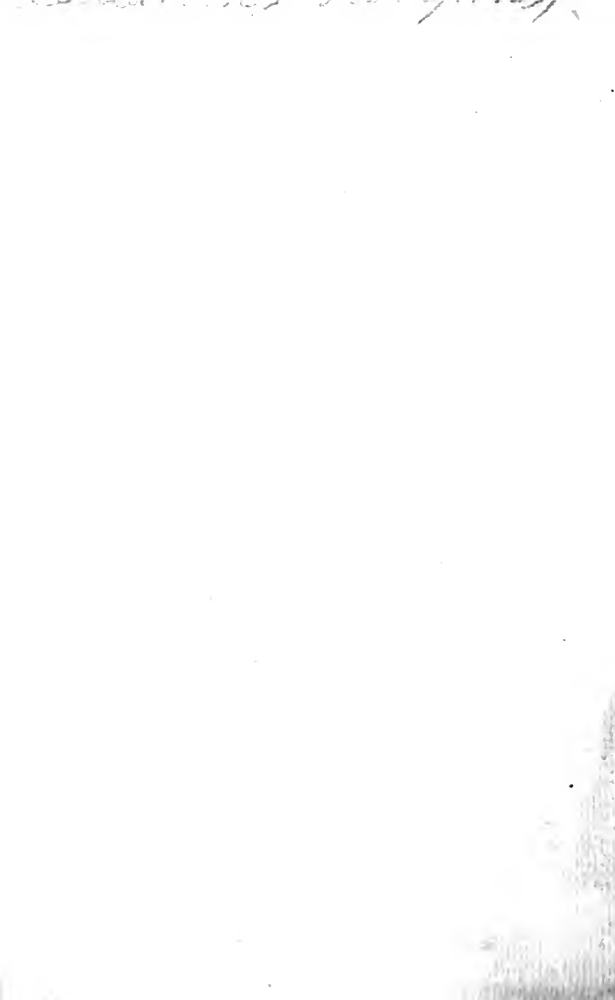


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# FIRST-FRUITS

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# FIRST-FRUITS

A Series of Short Meditations

BY

SISTER MARY PHILIP

*Of the Bar Convent, York*

WITH A PREFACE BY

THE REV. J. B. JAGGAR, S. J.

Offer to God with generous heart  
The first-fruits of thy day,  
And thou wilt find with generous hand  
He will thy gift repay.

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

THESE short meditations have been written with the hope that they may prove suitable for those who, having left our convent schools and training colleges, are entering upon the battle of life. Few, if any, will be able to give, regularly, more than ten minutes or a quarter of an hour to mental prayer each morning; but if this little book help even one soul to give the first-fruits of her day to God, it will not have been written in vain.

Many of the thoughts have been suggested by the hymns of Father Faber and those known as the "Notre Dame Hymns." The verses of the late Sister Mary Xavier of Mount Pleasant, Liverpool, have been freely used with permission. These verses have long been dear and familiar to the writer of *First-Fruits*, who spent all her early years under the care of the Sisters of Notre Dame, and who, in developing the thoughts Sister Mary Xavier's verses have suggested, desires at the same time to acknowledge her gratitude to those to whom she owes so much.

ST MARY'S CONVENT, YORK.

*Feast of All Saints, 1917.*



St Mary's, Weekly



## PREFACE

THE true life of a Christian is an interior life, one of union by love with Our Father Who is in Heaven. In such a life the function of prayer is to keep ever burning the flame of divine charity, for prayer above and beyond everything is a heart-to-heart intercourse and communion with God. Prayer then, vocal and mental, is an indispensable means for fostering and preserving this love of Our Lord within our souls.

Mental prayer, according to the Venerable Father Da Ponte, is "a work of the three interior faculties of the soul—memory, understanding, and will—exercising by God's assistance their acts about those mysteries and truths which our Holy Catholic Faith teaches; and speaking within ourselves to God our Lord, conversing familiarly with Him, begging of Him His gifts, and negotiating all whatsoever is necessary for our salvation and perfection."

The mysteries and truths of religion will not influence our lives and actions as they should unless with mind and heart we reflect upon them. "A truth meditated on," says Cardinal Newman, "is like a resident whose presence sensibly acts upon his town, and has a practical influence within it. A truth merely understood is like a sudden storm of hail which tears up the surface of the earth a little, but soon runs off and leaves it as parched as it was before. A truth well pondered on is like the rain, which descends softly and slowly, and penetrates deeply, and causes things to spring up." Jesus, His life and virtues, which we have to imitate, will not leave their impress on us unless, like His Holy Mother, "we ponder over all these things in our heart." Saint Teresa even went so far as to assert that one who does not meditate needs no devil to bring him down to hell—he drags himself down; and the Psalmist writes: "Unless Thy law had been my meditation, I had then perhaps perished in my abjection" (Ps. cxviii. 92).

Now no life is so full that a short span of time each day cannot be found—ten minutes or a quarter of an hour—for meditation, and the matter of that meditation should be

chiefly the life of Our Lord Himself, inasmuch as the aim of meditation is to unite us in love with God. "Because by the mystery of the Word made Flesh the new light of Thy brightness hath shone upon the eyes of our minds, that while we behold God visibly, we may, by Him, be carried on to the love of things invisible" (Preface for Christmas Day).

Now girls leaving school and entering into the work-a-day world in which they will meet with not a few dangers and difficulties, need strengthening in the love of God to remain loyal to Him. This present book of meditations, to which these words are written as a preface, is especially designed for them, though all others too may use it with equal advantage. It adequately meets its end. In the first place it covers the whole range of the Christian Faith and the life of Our Lord and Our Lady, as may be seen from the contents. The meditations are not too long, and can be read over easily in a short time. The thoughts are suggested rather than worked out, which is just as it should be, leaving the further development and intimate application to the one who meditates. The thoughts also are fresh, simple, direct, and arresting.

The writer has brought forth out of her treasure new things and old. The book has been written for the greater honour and glory of God. May it minister abundantly unto this end.

J. B. JAGGAR, S./.

ST BEUNO'S COLLEGE,  
ST ASAPH.

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## First-fruits

“Thou shalt not delay to pay thy first-fruits”  
(*Exodus*, xxii.).

### I

I BELONG to God. All that I have and all that I am is His. It is He Who gives me life from moment to moment. It is He Who bestows on me each morning the priceless treasure of another day in which to grow in His knowledge and love and service. My life is made up of days, and they pass swiftly by, each one bearing its record for Eternity. How foolish, then, I shall be if I do not use my days as I should! How foolish if I squander my time! How sad if, when my days are over, I have to stand empty-handed before my Judge! He warns me now:—“Work,” He says, “while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work” (St John, ix.).

Do I ever think, as I rise in the morning, what a gift God is putting into my hands? If I did, I should offer my heart to God with joy, and praise Him for His goodness.

“When morning gilds the skies,  
My heart awaking cries,  
May Jesus Christ be praised.”

## II

Each new day that God gives me brings with it fresh duties. The first great duty of each morning is for me to raise my heart to God in prayer. "Go to Him early in the morning, and let thy foot wear the steps of His doors" (Ecclus. vi.). And again, "O God, my God, for Thee do I watch at break of day" (Ps. lxii.). And yet again, "O Lord, I have cried to Thee: in the morning my prayer shall prevent Thee" (Ps. lxvii.).

The morning is the time in which Our Lord gives Himself to us in the Holy Mass and at Communion. There is no time more favourable for me to praise Him and thank Him; there is no time more suitable for bringing my petitions to Him. It seems as though He would make us understand this, by the very fact of His allowing the Church to choose the morning hours for the great Sacrifice of the Mass.

How do I employ the first hours of my days? Do they find me at the foot of the Altar?

"Cause me, O my God, to hear Thy mercy in the morning, for in Thee have I hoped" (Ps. cxlii.)

## III

God exacted the offering of first-fruits from His chosen people. These offerings were

tokens of submission and dependence, and were to acknowledge the sovereign dominion of God, the Author of all happiness.

Have I no first-fruits to offer to God? The first-fruits of a season are always of more value than those which come later. So, too, the offering of the first-fruits of each day is what God looks for from my hands. Am I going to disappoint Him? The morning hours, before the work of the day begins, are most fitting to be kept for Him. "Delay not," He says, "to offer thy first-fruits to the Lord." If I am faithful in giving Him the first-fruits of each morning I shall soon find that He will reward me by blessing all I do during the day.

Offer to God, with generous heart,  
The first-fruits of thy day,  
And thou wilt find, with generous hand,  
He will thy gift repay.

## God, my Father

“I will arise and go to my father” (*St Luke*, xv. 18).

### I

NO earthly father ever loved his child with a love which will even bear comparison with that of God's love for me, His child. I am His own. He has “called me by my name,” nay He has “made me and fashioned me,” and therefore He understands me through and through. He knows all the circumstances of my life—all the various phases through which I have passed and which have made me what I now am—and knowing all, He understands all. He can make allowances where others see no excuse, and as He loves me with an infinite love, He uses His knowledge to the utmost in my favour.

O God my Father, in whom can I trust as I can trust in Thee, Who knowest all, seest all, understandest all? Give me the heartfelt love of a child towards Thee, Who, being my God and Creator, art at the same time my most tender Father and Friend.

### II

Am I now, to-day, giving God the love of a child? Do I turn to Him in joy, in

sorrow, in disappointment? Do I take all things from His hands, the loving hands of my Father, Who cares with an infinite tenderness for the good of His child? If so, why am I troubled over the circumstances of my daily life? Why do I hesitate when He shows me His Will and asks me to do it?

My God, my Father, what can I say to Thee! Too late, far too late, have I known Thee and loved Thee; yet, late as it is, to-day at least I can say, "I will arise and go to my Father." I will trust Him with all that concerns me: my body and my soul, my life and my death, my trials, my temptations, my perplexities and uncertainties. He will care for all I love, for all who have any claim on me, for He is my Father and I am His child.

### III

God wants my love. No one else can give Him this love if I refuse it to Him. My Father asks something of me, His child. Am I going to hold back? He says to me, "My child, give Me thy heart." It is my one treasure, the one thing I can give Him that will please Him. Is He to turn away sad because of my refusal—He, my Father!

O most tender Father, take, take all from me. I give Thee my heart, my love, my affections. Give me Thy love and Thy grace.

## Christ, my friend

“I have called you friends” (*St John*, xv. 15).

### I

OUR Lord chooses His own friends. He has chosen me. “You have not chosen Me,” He says, “but I have chosen you.” What reason this gives me for full love and confidence. He chose me knowing perfectly all about me; and He is not fickle as so many earthly friends are, He is “Jesus Christ, yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever” (*Heb.* xiii.). How, knowing all, He *can* have chosen me, it is impossible for me to understand, but the very mystery of it is sunshine to my heart.

“How Thou canst think so well of us,  
Yet be the God Thou art,  
Is darkness to my intellect,  
But sunshine to my heart.”                      FABER.

### II

How does Our Lord show His friendship? He is “faithful and true.” He never misunderstands, never misinterprets my words or my actions, never shows me anything but infinite patience and love. He is continually sending me gifts and messages. He visits



me daily Himself. He waits hour by hour for me to visit Him. Sometimes He asks me to help Him to carry His Cross, but He never leaves me to do so alone. He considers me in all the circumstances of my life. He never suffers me to be tried above that which I am able to bear. In all things He shows me nothing but love, disguised sometimes it is true, but if I have faith in Him the veil is almost a transparent one.

“Such is my Beloved, and He is my Friend.”

### III

On my side, how do I treat my Friend? Do I wilfully refuse to do that which I know He is asking of me? What gifts do I make Him? Do I love Him in “deed and in truth,” or is my service mere lip-service? How often do I visit my Friend, how much time do I give Him in the day?

O Christ my Lord, my true and faithful Friend, let me be a real friend of Thine. Grant that I may give Thee love for love. Grant that, loving Thee above all things and in all things, I may at last be united to Thee for ever in heaven.

“I need Thee, gracious Jesus,  
I need a friend like Thee,  
A friend to soothe and sympathise,  
A friend to care for me.”

## The Holy Ghost the Comforter

“I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete that He may abide with you for ever” (*St John*, xiv. 16).

### I

THE Holy Ghost is the Love of the Father and the Son. He is the Spirit of Love. There is nothing the human heart craves for as it does for love. Our desire, then, should be to be filled with the Holy Spirit. If we are in the state of grace, the Holy Ghost abides with us: “Know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Spirit?” (1 Cor. iii.). Without this Guest of our souls we are restless and unhappy, for, as St Augustine tells us, “Our hearts are made for Thee, O God, and they can never be at rest until they rest in Thee.” This is why the Holy Ghost is called by Holy Church—

“True Rest in toil and sweat,  
Refreshment in excess of heat,  
And Solace in our grief.”

## II

The Holy Ghost is called the Paraclete, that is the Comforter. His special mission is to enlighten, teach, and comfort the soul. If I ask Him, He will enlighten me to know His Will, and will teach me how to accomplish it in spite of all difficulties. Then, too, He is ever near to console and strengthen me in all my trials and anxieties. The Holy Ghost comes to us first at our Baptism, then in a very special way in the Sacrament of Confirmation, and He comes "to abide with us for ever." At all times, in all difficulties, in all my doubts and fears, I can count on the guidance of the Holy Spirit Who dwells within me.

## III

Am I faithful to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit? St Paul says: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit within you." Is my conduct ever a source of displeasure to my Heavenly Guest? Do I beg His light and guidance before every important action that I do, and before every choice that I make? Do I ask Him to guide me into the path along which He wishes me to tread?

O Holy Spirit of God, take possession of me wholly. Guide me, enlighten me, instruct me. Give me the grace never to be deaf to Thy warnings, never to leave Thy inspirations

unnoticed and unattended to, but make me so faithful to Thee that even in small things I may never swerve from Thy guidance.

“ Dear Paraclete ! how hast Thou waited,  
While our hearts were slowly turned !  
How often has Thy love been slighted,  
While for us it grieved and burned !

“ Now if our hearts do not deceive us,  
We would take Thee for our Lord !  
O dearest Spirit ! make us faithful  
To Thy least and lightest word.”

FABER.

## The Annunciation

“And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord ;  
be it done unto me according to thy word”  
(*St Luke*, i. 38).

### I

“HAIL, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.” Our Lady knelt in prayer. She had no thought of the untold dignity to which God was about to raise her. Her one idea was to serve her Lord in absolute humility and obedience. She desired to be the servant of the Mother of the Messiah. It was her humility that so attracted God’s love that He chose her to be His Mother, and sent His Archangel to tell her the glad tidings, and to ask her consent.

I can never please God, never hope to be united to Him, unless I am really and sincerely humble. Humility is truth. What I am before God, that I am and no more. All I have and am, He has given me. I owe all to Him. Unless I fully acknowledge this, there is no spiritual life possible for me.

Teach me, dear Mother, this first lesson.

Obtain for me the grace always and everywhere to give God the first place.

## II

“And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord.” Here is another indication of Our Lady’s humility and submission. She is told that she is full of grace, that the Lord is with her, that God has chosen her to be His Mother, and still her only word is this: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord.”

Do I remember always that I am God’s handmaid, that my one duty is to serve Him, that my life is to be ruled not by my will but by His? Do I seek the first place, desire to be above others to be considered and esteemed? If so I am not like Our Lady.

## III

“Be it done to me according to thy word.” Our Lady’s whole will went out to embrace the Will of God. The submission was absolute, and at that very instant “the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.”

There is always swift recompense for a full-hearted submission of our will to God’s. Do I give generously when He asks something of me? Do I accept the cross, and, what is often a great deal harder, all the circumstances and results of the trial God

sends me? Our Lady will help me to do this if I ask her.

Teach me, dear Mother, how to accept with thee all God's Will for me. Teach me always to say with thee: "Be it done to me according to thy word."

## The Visitation

“And Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Juda” (*St Luke*, i. 39).

### I

“MARY rising up . . . .” There were many reasons why Our Lady would naturally have preferred to remain at Nazareth rather than to journey over the mountains to visit her cousin St Elizabeth. But Mary did not stop to consider her own convenience. Her aged cousin would be glad of her assistance, so she went with haste to devote herself to her kinswoman. What a lesson of unselfish charity this is to me! How often do I think any excuse sufficient for refusing to do a kind act? Yet here is Our Lady giving up her quiet life of recollection and prayer, and this immediately after the Incarnation, without a thought of herself.

Give me, dear Mother, a share of thine own unselfish charity; give of thy kind considerateness for others—for my relations, my friends, the aged, the infirm.

### II

“Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?” It was thus



that St Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, greeted Our Lady. See how reverently she who was far advanced in years welcomed her young cousin of fifteen; and watch how humbly and sweetly Mary accepts the greeting and sets herself for three long months to wait on St Elizabeth and render her all the offices of charity in her power.

We never lose anything by doing a kindly act for another; rather do we gain immeasurably more than we give, for God is never outdone in generosity.

Does not the example of Our Lady and St Elizabeth put my selfishness to shame?

### III

“My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour.” Our Lady’s heart was so full of joy and thanksgiving that she broke forth into her canticle of praise. She referred all to God, knowing that all came from Him.

Do I thus give praise to God for the gifts He bestows upon me? After Holy Communion, at least, I can join with Our Lady and say, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour.”

## The Nativity of Our Lord

“And they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger” (*St Luke*, ii. 16).

### I

SEE Our Lady and St Joseph prostrate before their Infant God. Cold, hunger, weariness, poverty, the utter destitution of their surroundings, all was forgotten in those first blissful moments that Christmas night. See how Our Lady lifts Our Lord for a moment from His bed of prickly straw and kisses Him with adoring love. Ask her with all humility to lend you her Child for a moment that you too may kiss His little feet.

“Sacred Infant, all divine,  
What a tender love was Thine  
Thus to come from highest bliss  
Down to such a world as this!”

### II

Our Lord was silent in the crib, so that we might not fear to draw near to Him. He will not reproach us for our sins. He became a Babe that we might think only of His

goodness and tenderness towards us. He came to purify and sanctify us, and to give us true peace and joy.

Lord, I bring Thee my heart, my love, my whole being. Teach me, sweet Infant, the lessons of Bethlehem.

### III

Our Lady and St Joseph suffered intensely at the sight of the privations of Jesus, but they were perfectly submissive to the Will of God. They adored their Child as their God, and tried to comfort Him as their Babe.

If we have to endure the pain of seeing those we love suffer, we can unite our hearts to those of Our Lady and St Joseph at Bethlehem. No love of ours for our dear ones can ever equal theirs for Jesus.

Lord, I lay before Thee the needs of all those I love; raise Thy Infant-Hand and bless each one as Thou knowest and seest best.

## The Epiphany—(I) The Star

“We have seen His star in the East, and are  
come to adore Him” (*St Matt.*, ii.).

### I

THE Star which guided the Magi was an emblem of Our Lord, the Light of Light. As soon as it appeared, these three Wise Men left their native land and set out on their journey. Undoubtedly they were criticised and looked upon as fools, but human respect held no sway in their hearts; they braved the remarks of men and went their way.

I shall have taken a great step in the right direction when, putting aside all human respect, I seek only to follow the light God gives me to know His Will, and this in small things as well as in great.

### II

The journey of the Magi was long and weary, but they never faltered. They were too happy in the thought that God was leading them to One Whom they knew to be the Promised Redeemer, to mind the

fatigues of the journey. When night fell and all became dark around them they did not fear, for the Star shed its radiance all along their path.

So also, in my dark days, I still have the light of faith to guide me. I can still say, "Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom, Lead thou me on."

### III

But there is still another lesson I can learn from the Three Kings. Suddenly, at the entrance to Jerusalem, the Star disappeared. It must have distressed and perplexed them, but they did not give up their quest. They used the human means at their disposal, and, learning that Our Lord was to be born at Bethlehem, they set off again on their journey, the Star reappearing immediately.

So, too, when my guiding star seems to fail me, when I can no longer see my way, I must use the ordinary means of grace: prayer and the sacraments. God will not fail to show me His Will in His own good time. He will lead me to my Heavenly Country, if I trust Him, and there I shall find the Child and His Mother, and falling down I shall adore Him.

## The Epiphany—(II) The Gifts

And opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts : gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (*St Matt.*, ii.).

### I

KNEEL in spirit at the feet of Our Blessed Lord. See the Magi there, in all their Eastern splendour, offering Him their rich gifts : gold, symbol of Royalty ; frankincense, in acknowledgment of His Divinity ; myrrh, a type of His Humanity.

Love always desires to give ; it is an instinct of all true affection. If, then, my love for the Infant God is true and real, I too shall be anxious to give Him of my best. How long is it since I last gladdened the heart of my Saviour by a generous gift to Him which I have never recalled ?

### II

Gold was the first gift offered by the Magi. They knew that their small earthly power was as nothing in the sight of that Babe, Whom they knew to be the King of kings ; and the gold they gave was emblematic of the love which was kindled in their hearts at the sight of Him

Love is the first gift Our Lord desires me to give Him. If I live in His love and for His love day by day, how near and dear to Him I shall soon become! He tells me Himself how my love is to be shown:—"If you love Me, keep My commandments." Will my love bear this test?

### III

The gift of frankincense is symbolical of prayer. I cannot keep close to God unless I pray. Long prayers are not necessary. What God looks to chiefly is the heart, the earnestness and sincerity with which I lift up my mind and heart to Him. Am I giving God all He asks in this way?

Lastly, the kings brought myrrh, fit type of suffering. We all have our share, either physically, mentally, or spiritually. In order to make my sufferings a gift meet to be offered to my King, I must bear them patiently and even, if I can, gladly for His sake. He has suffered first. He knows what a costly gift I can lay at His feet if I will. Surely I cannot refuse to give the Babe of Bethlehem the presents He desires!

Take, Lord, and receive the gold of my love, the incense of my prayer, the myrrh of my trials and sorrows, which I promise to bear for Thee.

## The Presentation in the Temple

“And thine own soul a sword shall pierce”  
(*St Luke*, ii.).

### I

“THEY carried Him to Jerusalem.” In this mystery Our Lady fulfilled a law by which she was by no means bound. Picture her with St Joseph entering the Temple, bearing in her arms the Lord of heaven and earth. Truly they would say with the Psalmist, “We rejoiced at the things that were said to us; we will go into the House of the Lord.” Do I ever visit Our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament when I am in no way bound to do so? What about my week-day Mass and Communion? I am not obliged to give Our Lord this token of my love, but can I be said really to love if through my own fault I confine myself to merely fulfilling the Sunday obligation?

O Mary, my Mother, give me of thy generous spirit. Make me anxious, as thou wert, to serve God to the full extent of my power.



## II

“To present Him to the Lord.” Our Lord, in His Presentation, renewed the offering of Himself to His Heavenly Father. He offered Himself for my sake, to save my soul, to teach me that my only true happiness lies in the accomplishment of the Will of God. “In the head of the book it is written: Behold I come to do Thy Will, O my God.” And also Our Lord never looked back or revoked His offering. “He became obedient even to the death of the Cross.”

How different are my offerings. I so often draw back when God puts me to the test.

Teach me, my Lord, to be generous in Thy service; make me wholehearted and sincere in my offerings to Thee. Let me never refuse to give Thee that which I have promised Thee.

## III

“Thy own soul a sword shall pierce.” Of all those present in the Temple that morning Our Lady was the best beloved. Yet it was to her that the suffering was promised. Our Lord sends suffering to those He loves in order to make them more like Himself. Instead, then, of fearing and dreading the cross I should welcome it, or if I cannot yet do that,

I should try to bear it patiently, knowing that I am united in this with God's Mother, who suffered more than any other child of Adam can ever do.

Mary, Mother of Sorrows, help me to bear bravely whatever trial God sends me. Unite my small sufferings to thy immense sorrows, and so offer them to thy Son in order that He may accept them as a token of my love for Him and for thee.

## The Flight into Egypt

“Take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee” (*St Matt.*, ii.).

### I

ST JOSEPH received this order in the middle of the night. It could not well have been more inconvenient or distasteful to him and Our Lady. It was seemingly hard, unreasonable even, yet not for one instant did they hesitate. God had sent them the message of His Will. It tried their faith, their submission, their trust, but they obeyed immediately: “Who, rising up, took the Child and His Mother by night.” What a lesson for me! Is it thus that I behave when my plans are upset by events which only my blindness prevents me from recognising as the Will of God?

Give me, my Lord, a greater submission to Thee. I ask it through the merits of Thy Mother, and St Joseph who obeyed Thee so perfectly.

### II

The command was quite indefinite as to the duration of the trial imposed: “Be there

until I shall tell thee." It might be a matter of months or years, or of only a few weeks. Our Lady and St Joseph were not told.

Uncertainty is always hard to bear. The only thing I can do is to act for the best, as far as I see God's Will in the present circumstances. It requires great trust in God to be able to say to Him sincerely, "I do not ask to see the distant scene, one step enough for me." Have I this trust in Him?

### III

Does Our Lord ever give me a share in the mystery of the Flight into Egypt? Does he ever say to me, "Fly from temptation; fly from such and such an occasion of sin; detach yourself from the utter worldliness that is gradually taking such a hold of you?" If God questions me thus, what is my answer? Do I at once arise and obey His command, and say to Him:—

"Jesus! sweet Fugitive Who fled  
From Herod's bloody net outspread  
For Thy dear Infancy,  
Give me, O Lord, like modest care  
To fly the world when it speaks fair  
To steal Thy grace away." FABER.

## The Loss and Finding in the Temple

“Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (*St Luke*, ii.).

### I

“THE Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem . . . and not finding Him they returned . . . seeking Him.”

Picture the anguish of Our Lady and St Joseph. They had lost Him who was All to them, the very Light of their eyes, their Child. Yet they were calm and submissive. They did not blame each other. They each considered themselves unworthy to possess Jesus; yet how earnestly they sought Him. How long and weary their search was. How carefully they used every means in their power to find their Son.

I, too, sometimes lose Jesus. Is it ever through my own fault? If ever I lose His grace by sin I must seek Him unweariedly until I find Him, however hard the search may be.

But it may be that He seems to have withdrawn Himself, in order to make me desire Him more earnestly and call upon Him more devoutly. “Come, Lord Jesus,

come to my poor heart and never leave me. Come, Lord Jesus, come."

## II

"Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" This was the answer Our Lord gave His Mother when she said to Him, "Son, why hast Thou done so to us?" There is a great lesson for me here. The one thing that really matters in this life is that I should be about "my Father's business," doing the Will of God. Quite possibly this may entail suffering for those I love; I may be called upon to leave them for Christ's sake; if so, I must remember Our Lord's example.

"Jesus, whom Thy sad Mother sought,  
And in the Temple found, who taught  
The aged in Thy youth;  
How blest are they who keep aright,  
Or find, when lost, the living light  
Of Thy eternal truth."

FABER.

## III

"And they understood not the word that He spoke to them," but Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.

If even Our Lady did not understand God's ways, it is not surprising that I am often quite unable to do so! If my path is obscure to me, it is quite clear to God, Who

knows what is best for me. If I do not understand why He sends me this sorrow, or takes away that help, can I not trust Him? After all, His ways are not our ways, nor are our thoughts His!

“My fate is in Thy hands,  
My God I wish it there ;  
I neither ask for life or death,  
Thou knowest what is best ;  
Say only Thou hast pardoned me,  
Say only I am Thine,  
In all things else dispose of me,  
Thy Holy Will is mine.”

## The Hidden Life

“He was subject to them” (*St Luke*, ii.).

### I

PICTURE the holy, humble house at Nazareth. See St Joseph and Our Blessed Lady. Watch Our Blessed Lord as He moves about the house. We read that He “was subject to them.” Five words sum up the history of those eighteen years. And He Who was subject was God! The Creator! The Master! The Redeemer! He Who is Almighty and Eternal!

Is it possible for me to find it difficult to obey those set over me when I see Jesus in His home at Nazareth? If I do not keep the commandment “Honour thy father and thy mother” to its full extent, can I be said to be copying Jesus, my Model?

### II

Our Lord spent thirty out of the thirty-three years of His life in His home at Nazareth. He did not travel about. He did not tire of that humble, hidden home-life. He lived it and loved it for me.

It may be sometimes that I find my home-



life irksome. I may long for change. I may long for more pleasure, perhaps, and for less restraint, but the lesson of Nazareth surely is one which, if I study it aright, will make me not only contented but delighted with my home-life.

### III

The Holy Family were poor; they had to live by the labour of their hands. St Joseph worked—nay toiled—at his carpenter's bench, trying to earn enough to make both ends meet! Our Lady was occupied with the simplest and most humble of household duties—sweeping, cooking, and washing. Our Lord Himself took His full share of duties. He must have drawn water from the well for His Mother, and gone messages for St Joseph. Later on He actually worked as a carpenter, and went round to collect the payment due to His labour.

Surely in the face of this scene I can never consider any work that I am asked to do as beneath me. Jesus sanctified manual work for all time during the years of His hidden life.

Teach me, my Lord, the lessons of those Thirty Years. Make me obedient after Thy example. Strengthen me to fulfil all the duties of my home-life in union with Thee, with humility and with love.

## The Marriage Feast of Cana

“Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye”  
(*St John*, ii.).

### I

PICTURE Our Lord and Our Lady as guests at the marriage feast. Their presence sheds joy and gladness on all around them. See them entering into conversation with their hosts and the other guests. Our Lady in her kind, quiet way does what she can to help those around her. Long before others have noticed it, she sees that the wine is falling short. At once her sympathy is aroused, and she goes to her Son and lays the need before Him: “They have no wine.”

How do I behave in my intercourse with others? Am I sad or self-engrossed when the occasion calls for cheerfulness and kindness? I will ask Our Lady, the Cause of our Joy, to give me of her own sweet spirit, and to obtain from her Divine Son the graces I need.

“Speak to thy Son, as thou didst of old  
That feast day in Galilee,  
Tell Him our needs in thine own sweet way,  
*O Causa Nostræ Latitiæ.*” S. M. X.

## II

Our Lady's advice to the waiters was this:—  
"Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye."  
She knew Our Lord so well that she did not  
for one instant doubt that He would work a  
miracle in answer to her simple statement,  
"they have no wine."

There is a lesson for me here. First, I will  
try to imitate my Mother's trust and  
reliance on Jesus. And also I will take  
heed to her words: "Whatsoever He shall  
say to you, do ye." My past infidelities to  
His voice shall not discourage me. In the  
future I will strive to be more docile, but I  
must note the word "whatsoever": my  
obedience is not to extend to the easy things  
only, but to whatever God's Will may be  
for me.

Teach me, my God, to be generous and  
faithful in Thy service, mindful of Thy least  
wish in my regard.

## III

"Thou hast kept the good wine until now."  
This is Our Lord's way. He gives us abundantly  
now of His grace, His gifts, His blessings  
both spiritual and temporal, but He keeps  
the best for hereafter. Now, I must suffer,  
be patient, and wait. Now, there is anxiety,  
struggle, and fear. But hereafter

there will be peace, joy, and glory if I am faithful. Best of all, hereafter will be the Blessed Vision of Himself for all eternity.

“When wilt Thou slake the thirsting of my heart  
To see Thee as Thou art,  
Face unto face in all Thy glad array,  
'Tranced with the beauty of Thy Eternal Day.”

## The Sermon on the Mount—I

“No man can serve two masters. . . . You cannot serve God and mammon” (*St Matt.*, vi.).

### I

THE service of God is the service of a Father. It is never difficult to serve one I really love. And in reality there is nothing more sweet, nothing that gives truer liberty, than the service of Him Who has said: “My yoke is sweet and My burden light” (*St Matt.*, xi.).

“For the love of God is broader  
Than the measure of man’s mind ;  
And the heart of the Eternal  
Is most wonderfully kind.

“If our love were but more simple,  
We should take Him at His word ;  
And our lives would be all sunshine  
In the sweetness of our Lord.”

FABER.

### II

The service of mammon is the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil. All these are hard task-masters, who promise and do not perform ; who dazzle for the time being, but who invariably deceive those who trust in them.

If I lean upon the world’s opinion, if I

am flattered by its caresses, deluded by its promises, I shall soon find out my mistake, for I shall be as though leaning on a broken reed for support.

If in the past I have so served the world that I have wholly or in part forgotten my duty to God, I will beg Him to forgive me, and, renewing the promises of my Baptism, I will renounce again with all my heart the devil with all his works, the world with all its pomps, the flesh with all its temptations.

“This have I leaned upon, sweet Lord !  
 This world hath had Thy rightful place ;  
 But come, dear jealous King of love !  
 Come, and begin Thy reign of grace.”

FABER.

### III

“To serve God is to reign.” There is nothing more glorious than to serve the King of kings. To serve Him is the end of my creation : it is to know Him, love Him, praise Him, and obey Him, to do all for His greater glory. Do I thus serve Him? I must give Him the undivided affection of my heart, my whole allegiance, for I cannot “serve two masters.” I can only cleave to one. I will only cleave to One, for with Him I am safe.

“There’s a wideness in God’s mercy  
 Like the wideness of the sea ;  
 There’s a kindness in His justice  
 Which is more than liberty.”

FABER.

## The Sermon on the Mount—II

“Be not solicitous . . . for your Father knoweth”  
(*St Matt.*, vi.).

### I

PICTURE Our Lord seated on the grassy slope of the Mount with His disciples and a great multitude around Him listening eagerly to every word which falls from His divine lips. “Be not solicitous, saying, What shall we eat, what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed.”

Does He address these words to me? Do I give too much time and care to these things? To do so is unworthy of a Christian, unbecoming a child of God.

O Lord my God, give me such love of Thee that my heart may never be “bewitched by worldly trifles.” Deepen my spiritual life, that the things of this passing world may lose their attraction for me, and that I may fix my mind on that world where true joys reside.

### II

“For your Father knoweth that you have need of these things.” Our Lord here gives us a proof of His more than paternal care

for each of us. His care for us extends not only to spiritual things but reaches even to our temporal needs. If I trust Him I can count on Him to give me all that is necessary for soul and body. No father ever provided for his child as my Heavenly Father provides for me. All that I enjoy comes from Him. He is lavish in His gifts to me. I cannot, then, insult my Father by mistrusting His love.

### III

“Your Father knoweth.” These words are strength and consolation on so many occasions. I can always say to myself with perfect truth, “My Father knoweth.” He sees and counts every effort I make. Where others see only failure in my conduct—nay, where I see only failure myself—He, my Father, knows. If I am suffering physically my Father knows, and weighs each pang He sends. If I am misunderstood, treated unjustly or unkindly, my Father sees it all and judges all things rightly. Gladly, then, will I commit myself to His care.

“Look down upon me, O my Father; how sweet to me is the thought that Thou art near. Purify my heart from all doubt of Thy tender Providence, from all mistrust of Thy infinite love, that as Thou knowest me from all eternity, so I may begin at last to know Thee” (Bp. Hedley).



## The Sermon on the Mount—III

“Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doth the Will of My Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven” (*St Matt.*, vii.).

### I

OUR Lord here teaches us a very plain lesson. The service which he requires of us does not consist in fervent words or fervent prayers only. Prayer without the practice of virtue is barren, nor will works which are not according to God's Will be of any avail.

If my prayers seem to remain unanswered, if I am cold and hard and dry when kneeling before the altar, may it not be, perhaps, because I do not try out of prayer-time to live up to the standard Our Lord requires of me.

“Had I kept stricter watch each hour  
O'er tongue and eye and ear,  
Had I but mortified all day  
Each joy as it came near,

“Had I, dear Lord, no pleasure found  
But in the thought of Thee,  
Prayer would have come unsought, and been  
A truer liberty.”

FABER.

## II

“He that doth the Will of my Father.” Our Lord again and again emphasises this all-important lesson—that all sanctity, all happiness, all perfection even, consists in doing the Will of God. St John in his Epistle repeats the same injunction:—“Let us not love in word nor in act, but in deed and in truth”; and again, in another place, “He that doth the Will of God abideth for ever.”

I must not be content if I do His Will on certain occasions only or under some circumstances and not under others. No! God wishes me to give Him my daily fidelity. “Be thou faithful until death and I will give thee the crown of life” (Apoc. ii.).

## III

“He shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Our Lord does not ask me to work without hope of reward. He tells me that if I am faithful I shall enter the kingdom of heaven. What does this mean? It means that for ever and for ever I shall enjoy full measure of life and riches, of joy and glory. All that I can hope for and far more will be there for me. My sorrow shall be turned into joy, and my joy no man shall take from me.

“Virgin most faithful, pray for me”

## The Tempest

“ Behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves, but He was asleep ”  
(*St Matt.*, viii.).

### I

PICTURE Our Lord asleep in the little tempest-tossed boat. The wind was contrary, the clouds lowering, all looked threatening—there was certainly danger ahead. The disciples knew Our Lord was with them, but their faith was weak, and as He slept they were afraid. They did not realise that, though asleep, His Heart was watching. They forgot that He was the Master of the winds and the waves, that all things were subject to His power.

How often is my heart tossed with the storm of temptation or trial: everything goes wrong, everybody seems contrary to me; darkness encloses me on every side, and yet Christ my Lord is still with me; He is watching all the time, even though it seems as though He slept. His power can quell the fiercest storm.

“ Jesu ! Deliverer !  
Come Thou to me,  
Soothe Thou my voyaging  
Over life's sea.

“Thou, when the storm of death  
Roars sweeping by,  
Whisper, O Truth of truth,  
Peace! it is I!”

## II

“Lord, save us!” The Apostles woke Our Lord with their cry of fear. The waves seemed about to swamp the boat; terrified, they turn to Jesus, “Lord, save us, we perish.”

And I? Can I not use the same words, with the same earnestness? “Lord, save me, I cannot save myself. Lord, help me, my soul is perishing under stress of trial and temptation. Wake, O my Lord, and save Thy child.”

## III

“Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” Our Lord rebuked His timid disciples. They might have known that He would not let them perish. They had not trusted Him sufficiently, and Our Lord felt their want of confidence.

How often has Our Lord felt my want of trust in Him? May not I well take the rebuke to myself, I who am so often full of fear and mistrust in spite of all He has done and is still doing for me? Truly I have often in the past deserved to be classed with those of “little faith.”

Dear Lord and Master, give me more

trust in Thee. Save me from ever being separated from Thee in temptation or in trial, in joy or in sorrow. Save me above all from myself, and from any want of confidence in Thee. Let me always be able to say to Thee in truth :—

“Heart of Jesus, I trust in Thee.”

## The Woman of Canaan

“Who answered her never a word” (*St Matt.*, xv.).

### I

A GENTILE woman came to Our Lord, and falling at His feet begged Him to heal her daughter who was possessed by a devil. She had probably heard of Jesus as a worker of miracles, and so great was her faith that, daunted by no difficulties, she makes her way straight to Him, and begs and entreats Him to listen to her. And Our Lord “answered her never a word.” She met with a distinct rebuff, and the disciples also were against her, for they besought Him, saying: “Lord, send her away, for she crieth after us.”

When I have prayed long and earnestly, and I seem to meet with no response, how do I act? Do I give up and say: “It is no good praying,” or do I only redouble my faith and knock persistently at the Heart of my Lord, sure that if I persevere He will at length listen to my petition?

### II

Our Lord repelled the woman, saying that He “was not sent but to the lost sheep of

the House of Israel," but she came and adored Him, saying, "Lord, help me." Then Our Lord tried her faith and humility to the utmost. "It is not good to take the bread of children and cast it to the dogs!" And the woman, instead of resenting the repulse, humbles herself, admits her unworthiness, and thus gains the Heart of Christ.

Here is a great lesson for me. If I wish my prayers to be powerful with God, I must see to it that they are always full of true humility. A humble and contrite heart God will never despise, and the prayer of him who humbleth himself pierces the clouds.

### III

Instantly Our Lord rewarded the faith and humility of the poor mother. "O woman, great is thy faith, be it done to thee as thou wilt; and her daughter was cured from that hour."

Happy woman, thus to merit to be praised by Our Divine Lord. If I would win praise from Him I must hold myself of no account at all, and put all my trust in Him with unbounded confidence.

## The Conditions of Discipleship

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me”  
(*St Luke*, ix.).

### I

OUR Lord makes no exception when He says these words. He is not talking to His Apostles only, or even to the chosen ones of all ages, whom He calls to leave all for His sake. No, the conditions of following Him, that is of being true Christians at all, are laid down for all. “If *any* man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”

I notice that Our Lord does not ask me to do anything or bear anything that He has not first been willing to endure for me. He does not merely say, “let him deny himself and take up his cross daily,” but He adds, “and follow Me,” as if He said: “Do not be afraid, follow Me, walk in My footsteps. Set thyself manfully, like a good and faithful servant, to bear My cross, for I have died for love of thee.”

O Lord, Who art the Way, the Truth, and the Life, grant that I may follow Thee, bearing my cross bravely for love of Thee.



## II

What is the cross that I have to bear after my Saviour? It may be many things, now this, now that. My cross is all that goes against me, all that it costs me to conquer myself, all that frets or annoys me. Sometimes the small things are the hardest to bear. Or it may be that my cross is a life-long and heavy one. I may mourn the death of those I love; or, worse still, bear the burden of anxiety about their well-being here or their salvation hereafter. What is a trial to me might not be so to another—we can only judge of our own case; but whatever my cross may be, I must take it up, that is, carry it willingly, deny myself to do so if necessary, and, if I can, love the cross for Christ's sake.

## III

Why must I carry my cross? Chiefly because of Our Lord's command, and out of love for Him; but I can urge myself on to do so by pondering over some of the advantages that the *Imitation* tells me I shall gain by so doing:—

“In the cross is life . . . in the cross is height of virtue. There is no health of soul, nor hope of eternal life, but in the cross. If thou die with Him, thou shalt also live with Him; and if thou art His companion in

suffering thou shalt also partake of His glory."

I must remember that each day's load is all Our Lord asks me to bear.

"Charge not thyself with the weight of a year,  
Child of the Master, faithful and dear.  
Choose not thy cross for the coming week,  
For that is more than He bids thee seek.  
Bend not thine arms for to-morrow's load,  
Thou mayest leave that to thy gracious God.  
'Daily'—only—He saith to thee,  
'Take up thy cross and follow Me.'"

## The Transfiguration

“They, lifting up their eyes, saw no one, but only Jesus” (*St Matt.*, xvii.).

### I

ST LUKE tells us that Our Lord took Peter and James and John up to a high mountain to pray, and as He prayed “He was transfigured” before them. St Matthew says: “His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow.”

Picture Our Lord standing before His disciples resplendent in His beauty. Note that it was whilst He prayed that He was transfigured.

If I wish my soul to be transfigured into a beautiful image of Christ I must pray much, and, pondering over the examples He has given me, I must strive to conform my conduct to His.

### II

Our Lord was transfigured before the Apostles on Thabor to prepare them for Calvary. Even on the mountain, so hallowed that Peter said, “Lord, it is good for us to be here,” the conversation was of the Passion,

“And they spoke of His decease that He should accomplish in Jerusalem.”

I cannot, then, be transfigured and made really like to Christ unless I suffer. The consolations that God gives from time to time are to prepare me to carry my cross bravely, spurring myself on with the thought of the glory and peace to come.

### III

“This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.” If I desire to be the beloved child of my Heavenly Father, I must endure afflictions patiently, and I must be prepared, as Jesus was, for conflict and for suffering. The more like I am to Him, the more I shall be well-pleasing in God’s sight.

“Hear ye Him.” Jesus is my Master. He it is to Whom I must go, for He has the “words of eternal life.”

“I come to Thee, sweet Saviour,  
For to whom, Lord, can I go?  
The words of life eternal  
From Thy lips for ever flow.” FABER.

They “saw no one, but only Jesus.” Happy shall I be if in all the events of life I pass over all the secondary causes and see in all the hand of Jesus only.

## The Blind Man

“Rabboni, that I may see!” (*St Mark*, x. 51).

### I

BARTIMEUS, the blind man, sat by the way-side begging. He sat begging because he was blind. Had he been able to see, he certainly would not have thus spent his time. Is it not, perhaps, because I am so spiritually blind that I spend my time seeking peace and happiness in things in which they are not to be found? Do I beg these gifts from the world? from my friends? Do I seek my happiness in a mere round of pleasure and amusement? If so I am blind indeed, in a worse plight than poor Bartimeus.

Lord, let me beg of Thee, not of others, for Thou hast the words of eternal life.

### II

“And many rebuked him that he might hold his peace, but he cried out the more, saying, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

What is it to cry to Our Lord? It is “to despise the world; never to yield to dis-

couragement, to be indifferent to criticism, and to work on perseveringly in God's service." Do I thus cry out to Jesus, in spite of all that others may say or think? If so, Our Lord will listen to me as He listened to the blind man. Perchance, He may even say to me, as to him, "What wilt thou that I should do to thee?" What would my answer be then?

### III

"Rabboni, that I may see!" Sight was the one desirable gift that Bartimeus longed for, and the first thing he saw was the face of Our Blessed Lord, looking on him in kindness and in love.

I too, Lord, long to see Thy face. I desire to see and know myself that I may come to see and know Thee; that I may appreciate Thy kindness and Thy love for me; Thy patience that has borne with me; Thy pity that has pardoned me. Yea, Rabboni, that I may see!

"Jesu! Whom at present I veiled see,  
What I so thirst for, ah! vouchsafe to me:  
That Thee with face unveiled I may behold  
And of Thy glory taste the bliss untold."

## Magdalen

“ Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much ” (*St Luke*, vi.).

### I

MARY MAGDALEN was a notorious sinner, a scandal to all who knew her. She had forgotten God and given herself up to creatures, but she became the model of penitents for all time. “ She began to wash His feet with tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head.” . . . “ She kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment.” See her deep humility, her spirit of reparation. She desires to offer to God in sacrifice the gifts by which she had offended Him. How deeply she loves Him Whom she has wounded by her sins.

What a lesson I can learn from this happy Penitent.

“ Thou didst fly unto thy Saviour  
And thine eyes were fixed on His,  
While thy guilty lips were printing  
On His feet full many a kiss :  
And then, wonder of compassion !  
In one moment thou wert free,  
And a gift of love unequalled  
From His Heart came into thee.”

FABER.

## II

The Pharisee said within himself: "This Man, if He were a prophet, would surely know who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him, that she is a sinner."

What an instance this is of that secret contemptuous judgment of others of which I have so often been guilty. It also shows how little heed we need pay to the judgments of others, for they are nearly always mistaken, as the Pharisee was about Magdalen. She knew that He, Who read her heart, saw there every sign of true repentance.

Our Lord at once took Magdalen's part:—"Simon," He said, "dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet; but she with tears hath washed My feet, and with her hair hath wiped them. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but she since she came in hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but she with ointment hath anointed My feet."

O loving Heart of Christ, how Thou dost reckon up every small thing done for Thee. Thou dost forgive and forget my sins, but Thou wilt not forget one act, one look, one word of love done for Thee.



## III

“Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much.” Our Lord is most kind and generous in forgiving. No matter what my past life has been, I can find pardon at the feet of Jesus if I do but love Him. He will be kind to me, as to Magdalen. Nay, how often have I heard His voice, in the Sacrament of Penance, saying to me through His priest: “I absolve thee from thy sins . . . go in peace.”

Love is repaid by love alone. I must see to it that my repentance is sincere as was St Mary Magdalen’s.

“Blessed swiftness of a pardon  
Which thy guilt could not delay !  
Happy penance of a moment  
Burning life-long sins away !  
O those gentle eyes of Jesus,  
And those tender words He said ;  
O the value that He places  
On the tears that sinners shed.”

FABER.

## Martha and Mary

“Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary”  
(*St Luke*, x.).

### I

FATHER FABER calls St Martha “the Saint of the Busy Hand and Heart,” and, as such, it may well be that in these days of busy turmoil and unrest she may teach us a valuable lesson.

We are told in the Gospel that “Martha was busy about much serving.” Yes! but we are also told “now Jesus loved Martha.” No wonder, for Martha was busy in His service, her work was for Him; it was to do Him honour that she went to and fro seeing to all, careful that all was as it should be.

It may be that I, too, am busy, employed from morning to night in this or that, foremost in all good works, running from one thing to another, never happy if I am left out of any movement for good that is on foot. But is all this work for God? Am I laying up treasure for heaven by working with a pure intention? Can I truly say in whatever work I take up that I am “about my Father’s business?” If not, I am wasting my time.

## II

“Lord, hast Thou no care that my sister has left me alone to serve? Speak to her, therefore, that she help me.”

Here Martha was wrong; and it is here that so many imitate her. Am I one of those who criticise others because, perchance, from one cause or another they may not be so busy as I in some respects? Criticism of others is always wrong. Where would the world be without the quiet souls, who, keeping apart from the bustle of life, stay like Mary at Our Lord's feet, and pray for others, rather than take an active part in helping them?

The world would be badly off indeed without the Contemplative Orders of men and women, without the Carthusians, the Carmelites, and the Benedictines. And how badly off, too, would the world be without the thousands of souls who, in their homes, lead quiet lives of self-sacrifice and of prayer, and in so many cases of suffering.

I must not condemn where I ought to praise.

## III

“Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary.” Our Lord gently chides St Martha, not because she is busy, but

because she is over-anxious, and so is in danger of losing her peace of soul. Even in the best and holiest work we may be over-anxious, too hasty or too eager. Our Lord Himself bids us work: "Work while it is day," and for all time He sanctified work by His example; but I must remember that though many things—work included—are comparatively necessary, only one thing is really so, namely, that I should accomplish the Will of God and love Him with all my heart and soul.

St Martha will obtain me the grace to do this if I ask her.

"Yet even love can hinder love,  
As thou wert hindered on thy way;  
Get our love prudence from above  
While at our work to watch and pray."

FABER.

## The Ten Lepers

“Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine?”  
(*St Luke*, xvii.).

### I

LEPROSY is a type of sin. A soul in a state of mortal sin is a much more horrible sight in the eyes of God than bodily leprosy is in ours. The ten lepers knew that their only hope of being cured lay in a miracle. They believed that Jesus would work one for them; standing afar off, therefore, “they lifted up their voice, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”

Here is a picture of the way I ought to appeal to Jesus when I have stained my soul by sin. I must go to Him with faith, for I know that He can and will forgive me if I am sorry. I must go to Him with humility; from the depths I must cry to Him, “Lord, hear my voice.” And I must persevere in confident petition for pardon; lifting up my heart I will say to Him again and again, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on me.”

### II

“Go, shew yourselves to the priest.” So does Our Lord command all who have fallen into mortal sin. The Sacrament of Penance is

the means instituted by Him for the remission of sin.

How do I approach this Sacrament? Am I truly contrite and humble, sincere in avowal of my sins, and determined to avoid them in future? It is well for me to review from time to time the way in which I make my confessions, as well as the fruit I derive from them.

### III

Only one out of the ten lepers came back to thank Our Lord. "Were not ten made clean?" asked Jesus sadly; "and where are the nine?" Think of it! Ten made clean and only one stranger with enough gratitude to return and give thanks. Yet do I, a child of God and a member of His Church, always remember to be grateful? "Give us this day our daily bread," I plead; and when I receive abundantly and gratuitously "good measure and pressed down and running over," how often do I go my way and never think of returning thanks. Surely it needs a Divine Patience to go on showering untold and constant blessings on such an ungrateful creature as I.

"What hast thou done for God, my soul?

Look o'er thy misspent years and see,

Sum up what thou hast done for God,

And then what God hast done for thee."

FABER.

## The Great Commandment

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself” (*St Luke*, x.).

### I

OUR Lord was once asked: “Master, what must I do to possess eternal life?” And Jesus quoted in answer these words from the Old Testament, which comprise the whole of our duty to God and to our neighbour.

How do I keep the commandment which Our Lord calls the first and greatest commandment? Do I love God with my whole heart? If so, I shall love all others for Him and in Him. I shall be ready to suffer in order to prove my love, and I shall hate all that displeases Him. Will my love bear these tests? If I love God with my whole soul I shall make His words my own:— “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?” Do I act as if I realised the full meaning of this sentence?

## II

“With all thy strength and with all thy mind.” To love God with all my strength means to consecrate to Him my time, my talents, my health, my labour, and my repose. He is Master of all. I have received all from Him; gladly, then, will I render all these gifts back to Him by using them for His greater honour and glory.

“O my God, what shall I render  
 For the gifts Thou givest me?  
 For Thy love so strong and tender  
 What can I bring to Thee?  
 O Lord! I can but give Thee  
 What was Thine, by right, before;  
 Take all, and only leave me  
 Thy dear love—I ask no more.”

S. M. X.

If I love God with all my mind I shall often think of Him; often call to mind His constant benefits; often remember His Presence.

It is not hard to think of those I love!

## III

“And thy neighbour as thyself.” Our Lord tells us that this second commandment is like to the first. St John says: “If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.” If I want to know how to



treat my neighbour I have only to ask myself how I like others to treat me. St Paul gives us an excellent guide when he says, "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not; dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up . . . seeketh not her own; is not provoked to anger; thinketh no evil . . . beareth all things . . . endureth all things" (I Cor. xiii.).

Here is plenty of matter for thought. If my charity towards my neighbour will bear these tests, I need have no fear that I am not keeping the second great commandment.

## The Ten Virgins

“Behold, the Bridegroom cometh ; go ye forth to meet Him” (*St Matt.*, xxv.)

### I

ALL ten virgins had the same opportunities and means of salvation. They all had lamps. At one time the lamps of all were lighted, for we read: “Our lamps are gone out.”

The Sacrament of Baptism has made me a child of God and a member of His Church. In that Sacrament the oil of sanctifying grace was poured into my soul. My lamp was alight then. Then these words were said to me, as a lighted candle was presented:—“N, receive this burning light, and keep thy baptism blameless: observe the commandments of God, that when the Lord shall come to the nuptials thou mayest meet Him, together with all the Saints, in the heavenly court, and have eternal life, and live for ever and ever.” Amen.

Have I kept this oil of sanctifying grace in my soul? Is my lamp trimmed? What if the Bridegroom should call to-day? Am I a wise or a foolish virgin?

## II

The foolish virgins said to the wise:—  
“Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.”

No one can save my soul for me. It is my own affair. Even God cannot save me unless I co-operate with His grace. It is quite useless for me to say to myself: “I shall be all right in the end. All my relatives are good and holy; their prayers will save me, so I will enjoy life as long as I can.” No! I am a fool indeed if I think thus. The good works of others, even of those nearest and dearest to me, will be of no avail for my soul at the hour of death. It is what I personally have done that will be judged then. I must not tarry, for “behold the Bridegroom cometh!”

O Lord, my God, give me the grace of true wisdom, that I may always keep the lamp of my conscience adorned to come and meet Thee, whenever Thou dost call.

## III

“Lord! Lord! open to us. . . . Amen, I know you not.” Death will come to me, perhaps when I least expect it. When I wake in the next world, it will be too late to repent, too late to merit. If at my death I have not the oil of sanctifying grace in my

soul, it will be in vain for me to plead, "Lord! Lord! open to me." He will only reply: "Too late, too late. Amen, I say to you I know you not."

I will ask Our Lady to be present at my death, and to pray for me then.

"When the midnight cry is heard  
Do not let us be too late,  
Do not let thy children call  
'Open, open, Lord, Thy Gate.'  
But because we loved thee here,  
Let us in, O Mother dear."

S. M. X.

## The Good Shepherd

“I am the Good Shepherd” (*St John*, x.).

### I

THE Prophet Ezechiel gives us a beautiful picture of Our Lord as the Good Shepherd. “Behold, I myself will seek my sheep and will visit them. . . . I will feed my sheep. . . . I will seek that which was lost. . . . I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was weak” (Ezechiel xxxiv.).

Do I ever think of Our Lord thus? He could trust no one else with my soul? He came himself and suffered weariness, pain, and even death for my sake.

O tender Shepherd of my Soul, Who hast sought me so long and so unweariedly, let me no longer be deaf to Thy voice; let me follow Thy guidance and keep close to Thee that I may truly be one of those of whom Thou hast said, “I know Mine, and Mine know me.”

### II

The Good Shepherd not only leads His sheep, but He feeds them in “most fruitful pastures.” What is the food which I receive from Him? Nothing less than His own

adorable Body and Blood in this life, and hereafter He will feed me with the Beauty of the Beatific Vision for all eternity.

“ Good Shepherd, feed me  
 And guard and lead me  
 To Thy bright pastures beyond the sea,  
 To make in glory  
 (O wondrous story !)  
 One long Communion eternally.”

S. M. X.

### III

The Good Shepherd speaks of other sheep who are not of the Fold: “them also must I bring and they shall hear My voice and there shall be one Fold and one Shepherd” (St John x.).

Our Lord's Heart thirsts for the triumph of His kingdom upon earth. He desires to bring all into the Fold of His Church. Is my example likely to inspire non-Catholics with a desire to enter the Church? I can do much to advance or hinder the triumph of God's Kingdom on earth by my conduct, but I can do much more by earnest prayer. So many are kept outside the Church through ignorance; they do not know anything of the love and desires of the Good Shepherd.

“ Was there ever kindest Shepherd  
 Half so gentle, half so sweet,  
 As the Saviour Who would have us  
 Come and gather round His feet.”

FABER.

## The Tribute to Cæsar

“Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and to God the things that are God’s”  
(*St Luke*, xx.).

### I

“WHOSE image is this?” The Catechism tells me that God made me to His own image and likeness. Mortal sin destroys this image of God in my soul. Venial sin tarnishes it and dims its brightness. The more my soul reflects the likeness of God, the nearer and dearer I shall be to Him, and the happier for all eternity. Each act of virtue I perform, each time I conquer myself, I increase the likeness of God in my soul. Especially does each deed of charity tend to produce in my soul “that likeness to Him in which all sanctity consists.”

O God, Who hast made me to Thine own image, grant me the grace to grow in those virtues which will make me like to Thee.

### II

“Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s.” Our Lord here calls my attention to the fact that I have certain distinct obliga-

tions with regard to those around me. I am bound to obey the King and all lawful authority. I have duties to my country. None are more truly patriotic than those who are members of Christ's Church. "True religion can never make us unpatriotic or disobedient to lawful authority, and true patriotism and loyalty can never interfere with our duty to God and to the Church." If, as happened in England at the time of Henry VIII., the State is against God, then and then only am I to neglect to obey it.

Besides these, I have my social duties to perform in whatever state I am placed by Almighty God. I must not neglect these, as, in so far as they are necessary and lawful, they are, for the present, the expression of God's Will to me.

How do I stand as regards these things?

### III

"And to God the things which are God's." This is my primary and first duty, the Great Commandment of the Law. The "things which are God's" include all that I am and possess, all my faculties of body and of soul: my health, my talents, my life itself. I have received all from Him, therefore I must use all for Him.

Can I be said to be rendering to God the things which are His, if I am content to just



keep clear of mortal sin by hurriedly attending one low Mass on Sundays, when, if I only took the trouble, I could easily do more? Is this keeping the Sunday holy to the Lord? If Easter is the only Feast which sees me at the altar rails, am I serving God as I ought? I will think over these things and beg grace to serve God generously, and always to give Him as much, and not as little, as I can.

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my will; all that I have and possess—all is Thine. To Thee, O Lord, I restore it. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is sufficient for me. Amen.

## The Widow's Mite

“Amen, I say to you, this poor widow hath cast in more than all they who have cast into the treasury” (*St Mark*, xii.).

### I

OUR Lord was sitting near the Treasury of the Temple watching the people cast in their money. Many of the rich cast in goodly sums, mostly with a great deal of ostentation about their almsgiving, for not a few of them were Pharisees. Our Lord always watches to see how those who are asked to give something to Him are going to respond. It may be for His Church, for the propagation of the Faith, or for any of the many charities we are called upon to support; in each case Our Lord watches to see those who give generously in order that He may reward generously, nay, that He may reward a hundred-fold. But for this, the alms must be given for His sake.

Do I give generously according to my means? If so, I am laying up for myself treasure in heaven where neither the rust nor the moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through and steal.

## II

“This poor widow hath cast in more than all.” The woman had cast in the smallest coin possible, but God does not look to the actual value of the alms given, but to the intention with which it is given. To give sixpence which I really want, for the love of God, may be a more generous gift than if I give a hundred pounds.

I must, then, look to my intention in all that I do. I must remember, too, that almsgiving according to my means is an obligation and not merely a counsel.

## III

“She of her want cast in all she had.” Almsgiving should, then, be generous, and given with a pure intention, but there is a third virtue which should accompany it, as Our Lord pointed out when speaking of the poor widow. Our almsgiving should cost us something if we want our charity to be perfect. Charity which involves self-denial is a most precious gift in God’s sight.

I will ask God to give me a kind and generous heart, quick to notice the needs of others of whatever kind, and anxious to supply them if I can, even at the cost of my own convenience.

## The Prodigal Son

“Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee ; I am not now worthy to be called Thy son” (*St Luke*, xv.).

### I

“FATHER, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me.” The beginning of the fall of the Prodigal Son was a love of independence. He desired greater liberty and disliked the restraints of His Father’s house. He became fretful, impatient, peevish ; until at last he could bear it no longer. And the Father, much as He loved His son, saw it was best to let him go, so “he divided unto them his substance, and not many days after the son . . . went abroad into a far country.”

Here is a true picture of the beginning of many a downfall : a restless, proud spirit, impatient of restraint, anxious only to enjoy more liberty, chafing under the mild yoke of Christ, rebellious against the laws of the Church, desiring to be one’s own master, and beholden to none.

Do I recognise myself in this picture ?

## II

“And after he had spent all there came a mighty famine . . . and he began to be in want.”

So will it always be if I seek my happiness out of God. Creatures can never satisfy me. The mere pleasures of the world can never content me. I am made for something higher. “Thou hast made me for Thyself, O God, and my heart can never be at rest until it rest in Thee.” If I leave God and cleave to the world, after a very short time I shall find how empty all its pleasures are; my soul will be starved, for the world is a hard and fickle master.

O Lord, my God, grant that I may never leave the safe shelter of my Father's house.

## III

The repentance of the Prodigal was sincere. “I will arise,” he said—that is, I will leave all that keeps me from God; “and go to my Father”—I will make a real effort to turn to God, to humble myself in His eyes, and if necessary in the eyes of others also; “and say to Him, Father, I have sinned . . . I am not worthy to be called Thy child”—I will go to the God Who loves me in spite of all my folly; I will not put any conditions to my repentance; anything that He wishes I will do.

But the Father is not to be outdone in generosity. "Bring hither quickly the first robe," sanctifying grace; "and put a ring on his hand," the pledge of My love; "and shoes on his feet," the necessary graces to walk in the ways of God; "and bring hither the fatted calf," the banquet of His own Flesh and Blood; "and rejoice and be glad, for this My son was dead and is come to life again, was lost and is found."

My God, my Father, give me the trustful love of the Prodigal Son.

"I have sinned against Thee  
Often, grievously.  
I am very sorry  
I have caused Thee pain.  
I will never, never  
Wound Thy Heart again." S. M. X.

## The Five Talents

“ Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over few things I will place thee over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord ” (*St Matt.*, xxv.).

### I

GOD has endowed every one with certain talents. To some He gives more ; to others, less. He requires of all that the talents entrusted to them shall be used. These talents are gifts of God ; they may be gifts of nature or gifts of grace, but all come from Him and all are to be increased and used, for Our Lord said to him who hid his talent in the earth, “ Thou wicked and slothful servant,” and He commanded that his talent should be taken from him, and that he should be cast into exterior darkness.

If God has given me five talents, I must thank Him, and remembering always to Whom I owe them, I must use them to the utmost of my ability, for “ to whom much has been given much also will be demanded.”

### II

If, on the other hand, I have fewer gifts than others I must not be discontented or jealous.

Even if I only have one I must make the most of it. God will not excuse me on the plea that I have few gifts, neither will he condemn me for not having more. All He asks of me is that I use the gifts, great or small, that I possess. I notice also that the servant with one talent did not waste his talent, he simply did not use it. It is not enough for me to go through life protesting that I do no harm. No! I must do good if I wish to gain heaven.

### III

The reward of the man who had received two talents was the same as that of the man who had received five. If the one who had received only one talent had used his gift as he ought to have done, he, too, would have received the same reward.

There is great encouragement for me here. I have only to put to good account my own gifts without any reference to those of others, be they greater or smaller, and I shall hear one day from my Master's lips those words of unspeakable joy and comfort: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

I will ask God for the grace to use His gifts according to His Will, so that I may one day be thus greeted by Him.



## The Pharisee and the Publican

“This man went down into his house justified rather than the other” (*St Luke*, xviii.).

### I

“MY God, I thank Thee that I am not as the rest of men.” Picture the proud Pharisee standing in a conspicuous place in the Temple and uttering these words. It seems almost incredible that he dared thus to address the All-seeing God. He even went so far as to enumerate his good works, comparing himself to the poor Publican whom he considered to be so great a sinner.

Yet it is certainly not impossible that I have frequently acted in the same spirit as this Pharisee. I may not, perhaps, express my thoughts and feelings in so many words, but how often have I preferred myself to others; how often have I treated others with contempt; how often have I secretly indulged in this thought: Whatever I am I am better at least than so-and-so; whatever I do I shall certainly never commit such sins as that! If I have so acted I must humble myself exceedingly in God's sight. I must beg Him to enlighten my darkness that I

may see myself as He sees me, or even as others see me; I must, instead of thinking that I stand, take heed to myself lest I fall.

## II

“The Publican, standing afar off . . . struck his breast, saying, O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.” Here is the copy I must imitate. The Publican’s prayer was full of humility. He recognised his own unworthiness, and, acknowledging it, he begged for mercy. All true holiness is founded on self-knowledge and humility. Our Lord resists the proud and gives His grace to the humble. The Publican’s prayer, humble and contrite as it was, pierced the clouds and reached the ears of God.

If I pray humbly God is sure to listen to me.

## III

“This man went down to his house justified rather than the other.” The lower I place myself in my own estimation the greater progress shall I make towards God. Our Lord does not judge me by my exterior actions, but by the dispositions of my heart. It is folly for me to judge others at all, because I can only see the exterior. And if I despise anyone that very fact places me beneath that person in God’s sight. God

alone can really judge of the merits of myself or of anyone else, because He alone can read hearts. Therefore He says to me, "Judge not, that you may not be judged." And Saint Paul warns me to be on my guard, for he says: "Wherefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest. For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself. For thou dost the same things which thou judgest" (Rom. ii.).

## The Agony in the Garden

“ My soul is sorrowful even unto death ”  
(*St Matt.*, xxvi.).

### I

PICTURE Our Lord kneeling, bowed in prayer in the lonely garden beneath the shade of the olive trees. He is there for me. He thinks of me. All the sins of my life, all my infidelities and neglect, were present before Him. He saw all my sins as well as those of the world in all ages. And as He knelt He was sad, weary, and sorrowful to death. He suffered so intensely that He was covered with a sweat of blood, so copious that it soaked through his garments and trickled down on to the ground. Why did Our Lord endure this agony? For love of me. To obtain pardon for my sins. To rouse my love and loyalty, so that, seeing my King and Lord in such agony for me, I may sorrow deeply for all my offences against Him, and resolve never to sin again.

“ Ever when tempted, make me see,  
Beneath the olive's moon-pierced shade,  
My God alone, outstretched and bruised  
And bleeding on the earth He made.  
And make me feel it was my sin,  
As though no other sin there were,  
That was to Him Who bears the world  
A load that He could scarcely bear.”

FABER.

## II

One of the greatest sufferings of the Agony of Our Lord must have been the sense He allowed Himself to feel of the utter uselessness of the Passion in so many cases. Surely I, at least, can resolve not to let all His labour be in vain for me.

My God, I am sinful, careless, heedless of Thy love I know, but—

“ Shall it be always thus, O Lord ;  
Wilt Thou not work this hour in me ?  
The grace Thy Passion merited,  
Hatred of self and love of Thee.”

FABER.

## III

“ Father, if it be possible let this chalice pass from Me ; nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done.” Our Lord teaches me by His prayer in the Garden that I may always ask to be relieved from my troubles and sufferings, provided I am resigned to His Will about it all. “ Not my will, O my Heavenly Father, but Thine ” ; do with me as Thou seest best. If I pray thus, I am sure of being united in my prayer with Our Lord, and therefore of being pleasing in God’s sight.

“ Jesus ! Who in the garden felt  
The bloody sweat, yet patient knelt  
To do Thy father’s Will,  
To me give such a zealous mind  
To suffer, such a heart resigned  
Thy statutes to fulfil.”

FABER.

“Friend, Whereto Art Thou Come?”

“Friend, whereto art thou come?” (*St Matt.*, xxvi.).

## I

WAS there any pain at all in the whole of Our Lord's Passion which He felt as keenly as He felt the betrayal of Judas? Judas was “one of the Twelve,” one of the chosen disciples and friends of Our Lord. For three years he had lived on most intimate terms with Jesus, yet he turned traitor, and sold his Lord and Master for a vile and paltry sum.

If Judas the Apostle fell away, how can I presume to think that I shall never fall? If I do so think, I must listen to Our Lord, saying, “Take heed, therefore, lest ye fall.” All things are possible to me with His help, but I must pray and pray earnestly for perseverance.

## II

Our Lord treated Judas with the utmost kindness. Even in the Garden, when Judas actually kissed Him as a sign for the soldiers to apprehend Him, Our Lord only said to him gently, “Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”

Is it thus that I treat my friends? For the most part the injuries that I receive from them are very slight, and yet I resent them, and will make no advances to be reconciled to those who have offended me. When am I going to begin to imitate the meek and humble Heart of my Lord?

### III

“Friend, whereto art thou come?” Our Lord addresses these words to me as I approach the rails for Holy Communion.

“Friend, whereto art thou come? Thou whisperest  
low,  
Dear Christ, my Christ, need'st Thou to question  
so?  
Word of Eternal Life, to whom else should I go?”  
S. M. X.

To whom else indeed? I go to Him Who deigns to call me “friend,” to Him Who comes to me in mercy and in love. I come that He may heal and bless and comfort me. Lord, Thou knowest well the reason why I come to Thee.

“I come because I need Thee very much;  
Evils and sorrows vanish at Thy touch;  
Sinful I am, and poor—and Thou receivest such.”  
S. M. X.

## The Denials of Saint Peter

“And the Lord, turning, looked on Peter”  
(*St Luke*, xxii.).

### I

“BUT Peter followed afar off.” He did not keep close to his Divine Master as he should have done. He was afraid of the consequences to himself of being known to be the friend of a condemned Man, and so he stayed in the outer court and warmed himself by the fire.

If I only follow Our Lord from afar, if I am tepid and careless in His service, above all if I will not avoid the occasions of sin, and seek my satisfaction only in earthly comforts, I am sure to fall into sin. My only hope of safety is to keep near Jesus, to strengthen myself by prayer and the Sacraments against the temptations that are sure to come to me. Even the greatest saints have felt this. St Philip Neri used to say: “Lord, watch over Philip this day, or this day Philip will betray Thee!”



## II

St Matthew tells us that each fall of St Peter was worse than the previous one. At first he "denied before them all"; then he "denied with an oath"; and at last he "began to curse and swear that he knew not the Man."

How terribly Our Lord must have suffered by this threefold denial of His friend. Judas had already betrayed Him. In the Garden the "disciples, all leaving Him, fled," and now here was Peter, the intimate companion of Jesus for three years, he who had been foremost in protesting his allegiance to Him, absolutely denying that he even so much as knew Him!

I, too, am a friend of Christ. I am a member of His Church. I have lived, how many years? in the full light of the faith; I have told Him so often that I love Him, yet if I am not careful I too may deny my Lord.

## III

"And the Lord, turning, looked on Peter." What a look of Divine tenderness and pity for the poor erring Apostle that must have been! What a depth of love and mercy it reveals to us. No wonder Peter was wrung with sorrow for his sin; no wonder that he went out and wept bitterly.

I will ask Our Lord to look on me with those same kind eyes of His, that I may be strengthened in the time of temptation. Above all, if I have fallen I will remember that His eyes are upon me, not in anger, but in sadness and pitying love, and, pierced by that glance of His, I, too, will weep for my sins.

## Jesus in Prison

“ And the men that held Him, mocked Him and struck Him ” (*St Luke*, xxi.).

“ And some began to spit on Him ” (*St Mark*, xiv.).

### I

PICTURE Our Blessed Lord in prison during that terrible night of His Passion. See how the soldiers treat Him with the utmost brutality and cruelty. They blindfold His sacred eyes; they buffet Him and strike Him in the face with the palms of their hands; they mock Him, revile Him, and even spit upon Him. The very thought of such an insult makes me recoil in horror. And yet Jesus, true God as He is, King of kings and Lord of lords, bore all this for me. “ He loved me, and delivered Himself for me.”

In the face of this scene, how is it possible for me to resent the slight insults and humiliations which I have to endure from time to time? Who am I, after all? How can I complain when I think of Our Lord, and of all He bore for love of me?

## II

When I think of the insults offered to the sacred face of my Lord, during His imprisonment, my heart should be filled with the desire to repair, as far as I can, the terrible sacrileges offered to Him then, and so often, alas! still offered to Him. I should pray for forgiveness for my own sins first, for each one has been an insult which I, personally, have offered to Him; and then I should pray, too, for pardon for the sinners of the world.

“ We pray Thee for thy straying sheep,  
We pray Thee for the eyes,  
The lips, the hearts, that always make  
Thine own hot teardrops rise ;  
We pray Thee for this world of Thine,  
Its wilful, wandering race.  
Lead it, kind Shepherd, to Thy Shrine,  
Thy Sacred, Suffering Face.”

## III

Our Lord is still voluntarily imprisoned in the Tabernacle for love of me; and each morning, if I desire it, He will enclose Himself in the prison of my heart. How do I treat Him? Do I try by my love and reverence to comfort Him for the imprisonment He endured during His Passion? Do

I often visit Him in the Tabernacle, or do I neglect Him as so many others do?

“ Let not my cold and selfish heart  
Earn this reproach from Thee :  
‘ I was in prison once, and thou—  
Thou didst not visit me !’  
Lord, Thou art here for my love’s sake,  
And I am here for Thine,  
Make me Thine own, and, as Thou wilt,  
Dispose of me and mine.”

## Jesus before Pilate

“Jesus stood before the governor” (*St Matt.*, xxvii.).

### I

PICTURE Our Lord standing meekly before His judge, so silent and so patient, humbly accepting the sentence of death which is to be the sentence of life eternal for the souls He loves. Pilate knew that the sentence he passed on Our Lord was unjust. He had even washed his hands before all the people, and declared that he was “innocent of the blood of this just Man” (*St Matt.* xxvii.); yet, through fear of his fellow-men, through cowardice and human respect, he condemned Him to death.

How terrible are the lengths to which human respect may lead me. Do I not try sometimes to blind not only others, but even myself? Fair words are of no avail unless I act rightly.

### II

Pilate asked Jesus many questions, but Jesus was silent. At last the governor said to Him: Wilt Thou not give any answer?

Behold in how many things they accuse Thee. "But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate wondered exceedingly" (St Mark xv.).

In this as in everything else Jesus is the Model I am to imitate. If I am accused justly, silence ought not to be difficult to me. But is it? If, on the other hand, I am unjustly blamed, do I ever dream of passing it over and saying nothing, glad to be thus united to my Lord standing silent before Pilate.

But, O my God, be not Thou silent to me. I do not deserve to hear Thy voice, but yet I beseech Thee to speak to me.

### III

The condemnation of Our Blessed Lord by Pilate brings to mind the judgment that is to come.

My sins condemned Jesus to death, but the day will come when He will be the Judge! Then He will pass sentence on me. On my conduct now that final decision depends.

O sweet Jesus, be not to me a Judge, but a Saviour.

## Jesus before Herod

“And Herod and his army set Him at nought : and mocked Him, putting on Him a white garment”  
(*St Luke*, xxiii.).

### I

PICTURE Our Lord surrounded by soldiers, standing before Herod. They mock Him, jeer at Him, and treat Him as a fool; yet He is the Eternal Wisdom. Herod wanted Our Lord to work some miracle, because “he had heard many things of Him, and he hoped to see some sign wrought by Him.” But Our Lord would not satisfy him; if He had done so, probably Herod would have saved Him; but Jesus wanted to suffer for me, and, besides, He would not satisfy the guilty curiosity of Herod.

In order to uphold my religion or any course of conduct which I know to be the right one, I must be ready to put up with the sneers and laughter of others. I must beg Our Lord to free me from all human respect in His service.

### II

“But He answered nothing.” Our Lord was absolutely silent. Nothing could have



been a sterner rebuke to Herod if he had only taken it and repented. I will ask Our Lord never to be silent to me when I address Him, whatever my sins may be. "O Lord, be not Thou silent to me, lest if Thou be silent I be like unto them that go down into the pit" (Ps. xxvii.).

But, on the other hand, Our Lord's silence is a most wonderful lesson to me. He was despised, overwhelmed with ignominy and scorn; He was accused of great crimes, and yet He was silent.

And I? If the least word is said against me, I justify myself. If I am accused I am angry, and my anger breaks out into words.

O most silent Lord, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine.

### III

"Putting on Him a white garment." Herod clothed Jesus in the dress of a fool, and sent Him back to Pilate. But Our Lord of His own goodness and mercy veils Himself for me in the white veils of the sacramental species. In the Blessed Sacrament I can honour Him under the lowly appearance of bread. Do I try to further love and reverence to Our Lord in the Sacrament of His love? Do I at least kneel devoutly before Him and adore Him, true God and true Man thus veiled for me?

## The Scourging at the Pillar

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

### I

ONE of the chief features of the mystery of Our Lord's Scourging was its terrible injustice. “I find no cause of death in Him,” said Pilate. “I will chastise Him, therefore, and let Him go” (*St Luke* xxiii.).

Why, then, did Our Lord undergo such an appalling punishment? Why did He suffer such utter indignity? It was not the scourging that redeemed me; the price of my redemption was Our Lord's death on the Cross. The scourging was undergone willingly by Our Lord simply out of love for me, and to give me an unmistakable proof of how intensely He yearns for my love.

How often do I put myself to voluntary suffering, or even only to inconvenience, solely out of love for Our Lord?

O most generous Master, teach me to imitate the boundless generosity of Thy love.

### II

In the revelations of St Bridget we read that the number of stripes Our Lord received was about four thousand. Thirty-nine stripes

was the utmost limit allowed by the Jews, lest the victim should depart "shamefully torn from before thy eyes" (Deut. xxv.). Picture, then, what must have been the state to which Our Lord's Sacred Body was reduced by the scourging. Well may He say to me, "attend and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow." Our Lord felt the pain of Pilate's injustice as well as the bodily pain.

O my Lord, may the thought of Thee, silent and bleeding, bound to the Pillar, help me to bear patiently the slight injustices which sometimes fall to my lot.

### III

The age in which we live is one of softness and pleasure-seeking. As a race, we can bear much less in the way of suffering and inconvenience than our forefathers. Our Lord endured the scourging to atone for this very softness, for this fear of all that hurts us. He allowed the fury of men to spend itself upon Him until they stopped through sheer exhaustion from inflicting the blows.

As I kneel by that Pillar, I will beg Jesus to make me more manly in endurance; again and again I will say, "Passion of Christ, strengthen me," until I, too, by His grace, learn to endure for Him whatever suffering He sees good for me.

## The Crowning with Thorns

“ And the soldiers plating a crown of thorns, put it on His head ” (*St John*, xix.).

### I

IN this mystery Our Lord allowed Himself to be treated with mere wanton cruelty. The soldiers make up their minds to treat Him as a mock-king. If a king, He must have a crown, and so they weave the long thorns into a wreath and press it down on Our Lord's head. The thorns are long and sharp; some pierce His cheeks, some His eyelids, and interfere with the movements of His eyes, from which the Blood pours down upon His sacred face.

All this was to atone for my sins — my sins of thought, my rash and unkind judgments, my self-conceit, my paltry thoughts of vanity and jealousy !

### II

Our Lord's hands are bound, and in them is placed a heavy sceptre; a purple cloak is thrown over His shoulders in mocking sign of royalty, and then the height of indignity is reached:—“ Bowing their knees they mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews ! ” (*St Matt*. xxvii.).

Can I possibly gaze on my King, thus mocked and reviled, and not feel anxious to offer Him my reparation and my love? He suffered for my pride. I will kneel at His feet now and beg Him to pardon me. I will humble myself before Him. I will cast myself down before Him and acknowledge Him as my King and my Master, my Lord and my God.

“Jesus, with crown of ruddy thorn  
 The Jews Thy tortured brow adorn,  
 And, jeering, hail Thee king ;  
 May I, O Lord, with heart sincere,  
 My humble zeal, my love, my fear,  
 And real homage bring.” FABER.

### III

How can I share in this mystery of the crowning with thorns? To me, as to all, come the constant daily prick of innumerable thorns—I am thwarted in some way; a sharp word is spoken to me; or it may be that I am suffering slightly physically, and everything seems to jar on me. But if I accept each small worry or trouble and offer it to Our Lord, I may be sure that He will receive each offering as a thorn drawn from that crown which He wore so lovingly for me, and doubtless for each thorn He will add one more jewel to the crown of never-fading bliss, which I trust He is weaving for me in heaven.

## The Carrying of the Cross

“ Bearing His own cross, He went forth ”  
(*St John*, xix.).

### I

WHAT must that last journey of Christ have been like? It was an utterly lonely journey. Our Lord, although surrounded with a howling mob and goaded on by cruel soldiers, was alone. It is true that He met Our Lady at a turning of the road, but we know of no words that passed between them, and the sight of His Mother's woe must have added acutely to Our Lord's grief. Helpless and lonely, for my sake, Jesus bore His own Cross and went forth even to the summit of Calvary.

“ Jesus ! along Thy proper road  
Of sorrows, with Thy weary load,  
How didst thou toil and strain !  
O may I bear the Cross like Thee,  
Or rather, Lord, do Thou in me  
The blessed weight sustain.”

FABER.

### II

We are told that Our Lord bore His *own* Cross. There is a lesson for me here. I, too,

have my cross to bear. At times it may be some crushing weight of sorrow which God bids me strive to bear bravely for His sake; more often, however, it is the prolonged carrying of small daily crosses which I am called upon to endure courageously for Our Lord. Whatever it may be, I cannot escape suffering of one sort or another; I must make up my mind to this. The *Imitation* says: "To suffer, therefore, is what awaits thee if thou art resolved to love Jesus and constantly to serve Him."

## III

Although I have to bear my own cross I am not asked or expected to bear it alone. I journey in the company of Jesus, Who bears the greater share. If I keep close to Him my cross will be lightened, and I shall come at last to that blessed haven of rest where "God shall wipe away all tears . . . and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor weeping, nor sorrow shall be any more," for the former things will have passed away (Apoc. xxi.).

## Our Lord's Falls

“ They led Him out to crucify Him ” (*St Mark*, xv.)

### I

PICTURE Our Lord falling the first time beneath His Cross. Probably He could not use His hands to protect Himself, as they were tied to the Cross He was carrying ; and so His head would strike heavily against the rough pavement. Blood must have flowed from His sacred face, and the agony to His wounded Body must have been intolerable.

How can I thank Him sufficiently for having fallen beneath His Cross for my comfort and encouragement? He knew so well how often and often I should fall through weakness and tepidity ; and so in His pity He suffered this grievous Fall that I may turn to Him in my moments of weakness, and, gaining strength from His sacred passion, I may rise and continue my journey towards Him.

### II

Again Jesus falls. His long garment gets entangled in His feet ; the soldiers drag, and push, and even kick Him.



O my Lord and Master, teach me by this Second Fall of Thine to rise again and again after my repeated falls into sin. I fall so heedlessly, sometimes so very soon after my repentance. Give me the grace to imitate Thee, Who, falling frequently on Thy way to Calvary, didst nevertheless rise each time and continue Thy journey for love of me.

## III

Our Lord's Third Fall takes place just before He reaches the summit of Calvary. This, too, is a lesson for me. I am surprised sometimes that in spite of all my efforts I still fall. Perhaps I have become less watchful because I think I have conquered such or such a fault, and I fall just when I least expect it.

Our Lord would teach me here that I can never count on myself. If I do, I am sure to fall. Until I rely utterly and fully upon God alone, I shall never be free from the danger of falling.

My God, I cast all my care upon Thee. Do Thou support, sustain, and help me, for I can do nothing without the help of Thy holy grace.

## Simon of Cyrene

“ And going out they found a man of Cyrene, named Simon : him they forced to take up His cross ”  
(*St Matt.*, xxvii.).

### I

THE soldiers were afraid that Our Lord's strength would fail utterly before they got Him to Calvary, therefore they forced Simon of Cyrene to help Him to carry His burden. Probably Simon was not willing at first to help Our Lord. According to human reckoning it was not an honourable task to help a criminal to carry his cross.

How often, when the cross first comes to me, I rebel against it. I ask impatiently why such sorrow should be sent to me ; why should I have to put up with this or with that ? I forget that the cross is sent to me by God, and that He does me an honour in allowing me in so far to resemble His Son.

### II

Helped by the grace Our Divine Lord gave him, Simon soon found the “ yoke sweet and the burden light ” ; and for all eternity he will rejoice that he was chosen for so

honourable a task as that of helping Our Lord on His way to Calvary.

So, too, if I bear my crosses willingly and lovingly, their bitterness will be taken from them; my burdens will be lightened even here, and hereafter I shall be happier for all eternity for each sorrow bravely borne for God.

### III

Simon of Cyrene is venerated in the Church as the one chosen disciple who was privileged to actually ease Our Lord of the weight of the Cross. Do I envy him? I need not do so. Every suffering that comes to me is an invitation from that same Lord to share the privilege of Simon of Cyrene.

My God, when suffering comes to me, may I have the grace to understand that it is the very heart of my Lord which has planned for me that I shall be allowed to help Him, by carrying His Cross with Him and for Him.

## Veronica

“And there followed Him a great multitude of people and of women who bewailed and lamented Him”  
(*St Luke*, xxiii.).

### I

VERONICA was one of those compassionate Jewish women whose hearts were touched at seeing Our Divine Lord in such a suffering state on His way to Calvary. Holy writers tell us that she was standing at her door waiting for Jesus, and that when He passed she boldly ran into the midst of the soldiers and presented a veil to wipe the filth and blood from His face. Our Lord accepted this service with great gratitude, and left impressed upon the veil the image of His sacred face.

How do I receive kindness from others? Am I always grateful, and do I show my gratitude as I should?

### II

The incident of Our Lord using Veronica's veil and so richly rewarding her, shows how grateful and compassionate a heart is His. He rewards immeasurably every smallest

act I do for Him. Veronica offered Him a poor linen veil and it is restored to her a priceless portrait of Himself; but I need not envy her. In Holy Communion I have a greater treasure than hers.

## III

“Seek ye My face”; “Thy face, O Lord, will I still seek” (Ps. xxvi.). Veronica saw Our Lord’s face all disfigured and marred with blood and dirt. Afterwards she saw the image of that Divine face impressed upon her veil. How she must have longed to look upon Him in His beauty, whom she had so loved and revered during His Passion.

I, too, O Lord, long for Thee. I, too, desire to gaze upon the beauty of Thy countenance. But for this I must strive to become more and more like to Thee, by the practice of the virtues that are dear to Thee.

“Jesus! Whom for the present I veiled see,  
What I so thirst for, ah! vouchsafe to me,  
That Thee, with face unveiled, I may behold,  
And of Thy glory taste the bliss untold.”

## Our Lord Stripped and Nailed to the Cross

“They crucified Him” (*St Luke*, xxiii.).

### I

OUR Lord is stripped of His garments. “The weight of the Cross, the frequent falls, the rough hands of the soldiers, have all helped to imbed the woollen tunic in the Sacred Wounds; but with their strong arms the executioners very quickly tear it out again from all the wounds and swelling sores” (Fr. Gallwey).

The pain of even one wound roughly handled is intense, yet here is Our Lord, wounded from head to foot, and yet enduring this unspeakable agony for me.

O Lord Jesus, by Thy painful stripping, strip me of all that is displeasing to Thee. Strip me of my pride, my self-love, my clinging to earthly comfort and gain, so that at last I may be conformed to Thee.

### II

The soldiers lay Our Lord down upon the Cross. He stretches out His arms in obedi-

ence to their orders. Roughly and with malicious cruelty they drag His sacred limbs until they reach the holes which they have purposely drilled too far apart. The long sharp nails are held by one of the executioners, while another hammers them into place.

“ Have we no tears to shed for Him  
 While soldiers scoff and Jews deride ?  
 Ah ! look how patiently He hangs ;  
 Jesus, our Love, is crucified !

“ How fast His hands and feet are nailed,  
 His blessed tongue with thirst is tied ;  
 His failing eyes are blind with blood ;  
 Jesus, our Love, is crucified !”      FABER.

### III

What are the nails that prevent me from detaching myself from the cross God sends me ?

First, Faith, for I know that if I bear the Cross with Him I shall also reign with Him.

Second, Hope, for in the Cross is life, in the Cross is protection from my enemies.

Third, Love, for how can I be made like to my Crucified Lord, unless I am willing to suffer for Him ?

Attach me to Thyself, dear Lord, by these nails, that I may never more be separated from Thee.

## The First Word

“ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ” (*St Luke*, xxiii.).

### I

OUR Lord lets us see the dispositions of His heart by the words He uttered on Calvary. How forcibly He shows us His divine self-forgetfulness by the first word He uttered and repeated again and again. It is a prayer for His enemies. “ Father, forgive them.” Our Lord puts Himself entirely aside. The scourging, the crowning with thorns, the mockery, the brutal cruelty with which they had goaded Him onwards towards Calvary, the appalling agony He endured during the nailing to the Cross—all was apparently forgotten. He loved sinners and He prayed for them, and found excuse for them out of the depths of His compassionate heart.

O Lord, my God, wilt Thou not, then, forgive me? How often I have not fully known what I was doing when I sinned against Thee! How little I understand the evil of sin! Enlighten me, my Father, that I may understand more and more the hatefulness and ingratitude of my sins, and give me grace never to sin against Thee in future.



## II

“They know not what they do.” No one but Our Lord would have thought of such an excuse. It seems almost incredible that He did find it—but He did. If ever I find it difficult to forgive or to make excuses for others, let me kneel in spirit by Our Lord nailed to the Cross, and learn of Him. If He forgave His executioners, surely I can put a kind, or at least a just interpretation on the actions and words of those who have offended me.

O most compassionate Heart of Jesus, make my heart like unto Thine.

## III

“Father, forgive them.” I can use Our Lord’s words and pray for sinners. How many and many there are in the world who are grievously offending God, and yet about whom the excuse can be most justly pleaded—“they know not what they do.”

For all these poor sinful ones, then, I will pray. I can do so much by prayer to win souls to God, and to make reparation to His outraged Majesty.

Reparation of the Heart of Jesus, I unite myself to thee. Ardent zeal of the Heart of Jesus for the conversion of sinners, I unite myself to thee.

## The Second Word

“Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise” (*St Luke*, xxiii.).

### I

THE good thief was drawn to Our Blessed Lord by the wonderful example He gave. He sees this Patient Sufferer, so meek, so gentle and silent, saying no word of reproach or complaint, but earnestly asking forgiveness for those who have so tortured Him. And the heart of the thief is touched. He makes a magnificent act of faith, and acknowledges Our Lord as God. “Lord,” he whispers, “remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom.”

Draw me, dear Lord, to Thyself by Thy divine attractiveness. Help me to realise Thy divine presence in the Tabernacle hidden beneath the sacramental veils.

“God only on the Cross lay hid from view,  
But here lies hid at once the Manhood too ;  
And I, in both professing my belief,  
Make the same prayer as the repentant thief.”

### II

“Lord, remember me.” The thief made but one short prayer, but it covered all his needs.

There is no need for me to use long forms of words when I speak to Our Lord. The more simple my prayer is the better. Therefore I will say to Him again and again: "Lord, remember me." Remember that I am Thy child. Remember that though I have sinned I have sorrowed too. Remember that I can do nothing without Thee. Remember that in spite of all my falls and failings I do love Thee sincerely. To-day, to-morrow, and always, in life and in death, O Lord, remember me.

## III

Our Lord was touched by the simple prayer of the poor thief, and straightway came the answer: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Happy Dismas, in one short moment he received pardon, the grace of final perseverance, and the promise of union with Our Lord before the day was out.

The day will come when I, too, hope to hear this blessed word from the lips of my Saviour. To secure this, I must constantly beg Him to remember me.

"Jesus ! Who came to teach and save,  
Absolved the thief, and promise gave  
Of peace among the blest ;  
Ah ! do Thou give me penitence  
Like this, that I, when summoned hence,  
In Paradise may rest."

FABER.

## The Third Word

“Woman, behold thy son ! Behold thy Mother”  
(*St John*, xix.).

### I

OUR Lady stood beneath the Cross, but she was helpless to aid or protect, helpless to alleviate the slightest of the sufferings of that Son for Whom she would willingly have died. Who can picture the grief of the poor Mother? Holy Church, in the *Stabat Mater*, asks :—

“Where the man who would not weep,  
'Whelmed in misery so deep,  
Christ's dear Mother to behold?”

Helplessness to aid those we love is a most acute trial. We see our dear ones suffer and we can do nothing. Perhaps, even, others are allowed to help and we are set aside. If I have thus to suffer let me think of Our Lady on Calvary, and unite my grief to hers.

### II

“Behold thy son.” Our Lord chose loneliness for His portion on Calvary. For our sake He relinquished even His Mother,

and asked her to take us in His place. What an exchange! sinners for Jesus! Can I still doubt of my Lord's love for me?

Our Lady has been absolutely faithful to the trust bequeathed to her on Calvary. All through my life she has shown a mother's love for me. I will ask her to protect me always, especially at the hour of my death.

“My Queen and my Mother, receive me as thy child, guard me and protect me as thy property and possession.”

### III

“Behold thy Mother.” Our Lord in this word teaches me how to honour Our Lady. I am to treat her with love, reverence, and obedience; to fly to her in all my necessities, to take to her my sorrows and my joys; to count on her with perfect trust—for she is my Mother!

Do I thus fulfil my duties towards God's Mother and mine? Devotion to Our Lady is by many saints considered to be a pledge of salvation. I will renew my love for her and try daily to increase my trust in her.

“Jesus! when His Three Hours were run,  
Bequeathed thee from the Cross to me;  
How can I rightly love thy Son,  
Sweet Mother, if I love not thee?”

FABER.

## The fourth Word

“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”  
(*St Matt.*, xxvii.).

### I

OUR Lord had given up His Mother, and now all the sensible consolation which “His Soul should have derived from its unbroken union with the Divinity is cut off from Him.” Of all the unspeakable sufferings of the Passion, this hiding, as it were, of the Father’s face was the keenest.

I ask myself why Our Lord allowed Himself this most terrible suffering. The answer is twofold:—He bore it for my sins, and also to teach me how to bear my own times of desolation and distress.

O most lonely Lord, have pity on the lonely souls of earth. Have pity on the poor bereaved ones who mourn the absence of those they love. Have pity on me, and never allow me to be separated from Thee.

### II

Our Lord bore this suffering for my sins. “The chastisement of our peace was upon

Him." All the loneliness, the terror, the helplessness that comes upon the soul that is suffering under a sense of estrangement from God, He felt. He knew that from time to time I should suffer desolation, and so, because He loved me, He bore it first, and bore it to its furthest limit.

## III

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Here Our Lord gives me a model prayer for my hours of darkness. Sometimes I may feel as though God had forsaken me. If so, I can re-echo my Master's words, and He who hears me use them will remember His own dereliction and help me in mine.

"My God! my God!"—into the night went forth  
That lonely cry,  
Piteous as never plaint from burdened breast  
Its misery.

"Went forth for me into the night, that wail  
Of woe divine;  
His bitter dereliction bared, to draw  
The sting from mine."

M. M. LOYOLA.

## The Fifth Word

“I thirst” (*St John*, xix.).

### I

OUR Lord was suffering from intense natural thirst, caused by the immense loss of blood He had endured; but it must have been the far keener thirst of His Heart for the souls of men which wrung the cry “I thirst” from His parched lips. This thirst is not yet quenched. Jesus still longs for the souls of men.

If by my prayers, or my example and encouragement, I can help but one soul heavenwards, I shall be doing something to assuage this thirst of Christ, and shall win for myself the gratitude of God Himself.

My God, let me listen to Thee as Thou sayest: “I thirst; give Me to drink.” Give me such love of Thee that I may count no cost provided I can but help some soul to love Thee better.

### II

“I thirst.” Our Lord speaks this word to me personally. He says to me from the



Cross, "My child, I thirst for thee; for thy love; for the reparation thou canst make Me, if thou wilt; for all the coldness and indifference of men." What response do I make to this appeal? Am I touched with joy and gratitude at the thought that my Lord should ask something of me? Am I overwhelmed with awe at the thought that God has stooped to plead and beg from one so low as myself? Surely the very least I can do is to respond to His request, and give Him to drink.

My God, athirst for my poor love, let me give Thee full measure of what Thou deignest to ask of me. I give Thee my love, my thanks, my whole self. Would that I could quench Thy thirst by the intensity of my love and reparation.

### III

"I thirst." Our Lord listens for me to re-echo His cry. He longs to hear me tell Him that my heart is athirst for Him; that I long for His glory, the accomplishment of His will, the extension of His kingdom upon earth.

Yet does He hear this cry from me? For what do I actually thirst? Is it not too often for my own will, my own comfort, my own pleasure? If so, it shall be so no more.

My Lord, give me such love of Thee that in

all sincerity I may be able to say to Thee, "I thirst," not after the things of this world, not, above all, after self, but for Thee, the Fountain of Living Water.

"As the hart pants after the water-brooks, so pants my heart after Thee, O my God."

## The Sixth Word

“It is consummated” (*St John*, xix.).

### I

OUR Lord had finished His life's work. He had stretched His loving care for my soul to its utmost limit. He could say: “What more could I have done for My vineyard that I have not done?” All now, all is finished.

As I contemplate Our Lord hanging on the Cross for love of me, as I begin to realise that He has indeed done all for me, even to dying for my salvation, I say to myself: “Our Lord has finished, and have I as yet begun to serve Him as I ought?”

Give me grace, O God, to begin at last my life's work for Thee, for Thou hast finished all for love of me.

### II

“All is finished.” In a few moments Our Lord's Passion will be accomplished. “Death will be swallowed up in victory.” The agony of the Three Hours will be over. Even Christ could do no more. His time of suffering will pass away with His death.

So too, one day, my time of trial will be

over. Shall I be able to say then with perfect confidence, "It is consummated," my life's work is finished, completed and ready to be presented to my Judge?

"Completed, yet how incomplete  
 My folded work: what shall I do  
 When I must place it at Thy feet  
 For Thy pure eyes to look it through?"  
 S. M. X.

### III

"It is finished." When Our Lord has done all in order to save the souls of those He loved, how terrible will it be for me if I hinder His work from being accomplished by my bad example, or, worse still, by being the cause of another's sin.

Help me, my God, never to hinder Thy work for souls, but rather to further it to the utmost of my power.

## The Seventh Word

“Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit”  
(*St Luke*, xxiii.).

### I

THE end was very near. Soon there would be no more that the malice of men could do to Our Lord. But before His death there is still one lesson He wishes to teach me. He has taught me how to live and how to suffer; now He would teach me how to die.

What is my best preparation for death? Confidence, and the abandonment of myself into my Father's Hands. And if I ask myself why, the answer is because no one knows me as my Father does; not one loves me as He; no one is more anxious to make me happy for all eternity.

### II

“Father, into Thy hands.” In all the events of life I can do no better thing than to abandon myself to God's Will. He knows what is best. His Hands have formed me and shielded me, and have been my support from my birth. With Him I am safe; guided by His Hands I am sure to reach my

goal. Apart from Him no good can come to me.

Gladly, then, will I commit myself to Him and ask Him to sustain me to the end.

### III

“Into Thy hands I commend my spirit.” The word “commend” implies trust. I am sure of my Father’s love and wisdom. The prerogative of Fatherhood is one which God never relinquishes.

Safely then, in death as in life, I may turn to Him, uniting myself to the Son of God, Who with His dying breath taught me to commend my spirit into the Hands of my Eternal Father.

“Into Thy Hands, dear Christ, into Thy Hands  
I place my spirit as she breaks her bands.  
Close Thy strong fingers round her as she slips  
Into the awful void of death’s eclipse.  
Into Thy poor Hands, pierced and nailed for it,  
My sinful soul securely I commit—  
Into Thy Hands, my Saviour, into Thy Hands!”  
S. M. X.

## The Death of Christ

“And bowing His head, he gave up the ghost”  
(*St John*, xix.).

### I

OUR Lord hung in agony on the Cross for three hours. He endured every form of suffering, both bodily and mental. None of the martyrs have suffered as He did. No human being has ever, or will ever in this world, suffer such anguish and desolation as He. He sacrificed His honour and His reputation. He was esteemed a fool and a madman. Now there is only one sacrifice left for Him to offer to His Eternal Father for my sake—the sacrifice of His life—and so He became obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross.

My loving Lord, crucified for my sake, let me at least live for love of Thee, for Thou hast died for love of me.

### II

As I kneel before my crucifix and look up into the face of my dying Lord, the question I ought to ask myself is: What does He say to me from His Cross? The words of

a dying person are always remembered and treasured by those who love. What, then, does my Lord say to me? If I look and ponder aright I shall not have to wait long for His message, for "He loved me and delivered Himself for me."

Teach me, my Lord, the lessons of my crucifix. Speak to my heart. Do not allow Thy lessons and all Thy labour and pain to be in vain.

### III

"In the Cross is life." Where can I find true comfort apart from Him? where pardon for my sins except from Him and through His merits? where hope of eternal life except through His death?

He had me in His heart and mind all through the agony of those Three Hours. This is the truth I must bring home to myself, so that my heart may be filled with sorrow for the sins which have been the cause of all His sufferings.

"O love of God! O sin of man!

In this dread act your strength is tried;  
And victory remains with love,  
For He, our Love, is crucified!"

FABER.



## The Descent from the Cross

“They took therefore the body of Jesus”  
(*St John*, xix.).

### I

SEE how gently and carefully Joseph and Nicodemus detach Our Lord's Body from the Cross and lay it on Our Lady's knee. “Happy the men,” writes St Bonaventure, “who were so privileged as to clasp in their arms the Sacred Body.” Devout writers tell us that Our Lady helped in the holy work of taking Our Lord's Body down from the Cross, and that as soon as they were within her reach, she took the holy hands, and with great devotion kissed the sacred wounds. What must have been her thoughts as she gazed on the mutilated Body of Jesus, and knew that sin was the cause of it all. I will ask her to obtain for me an intense horror of sin.

“Do this for me, O Mother blest,  
Deeply imprint within my breast  
The wounds of Jesus crucified.”

### II

Our Lady with great care and love cleanses each wound and closes them. See

how her tears flow as she draws the nails out of the hands and feet of her Son. It was my sins that fastened Our Lord to the Cross.

How happy I shall be when one day, in God's own good time, the nails that bind me to my cross are drawn away, and I am safe with Jesus and Mary for ever!

### III

To all human reckoning what a scene of failure the Descent from the Cross seems to be. Instead of triumph, Our Lord chose ignominy; instead of glory, death; instead of joy, suffering!

If I want to be united to Him, I cannot expect to be exempt from all that is painful to nature. Nor, if I love Him, shall I desire to be so.

“Passion of Christ, strengthen me;  
O Good Jesus, hear me,  
Within Thy wounds, hide me;  
Never permit me to be separated from Thee.”

## The Sepulchre

“Joseph . . . laid Him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock. And he rolled a stone to the door of the sepulchre” (*St Mark*, xv.).

### I

PICTURE Our Lord's friends, Joseph and Nicodemus, together with Our Lady and the Holy Women, wending their way towards the Sepulchre, carrying the Body of Jesus. Watch how reverently they embalm the Body and lay it in the Tomb.

In Holy Communion I am given, not the dead, but the living Body of Jesus. Am I reverent, careful, and loving in the way I receive Him into my heart? Does He find that resting-place cold and hard? Alas! how often has He found it so, but it shall be so no longer.

O Lord, my God, I grieve for my coldness and hardness towards Thee. I beg of Thee to forgive me. Keep, Lord, in my regard the promise Thou didst make of old, “I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh and will give them a heart of flesh.”

### II

The Tomb in which Our Lord was laid was silent. The din of earthly things was

far removed from that hallowed grave. But when my Saviour comes to lie in my heart, how often do I let the noise of the world drown His gentle voice? How seldom is my tongue silent for any length of time from all words that could displease Him. In future I will speak to Him words of love and praise, and listen attentively to His voice whispering in my heart.

### III

The Tomb again was closed and sealed. So when He visits me in Holy Communion Our Lord wishes me to close the doors of my senses to outward things that I may attend only to Him.

I will kneel by His Tomb and bury my proud heart there. I will ask Him to enclose my heart in His and I will say to Him in the words of St Gertrude: "Seal my heart with the seal of Thy love, my Lord, that nothing displeasing to Thee may ever rest therein."

## The Resurrection

“He is risen, as He said” (*St Matt.*, xxviii.).

### I

THERE has never been joy on earth to compare with that of Jesus when He rose from the grave on Easter morning. It was the day of His triumph, the day on which He proved Himself to be Conqueror and King over all, even over death itself.

Our Lord is my King and He invites me to share His joy. He asks me to forget, at least for a time, my own troubles and worries, and to give myself up to an unselfish joy in Him. I may contemplate the exceeding beauty of my risen Lord. He is resplendent with light. His Body can never again suffer or die. Yes! but Easter comes after Good Friday, and it is only if I am willing to share in my King's sufferings and humiliations that I can hope to share His joy and His glory. Am I willing?

### II

Our Lord wants me to rise with Him. To rise from sin, from sloth, from tepidity. Am I lying year after year buried in self, in my

own pleasures and plans, or perhaps even in my own troubles and annoyances? If so, my King asks me to begin a new life—a life lived for Him and with Him, a life devoted to His interests. Am I going to try thus to rise? St Paul says: "If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above . . . not the things that are upon the earth" (Coloss. iii.), and Our Lord Himself tells me to seek "first the Kingdom of God and His justice," and that all other things shall be given to me.

My Lord and Master, help me thus to rise above self, above all that holds me back from Thee, that with Thy help I may begin to live at last wholly for Thee.

### III

Our Lord appeared first to His Mother. She had suffered more than anyone except Himself, and so He hastened to console her and make her a companion of His joy.

So, too, Our Lord will come to me if I suffer willingly for Him; and the measure of my suffering will be the measure of the consolation I shall enjoy. It is well for me to remember this in my hours of darkness and pain.

My King and my Lord, I rejoice with Thee in Thy great joy and triumph. I adore Thee, I love Thee, I offer Thee the

homage of my whole being through the hands of Thy Blessed Mother. Grant, O my Lord, that after having suffered for Thee here I may rejoice eternally with Thee in heaven.

## Mary—Rabboni!

“Jesus saith to her, Mary. She, turning, saith to Him, Rabboni” (*St John*, xx.).

### I

“MARY stood without at the sepulchre weeping. . . . Jesus said to her: Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?”

Mary Magdalen could not bear to leave the place where her Lord's Body had been laid; she could not tear herself away, so she stayed behind the other holy women, and wept because, she said, “they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him.” Our Lord was her one Treasure, her Friend, her only Love. Therefore when “she sought Him and found Him not” she was sad and gave full vent to her grief. Our Lord knew this perfectly well, yet He asked her: “Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?”

Our Lord also knows the cause of my grief, yet if he should ask me, “Why weepest thou?” what should I be obliged to answer? How often, if I spoke the truth, I should be obliged to say: Because I am disappointed in this or that worldly hope; because I have been thwarted; because I have been treated



with coldness. How rarely I could say: My Lord, I am grieving because of my sins and the sins of the world; because I have lost Thy friendship; because I no longer feel the sweetness of Thy presence; because Thy Church is being persecuted; because the souls Thou lovest are being lost for ever!

## II

“She thinking it was the gardener. . . .” Our Lord takes many disguises. Mary Magdalen did not recognise either Our Lord’s form or His voice. She took Him to be the gardener.

How often do I meet Jesus in my daily life and know Him not? I meet Him in the poor, the children, the lonely, the suffering, and I know Him not and pass Him by. Yet He has distinctly said to me: “Whatever you do to one of these, My least, you do it to Me.”

To-day if I am given the opportunity, I will serve my Lord in the person of one of His suffering members.

## III

“Mary — Rabboni!” Our Lord called Magdalen by her name, the name she was best known by, the name she had heard so often before from His lips. She recognises

Him at once now, and falls at His feet. "Rabboni! Master, dear Master!" she cries, and she would have embraced Our Lord's feet had He not stayed her with the words, "Do not touch Me . . . but go tell my brethren, and say to them: I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and to your God."

If Our Lord calls me by my name, how shall I respond? He knows me personally and is quite familiar with all that concerns me. One day He will certainly call me out of this world, but daily, if I will, I can hear Him speaking to my heart and asking me to accomplish some work of love for Him.

Rabboni, dear Master, I offer myself to Thee for whatever work Thou canst entrust to me. Let me only hear Thee call me by my name and I will joyfully answer: "Yea, Rabboni, speak! for Thy servant heareth."

## Emmaus

“Stay with us, Lord, for the day is now far spent”  
(*St Luke*, xxiv.).

### I

THE two disciples are on their way to Emmaus and are sad. Suddenly a third traveller joins Himself to them, but “their eyes were held so that they should not know Him.” Our Lord does not reveal Himself to them yet, but He questions them as though He knew nothing of their trouble: “What are these discourses that you hold one with another and are sad?”

This shows me how anxious Our Lord is that I should tell Him all my troubles, and lay before Him all my needs. He knows it all, of course, but He delights to receive my confidence, and indeed has made my petitions the guarantee of my receiving. “Ask and you shall receive.”

### II

“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so enter into His glory.” Ought not? As though the Scourging, the Crowning with Thorns, the Cross, and all His other sufferings were quite a matter of course. What a revelation these words are of Our

Lord's humility! He, Who suffered solely for my sins and the sins of the world, speaks as though even for Him suffering was the only way to glory.

Next time I have something to suffer I will say to myself: "Ought not I to suffer this, and so lay up merit for heaven?"

### III

When the travellers got to the cross-roads, Jesus made as if He would go farther, but the Disciples constrained Him, saying: "Stay with us, because it is towards evening and the day is now far spent. And he went in with them."

I will store up in my heart this beautiful prayer of the Disciples; again and again I will say to Our Lord: "Stay with me, O stay with me, my Lord"; I will "constrain Him," beg Him, persuade Him. But Our Lord needs no persuasion, He is always willing to be with me, if only I desire Him. There is no moment in which I can afford to be without Him. Especially after Holy Communion I will beg Him to remain with me. I do not know how soon the evening of my life may close in upon me; devoutly then, and with all my heart, I will say to Jesus: Stay with me, Lord, because it is towards evening, and my day may even now be far spent.

## Saint Thomas

“Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed” (*St John*, xx.).

### I

“JESUS stood in the midst of them and saith to them: Peace be to you, it is I, fear not.” Peace is the great treasure Our Lord desires to give us. At the Last Supper He had said: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid” (*St John* xv.). And now we picture Him in His glorious, risen Life, come to bring this same gift of peace to His disciples, and not to them only, but to all—to me!

Our Lord’s peace is true peace, founded on distrust of self and boundless confidence in Him. Whatever my troubles, temptations, and trials may be, I can always count on Him. He will give me peace and say to me, “Let not your heart be troubled.” “It is I, fear not!”

### II

St Thomas was not present at this apparition on Easter Sunday evening. When

he came in he was greeted with the words, "We have seen the Lord!" He would not believe, "Unless I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

How often in the past have I imitated the incredulity and distrust of St Thomas, and how deeply has my want of trust wounded the heart of my Lord! I have wished, how often, to lay down conditions to God. By my conduct, if not by my words, I have said to Him, "Unless I see the result of my prayers, unless I get help in the exact way I want it, I will not believe!"

I will kneel before Him now and ask His pardon for my want of faith, and say to Him sincerely and from the depths of my heart: "Heart of Jesus, I trust in Thee."

### III

After eight days Our Lord came and, with the utmost compassion, condescended to the weakness of St Thomas. "Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands . . . and be not faithless but believing." What could St Thomas do but fall on his knees, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God!" Then came Our Lord's gentle rebuke: "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou

hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."

Here is my comfort, for I have to live by faith. I have not seen, and yet, O Lord, Thou knowest that I believe in Thee.

"Thy wounds, as Thomas saw, I do not see,  
Yet Thee confess my Lord and God to be;  
Make me believe Thee, ever more and more,  
In Thee my hope, in Thee my love to store."

## The Sea of Tiberias

“It is the Lord” (*St John*, xxi. 7).

### I

“. . . That night they caught nothing. But when the morning was come Jesus stood on the shore.” Picture the Apostles weary with their labour during the long dreary night; they had probably started off full of hope that they would have a good night’s work, and they caught—nothing! Then, with the dawn, they drew nigh to the shore and Jesus stood there to welcome them.

How often in my life do I start off full of hope? But things go wrong. Darkness seems to envelop me on every side, and I do no good. I make no progress. I seem to acquire no more virtue than I ever had. I am not more patient, or more kind and submissive. In fact “I catch nothing” of the virtues of my Lord and Master. Then after a long and weary time the light begins to break. Jesus shows Himself and the darkness is scattered; my weariness is changed into joy.



## II

“The disciples knew not that it was Jesus.” So often is it thus with me. Our Lord is there, but a mist hides Him partly from me, and, because my faith is weak, I do not recognise Him. Yet He is there close to me. In the early morning Mass He is there, offering Himself for me; yet my distractions, my worries, my pleasures perhaps, occupy my mind, and I do not realise that He is there. In the glare of mid-day, He is in the Tabernacle waiting for me. In the evening stillness He is raised on His throne to bless and comfort me, and yet I act as though I did not know that it was He.

He comes to me in joy, and I forget that it is His joy, given in love to me. He comes to me in sorrow, and I will not rouse myself to see that it is the best gift He can give me, because it means likeness to and union with Him.

Lord, how often I know Thee not. Open my eyes that I may learn to know Thee more and more, to recognise Thee under any disguise Thou chooseth to take in order to try my faith.

## III

“It is the Lord!” It was St John, the Beloved Disciple, who first recognised Our

Lord. Why? St John was pure of heart. "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God." If I want to see Our Lord in all that befalls me, and under all circumstances, I must strive to obtain cleanness of heart.

In the Blessed Sacrament we recognise Our Lord, and say with St John, "It is the Lord," and we know that the Banquet Jesus has prepared for us there is sweeter far than that which He gave to His Disciples on the shore that April morning, for it is the Banquet in which He gives us His own Flesh and Blood.

O Sacred Banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of His Passion is renewed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us!

## “Simon, Lovest Thou Me?”

“Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?” (*St John*, xxi.)

### I

SAINT PETER had thrice denied his Lord and Master during the Passion, and now Our Lord gives him an opportunity of making reparation. All during the public life, even to the very night of the Last Supper, Peter had boasted that whatever the other disciples did, he at least would be true to Our Lord. We know how he fell, and how at a look from Our Lord he went out and wept bitterly.

Do I ever boast that I am safe from such and such a fault, that in that respect at least I have no cause for fear? If so, let me learn a lesson from St Peter. If, unhappily, I should fall, let me strive to imitate his deep and heartfelt penitence, a sorrow which he kept up all his life.

### II

“Lovest thou Me?” I can imagine I hear Our Lord addressing these words to me.

“ Lovest thou Me? Lovest thou Me sufficiently to sacrifice thyself for My sake? Lovest thou Me when I ask thee to do some work for My sake which is naturally distasteful to thee? Lovest thou Me in the person of My poor? Lovest thou My will above thine own? Lovest thou Me sufficiently to follow Me, in whatsoever state of life I may call thee to? Answer Me My child, lovest thou Me?”

What am I going to answer to this tender appeal of Our Lord? Can I with truth say to Him: “Yea, Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee.”

### III

Our Lord said to St Peter, “ Lovest thou Me more than these?” I can understand these words as addressed to myself in two ways.

First, Our Lord may say to me, “Thou sayest that thou lovest Me more than others do, but where are the proofs of thy love? Where shall I find in thee the charity of My apostles, the purity of My virgins, the zeal of My confessors, the fidelity of My martyrs? Love is proved by deeds.”

Secondly, Our Lord may ask: “ Lovest thou Me more than these—more than thy pleasures, more than thy convenience, more than thy life itself?”

Lord, what can I say to Thee? Indeed, indeed I do love Thee, but I cannot compare with Thy holy ones. Increase my love that with more and more truth I may be able to say to Thee, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

## The Ascension

“And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up to heaven” (*St Luke*, xxiv.).

### I

PICTURE Our Blessed Lord ascending triumphant and glorious into heaven. The Church prays: “By Thine admirable Ascension, O Lord, deliver us,” and truly the hearts of all Christ’s followers may well be lifted up in speechless admiration at the sight of Him ascending by His own power to the highest heaven.

Hear the angels singing on that first Ascension Day, “Lift up your gates, O ye Princes! and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates! and the King of Glory shall enter in.”

I too, my Lord, would fain rejoice at Thy great triumph. I, too, would join with the angels and the countless blessed ones who rejoiced with joy unspeakable at the triumph of their King, for I, too, truly love Thee, and Thou hast said: “If you love Me, you will indeed be glad because I go to the Father.”

## II

Picture Our Lady kneeling on Olivet, gazing at the ascending form of her Son. She is smiling, although she has just been parted from Him.

“ Mother ! how canst thou smile to-day ?  
 How can thine eyes be bright ?  
 When He, thy Life, thy Love, thine All,  
 Hath vanished from thy sight ? ” FABER.

The secret of Our Lady's joy lay in her absolute unselfishness. She never considered herself at all. All her thoughts, all her love, all her desires were centred in her Son.

“ Why do not thy sweet hands detain  
 His feet upon their way ?  
 Oh ! why doth not the Mother speak  
 And bid her Son to stay ? ”

“ Ah ! no ! thy love is rightful love,  
 From all self-seeking free ;  
 The change that is such gain to Him  
 Can be no loss to thee ! ” FABER.

Am I unselfish after the example of my Mother ? Or am I, on the contrary, engrossed in my own selfish aims, with hardly a thought for anything outside them ?

## III

Our Lord ascended into heaven to be our Advocate, that He might plead for us with

the Father. As man, He is there ever pleading for His creatures, showing the marks of the five wounds in His hands, and feet, and side—our Advocate to the end of time. St John says: “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just” (1 John ii.).

I will take courage, then, knowing that Our Lord pleads for me. If I feel weighed down by the thought of my sins, I will say:—“Look not upon me, but upon the face of Thy Christ,” and for His sake pardon me.

Also I will make the words of the Church my own, and beg that “we who believe that the Only Begotten Son, our Redeemer, ascended into heaven, may ourselves also in mind dwell in heavenly things” (Collect for the Feast of the Ascension).



## Pentecost—I

“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house” (*Acts*, ii.).

### I

THE Apostles were all gathered together with Mary the Mother of Jesus, when the Holy Ghost came upon them. They were in prayer waiting and hoping for the coming of the Paraclete so often promised them by Our Lord. “Suddenly” the Holy Spirit came to them.

I must pray earnestly that this same Holy Spirit of God may come to me, and I must keep myself always ready to hear His Voice, “for the Spirit breatheth where He will” (*St John*, iii.). He knows best the time and manner that is most fitting for His visits to my soul. If I keep my heart attentive, I shall often hear His voice.

### II

“A sound from heaven as of a mighty wind.” Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Light. I can then look on every

good inspiration I receive as a gift straight from heaven. Wind purifies the air, tempers heat, and drives away clouds and dust. So will the Holy Spirit purify my heart from sin. He will cool my passions and clear away from my heart all that is a cloud between myself and Him.

I will ask the Holy Ghost to come to me that I may be thus purified in His sight.

### III

“And it filled the whole house.” The Holy Ghost comes to take full possession of my heart and soul, so that there will be no part of my being that is not sanctified by Him. I will offer Him all the powers of my soul, all the senses of my body, all the affections of my heart, that He may possess me wholly.

“Come, Holy Ghost, Creator,  
Come from Thy bright heavenly throne ;  
Come ! take possession of my soul  
And make it all Thine own.”

## Pentecost—II

“And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were of fire . . . and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost” (*Acts*, ii.).

### I

FIRE purifies, illuminates, enkindles, glows, unites. So the Holy Ghost comes to me to purify me from all sin, from all that is earthly and defective, that I may be a fit temple for Him to dwell in. He comes also to enlighten me; to show me His Will; to guide me along my path to Heaven; to show me how to avoid the snares of the world; to point out to me the wiles of the devil.

How grateful I ought to be to the Holy Spirit! How earnestly I ought to entreat Him to come to me!

“Holy Ghost, come down upon Thy children,  
Give us grace and make us Thine!  
Thy tender fires within us kindle,  
Blessed Spirit! Dove Divine!”

FABER.

### II

Fire also enkindles and glows. Holy Church prays: “Come, O Holy Spirit, fill

the hearts of Thy faithful and enkindle within them the fire of Thy love." This is what I ought to desire: that my heart may be inflamed and may glow with the love of God. Nothing else matters as much as this. Again the Holy Ghost comes to unite me to Himself.

"Ah! sweet Consoler! though we cannot  
Love Thee as Thou lovest us,  
Yet, if Thou deign'st our hearts to kindle  
They will not be always thus."           FABER.

### III

The coming of the Holy Spirit changed the Apostles from weak, cowardly men into men full of courage, wisdom, and love. They no longer acted by themselves, but under the influence of the Holy Ghost; they spoke "according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak." So if I give myself up entirely to the guidance of the Holy Spirit He will transform me, and instead of being, as I am, weak and cowardly in God's service, I shall become strong and steadfast in His love.

"Come! O Holy Spirit, come!"

## Pentecost—III

“ If thou didst know the gift of God ! ” (*St John*, iv.).

### I

THE Holy Spirit is the “ Best Gift of God above ”; the Ineffable Gift; the gift that includes all other gifts; therefore again and again in her Liturgy, the Church bids us implore that we may receive the Holy Spirit more and more fully. The Holy Ghost is the “ Sweet Unction ” that is to heal our wounds and bruises; the “ True Love ” that is to be enkindled within us!

Do I try to realise all the Holy Spirit does for me, and will do for me if only I will put no obstacles in His way?

### II

This “ Gift of God ” was given to me first at my baptism. Then my soul became the temple of the Holy Ghost. “ Know ye not,” says St Paul, “ that ye are the temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? ”

How often do I think of this in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit within me? Do I reverence my body as His temple?

## III

All who are in the state of grace are the living temples of God. I should then reverence those around me. It is impossible for me even to imagine what the beauty of a soul is like that is in the state of grace.

How careful I must be never to be the cause of a fall from grace in another! What a horror I should have of anything that could scandalise or harm anyone!

O most Holy Spirit of God, I thank Thee for dwelling in my heart and in the hearts of all who love Thee. I ask Thy pardon for all my neglect of Thee. Above all, I beg Thy forgiveness for the harm I have done to others by my carelessness, my bad example, or my neglect.

“Lord, wash our sinful stains away,  
Water from heaven our barren clay ;  
Our wounds and bruises heal.  
To thy sweet yoke our stiff necks bow,  
Warm with Thy fire our hearts of snow,  
Our wandering feet repeal.”

## Pentecost—IV

“Come, Thou Father of the poor, Thou the Supreme  
Comforter,  
The soul’s sweet Guest and Refreshment,  
Her Rest in toil.” *(Sequence for Pentecost.)*

### I

COME, Father of the poor! All can thus call upon God as their Father, for all are poor—poor in spiritual gifts, needy and helpless so often, and quite apart from the fact that we may or may not be blessed with goods of this perishable world. Was it not David the King who called out from the fulness of his heart: “I am needy and poor, O God help me!”

I am poor in God’s sight, and the sooner I recognise the fact the better. If I do so and invoke the Holy Spirit, “Come, Thou Father of the poor,” He Who is the Fount and Source, the inexhaustible Treasure of all riches, the Giver of all good gifts, will come to me and fill me with Himself.

### II

The Holy Ghost is the Supreme and only real Comforter of our souls. If I am suffering from the loneliness and desolation that comes

of being bereft of my nearest and dearest, the Holy Spirit will comfort me and be the sweet Guest of my soul. If I am weary of the journey of life, and pine for refreshment, the Holy Ghost will come and refresh me with Himself. If I am spent and jaded with the toil and friction of my daily life, the Holy Spirit is rest in toil! Thus I can turn to the Holy Ghost for everything.

“For all within us good and holy  
Is from Thee, Thy precious gift;  
In all our joys, in all our sorrows,  
Wistful hearts to Thee we lift.”

FABER.

### III

I must beg the Holy Spirit to replenish me with His sevenfold gifts, that I may go through life made strong by Him, and arrive at last at the blessedness of endless joys in my heavenly home.

Give to Thy faithful who trust in Thee  
Thy sevenfold Gifts;  
Give them the merit of virtue;  
Give them in the end salvation;  
Give them endless joy. Amen.



## Pentecost—V

“The woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised” (*Proverbs*, xxxi.).

### I

“THE fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps. cx.). It is not a cowardly fear, or a craven fear, but it is a loving, tender, reverential fear; a fear which is founded on love. A fear of offending my God and Father, a child-like fear of anything, however small, which may come in between my soul and God.

Have I this great Gift of the Fear of the Lord? I should beg for it earnestly, for it will be the beginning of all good things for my soul.

### II

The Gift of Fear makes us dread anything that approaches to sin, anything that leaves the slightest stain on the soul; but it has nothing at all to do with scrupulosity! The Holy Fear of God does not make us doubt God's forgiveness when we are sorry for and acknowledge our sins.

Have I this fear of deliberate venial sin? It is a great gift to be prayed for earnestly

and desired sincerely. Also if I have this gift, I shall be brave and free from human respect, for if I fear God as I should there will be no room for any other fear. The martyrs were full of this Gift of the Holy Ghost, and so they overcame all human fear.

### III

Holy Scripture says: "Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain; the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." It is useless for me to find favour in the sight of others, if Holy Fear does not keep me from sin, and so make me pleasing in God's sight.

Earthly beauty is at best a passing gift, and it is vain for me to put my trust in anything so fleeting. But if my soul is beautiful in God's sight, fenced round and protected by the Gift of Holy Fear, then I may expect to hear Our Lord say to me in praise: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!"

In the past, have I not made too much of the favour of others? Have I not prided myself on my natural gifts? If so I will now beg for a great increase of that Holy Fear which is the beginning of wisdom.

## Pentecost—VI

“The spirit of godliness, and of fortitude, the spirit of counsel” (*Isaias*, xi.).

### I

THE Gift of Piety is one which fills the soul with a loyal and child-like affection for God its Father. “You have received,” says St Paul, “the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry Abba, Father.”

If I really love God I shall be intensely loyal to Him. I shall serve Him to the full extent of my power. I shall be intensely sensitive to all that touches His honour. I shall allow no word or hint which is in the slightest degree derogatory to Him. I shall, in a word, love Him as my Father.

Do I thus love and honour Him?

### II

The Gift of Fortitude enables us to resist temptation, to struggle bravely on in the path to heaven, to begin again courageously if we have fallen. Fortitude also helps us to endure suffering manfully. It strengthens even children to suffer for Christ; Saint Agnes for instance! Thousands of men and women

have been enabled to endure torments and death through the Gift of Fortitude which was given to them. Fortitude also makes self-denial and self-sacrifice easy.

What exceeding need I have of this great Gift! I will beg and implore God to give it to me.

### III

The Gift of Counsel makes us prudent and discreet—two most valuable virtues. There is a worldly prudence, but there is also a heavenly prudence which leads us to pause and ask light and help from God before we act.

If I always prayed first, I should avoid acting, as I so often do, on the impulse of the moment. I should not be rash and hasty in my decisions.

Sometimes human prudence says one thing, and heavenly prudence says another. I need the Gift of Counsel to enable me to put aside worldly prudence and follow out God's will in spite of all the world may say or think.

## ¶ Pentecost—VII

“The spirit of knowledge and of understanding,  
the spirit of wisdom” (*Isaias*, xi.)

### I

THE Gift of Knowledge enables me to see God in all around me. All natural beauty should lead me to think of God and raise my heart to Him. A smiling landscape, a lovely sunset, even a tiny flower should bring the remembrance of the Creator to my mind. Many Saints have been raised in ecstasy at the sight of a flower. St Ignatius used to say: “How sordid all the things of earth appear when I look up to heaven.” That was the effect a starlight night had on him!

Do I see God in the beautiful world around me? Do I see Him at least in His creatures? Do the virtues of those around me remind me of Him? I will ask for an increase of the Gift of Knowledge.

### II

The Gift of Understanding will enable me to appreciate all the truth and beauty of my faith. It will also help me to appreciate all that is good in others. It is always the most

virtuous who are quick to see the good points of those among whom they live. It is the sign of a little mind to be perpetually carping and picking holes in others; this fault shows me also how lacking I am in virtue, and in the Gift of Understanding. The Holy Spirit will give me this Gift if I ask Him.

## III

The Gift of Wisdom is that which gives us a clear light to see that God is my last and only true Good; that all things else are nothing except as helps to reach Him, or as obstacles which prevent me from reaching Him. Wisdom makes us live for God alone. It lifts us above mere human pleasure and pain. Wisdom gives a relish for holy things—for Mass and the Sacraments; for prayer and spiritual reading; for all that is right and just. And lastly, Wisdom makes us love the Cross, for suffering brings us nearer to God.

Do I find these fruits of wisdom within my soul? I will beg most earnestly for this, and for all the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

“Grant to Thy faithful, dearest Lord,  
Whose only hope is Thy sure word,  
The seven gifts of Thy spirit.  
Grant us in life Thy helping grace,  
Grant us in death to see Thy face  
And endless joys inherit.”

## The Last Supper

“This is My Body. . . . This is My Blood”  
(*St Matt.*, xxvi.).

### I

SEE Our Lord seated at table with His Apostles on the eve of His Passion. He had prepared them long and carefully for that night. The miracle of the Five Thousand men, besides women and children, who had been fed with five barley loaves and two fishes, was a type of the far greater miracle He was about to perform for them and for all who were to come after them. After the Feeding of the Five Thousand Our Lord had spoken plainly of the Blessed Sacrament. “I am the Bread of Life, he that cometh to me shall not hunger; and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst.” “Amen, amen, I say unto you, except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you” (*St John vi.*). The time was now come for Our Lord to fulfil these promises.

See Him taking bread into His hands. Watch Him as He blesses and breaks it, and then distributes it to His disciples:

“Take ye and eat. This is My Body.” And taking the chalice He gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: “Drink ye all of this, for this is My Blood.”

My Lord and my God, I fall on my knees before Thee, hidden under the appearances of bread and wine. I adore Thee, I love Thee, I give Thee thanks.

“O hidden God, devoutly I adore Thee  
Who truly art within the forms before me ;  
To Thee my heart bends down in adoration,  
Entirely lost in wondering contemplation.”

## II

Our Lord gives Himself wholly and entirely to us in the Blessed Sacrament. Each time I go to Holy Communion I receive the Body and Blood, the Soul and Divinity, of Jesus Christ. And with Himself He gives me all things: more I could not receive; less would not satisfy His love.

Do I think sufficiently of this entire generosity of my God towards me? If He gives me Himself, what can I give Him in return?

“Thy Body, Soul, and Godhead, all ;  
O mystery of Love divine,  
I cannot compass all I have,  
For all Thou hast and art are mine.”

FABER.



## III

Why did Our Lord institute the Blessed Sacrament? Is it not unbecoming that He should so annihilate Himself? "If," says St Bernard, "it was unbecoming to His Majesty, it was not unbecoming to His love." There is only one way of repaying love, and that is by loving. "Jesus having loved His own, He loved them to the end"—thus must it be with my love; it must go on steadily burning and increasing, steadfast to the end. It is to enkindle this love for Him that Jesus comes to me in Holy Communion. He comes to satisfy His love and mine.

“ Just because Thy name is Jesus,  
Just because Thou art my Friend,  
Just because, O Love, Thou lovest  
And lovest to the end,  
Therefore, Jesus, art Thou come ! ”

S. M. X.

## Holy Mass

“ Do this for a commemoration of Me ”  
(*St Luke*, xxii.).

### I

OUR Lord gives Himself to us in the Blessed Sacrament, not only as our Food and our Companion, but also as a continual victim for our sins. Day and night, from sunrise to sunset, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is being offered in some part of the world. Our Lord ceaselessly offers Himself to the Eternal Father. The Holy Mass is one and the same sacrifice with that of Calvary. In each Mass Jesus dies mystically upon our Altars. As I kneel there where Mass is going on, I can truly say to myself that I am assisting at the same sacrifice as I should have assisted at, had I been present beneath the Cross on the first Good Friday.

How is it that, believing this as I do, I do not make the Holy Mass the very centre of my life? How is it that I lose so many opportunities of assisting at this tremendous Sacrifice? How is it that when present at Mass, I am so callous and distracted? How is it that I find the half hour too long?

O my God, my God, rouse up my faith,

I beseech Thee; help me to realise the meaning of the Holy Mass. Grant that I may never through my own fault pass by opportunities of assisting at Mass. Kindle my love that I may kneel before the altar during Mass in the same dispositions I should wish to have had, had I knelt at the foot of Thy Cross and seen the Precious Blood flow from Thy sacred wounds. O Lord, my God, increase my faith.

## II

When Our Lord gave the Apostles and their successors the power of changing bread and wine into His Body and Blood, He said to them: "Do this in commemoration of Me." Our Lord desires intensely that we should keep ever fresh in our memory the thought of His Passion and Death, and so He offers Himself continually in the Holy Mass. To assist at Mass is by far the best way of thanking Christ for all His love and for all He has suffered for us. It is, too, by far the most efficacious means I can employ to get strength to bear my own cross whatever it may be. If I unite my sufferings to His and offer them to God the Father in union with Our Lord in the Holy Mass, they at once become of untold value in God's sight, and I shall thus go through life made rich with the blessings that come to me through the Mass.

## III

The Catechism says: "To hear Mass is by far the best and most profitable of all devotions." Why? Because in the Mass it is Our Lord Who prays; Our Lord Who offers Himself; He is both Priest and Victim. The value of the Mass is infinite, therefore I can hope to obtain all things from God if I ask it in union with Jesus in the Holy Mass.

How do I use my privileges? Do I pray at Mass for the living and the dead? Do I pray for the Church and the Pope, for bishops and priests, for all who have asked my prayers, or for whom I am in any way bound to pray? Do I use the Holy Mass as I should?

"We thank Thee, that from sunrise to its setting  
 Thou standest on our altars, Lord, as slain;  
 We sorrow that, despising or forgetting,  
 Men leave Thee in Thy death alone again.  
 We come to tell Thy Heart thus scorned and  
 slighted,  
 That in the daily Mass our strength shall be,  
 That in the Mass our lives shall be delighted,  
 That for that sorrow we will comfort Thee."

S. M. X.

## Preparation for Communion

“The intention must be ‘right and devout’; we must receive our Lord, ‘not out of routine, or vain-glory, or human respect,’ but for the purpose of pleasing God and ‘of being more closely united to Him by charity’” (*Decree of Pope Pius X., 1905*).

### I

“A RIGHT and devout intention.” I cannot but know how Our Blessed Lord desires me to come to Him; and how pleasing to Him is my response to His loving invitations. “Come to Me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you” (St Matt. xi.). “Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood you shall not have life in you” (St John vi.); and again, “With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you” (St Luke xxii.). If I ponder these words carefully and lovingly, they will stir up in my heart a fervent desire to respond to Our Lord’s call, and to go to Holy Communion for the purpose of pleasing the good God Who has so tenderly urged me to do so.

## II

“To be more closely united to Him by charity.” I must try in each Communion to arouse in myself a greater desire to be united to Our Lord. Union with Him is what Our Lord promises to all those who receive Him worthily. “He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in him” (St John vi.). “As I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by me” (St John vi.). Jesus forestalls my desires, and promises me what I want. In Holy Communion I am united to Him in charity, for He Himself is—Love!

## III

“To seek this divine remedy for weakness and defects.” Pope Pius X. pointed this out as a most laudable intention for receiving Holy Communion. It is one that may well suggest many thoughts for my preparation for receiving the Blessed Sacrament. No one knows better than I do how weak and prone to evil I am. To whom shall I turn for remedy if not to the Divine Physician, Who knows me as I am, and Who loves me in spite of it all; Whose power is infinite, and Whose tenderness surpasses that of a mother for her child.

I can turn with utter confidence to my

Divine Lord. I will desire Him ardently,  
and call upon Him lovingly.

“Come! oh come! my Jesus come,  
Make this poor sad heart thy home;  
Come! but e'er Thou come, prepare  
For Thyself a dwelling there.  
Come, no longer, Lord, delay,  
*Veni, Jesu Domine!*”

## Thanksgiving after Communion

“Holy Communion should be followed by a suitable thanksgiving according to each one’s strength, circumstances, and duties” (*Decree of Pope Pius X., 1905*).

### I

FROM my point of view what do I understand by a suitable thanksgiving? I ask myself for what my thanksgiving is to be made? And the answer is: For the stupendous miracle by which I receive into my very heart the Body and Blood, the Soul and Divinity, of Jesus Christ. God becomes my Guest. God lays aside His awful Majesty, and becomes my food. The God Who rules the universe, Who holds us all in His hand, Who is Supreme, Infinite, Omnipotent, and Eternal, comes to me! I ponder these thoughts, and I say to myself, what thanksgiving is “suitable” for a Gift such as this? A lifetime of prayer and praise and gratitude would be as nothing compared to Love such as this. Surely, then, my thanksgiving after Holy Communion can never be too fervent, too grateful, too prolonged.

Yet, knowing and believing as I do, what are my actual thanksgivings like?



How do I employ the quarter of an hour immediately following my communions?

“Oh! how can we thank Thee  
For a Gift like this?  
Gift that truly maketh  
Heaven’s eternal bliss.” FABER.

## II

From Our Lord’s point of view, in what does a “suitable” thanksgiving consist? Our Lord speaks to us through the voice of His church, and the church says the thanksgiving must be “according to each one’s strength, circumstances, and duties.” Less could not be exacted of me. Our Lord loves me with more than a mother’s love, and He shows me here to what a depth His thought for my weakness goes. He does not ask for what I am not able to give. He never expects impossibilities. He simply wishes that I should love Him, and give Him what I can. My heart, wholly, entirely, and for ever, I can and must give Him. Strength is not wanted for this, only love. My time may or may not be my own. If I have leisure I will prolong my actual thanksgiving; if I have little or none, my heart must make up for the time I am unable to give. Our Lord knows perfectly well all the details of my “strength, circumstances, and duties.” He takes it all into account. But as He sees all, I cannot

deceive Him ; I must give Him quite honestly all that I am able.

## III

How am I to make my thanksgivings as "suitable" as I am able? The answer might be in the words of St Augustine : "Love and do what you will." But two suggestions may be a help. I can never thank God adequately for the Blessed Sacrament ; but I hold Jesus in my heart—His thanks are adequate. I can offer Him in thanksgiving ; I unite my heart to His and offer them both to the Eternal Father. I can say "Thanksgiving of the Heart of Jesus, I unite myself to thee" ; also, if I cannot give much time to my preparation and thanksgiving for Holy Communion, I can at least strive to live each day so that the following morning may see me at the altar-rails. Days spent for Our Lord in trying to accomplish His Will, will be the best token of my desire for Holy Communion, and of my gratitude for His visits of love. This is within my reach however busy I may be.

" Sacred Heart, take Thou my offering,  
All I have to give to Thee,  
Life and strength and soul and body,  
To be Thine eternally."

## My First Communion

“ I am the Bread of life ” (*St John*, vi.).

### I

IT is well for me to recall from time to time the memory of the day of my First Communion. It was the day of Our Lord's first visit to my soul. The day on which for the first time my soul was united to the Body and Blood, the Soul and Divinity, of my Lord. My heart then became for the first time the tabernacle of Jesus. I can quite easily recall that blessed day, and I will give myself up awhile to the thoughts such memories bring to me.

Why was it that I was then so enthusiastic for Our Lord's visit, and that now so often the visits of that same kind Lord and Master hardly awake any interest in me? Do I love Him less now than I did then? Surely not! Is it not rather, dear Lord, that I have let my heart grow hardened by routine; that I take Thy kindness as a matter of course, forgetting the inestimable privilege Communion is to me.

O God, my God, give me back the earnestness of the day of my First Communion.

## II

Have I forgotten the promises I made to God on the day of my First Communion? What were then my resolutions? Immature they may have been, but at least they were earnest. I meant to strive always to keep my heart pure as it then was. I renewed that day the promises of my Baptism. I put myself under the protection of Our Lady. As I recall all this, I ask myself, And now? Have I lowered the ideals of my First Communion Day? They ought to be far higher than they were then, but what are the actual facts?

## III

How many visits have I had from Our Lord since the first one, now so long ago! So many that I have entirely lost count of them. But God has not forgotten. I shall find one day that count has been taken of all, to my eternal joy, if I have been earnest in preparation, devout in receiving, grateful in returning thanks; but alas! to my eternal regret if it has been otherwise.

Now, at least, I will renew within myself

the dispositions of my First Communion Day.

“ O sweet Communion ! Feast of Bliss !  
When the dear Host my tongue doth kiss,  
What happiness is like to this ?  
O Heaven, I think, must be alway  
Quite like a First Communion Day ;  
With love so sweet and joy so strange,  
Only that Heaven will never change.”

FABER.

## My Present Communions

“Give us this day our daily bread” (*St Luke*, xi.).

### I

THESE words of the “Our Father” can be applied most aptly to our daily Communions. Saint Teresa used them in this sense. She says: “His Majesty gave us this nourishment so that we may find it when we please, and not die of famine except through our own fault; for in every way in which the soul can desire to feed, she will find in the Most Blessed Sacrament sweetness and consolation” (*Way of Perfection*).

In these days we are all invited to daily Communion; nay, we are strongly encouraged to receive the Blessed Sacrament daily. “Come to Me all,” said Our Lord, and Pope Pius X. used his power as sovereign Pontiff to the utmost in order to urge us to comply with this most loving invitation.

Do I go to Holy Communion as often as I can? Am I ready to make sacrifices in order to be able to get to daily Communion? Our Lord is there, each morning, waiting for me; how often do I make Him wait in vain?

## II

Are my present Communion doing for me all that Our Lord means them to do? It is entirely my own fault if they do not produce all their blessed fruits in my soul, for Our Lord is always the same, and, says Saint Teresa, "His Majesty is not wont to pay poorly for His lodging if He is well received."

I must be earnest in trying to remove every obstacle to grace in my soul; if I do this, my Communion will soon produce their effect, and Our Lord will live in me as He has promised: "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in him" (St John vi.).

## III

Every time I receive Holy Communion worthily I am laying up for myself treasure in heaven. Each Communion is to me a pledge of everlasting life. "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up on the last day" (St John vi.).

If I thought more of this should I not be more anxious to miss no possible opportunity of receiving the Blessed Sacrament? Yet how often I stay away through vain fear, through sloth, or even through neglect!

O my God forgive me, I am not worthy to receive Thee, but come to me nevertheless.

Thou canst heal me by a word. Come, Lord,  
come and stay with me.

“When daylight shineth  
When day declineth,  
In storm and sun abide with me.  
In joy and gladness,  
In pain and sadness,  
O let me, Lord, be close to Thee.”  
S. M. X.



## My Last Communion

“ He walked in the strength of that food . . . unto the mount of God ” (3 *Kings*, xv.).

### I

My last Communion! I never know which of the Communion that I make may be my last. It may be that I shall be able to receive Our Lord in Holy Viaticum. It may be that on my death-bed I shall hear those blessed words: “Receive the Viaticum of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that He may preserve thee from the malignant enemy, and bring thee to life everlasting.” And Our Lord will come to be my companion in death, as He has been through life; He will come to strengthen me on my last journey, that in the strength of that Food I may arrive unto the Vision of God. It may be so. I hope it will be so. But it may not be like this. It may be that death will come to me suddenly. Or I may be unable from one cause or another to receive Holy Viaticum at the last, and so now, whilst I am in health, it is well for me from time to time to prepare for my Communion, as if it were my Viaticum; and to offer it as though it were in very truth to be my last. I could put aside one day in

the month for this. Do I so offer it from time to time as my devotion may suggest?

## II

The chief feature of the preparation for my last Communion, or for one which I intend to offer as my last, should be trust—absolute, child-like confidence and trust in the Lord, Who, having come to me all my life through in His visits of mercy and love, comes to me now to be my friend, my support, and my comfort, as I pass through “the midst of the shadow of death.” I shall need Him then as I have never needed Him before. All earthly supports and helps will be passing away, for I must make my long last journey alone. And yet I cannot go alone, and Our Lord knows it, and so comes to me Himself.

O loving Lord, how can I thank Thee for love like this? How can I thank Thee for coming to me now as my friend, before Whom, in so short a time, I am to stand to be judged? I shall find at death how sweet a thing it is to have had for my friend here He Who is to be my Judge. Yes, Lord! I will trust myself to Thee. “Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me” (Ps. xxii.).

## III

In my thanksgiving I cannot do better than treat with Our Lord as though He were Himself giving me the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. I will offer Him my eyes, and beg Him of His tender mercy to pardon me all the sins I have committed with my sight. I will ask Him to lay His hand upon my ears and nostrils, and pardon me all my sins of hearing and of sensuality. I will offer Him my tongue, that tongue on which He has been laid so often during my life, and I will beg Him to pardon me my sins of taste and of speech. I will bring Him my hands and feet, and beseech Him to forgive all the sins I have committed through those members. I will beg Him to purify me wholly from every stain of sin, that so I may stand before Him as my Judge, clothed in the white garment which I received at Baptism, with this injunction, "See thou carry it without stain before the judgment seat of Our Lord Jesus Christ that thou mayest have eternal life. Amen."

"My only Treasure,  
My Rest and Pleasure,  
My Rock and Fortress for ever be ;  
In strife defend me,  
In sickness tend me,  
And come in death to set me free."

S. M. X.

## Reparation

“I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none ; and for one that would comfort Me, and I found none ” (*Psalm lxxviii.*)

### I

REPARATION is an instinct of love. It is not possible to love deeply and yet not care to share the sorrows of the one loved, nor to try to do all that is possible to make up in some measure for any slight or dishonour shown to such a one. How, then, is it possible for me to be indifferent or callous when it is a question of making reparation to Our Lord? He stays in the Blessed Sacrament for me. He becomes our Food in order that He may be closely united to every heart; and yet how often is He met by nothing but coldness and carelessness. How many receive Him through routine! How many will not come to receive Him at all! How many receive Him, alas! without being in a state of grace!

If I love my Lord, I shall be anxious to make up to Him as far as I can for all this: for my own neglect and coldness first, and then for all the insults He so often receives in return for all His love.

Some loving souls offer their Communion

on the first Friday or the first Sunday of the month, as a Communion of Reparation. What can I do?

“ We thank Thee, O how can we thank Thee, Jesus,  
That in this Sacrament Thou art our Food ;  
That we can find all sweetness that may please us  
In this dear Banquet of Thy Flesh and Blood.  
We weep for all those souls who dare to take Thee,  
To hearts made over to Thine enemy ;  
O let our love some reparation make Thee,  
In that great sorrow let us comfort Thee.”

S. M. X.

## II

I can make reparation, too, for the loneliness of Our Lord in the silent tabernacles where He waits day and night in order to be entirely at our disposal. In how many churches He is left alone hour after hour. Yet His “delight is to be with the children of men” (Prov. viii.). Some, indeed, enter His sacred presence, but are heedless of the reverence they owe to Him ; but for the most part it is the utter callousness of so many that calls for reparation.

“ We thank Thee, Lord, that all Thy pain expecting,  
Thou dwellest with us still both day and night ;  
We grieve that men, forsaking and neglecting,  
In Thy sweet company find no delight ;  
We grieve that men for all things else have leisure ;  
That other friends they joy to hear and see ;  
O let us make Thy Presence here our pleasure,  
That in Thy sorrow we may comfort Thee.”

S. M. X.

## III

I turn to myself. Is there not need for me to make reparation for my own conduct towards Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament? What of my own communions? What of my reverence in His Presence? What of my neglect to visit Him in His Tabernacle? Have I nothing to reproach myself with, either now or in the past? Lord, Thou knowest how much need there is for me to make reparation to Thee on my own account. I offer Thee my love and the love of the angels and saints; best of all, I offer Thee the love of Thy Mother in atonement for all my own neglect.

“And for ourselves who, knowing and believing,  
Have treated Thee so coldly and so ill,  
Behold us now before Thee deeply grieving,  
And strengthen, Lord, our weak and changing  
will ;  
We promise now Thy Heart despised and lonely,  
That we will try Thy truer friends to be,  
That we will try through life to love Thee only,  
That in Thy sorrows we will comfort Thee.”

S. M. X.

## Visits to the Blessed Sacrament

“Come to Me and I will refresh you”  
(*St Matt.*, xi.).

### I

OUR Blessed Lord dwells day and night in the Tabernacle for me. “My delight,” He says, “is to be with the children of men” (*Prov.* viii.). He is there for me. He longs for me to treat Him as a Friend; to come often to visit Him; to look upon Him, as indeed He truly is, as the One Friend Who will never tire of me, the only One Who really understands me, the only One Who can really help me in my need.

Why do I not think more of what this friendship of Christ would be to me, if only I corresponded to His love? He is the Friend that “loveth at all times.” He is waiting hour by hour for me to go to Him that He may let me learn by my own experience what it is to have Him for my Friend. And yet how often I disappoint him! How often I find time enough and to spare to spend with others; but for Him—I am too busy!

“Yes, Jesus! Thou art hidden thus  
On this poor earth for love of us,  
And yet upon Thine altar throne  
Too oft we leave Thee all alone.

“ Ah ! since it is Thy chief delight  
To dwell with us, both day and night,  
Sweet Jesus, make it ours to be  
Both night and day to stay with Thee.”

## II

When I visit the Blessed Sacrament I can pour out my heart before Our Lord with perfect freedom. There need be no restraint with Him. I can bring my sorrows and my joys, my hopes and disappointments, my trials and worries, even the story of the most ordinary, and to others the most uninteresting, circumstances of my daily life, will be listened to by Him. He will not find anything that concerns me uninteresting ; on the contrary He welcomes such confidences. He loves to see me kneeling in His Presence, telling him freely and fully all that is in my heart. He listens patiently and kindly to me whatever I have to say ; and He never lets me leave Him without giving me, not, perhaps, the answer to my prayer as I think best, but something that is better for me than that for which I ask. And He always gives me the grace I need in order to love and serve Him better.

Do I thus treat with Our Lord during my visits to the Blessed Sacrament ?



III

Does Our Lord ever have to reproach me for neglecting to visit Him in the Sacrament of His love? Does he ever whisper to me :—

“ Long, long I’ve waited here,  
And though thou heed’st not Me,  
The Heart of God’s own Son  
Beats ever on for thee.”

How great will be my regret when I come to die, if I have not used Our Lord’s Presence in the Tabernacle as He intends me to do! Is it, after all, worth His while to remain on the Altar for me? If only I loved Him more and visited Him oftener, I should find that many of the problems of my life which are now such a puzzle to me would become quite clear. I should be strong where I am now weak; joyous where I am now sad; for the Blessed Sacrament would become the sunshine of my days.

“ Sweet Sacrament Divine,  
Earth’s light and jubilee,  
In Thy far depths doth shine  
Thy Godhead’s majesty ;  
Sweet Light so shine on us, we pray,  
That earthly joys may fade away,  
Sweet Sacrament Divine.”

## Exposition and Benediction

“For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (*Apoc.*, vii.).

### I

AT Exposition Our Lord comes forth from His Tabernacle and as a King is enthroned before us to receive our homage, our adoration, our love, and our petitions.

Do I at all realise what these days of Exposition might mean to me if only I used them as I ought? For some, for me perhaps, they are very rare; but when they do come, it means that Our Blessed Lord Himself gives, as it were, a public and special audience to which all are invited, and at which all are welcomed. There, hour after hour amid lights and flowers and incense, is Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, ready to hear the petitions of all who come to Him. I need not plead my poverty—He is there for the poor. I need not plead lack of opportunity, for He is there for hours at a time, almost, it would seem, waiting to suit my convenience.

Surely I shall be both foolish and ungrateful if I do not attend the court of my King. No time is more favourable, except the hour of

Holy Mass, for laying my wants and the needs of all I love before Him. Yet how have I profited hitherto by the Hours of Exposition? Have I been too selfish to put myself out a little to go and pay homage to my King? If so I will beg Him to forgive me, and I will do my best to profit by the next Exposition Day I can hear of.

## II

At Benediction, too, Our Lord is enthroned for a brief space to receive our hymns of praise and the devotion of our heart's love. Our Lord comes from His Tabernacle to bless us, usually at the end of the day, and what more beautiful ending could any day have than this! Here I may come and bring Him the story of the sorrows and trials, the temptations and anxieties of the day, and He will console and bless and strengthen, giving new graces and hope for the morrow. Or it may be that I have joy and success to bring Him; some unexpected good news, some lifting of a burden that I thought I should have to carry to the end, and I go to Benediction and Our Lord is glad to see me come; He congratulates me and sends me on my way happier still and uplifted by the blessing He gives.

Have I thus looked on Benediction in the past? Do I assist at it whenever I possibly

can? Do I ever sacrifice my pleasures to procure the privilege of Benediction for myself? O! how much I miss by neglecting opportunities of assisting at it whenever I can!

### III

The fact that Our Lord does so allow Himself to be enthroned above our altars ought to be a great comfort to us. It is only during the last fifty years or so that such a thing has been possible in England in our public churches. Yet now all the year round the Forty Hours Adoration takes place in one church or another in London and very frequently in the churches of all our great cities. There is Our Lord on the altar, pleading—pleading for sinners, pleading for the poor, the outcast, the down-trodden; pleading for those who are hardened with the greed of earthly gain; pleading for our statesmen, our soldiers, our sailors; pleading for the dying; pleading for the young and the old; pleading for all!

Do I ever think of this? Our Lord has all these interests at heart. Whenever I see the Blessed Sacrament exposed I will say: "Intentions, desires, and wishes of the Heart of Jesus, I unite myself to you."

## The Beauty of the House of the Lord

“I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth” (*Ps.*, xxv.).

### I

OUR Lord annihilates Himself in the Blessed Sacrament for love of us. He hides His glory, His majesty, His beauty. He strips Himself of all appearance of royalty. He conceals Himself under the humble species of bread and wine. Surely, then, it is for us—for me—to do what I can to procure that, as far as in me lies, all the surroundings of His earthly home are as perfect as I can make them. How can I bear to see my King, my Friend, my God surrounded with poverty? How can I bear to see the altar-linen stained or torn? How often a poor and over-worked priest would be only too grateful if someone would look to the renewing of the altar-cloths, the corporals and mundatories especially, and indeed of the vestments in general. If I live near a poor church or a country church there may be a grand opportunity for me here. If I live in a town, I can join the Altar Society, or at least offer my services. If I love my King I shall certainly not allow any

opportunity of so honouring Him to pass by unheeded. Love is ingenious in devices for serving the one loved!

## II

I must remember that this work of tending the altar-linen is a work done directly to Our Lord Himself. It is not possible for our over-worked priests to see to it themselves. Sewing for the Church is essentially a woman's work, a privilege left to me by Our Lord.

It would be heart-breaking to think that I can spend hours of trouble and thought about my own personal adornment and leave the Blessed Sacrament unprovided with the best I can procure. Where is my faith? Where my love? Where my loyalty? All that is richest and most beautiful should be for Him, and if I have to deprive myself, so much the better, for Jesus has stripped Himself of all things for me!

## III

I may try, too, as far as in me lies, to contribute to the adornment of His altar. Someone has called flowers "God's love-gifts to men"; why, then, can I not make these flowers my "love-gift" to Him? Very often it may not be possible, but if it is, it is a privilege for me to know that the flowers I

have offered Him are spending their sweetness close to His Tabernacle; after all they are the most beautiful material thing I can give Our Lord, and they come fresh from His hand. If I do what I can to show my love for the "beauty of the house of the Lord" Jesus will not forget it, and one day He will show me the beauty of the heavenly courts.

I will think over these things and see if I cannot do some little thing to further the beauty of Our Lord's earthly homes.

## Devotion to the Sacred Heart

“Behold this Heart which hath so much loved men, and is so little loved in return” (*Words of Our Lord to Blessed Margaret Mary*).

### I

THE essence of devotion to the Sacred Heart is the understanding of Our Lord's love for us. We honour the adorable Heart of Our Lord, because it is the principle of His life, the source of His sufferings and His love, the Fountain whence flows that Precious Blood which purifies us. The Sacred Heart has been the object of devotion to the greatest saints, and is so to all who truly love Jesus Christ. By this devotion we return love for love. We believe in the love of Jesus for us, and so speedily increase in love for Him. The devil tries to blind our eyes and lead us to mistrust Our Lord, but nothing wounds that loving Heart more than want of confidence in His love.

How often have I thus wounded the loving Heart of my Saviour! There is nothing that I do not owe to His love. I must try



at last to return Him love for love; to trust Him utterly.

“Heart of Jesus, Human Heart,  
Thanks to Thee for all Thou art;  
Where should I have been or be,  
Fount of Goodness, but for Thee?  
Heart so full of love for us,  
Would that we could love Thee thus.”

S. M. X.

## II

I must make my devotion to the Sacred Heart practical. One of the best tests of my love will be to try to make Our Lord's interests my own; to forget myself for Him; to consecrate myself to Him and renew each morning the offering of all my prayers, works, and sufferings for the intentions of His Divine Heart in the Holy Mass. I must try also to imitate His virtues: His charity to others, His zeal for souls, His patience, His meekness, and humility. If I do this I shall truly love Him, and I shall experience deeply the love of His heart for me.

“O Sacred Heart! be this our life's one aim  
To labour for the glory of Thy Name;  
O dearest Heart! this grace we Thee implore  
That all the world may know and love Thee more.”

## III

Reparation is also a special feature of devotion to the Sacred Heart. Our Lord

Himself asked for the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi, to be set apart as a day of reparation for the insults offered to His adorable Heart. Can I do less than try to repair, to the utmost of my power, all the injuries He daily receives, especially in the Blessed Sacrament. Our Lord wants me to thank Him, to feel for Him, to sympathise with Him; to know what gives Him joy and what gives Him pain. "This interior thought of, memory of and sympathy with the life, joys, and sorrows of the lonely One in the Tabernacle, is the very marrow of devotion to the Sacred Heart."

"Heart still beating in the Host,  
Where, alas! we wrong Thee most;  
Heart so noble, Heart so true,  
Pierced by all, consoled by few;  
Lonely Heart, so loving men,  
Would that Thou wert loved again."

S. M. X.

## The Meekness of the Sacred Heart

“Learn of Me, for I am meek . . . of heart”  
(*St Matt.*, xi.).

### I

OUR Lord, knowing all our weakness, gives Himself to us as a model of meekness, which is a virtue of the strong. It requires strength to preserve one's peace of heart in face of provocation; to answer gently when misunderstood, abused, or calumniated; to return the evil done us by increased mildness towards the aggressor: these things are not easy, and so Our Lord puts Himself before us, “Who, when He was reviled did not revile; when He suffered He threatened not; but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly” (I St Peter ii.).

I will ponder and look long and lovingly on my Lord, whose character is a perfect commingling of all the virtues into a whole that is divinely beautiful. I will let my heart go out to Him in admiration and praise.

“Heart so holy, Heart so pure,  
Heart so patient to endure,  
Heart that all our sins hast borne,  
Bruised, humbled, crushed, forlorn;  
Heart which we have wrung with pain,  
Be Thou never wronged again.” S. M. X.

## II

Our Lord does not wish me to stop at admiration. He calls me to follow Him, to imitate Him. Am I strong enough to be meek? Have I strength of character sufficient to keep command over myself on all occasions? Or am I weak and easily given to retort and to resent? to pay back, as it were, in the same coin in which I receive? In such temptations the thought of the meek and lowly Heart of Jesus must be my refuge. If I keep Him before my mind and pray for help I shall find strength sufficient to be meek in all my difficulties.

“O Jesus’ Heart, meek, patient, kind,  
My soul to Thee I turn,  
Thou wilt not crush the bruised reed,  
The sorrowing spirit spurn.”

## III

Another aspect of the meekness of Christ is shown in His attitude towards sinners. How did He treat the woman taken in adultery? “Hath no man condemned thee?” “No man, Lord.” “Neither will I condemn thee; go, and now sin no more” (St John viii.). Or again, what did Jesus say of Magdalen? “Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much” (St Luke vii.). When St Peter denied our Lord, what do we read? “The Lord turning looked on Peter.” Have

I ever considered the meek majesty of that look?

And for myself—how many, many times have I experienced the meekness of Christ in receiving me back after my falls into sin? How gently has He pardoned me time after time, almost as though He were to be the gainer in my return to Him! All this is the effect of His meekness.

O most meek and gentle Heart of my Saviour, I adore Thee, I thank Thee, I love Thee, I beseech Thee so to impress Thy virtues on my heart that I may become meek and humble of heart, and so pleasing to Thee.

## The Humility of the Sacred Heart

“Learn of Me, for I am . . . humble of heart”  
(*St Matt.*, xi.).

### I

FROM the Crib to the Cross and on through the ages, in His Eucharistic Life, Our Lord gives us the example of unparalleled humility. I have only to think of what the Incarnation means. God, a little Child, a poor little helpless Babe; God, submitting to a life of poverty and hardship; God, hidden for thirty years in a poor and obscure village; God, obedient unto death; God, suffering; God, treated as a fool by Herod and mocked by the people. God, suffering the ignominy of the Cross!

How can I ponder these truths and not be lost in amazement at the wonderful humility of the God made Man? And yet it is He Who says, “Learn of Me, for I am humble of heart!”

### II

Our Lord has taught me first by example all that He urges me to practise. What can

it be for me to humble myself, when I think of Him? If He obeyed till death, why cannot I obey on occasion? If He made Himself the servant of all, why do I find it hard if others are preferred before me? "Behold," He says, "I am with you as one who serves"; and again, "The disciple is not above his Master, it is sufficient if he be as his Master" (St Matt. x.). Yes, indeed! well would it be for me if even from afar I could bear some resemblance to my meek and humble Master!

"O Heart of Jesus, come and live in me,  
That with Thy love my heart consumed may be.  
O Sacred Heart of Jesus! I implore  
That I may love Thee daily more and more."

### III

The Eucharistic Life of Our Lord is the completion of the stupendous humiliation of the Incarnation. Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, became Man. He suffered and died for us, but this did not satisfy the love of His Heart. He sought a further means of proving to poor sinful men the breadth of His love and the depths of humiliation to which He was willing to go in order to help, sustain, and strengthen each one. Thus it was that He became my Food. He—God Almighty—enters my poor heart and makes it His delight to dwell

with me! Could the mind of man have conceived an abasement so great? a love so unspeakable!

O most humble Heart of Jesus, make my heart like unto Thine.



## The Pierced Heart

“ But one of the soldiers opened His side, and there came out Blood and water ” (*St John*, xix.).

### I

OUR Lord's Sacred Heart was pierced on Calvary; and from it flowed Blood and water. Our Saviour had shed the last drop of His Precious Blood. That Blood is the source of life to all mankind. In it sinners are healed of the wounds made by sin. In it the weak find strength. All the Saints who now rejoice in heaven have washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb. The Precious Blood is life and light and hope to all. It is the price of our salvation.

I must adore the Precious Blood shed for me on Calvary, and still shed mystically for me in every Mass. I will ask Our Lord to steep my soul in that healing Fountain, that all my sins may be washed away.

“ Ah ! let the water and the Blood  
Fall on my wounds in healing flood,  
Thou best Physician, Heart of God ! ”

S. M. X.

## II

The Precious Blood is especially applied to my soul in the Sacrament of Penance. It cleanses, strengthens, and invigorates me, if I receive the Sacrament worthily.

Do I try to realise as I make my act of contrition in the confessional, that the Precious Blood is actually cleansing my soul and healing my weakness?

“To endless ages let us praise  
 The Precious Blood, whose price could raise  
 The world from wrath and sin ;  
 Whose streams our inward thirst appease  
 And heal the sinner’s worst disease,  
 If he but bathe therein.”

FABER.

## III

Our Lord’s Heart was opened on Calvary, to show me that He wishes me to take refuge therein, as a secure shelter against all my enemies. His Heart will be my Protection. If I go to Him I shall be safe, for He is “my God and a House of Refuge to save me.”

In all my trials, anxieties, and sorrows ; in all my temptations, in spite of all my sinfulness, I will go confidently to the Sacred Heart.

“ Heart of Jesus, broken Heart,  
Praise and thanks for all Thou art—  
Shelter in the noonday heat,  
Covert when the rain doth beat,  
Home where all find peace and rest,  
Be Thou known, and loved and blest !”

S. M. X.

## The Immaculate Conception

“Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot  
in thee” (*Cant.* iv.).

### I

FROM all eternity God had chosen Our Lady to be the Mother of His Son. It was, then, fitting that she who was to be exalted to such untold dignity should be preserved from the first moment of her existence from the guilt of original sin. Mary was never for one instant under the power of the devil. Her soul was perfectly spotless and fair. No breath of sin ever came near Our Lady. She was perfectly pleasing at all times to her Creator.

I must congratulate my Mother on her Immaculate Conception. I must remind her of her glorious privilege, and rejoice exceedingly that God poured such precious graces upon her. I will thank God that He made for Himself one so fair and beautiful.

“He gazed on thy soul, it was spotless and fair,  
For the empire of sin it had never been there ;  
None had e'er owned thee, dear Mother, but He,  
And He blessed thy clear shining, sweet Star of  
the Sea.”

FABER.

## II

The thought of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception should be a great comfort to me. Often I am weighed down by the sense of sin. Often I find myself failing even in those very things about which I have made the strongest resolutions. I have again and again to turn to Our Lord and tell Him that I have once more broken my promises to Him. This, if I love Him, is a real source of sorrow to me; I have disappointed Him Whom I love; but when I think of Our Lady I take courage and am glad, because I can remind Our Lord that in His Mother, at least, there was never the slightest stain. She never failed. She never disappointed Him. And so I can offer her sinlessness in reparation for my sinfulness; her perfect fidelity in the place of my unfaithfulness.

“Immaculate! O dear exemption!

A spotless soul for God, entire and free,

Redeemed with such a choice redemption,

Angel nor saint can share the praise with thee.”

FABER.

## III

Our Blessed Lady, though Immaculate, was not exempt from suffering. This proves to me that suffering is not a mere punishment. More often than not it is not a punishment

at all, but a proof that God loves me and has received me as His child. No mere creature has suffered more than Our Lady, and yet she was absolutely sinless. I will take courage, then, from the thought of my Mother. I will put myself under her protection in life and in death. I will beg of her, by her Immaculate Conception, to preserve me from sin. Often I will say to her the dear, familiar words:—

“O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.”

## The Nativity of Our Lady

“Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising,  
fair as the moon, bright as the sun” (*Cant.* vi.).

### I

THE day of Our Lady's birth was a day of joy and exultation in heaven, in limbo, and on earth. It marked the dawn of God's great mercy to men. It was the herald of the day of the Incarnation of Jesus. Our Lady was the sweet Morning Star that preceded the rising of the Sun of Justice. Listen to the jubilation of the angels as they ask: “Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun?” Feel the thrill that passes the souls in limbo, for Mary is to be the Mother of the Redeemer Who is to open the gates of heaven to them. Think, above all, of God's joy at the birth of this spotless creature who is to be the Mother of His Son. Say to Our Lady:—

“How shall we welcome thee, beautiful Mother,  
How shall we greet thee, newly born?  
Joy to thee! Praise to thee! Love to thee! Thanks  
to thee!  
Hail to thy rising, sweet Star of the Morn.”

S. M. X.

## II

Our Lady's birth should be a great joy to me personally ; for I cannot count the graces I receive through her ! Our Lord delights to bestow His graces through the hands of His Mother. Our Lady is my great Advocate with Our Lord. I shall never know, until I get to heaven, all I owe to Mary's prayers. My confidence in her should be unbounded. My gratitude for all she is to me should be deep and lasting. Is it so ? Do I delight to honour her ? Do I praise and extol her as far as I can ? Am I a real child of my Mother Mary ?

“ All our joys do flow from Mary,  
All then join her praise to sing ;  
Trembling sing the Virgin Mother  
Mother of Our Lord and King.”

FABER.

## III

A mother's birthday is an occasion for gifts. What presents have I to bring to Our Lady on her Nativity ? At least I can renew my consecration to her. I can give her myself ; there is no present she would like better. I can review the practices of my devotion to her and ask myself if the word “ devoted ” applies to me in any real sense with regard to Our Lady. If I find I have grown cold or slack I will make a more



entire gift of myself and ask her to pardon my neglect.

“Oh, we cannot go empty-handed  
On her birthday to babe so sweet,  
Yet we have but our love to offer,  
Printing a kiss on her little feet.  
Open thy baby hand and take  
Our hearts, at least, for thy birthday's sake.”  
S. M. X.

## The Presentation of Our Lady

“ My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of  
the Lord (*Psalm lxxxiv.*)

### I

SEE Our Lady ascending the steps of the Temple when only three years old. She is going to offer herself to God—to consecrate herself to Him from her earliest childhood. There is no hesitation or delay. Mary loved the Lord her God with her whole heart, her whole soul, her whole mind, and with all her strength. So she chose the means that seemed the best for loving and serving Him alone.

How often do I hesitate about giving God the service He requires of me! I must ask Our Lady to give me a share of her generous spirit.

“ O Maiden most immaculate,  
Make me to choose thy better part,  
And give my Lord, with love as great,  
An undivided heart.”

FABER.

### II

Our Lady's life in the Temple must have been a most ordinary round of daily duties; yet she was absolutely faithful to them all.

She sought no exemptions and complained of no monotony. She did not fall off in her fidelity, but each day found her corresponding to every grace that she received. It was this humble fidelity that made her so pleasing in God's sight.

Am I like Our Lady in the way I perform my daily duties? Am I like her in my fidelity to every grace I receive?

### III

Our Lady was the first woman to consecrate her virginity to God. After her example, how many have given up all to follow Christ. But the grace is not given to all. Happy shall I be if God calls me to be one of His chosen spouses. But if He does not, I must remember that the highest sanctity for me, as for everyone, is to do His Will. I can be as perfect in the world as in the cloister. The state of life is not so perfect, but my personal perfection depends entirely upon the way I seek, and then follow promptly and faithfully, God's call to me, whatever it may be.

I will ask Our Lady to take me under her protection, especially as to the question of my vocation. I will beg her to give me a great love of God's Will, and a great fidelity in carrying it out in my life.

## The Assumption

“Who is this that cometh up from the desert,  
flowing with delights, leaning upon her  
Beloved!” (*Cant.* viii.).

### I

PICTURE Our Blessed Lady being borne up to heaven by angels. See the angelic choirs coming to meet their Queen. Hear the glad chorus of welcome that greets her on all sides. Contemplate the meeting between Jesus and His Mother.

“O happy angels! look  
How beautiful she is!  
See! Jesus bears her up,  
Her hand is locked in His:  
Oh! who can tell the height  
Of that fair Mother’s bliss?”

FABER.

See the Eternal Father crowning her as Queen of Heaven.

I will contemplate my Mother on this great Festival of her Assumption. I will rejoice with the whole court of heaven at possessing such a Queen. I will join in

spirit with the songs of the angels, and kneel at her feet with the saints.

“The angels answer with their songs,  
Bright choirs in gleaming rows,  
And saints flock round thy feet in throngs,  
And heaven with bliss o'erflows.”

FABER.

## II

Our Lady came “up from the desert flowing with delights.” This world is a desert; and no one finds it more desolate than Our Lady must have done after Our Lord's Ascension. Our Lady's delights at her Assumption were in proportion to her sorrows. “According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy consolations have given joy to my soul” (Ps. xcii.).

So will it always be, suffering first and then joy. If I want to rejoice in heaven I must first bear my trials bravely in the desert of this life.

## III

“Leaning on her Beloved.” This was the source of all Our Lady's strength. This was her comfort through life. This it was that enabled God to raise her to such heights of glory. She leaned on God, never on herself.

When I fail and fall it is because, forgetting God, I lean on myself. If I do, this failure

is inevitable. For the future I will learn from my Mother to cast all my care on God. He will sustain me, and one day He will welcome me home, and I shall be safe for ever with Jesus and Mary.

“ O dearest, evermore the Queen of Heaven,  
The risen stars are round thy throne in Heaven,  
Where Jesus reigns in highest height of Heaven ;  
O bring me to the home where I would be,  
The sapphire city where I pray to be,  
The home of Jesus where I long to be.”

FR. RAWES.

## Our Lady of Dolours

“Great as the sea is thy destruction”  
(*Lamentation*, ii.).

### I

MANY, perhaps, are more drawn to Our Blessed Lady by the thought of her sorrows than by that of her joys. “The Mother of Sorrows must always be nearer to the human race than even the Cause of our Joy” (Mons. Benson). The reason is that we feel the need of a mother more in sorrow than in joy. We need the protection of one who has herself suffered, and who, in consequence, can comfort, sustain, and help us in all our trials. This is why Our Lord, when dying, gave us all to His Mother, who, standing beneath the Cross, received us all as her children.

In my hours of darkness and of trial, I can always go to Our Lady and be sure that she understands my sorrow. Her sinless soul was pierced with a sword of sorrow, that she might be able to fill the office of Mother to all the suffering ones of earth. I will, then, have great trust in her, and great devotion to her title, “Mother of Sorrows.”

## II

Our Lady of Sorrows is the model I must try to imitate in every trial I have to bear. Mary's sorrows were never absent from her from the time of Simeon's prophecy, and yet how utterly she forgot herself for others. Look at her in the little home of Nazareth; see her at the marriage feast of Cana, shedding joy and gladness on all around her. I must not let my sorrows make me selfish.

I will think, too, of the heroic meekness of Our Lady during the Passion of her Son. What must she not have felt when she saw Our Lord so treated by those He had come to save? And yet no word of complaint passed her lips.

I will try also to imitate her in her perfect abandonment and resignation to the will of God. It was this that gave her the strength to bear all her sorrows. This, too, would be my strength and comfort, if only I practised it as I ought.

## III

Devotion to Our Lady of Dolours will unite me to her and to her Son. Our Lady will teach me how to become more like her; how to widen my sympathies and enlarge my heart until it yearns for the conversion of sinners as did her own Immaculate Heart. "There is no time lost in seeking Jesus if we



go at once to Mary: she is the short road to Him" (Faber).

I will go to her then and ponder her sorrows one by one.

"O thou Mother! Fount of love!  
Touch my spirit from above,  
Make my heart with thine accord:  
Make me feel as thou hast felt,  
Make my heart to glow and melt  
With the love of Christ my Lord."

## My Guardian Angel

“ He has given His angels charge over thee ” (*Ps.* xc.)

### I

GOD has given me a Guardian Angel from the first moment of my birth. This blessed Spirit has never left me for an instant all through the years of my life. He never will leave me, until I am safe in the other world. What an untiring love my angel has for me ; and yet how seldom do I think of him, how rarely do I show him any gratitude. It is well for me that in thus protecting me my angel knows that he is fulfilling God's will, and showing his love for Him. As this is so I need have no fear of my Angel wearying of his task of being with me.

“ Then love me, love me, Angel dear,  
And I will love thee more ;  
And help me when my soul is cast  
Upon the eternal shore.”            FABER.

### II

My Guardian Angel is witness of all that I do. He sees the struggles I go through in order to avoid sin and to please God. He knows the temptations that beset me, the

dangers that surround me. And, at all times, he is ready to encourage, to shield, to protect me. If I invoked my Angel oftener, especially in time of temptation, I should see what help I should get from him.

“Dear Angel, in temptation’s hour,  
Ah! whisper softly in mine ear—  
‘Be brave, nor fear the tempter’s power,  
Thy Guardian Angel standeth near.’”

### III

As life draws to a close, my Angel will redouble his efforts for my soul. He will shield me on my deathbed. His prayers will ascend before God for me then with renewed earnestness, for the time is short; soon he must commit the charge he has received into the hands of Him from Whom he received it:—

“And thou in life’s last hour wilt bring  
A fresh supply of grace.”

I shall have need of all the help my Angel can give me then, as indeed I have at all times. How foolish it is of me to take no heed now of such a true and faithful friend. I will try to cultivate a great devotion to my Guardian Angel. I will never fail morning and evening to commit myself to his care and protection.

O Angel, whom God has appointed to be my guardian, enlighten and protect me, direct and govern me this day.

## Saint Joseph

“Thou, O Joseph! art the delight of the Blessed,  
the sure hope of our life, and the pillar of the  
world.”

*(Hymn for Lauds on the Feast of  
the Patronage of Saint Joseph.)*

### I

DEVOTION to Saint Joseph began in the humble house of Nazareth. What saint was ever so honoured as he? Think of the love bestowed upon him by Jesus and Mary. In these latter days Saint Joseph is greatly honoured and singularly loved. The Church has proclaimed him to be the “Protector of the Universal Church.” He is the refuge and support of all who invoke him with confidence. Saint Teresa says that she never had recourse to him in vain. Holy Church addresses him as the hope of our life, the pillar of the world. Here are great motives to excite my devotion to this great and glorious saint. I will follow in the footsteps of Jesus and Mary and honour Saint Joseph as much as I am able.

“Ah! no wonder that all ages  
Homage to thy name have paid;  
Can we give thee too much honour  
Whom our God Himself obeyed.”

## II

What was the secret of Saint Joseph's sanctity? He was no leader of people, no preacher, and, as far as we know, he worked no miracles whilst he was on earth. On the contrary, there is even no recorded word of his at all. His was a silent, hidden life. He relied wholly on the love of his Lord. He obeyed God blindly—we have only to recall the Flight into Egypt. And afterwards, in the daily life at Nazareth, it was love which sanctified his humble toil. Saint Joseph worked all for Jesus, and this is the purest of intentions. It little matters what the work is I have to offer, but the love and intention with which I do it is everything.

Obedience to God's Will, silence, and purity of intention were the virtues that shone resplendently in Saint Joseph. In these I can copy him, and the imitation of his virtues will be the best honour I can pay to him.

## III

Saint Joseph is the special Patron of the dying. He died himself supported and tended to the last by Jesus and Mary. His was indeed a most happy death, and he certainly will not refuse the prayers of any who ask him to obtain for them a like grace.

I will put my death under the protection

of Our Lady and Saint Joseph. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in your blessed company. Amen.

“Blessed Saint Joseph, remember that never  
Thy clients in vain to their father have prayed ;  
Win our petitions, for Jesus must ever  
Listen to him whom on earth He obeyed.”

S. M. X.

## All Saints

“I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands” (*Apoc.*, vii.).

### I

PICTURE the Saints before the Throne of God. There is no nation that is not there represented; no class of society which has not its saints. Kings and beggars, doctors of the Church and those who died in childhood, virgins and penitents, martyrs and confessors, the married and the single, all are there; all are enjoying those delights which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard” (1 Cor. ii.).

I must not imagine that the particular state of life in which I find myself is one in which it is especially difficult for me to save my soul. The Saints were not born saints. They have to struggle as I have against temptation and the sinful inclinations common to all the children of Adam. I must, then, encourage myself by the thought that what they have been able by God’s

grace to do, I, too, aided by that same Divine grace, can also do.

“From your blissful thrones of glory  
 Look on us, O ye elect!  
 Tell us what repays your combats,  
 Tell us what we may expect.

“Our delights no word can utter,  
 ‘Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,’  
 Nor can mortals feel the pleasures  
 That for us God hath reserved”

## II

The Saints had the same helps—and no more—that I have. They had prayer, Mass, Holy Communion, and the Sacraments. They had good books to read—but fewer far than I have. They had the examples of those who had gone before them. But I have all these helps. The difference lies in the fact that they made good use of all their helps, they were faithful to grace. Do I imitate them in this fidelity?

The Saints had many and most various gifts, but they were all alike in their fidelity to prayer, their humility and love of God.

These virtues are not beyond my power with God's help.

## III

The Saints, far from forgetting those who are striving to follow in their footsteps, watch



over us with great affection. They know, love, and pray for us. We must not think that they are so far above us as to have lost all interest in us. The catechism teaches the contrary: "We ask the saints to pray for us because their prayers have great power with God."

I will renew my confidence in the intercession of the Saints. They will pray for me and encourage me. I can almost hear them saying:—

"If the path be rough and thorny,  
At the end all pain shall cease;  
If the battle be a fierce one,  
There shall be eternal peace!"

## The English Martyrs

“ Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends ” (*St John*, xv.).

### I

IT is well sometimes to remember how dearly our forefathers paid for the religious liberty we now enjoy in England. We are the children of a noble race, a race that bore imprisonment, the rack, the rope, and death itself, rather than deny Christ.

Now we live in a pleasure-loving age. We are apt to forget how hard a battle was fought and won for Christ by those who lived in the same cities as we do, who trod the same roads and spoke the same language as we. How shameful would it be for us to degenerate from the glorious example of our English Martyrs! In order not to do this we must be ready to bear, not the rack and the rope, but sometimes, perhaps, a little ridicule, a bitter taunt, or a sarcastic remark.

Am I ready to stand up for my faith always and everywhere? Am I ever afraid,

or worse still, ashamed, of being known to be a Catholic?

“Martyrs of England, keep us true,  
True to Jesus whate’er the pain;  
Martyrs of England, we look to you,  
Win our country to Christ again.”

S. M. X.

## II

If the Martyrs endured so much with such constancy and cheerfulness, how is it that we who are of the same race can endure so little? How is it that we shrink so instinctively from everything that is in the least inconvenient or unpleasant? How is it that pleasure and amusement hold such sway over our hearts?

Is this lack of courage true of me? Am I a soft, pleasure-seeking soul? If I know myself to be so, I must rouse myself; the thought of the Martyrs will help me to be more courageous!

“Martyrs of England! dare we shrink  
As we lift our eyes to Tyburn’s tree?  
Dare we ever refuse to drink  
The chalice of Jesus, whate’er it be?”

S. M. X.

## III

The Martyrs tasted bitterness and death here. They were imprisoned, fined, beaten down, treated with the utmost rigour and

cruelty, but they persevered faithful to the end, and are reaping the reward for it all now. The foundation of their heroism was their faith. They knew that the sorrows of this fleeting life are as nothing compared with the things of eternity. They knew that we are not made for this world, but for the next, and so they were ready to risk all, to give up all here below, even life itself, in order to make sure of their eternity.

Am I as wise? Do I ever pause to ask myself, "What will this profit me for eternity?"

"Past for you are the rope and knife,  
Yours are the joys that ne'er shall cease ;  
Death has merged into endless life,  
Combat brief into endless peace.  
Teach, oh ! teach us what faith is worth,  
Take the veil from our blinded eyes,  
Tell us we were not made for earth,  
That the real and true are beyond the skies."  
S. M. X.

## Sin

“I have sinned against the Lord” (2 *Kings*, xii.).

### I

THERE is only one real evil in the world—sin. All other things which we reckon as evils—pain, sorrow, disease, even death itself, are only the consequences of sin, the just punishments of sin. One mortal sin is a greater evil than all the miseries of the world in all ages, heaped up together.

If I have ever once deliberately sinned mortally against God, I have merited hell-fire, and it is only by God's tender mercy that I have been spared and given the grace to repent.

“O pardon me, Jesus !  
Thy mercy I implore,  
I will nevermore offend Thee,  
No ! nevermore.”

### II

Next to mortal sin, there is no greater evil than venial sin. If mortal sin is a direct insult to God, every venial sin, however small, is a slight to Him. To think that

I, poor mean creature that I am, should dare to slight the God of Infinite Majesty, the God before Whom even the angels veil their faces in awe! To think that I should dare to deliberately choose my own perverse will before His adorable Will! To think that time after time I have been heartless enough to slight the tender love of Him Who died for me!

“’Tis I have thus ungrateful been,  
 Yet, Jesus! pity take!  
 O spare and pardon me, my Lord,  
 For Thy sweet mercy’s sake.”

### III

The thought of sin, and of my personal sins in particular, should fill me with a deep and heartfelt contrition. He Whom I have offended is my Father, my kind Saviour and Lord, my Friend; He Who has been so patient in His love for me, so ready to forgive, so tender in the way He has received me back after each fresh fall.

Surely if I ponder Who it is my sins have offended I shall be filled with sorrow, for in spite of all I am God’s child and He is my Father!

“No earthly father loves like Thee,  
 No mother half so mild  
 Bears and forbears as Thou hast done  
 With me, Thy sinful child.”

FABER.

## Death

“It is appointed unto men once to die”  
(*Hebrews*, ix.).

### I

DEATH is a fact we all have to face. “In the midst of life we are in death.” We see it all around us. No one can escape. Rich and poor, high and low, all have to pass to eternity through the gates of death. Youth, health or beauty are no security, for death may come at any age. It may come at any time or in any place. “Be you then always ready,” says Our Lord, “for at what hour you think not the Son of Man will come” (St Luke xii.).

It is foolish for me to count on years to come in which I intend to lead a better life than I am now doing; folly for me to neglect my salvation now and to give myself up wholly to pleasure or to the things of this passing world. If I am so careless I may, at any time, hear the terrible words: “Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee” (St Luke xii.).

“ I know not what the years may bring,  
 Nor whether the years shall be ;  
 The past has fled on rapid wing,  
 And cannot come back to me.  
 One point of time we hold in our hand  
 The minute we now draw breath ;  
 And we look to the point when we shall stand  
 In the awful strait of death.” S. M. X.

## II

It is true that the time and manner of my death are entirely hidden from me. God keeps this knowledge from me for His own wise reasons. If now I am so careless and heedless of sin, when I know that death may overtake me at any time, how should I be tempted to act if I knew for certain that I had twenty or forty years of life before me ?

One thing is certain—God’s choice about my death and all the circumstances of it is the best for me. When He sees it best, death will come to me, and He—is my Father !

“ Why should I choose ? for in Thy love  
 Most surely I descry  
 A gentler death than I myself  
 Should dare to ask to die.

“ But when, and where, and by what pain  
 All this is one to me ;  
 I only long for such a death  
 As most shall honour Thee.” FABER.



## III

Every time I say the "Hail Mary" I ask Our Blessed Lady to pray for me at the hour of my death. I shall need all the help I can get then, and to whom can I turn better than to my Mother? If I am devout to her now, she will not fail me then. Now when I am in health, now when, perhaps, I think death still far off, I will commit my cause to her. O Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me now and at the hour of my death. Amen.

"Then when the friends of earth are gone,  
Then when our senses sleep,  
Then when our soul must plunge alone  
Into the boundless deep;  
Be it soon or late, be it swift or slow,  
Then, then be it night or day,  
Howe'er that hour shall come or go,  
Pray for us sinners—pray." S. M. N.

## The Particular Judgment

“It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the Judgment” (*Hebrews, ix.*).

### I

THE instant I am dead I shall appear before Our Lord to be judged. Escape will be impossible. Whether I like it or not I shall have to stand before Him then whilst the record of my life is unfolded. Every thought, word, deed, and omission of my life will be judged then—and He who has died for me, He Who has so often absolved me, He Who has visited me in Holy Communion, He Who sees all, knows all, remembers all, He—will be my Judge!

“When, then, . . . thou seest thy Judge,  
The sight of Him will kindle in thy heart  
All tender, gracious, reverential thoughts.  
Thou wilt be sick with love, and yearn for Him,  
And feel as though thou couldst but pity Him,  
That one so sweet should e’er have placed Himself  
At disadvantage such as to be used  
So vilely by a being so vile as thee.”

CARD. NEWMAN.

II

I am preparing my judgment now. Each day I write, as it were, my own sentence. All I think or do or say now, is the matter on which I shall be judged.

If I recalled this thought oftener, I should find it would be a great help to me in temptation. I should say to myself, "How will this appear to me when I stand before my Judge?" How differently I should act if I kept this thought before me. Time is passing, passing, passing — soon, perhaps sooner than I think, the day of my Particular Judgment will dawn. I cannot do better than ask Our Lady to prepare me for that hour. She will not fail me if I put my confidence in her.

"When at the Judgment-seat I stand  
And my dread Saviour see ;  
When hell is raging for my soul,  
Pray thou to God for me."

III

How can I prepare a favourable judgment for myself? Our Lord tells me Himself. "Judge not, and you shall not be judged." "Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned." "Be merciful, and you shall obtain mercy." My conduct towards others, then, in thought, word, and deed, will greatly

influence my judgment. How foolish I shall be if, with such an easy means of appeasing my Judge at my command, I risk hearing those awful words: "Depart from Me." Rather will I strive so to live that I may see Our Lord's smile of welcome and hear him say: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

## Purgatory

“It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins”  
(2 *Mac.*, xii.).

### I

FEW, if any of us, can hope to altogether escape the fire of Purgatory. Some of God's saints have been instantly admitted to the Beatific Vision, but most have been committed for a longer or shorter time to the cleansing fires. How great an idea this gives me of the sanctity of God. “Nothing defiled can enter heaven” (Apoc. xxi.). Every smallest debt of temporal punishment, due either to forgiven mortal sin or to venial sin, must be rigorously paid before I can leave Purgatory. “Amen I say to thee, thou canst not go out from thence till thou pay the last farthing” (St Matt. v.).

How is it that, knowing and believing this as I do, I can be so heedless about doing penance for my sins, so careless about small sins, so remiss in my duty of praying for the dead?

“Help, Lord, the souls which Thou hast made,  
The souls to Thee so dear,  
In prison for the debt unpaid  
Of sins committed here.”

CARD. NEWMAN

## II

There will be many punishments in Purgatory—pains of sense, the pain of fire, the pain of regret for sin, regret for merit lost, and for opportunities wasted. All these things will cause me intense pain, but worst of all will be the separation, temporary though it be, from God. I shall have seen Him for an instant at my judgment, and, having seen Him, I shall thirst for Him with an insatiable thirst.

“Thou wilt hate and loathe thyself, for though  
 Now sinless, thou wilt feel that thou hast sinned  
 As never thou didst feel : and wilt desire  
 To shrink away and hide thee from His sight ;  
 And yet wilt have a longing eye to dwell  
 Within the beauty of His countenance.  
 And these two pains, so counter and so keen,  
 The longing for Him, when thou see'st Him not,  
 The shame of self at thought of seeing Him,  
 Will be thy veriest, sharpest purgatory.”

CARDINAL NEWMAN.

## III

The thought of Purgatory has also its consoling side. Once there, I know that I am safe ; there can be no more doubt or fear then ; my salvation is secure. I shall know that for ever and for ever I am to be with God ; that no temptation can ever harass me again ; that no possible mishap can ever deprive me of eternal bliss. In Purgatory,

too, I shall have the intense joy of knowing that I can never offend God again ; that my poor weak human nature can never triumph again over my better self. I shall know that at last sin is an impossibility for me.

If I am wise I shall do all I possibly can while on earth to shorten my Purgatory, for Purgatory will hold me back from Him Whom I love.

“ In purgatorial flames,  
Brief be my stay ;  
O bid me, if to-day I die,  
Go home to-day.”

S. M. X.

## The General Judgment

“Behold, the Lord cometh, with thousands of His saints, to execute Judgment upon all” (*Jude*, xiv., xv.).

### I

THINK what it will be to see the Son of Man, in His majesty, surrounded by His saints and angels, coming to pronounce judgment upon all mankind.

Our Lord has done everything He could to save us. He became a little Child to attract men's hearts to Himself; He endured every sort of privation and toil and suffering for our sakes; He died for our salvation; He showers blessings and graces upon the world in all ages; but at the Last Day He will come as Judge! The time for mercy will be over then. The great and mighty of this world who have tyrannised over their fellow-men, men and women hardened in sin and worldliness, those who have scoffed at Christ and at His Church, as well as the countless souls who have loved and served Him—all without exception will stand before the King of kings at that last terrible Day to be judged.

“O just avenging Judge, I pray  
In pity take my sins away  
Before Thy great avenging day.”



## II

The thought of the Last Day is well calculated to prove an antidote to the pleasure-loving age in which we live. In the face of that tremendous Judgment, how can I dare to neglect the things of God? How can I dare be anything but wholly and entirely on God's side? Evil may appear to triumph now; the wicked may seem to have a more enjoyable time than the good, but what of the Last Day? How shall I look on things then?

“What shall guilty I then plead,  
Who for me will intercede,  
When the saints shall comfort need?”

“Heavenly King of dreadful splendour,  
Fount of love and pity tender!  
Be my Saviour and Defender.”

## III

If I am faithful to God, how great will be my happiness on the Last Day. My future Judge is my present Witness. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the Living God, but if in life I have done my best to serve Him, then it will be consoling for me to remember that He is Witness—not of my failures only—but of all the good I have ever done, how secret soever it be. Failure according to the standard of my fellow-men

is a small thing, if God, the Searcher of hearts, be satisfied with me. If, then, I am faithful, the day of the Second Coming of Christ will be shorn of its terror, and I can listen to Our Lord addressing these words to me: "When these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your head, because your Redemption is at hand" (St Luke xxi.).

"Recollect, O Love Divine,  
'Twas for this lost sheep of Thine  
Thou Thy glory didst resign ;  
Satest wearied seeking me,  
Sufferest upon the tree—  
Let not vain Thy labour be."

## Hell

“They shall go into everlasting fire” (*St Matt.*, xxv.).

### I

IT is good for me from time to time to recall the thought of hell. St Ignatius bids us pray that if ever “I, through my faults, forget the love of the Eternal Lord, at least the fear of punishment may help me not to fall into sin” (Ex. of St Ignatius).

I will ask Our Lady to take me under her protection, and to hold me by the hand whilst I approach in thought the brink of that terrible abyss, in order so to penetrate myself with its horror that I may never sin.

“O Mary, let no child of thine  
In hell’s eternal exile pine ;  
If time for penance still be mine,  
Mother, the precious gift is thine.”

FABER.

### II

Who can picture the agony of the souls in hell? For ever and for ever they are imprisoned there. No prayers can help

them. There can be no alleviation of their pain—all is blank, dark, hopeless misery.

Think of the agony of the remorse of the lost souls; the tortures of memory, bringing before them their sins, their wilfulness, their graces abused. How vain and wretched now appear the things they preferred to God! How paltry and vile the miserable pleasures for which they have bartered their immortal soul!

“ By my sins I have deserved  
Death and endless misery,  
Hell with all its pains and torments,  
And for all eternity.

“ Jesu! Lord, I ask for mercy,  
Let me not implore in vain;  
All my sins I now detest them,  
Never will I sin again.”

### III

I must enter seriously into myself and ask myself if there is anything which is gradually leading me from God; if there is any occasion of sin which is a danger to me; any person, place, or thing which may risk my eternal salvation. If there is, there is only one thing for me to do—to cast it away from me at any cost. What matter a little pain here, to avoid the eternal tortures of hell-fire? “It is better,” says Our Blessed Lord, “to go into life maimed or lame than having two

hands or two feet to go into hell, into unquenchable fire" (St Mark ix.).

O Lord, my God, give me the grace to turn wholly to Thee, to count no cost too great when it is a question of keeping from offending Thee.

## Heaven

“Everlasting joy shall be unto them” (*Isaias*, lxi.)

### I

HEAVEN! The very word brings before my mind all that I can imagine of most beautiful, most peaceful, most glorious, and most joyous; the satisfaction of every desire; the absence of anything, however small, which could mar my complete happiness. All this the mere word heaven suggests to me. And yet all this is nothing compared to the reality, for “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor. ii.).

“Jerusalem, my happy home,  
When shall I come to thee?  
When will my sorrows have an end,  
Thy joys when shall I see?”

*(Old Lancashire verses of the  
days of persecution.)*

### II

All the joys that I can imagine, and the far greater ones that await me in heaven, are

but accessories to the supreme joy of all—the bliss of the Beatific Vision. “Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy countenance.” It is for this that God has created me—to see, know, and love Him for ever. No wonder that here below I am never entirely at rest, never entirely happy. God does not mean me to find my ultimate happiness except in Him. “Thou hast made me for Thyself, O Lord, and my heart can never be at rest until it rest in Thee” (St Augustine). To be with God, for ever and for ever, without possibility of being separated from Him—this is bliss indeed, and this is Heaven!

### III

Before Our Lord left this earth, He told us that He was going to prepare a place for us in heaven. It is commonly thought that each child of Adam is destined to occupy one of the thrones left vacant by the rebel angels. I can say to myself: My throne is waiting for me; am I so living that I shall deserve to occupy it? Our Lord is preparing my place Himself; He will entrust the work to no one else, for no one else knows me as He does. I can, then, lift up my heart in hope and confidence of the good things that are to come; I can bear the troubles of life bravely when I think of my eternal home and of the

place waiting for me, destined specially for me by my Lord and Master.

“O Paradise ! O Paradise !  
I greatly long to see  
The special place, my dearest Lord  
Is furnishing for me ;

“Where loyal hearts and true  
Stand ever in the light,  
All rapture through and through  
In God's most holy sight.”

FABER.



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