes. ii. 5). And this was precisely the expression used by Moses and Elias on Mount Tabor, in speaking of the Passion of Jesus Christ. They did not

know how to give it any other appellation than an excess of love: *And they spoke of his excess, which he should consummate in Jerusalem.*—(Luke ix. 31).

When our Saviour came into the world, the shepherds heard the angels singing, *Gloria to God in the highest.*—(Luke ii. 14). But the humiliation of the Son of God in becoming Man, through His love for man, might have seemed rather to obscure than to manifest His Divine glory: but no; there was no means by which the glory of God could have been better manifested to the world than by Jesus Christ dying for the salvation of mankind, since the Passion of Jesus Christ has made us know the perfection of the Divine attributes. It has made us know how great is the Mercy of God, in that a God was willing to die to save sinners; and to die, moreover, by a death so painful and ignominious. St. John Chrysostom says, that the Passion of Jesus Christ was not an ordinary suffering, nor His death a simple death like that of other men.

It has made us know the Divine Wisdom. Had our Redeemer been merely God, He could not have made satisfaction for man; for God could not make satisfaction to Himself in place of man; nor could God make satisfaction by means of suffering, for He is impassible. On the other hand, had He been merely man, man could not have made satisfaction for the grievous injury done by him to the Divine Majesty. What, then, did God do? He sent His own very Son, true God with the Father, to take human flesh, that so as man He might by His death pay the debt due to the Divine Justice, and as God might make full satisfaction.

The Passion, moreover, made us know how great is the Divine Justice. St. John Chrysostom says, that God reveals to us the greatness of His Justice, not so much by hell in which He punishes sinners, as by the sight of Jesus on the Cross; since in hell creatures are punished for sins of their own, but on the Cross we behold a God cruelly treated in order to make satisfaction for the sins of men. What obligation had Jesus Christ to die for us? *He was offered because it was his own will.*—(Is.

lii. 7). He might have justly abandoned man to his perdition; but His love for us would not let Him see us lost: wherefore He chose to give Himself up to so painful a death in order to obtain for us salvation: *He hath loved us and delivered himself up for us.*—(Ephes. v. 11). From all eternity He had loved man: *I have loved thee with an everlasting love.*—(Jer. xxxi. 8). But then, seeing that His justice obliged Him to condemn man, and to keep him at a distance, separated eternally from Himself, His mercy urged Him to find a way by which He might be able to save him. But how? By making satisfaction Himself to the Divine Justice by His own death. And consequently He willed that there should be affixed to the Cross whereon He died the sentence of condemnation to eternal death which man had merited, in order that it might remain there, cancelled in His Blood. *Blotting out the writing of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross.*—(Colos. ii. 14). And thus, through the merits of His own Blood, He pardons all our sins: *Forgiving you all offences.*—(Colos. ii. 13). And at the same time He spoiled the devils of the rights they had acquired over us, carrying along with Him in triumph as well our enemies as ourselves, who were their prey. *And despoiling the principalities and powers, he hath exposed them confidently in open show, triumphing over them in himself.*—(Colos. ii. 15). On which Theophylact comments: “As a conqueror in triumph, carrying with Him the booty and the enemy.”

Evening Meditation

FRUITS OF MEDITATION ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

The Lover of souls, our most loving Redeemer, declared that He had no other motive in coming down

win to Thyself our hearts, by showing us the immense love Thou didst bear us in accomplishing a Redemption which has brought to us a sea of benedictions, and which cost Thee a sea of pains and ignominies. It was principally for this end that Thou didst institute the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, in order that we might have a perpetual memorial of Thy Passion: "That we might have for ever a perpetual memorial of so great a benefit," says St. Thomas, "He gives His body to be the food of the faithful"; which St. Paul had already said: *As often as you shall eat this bread, you shall show the death of the Lord.*—(1 Cor. xi. 26). Oh, how many holy souls hast Thou persuaded by these prodigies of love, consumed by the flames of Thy love, to renounce all earthly goods, in order to dedicate themselves entirely to loving Thee alone, O most amiable Saviour! O my Jesus, I pray Thee make me always remember Thy Passion; and grant that I also, a miserable sinner, overcome at last by so many loving devices, may return to love Thee, and to show Thee, by my poor love, some mark of gratitude for the excessive love which Thou, my God and my Saviour, hast borne to me. Remember, my Jesus, that I am one of those sheep of Thine, to save which Thou didst come down on the earth, and didst sacrifice Thy Divine life. I know that, after having redeemed me by Thy death, Thou hast not ceased to love me, and that Thou dost still bear to me the same love which Thou hadst for me when Thou didst die for my sake. Oh, permit me not any longer to lead a life of ingratitude towards Thee, my God, Who dost so much deserve to be loved, and hast done so much to be loved by me.

And thou, O most holy Virgin Mary, who didst take so great a part in the Passion of thy Son, obtain for me, I beseech thee, through the merits of thy sorrows, the grace to experience a taste of that compassion which thou didst so sensibly feel at the death of Jesus; and obtain for me also a spark of that love which wrought all the martyrdom of thy afflicted heart. Amen.

"Let my mind, O Lord Jesus Christ, I beseech Thee,

upon earth to become man, than to enkindle in the hearts of men the fire of His holy love: *I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled.*—(Luke xii. 49). And, oh, what beautiful flames of love has He not enkindled in so many souls, especially by the pains that He chose to suffer in His death, in order to prove to us the immeasurable love which He still bears to us! Oh, how many souls, happy in the Wounds of Jesus, as in burning furnaces of love, have been so inflamed with His love, that they have not refused to consecrate to Him their goods, their lives, and their whole selves, surmounting with great courage all the difficulties which they had to encounter in the observance of the Divine law, for the love of that Lord Who, being God, chose to suffer so much for the love of them! This was just the counsel that the Apostle gave us, in order that we might not fail, but make great advances in the way of salvation: *Think diligently upon him who endureth such opposition from sinners against himself, that you be not wearied, taming in your minds.*—(Heb. xii. 3).

Wherefore St. Augustine, all inflamed with love at the sight of Jesus nailed on the Cross, prayed thus sweetly: Imprint, O Lord, Thy Wounds in my heart, that I may read therein suffering and love: suffering, that I may endure for Thee all suffering; love, that I may despise for Thee all love. Write, he said, my most loving Saviour, write on my heart Thy Wounds, in order that I may always therein behold Thy sufferings and Thy love. Yes, in order that having before my eyes the great sufferings that Thou, my God, didst endure for me, I may bear in silence all the sufferings it may fall to my lot to endure; and at the sight of the love which Thou didst exhibit for me on the Cross, I may never love or be able to love any other than Thee.

II.

O Saviour of the world, O Love of souls, O Lord most lovely of all beings, Thou by Thy Passion didst come to

be absorbed in the fiery and honeyed sweetness of Thy love, that I may die for love of the love of Thee, Who wert pleased to die for love of the love of me."—(Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi).

Tuesday after *Seragesima*

Morning Meditation

THE MERCY OF GOD IN CALLING SINNERS TO REPENTANCE.

Art thou a sinner, and dost thou desire to be pardoned? "Doubt not," says St. John Chrysostom, "that God has a greater desire to pardon thee than thou hast to be pardoned." God stands at the door of our hearts, and knocks that we may open to Him: *Behold, I stand at the door and knock.*—(Apoc. iii. 20). Again He urges: *Why wilt ye die, O house of Israel?*—(Ezech. xviii. 31). As if He were saying in compassion: "O My child, why wilt thou die?"

I.

The Lord called Adam, and said to him: Where art thou?—(Gen. iii. 9). These are the words of a father, says a pious author, going in quest of his lost son. Oh, the immense compassion of our God! Adam sins, he turns his back upon God; and yet God does not abandon him, but follows him and calls after him: *Adam, where art thou?* Thus, my soul, has God frequently done towards thee; thou hast forsaken Him by sin; but He did not hesitate to approach thee, and to call upon thee

by many interior lights, by remorse of conscience, and by His holy inspirations; all of which were the effects of His compassion and love.

O God of mercy, O God of love, how could I have so grievously offended Thee! How could I have been so ungrateful to Thee!

As a father, when he beholds his son hastening to cast himself down from the brink of a precipice, presses forward towards him, and with tears endeavours to withhold him from destruction; so, my God, hast Thou done towards me. I was already hastening by my sins to precipitate myself into hell, and Thou didst hold me back. I am now sensible, O Lord, of the love which Thou hast shown me, and I hope to sing forever in Heaven the praises of Thy mercy: *The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever.*—(Ps. lxxxviii. 1). I know, O Jesus, that Thou desirest my salvation; but I do not know whether Thou hast yet pardoned me. Oh! give me intense sorrow for my sins, give me an ardent love for Thee, as signs of Thy merciful forgiveness.

II.

O my Saviour, how can I doubt of receiving Thy pardon, when Thou Thyself dost offer it to me, and art ready to receive me with open arms on my return to Thee? Wherefore I do return to Thee, sorrowing and overpowered at the consideration that after all my offences against Thee, Thou indeed still lovest me. Oh, that I had never displeased Thee, my sovereign Good! How much am I grieved for having done so! Pardon me, O Jesus, I will never more offend Thee. But I will not rest satisfied with Thy forgiveness only: give me also a great love of Thee. Having so often deserved to burn in the fires of hell, I now desire to burn in the fire of Thy holy love. I love Thee, my only Love, my Life, my Treasure, my All. O Mary, my protectress, pray for me that I may continue faithful to God to the end of my life.

Spiritual Reading

THE POWER OF THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

—(continued).

When satisfying the Divine justice on the Cross, Jesus Christ speaks but of mercy. He prays His Father to have mercy on the very Jews who had contrived His death, and on His murderers who were putting Him to death: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*—(Luke xxiii. 34). While He was on the Cross, instead of punishing the two thieves who had just before reviled Him,—*And they that were crucified with him, reviled him.*—(Mark xv. 32),—when He heard one of them asking for mercy,—*Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom.*—(Luke xxiii. 42),—overflowing with mercy, He promises him Paradise that very day: *This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.*—(Luke xxiii. 43). Then, before He expired, He gave to us, in the person of John, His own Mother to be our Mother: *He saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother.*—(Jo. xix. 27). There upon the Cross He declares Himself content in having done everything to obtain salvation for us, and He makes perfect the sacrifice by His death: *Afterwards Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, . . . said, It is consummated; and bowing his head he gave up the ghost.*—(Jo. xix. 28, 30). And behold, by the death of Jesus Christ, man is set free from sin and from the power of the devil; and, moreover, is raised to grace, and to a greater degree of grace than Adam lost: *And where sin abounded, says St. Paul, grace did more abound.*—(Rom. v. 20). It remains therefore for us, writes the Apostle, to have frequent recourse with all confidence to this throne of grace, which Jesus crucified truly is, in order to receive from His mercy the grace of salvation, together with aid to overcome the temptations of the world and of hell: *Let us go there-*

fore with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid.—(Heb. iv. 16).

Ah, my Jesus, I love Thee above all things, and whom would I wish to love if I love not Thee Who art Infinite Goodness, and Who hast died for me? Would that I could die of grief every time I think how I have driven Thee away from my soul by my sins, and separated myself from Thee Who art my only Good, and Who hast loved me so much: "Who shall separate me from the charity of Christ?" It is sin only that can separate me from Thee. But I hope in the Blood Thou hast shed for me, that Thou wilt never allow me to separate myself from Thy love, and to lose Thy grace, which I prize more than every other good. I give myself wholly to Thee. Do Thou accept me, draw all my affections to Thyself, that so I may love none but Thee.

Does Jesus Christ perhaps claim too much in wishing us to give ourselves wholly to Him, after He has given to us all His Blood and His life, in dying for us upon the Cross? *The charity of Christ presseth us.*—(2 Cor. v. 14). Let us hear what St. Francis de Sales says upon these words: "To know that Jesus has loved us unto death, and that the death of the Cross, is not this to feel our hearts constrained by a violence which is the stronger in proportion to its loveliness?" And then he adds: "My Jesus gives Himself all to me, and I give myself all to Him. On His bosom will I live and die. Neither death nor life shall ever separate me from Him."

Evening Meditation

REFLECTIONS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

From what source did the Saints draw courage and strength to suffer torments, martyrdom, and death, if

not from the sufferings of Jesus crucified? St. Joseph of Leonessa, a Capuchin, on seeing that they were going to bind him with cords for a painful incision that the surgeon was to make in his body, took into his hands his Crucifix and said, "Why these cords? Why these cords? Behold, these are my chains—my Saviour nailed to the Cross for love of me. He through His sufferings constrains me to bear every trial for His sake." And thus he suffered the amputation without a complaint; looking upon Jesus, Who, *as a lamb before his shearers, was dumb, and did not open his mouth.*—(Is. liii. 7). Who, then, can ever complain that he suffers wrongfully, when he considers Jesus, Who was *bruised for our sins?*—(Is. liii. 5). Who can refuse to obey, on account of some inconvenience, when Jesus *became obedient unto death?*—(Phil. ii. 8). Who can refuse ignominies, when he beholds Jesus, treated as a fool, as a mock king, as a disorderly person; struck, spit upon His Face, and suspended upon an infamous gibbet?

Who could love any other object besides Jesus, when he sees Him dying in the midst of so many sufferings and insults in order to captivate our love? A certain devout solitary prayed to God to teach him what he could do in order to love Him perfectly. Our Lord revealed to him that there was no more efficient way to arrive at the perfect love of Him, than to meditate constantly on His Passion. St. Teresa lamented and complained of certain books which had taught her to leave off meditating on the Passion of Jesus Christ, because this might be an impediment to the contemplation of His Divinity; and the Saint exclaimed: "O Lord of my soul, O my Jesus crucified, my Treasure, I never remember this opinion without thinking that I have been guilty of great treachery. And is it possible that Thou, my Lord, couldst be an obstacle to me in the way of a greater good? Whence, then, do all good things come to me, but from Thee?" And she then added: "I have seen that, in order to please God, and to induce Him to grant us great graces, He wills that they should

all pass through the hands of this most Sacred Humanity, in which His Divine Majesty declared that He took pleasure."

II.

Father Balthassar Alvarez said that ignorance of the treasures that we possess in Jesus was the ruin of Christians; and therefore his favourite and usual meditation was on the Passion of Jesus Christ. He meditated especially on three of the sufferings of Jesus—His poverty, contempt, and pain; and he exhorted his penitents to meditate frequently on the Passion of our Redeemer, telling them that they should not consider that they had done any thing at all, until they had arrived at retaining Jesus crucified continually in their hearts.

"He who desires," says St. Bonaventure, "to go on advancing from virtue to virtue, from grace to grace, should meditate continually on the Passion of Jesus." And he adds, that there is no practice more profitable to the entire sanctification of the soul than frequent meditation on the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

St. Augustine also said that a single tear shed at the remembrance of the Passion of Jesus is worth more than a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, or a year of fasting on bread and water. Yes, because it was for this end that our Saviour suffered so much, in order that we should think of His sufferings; because, if we think of them, it is impossible not to be inflamed with Divine love: *The charity of Christ presseth us*, says St. Paul.—(2 Cor. v. 14). Jesus is loved by few, because few consider the pains He has suffered for us; but he that frequently considers them cannot live without loving Jesus. *The charity of Christ presseth us*. He will feel himself so constrained by His love, that he will not find it possible to refrain from loving a God so full of love Who has suffered so much to make us love Him.

Wednesday after Sexagesima

Morning Meditation

THE TURNING AWAY FROM GOD BY SIN.

Who is the Lord that I should hear his voice? I know not the Lord.—(Exod. v. 2). So speaks the sinner. Lord, I do not acknowledge Thee! I will do what I please! He insults God to His face and turns his back upon Him. This turning away from God is mortal sin.

I.

St. Augustine and St. Thomas define mortal sin as *a turning away from God*: that is, the turning of one's back upon God, leaving the Creator for the sake of the creature. What punishment would that subject deserve who, while his king was giving him a command, contemptuously turned his back upon him to go and transgress his orders? That is what the sinner does; and it is punished in hell with the pain of loss, that is, the loss of God, a punishment richly deserved by him who in this life turns his back upon his Sovereign Good.

Alas! my God, I have frequently turned my back upon Thee; but I see that Thou hast not yet abandoned me; I see that Thou approachest me, and, inviting me to repentance, dost offer me Thy pardon. I am sorry above every evil for having offended Thee, do Thou have pity on me.

Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord; thou art gone backward.—(Jer. xv. 6). God complains and says: Ungrateful soul, hast thou forsaken Me! I should never have forsaken thee hadst thou not first turned thy back upon Me: *thou hast gone backward.*

O God, with what consternation will these words fill the soul of the sinner when he stands to be judged before Thy Divine tribunal!

Thou makest me hear them now, O my Saviour, not to condemn me, but to bring me to sorrow for the offences I have committed against Thee. Yes, O Jesus, I sincerely repent of all the displeasure I have given Thee. For my own miserable gratification I have forsaken Thee, my God, my Sovereign, Infinite Good! But behold me a penitent returned to Thee; reject me not.

II.

Why will you die, O house of Israel? return ye and live.—(Ezech. xviii. 31). I have died, says Jesus Christ, for the salvation of your souls, and why will you condemn them by your sins to eternal death? Return to Me, and you will recover the life of My grace.

O Jesus, I should not dare to crave Thy pardon, did I not know that Thou hast died to obtain my forgiveness. Alas! how often have I despised Thy grace and Thy love! O that I had died rather than have ever offered Thee so great an injury! But Thou, Who didst come near to me even when I offended Thee, wilt not now reject me, when I love Thee and seek no other but Thee. My God and my All, suffer me not any more to be ungrateful to Thee. Mary, Queen and Mother, obtain for me the grace of holy perseverance.

Spiritual Reading

THE POWER OF THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST —(continued).

It was for this end, says St. Paul, that Jesus Christ died, that each of us should no longer live to the world nor to himself, but to Him alone Who has given Himself

wholly to us : *And Christ died for all, that they also who live may not now live to themselves, but unto him who died for them.*—(2 Cor. v. 15). He who lives to the world, seeks to please the world ; he who lives to himself, seeks to please himself ; but he who lives to Jesus Christ, seeks only to please Jesus Christ, and fears only to displease Him. His only joy is to see Him loved ; his only sorrow, to see Him despised. This is to live to Jesus Christ ; and this is what He claims from each one of us. I repeat, does He claim too much from us, after having given us His blood and His life ?

Wherefore, then, O my God, do we employ our affections in loving creatures, relations, friends, the great ones of the world, who have never suffered for us scourges, or thorns, or nails, or shed one drop of blood for us ; and not in loving a God Who for love of us came down from Heaven and was made Man, and shed all His blood for us in the midst of torments, and finally died of grief upon a Cross, in order to win to Himself our hearts : and, further, in order to unite Himself more closely with us, has left Himself, after His death, upon our altars, where He makes Himself one with us that we may understand how burning is the love wherewith He loves us ? “ He hath mingled Himself with us,” exclaims St. John Chrysostom, “ that we may be one and the same thing ; for this is the desire of those who ardently love.” And St. Francis de Sales, speaking of Holy Communion, adds : “ There is no action in which we can think of our Saviour as more tender or more loving than this, in which He, as it were, annihilates Himself, and reduces Himself to food, in order to unite Himself to the hearts of His faithful.”

But how comes it, O Lord, that I, after having been loved by Thee to such an excess, have had the heart to despise Thee, according to Thy just reproach : *I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised me*—(Is. i. 2) ? I have dared to turn my back upon Thee, in order to gratify my senses : *Thou hast cast me behind thy back.*—(Ezech. xxiii. 85). I have

said to God : Depart from us.—(Job xxi. 14). I have dared to afflict that Heart of Thine which has loved me so much. And what, then, am I now to do ? Ought I to be distrustful of Thy mercy ? I curse the days wherein I dishonoured Thee. Oh, would that I had died a thousand times, O my Saviour, than that I had ever offended Thee ! O Lamb of God, Thou didst bleed to death upon the Cross to wash away our sins in Thy Blood. O sinners, what would you not pay on the Day of Judgment for one drop of the Blood of this Lamb ? O my Jesus, have pity on me, and pardon me ; but Thou knowest my weakness ; take, then, my will, that it may never more rebel against Thee. Expel from me all love that is not for Thee. I choose Thee alone for my Treasure and my only Good. Thou art sufficient for me ; and I desire no other good apart from Thee : *The God of my heart, and God that is my portion for ever.*

O little sheep, beloved of God (so used St. Teresa to call the Blessed Virgin), who art the Mother of the Divine Lamb, recommend me to thy Son. Thou, after Jesus, art my hope, for thou art the hope of sinners. To thy hands I intrust my eternal salvation. *Spes nostra, salve !*

Evening Meditation

REFLECTIONS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

The Apostle St. Paul said that he desired to know nothing but Jesus, and Jesus crucified ; that is, the love that He has shown us on the Cross : *I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*—(1 Cor. ii. 2). And, in truth, from what books can we better learn the Science of the Saints—that is, the Science of loving God than from Jesus crucified ? That great servant of

God, Brother Bernard of Corlione, the Capuchin, not being able to read, his brother Religious wanted to teach him, upon which he went to consult his Crucifix; but Jesus answered him from the Cross, "What is reading? What are books? Behold, I am the Book wherein thou mayest continually read the love I have borne thee." O great subject to be considered during our whole life and during all eternity! A God dead for the love of us! a God dead for the love of us! O wonderful subject!

St. Thomas Aquinas was one day paying a visit to St. Bonaventure, and asked him from what book he had drawn all the beautiful lessons he had written. St. Bonaventure showed him the image of the Crucified, which was completely blackened by all the kisses he had given it, and said, "This is my book, whence I receive everything that I write; and it has taught me whatever little I know." In short, all the Saints have learned the art of loving God from the study of the Crucifix. Brother John of Alvernia, every time that he beheld Jesus wounded, could not restrain his tears. Brother James of Tuderto, when he heard the Passion of our Redeemer read, not only wept bitterly, but broke out into loud sobs, overcome with the love with which he was inflamed towards his beloved Lord.

II.

It was this sweet study of the Crucifix which made St. Francis become a great seraph. He wept so continually in meditating on the sufferings of Jesus Christ, that he almost entirely lost his sight. On one occasion, being found crying out and weeping, he was asked what was the matter with him. "What ails me?" replied the Saint. "I weep over the sorrows and insults inflicted on my Lord; and my sorrow is increased when I think on those ungrateful men who do not love Him, but live without any thought of Him." Every time that he heard the bleating of a lamb, he felt himself touched with compassion at the thought of the death of Jesus; the Immaculate Lamb, drained of every drop of Blood

upon the Cross for the sins of the world. And therefore this loving Saint could find no subject on which he exhorted his brethren with greater eagerness than the constant remembrance of the Passion of Jesus.

This, then, is the Book—Jesus crucified—which, if we constantly read it, will teach us on the one hand, to have a lively fear of sin, and, on the other hand, will inflame us with love for a God so full of love for us; while we read in these Wounds the great malice of sin, which reduced a God to suffer such a bitter death in order to satisfy the Divine justice, and the love which our Saviour has shown us in choosing to suffer so much in order to prove to us how much He loved us.

Let us beseech the Divine Mother Mary to obtain for us from her Son the grace that we also may enter into these furnaces of love, in which so many loving hearts are consumed, in order that, our earthly affections being there burnt away, we also may burn with those blessed flames, which render souls holy on earth and blessed in Heaven. Amen.

Thursday after Sexagesima

Morning Meditation

PROVOKING GOD BY SIN TO DEPART FROM US.

Thus does the Royal Prophet speak of sinners: *They tempted and provoked the most high God.*—(Ps. lxxvii. 65). God is not capable of grief; but were it possible for Him to grieve, every sin that men commit would

deeply afflict Him. Our sins were the cause of Jesus sweating Blood, and suffering the agonies of death in the garden of Gethsemane, where He declared that His soul was *sorrowful unto death*.—(Mark xiv. 34).

I.

Every soul that loves God is loved by Him in return, and God dwells within that soul, and leaves it not till He is expelled by sin. "He forsakes not unless He is forsaken," says the Council of Trent. When a soul deliberately consents to mortal sin it expels God, and, as it were, says to Him: Leave me, O Lord, for I desire to possess Thee no longer. *The wicked have said to God: Depart from us.*—(Job xxi. 14).

O my God, I have then had the audacity, when I committed sin, to expel Thee from my soul and to desire to have Thee no longer with me! But Thou wouldst not have me to despair, but repent and love Thee. Yes, my Jesus, I do repent of having offended Thee, and I love Thee above all things.

The sinner must be sensible that God cannot dwell in a soul together with sin. When, therefore, sin enters the soul, God must depart from it. So that the sinner, by admitting sin, says to God: As Thou canst not remain any longer with me, unless I renounce sin, depart from me; it is better to lose Thee than the pleasure of committing sin. At the same time that the soul expels God it gives possession to the devil. Thus does the sinner eject his God Who loves him, and makes himself the slave of a tyrant who hates him.

This, O Lord, is what I have hitherto done. Oh, give me some share of that abhorrence for my sins which Thou didst experience in the Garden of Gethsemane. Dearest Redeemer, would that I had never offended Thee!

II.

When a child is being baptized, the priest commands the devil to depart from its soul: *Go forth, unclean*

spirit, and give place to the Holy Ghost. On the contrary, when a man falls from the state of grace into mortal sin, he says to God, *Go forth from me, O Lord, and give place to the devil!*

Such is the foul ingratitude, O Lord, with which I have frequently repaid Thy great love towards me. Thou didst come down from Heaven to seek me, the lost sheep; and I have fled from Thee and expelled Thee from my soul. But no, I will now embrace Thy sacred feet and will nevermore leave Thee, my beloved Lord. Help me with Thy holy grace. And, O blessed Mary, most holy Queen, do not abandon me.

Spiritual Reading

JESUS BY HIS EXAMPLE TEACHES US
MORTIFICATION.

St. John says, *All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.*—(1 John ii. 16). Behold the three sinful loves which held dominion over man after the sin of Adam—the love of pleasures, the love of riches, the love of honours, which generate human pride. The Divine Word, to teach us by His example, the mortification of the senses, by which the love of pleasures is subdued, from being happy became afflicted; to teach us detachment from the goods of this earth, from being rich He became poor; and, finally, to teach us humility, which overcomes the love of honours, from being exalted He became humble.

Jesus came, then, to teach us the love of mortification of the senses more by the example of His life than by the doctrines He preached; and, therefore, from being happy He came to lead a suffering life.

Our Redeemer could, indeed, have rescued us from the hands of our enemies without suffering. He could have

come on earth and continued in His happiness, leading here below a pleasant life, receiving the honour justly due to Him as King and Lord of all. It was enough, to offer to God one drop of His Blood, one single tear, to redeem the world and an infinity of worlds: "the least degree of the suffering of Christ" (says the Angelic Doctor) "would have sufficed for Redemption, on account of the infinite dignity of His Person." But no: *Having joy set before him, he endured the cross.*—(Heb. xii. 2). He renounced all honours and pleasures and made choice on earth of a life full of toils and ignominies. St. John Chrysostom says that any action whatever of the Incarnate Word sufficed for Redemption; but it did not suffice for the love which He bore to man. "What was sufficient for Redemption was not sufficient for love." And whereas he that loves desires to see himself loved in return, Jesus Christ, in order to be loved by man, was pleased to suffer exceedingly, and to choose for Himself a life of continual suffering, to put man under an obligation of loving Him. Our Lord revealed to St. Margaret of Cortona that in His whole life He never experienced the smallest degree of sensible consolation: *Great as the sea is thy destruction.*—(Lament. ii. 13).

Yes; because Jesus was born on purpose to suffer, He assumed a body particularly adapted for suffering. On entering the womb of Mary, as the Apostle tells us, He said to His Eternal Father: *Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not; but a body thou hast fitted to me.*—(Heb. x. 5). My Father, Thou hast rejected the sacrifices of men, because they were not able to satisfy Thy Divine justice for the offences committed against Thee: Thou hast given Me a body, as I requested of Thee; a body delicate, sensitive, and made purposely for suffering; I gladly accept of this body, and I offer it to Thee; because by enduring in this body all the pains which will accompany me through My life, and will finally cause My death upon the Cross, I shall propitiate Thee towards the human race, and thus to gain for Myself the love of mankind.

And behold Him scarcely entered into the world, when

He already begins His sacrifice by beginning to suffer; but in a manner far different from that in which men suffer. Other children, while remaining in the womb of their mothers, do not suffer, because they are only in their natural place; and if they do suffer in some slight degree, at least they are unconscious of what they feel, since they are deprived of understanding; but Jesus, while an Infant, endures for nine months the darkness of that prison, endures the pain of not being able to move, and is perfectly alive to what He endures. St. Bernard says that though yet unborn Jesus was a Man, not in age, but in wisdom.

When Jesus comes forth from the prison of His Mother's womb, was it, perhaps, to lead a pleasant life? He came forth to fresh sufferings, for He chose to be born in the depth of winter, in a cavern where beasts find stabling, and at the midnight hour. He was born in such poverty that He has no fire to warm Him, no clothes to screen Him from the cold. "A grand pulpit is that manger!" exclaims St. Thomas of Villanova. Oh, how well does Jesus teach us the love of suffering in the cave of Bethlehem!

The life of Jesus was one of continual affliction and sorrow—in Egypt, in Nazareth—until at last He died at the hands of His executioners on the Cross in a sea of sorrows and infamy. As Bellarmine says, Jesus had His Cross always before His eyes. When He slept His Heart watched; nor was it ever free from the vision of the Cross.

Learn, then, from Christ, how to love Christ, says St. Bernard. Be happy to suffer something for that God Who suffered so much for you. The desire of pleasing Jesus Christ, and of making known to Him the love they bore Him, made the Saints hungry and thirsty, not for honours and pleasures, but for sufferings, and contempt. *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*—(Gal. vi. 14).

Evening Meditation

REFLECTIONS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE
PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

We read in history of a proof of love so prodigious, that it will be the admiration of all ages. There was once a king, lord of many kingdoms, who had one only son, so beautiful, so holy, so amiable, that he was the delight of his father, who loved him as he loved himself. This young prince had a great affection for one of his slaves; so much so, that the slave having committed a crime, for which he had been condemned to death, the prince offered himself to die for the slave; the father, being jealous of justice, was satisfied to condemn his beloved son to death, in order that the slave might remain free from the punishment he deserved: and thus the son died a malefactor's death, and the slave was freed from punishment.

This fact, the like of which has never happened in this world and never will happen, is related in the Gospels, where we read that the Son of God, the Lord of the universe, seeing that man was condemned to eternal death in punishment of his sins, chose to take upon Himself human flesh, and thus to pay by His death the penalty due to man: *He was offered because it was his own will.*—(Is. liii. 7). And His Eternal Father caused Him to die upon the Cross to save us miserable sinners: *He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.*—(Rom. viii. 32). What dost thou think, O devout soul, of this love of the Son and of the Father?

Thou didst, then, O my beloved Redeemer, choose by Thy death to sacrifice Thyself in order to obtain the pardon of my sins. And what return of gratitude shall I, then, make to Thee? Thou hast done too much to oblige me to love Thee; I should, indeed, be most

ungrateful to Thee if I did not love Thee with my whole heart. Thou hast given for me Thy Divine life; I, miserable sinner that I am, give Thee my own life. Yes, I will at least spend that period of life which remains to me only in loving Thee, obeying Thee, and pleasing Thee.

II.

O men, men, let us love this our Redeemer, Who, being God, has not disdained to take upon Himself our sins, in order to satisfy by His sufferings for the chastisement which we have deserved: *Surely he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows.*—(Is. liii. 4). St. Augustine says, that our Lord in creating us formed us by virtue of His power, but in redeeming us He hath saved us from death by means of His sufferings: "He created us in His strength; He sought us back in His weakness." How much do I not owe Thee, O Jesus my Saviour! Oh, if I were to give my blood a thousand times over,—if I were to spend a thousand lives for Thee,—it would yet be nothing. Oh, how could any one that meditated much on the love which Thou hast shown him in Thy Passion, love anything else but Thee? Through the love with which Thou didst love us on the Cross, grant me the grace to love Thee with my whole heart. I love Thee, Infinite Goodness; I love Thee above every other good; and I ask nothing more of Thee but Thy holy love.

"But how is this?" continues St. Augustine. How is it possible, O Saviour of the world, that Thy love has arrived at such a height, that when I had committed the crime, Thou shouldst have to pay the penalty? "Whither has Thy love reached? I have sinned; Thou art punished." And what could it then signify to Thee, adds St. Bernard, that we should lose ourselves and be chastised, as we well deserved to be; that Thou shouldst choose to satisfy with Thy innocent flesh for our sins, and to die in order to deliver us from death? "O good Jesus, what doest Thou? We ought to have died, and it is Thou who diest. We have sinned, and Thou

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sufferest. A deed without precedent, grace without merit, charity without measure! O deed, which never has had and never will have its match! O grace that we could never merit! O love which can never be understood!

Friday after Sexagesima

Morning Meditation

THE SINNER DESPISES GOD.

Contemplating the greatness and majesty of God, David cried out: *Lord, who is like to thee!* But God, seeing sinners compare and prefer a miserable gratification to His friendship, exclaims: *To whom have ye likened me or made me equal!* The sinner declares that his passion, his vanity, his pleasure, is of greater value than God's friendship. *They violated me among my people, for a handful of barley and a piece of bread.*—(Ezech. xiii. 19).

I.

The sinner despises God. *By the transgression of the law thou dishonourest God.*—(Rom. ii. 23). Yes; because the sinner renounces God's grace, and for the sake of a miserable pleasure he tramples upon His friendship. If a man were to lose the friendship of God to gain a kingdom, or even the whole world, still he would do a great wrong, because the friendship of God

is of greater value than the world—and a thousand worlds. But for what do we offend God? *Wherefore hath the wicked provoked God?*—(Ps. ix. 13). For a little earth, for a fit of anger, for a filthy pleasure, for a mere vapour, for a caprice: *They violated me for a handful of barley and a piece of bread.*—(Ezech. xiii. 19). When the sinner deliberates whether he shall consent or not to sin, he then, as it were, takes the balance in his hands, and examines which weighs most—the grace of God, or that fit of rage, that vapour, that pleasure; and when he afterwards consents, he declares, as far as he is concerned, that his passion and his pleasure are of greater value than the friendship of God. Behold God dishonoured by the sinner! David, reflecting upon the greatness and majesty of God, said: *Lord, who is like to thee?*—(Ps. xxxiv. 10). But God, on the other hand, when He sees a miserable gratification compared by sinners and preferred to Himself, says to them: *To whom have you likened me, or made me equal?*—(Is. xl. 25). Therefore, says the Lord, that vile pleasure was of greater value than My grace: *Thou hast cast me off behind thy back.*—(Ezech. xxiii. 35). You would not have committed that sin if you were, in consequence, to lose a hand, or ten ducats, or perhaps even much less. God, then, says Salvian, is so contemptible in thy eyes, that He deserves to be despised for a momentary passion or a miserable gratification: "God alone was esteemed vile by thee in comparison of all things else."

Thou, then, O my God, art an infinite Good; and I have often exchanged Thee for a miserable pleasure, which was hardly obtained ere it vanished. But although despised by me, Thou dost now offer me pardon if I desire it; and dost promise to restore me to Thy grace if I repent of having offended Thee. Yes, O my Lord, I repent with all my heart of having thus insulted Thee; I detest my sin above every evil.

II.

Moreover, when the sinner for the sake of some pleasure offends God, that pleasure then becomes his god, inasmuch as he makes it his last end. St. Jerome says: "That which each one desires, if he worship it, it is to him a god. A vice in the heart is an idol on the altar." Therefore St. Thomas says: "If thou lovest delights, delights are thy god." And St. Cyprian: "Whatever man prefers to God, he makes his god." When Jeroboam rebelled against God, he endeavoured to draw the people with him into idolatry, and therefore he presented his idols to them, saying: *Behold thy gods, O Israel.*—(3 Kings xii. 28). Thus does the devil present to the sinner some gratification, saying: What hast thou to do with God? Behold thy god in this pleasure, this passion; take this, and leave God. And the sinner, when he consents, adores in his heart that pleasure as his god: "A vice in the heart is an idol on the altar."

If the sinner dishonours God, he will not, at least, do so in His presence? Ah, he insults Him to His Face, because God is present everywhere: *I fill heaven and earth.*—(Jer. xxiii. 24). And this the sinner knows, and yet shrinks not from provoking God even before His eyes: *They continually provoke me to anger before my face.*—(Is. lxxv. 3).

Behold, I now return, as I hope, to Thee, O my God; and Thou dost already receive and embrace me as Thy child. I thank Thee, O Infinite Goodness. But help me now, and do not permit that I ever again banish Thee from me. Hell will not cease to tempt me; but Thou art more powerful than hell. I know that I shall never more separate myself from Thee if I always recommend myself to Thee; this, then, is the grace that Thou must grant me, that I may always recommend myself to Thee, and always pray to Thee, as I now do, saying: O Lord, assist me; give me light, give me strength, give me perseverance, give me paradise; but above all, grant me Thy love, which is the true paradise

of souls. I love Thee, O Infinite Goodness, and desire always to love Thee. Hear me, for the love of Jesus Christ. Mary, thou art the refuge of sinners; succour a sinner who desires to love thy God.

Spiritual Reading

EXTERIOR MORTIFICATION: ITS NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGES.

There is no alternative: we poor children of Adam must till death live in continual warfare; *For*, says the Apostle, *the flesh lusteth against the spirit.*—(Gal. v. 17). The flesh desires what the spirit dislikes; and the spirit pants for what the flesh abhors. Now, since it is peculiar to irrational creatures to place all their happiness in sensual enjoyment, and to the Angels to seek only the accomplishment of God's will, surely if we attend to the observance of the Divine commands, we shall, as a learned author justly says, be transformed into Angels; but if we fix our affections on the gratifications of sense, we shall sink to the level of the brute creation.

If the soul do not subdue the body, the flesh will conquer the spirit. To maintain his seat on a furious steed, and to escape danger, the horseman must hold a tight rein; and to avoid the corruption of the flesh, we must keep the body in perpetual restraint. We must treat it as the physician treats a patient, to whom he prescribes nauseous medicine, and to whom he refuses palatable food. Cruel indeed must be the physician who gives to a sick man noxious draughts because they are pleasing to the taste, and who does not administer useful remedies because they are bitter and disgusting. And great is the cruelty of the sensual, when, to escape some trifling corporal pain in this life, they expose their souls and bodies to eternal torments in the next. "Such charity," says St. Bernard, "is destructive of

dome, and not to leave those undome.—(Matt. xxiii. 23). He meant to say that, to keep the flesh in subjection to reason, the mortification of the body is necessary, as well as the denial of the will. *I chastise my body*, says St. Paul, *and bring it into subjection.*—(1 Cor. ix. 27). The flesh, when indulged, will be brought with difficulty to obey the Divine law. Hence St. John of the Cross, speaking of certain spiritual directors who despise and discourage external penance, says that “he who inculcates loose doctrines regarding the mortification of the flesh, should not be believed though he confirmed his preaching by miracles.”

Evening Meditation

REFLECTIONS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Isaias had already foretold that our blessed Redeemer would be condemned to death, and as an innocent lamb brought to sacrifice: *He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter.*—(Is. liii. 7). What a cause of wonder it must have been to the Angels, O my God, to behold their innocent Lord led as a victim to be sacrificed on the Altar of the Cross for the love of man! And what a cause of horror to Heaven and to hell, the sight of a God extended as an infamous criminal on a shameful gibbet for the sins of His creatures!

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, (for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree) that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.—(Gal. iii. 13). “He was made a curse upon the Cross,” says St. Ambrose, “that thou mightest be blessed in the kingdom of God.” O my dearest Saviour, Thou wert, then, content, in order to obtain for me the blessing of God, to embrace

charity: such mercy is full of cruelty; because it so serves the body as to destroy the soul.” The false love of the flesh destroys the true charity which we owe to ourselves: inordinate compassion towards the body is full of cruelty, because by indulging the flesh it kills the soul. Speaking of sensualists who deride the mortifications of the Saints, the same Father says: “If we are cruel in crucifying the flesh, you, by sparing it, are more cruel.” Yes, for by the pleasures of the body in this life you will merit for soul and body inexpressible torments forever in the next. Father Rodriguez tells us of a solitary who had emaciated his body by very rigorous austerities. Being asked why he treated his body so badly, he replied: “I only chastise what chastises me.” I torment the enemy who persecutes my soul, and who seeks my destruction. The Abbot Moses being once censured for severity towards his body, replied: “Let the passions cease, and I will also cease to mortify my flesh.” When the flesh ceases to molest me, I shall cease to crucify its appetites.

If, then, we wish to be saved, and to please God, we must take pleasure in what the flesh refuses, and must reject what the flesh demands. Our Lord once said to St. Francis of Assisi: “If you desire my love, accept the things that are bitter as if they were sweet, and the things that are sweet as if they were bitter.”

Some will say that perfection does not consist in the mortification of the body, but in the abnegation of the will. To them I answer with Father Pinamonti, that the fruit of the vineyard does not consist in the surrounding hedge; but still if the hedge be taken away, you will seek in vain for the produce of the vine. *Where there is no hedge*, says the Holy Ghost, *the possession shall be spoiled.*—(Eccles. xxxvi. 27). So ardent was the desire of St. Aloysius to crucify his flesh, that, although weak in health, he sought nothing but mortifications and penitential rigours; and, to a person who once said that sanctity does not consist in corporal works of penance, but in the denial of self-will, he wisely answered in the words of the Redeemer: *These things you ought to have*

the dishonour of appearing upon the Cross accursed in the sight of the whole world, and even forsaken in Thy sufferings by Thy Eternal Father,—a suffering which made Thee cry out with a loud voice, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Yes, observes Simon of Cassia, it was for this end that Jesus was abandoned in His Passion, in order that we might not remain abandoned in the sins which we have committed: “Therefore Christ was abandoned in His sufferings that we might not be abandoned in our guilt.” O prodigy of compassion! O excess of love of God towards men! And how can there be a soul who believes this, O my Jesus, and yet loves Thee not?

He hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.—(Apoc. i. 5). Behold, O men, how far the love of Jesus for us has carried Him, in order to cleanse us from the filthiness of our sins. He has even shed every drop of His Blood that He might prepare for us in this His own Blood a bath of salvation: “He offers His own Blood,” says a learned writer, “speaking better than the blood of Abel: for that cried for justice; the Blood of Christ, for mercy.” Whereupon St. Bonaventure exclaims, “O good Jesus, what hast Thou done? O my Saviour, what indeed hast Thou done? How far hath Thy love carried Thee? What hast Thou seen in me which has made Thee love me so much? Why, Lord, why? What am I?” Wherefore didst Thou choose to suffer so much for me? Who am I that Thou wouldst win to Thyself my love at so dear a price? Oh, it was entirely the work of infinite love! Be Thou eternally praised and blessed for it.

II.

O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.—(Lament. i. 12). The same Seraphic Doctor, St. Bonaventure, considering these words of Jeremias as spoken of Our Blessed Redeemer while He was hanging on the Cross dying for the love of us, says: “Yes, Lord, I will attend and see

if there be any love like unto Thy love.” By which he means, I do indeed see and understand, O my most loving Redeemer, how much Thou didst suffer upon that infamous tree; but what most constrains me to love Thee is the thought of the affection which Thou hast shown me in suffering so much, in order that I may love Thee.

That which most inflamed St. Paul with the love of Jesus was the thought that He chose to die, not only for all men, but for him in particular: *He loved me and delivered himself up for me.*—(Gal. ii. 20). Yes, He loved me, said he, and for my sake He gave Himself up to die. And thus ought every one of us to say; for St. John Chrysostom asserts that God has loved every individual man with the same love with which He has loved the world: “He loves each man separately with the same measure of charity with which He loves the whole world.” So that each one of us is under as great obligation to Jesus Christ for having suffered for every one, as if He had suffered for him alone. For supposing Jesus Christ had died on the Cross to save you alone, leaving all others to their original ruin, what a debt of gratitude you would owe to Him! But you ought to feel that you owe Him a still greater obligation for having died for the salvation of all. For if He had died for you alone, what sorrow would it not have caused you to think that your neighbours, parents, brothers, and friends would be damned, and that you would, when this life was over, be for ever separated from them? If you and your family had been slaves, and some one came to rescue you alone, how would you not entreat of him to save your parents and brothers together with yourself! And how much would you thank him if he did this to please you! Say, therefore, to Jesus: O my sweetest Redeemer, Thou hast done this for me without my having asked Thee; Thou hast not only saved me from death at the price of Thy Blood, but also my parents and friends, so that I may have a good hope that we may all together enjoy Thy Presence for ever in Paradise. O Lord, I thank Thee, and I love Thee, and I hope to thank Thee for it, and to love Thee for ever in that blessed country.

Saturday after Sexagesima

Morning Meditation

MARY, THE QUEEN OF MARTYRS.

As Jesus is called the King of Sorrows and the King of Martyrs, because He suffered more than all the Martyrs, so also is Mary with good reason called the Queen of Martyrs, having merited this title by suffering a Martyrdom the most cruel, after that of her Divine Son. Of her can the words of Isaias with all truth be said: *He will crown thee with a crown of tribulation*—that is to say, Mary's sufferings, which exceeded the sufferings of all the other Martyrs united, were the crown by which she was shown to be the Queen of Martyrs.

I.

Who can have a heart so hard that it will not melt on hearing the most lamentable event that has ever occurred in the world? There was a noble and holy woman who had an only son. This son was the most amiable that can be imagined—innocent, virtuous, beautiful, who loved his mother most tenderly; so much so that he had never caused her the least displeasure but had ever shown her all respect, obedience, and affection; hence this mother had placed all her affection on earth in this son. Hear, then, what happened: This son, through envy, was falsely accused by his enemies; and though the judge knew, and himself confessed; that he was innocent, yet, that he might not offend his enemies, he condemned him to the ignominious death that they demanded. This poor mother had to

suffer the grief of seeing that amiable and beloved son unjustly snatched from her in the flower of his age by a barbarous death; for, by dint of torments and drained of all his blood, he was made to die on an infamous gibbet in a public place of execution, and this before her own eyes. Devout souls, what say you? Is not this event, and is not this unhappy mother, worthy of compassion?

You already understand of whom I speak. This son, so cruelly executed, was our loving Redeemer, Jesus; and this mother was the Blessed Virgin Mary, who, for the love she bore us, was willing to see Him sacrificed to Divine justice by the barbarity of men. This great torment, then, which Mary endured for us—a torment that was more than a thousand deaths—deserves both our compassion and our gratitude. If we can make no other return for so much love, at least let us give a few moments to consider the greatness of the sufferings by which Mary became the Queen of Martyrs.

O my afflicted Mother, Queen of Martyrs and of Sorrows, thou didst so bitterly weep over thy Son, Who died for my salvation, but what will thy tears avail me if I am lost? By the merits, then, of thy sorrows, obtain for me true contrition for my sins, and a real amendment of life, together with constant and tender compassion for the sufferings of Jesus and thy Dolours.

II.

As Jesus is called the King of Sorrows and the King of Martyrs, because He suffered during His life more than all other Martyrs, so also is Mary with reason called the Queen of Martyrs, having merited this title by suffering the most cruel Martyrdom possible after that of her Son. Hence with reason was she called by Richard of St. Laurence, "the Martyr of Martyrs"; and of her can the words of Isaias with all truth be said, *He will crown thee with a crown of tribulation*—(Is. xxii. 18); that is to say, that Mary's sufferings, which exceeded the

all my hope, I do so now; I invoke thy Son and thee to succour me in that last moment; and I say, Jesus and Mary, to you I recommend my soul. Amen.

Spiritual Reading

MORTIFICATION: ITS NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGES.

The world and the devil are very powerful enemies of our eternal salvation; but our own body, because it is a domestic enemy, is a still more dangerous antagonist. "A domestic enemy," says St. Bernard, "is the worst of foes." A town that is besieged has more to apprehend from the enemies that are within than from those that are without the walls, because it is far more difficult to ward off the attacks of the former than those of the latter. St. Joseph Calasancius used to say that "we should pay no more attention to the body than to the vilest rag." Such, indeed, has been the practice of the Saints. As the indulgence of the body by sensual pleasures is the sole and constant study of worldlings, so the continual mortification of the flesh is to the Saints the only object of their care and of their desires. St. Peter of Alcantara was accustomed to say to his body: O my body, keep your peace; I shall give you no rest here below; pains and torments shall be your portion in this life; when we shall be in Paradise, you will then enjoy that repose which shall never end. Similar was the practice of St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, who, on the bed of death, stated that she did not remember to have ever taken pleasure in any other object than God alone. If we read the Lives of the Saints and see the works of penance they performed, we shall be ashamed of the delicacy and of the reserve with which we chastise the flesh. In the Lives of the Ancient

sufferings of all the other Martyrs united, were the crown by which she was shown to be the Queen of Martyrs.

That Mary was a true Martyr cannot be doubted, as Denis the Carthusian, Pelbart, Catharinus, and others prove; for it is an undoubted opinion that suffering sufficient to cause death is Martyrdom, even though death does not ensue from it. St. John the Evangelist is revered as a Martyr, though he did not die in the cauldron of boiling oil, but "came out more vigorous than he went in." St. Thomas says, "that to have the glory of Martyrdom, it is sufficient to exercise obedience in its highest degree, that is to say, to be obedient unto death." "Mary was a Martyr," says St. Bernard, "not by the sword of the executioner, but by bitter sorrow of heart." If her body was not wounded by the hand of the executioner, her blessed heart was transfixed by a sword of grief at the Passion of her Son, grief which was sufficient to cause her death not once, but a thousand times. From this we shall see that Mary was not only a real Martyr, but that her Martyrdom surpassed all others; for it was longer than that of all others, and her whole life may be said to have been a prolonged death.

And if Jesus and thou, O Mary, being so innocent, have suffered so much for love of me, obtain that at least I, who am deserving of hell, may suffer something for your love. "O Lady," will I say with St. Bonaventura, "if I have offended thee, in justice wound my heart; if I have served thee, I now ask wounds for my reward. It is shameful to me to see my Lord Jesus wounded, and thee wounded with Him, and myself without a wound." In fine, O my Mother, by the grief that thou didst experience in seeing thy Son bow down His head and expire on the Cross in the midst of so many torments, I beseech thee to obtain me a good death. Ah, cease not, O advocate of sinners, to assist my afflicted soul in the midst of the combat in which it will have to engage on its great passage from time to eternity. And as it is probable that I may then have lost my speech and strength to invoke thy name and that of Jesus, who are

Fathers we read of a large Community of nuns who never tasted fruit or wine. Some of them took food only once every day; others never ate a meal, except after two or three days of rigorous abstinence: all were clothed and even slept in haircloth. Such austerities are not required of you. But is it too much for you to take the discipline several times in the week?—to wear a chain round some part of the body till the hour of dinner?—not to approach the fire in winter on some day in each week, and during novenas of devotion?—to abstain from fruit and sweetmeats?—and, in honour of the Mother of God, to fast every Saturday on bread and water, or at least to be content with one dish?

But you will say: I am weak, and my director forbids me to practise any corporal austerity. Obey your confessor, but take care to embrace with peace all the troubles of your infirmities, and all the inconveniences arising from the heat or cold of the seasons. If you cannot chastise your body by positive rigours, abstain at least from some lawful pleasures. St. Francis Borgia, when amusing himself in hawk-hunting, used to cast down his eyes when he saw the hawk about to spring upon its prey. St. Aloysius always turned away his eyes from the objects of curiosity exhibited at the festivities at which he was present. Why cannot you practise similar mortifications? If denied lawful pleasures, the body will not dare to seek forbidden indulgence; but if continually gratified by every innocent enjoyment, it will soon draw the soul into sinful gratifications. Besides, that great servant of God, Father Vincent Carafa, of the Society of Jesus, used to say that the Almighty has given us the goods of the earth, not only that we may enjoy them, but also that we may have the means of pleasing Him by offering Him His own gifts, and by voluntarily renouncing them in order to show our love for Him. It is true, indeed, that certain innocent pleasures assist our weakness, and prepare us for spiritual exercises; but it is likewise true that earthly pleasures poison the soul, by attaching her to creatures. Hence, like poison, they must be used

sparingly. Poisons, when properly prepared and taken with moderation are sometimes conducive to health; and earthly delights, because they are poisonous and remedies, must be taken with great caution and reserve, without attachment to them, only through necessity, and to be better able to serve God.

Evening Meditation

REFLECTIONS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Who could ever, says St. Laurence Justinian, explain the love which the Divine Word bears to each one of us, since it surpasses the love of every son towards his mother, and of every mother for her son. "The intense charity of the Word of God surpasses all maternal and filial love; neither can human words express how great His love is to each one of us!" So much so, that Our Lord revealed to St. Gertrude, that He would be ready to die as many times as there were souls damned, if they were yet capable of redemption: "I would die as many deaths as there are souls in hell." O Jesus, O Treasure more worthy of love than all others, why is it that men love Thee so little? Oh, do Thou make known what Thou hast suffered for each of them, the love that Thou bearest them, the desire Thou hast to be loved by them, and how worthy Thou art of being loved. Make Thyself known, O my Jesus, make Thyself loved.

I am the good shepherd, said our Redeemer; *the good shepherd gives his life for his sheep*.—(John x. 11). But, O my Lord, where are there in the world shepherds like unto Thee? Other shepherds will slay their sheep in order to preserve their own life. Thou, O too loving Shepherd, didst give Thy Divine life in order to save the life of Thy beloved sheep. And of these sheep, I

O most amiable Shepherd, have the happiness to be one. What obligation, then, am I not under to love Thee, and to spend my life for Thee, since Thou hast died for the love of me in particular! And what confidence ought I not to have in Thy Blood, knowing that it has been shed to pay the debt of my sins! *And thou shalt say in that day, I will give thanks to thee, O Lord . . . Behold, God is my Saviour. I will deal confidently, and will not fear.*—(Is. xii. 1, 2). And how can I any longer mistrust Thy mercy, O my Lord, when I behold Thy Wounds? Come, then, O sinners, and let us have recourse to Jesus, Who hangs upon the Cross as it were on a throne of mercy. He has appeased the Divine justice, which we had insulted. If we have offended God, He has done penance for us; all that is required for us is contrition for our sins.

O my dearest Saviour, to what have Thy pity and love for me reduced Thee? The slave sins, and Thou, Lord, payest the penalty for him. If, therefore, I think of my sins, the thought of the punishment I deserve must make me tremble; but when I think of Thy death, I find I have more reason to hope than to fear. O Blood of Jesus, Thou art all my hope.

II.

But this Blood, as it inspires us with confidence, also obliges us to give ourselves entirely to our Blessed Redeemer. The Apostle exclaims: *Know you not, that you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price.*—(1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). Therefore, O my Jesus, I cannot any longer, without injustice, dispose of myself, or of my own concerns, since Thou hast made me Thine by purchasing me through Thy death. My body, my soul, my life are no longer mine; they are Thine, and entirely Thine. In Thee alone, therefore, will I hope. O my God, crucified and dead for me, I have nothing else to offer Thee but this soul, which Thou hast bought with Thy Blood; to Thee do I offer it. Accept of my love, for I desire nothing but Thee, my Saviour, my

God, my Love, my All. Hitherto I have shown much gratitude towards men; to Thee alone have I, alas, been ungrateful. But now I love Thee, and I have no greater cause of sorrow than my having offended Thee. O my Jesus, give me confidence in Thy Passion; root out of my heart every affection that belongs not to Thee. I will love Thee alone Who dost deserve all my love, and Who hast given me so much reason to love Thee.

And who, indeed, could refuse to love Thee, when they see Thee, Who art the Beloved of the Eternal Father, dying such a bitter and cruel death for our sakes? O Mary, O Mother of fair love, I pray thee, through the merits of thy burning heart, obtain for me the grace to live only in order to love thy Son, Who, being in Himself worthy of an infinite love, has chosen at so great a cost to acquire to Himself the love of a miserable sinner like me. O Love of souls, O my Jesus, I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee; but still I love Thee too little. Oh, give me more love, give me flames that may make me live always burning with Thy love. I do not myself deserve it; but Thou dost well deserve it, O Infinite Goodness. Amen. This I hope, so may it be.

Quinquagesima Sunday

Morning Meditation

THE LOVE OF JESUS IN LEAVING HIMSELF FOR OUR FOOD BEFORE HIS DEATH.

The Angelic Doctor calls the Most Blessed Sacrament "a Sacrament of love, a token of the greatest love that a God could give us." "The love of loves," says St. Bernard. O Divine Food, O Sacrament of love, when wilt Thou draw me entirely to Thyself?

I.

Jesus, knowing that his hour was come that he should pass out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end.—(John xiii. 1). Our most loving Redeemer, on the last night of His life, knowing that the much longed-for time had arrived in which He should die for the love of man, had not the heart to leave us alone in this valley of tears; but in order that He might not be separated from us even by death, He would leave us His whole Self as Food in the Sacrament of the Altar; giving us to understand by this, that, having given us this gift of infinite worth, He could give us nothing further to prove to us His love: *He loved them unto the end.* Cornelius à Lapide, with St. John Chrysostom and Theophylact, interprets the words *unto the end* according to the Greek text, and writes thus: *He loved them with an excessive and supreme love.* Jesus in this Sacrament made His

[In many churches it is customary to have the Forty Hours' Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, beginning on Sunday morning (Quinquagesima) and closing on Tuesday morning. Suitable Meditations and Readings are arranged here for the three days.—Ed.]

last effort of love towards men, as the Abbot Gueric says: "He poured out the whole power of His love upon His friends."

This was still better expressed by the Holy Council of Trent, which, in speaking of the Sacrament of the Altar, said that in it our Blessed Saviour "poured out of Himself, as it were, all the riches of His love towards us." The Angelical St. Thomas was therefore right in calling this Sacrament "a Sacrament of love, and a token of the greatest love that a God could give us." And St. Bernard called it "The Love of loves." And St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi said that a soul, after having communicated, might say, *It is consummated*; that is to say: My God, having given Himself to me in this Holy Communion, has nothing more to give me. This Saint, one day, asked one of her novices what she had been thinking of after Communion; she answered: "Of the love of Jesus." "Yes," replied the Saint, "when we think of this love, we cannot pass on to other thoughts, but must stop upon love."

O Saviour of the world, what dost Thou expect from men, that Thou hast been induced even to give them Thyself as Food? And what can there be left for Thee to give us after this Sacrament, in order to oblige us to love Thee? Ah, my most loving God, enlighten me that I may know what an excess of goodness this has been of Thine, to reduce Thyself unto becoming my Food in Holy Communion! If Thou hast, therefore, given Thyself entirely to me, it is just that I also should give myself wholly to Thee. Yes, my Jesus, I give myself entirely to Thee. I love Thee above every good, and I desire to receive Thee in order to love Thee more. Come, therefore, and come often, into my soul, and make it entirely Thine. Oh, that I could truly say to Thee, as the loving St. Philip Neri said to Thee when he received Thee in the Viaticum: "Behold my Love! Behold my Love! Give me my Love!"

II.

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him.—(John vi. 57). St. Denis, the Areopagite, says that love always tends towards union with the object beloved. And because food becomes one thing with him who eats it, therefore Our Lord would reduce Himself to Food, in order that receiving Him in Holy Communion, we might become of one substance with Him : *Take ye and eat*, said Jesus, *this is my body*. As if He had said, remarks St. John Chrysostom : “Eat Me, that the highest union may take place.” O man, feed thyself on Me, in order that thou and I may become one substance. In the same way, says St. Cyril of Alexandria, as two pieces of melted wax unite together, so a soul that communicates is so thoroughly united to Jesus, that Jesus remains in her and she in Jesus. O my beloved Redeemer, exclaims Saint Laurence Justinian, how couldst Thou ever come to love us so much that Thou wouldst unite Thyself to us in such a way that Thy Heart and ours should become but one heart? “Oh, how admirable is Thy love, O Lord Jesus, Who wouldst incorporate us in such a manner with Thy Body, that we should have but one heart with Thee.”

Spiritual Reading

VISITING JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

Frequent visits to Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar are a great help to souls that love Him. The Holy Church has instituted and celebrates the Feast of the Adorable Sacrament with so many solemnities in honour of Jesus, not only in Holy Communion, but also in the loving Presence of Jesus Christ night and day in our churches, in this Sacrament of love. Our Loving Lord

says Nieremberg, has left Himself on earth under the species of bread, principally in order to be the Food of our souls; but He has left Himself also in order to remain with us shut up in our Tabernacles, and thus remind us of the love which He bears us. “No tongue,” says St. Peter of Alcantara, “can express the greatness of the love that Jesus bears to all that are in the state of grace.”

Hence, that His absence from them might not be an occasion of forgetting Him, this most sweet Spouse of souls, before His departure from this world, left, as a memorial of His love, this most holy Sacrament, in which He Himself remained. He did not wish that between Him and His servants there should be any other pledge than Himself to keep alive the remembrance of Him.

Hence, when our dear Saviour left this world, He did not wish to leave us alone, and hence it was that He devised a means of remaining with us in the Holy Eucharist to the end of time, so that even here below we might enjoy His sweet company. This He declared to His disciples, and through them to us all : *Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.*—(Matt. xxviii. 20). St. Peter of Alcantara adds : “The Saviour did not wish to leave His spouse alone at such a distance, and therefore He has left her this Sacrament, in which He Himself remains, as the best companion He could leave her.”

St. Teresa says that all are not permitted to speak to their king; the most that a vassal can expect is, to speak to his sovereign through a third person. She then adds : But to speak to Thee, O King of Glory, the intervention of a third person is not necessary; Thou art always ready to give audience to all in the Sacrament of the Altar. Every one that wishes may find Thee there always, and may speak to Thee with confidence. Oh, how difficult is it to obtain an audience from an earthly monarch! Kings seldom give audience to their subjects. But Thou, O my Redeemer, in this Sacrament, dost give audience to all, whenever they wish. Our Divine King,

says the same Saint, in order to animate us to approach His feet with greater confidence, has clothed Himself with the species of bread in this Sacrament, and thus has veiled His majesty that we may not be terrified at the sight of it.

But, O God, how many insults must Jesus Christ suffer from infidels, from heretics, and from sinners in this Sacrament in order to remain with us. Some have trampled on the Sacred Host, others have thrown It into the mire. He foresaw all these injuries; but still He resolved to remain with us on the altar, that we might not be deprived of His amiable Presence.

Many pilgrims make long journeys to visit the Holy House of Loretto, where Jesus Christ once dwelt, or to venerate the places in the Holy Land in which He was born, in which He suffered and died. But Blessed John of Avila had just reason to say, that he knew no sanctuary more amiable, or more apt to inspire devotion, than a church in which the Holy Sacrament is reserved, for there Jesus Christ has not only once dwelt but truly lives and dwells always. Hence, the Saints have experienced no greater delight on earth than that which they enjoyed in the presence of the most Holy Sacrament. St. Francis Xavier, as is related in his *Life*, after having laboured all day for the sanctification of souls, spent the night at the foot of the Tabernacle; when overcome by sleep, he threw himself on the steps of the Altar, and, after a short repose, he began again to converse with his dear Lord. St. John Francis Regis used to do the same; for after having spent the entire day in preaching and hearing confessions, his repose consisted in remaining during the night before Jesus in the Holy Sacrament, and when he found the church shut he remained outside the door to pay homage, at least at a distance, to his beloved Redeemer. The Venerable Father Baithasar Alvarez, a holy man, when unable to remain in the church, endeavoured at least to keep his eyes turned to the Tabernacle, in which he knew the Blessed Sacrament was reserved. In a word, all

the Saints have found their paradise on earth in this Sacrament. St. Teresa said one day from Heaven to one of her Religious: "We who rejoice in Heaven, and you who suffer on earth, should be the same in purity and love. And what we do in Heaven before the Divine Essence you should do on earth before the Most Holy Sacrament." And what greater paradise can he that loves Jesus Christ find on this earth than to remain at His feet, to manifest the love that he bears to Him, to offer to Jesus himself and all that belongs to him, to make known his desire to see Him face to face, in order to love Him with greater ardour!

But this paradise Religious can enjoy in a special manner. It is true that Jesus remains in the Blessed Sacrament for all; but He remains particularly for His spouses who enjoy His society day and night under their very own roof. When Jesus was born, the holy Magi left their country and their homes, and spent a long time travelling through Palestine, inquiring for the birth-place of the Redeemer: *Saying, where is he that is born king of the Jews?*—(Matt. ii. 2). To visit Jesus Christ, people living in the world must leave their houses and go to the church, which is closed at night, and in many places is open only in the morning. But those living in convents and monasteries need not leave their own dwelling in order to enjoy the society of Jesus Christ; He remains continually in the house in which they dwell. They can visit Jesus, then, whenever they please, in the morning or evening, by day or by night. As spouses of Jesus they are permitted to dwell in the palace. How highly honoured does the vassal esteem himself to be, when he is invited to dwell in the palace of his king! You, then, are of the number of those happy Christians who have the honour of dwelling on this earth with Jesus Christ, the King of Heaven. You can visit Him, and remain with Him day and night, whenever you please. The Venerable Mother Mary of Jesus, the Foundress of a Monastery in Toulouse, used to say, that she thanked God in a special manner for two things: first, because by the vow of Obedience,

Religious belong entirely to God; secondly, because they have the happiness of dwelling always in the house where Jesus dwells in the Blessed Sacrament.

Evening Meditation

THE LOVE OF JESUS IN LEAVING HIMSELF TO US IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

I.

Well did St. Francis de Sales say, in speaking of Holy Communion: "In no action does our Saviour show Himself more loving or more tender than in this one, in which, as it were, He annihilates Himself and reduces Himself into food in order to penetrate our souls, and unite Himself to the hearts of His faithful ones." So that, says St. John Chrysostom, "to that Lord on whom the Angels even dare not fix their eyes, to Him we unite ourselves, and with Him we are made one body, one flesh." But what shepherd, adds the Saint, feeds the sheep with his own blood? Even mothers give their children to nurses to feed; but Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament feeds us with His own Blood, and unites us to Himself. There are many mothers who give their children to others to nurse; but this He has not done, but feeds us with His own Blood. In short, says the Saint, because He loved us so ardently, He chose to make Himself one with us by becoming our food. "He mingled Himself with us, that we might be one; this they do whose love is ardent."

O infinite Love, worthy of infinite love, when shall I love Thee, my Jesus, as Thou hast loved me. O Divine Food, Sacrament of love, when wilt Thou draw me entirely to Thyself? Thou hast nothing left to do in order to make Thyself loved by me. I am constantly intending to begin to love Thee, I constantly

promise Thee to do so; but I never begin. I will from this day begin to love Thee in earnest. Oh, do Thou enable me to do so. Enlighten me, inflame me, detach me from earth, and permit me not any longer to resist so many enticements of Thy love. I love Thee with my whole heart, and I will therefore leave everything in order to please Thee, my Life, my Love, my All. I will constantly unite myself to Thee in this Holy Sacrament, in order to detach myself from everything, and to love Thee only, my God. I hope, through Thy gracious assistance, to be enabled to do so.

II.

St. Laurence Justinian says: "We have seen the All-wise made foolish by excess of love." We have seen a God Who is Wisdom itself become a fool through the love He has borne to man. And is it not so? Does it not seem, exclaims St. Augustine, a folly of love that a God should give Himself as food to His creatures? "Does it not seem madness to say: *Eat my flesh; drink my blood?*" And what more could a creature have said to his Creator? "Shall I make bold to say, that the Creator of all things was beside Himself through the excess of His loving goodness?" Thus St. Denis speaks, and says, that God through the greatness of His love has almost gone out of Himself; for, being God, He has gone so far as to become Man, and even to make Himself the Food of men. But, O Lord, such an excess was not becoming Thy Majesty. No, but love, answers St. John Chrysostom for Jesus, does not go about looking for reasons when it desires to do good and to make itself known to the object beloved; it goes, not where it is becoming, but where it is carried by its desire. "Love is unreasoning, and goes as it is led, and not as it ought."

O my Jesus, how ought I not to be covered with shame when I consider that, having Thee before me, Who art the Infinite Good and lovely above every good, and so full of love for my soul, I have yet turned back to love vile and contemptible things, and for their sake have

forsaken Thee. O my God, I beseech Thee, discover to me every day more and more the greatness of Thy goodness, in order that I may every day be more and more enamoured of Thee, and may labour more and more to please Thee. Ah, my Lord, what object more beautiful, more good, more holy, more amiable can I love beside Thee? I love Thee, Infinite Goodness, I love Thee more than myself, and I desire to live only that I may love Thee, Who dost deserve all my love.

Monday after Quinquagesima

Morning Meditation

JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT GIVES AUDIENCE TO ALL.

St. Teresa says that all are not allowed to speak to their king : the most that can be hoped for is to communicate with him through a third person. And even if anyone at length succeeds in speaking with a king, how many difficulties has he had to overcome before he could do so ! To converse with Thee, O King of Glory, no third person is needed. Thou art always ready in the Sacrament of the Altar to grant audience to all. In this Sacrament Thou grantest audience to all, night and day—whenever we please.

I.

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament gives audience to all. St. Teresa says, that in this world all cannot speak with

their sovereign ; the poor can hardly hope to do so, or even to make their wants known through some third person : but with this King of Heaven no third person is necessary,—all, both high and low, may speak to Him, for He remains face to face with us in this Sacrament. It is for this reason that Jesus is called the *Flower of the field and the lily of the valleys*.—(Cant. ii. 1). Gardens are shut in and carefully preserved ; but the flowers of the fields are open to all. Cardinal Hugo comments on these words, saying, “ because I show Myself to be found by all.”

Any one may, then, speak to Jesus in this Sacrament at any hour of the day. St. Peter Chrysologus, describing the birth of our Redeemer in the stable of Bethlehem, says, that kings are not always giving audience ; it often happens that a person goes to speak to the prince, and the guards send him away, saying that it is not the hour for admission, and he must come again. But our Lord was pleased to be born in an open cave, without a door, and without guards, that He might receive all, at all hours. There is no attendant to say, “ It is not the hour.” And it is the same with Jesus in His Most Holy Sacrament : the churches are always open, and everyone may go and speak to the King of Heaven whenever he pleases ; and Jesus wills that we should there address Him with the utmost confidence. It is for this that He has concealed Himself beneath the form of bread. If He were to appear on our Altars on a throne of light, as He will appear at the Last Judgment, which of us would have courage to approach Him ? But because Our Lord wishes us to speak to Him, says St. Teresa, and to seek graces of Him with confidence and without fear, He has hidden His majesty under the species of bread : He wishes that we should treat with Him “ as one friend with another,” as Thomas à Kempis expresses it.

To converse with Thee, O King of Glory, no third person is needed : Thou art always ready in the Sacrament of the Altar to give audience to all. Who ever desires Thee always finds Thee there and converses with Thee face to face. Since, then, my Jesus, Thou

art enclosed in this Tabernacle to receive the supplications of miserable creatures who come to seek an audience of Thee, listen this day to the petition addressed to Thee by the most ungrateful sinner on earth. I come repentant to Thy feet. Change me from a great rebel such as I have hitherto been to Thee, into a great lover of Thee. Thou canst do it. I love Thee, my Jesus, above all things. I love Thee more than my life, my God, my Love, my All!

II.

When the soul remains at the foot of the Altar, Jesus seems to address her in the words of the Canticle: *Arise: my love, my beautiful one, and come.*—(Cant. ii. 10). “Soul arise,” He says, “and fear not; approach, come near to Me. *My friend*: you are not now My enemy for you love Me, and are sorry for having offended Me. *My beautiful one*: you are no longer hideous in My eyes. My grace has made you beautiful. *And come*: come here, tell Me whatever you wish; I am on the altar for this very purpose.” How delighted you would be if a king were to call you into his presence, and say to you: “Tell me, what do you want, what do you wish? love you and wish to benefit you.” Jesus Christ, the King of Heaven, says this to all who visit Him: *Come to me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*—(Matt. xi. 28). Come all you who are poor, sick, or afflicted, I can and will enrich you, heal you, and comfort you. I remain for this purpose on your altars: *I myself that spoke: behold I am here*—(Is. lii. 6).

My beloved Jesus, since Thou remainest on our Altar to hear the petitions of wretched creatures who have recourse to Thee, hear now the prayer which I, miserable sinner, make to Thee. O Lamb of God sacrificed and put to death on the Cross, Thou seest: I am a soul redeemed with Thy Blood; forgive me the insults I have offered Thee, and help me by Thy grace to lose Thee no more. Give me, dear Jesus, a share in

the grief Thou didst feel in the Garden of Gethsemani for my sins! Oh, that I had never offended Thee, my God! If I were to die in sin, my beloved Lord, I could love Thee no more; but Thou hast waited for me expressly that I may love Thee; I thank Thee for the time Thou grantest me, and since I now can love Thee, I will do so. Grant me the great grace of loving Thee, but of loving Thee so as to make me forget all, to think only of pleasing Thy most loving Heart. My Jesus, Thou hast expended Thy whole life for me; grant that I may use for Thee at least the remainder of my life. I hope for all graces through the merits of Thy Passion. I hope also in thy intercession, O Mary! Thou knowest that I love thee. Have pity upon me.

Spiritual Reading

VISITING JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

Let us be careful to profit by the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Our hearts should remain with Him to burn continually, and with greater splendour than the lights and lamps that adorn the Altar. But, alas! the ingratitude of men towards Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament made Him complain to His servant, St. Margaret Mary Aloccoque, to whom He showed His Divine Heart burning with flames of love for men. Jesus said to her: “Behold this Heart that has loved men so tenderly, and has reserved nothing, but has consumed itself in order to show its love for men; yet in return I receive nothing but ingratitude and contempt. But what displeases Me most is, that some of these ungrateful ones are hearts consecrated to Me.” In these last words Jesus spoke of those who dwell in the same house with Him, and yet draw but little profit

from His Presence. If He were to come into your church once a year, and to remain only for a single day, surely all would contend with one another in paying homage to Him, and in remaining in His loving company; and will you leave Him alone, and seldom visit Him because in order to see you more frequently in His Presence, He, in His goodness, remains continually with you?

If you have hitherto been negligent in visiting Jesus in the Tabernacle, I entreat you henceforth to avail yourself of the great treasure that you have in the most Holy Sacrament. Sister Anne of the Cross, who had been Countess of Feria, and a Spanish lady of high rank, after being a widow for twenty-four years entered the Order of St. Clare, in Montilla. She procured a cell, from which she had a view of the Altar of the Blessed Sacrament, and there she generally remained day and night. Being asked how she was employed during so many hours that she spent before the Blessed Sacrament, she replied: "I would remain there for all eternity. How am I employed before Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist? I thank Him, I love Him, I ask His graces." Behold an excellent means of drawing great fruit from your visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

First, thank Jesus Christ. How thankful you are to relatives that come from a distance to visit you! And will you not thank Jesus Christ Who descends from Heaven, not only to visit you, but also to remain always with you? First of all in your Visit, enliven your Faith and adore your Spouse in the Sacrament: thank His great goodness in coming to remain on the Altar for the love of you.

Secondly, love Jesus. St. Philip Neri, when he saw the most holy Viaticum brought into his room, was all on fire with holy love, and exclaimed: "Behold my Love! Behold my Love!" Do you say the same when you remain before the Holy Tabernacle. Consider that your Jesus, shut up in that prison of love, is burning with love for you. To St. Catherine of Sienna He appeared one day in the Blessed Sacrament in the form of a fiery

furnace, and the Saint was astonished that the flames that issued from it had not filled the hearts of all men with the fire of Divine love. If, when you remain in His Presence, you wish to please Him, repeat acts of love, offering yourself to Him in a special manner.

Thirdly, ask Jesus for His grace. Blessed Henry Suso used to say that it is in the Holy Sacrament that Jesus hears most readily the prayers of those who visit Him, and that it is there He dispenses His graces most abundantly. The Venerable Father Balthasar Alvarez once saw Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament with His hands full of graces, but found no one to whom He could impart them, because there was no one to ask them. You say that you cannot remain in the Presence of Jesus Christ, because you know not what to do before Him, or what to say. O God! And why do you not employ yourself in asking the graces of which you stand in need? Beg of Jesus to give you strength to resist temptations, to correct the faults into which you always relapse, to rescue you from the passion that keeps you in chains, and hinders you from giving yourself entirely to God. Entreat Him to give you aid to suffer all insults and contradictions in peace, to increase in your heart His Divine love, and entreat Him particularly to make you live always united with His holy will. When you feel disturbed on account of having committed any fault, go instantly to the Holy Sacrament to ask pardon, and then calm your mind. When you receive any offence, or when you meet a heavy cross, go and offer it to Jesus Christ and ask His aid to embrace it with resignation. Oh! if we all acted in this manner and knew how to avail ourselves of the Presence of Jesus, we should all become Saints. Let it be our care to become Saints by adopting this practice.

Evening Meditation

A GIFT SURPASSING ALL GIFTS.

I.

St. Paul draws attention to the time Jesus chose to make us this gift of the most Holy Sacrament; a gift which surpasses all the other gifts which an Almighty God could make, as St. Clement says: "A gift surpassing all fulness." And St. Augustine says: "Although omnipotent He could give no more." The Apostle remarks that *the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread and, giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye and eat; this is my body which shall be delivered for you.*—(1 Cor. xi. 23, 24). In that same night, then, that men were thinking of preparing torments and death for Jesus, our beloved Redeemer thought of leaving them Himself in the Blessed Sacrament; giving us thereby to understand that His love was so great, that, instead of being cooled by so many injuries, it was then more than ever yearning towards us. O most loving Saviour, how couldst Thou have so great love for men as to choose to remain with them on this earth to be their Food, after their having driven Thee away from it with so much ingratitude!

II.

Let us also consider the immense desire Jesus had during all His life for the arrival of that night, in which He had determined to leave us this great pledge of His love. For at the moment of His instituting this most sweet Sacrament, He said, *With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you.*—(Luke xxii. 15), words which Himself with us in Communion through the love which He bore us: "This is the voice of most burning charity,

says St. Laurence Justinian. And Jesus still retains at the present time the same desire towards all the souls that love Him.

O Lover, too full of love, there are no greater proofs left for Thee to give me in order to persuade me that Thou dost love me. I bless Thy goodness for it. O my Jesus, I beseech Thee, draw me entirely to Thyself. Make me love Thee henceforth with all the affections and tenderness of which I am capable. Let it suffice to others to love Thee with a love only appreciative and predominant, for I know that Thou wilt be satisfied with it; but I shall not be satisfied until I see that I love Thee also with all the tenderness of my heart, more than friend, more than brother, more than father, and more than spouse. And where, indeed, shall I find a friend, a brother, a father, a spouse, who will love me as much as Thou hast loved me, my Creator, my Redeemer, and my God, Who for the love of me hast spent Thy Blood and Thy life; and, not content with that, dost give Thyself entirely to me in this Sacrament of love. I love Thee, then, O my Jesus, with all the affections of my soul: I love Thee more than myself. Oh, help me to love Thee; I ask nothing more of Thee.

Tuesday after Quinquagesima

Morning Meditation

**JESUS DESIRES THAT ALL SHOULD RECEIVE
HIM IN HOLY COMMUNION.**

With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you.
By these words our Redeemer describes His eagerness to unite Himself with each one of us in the Blessed

Sacrament. *With desire have I desired.* This is the expression of most burning love, says St. Laurence Justinian. So that Our Lord said one day to St. Mechtilde: "No bee throws itself with such eagerness on flowers, to suck their honey, as I come to the souls which desire Me."

I.

Let us consider the great desire Jesus Christ has that we should receive Him in Holy Communion: *Jesus, knowing that his hour was come.*—(John xiii. 1). How could He call his hour that in which His bitter Passion was to begin? He speaks thus, because in that night He was about to leave us this Divine Sacrament, that He might unite Himself perfectly to His beloved souls; and this desire made Him say: *With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you.*—(Luke xxii. 15). By these words our Redeemer describes His eagerness to unite with each of us in this Sacrament: *With desire have I desired;* The immense love He bears us makes Him speak thus. St. Laurence Justinian says, "This is the expression of most burning love." And He has been pleased to veil Himself beneath the species of bread, that so all may be able to receive Him. If He had concealed Himself under the appearance of any expensive food, the poor would have been unable to obtain it; and even if He had chosen some other inexpensive food, it might perhaps not have been found in all parts of the world: Jesus has been pleased to remain under the form of bread, because bread costs little, and is to be had everywhere; so that in all places we may find Him and receive Him.

Our Redeemer's great desire to be received by us, makes Him not only exhort us in so many ways to come to Him. *Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you.*—(Prov. ix. 5). *Eat, O friends, drink and be inebriated, my dearly-beloved.*—(Cant. v. 1). But He even imposes it on us as a command to do so: *Take ye, and eat; this is my body.*—(Matt. xxvi. 26). And that we may approach to Him, He allures us by the promise of eternal life: *He that eateth my flesh*

. . . *hath everlasting life; he that eateth this bread shall live for ever.*—(John vi. 55-59). And He threatens us with being shut out from Heaven if we do not: *Except you eat the flesh of the son of man . . . you shall not have life in you.*—(John vi. 54). All these invitations, promises, and threats, spring from the desire Jesus has to be united to us in this Sacrament. Now this desire arises from the great love He bears us; for, as St. Francis de Sales says, the end of love is solely to unite itself to the beloved object, and therefore in this Sacrament Jesus unites Himself wholly to our souls: *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him.*—(John vi. 57). And for this reason He so earnestly wishes us to receive Him. Our Lord said one day to St. Mechtilde: "No bee throws itself with such eagerness on flowers, to suck their honey, as I come to those souls which desire Me."

Oh, if the faithful would understand the great Good which Holy Communion brings to their souls! Jesus is the Lord of all riches, since He knows that *his father had given him all things into his hands.*—(John xiii. 8). St. Dionysius says that the Most Holy Sacrament "has a special power to sanctify man's soul." And St. Vincent Ferrer writes, that a soul profits more by one Communion than by a week's fast on bread and water. The Council of Trent teaches that Holy Communion is the great "remedy which frees us from daily sins, and preserves us from mortal sin"; and hence St. Ignatius the Martyr calls the ever-blessed Sacrament "the medicine of immortality." Innocent III. says, that Jesus Christ "freed us by the mystery of the Cross from the punishment due to sin; but that by the Sacrament of the Eucharist He frees us from sin itself."

O my Jesus, Lover of souls, Thou hast no further proof of love to give to show us that Thou dost love us; what more canst Thou think of to make us love Thee? O Infinite Goodness, I beseech Thee that, from this day forward, I may love Thee with all possible earnestness and tenderness. Who can love my soul more tenderly than Thou, my Redeemer, Who after having given Thy life

for me, dost give me Thy whole Self in this Sacrament? My beloved Lord, may I always remember Thy love, so that I may forget all else, and love Thee alone, without interruption and without reserve.

II.

Moreover, this Sacrament kindles in us the love of God: *He brought me into the cellar of wine, he set in order charity in me. Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples; because I languish with love.*—(Cant. ii. 4, 5). St. Gregory of Nyssa tells us, that this cellar of wine is the Holy Communion, in which the soul is so inebriated with Divine Love, that she forgets earth and all created things. And what intense flames of love does Jesus Christ kindle in souls which receive Him in this Sacrament with a desire that He should do so! St. Catherine of Sienna one day saw Jesus in the hands of a priest as a furnace of love; so that she wondered how all the hearts of mankind were not wholly consumed with such a fire. St. Rose of Lima used to say that, when she communicated, she seemed to receive the sun; and hence such brilliant rays shone from her face, that people used to be dazzled; and such a heat proceeded from her mouth, that those who gave her to drink after Communion, felt their hand scorched, as if they had approached a furnace. When the pious king, St. Wenceslaus, went to visit the Most Holy Sacrament, he burned even outwardly with such ardour, that the servant who accompanied him used, when there was snow on the ground, to set his feet in the footprints of the Saint, and thus he never felt the cold. St. Chrysostom says that “the Blessed Eucharist is a flame which sets us on fire; so that, like lions breathing flame, we may return from that table dreadful to the devil,” who has no longer courage to tempt us.

But some will say, “I do not communicate often, because I feel so cold in the love of God.” Gerson says that this is the same as if a person would not go near the fire because he was cold: the colder we feel

ourselves, the more often we should approach the Most Holy Sacrament, if we really desire to love God. St. Francis de Sales writes: “If anyone asks you why you communicate so often, tell him that two classes of persons should communicate frequently, the perfect and the imperfect: the perfect, to preserve themselves in perfection; and the imperfect, that they may attain to it.” St. Bonaventure says, in the same way, “Even if you be cold, approach, trusting in the mercy of God. The more ill one feels, the more one requires the physician.” And Jesus Christ said to St. Mechtild: “When you are about to communicate, wish that you had all the love that any heart ever felt towards Me; and I will accept it as you wish, as if such love were really yours.”

I love Thee, my Jesus, above all things, and I wish to love Thee alone; I beseech Thee to drive from my heart all affections which are not for Thee. I thank Thee for giving me time to love Thee and to weep over the offences I have offered to Thee. My Jesus, I desire that Thou mayst be the only object of my affections. Assist me, save me, and let my salvation consist in loving Thee with my whole heart, and in loving Thee always in this life and in the next. Mary, my Mother, obtain for me the grace to love Jesus Christ; pray to Him for me.

Spiritual Reading

MORTIFICATION: ITS NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGES.

For the recovery of bodily health you must take care never to impair the strength of the soul, which will always be weak so long as the flesh is not mortified. “I compassionate,” says St. Bernard, “the infirmities of the body; but the infirmity of the soul should be an object of greater alarm.” I pity the infirmities of the

body, but feel greater commiseration for the more formidable and dangerous maladies of the soul. Oh, how often is bodily weakness made the pretext for unnecessary indulgence. "We leave the choir," says St. Teresa, "to-day, because the head aches; and to-morrow, because it has ached; and for three more days, lest it should ache." Hence, on another occasion she thus addresses her dear children: "You have entered Religion not to indulge the flesh, but to die for Jesus Christ. If we do not resolve to disregard the want of health, we shall do nothing. What injury will death do us? How often have our bodies molested us? Shall not we torment them in return?" St. Joseph Calasancius says: "Woe to the Religious who loves health more than sanctity."

St. Bernard considered it unbecoming in those called to a perfect life, to take costly medicine; for them, he said, decoctions of herbs should be sufficient. I do not require this of you; but I say that small indeed must be the spiritual progress of him who is continually seeking physicians and remedies; who is sometimes not content with the prescription of the ordinary physician; and who, by his discontent, disturbs everybody. "Men," says Salvian, "devoted to Christ are weak, and wish to be so: if they were robust, they could with difficulty be Saints." All who have consecrated themselves to the love of Jesus Christ, and are weak in body, desire to continue in their infirmities: for were they strong and vigorous, it would be difficult for them to attain sanctity. The truth of this observation appears from the Lives of St. Teresa, St. Rose, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, and other Saints. The Venerable Beatrix of the Incarnation, the first spiritual daughter of St. Teresa, though afflicted with pains and infirmities, was accustomed to say that she would not exchange her condition for that of the happiest princess on earth. Such was her patience, that in the greatest sufferings she never uttered a word of complaint. Hence a sister once said to her: "You are like one of those wretched paupers who languish for want of food, but continue to endure

the pains of hunger rather than submit to the shame of manifesting their poverty."

If bodily weakness renders us unable to practise corporal austerities, let us at least learn from her example to embrace with joy the infirmities with which Almighty God visits us. If borne with patience, they will conduct us to perfection better than voluntary works of penance. St. Syncretica used to say, that "as corporal maladies are cured by medicine, so the diseases of the soul are healed by the infirmities of the body."

Oh, how profitable to the spirit are the mortifications of the flesh!

They detach the heart from sensual pleasures, which wound the soul, and frequently deprive her of life. "The wounds of charity," says Origen, "make us insensible to the wounds of the flesh."

Evening Meditation

REFLECTIONS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

"Two things," says Cicero, "make us know a lover—his doing good to his beloved, and suffering torments for him; and the latter is the greatest sign of true love." God has, indeed, already shown His love for man by many benefits bestowed upon him; but His love would not have been satisfied by only doing good to man, as says St. Peter Chrysologus, if He had not found the means to prove to him how much He loved him by also suffering and dying for him, as He did by taking upon Him human flesh: "But He held it to be little if He showed His love without suffering." And what greater means could God have discovered to prove to us the immense love which He bears us than by making Himself Man

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and suffering for us? In no other way could the love of God for us be shown so well," writes St. Gregory Nazianzen. My beloved Jesus, how much hast Thou laboured to show me Thy love, and to make me enamoured of Thy goodness. Great indeed, then, would be the injury I should do Thee, if I were to love Thee but little, or to love anything else but Thee.

Ah, when He showed Himself to us, a God wounded, crucified, and dying, did He not indeed, says Cornelius à Lapide, give us the greatest proofs of the love that He bears us? "God showed His utmost love on the Cross." And before him St. Bernard said that Jesus, in His Passion, showed us that His love towards us could not be greater than it was: "In the shame of the Passion is shown the greatest and incomparable love." The Apostle writes, that, when Jesus Christ chose to die for our salvation, then appeared how far the love of God extended towards us miserable creatures: *The goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared.*—(Tit. iii. 4). O my most loving Saviour, I feel indeed that all Thy Wounds speak to me of the love Thou bearest me. And who after so many proofs of Thy love could resist loving Thee in return? St. Teresa was indeed right, O most amiable Jesus, when she said that he who loves Thee not, gives a proof that he does not know Thee.

II.

Jesus Christ could easily have obtained salvation for us without suffering, and in leading a life of ease and delight; but no, St. Paul says, *having joy set before him he endured the cross.*—(Heb. xii. 2). He refused the riches, the delights, the honours of the world, and chose for Himself a life of poverty, and a death full of suffering and ignominy. And wherefore? Would it not have sufficed for Him to have offered to His Eternal Father one single prayer for the pardon of man?—for this prayer, being of infinite value, would have been sufficient to save the world, and infinite worlds besides. Why, then, did He choose for Himself so much suffering, and a death

so cruel, that an author has said very truly, that through mere pain the soul of Jesus separated itself from His Body? To what purpose so much cost in order to save man? St. John Chrysostom answers: a single prayer of Jesus would indeed have sufficed to redeem us; but it was not sufficient to show us the love that our God has borne us—"That which sufficed to redeem us was not sufficient for love." And St. Thomas confirms this when he says, "Christ, in suffering from love, offered to God more than the expiation of the offence of the human race demanded." Because Jesus loved us so much, He desired to be loved very much by us; and therefore He did everything that He could, even unto suffering for us, in order to conciliate our love, and to show that there was nothing more that He could do to make us love Him: "He endured much weariness," says St. Bernard, "that He might bind man to love Him much."

REMEMBRANCE OF THE FATHERS

Kearney Avenue - Wm.

Ash Wednesday

Morning Meditation

"MEMENTO, HOMO, QUIA PULVIS ES."

It is most useful for our salvation to say often to ourselves: *I must one day die!* The Church every year on Ash Wednesday brings this remembrance to the faithful: *Memento, homo, quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris!* Remember, man, that thou art dust and into dust shalt thou return!

O my God, give me light, give me strength to spend the rest of my life in serving and loving Thee.

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I.

Remember, man, that thou art dust and into dust shalt thou return! This certainty of death is brought to our recollection many times in the year; sometimes by the burial grounds which we pass upon the road, sometimes by the graves which we behold in churches, sometimes by the dead who are carried to burial.

The most precious furniture that was carried by the anchorites to their caves was a cross and a skull; the cross to remind them of the great love of Jesus Christ for us, and the skull to remind them of the day of their own death. And so they persevered in penitential works till the end of their days; and thus dying in poverty in the desert, they died more contented than if they had died as kings in their palaces.

The end is at hand! The end is at hand! Finis venit; venit finis.—(Ezech. vii. 2). In this life one man lives a longer, another a shorter time; but for everyone sooner or later, the end comes; and when that end comes, nothing will comfort us at death but the thought that we have loved Jesus Christ, and have endured with patience the labours of this life for love of Him. Then, not the riches we have gained, nor the honours we have obtained, nor the pleasures we have enjoyed, will console us. All the greatness of the world cannot comfort a dying man; it rather adds to his pains; and the more he has gained of it, the more does he suffer. It was said by Sister Margaret of St. Anne, a very holy Discalced Carmelite, and daughter of the Emperor Rudolph II: “What profit is a kingdom at the hour of death?”

Oh, how many worldly persons are there to whom, at the very moment when they are busy in seeking for gain, power, and office, the message of death comes: *Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.*—(Is. xxxviii. 1). Why, O man, hast thou neglected to make thy will till the hour when thou art in sickness? O my God, what pain is suffered by him who is on the point of gaining some lawsuit, or of taking possession of some palace or property, who hears it said by the priest who

has come to pray for his soul: *Depart, Christian soul, from this world.* Depart from this world, and render thy account to Jesus Christ. “But,” he cries, “I am not now well prepared.” What matters that? Thou must now depart.

O my God, give me light, give me strength to spend the rest of my life in serving and loving Thee. If now I should die, I should not die content; I should die disturbed. What, then, do I wait for? That death should seize me at a moment of the greatest peril to my soul? O Lord, if I have been foolish in the past, I will not be so for the time to come. Now I give myself wholly to Thee; receive me and help me with Thy grace.

II.

In a word, to every one the end comes, and with the end comes that decisive moment on which depends a happy or wretched eternity. Oh, what a moment, on which Eternity depends! Oh, that all would think upon that moment, and the account they must give to their Judge of their whole life! *Oh, that they were wise, and would understand, and would provide for their last end!*—(Deut. xxxii. 29). Truly, they would not then devote themselves to amassing riches, nor labour to become great in this perishable world; they would think how to become Saints, and to be great in that life which never ends.

If, then, we have Faith, let us believe that there is a Death, a Judgment, an Eternity, and labour for the rest of our life to live only for God. And, therefore, let us take care to live as pilgrims on this earth, remembering that we must speedily leave it. Let us live ever with death before our eyes; and, in all the affairs of life, let us take care to act precisely as we should act at the point of death. All things upon earth either leave us or we leave them. Let us hear Jesus Christ, Who says: *Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither the rust nor moth doth consume.*—(Matt. vi. 20). Let us despise the treasures of earth, which cannot content us,

Purgatory for three days, or of being condemned to a continuation of his infirmities for two years. The sick man chose the three days in Purgatory; but scarcely had an hour elapsed in that place of torments, than he began to complain of the Angel for having condemned him to a purgation not of three days, but of several years. ‘What!’ replied the Angel, ‘your body is still warm on the bed of death, and you speak of having spent years in Purgatory.’ If you wish to suffer in peace, imagine that you have still to live fifteen or twenty years, and say: This is my Purgatory: it is the spirit rather than the body that I must conquer.

Mortifications raise the soul to God. St. Francis de Sales used to say that a soul cannot ascend to the throne of God unless the flesh is mortified and depressed. There are many beautiful remarks on this subject in the *Works* of St. Teresa: ‘It would be a folly,’ says this great Saint, ‘to think that God admits to His familiar friendship those who seek their own ease.’ ‘Sensuality and prayer are incompatible.’ ‘Souls who truly love God cannot desire repose.’

Mortifications merit great glory in Heaven. If ‘every one who striveth for the mastery,’ abstains from what ever is likely to diminish his strength, and thus endanger the conquest of a miserable earthly crown, how much more should we deny the flesh for the attainment of an eternal kingdom? *And they, indeed, says St. Paul, that they may receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible one.*—(1 Cor. ix. 25). St. John saw all the Saints with palms in their hands.—(Apoc. vii. 9). From this passage we learn that all the Elect must be Martyrs, either by the sword of the tyrant or by the voluntary crucifixion of the flesh. But while we consider the necessity of works of penance, we should at the same time remember that the pains of this life bear no proportion to the eternal glory that awaits us in Paradise. *The sufferings of this time, says St. Paul, are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.*—(Rom. viii. 18). The few transitory mortifications which we practise here below will produce

and speedily end; and let us gain those heavenly treasures which will make us happy and will never end.

Miserable I am, O Lord, in that I have so often, for the sake of the goods of this life, turned my back upon Thee Who art the Infinite Good! I see my folly in having sought for a great name, and for making my fortune in the world. I see what my true happiness is: it is henceforth to love Thee, and in everything to fulfil Thy will. O my Jesus, take from me the desire of gain; make me love neglect and a humble life. Give me strength to deny myself in everything that displeases Thee. Make me embrace, with a calm mind, infirmities, persecutions, desolations, and all the crosses that Thou mayest send me. Oh, that I could die for the love of Thee, abandoned by all, as Thou didst die for me! Holy Virgin, thy prayers can enable me to find my true happiness, which is earnestly to love thy Son. Oh, pray for me; in thee I put my trust.

Spiritual Reading

MORTIFICATION: ITS NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGES.

By mortifications we atone in this life for the pains due to our sins. He that has offended God, though the offence may be pardoned, must either by expiatory works in this life, or by the pains of Purgatory in the next, make satisfaction for the temporal punishment due to sin after remission of its guilt. His sufferings in Purgatory will be infinitely greater than any torments that he could endure on earth. *They shall be in very great tribulation, unless they do penance from their deeds.*—(Apoc. ii. 22). They who have not expiated their sins shall suffer the sharpest torments in the other world. St. Antoninus relates that an Angel proposed to a sick man the choice of being confined to

complete and everlasting felicity. For, says the Apostle, *that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.*—(2 Cor. iv. 17).

Let us, then, animate our faith. Our pilgrimage on earth will not be of long duration : our home is eternity, where he who has practised the greatest mortifications during life shall enjoy the greatest glory. St. Peter says the Saints are the living stones of which the celestial Jerusalem is built. But before they are translated to the city which is above, they must be polished by the salutary chisel of penance.

Evening Meditation

REFLECTIONS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

What greater proof of love, says Our Saviour Himself, can a friend show towards the person he loves than to give his life for his sake? *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*—(John xv. 13). But Thou, O most loving Jesus, says St. Bernard, hast done more than this, since Thou hast given Thy life for us, who are not Thy friends, but Thy enemies, and rebels against Thee : “Thou hast a greater charity, Lord, in giving Thy life for Thy enemies.” And this is what the Apostle observes when he writes : *He commendeth his charity towards us, because when as yet we were sinners, according to the time Christ died for us.*—(Rom. v. 8, 9). Thou wouldst then die for me, Thy enemy, O my Jesus; and can I yet resist so much love? Behold, here I am; since Thou dost so anxiously desire that I should love Thee, I will drive away every other love from my breast, and will love Thee alone.

St. John Chrysostom says, that the principal end Jesus had in His Passion was to discover to us His love, and thus to draw our hearts to Himself by the remembrance of the pains He has endured for us : “This was the principal cause of the Passion of Our Lord; He wished it to be known how great was the love of God for man, of God Who would rather be loved than feared.” St. Thomas adds, that we may, through the Passion of Jesus, know the greatness of the love that God bears to man : “By this man understands the greatness of the love of God to man”; and St. John had said before : *In this ree have known the charity of God, because he hath laid down his life for us.*—(1 John iii. 16). O my Jesus, Immaculate Lamb sacrificed on the Cross for me, *tantus labor non sit cassus*; let not all that Thou hast suffered for me be lost, but accomplish in me the object of Thy great sufferings. Oh, bind me entirely with sweet chains of Thy love, in order that I may not leave Thee, and that I may never more be separated from Thee : “Most sweet Jesus, suffer me not to be separated from Thee.”

II.

St. Luke relates that Moses and Elias on Mount Tabor, speaking of the Passion of Jesus Christ, called it an excess : *and they spoke of his excess that he should accomplish in Jerusalem.*—(Luke ix. 31). “Yes,” says St. Bonaventure, and rightly was the Passion of Jesus called an excess, for “it was an excess of suffering, and an excess of love.” And a devout author adds, “What more could He suffer that He has not endured? The excess of His love reached the highest point.” Yes, indeed, for the Divine law imposes on men no other obligation than that of loving their neighbours as themselves; but Jesus has loved man more than Himself : “He loved these more than Himself,” says St. Cyril. Thou didst then, O my beloved Redeemer,—I will say to Thee with St. Augustine—love me more than Thyself, since to save me Thou wouldst lose Thy Divine

life—a life infinitely more precious than the lives of all men and angels put together. Thou didst love me more than Thyself, because Thou wert willing to die for me.

O infinite God, exclaims the Abbot Gueric, Thou hast for the love of men (if it is lawful to say so) become prodigal of Thyself. “Yes, indeed,” he adds, “since Thou hast not been satisfied with bestowing Thy gifts, but Thou hast also given Thyself to recover lost man.” O prodigy, O excess of love, worthy only of infinite goodness! “And who,” says St. Thomas of Villanova, “will ever be able, Lord, to understand even in the slightest degree the immensity of Thy love in having loved us miserable worms so much, that Thou didst choose to die, even upon a Cross, for us?” “Oh, how this love,” continues the same Saint, “exceeds all measure, all understanding!”

Thursday after Quinquagesima

Morning Meditation

THE TERRORS OF THE DYING MAN AT THE THOUGHT OF THE APPROACHING JUDGMENT.

How shall a dying man who has spent his life in sin, be able in the midst of the pains, the stupefaction, and the confusion of death, to repent sincerely of all his past iniquities? O God, what terrors and confusion will seize upon the unhappy Christian who has led a careless life, when he shall find himself overwhelmed with sins

and the fear of Judgment, of Hell and Eternity! And how should he not tremble who has offended God by many mortal sins and has done no penance for them!

I.

Consider the fear which the thought of Judgment will cause in the mind of a dying man, when he reflects that in a very short time he must present himself before Jesus Christ, his Judge, to render an account of all the actions of his past life. When the awful moment of his passage out of this world into another, out of time into eternity, arrives, then will there be nothing so tormenting to him as the sight of his sins. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, being ill, and thinking of Judgment, trembled. Her confessor told her not to fear. “Ah, Father,” she replied, “it is an awful thing to appear before Jesus Christ as our Judge!” Such were the feelings of this holy virgin who was a Saint from her infancy. What will he say who has frequently deserved hell?

The Abbot Agatho after many years of penance trembled, saying, “What will become of me when I shall be judged?” And how should he not tremble who has offended God by many mortal sins, and yet has done no penance for them! At death, the sight of his crimes, the rigour of the Divine judgments, the uncertainty of the sentence to be pronounced upon him—what a tempest of horror and confusion will these raise around him! Let us be careful to throw ourselves at the feet of Jesus Christ, and secure our pardon before the arrival of our accounting day.

Ah, my Jesus and my Redeemer, Who wilt one day be my Judge, have pity on me before the day of justice. Behold at Thy feet a deserter who has often promised to be faithful to Thee, and has as often again turned his back upon Thee. No, my God, Thou hast not deserved the treatment Thou hast hitherto received at my hands. Forgive me, O Lord, for I desire truly to change and amend my life. I am sorry, my Sovereign Good, for having despised Thee: take pity on me.

II.

Then will be decided the great affair of our eternal salvation. Upon this decision will depend our being either saved for ever, or lost for ever, our being happy or miserable for all eternity. But, O God, each one knows this, and says, "Yes, so it is." But since it is so, why do we not leave all to attend only to our sanctification, and to the securing of our eternal salvation?

My God, I give Thee thanks for the light which Thou hast given me. Remember, O Jesus, that Thou didst die for my salvation; grant that when I first behold Thee I may see Thee appeased. If hitherto I have despised Thy grace, I now esteem it above every other good. I love Thee, O Infinite Goodness, and because I love Thee I am sorry for having offended Thee. Hitherto I have forsaken Thee, but now I desire Thee and seek Thee; grant that I may find Thee, O God of my soul! Mary, my Mother, recommend me to thy Son, Jesus.

Spiritual Reading

MORTIFICATION: ITS NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGES.

Let us consider each act of self-denial as a work that will prepare us for Paradise. This thought will sweeten all our pains and all our toils. How pleasing is the fatigue of a journey to him who is assured that he shall obtain possession of all the territory through which he travels! It is related in the *Lives* of the Fathers of the Desert, that a certain monk was anxious to exchange his cell for another nearer to the fountain from which he was accustomed to draw water, but as he was one day going to the fountain he heard his steps counted by a person behind him. Turning round, he saw a young man who said: "I am an Angel: I count your steps that none of

them may be without a reward." The monk immediately abandoned the intention of changing his cell; and even wished it to be more distant from the water, that he might be able to acquire greater merit.

Mortified Christians enjoy peace and content in this life, as well as in the next. What greater happiness can a soul possess than to know that by her mortifications she pleases God. The very privation of earthly pleasures, and even the pains of penance, are so many spiritual delights to a loving soul. Love cannot be at rest. He that loves God cannot live without giving continual proofs of his affection. Now, a soul cannot give a stronger proof of its love for God than the voluntary renunciation of earthly pleasures for His sake, and the oblation of its pains to Him. A Christian enamoured of Jesus Christ feels no pain in his penitential works. "He that loves God," says St. Augustine, "labours not." "Who," says St. Teresa, "can behold his God covered with wounds and harassed by persecutions, without embracing and even desiring a portion of his Saviour's sufferings?" Hence St. Paul exclaimed that he wished for no other delight or glory than the Cross of the Redeemer. *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*—(Gal. vi. 14). Again he says that the crucifixion of the flesh is the test by which the true lovers of Jesus Christ may be known. *They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences.*—(Gal. v. 24). Worldlings of Christ seek only corporal austerities.

In conclusion, imagine that death is at hand, and that as yet you have done but little for Paradise. Strive from this day forward to mortify yourself as much as possible, at least by abstinence from the pleasures that self-love seeks. Endeavour to profit by every opportunity of mortification. *Let not the part of a good gift overpass thee.*—(Ecclus. xiv. 14). Consider every occasion of self-denial as a gift which God bestows upon you, that you may be able to merit greater glory in another life; and remember that what can be done to-day

may not be possible to-morrow, and time that is past never returns.

To animate your fervour in the practice of mortification, I shall here place before your eyes, in his own words, what St. John Climacus saw in a monastery called the *Prison of Penitents*. "I saw," says the Saint, "some of them standing the whole night in the open air, to overcome sleep. I saw others with their eyes fixed on Heaven, and with tears, begging mercy from God. Others stood with their hands bound behind their shoulders, and their heads bowed down, as if they were unworthy to raise their eyes to Heaven. Others remained on ashes, with their heads between their knees, and beat the ground with their foreheads. Others deluged the floor with their tears. Others stood in the burning rays of the sun. Others, parched with thirst, were content with taking a few drops of water to prevent death. Others took a mouthful of bread, and then threw it out, saying that they who have lived like animals are unworthy of the food of men. Some had their cheeks furrowed by continual streams of tears; and others had their eyes sunken. Others struck their breast with such violence, that they began to spit blood. And I saw all with faces so pallid and emaciated, that they appeared to be so many corpses." The Saint then concludes by saying that notwithstanding their fall, he considered them, on account of their penitential rigours, more happy than those who had never sinned and never done penance. What shall be said of those who have fallen and have never atoned for their crimes by expiatory works?

Evening Meditation

REFLECTIONS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

It is a pleasing thing to see a person beloved by some great man, and more so if the latter has the power of raising him to some great fortune; but how much more

sweet and pleasing must it be to us to see ourselves beloved by God, Who can raise us up to an eternity of happiness? Under the Old Law men might have doubted whether God loved them with a tender love; but after having seen Him shed His Blood on an infamous gibbet and die for us, how can we doubt His loving us with infinite tenderness and affection? O my soul, behold now thy Jesus, hanging from the Cross, all covered with Wounds! Behold how, by these Wounds, He proves to Thee the love of His enamoured Heart: "The secrets of His Heart are revealed through the Wounds of His Body," says St. Bernard. My dearest Jesus, it does indeed afflict me to see Thee dying with such dreadful suffering upon an ignominious tree; but at the same time I am greatly consoled and inflamed with love for Thee, when I see in these sacred Wounds the love that Thou bearest me. O heavenly Seraphs, what do you think of the love of my God, *who loved me and delivered himself for me*—(Gal. ii. 20)?

St. Paul says that when the Gentiles heard it preached that Jesus was crucified for the love of men, they thought it such nonsense that they could not believe it. *But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness.*—(1 Cor. i. 23). And how is it possible, said they, to believe that an omnipotent God, Who wants nothing in order to be perfectly happy as He is, would choose to become Man and die on a Cross to save men? This would be the same, said they, as to believe that a God had become mad for love of men. *But unto the Gentiles foolishness.* And thus they refused to believe it. But faith teaches us that Jesus has really undertaken and accomplished this great work of Redemption which the Gentiles esteemed and called folly. "We have seen," says St. Laurence Justinian, "Eternal Wisdom, the Only-begotten of God, become as it were a fool through the excessive love He bears man." Yes, adds Cardinal Hugo, for it seemed nothing but a folly that a God should choose to die for men: "It seemed a folly that God should die for the salvation of men."

II.

The Blessed Giacomone, who in this world had been a man of letters, and afterwards became a Franciscan, seemed to have become mad through the love that he bore to Jesus Christ. One day Jesus appeared to him and said: "Giacomone, why do you commit these follies?" "Why?" he answered. "Because You have taught them to me. If I am mad," said he, "You have been more mad than me, in that You have died for me. I am a fool, for Thou hast been a greater fool." Thus also St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, being in an ecstasy, exclaimed, "O God of love! O God of love! The love that Thou bearest to creatures, O my Jesus, is too great indeed." And one day, when rapt out of herself, she took an image of the Crucified One, and began running about the monastery, crying, "O Love! Love! I shall never rest, my God, from calling Thee Love." Then, turning to the Religious, she said, "Do you not know, my dear sisters, that Jesus Christ is nothing but love? He is even mad with love, and I will go on saying it continually." And she added that she wished she could be heard by the whole universe when she called Jesus "Love," in order that the love of Jesus might be known and loved by all. And she sometimes even began to ring the bell, in order that all the people in the world should come (as she desired, if it had been possible) to love her Jesus.

Yes, my sweetest Redeemer, permit me to say so, this Thy spouse was indeed right when she called Thee mad with love. And does it not indeed seem a folly that Thou shouldst choose to die for love of me, for such an ungrateful worm as I am, and whose offences Thou didst foresee, as well as the infidelities of which I should be guilty? But if Thou, my God, art thus become mad, as it were, for the love of me, how is it that I do not become mad for the love of a God? When I have seen Thee crucified and dead for me, how is it that I can think of any other than Thee? Yes, O my Lord, my Sovereign Good, more worthy of love than every other good, I

love Thee more than myself. I promise for the future to love none other but Thee, and to think constantly on the love Thou hast shown me by dying in the midst of so many sufferings for me.

O Scourges, O Thorns, O Nails, O Cross, O Wounds, O sufferings, O death of my Saviour, you irresistibly constrain me to love Him Who has loved me so much! O Incarnate Word, O loving God, my soul is enamoured of Thee! I would fain love Thee so much, that I should find no pleasure but in pleasing Thee, my most sweet Lord; and since Thou dost so earnestly desire my love, I protest that I will only live for Thee. I desire to do whatever Thou wiltest of me. O my Jesus, I pray Thee, help me, and grant that I may please Thee entirely and continually in time and in eternity. Mary, my Mother, entreat Jesus for me, in order that He may grant me His holy love; for I desire nothing else in this world and in the next but to love Jesus. Amen.

Friday after Quinquagesima

Morning Meditation

"THERE IS NO PEACE FOR THE WICKED."

Peace! What peace? No, says God, *There is no peace to the wicked.*—(Is. xlviii. 22). If anyone has a powerful enemy, he can neither eat nor sleep in peace; and can he who has God for an enemy, rest in peace?

I.

Not only does Solomon say that the pleasures and riches of this world are but vanities that cannot satisfy

the heart, but that they are pains which afflict the spirit: *Behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*—(Eccles. i. 14). Poor sinners! They think to gain happiness by their sins, but they find only bitterness and remorse: *Destruction and unhappiness in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known.*—(Ps. xiii. 3). Peace! What peace! No, says God: *There is no peace to the wicked.*—(Is. xlvi. 22). In the first place, sin brings with it the terror of Divine vengeance. If anyone has a powerful enemy, he can neither eat nor sleep in peace; and can he who has God for an enemy rest in peace? *Fear to them that work evil.*—(Prov. x. 29). If there is an earthquake, or if it thunders, how does not he tremble who is living in sin! Every leaf that moves alarms him: *The sound of dread is always in his ears.*—(Job xv. 21). He is ever flying, though he sees not who pursues him: *The wicked man fleeth when no man pursueth.*—(Prov. xxviii. 1). And who pursues him? His own sin. Cain, after he had killed his brother Abel, said: *Everyone, therefore, that findeth me shall kill me.*—(Gen. iv. 14). And although the Lord assured him that no one would injure him—*No, it shall not be so*—yet, as the Scripture says, Cain was always a fugitive from one place to another: *He dwelt as a fugitive on the earth.*—(Gen. iv. 16). What persecuted Cain but his own sin?

Moreover, sin brings with it remorse of conscience—that cruel worm that gnaws without ceasing. The wretched sinner goes to the play, the ball, the banquet; but, says his conscience: *Thou art at enmity with God; and if thou wert to die, whither wouldst thou go?* Remorse of conscience is so great a torment even in this life, that to rid themselves of it, some have even deliberately destroyed themselves. One of these, as we all know, was Judas, who hanged himself in despair. It is related of another, that, having killed a child, he became a Religious to fly from the pain of remorse of conscience; but not having found peace even in Religion, he went and confessed his crime to a judge, and caused himself to be condemned to death.

O my wasted life! O my God, had I but suffered to please Thee the pains that I have suffered to offend Thee, how much merit should I not now have for Heaven! Ah, my Lord, for what did I leave Thee, and lose Thy grace? For brief and empoisoned pleasures, which vanished almost as soon as possessed, and which left my heart full of thorns and bitterness. Ah, my sins, I detect and curse you a thousand times; and I bless Thy mercy, O my God, which has borne so patiently with me. I love Thee, O my Creator and Redeemer, Who hast given Thy life for me; and because I love Thee, I repent with all my heart of having offended Thee.

II.

God compares sinners to a stormy sea: *The wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest.*—(Is. lvi. 20). I ask of you, if any one were taken to a musical festival, or to a ball or feast, and to be there suspended with his head downwards, could he enjoy that amusement? Such is the sinner's state whose soul is, as it were, turned upside down, being in the midst of the enjoyments of this world, but without God. He may eat, and drink, and dance; he may wear to great advantage that rich apparel, receive those honours, obtain that dignity, or those possessions, but peace he will never have: *There is no peace to the wicked.* Peace comes from God alone; and God gives it to His friends, not to His enemies.

The pleasures of this earth, says St. Vincent Ferrar, run dry; they enter not into the heart: *“They are waters which penetrate not where there is thirst.”* The sinner may wear rich embroidered robes or a splendid diamond on his finger; he may indulge the sense of taste according to his inclination; but his poor heart will remain full of thorns and bitterness; therefore shalt thou behold him, with all his riches, pleasures, and amusements, always unquiet, and at every contradiction infuriated and angry, like a mad dog. He who loves God resigns himself under adverse events to the Divine

Will, and finds peace; but he cannot do this who is an enemy to the will of God, and therefore he has no way of tranquillising himself. The unhappy man serves the devil,—serves a tyrant who repays him with grief and bitterness. Ah, the word of God cannot fail, which says: *Because thou didst not serve the Lord thy God with joy and gladness of heart . . . thou shalt serve thy enemy . . . in hunger and thirst and nakedness, and in want of all things.*—(Deut. xxviii. 47, 48). What does not that revengeful man suffer when he has avenged himself! That unchaste man when he has gained his object! That ambitious, that avaricious man! Oh, how many, did they but suffer for God what they suffer in order to damn themselves, would become great Saints!

My God, my God, why have I lost Thee; and for what have I exchanged Thee? I now know the evil I have done; and I resolve to lose everything, even life itself, rather than Thy love. Give me light, Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus Christ; make me know how great a good Thou art, and how vile are those pleasures which the devil offers me to make me lose Thy grace. I love Thee; but I desire to love Thee more. Grant that Thou mayest be my only thought, my only desire, my only love. I hope all things from Thy goodness, through the merits of Thy Son. Mary, my Mother, through the love thou bearest to Jesus Christ, I implore thee to obtain for me light and strength to serve Him, and to love Him until death.

Spiritual Reading

THE MORTIFICATION OF THE APPETITE.

St. Andrew Avellini used to say that he who wishes to advance in perfection should begin zealously to mortify the appetite. "It is impossible," says St. Gregory, "to engage in the spiritual conflict without the previous sub-

jugation of the appetite." Father Roggacci, in his treatise on *The One Thing Necessary*, asserts that the principal part of external mortification consists in the mortification of the palate. Since the mortification of the taste consists in abstinence from food, must we then abstain altogether from eating? No; it is our duty to preserve the life of the body, that we may be able to serve God as long as He wills us to remain on earth. But, as Father Vincent Carafa used to say, we should attend to the body with the same sense of loathing as a powerful monarch would perform by compulsion the meanest work of a servant.

"We must," says St. Francis de Sales, "eat, in order to live; but we should not live as if for the purpose of eating." Some, like beasts, appear to live only for the gratification of the palate. "A man," says St. Bernard, "becomes a beast by loving what beasts love." Whoever, like brute animals, fixes his heart on the indulgence of the appetite, falls from the dignity of a spiritual and rational creature, and sinks to the level of senseless beasts. Unhappy Adam, for the pleasure of eating an apple, is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them. In another place, St. Bernard says that, on seeing Adam forget his God and his eternal salvation for the momentary gratification of his palate, the beasts of the fields, if they could have spoken, would say: "Behold Adam is become one of us!" Hence, St. Catherine of Sienna used to say that "without mortifying the taste, it is impossible to preserve innocence; since it was by the indulgence of his appetite that Adam fell." Ah! how miserable is the condition of those whose God is their belly.—(Philipp. iii. 19).

How many have lost their souls by intemperance! In his *Dialogues*, St. Gregory relates that in a monastery of Sienna there was a monk who seemed to lead a very exemplary life. When he was at the point of death, the Religious, expecting to be edified by his last moments, gathered around him. "Brethren," said the dying man, "when you fasted, I ate in private; and therefore I have been already delivered over to Satan who now deprives

me of life and carries away my soul." After saying this he expired. The same Saint relates in another place that a certain Religious, seeing in the garden a very fine lettuce, pulled and ate it in opposition to her Rule. She was instantly possessed by a devil, who tormented her grievously. Her companions called to her aid the holy abbot Equitius, at whose arrival the demon exclaimed: "What evil have I done? I sat upon the lettuce; she came and ate it." The holy man, by his commands, compelled the evil spirit to depart. In the *Cistercian Records* we read that St. Bernard once visiting his novices called aside a Brother whose name was Acardo, and said that a certain novice, to whom he pointed, would on that day fly from the monastery. The Saint begged of Acardo to watch the novice, and to prevent his escape. On the following night, Acardo saw a demon approach the novice, and by the savoury smell of a roasted fowl tempt him to desire forbidden food. The unhappy young man awoke, and, yielding to the temptation, took his clothes and prepared to leave the monastery. Acardo endeavoured in vain to convince him of the dangers to which he would be exposed in the world. Overcome by gluttony, the unhappy man obstinately resolved to return to the world: there, the narrator adds, he died miserably.

Evening Meditation

REFLECTIONS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

The Divine Word came into the world and took to Himself human flesh in order to make Himself loved of man, and therefore He came with such a longing to suffer for our sakes that He would not lose a moment in beginning to torment Himself, at least by apprehension.

Hardly was He conceived in the womb of Mary, than He represented to His mind all the sufferings of His Passion; and in order to obtain for us pardon and Divine grace, He offered Himself to His Eternal Father to satisfy through His dolours for all the chastisements due to our sins; and from that moment He began to suffer everything that He afterwards endured in His most bitter death. O my most loving Redeemer, what have I hitherto done or suffered for Thee? If I could for a thousand years endure for Thy sake all the torments that all the Martyrs have suffered, they would yet be nothing compared with that one first moment in which Thou didst offer Thyself and begin to suffer for me.

The Martyrs did indeed suffer great pains and ignominy; but they endured them only at the time of their Martyrdom. Jesus, even from the first instant of His life, continually suffered all the torments of His Passion; for, from the first moment, He had before His eyes all the horrid scene of torments and insults which He was to receive from men. Wherefore He said by the mouth of the Prophet: *My sorrow is continually before me.*—(Ps. xxxvii. 18). O my Jesus, Thou hast been so eager to suffer for my sake, that Thou wouldst even endure Thy sufferings before the time; and yet, I am so greedy for the pleasures of this world. How many times have I offended Thee in order to please my body! O my Lord, through the merits of Thy sufferings, take away from me, I beseech Thee, all affection for earthly pleasures.

II.

God in His compassion for us does not generally reveal to us the trials that await us before the time when we are destined to endure them. If a criminal to be executed on a gibbet had revealed to him from the first use of his reason the torture that awaited him, could he ever have been capable of joy? If Saul from the beginning of his reign had had present to his mind the sword that was to pierce him, if Judas had foreseen the

cord that was to suffocate him,—how bitter would their life have been. Our kind Redeemer, even from the first instant of His life, had always present before Him the scourges, the thorns, the Cross, the outrages of His Passion, the desolate death that awaited Him. When He beheld the victims which were sacrificed in the Temple, He well knew that they were figures of the sacrifice which He, the Immaculate Lamb, would one day consummate on the Altar of the Cross. When He beheld the city of Jerusalem, He well knew that He was there to lose His life in a sea of sorrows and reproaches. When He saw His dear Mother, He already imagined He saw her in an agony of suffering at the foot of the Cross, near to His dying Self. So that, O my Jesus, the horrible sight of all these evils kept Thee during the whole of Thy life continually tormented and afflicted before the time of Thy death. And Thou didst accept and suffer everything for my sake.

O my agonising Lord, the sight alone of all the sins of the world, especially of mine, by which Thou didst already foresee I should offend Thee, rendered Thy life more afflicted and painful than all the lives that have ever been or ever will be. But, O my God, in what barbarous law is it written that a God should have such great love for a creature, and yet that same creature live without loving His God, or rather, should offend and displease Him? O my Lord, make me know the greatness of Thy love, in order that I may no longer be ungrateful to Thee. Oh, if I but loved Thee, O my Jesus,—if I really loved Thee—how sweet it would be to me to suffer for Thee!

Saturday after Quinquagesima

Morning Meditation

MARY'S MARTYRDOM LIFELONG.

The Passion of Jesus, as St. Bernard says, began with His Birth, so did Mary's Martyrdom endure throughout her whole life. Wherefore well might Mary say: *My life is wasted with grief and my years in sighs. My sorrow is continually before me.*

i.

The Passion of Jesus, as St. Bernard says, began with His Birth." So also did Mary, in all things like unto her Son, endure her Martyrdom throughout her life. Amongst other significations of the name of Mary, as Blessed Albert the Great asserts, is that of "bitter sea." *Mare amarum*. Hence to her is applicable the text of Jeremias: *Great as the sea is thy destruction.*—(Lam. ii. 18). For as the sea is all bitter and salt, so also was the life of Mary always full of bitterness at the sight of the Passion of the Redeemer, which was ever present to her mind. There can be no doubt, that, than all the Prophets, she, far better than they, understood the predictions recorded by them in the sacred Scriptures concerning the Messias. This is what the Angel revealed to St. Bridget, and he also added: "that the Blessed Virgin, even before she became His Mother, knowing how much the Incarnate Word was to suffer for the salvation of men, and compassionating this innocent Saviour Who was to be so cruelly put to death for crimes not His own, even then began her great

her sorrows; for, as Jesus, on the one hand, advanced in age, and always appeared more and more beautiful and amiable; so also, on the other hand, the time of His death ever drew nearer, and grief always increased in the heart of Mary, at the thought of having to lose Him on earth. In the words addressed by the holy Angel to St. Bridget: "As the rose grows up amongst thorns, so the Mother of God advanced in years in the midst of suffering: and as the thorns increase with the growth of the rose, so also did the thorns of her sorrow increase in Mary, the chosen rose of the Lord, as she advanced in age; and so much the more deeply did they pierce her heart."

Spiritual Reading

MORTIFICATION OF THE APPETITE.

Let us take care not to be conquered by this brutal vice of gluttony. St. Augustine says that food is necessary for the support of life, but, like medicine, it should be taken only through necessity. Intemperance is very injurious to the body as well as to the soul. It is certain that excess in eating is the cause of almost all the diseases of the body, for stomach complaints and very many other maladies spring from the immoderate use of food. But the diseases of the body are only a small part of the evils that flow from intemperance; its effects on the soul are far more disastrous.

This vice, according to St. Thomas, in the first place, darkens the soul, and renders it unfit for spiritual exercises, but particularly for mental prayer. As fasting prepares the mind for the contemplation of God and of eternal goods, so intemperance diverts it from holy thoughts. St. John Chrysostom says that the glutton, like an overloaded ship, moves with difficulty, and that in the first tempest of temptation he is in danger of being lost. "Take," says St. Bernard, "even bread

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Martyrdom." Mary's grief was immeasurably increased when she became the Mother of this Saviour; so that at the sad sight of the many torments that were to be endured by her poor Son, she indeed suffered a long Martyrdom, a Martyrdom which lasted her whole life. This was signified with great exactitude to St. Bridget in a vision which she had in Rome in the church of St. Mary Major, where the Blessed Virgin with St. Simeon, and an Angel bearing a very long sword, reddened with blood, appeared to her, denoting thereby the long and bitter grief which transpierced the heart of Mary during her whole life. Whence Rupert supposes Mary thus speaking: "Redeemed souls, and my beloved children, do not pity me only for the hour in which I beheld my dear Jesus expiring before my eyes; for the Sword of Sorrow predicted by Simeon pierced my soul during my whole life. When I was giving suck to my Son, when I was warming Him in my arms, I already foresaw the bitter death that awaited Him. Consider, then, what long and bitter sorrows I must have endured."

II.

Wherefore, well might Mary say, in the words of David: *My life is wasted with grief, and my years in sighs.*—(Ps. xxx. 11). *My sorrow is continually before me.*—(Ps. xxxvii. 18). "My whole life was spent in sorrow and in tears; for my sorrow, which was compassion for my beloved Son, never departed from before my eyes, as I always foresaw the sufferings and death which He was one day to endure." The Divine Mother herself revealed to St. Bridget, that even after the Death and Ascension of her Son, whether she ate, or worked, the remembrance of His Passion was ever deeply fixed in her heart, and ever fresh in her memory. Hence Tauler says that the most Blessed Virgin spent her whole life in continual sorrow; for her heart was always occupied with sadness and suffering.

Therefore time, which usually mitigates the sorrows of the afflicted, did not relieve Mary; nay, it even increased

with moderation, lest a loaded stomach should make you weary of prayer.' And again he says: "If you compel a person who takes a heavy meal to watch, you will extort from him wailing rather than singing." Hence it is a duty to eat sparingly, and particularly at supper: for whoever satisfies his appetite in the evening, is exposed to great danger of excess; and, in consequence of indigestion, will frequently feel the stomach overburdened in the morning, and his head so stupid and confused that he will not be able to say a "Hail Mary." Do not imagine that the Almighty will, at the time of prayer infuse His consolations into the souls of those who, like senseless beasts, seek delight in the indulgence of the appetite. "Divine consolation," says St. Bernard, "is not given to those that admit any other delight." Celestial consolations are not bestowed on those that go in search of earthly pleasures.

Besides, he that gratifies the taste will readily indulge the other senses; for, having lost the spirit of recollection, he will easily commit faults, by indecent words and unbecoming gestures. But the greatest evil of intemperance is, that it exposes chastity to great danger. "Repletion of the stomach," says St. Jerome, "is the hotbed of lust." Excess in eating is a powerful incentive to incontinence. Hence, Cassian says that "it is impossible for him who satiates his appetite not to experience conflicts." The intemperate cannot expect to be free from temptations against purity. To preserve chastity, the Saints practised the most rigorous mortifications of the appetite. "The devil," says St. Thomas, "vanquished by temperance, does not tempt to lust." When his temptations to indulge the palate are conquered, he ceases to provoke incontinence.

He that attends to the abnegation of the appetite makes continual progress in virtue. That the mortification of the palate will facilitate the conquest of the other senses, and enable us to employ them in acts of virtue, may be inferred from the following Prayer of the Church: "O God, Who by this bodily fast extinguishest our vices, elevatest our understanding, bestowest on us

virtue and its reward, etc." By fasting, the Lord enables the soul to subdue her vices, to raise her affections above the earth, to practise virtue, and to acquire merits for eternity.

Worldlings say: God has created the goods of this earth for our use and pleasure. Such is not the language of the Saints. The Venerable Vincent Carafa, of the Society of Jesus, used to say that God has given us the goods of the earth, not only that we may enjoy them, but also that we may have the means of thanking Him, and showing Him our love by the voluntary renunciation of His gifts, and by the oblation of them to His glory. To abandon, for God's sake, all worldly enjoyments, has always been the practice of holy souls.

Evening Meditation

REFLECTIONS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Jesus appeared one day on the Cross to Sister Magdalen Orsini, who had been suffering for some time from some great affliction, and animated her to suffer it in peace. The servant of God answered, "But, Lord, Thou didst hang on the Cross for only three hours, whereas I have gone on suffering this pain for several years." Jesus Christ then said to her reproachingly, "O ignorant that thou art, what dost thou mean? From the first moment that I was in My Mother's womb, I suffered in My Heart all that I afterwards endured on the Cross." And I, my dear Redeemer, how can I, at the sight of the great sufferings which Thou didst endure for my sake, during Thy whole life, complain of those crosses which Thou dost send me for my good? I thank Thee for having redeemed me with so much love and such sufferings. In order to animate me to suffer with patience the pains of this life, Thou

didst take upon Thyself all our evils. O my Lord, grant that Thy sorrows may be ever present to my mind, in order that I may always accept and desire to suffer for Thy love.

Great as the sea is thy destruction.—(Lam. ii. 18). As the waters of the sea are all salt and bitter, so the life of Jesus Christ was full of bitterness and void of all consolation, as He Himself declared to St. Margaret of Cortona. Moreover, as all the waters of the earth unite in the sea, so did all the sufferings of men unite in Jesus Christ; wherefore He said by the mouth of the Psalmist, *Save me, O God, for the waters are come in even unto my soul. I am come into the depth of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed me.*—(Ps. lxxviii. 2, 3). Save me, O God, for sorrows have entered in even to the innermost parts of my soul, and I am left submerged in a tempest of ignominy and of sufferings, both interior and exterior.

O my dearest Jesus, my Love, my Life, my All, if I behold from without Thy Sacred Body, I see nothing else but wounds. But if I enter into Thy desolate Heart, I find nothing but bitterness and sorrows, which made Thee suffer the agonies of death. O my Lord, and who but Thee, Who art infinite Goodness, would ever suffer so much, and die for one of Thy creatures? But because Thou art God, Thou dost love as a God alone can love, with a love which cannot be equalled by any other love.

II.

St. Bernard says, "In order to redeem the slave, the Father did not spare His own Son, nor did the Son spare Himself." O infinite love of God! On the one hand the Eternal Father required of Jesus Christ to satisfy for all the sins of men: *The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*—(Is. liii. 6). On the other hand, Jesus, in order to save men in the most loving way that He could, chose to take upon Himself the utmost penalty due to Divine justice for our sins. Wherefore, as St.

Thomas asserts, He took upon Himself in the highest degree all the sufferings and outrages that ever were borne. It was on this account that Isaias called Him *a man of sorrows, despised, and the most abject of men.*—(Is. liii. 3). And with reason: for Jesus was tortured in all the members and senses of His Body, and was still more bitterly afflicted in all the powers of His Soul; so that the internal pains which He endured infinitely surpassed His external sufferings. Behold Him, then, torn, bloodless; treated as an impostor, as a sorcerer, a madman; abandoned even by His friends, and finally persecuted by all, until He finished His life upon an infamous gibbet.

Know you what I have done to you?—(John xiii. 12). O my Lord, I do indeed know how much Thou hast done and suffered for my sake; but Thou knowest, alas, that I have hitherto done nothing for Thee. My Jesus, help me to suffer something for Thy love before death overtakes me. I am ashamed of appearing before Thee; but I will no longer be ungrateful, as I have been so many years towards Thee. Thou hast deprived Thyself of every pleasure for me; I will for the love of Thee renounce all the pleasures of the senses. Thou hast suffered so many pains for me; I will for Thy sake suffer all the pains of my life and of my death as it shall best please Thee. Thou hast been forsaken; I will be content that all should forsake me, provided Thou dost not forsake me, O my only and Sovereign Good. Thou hast been persecuted; I accept whatever persecution may befall me. Finally, Thou hast died for me; I will die for Thee. O my Jesus, my Treasure, my Love, my All, I love Thee. Oh, give me more love! Amen.

First Sunday of Lent

Morning Meditation

“THOU SHALT NOT TEMPT THE LORD
THY GOD.”

God, as the Apostle says, *will have all men to be saved.*—(1 Tim. ii. 4). But God wishes us all to labour for our salvation by adopting the means of overcoming our enemies, and by obeying His voice calling us to repentance. The sinner who abandons himself to sin without an effort to resist temptations, without at least asking God's help to conquer, and hopes that the Lord will one day draw him forth out of the precipice, tempts God to work miracles and to show him an extraordinary mercy not generally extended to Christians. *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God!*—(Matt. iv. 7).

I.

If God were to immediately chastise those who offend Him, He certainly would not be insulted as He now is : but because the Lord does not punish instantly, and delays, therefore do sinners take courage to offend Him all the more ! We must, however, be assured that although God waits and endures, yet He does not wait and endure for ever. It is the opinion of many of the holy Fathers, of St. Basil, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and others, that as God has determined for each man the number of days he has to live, and the

degrees of health or talents He chooses to bestow on him, *Thou hast ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight.*—(Wis. xi. 21) ; so also has He determined the number of sins He will pardon in each one : when that number is filled up, He pardons no more. “ We should remember this,” says St. Augustine, “ that for a certain time the patience of God bears with each one ; that time being completed, no more pardon is reserved for him.” Eusebius of Cesarea says the same : “ God waits up to a certain number, and afterwards abandons ” ; and so speak also the above-named Fathers.

These Fathers have not spoken at random, but according to the Holy Scriptures. In one place the Lord says that He delayed the ruin of the Amorrites because the number of their sins was not yet filled up : *For as yet the iniquities of the Amorrites are not at the full.*—(Gen. xv. 16). In another He says : I will have no more compassion upon Israel.—(Os. i. 6). They have tempted me ten times ; they shall not see the land of promise.—(Num. xiv. 22). In another place, Job says : *Thou hast sealed up my offences as it were in a bag.*—(Job xiv. 17). Sinners keep no account of their sins ; but God indeed keeps it, that He may chastise when the harvest is ripe, that is, when the number is filled up : *Put ye in the sickles, for the harvest is ripe.*—(Joel iii. 18). In another place, God says : *Be not without fear about sin forgiven, and add not sin upon sin.*—(Ecclus. v. 5). By which He would say : “ Sinner, thou must fear even for the sins I have forgiven thee, because if thou addest another, it may be that the new sin, together with those pardoned, will complete the number ; and there will then be no more mercy for thee.” In another place, the Scripture still more plainly says : *The Lord waiteth patiently, that when the day of judgment shall come he may punish them* (that is, the nations) *in the fulness of their sins.*—(2 Mach. vi. 14). So that God waits until the day in which the measure of sins is filled up, and then He punishes.

Ah, my God, I thank Thee : how many for fewer sins than mine are now in hell : and there is no more pardon,

no more hope for them. And I still live! I am not in hell, and I have the hope of pardon and of Heaven, if I so desire. Yes, my God, I do desire pardon; I grieve above every evil for having offended Thee, because I have offended Thy infinite Goodness. Eternal Father, look upon Thy Son upon the Cross dead for my sake, and through His merits have pity on me. I promise Thee to choose death rather than offend Thee again.

II.

Of such punishment there are many examples in Scripture, especially that of Saul, who for his last disobedience was abandoned by God. When he pleaded with Samuel to intercede for him: *Bear, I beseech thee, my sin, and return with me, that I may adore the Lord, Samuel replied, I will not return with thee, because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee.* There is the example of Balthassar, who being at table profaned the vessels of the temple; and he then saw a hand which wrote on the wall, *Mene, Thecel, Phares.* Daniel came, and explaining these words, said to him, among other things, *Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting.*—(Dan. v. 27). Giving him to understand that the weight of his sins had already sunk the scale of Divine justice; and in effect he was destroyed that same night. And oh, to how many miserable sinners does the same happen! They live on for years in their sins; but when their number is filled up, they are overtaken by death and condemned to hell: *They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down into hell.*—(Job xxi. 18). Some apply themselves to searching out the number of the stars, the number of Angels, or of the years of such a one; but who can set about to discover the number of sins that God will pardon in each of us? And therefore must we tremble. Who knows, but that after that first criminal pleasure, that first thought consented to, that first sin which you shall commit, God will never again forgive you?

Well may I fear, O God, when I think of the sins I have committed, and the graces Thou hast bestowed on me, that should I add another sin, the measure would be filled up, and I should be lost. Ah, assist me by Thy grace. From Thee I hope for light and strength to be faithful to Thee. And if perchance Thou foreseeest that I shall again offend Thee, let me die at this moment, in which I hope I am in Thy grace. My God, I love Thee above all things, and more than death itself I fear again to incur Thy displeasure; in mercy permit it not. Mary, my Mother, by thy compassion assist me; obtain for me holy perseverance.

Spiritual Reading

“ADD NOT SIN TO SIN.”

In this day's Gospel we read that, having gone into the desert, Jesus Christ permitted the devil to set him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and say to Him: *If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down*—(Matt. iv. 6); for the Angels shall preserve Thee from all injury. But the Lord answered that in the Sacred Scriptures it is written: *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

The sinner who abandons himself to sin without striving to resist temptations or without at least asking God's help to conquer them, and hopes that the Lord will one day draw him forth out of the precipice, tempts God to work miracles, or rather to show to him an extraordinary mercy not extended to the generality of Christians. God, as the Apostle says, *will have all men to be saved*—(1 Tim. ii. 4); but He also wishes us all to labour for our own salvation, or at least to adopt the means of overcoming our enemies, and to obey God when He calls us to repentance. Sinners hear the calls of God, but they forget them, and continue to offend Him. But God does not forget them. He numbers the

many graces He dispenses, as well as the many sins we commit. Hence, when the time which He has fixed arrives, God deprives us of His graces, and begins to inflict chastisement.

The Lord hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart.—(Is. lxi. 1). God is ready to heal those who sincerely wish to amend their lives, but He cannot take pity on the obstinate sinner. The Lord pardons sins, but He cannot pardon sinners who are determined to offend Him. Nor can we demand from God a reason why He pardons one a hundred sins, and takes others out of life, and condemns them to hell after three or four sins. By His Prophet Amos, God has said: *For three crimes of Damascus, and for four, I will not convert it.*—(Amos. i. 3). In this we must adore the judgments of God, and say with the Apostle: *O the depth of the riches, of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments.*—(Rom. xi. 33). He who receives pardon, says St. Augustine, is pardoned through the pure mercy of God; and they who are chastised are justly punished.

How many has God sent to hell for the first offence! St. Gregory relates that a child of five years who had arrived at the use of reason, for having uttered a blasphemy, was seized by the devil and carried to hell. The Divine Mother revealed to that great servant of God Benedicta of Florence, that a boy of twelve years was damned after his first sin. Another boy of eight years died after his first sin and was lost. You say: I am young: there are many who have committed more sins than I have. But is God on that account obliged to wait for your repentance if you offend Him? In the Gospel of St. Matthew we read, that the Saviour cursed a fig-tree the first time He saw it without fruit. *May no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever.* And *immediately the fig-tree withered away.*—(Matt. xxi. 19). You must, then, tremble at the thought of committing a single mortal sin, particularly if you have already been guilty of mortal sins.

Be not without fear about sins forgiven, and add not

sin to sin.—(Ecclus. v. 5). Say not then, O sinner: As God has forgiven me other sins, so He will pardon me this one if I commit it. Speak not thus; for, if to the sin which has been forgiven you add another, you have reason to fear that this new sin will be united to your former guilt, and that thus the number will be completed, and that you will be abandoned. Sinners multiply their sins without keeping any account of them; but God numbers them, that when the harvest is ripe, that is, when the number of sins is completed, He may take vengeance on them. *Put ye in the sickles for the harvest is ripe.*—(Joel iii. 13).

Of this there are many examples in the Scriptures. Speaking of the Hebrews, the Lord in one place says: *All the men that have tempted me now ten times . . . shall not see the land.*—(Num. xiv. 22, 23). In another place He says that he restrained His vengeance against the Amorrhites, because the number of their sins was not completed. *For as yet the iniquities of the Amorrhites are not at the full.*—(Gen. xv. 16). We have, again, the example of Saul, who, after having disobeyed God a second time, was abandoned. He entreated Samuel to interpose before the Lord in his behalf. *Bear, I beseech thee, my sin, and return with me, that I may adore the Lord.* But, knowing that God had abandoned Saul, Samuel answered: *I will not return with thee, because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee.*—(1 Kings xv. 25). Saul, you have abandoned God, and He has abandoned you. We have another example in Balthassar, who, after having profaned the vessels of the Temple, saw a hand writing on the wall: *Mene, Thecel, Phares.* Daniel was requested to expound the meaning of these words. In explaining the word *Thecel*, he said to the king: *Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting.*—(Dan. v. 27). By this explanation he gave the king to understand that the weight of his sins in the balance of Divine justice had made the scale descend. *The same night, Balthassar, the Chaldean king, was killed.* (Dan. v. 30).

Oh, how many sinners have met with a similar fate! Continuing to offend God till their sins amounted to a certain number, they have been struck dead and sent to hell. *They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell.*—(Job xxi. 13). Tremble lest, if you commit another mortal sin, God should cast you into hell.

Evening Meditation

REFLECTIONS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Oh, how exceedingly tender, loving, and constraining was that declaration of our Blessed Redeemer concerning His coming into the world, when He said that He had come to kindle in souls the fire of Divine love, and that His only desire was that this holy flame should be enkindled in the hearts of men: *I am come to cast fire upon the earth; and what will I but that it should be kindled?*—(Luke xii. 49). He continued immediately to say that He was expecting to be baptised with the baptism of His own Blood—not, indeed to wash out His own sins, since He was incapable of sinning, but to wash out our sins, which He had come to satisfy for by His sufferings: “The Passion of Christ is called baptism, because we are purified in His Blood.” And, therefore, our loving Jesus, in order to make us understand how ardent was His desire to die for us, added, with sweetest expression of His love, that He felt an immense longing for the time of His Passion, so great was His desire to suffer for our sakes. These are His loving words: *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?*—(Luke xii. 50).

O God, the Lover of men, what more couldst Thou have said or done in order to put me under the necessity

of loving Thee? And what good could my love ever do Thee, that Thou didst choose to die, and didst so much desire death in order to obtain it? If a servant of mine had only desired to die for me, he would have attracted my love; and can I then live without loving Thee with all my heart, my King and God, Who didst die for me, and Who hadst such a longing for death in order to acquire to Thyself my love?

II.

Jesus, knowing that his hour was come that he should pass out of the world to the Father, having loved his own, . . . he loved them unto the end.—(John xiii. 1). St. John says that Jesus called the hour of His Passion His hour; because, as a devout commentator writes, this was the time for which our Redeemer had most sighed during His whole life; because by suffering and dying for men, He desired to make them understand the immense love that He bore to them: “That is the hour of the lover, in which he suffers for the object beloved”; because suffering for the beloved is the most fitting way of discovering the love of the lover, and of captivating to ourselves the love of the beloved. O my dearest Jesus, in order to show me the great love Thou bearest me, Thou wouldst not commit the work of my redemption to any other than Thyself. Was my love, then, of such consequence to Thee, that Thou wouldst suffer so much in order to gain it? Oh, what more couldst Thou have done if Thou hadst had to gain to Thyself the love of Thy Divine Father? What more could a servant endure to acquire to himself the affections of his master than what Thou hast suffered in order that Thou mayest be loved by me, a vile, ungrateful slave?

Monday—First Week of Lent

Morning Meditation

GOD IS MERCIFUL, YET MANY ARE LOST EVERY DAY.

God is merciful! Yes; the mercy of God is infinite; but with all that mercy, how many are lost every day! *I come to heal the contrite of heart!* God heals those sinners who have a good will. He pardons their sins, but He cannot pardon their determination to go on sinning.

I.

The sinner says: But God is merciful. I reply: Who denies it? The mercy of God is infinite; but with all that mercy, how many are lost every day! *I come to heal the contrite of heart.*—(Is. lxi. 1). God heals those who have a good will. He pardons sin; but He cannot pardon the determination to sin. The sinner will reply: But I am young. You are young: but God does not count years, but sins. And this reckoning of sins is not the same for all. In one, God pardons a hundred sins, in another a thousand, another He casts into hell after the second sin. How many has the Lord sent there at the first sin! St. Gregory relates that a child of five years old was cast into hell for uttering a blasphemy. The Blessed Virgin revealed to that great servant of God, Benedicta of Florence, that a girl of twelve years old was condemned for her first sin. Another child of eight years sinned, and after his first sin, died and was lost. We are told in the Gospel of St. Matthew, that the Lord

immediately cursed the fig-tree the first time that He found it without fruit, and it withered: *May no fruit grow on thee forever!*—(Matt. xxi. 19). Another time God said: *For three crimes of Damascus, and for four, I will not convert it.*—(Amos i. 8). Some presumptuous man may perhaps ask the reason of God why He pardons three and not four sins. In this we must adore the Divine judgments of God, and say with the Apostle: *O the depth of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways!*—(Rom. xi. 33). St. Augustine says: "He well knows whom He pardons to and whom He does not pardon; when He shows mercy to any one, it is gratuitous on His part; and when He denies it, He denies it justly."

The obstinate sinner will reply: But I have so often offended God, and He has pardoned me; I hope, therefore, He will pardon me this other sin. But I say: And because God has not hitherto punished you, is it always to be thus? The measure will be filled up, and the chastisement will come. Samson, continuing his wanton conduct with Dalila, hoped nevertheless to escape from the hands of the Philistines, as he had done before; *I will go out as I did before and shake myself.*—(Jud. xvi. 20). But that last time he was taken, and lost his life. *Say not, I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me?* Say not, says the Lord, I have committed so many sins, and God has never punished me: *For the Most High is a patient rewarder.*—(Ecclus. v. 4). That is, the time will come when He will repay all; and the greater His mercy has been, so much the greater will be the punishment.

When I am tempted, O my merciful God, I will instantly and always have recourse to Thee. Hitherto I have trusted in my promises and my resolutions, and I have neglected to recommend myself to Thee in my temptations; and this has been my ruin. No; from this day henceforth Thou shalt be my hope and my strength; and thus shall I be able to accomplish all things. Give me the grace, then, through Thy merits, O my Jesus,

to recommend myself always to Thee, and to implore Thy aid in my necessities. I love Thee, O my Sovereign Good, amiable above all that is amiable, and Thee only will I love; but Thou must help me. And thou also, O Mary my Mother, thou must help me by thy intercession; keep me under the mantle of thy protection, and grant that I may always call upon thee when I am tempted; thy name shall be my defence.

II.

St. Chrysostom says, that we ought to fear more when God bears with the obstinate sinner than when He punishes him: "There is more cause to fear when He forbears than when He quickly punishes"; because, according to St. Gregory, God punishes more rigorously those whom He waits for with most patience, if they remain ungrateful: "Whom He waits for the longer He the more severely condemns." Often, adds the Saint, do those whom He has borne with for a long time die suddenly at last, without having time to be converted: "Often those who have been borne with a long time are snatched away by sudden death, so that it is not permitted them to shed a tear before they die." Especially, the greater the light which God has given you has been, the greater will be your blindness and obstinacy in sin: *For it had been better for them* (said St. Peter) *not to have known the way of justice, than after they had known it, to turn back.*—(2 Peter ii. 21). And St. Paul said, that it is impossible (morally speaking) for a soul that sins after being enlightened to be again converted: *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift . . . and are fallen away, to be renewed again unto penance.*—(Heb. vi. 4, 6).

Terrible, indeed, is what the Lord says against those who are deaf to His calls: *Because I have called and you have refused . . . I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared.*—(Prov. i. 24.26). Take notice of those two words,

I also; they signify that as the sinner has mocked God, confessing, promising, and yet always betraying Him, so the Lord will mock him at the hour of death. Moreover, the Wise Man says: *As a dog that returneth to his vomit, so is the fool that repeateth his folly.*—(Prov. xxvi. 11). So he who relapses into the sins he has detested in Confession, becomes odious to God.

Behold me, O my God, at Thy feet. I am that loathsome sinner who so often returned to feed upon the forbidden fruit which I had before detested. I do not deserve mercy, O my Redeemer; but the Blood Thou hast shed for me encourages and compels me to hope for it. How often have I offended Thee, and Thou hast pardoned me! I have returned never again to offend Thee; and yet I have returned to the vomit, and Thou hast again pardoned me. Do I wait, then, for Thee to send me straight to hell—or to give me over to my sins which would be a greater punishment than hell? No, my God, I will amend; and that I may be faithful to Thee, I will place all my trust in Thee.

Spiritual Reading

SAY NOT: "I HAVE SINNED AND WHAT EVIL HATH BEFALLEN ME?"

If God chastised sinners the moment they insult Him, we should not see Him so much despised. But, because He does not instantly punish their transgressions, and because, through mercy, He restrains His anger and waits for their return, they are encouraged to continue to offend Him. *For, because sentence is not speedily pronounced against the evil, the children of men commit evils without any fear.*—(Eccles. viii. 11). But it is necessary to be persuaded that, though God bears with us, He does not wait, nor bear with us forever. Expecting, as on former occasions, to escape from the snares

of the Philistines, Samson continued to allow himself to be deluded by Dalila. *I will go out as I did before, and shake myself.*—(Jud. xvi. 20). But *the Lord was departed from him*. Samson was at last taken by his enemies, and lost his life. The Lord warns you not to say: I have committed so many sins, and God has not chastised me. *Say not: I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me? for the Most High is a patient rewarder.*—(Eccles. v. 4). God has patience for a certain term, after which He punishes all your sins; the first and the last. And the greater has been His patience, the more severe His vengeance.

Hence according to St. John Chrysostom, God is more to be feared when He bears with sinners than when He instantly punishes their sins. And why? Because, says St. Gregory, they to whom God has shown most mercy, shall, if they do not cease to offend Him, be chastised with the greatest rigour. The Saint adds that God often punishes such sinners with a sudden death, and does not allow them time for repentance. And the greater the light God gives certain sinners for their correction, the greater is their blindness and obstinacy in sin. *For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than, after they had known it, to turn back.*—(2 Pet. ii. 21). Miserable the sinners who, after having been enlightened, return to the vomit. St. Paul says, that it is morally impossible for those to be again converted. *For it is impossible for those who were once illuminated—have tasted also the heavenly gifts, . . . and are fallen away, to be renewed again to penance.*—(Heb. vi. 4).

Listen, then, to the admonition of the Lord: *My son, hast thou sinned? Do so no more, but for thy former sins pray that they may be forgiven thee.*—(Eccles. xxi. 1). My child, add not sins to those which you have already committed, but be careful to pray for the pardon of your past transgressions; otherwise, if you commit another mortal sin, the door of the Divine Mercy may be closed against you, and your soul may be lost forever. When, then, the devil tempts you again to yield to sin,

say to yourself: If God pardons me no more, what shall become of me for all eternity? Should the devil, in reply, say: "Fear not, God is merciful," answer him by saying: What certainty or what probability have I, that, if I return again to sin, God will show me mercy or grant me pardon? Behold the threat of the Lord against all who despise His calls: *Behold I have called and you refused . . . I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared.*—(Prov. i. 24). Mark the words I also; they mean that, as you have mocked the Lord by betraying Him again after your Confession and promises of amendment, so He will mock you at the hour of death. *I will laugh and will mock. But God is not mocked.*—(Gal. vi. 7).

O folly of sinners! If you purchase a house, you spare no pains to get all the securities necessary to guard against loss; if you take medicine, you are careful to assure yourself that it cannot injure you; if you pass over a river, you carefully avoid all danger of falling into it; and, for a transitory enjoyment, for the gratification of revenge, for a brutal pleasure, which lasts but a moment, you risk your eternal salvation, saying: "I will go to Confession after I commit this sin!" And when, I ask, are you to go to Confession? You say: "To-morrow." But who promises you to-morrow? Who assures you that you shall have time for Confession, and that God will not deprive you of life, as He has deprived so many others, in the act of sin? "Are you sure of a whole day," says St. Augustine, "and you cannot be sure of an hour?" You cannot be certain of living for another hour, and you say: "I will go to Confession to-morrow!" Listen to the words of St. Gregory: "He who has promised pardon to penitents, has not promised to-morrow to sinners." God has promised pardon to all who repent; but He has not promised to wait till to-morrow for those who insult Him. Perhaps God will give you time for repentance, but perhaps He will not. But, should He not give it, what shall become of your soul? In the meantime, for the

sake of a miserable pleasure, you lose the grace of God, and expose yourself to the danger of being lost forever. Would you, for such transient enjoyments, risk your money, your honour, your possessions, your liberty, and your life? No; you would not. How, then, does it happen that, for a miserable gratification, you risk your soul, Heaven, and God? Tell me: Do you believe that *Heaven, Hell, Eternity*, are *Truths of Faith*? Do you believe that, if you die in sin, you are lost forever? Oh, what temerity, what folly, to condemn yourself voluntarily to an Eternity of torment with the hope of afterwards reversing the sentence of your condemnation! "No one," says St. Augustine, "wishes to fall sick with the hope of getting well." No one can be found so foolish as to take poison with the hope of preventing its deadly effects by adopting the ordinary remedies. And you will condemn yourself to hell, saying that you expect to be afterwards preserved from it. O folly! which, in conformity with the Divine threats, has brought, and brings every day, so many to hell. *Thou hast trusted in thy wickedness, and evil shall come upon thee, and thou shalt not know the rising thereof.*—(Is. xlvi. 10). You have sinned, trusting rashly in the Divine mercy; the punishment of your guilt shall fall suddenly upon you, and you shall not know from whence it comes.

What do you say? What resolution do you make? If, after reading this, you do not firmly resolve to give yourself to God, I weep over you, and regard you as lost.

Evening Meditation

REFLECTIONS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Now behold our loving Jesus already on the point of being sacrificed on the altar of the Cross for our salvation, in that blessed night which preceded His Passion. Let

us hear Him saying to His Disciples at the last supper that He takes with them, *With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you.*—(Luke xxii. 15). St. Laurence Justinian, considering these words, asserts that they were all words of love: "With desire have I desired; this is the voice of love." As if our loving Redeemer had said, O men, know that this night, in which My Passion will begin, has been the time most longed after by Me during the whole of My life; because I shall now make known to you, through My sufferings and My bitter death, how much I love you, and will thereby oblige you to love Me, in the strongest way it is possible for Me to do. A certain author says that in the Passion of Jesus Christ the Divine Omnipotence united itself to Love,—Love sought to love man to the utmost extent that Omnipotence could arrive at; and Omnipotence sought to satisfy Love as far as its desire could reach.

O Sovereign God! Thou hast given Thyself entirely to me; and how, then, shall I not love Thee with my whole self? I believe,—yes, I believe Thou hast died for me; and how can I, then, love Thee so little as constantly to forget Thee, and all that Thou hast suffered for me? And why, Lord, when I think on Thy Passion, am I not quite inflamed with Thy love, and do not, then, become entirely Thine, like so many holy souls who, after meditating on Thy sufferings, have remained the happy prey of Thy love, and have given themselves entirely to Thee?

II.

The spouse in the Canticles said that whenever her Spouse introduced her into the sacred cellar of His Passion, she saw herself so assaulted on all sides by Divine love, that, all languishing with love, she was constrained to seek relief for her wounded heart: *The king brought me into the cellar of wine, he set in order charity in me. Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples; because I languish with love.*—(Cant. ii 4, 5). And how is it possible for a soul to enter upon the meditation of the Passion of Jesus Christ without

