

BV 85 .T3 1867
Taylor, Jeremy, 1613-1667.
Readings for every day in
lent





READINGS

FOR EVERY DAY IN LENT.



✓
READINGS

FOR

EVERY DAY IN LENT.

COMPILED FROM THE WRITINGS OF BISHOP
JEREMY TAYLOR.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "AMY HERBERT," "THE CHILD'S FIRST HISTORY
OF ROME," ETC.



H. B. DURAND, No. 11 BIBLE HOUSE.
1867.

P R E F A C E.



THE following pages have been compiled principally for the use of those young persons who are not likely to be well acquainted with the voluminous works of Bishop Taylor.

The subjects selected have been such as seemed naturally to lead from Repentance and Self-examination to growth in Grace and Christian Perfection; the Sunday meditations being of a different kind, and connected with events in the Life of our Blessed Lord. Very little has been taken either from the "Golden Grove" or the "Holy Living and Dying;" those works being generally well known.

The endeavor to concentrate our thoughts upon some definite subject can scarcely, at any time, be made without profit; and it is humbly trusted, that those who may strive with prayer

and earnest purpose of heart to fix in their minds the ideas suggested for each day, during the coming season of Lent, will find themselves, at the close of it, better enabled to live according to the measures of that "Faith which is a certain image of Eternity, which beholds Heaven at present, and sees how blessed a thing it is to die in God's favor, and to be chimed to our grave with the music of a good conscience."*

* Bp. Taylor's Sermon on the Flesh and the Spirit.

FEB. 1st, 1851.

READINGS FOR LENT.



ASH-WEDNESDAY.

REPENTANCE.

“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.”

MATT. iii. 8.

FROM the beginning of time till now, all things which have come from God have been nothing but emanations of His goodness, clothed in variety of circumstances. He causes us to be born, that we may be capable of His blessings; He causes us to be baptized, that we may have a title to the glorious promises evangelical; He gives us His Son, that we may be rescued from hell; and since the best of men, in the midst of all the great advantages of laws, and examples, and promises, and threatenings, does many things he ought to be ashamed of, and needs to repent of, the very design of our birth and education in the Christian religion is, that we may recover of and cure our follies by the antidote of repentance.

To have our infirmities excused and our sins forgiven, our habits lessened and our malice

cured, after we were wounded, and sick, and dead, and buried, and in the possession of the devil; this was such a blessing, so great riches of the Divine goodness, that it was taught to no religion but the Christian—revealed by no law-giver but Christ.

It is the greatest and the dearest blessing that ever God gave to men, that they may repent; and therefore to deny it, or delay it, is to refuse health brought us by the skill and industry of the physician; it is to refuse liberty indulged to us by our gracious Lord.

The duty of repentance is indispensably required in the danger of death; and he that does not repent when he is arrested with the probability of so sad a change, is uncharitable to himself, and a murderer of his own soul. But so is he, in his proportion, who puts it off one day; because every day of delay is a day of danger; and, certainly, it was none of the least reasons of God's concealing the day of our death, that we might ever stand ready. This is plainly enough taught us by our blessed Saviour, laboriously persuading and commanding us not to defer our repentance, by His parable of the rich man, who promised to himself the pleasures of many years. He reprov'd that folly with, a "Fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

And it may be any man's case.

Think it not, therefore, a hasty commandment, that we are called upon to repent to-day. It was too much that yesterday passed by you: it is late enough, if you do it to-day.

Nothing, indeed, hath made more ample harvests for the devil, than the deferring of repentance upon vain confidences, while we imagine that a few tears, and scatterings of devotion, are enough to expiate the baseness of a long impiety. But repentance implies in it the duty of a life, or of many and great, of long and lasting parts of it. It implies a deep sorrow as the beginning and introduction of this duty. Not a superficial sigh, or tear; not a calling ourselves sinners and miserable persons: but a hearty, pungent sorrow; a sorrow that shall so irreconcile us to sin, as to make us rather choose to die than to sin.

For repentance is a great volume of duty, and godly sorrow is but the frontispiece, or title-page; it is the harbinger or first introduction to it; or, if you will consider it in the words of St. Paul, "Godly sorrow worketh repentance." Sorrow is the parent, and repentance is the product. Ahab had a great sorrow; but it wrought nothing upon his spirit; it did not reconcile his affections to his duty, and his duty to God. Judas had so great a sorrow for betraying the innocent blood of his Lord that it was intolerable to his spirit, and he "burst asunder in the middle." And if mere sorrow be repentance, then hell is

full of penitents; for there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, for evermore.

Let us, therefore, beg of God, as Caleb's daughter did of her father, "Thou hast given me a dry land, give me also a land of waters, a dwelling-place in tears, rivers of tears." "That," as St. Austin's expression is, "because we are not worthy to lift up our eyes to heaven in prayer, yet we may be worthy to weep ourselves blind for sin." The meaning is, that we beg sorrow of God; such a sorrow as shall be an effective principle of arming all our faculties against sin, and heartily setting upon the work of grace, and the persevering labors of a holy life. I shall only add one word to this: that our sorrow for sin is not to be estimated by our tears and our sensible expressions, but by our active hatred and dereliction of sin; and is many times unperceived in outward demonstration.

Let us remember, besides, that repentance is not only an abolition and extinction of the body of sin, a bringing it to the altar, and slaying it before God and all the people; but we must also "mingle gold and rich presents," the oblation of good works and holy habits, with the sacrifice.

In Ezekiel xviii. 21, you shall find it thus described: "But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and

right, he shall surely live—he shall not die.” Or, as it is more fully described in Ezekiel xxxiii. 14, 15: “When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he hath robbed, walk in the statutes of life without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.” Here only is the condition of pardon; to leave all your sins, to keep all God’s statutes, to walk in them—to abide, to proceed, and make progress in them; and this without the interruption of a deadly sin, “without committing iniquity.”

Neither is the duty of repentance to be bought at an easier rate in the New Testament. You may see it described in 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11: “Godly sorrow worketh repentance.” Well, but what is that repentance which is so wrought? This it is: “Behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!” These are the fruits of that sorrow that is effectual: these are the parts of repentance: “clearing ourselves,” of all that is past, and great carefulness for the future; “anger” at ourselves for our old sins, and “fear” lest we commit the like again; “vehement de-

sire" of pleasing God, and "zeal" of holy actions; and a "revenge upon ourselves for our sins," called by St. Paul, in another place, "a judging ourselves, lest we be judged of the Lord."

Since then repentance is a duty of so great and giant-like bulk, let no man crowd it up into so narrow room, as that it be strangled in its birth, for want of time and air to breathe in.

A child, who hath a great way to go before he be wise, may defer his studies, and hope to become learned in his old age, and upon his death-bed; as well as a vicious person may think to recover from all his ignorances, from all his false principles and evil customs, from his wicked inclinations and ungodly habits, from his fondnesses of vice and detestations of virtue, upon his death-bed (I say), when he hath no natural strength, and as little spiritual; when he is criminal and impotent, hardened in his vice and soft in his fears; when he is sick and amazed, and timorous and confounded, and impatient, and extremely miserable.

And it will be a vain question to ask: Must a man repent a year or two, or seven years, or ten, or twenty, before his death? Or what is the last period after which all repentance will be untimely and ineffectual? To this captious question I have many things to oppose.

1st. We have entered into covenant with God,

to serve Him from the day of our baptism to the day of our death. He hath "sworn this oath to us, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered from fear of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life." Now, although God will not forget our infirmities, but pass by the nakedness of an honest, a watchful, and industrious person; yet the covenant He makes with us, is from the day of our first voluntary profession to our grave; and according as we by sins retire from our first undertaking, so our condition is insecure.

2d. Scripture, describing the duty of repenting sinners, names no other time but "to-day:" "*To-day*, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

3d. The duty of a Christian is described in Scripture to be such as requires length of time and a continual industry. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us;" and "consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." So great a preparation is not for the agony and contention of an hour, or a day, or a week; but for the whole life of a Christian, or for great parts of its abode.

He that lives well from his younger years, and enters into the courses of a sober life early, diligently, and vigorously, shall find himself,

after the studies and labors of twenty or thirty years' piety, but a very imperfect person; many degrees of pride left unrooted up, much indevotion and backwardness in religion, many temptations to contest against, and some infirmities which he shall never say he hath mastered. And if we do but consider this, we shall find the work of a holy life is not to be deferred till our days are almost done, till our strengths are decayed, our spirits are weak, and our habits confirmed. For what is very hard to be done, and is always done imperfectly, when there is length of time, and a less work to do, and more abilities to do it withal; when the time is short, and almost expired, and the work made difficult and vast, and the strength weaker, and the faculties are disabled, will seem little less than absolutely impossible.

I shall end this general consideration with the question of the Apostle: "If the righteous scarcely be saved,"—if it be so difficult to overcome our sins, and obtain virtuous habits—difficult, I say, to a righteous, a sober, and well-living person,—“where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”

He that hath lived in sin will die in sorrow.

PRAYER.

O Almighty God, Father of Mercies, Judge of all the world, who hast in our Lord Jesus Christ established the covenant of repentance, and promised pardon to all of them that confess their sins and forsake them, be pleased to work in me what Thou hast commanded should be in me. Give me, O Lord, the grace of an earnest sorrow—turn my sin into repentance, and let my repentance proceed to pardon; and teach me so diligently to watch over all my actions that I may never transgress Thy holy laws willingly, but that it may be the work of my life to obey Thee, the joy of my soul to please Thee, and the perfection of my desires to live with Thee in the kingdom of Thy grace and glory, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FIRST THURSDAY IN LENT.

GODLY FEAR.

“Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.”

HEB. xii. 28, 29.

“OUR God is a consuming fire.” He was so to them that brake the law, but He will be much more to them that disobey His Son. He made great changes then; but those which remain are far greater, and His terrors are infinitely more intolerable; and therefore, although Christ came not in the spirit of Elias, but with meekness and gentle insinuations, soft as the breath of heaven, not willing to disturb the softest stalk of a violet, yet His second coming shall be with terrors such as shall amaze all the world, and dissolve it into ruin and a chaos.

The effects of this consideration are reverence and godly fear. They are the duties of every Christian: they are the graces of God.

I shall not here insist upon the general reasons of fear which concern every man, though it may be most certain that every one hath cause to fear, even the most confident and holy;

because his way is dangerous and narrow, troublesome and uneven, full of ambushes and pitfalls; and I remember what Polynices said, in the tragedy, when he was unjustly thrown from his father's kingdom, and refused to treat of peace but with a sword in his hand—"Every step is a danger for a valiant man, when he walks in his enemy's country." And so it is with us; we are espied by God and observed by angels; we are betrayed within and assaulted without; the devil is our enemy, and we are fond of his mischiefs; he is crafty, and we love to be abused; he is malicious, and we are credulous; he is powerful, and we are weak; he is too ready of himself, and yet we desire to be tempted; the world is alluring, and we consider not its vanity; sin puts on all pleasures, and yet we take it though it puts us to pain. In short, we are vain and credulous, and sensual and trifling; we are tempted and tempt ourselves, and we sin frequently and contract evil habits, and they become second natures and bring in a second death, miserable and eternal. Every man hath need to fear, because every man hath weakness, and enemies, and temptations, and dangers, and causes of his own. But I shall only instance some peculiar sorts of men, who, it may be, least think of it, and therefore have most cause to fear.

First are those of whom the Apostle speaks:

“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” In persons of ordinary, even course of life, we find in it too often that they have no checks of conscience, or sharp reflections upon their condition. They fall into no horrid crimes, and they think all is peace round about them. But you must know, that as grace is the improvement and bettering of nature, so it grows in natural measures by supernatural aids. It hath its degrees, its strengths and weaknesses, its promotions and arrests, its stations and declensions, its direct sicknesses and indispositions. And there is a state of grace that is next to sin. It inclines to evil, and dwells with a temptation; its acts are imperfect, and the man is within the kingdom, but he lives in its borders. These men have cause to fear. These men seem to stand, but they reel indeed, and decline towards danger and death. “Let these men (saith the Apostle) take heed lest they fall,” for they shake already. Such are persons whom the Scriptures call “weak in faith.” I do not mean new-beginners in religion, but such who have dwelt long in its confines, and yet never enter into the heart of the country; such whose faith is tempted, whose piety does not grow; such who yield a little; people that do all they can lawfully do, and study how much is lawful, that they may lose nothing of a temporal interest; people that will

not be martyrs in any degree, and yet have good affections; and love the cause of religion, and yet will suffer nothing for it. These are such of which the Apostle speaks: "They think they stand;" and so they do, upon one leg; that is, so long as they are untempted; but when the tempter comes, then they fall and bemoan themselves, that by losing peace they lost their inheritance. There are a great many sorts of such persons. Some, when they are full, are content, and rejoice in God's providence, but murmur and are amazed when they fall into poverty. They are temperate and sober, if you let them alone at home; but call them abroad, and they will lose their sober thoughts. These men, in these estates, think they stand; but God knows they are soon weary and stand stiff as a cane, which the heat of the Syrian star or the flames of the sun cannot bend—but one sigh of a northern wind shakes them into the tremblings of a palsy.

They also have great reason to fear whose repentance is broke into fragments, and is never a whole or entire change of life. I mean those that resolve against a sin, and pray against it, and hate it in all the resolutions of their understanding, till that unlucky period comes in which they use to act it; but then they sin as certainly as they will infallibly repent it when they have done. There are a very great many

Christians who yet feel this feverish repentance to be their best state of health. They fall, certainly, in the returns of the same circumstances, or at a certain distance of time; but God knows they do not get the victory over their sin, but are within its power. For this is certain: they who sin and repent, and sin again in the same or like circumstances, are in some degree under the power and dominion of sin. Though it be the least habit, yet a habit it is. Every course, or order, or method of sin; every constant or periodical return; every return that can be regularly observed, or which a man can foresee, or probably foretell,—even then, when he does not intend it, but prays against it, every such sin is to be reckoned, not upon the accounts of a pardonable infirmity, but it is an evil state; such a thing as the man ought to fear concerning himself, lest he be surprised, and called from this world before this evil state be altered; for if he be, his securities are but slender, and his hopes will deceive him. And let it be considered what growth that repentance can make that is never above a week old, that is forever in its infancy, that is still in its birth, that never gets the dominion over sin.

They have great reason to fear concerning their condition; who, having been in the state of grace; who, having begun to lead a good life, and given their names to God by solemn delib-

erate acts of will and understanding, and made some progress in the way of godliness, if they shall retire to folly, and unravel all their holy vows, and commit those evils, from which they formerly ran as from a fire, or inundation. Their case hath in it so many evils, that they have great reason to fear the anger of God and concerning the final issue of their souls. For, to return to folly hath in it many evils beyond the common state of sin and death; and such evils which are most contrary to the hopes of pardon.

Above all, they have great reason to fear whose sins are not yet remitted; for they are within the dominion of sin—within the kingdom of darkness. In this case, it is natural to fear. For if men consider their condition, and know that all the felicity, and all the security, they can have, depends upon God's mercy, pardoning their sins,—they cannot choose but fear infinitely, if they have not reason to hope that their sins are pardoned.

But “whatsoever is terrible, is destructive of that thing for which it is so;” and if we fear the evil effects of sin, we ought to fear its alluring face too. Let us be so afraid that we may not dare to refuse to hear Him, whose throne is heaven, whose voice is thunder, whose tribunal is clouds, whose seat is the right hand of God, whose word is with power, whose law is given with mighty demonstration of the Spirit; who

shall reward with heaven and joys eternal, and who punishes His rebels, that will not have Him to reign over them, with brimstone and fire, with a worm that never dies, and a fire that never is quenched. Let us fear Him who is terrible in His judgments, just in His dispensation, secret in His providence, severe in His demands, gracious in His assistances, bountiful in His gifts, and is never wanting to us in what we need. And if all this be not argument strong enough to produce fear, and that fear great enough to secure obedience, all arguments are useless, all discourses are vain, the grace of God is ineffective, and we are dull as the Dead Sea, inactive as a rock, and we shall never dwell with God in any sense, but as "He is a consuming fire," that is, dwell in everlasting burnings.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, who hast promised to multiply Thy blessings upon them that fear Thee, teach me the fear of the Lord; and let Thy Spirit so assist me, that I may walk in Thy ways with great carefulness in all my actions, and much diligence to perform Thy holy will; that I may receive the blessings of the righteous, and may rejoice in the peace of Thy Church, waiting for the consummation of glory in Thy eternal kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FIRST FRIDAY IN LENT.

DEATH.

“For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person.” 2 SAM. xiv. 14.

WHEN our blessed Saviour and His disciples viewed the temple, some one among them cried out: “Master, behold what fair, what great stones are here!” Christ made no other reply, but foretold their dissolution: “The time shall come, that there shall not be left one stone upon another.” The whole temple, and the religion, the ceremonies ordained by God, and the nation beloved by God, and the fabric erected for the service of God, shall run to their own period, and lie down in their several graves. Whatsoever had a beginning can also have an ending; and it shall die, unless it be daily watered with the purls flowing from the fountain of life, and refreshed with the dew of heaven and the wells of God; and, therefore, God had provided a tree in paradise, to have supported Adam in his artificial immortality. Health and life were to descend upon him from heaven, and

he was to suck life from a tree on earth ; himself being but engrafted into a tree of life, and adopted into the condition of an immortal nature. But he that in the best of his days was but a scion of this tree of life, by his sin was cut off from thence quickly, and planted upon thorns ; and his portion was forever after among the flowers, which to-day spring and look like health and beauty, and in the evening they are sick, and at night are dead, and the oven is their grave. And as before, even from our first spring from the dust on earth, we might have died, if we had not been preserved by the continual flux of a rare providence ; so now, that we are reduced to the laws of our own nature, “ we must needs die.”

It is natural, and therefore necessary : it is become a punishment to us, and therefore it is unavoidable ; and if a man can be stronger than nature, or can wrestle with a decree of heaven, or can escape from a Divine punishment by his own arts, so that neither the power nor the providence of God, nor the laws of nature, nor the hands of eternal predestination can hold him, then he may live beyond the fate and period of flesh, and last longer than a flower : but if all these can hold us and tie us to conditions, then we must lay our heads down upon a turf, and entertain creeping things in the cells and little chambers of our eyes and dwell with worms, till time and death shall be no more.

“We must needs die.” That is our sentence. But that is not all. “We are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.”

Stay—we are as water, weak and of no consistence; always descending, abiding in no certain place, unless where we are detained with violence; and every little breath of wind makes us rough and tempestuous, and troubles our faces; every trifling accident discomposes us. And as the face of the waters, wafting in a storm, so wrinkles itself that it makes upon its forehead furrows deep and hollow like a grave; so do our great and little cares and trifles first make the wrinkles of old age, and then they dig a grave for us. There is in nature nothing so contemptible, but it may meet with us in such circumstances that it may be too hard for us in our weaknesses; for men die without rule, and with and without occasion. A man in a long consumption is fallen under one of the solemnities and preparations to death; but at the same instant, the most healthful person is as near death upon a more fatal and a more sudden, but a less discerned cause. There are but few persons upon whose foreheads every man can read the sentence of death, written in the lines of a lingering sickness; but they sometimes hear the passing bell ring for stronger men, even long before their own knell calls at the house of their

mother to open her womb, and make a bed for them.

No man is surer of to-morrow than the weakest of his brethren; and there is no age of man but it hath, proper to itself, some posterns and outlets for death, besides those infinite and open ports out of which myriads of men and women every day pass into the dark, and the land of forgetfulness.

Infancy hath life but in effigy, or like a spark dwelling in a pile of wood: the candle is so newly lighted, that every little shaking of the taper, and every ruder breath of air, puts it out and it dies. Childhood is so tender, yet so unwary; so soft to all the impressions of chance, and yet so forward to run into them, that God knew there could be no security without the care and vigilance of an angel-keeper; and the eyes of parents and the arms of nurses, the provisions of art and all the effects of human love and providence, are not sufficient to keep one child from horrid mischiefs, from strange and early calamities and deaths, unless a messenger be sent from heaven to stand sentinel, and watch the very playings and sleepings, the eatings and drinkings, of the children.

Neither in the middle way is the case altered. For there are so many diseases in man that are not understood;—so many new ones every year;—the symptoms are oftentimes so alike;—some-

times so hidden and fallacious;—sometimes none at all;—and then the diseases in the inward parts of the body are oftentimes such to which no application can be made; and all this while the men are sick, and they take things that certainly make them sicker for the present, and very uncertainly restore health for the future; while besides nature and chance, and the mistakes of art, men die with their own sins, and then enter into the grave in haste and passion, and pull the heavy stone of the monument upon their own heads.

We throw away our lives as if they were unprofitable (and, indeed, most men make them so): we let our years slip through our fingers like water; and nothing is to be seen, but like a shower of tears upon a spot of ground;—there is a grave digged, and a solemn mourning, and a great talk in the neighborhood, and when the days are finished, they shall be; and they shall be remembered no more. And that is like water too,—when it is spilt, “it cannot be gathered up again.”

There is no redemption in the grave.

Men live in their course and by turns; their light burns awhile, and then it burns blue and faint; and men go to converse with spirits, and then they reach the taper to another; and as the hours of yesterday can never return again, so neither can the man whose hours they were,

and who lived them over once,—he shall never come to live them again, and live them better.

“Neither doth God respect the person of any man:” the rich is not protected for favor, nor the poor for pity; the old man is not revered for his age, nor the infant regarded for his tenderness. Youth and beauty, learning and prudence, wit and strength, lie down equally in the dishonors of the grave. All men, and all natures, and all persons, resist the addresses and solemnities of death, and strive to preserve a miserable and unpleasant life; and yet they all sink down and die. For so have I seen the pillars of a building assisted with artificial props, bending under the pressure of a roof, and pertinaciously resisting the infallible and prepared ruin, till the determined day comes, and then the burden sunk upon the pillars, and disordered the aids and auxiliary rafters into a common ruin, and a ruder grave.

Let us not think to be excepted or deferred. We have lived so many years, and every day and every minute we make an escape from those thousands of dangers and deaths that encompass us round about; and such escapings we must reckon to be an extraordinary fortune; and, therefore, that it cannot last long. Vain are the thoughts of man, who, when he is young or healthful, thinks he hath a long thread of life to run over, and that it is violent and strange

for young persons to die, and natural and proper only for the aged. That is more natural which hath more natural causes, and that is more natural which is most common. But to die with age is an extreme rare thing; and there are more persons carried forth to burial before the five-and-thirtieth year of their age than after it; and, therefore, let no vain confidence make you hope for long life. If you have lived but little, and are still in youth, remember that now you are in your biggest throng of dangers, both of body and soul. But if you be old, you have escaped long and wonderfully, and the time of your escaping is out. You must not forever think to live upon wonders, or that God will work miracles to satisfy your longing follies, and unreasonable desires of living longer to sin and to the world.

Go home and think to die; and what you would choose to be doing when you die, that do daily: for you will all come to that pass to rejoice that you did so, or wish that you had. That will be the condition of every one of us, for "God regardeth no man's person."

PRAYER.

O Eternal and most Holy Saviour, who by death hast overcome death, and made it to become one of the gates of heaven; let Thy grace,

I beseech Thee, accompany me all the days of my life, and grant me so perfectly to obey Thy commandments, that Thou mayest be gracious unto me in the pardon of my sins, and that I may die the death of the righteous in the communion and peace of the Church. And when my days are gone, and my years are brought to an end, like a tale that is told, let my soul rest with Thee in safety and joy, waiting for the glories of Thy kingdom; O Gracious and Merciful Redeemer. Amen.

FIRST SATURDAY IN LENT.

THE JUDGMENT DAY.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” 2 Cor. v. 10.

I HAVE read a story, that a young gentleman, being passionately by his mother dissuaded from entering into the severe courses of a religious life, broke from her importunity by saying, “I am resolved, by all means, to save my soul.” But when he had undertaken a rule with passion he performed it carelessly and remissly, and was but lukewarm in his religion, and quickly proceeded to a melancholy and wearied spirit, and from thence to a sickness and the neighborhood of death. But, falling into an agony and a fantastic vision, dreamed that he saw himself summoned before God’s angry throne, and from thence hurried into a place of torment, where, espying his mother, full of scorn, she upbraided him with his former answer, and asked him why he did not save his soul by all means, according as he undertook. But when the sick man

awaked, and recovered, he made his words good indeed; and prayed frequently, and fasted severely, and labored humbly, and conversed charitably, and mortified himself severely, and refused such secular solaces which other good men received to refresh and sustain their infirmities, and gave no other account to them that asked him but this: "If I could not in my dream endure my mother's upbraiding my follies and weak religion, how shall I be able to suffer, that God should reject me at doomsday, and the angels reproach my lukewarmness, and the devils aggravate my sins, and all the saints of God deride my follies and hypocrisies?"

The effect of that man's consideration may serve to actuate a meditation in every one of us, for we shall all be at that pass, that unless our shame and sorrows be cleansed by a timely repentance, and covered by the robe of Christ, we shall suffer the anger of God, the scorn of saints and angels, and our own shame in the general assembly of all mankind.

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

This is that which the Apostle, in the next verse, calls "the terror of the Lord." It is *His* terror, because Himself shall appear in His dress of majesty and robes of justice; and it is *His*

terror, because it is, of all things in the world, the most formidable in itself, and it is most fearful to us; where shall be acted the interest and final sentence of eternity.

For the persons to be judged are you, and I, and all the world; kings and priests, nobles and learned, the crafty and the easy, the wise and the foolish, the rich and the poor, the prevailing tyrant and the oppressed party, shall all appear to receive their sentence; and this is so far from abating any thing of its terror and our dear concernment, that it much increases it; since in final and extreme events, the multitude of sufferers does not lessen but increase the suffering.

He that stands in a churchyard in the time of a great plague, and hears the passing-bell perpetually telling the sad stories of death, and sees crowds of infected bodies passing to their graves; and others sick and tremulous; and death, dressed up in all the images of sorrow, round about him; is not supported in his spirit by the variety of his sorrow. And at doomsday, when the terrors are universal—besides that it is itself so much greater, because it can affright the whole world—it is also made greater by communication and a sorrowful influence. And that shriek must needs be terrible, when millions of men and women, at the same instant, shall fearfully cry out, and the noise shall mingle with the trumpet of the archangel, with the thunders of the dying

and groaning heavens, and the crash of the dissolving world ; when the whole fabric of nature shall shake into dissolution and eternal ashes.

But this general consideration may be heightened by other circumstances.

Consider what an infinite multitude of angels, and men, and women, shall there appear. It is a huge assembly when the men of one kingdom, the men of one age in a single province, are gathered together into heaps and confusion of disorder ; but then, all kingdoms of all ages, all the armies that ever mustered, all the world that Augustus Cæsar taxed, all those hundreds of millions that were slain in all the Roman wars ; all these, and all that can come into numbers, and that did descend from the loins of Adam, shall at once be represented. To which account, if we add the armies of heaven, the nine orders of blessed spirits, and the infinite numbers in every order, we may suppose the numbers fit to express the majesty of that God, and the terror of that Judge, who is the Lord and Father of all that unimaginable multitude.

And this infinite multitude of men, women, angels, and devils, must needs have influence upon every spirit that shall there appear. For the transactions of that court are not like orations spoken by a Grecian orator in the circles of his people—heard by them that crowd nearest him ; or that sound limited by the circles of

air, or the inclosure of a wall: but every thing is represented to every person, and that then shall be spoken by the trumpet of an archangel upon the house-top—the highest battlements of heaven, which thou didst act secretly.

That all may think themselves concerned in this consideration, let us remember than even the righteous and most innocent shall pass through a severe trial. He that hath the greatest cause of confidence, although he runs to no rocks to hide him, yet he runs to the protection of the cross, and hides himself under the shadow of Divine mercies; and he that shall receive the absolution of the blessed sentence, shall also suffer the terrors of the day, and the fearful circumstances of Christ's coming. And if St. Paul, whose conscience accused him not, yet durst not be too confident, because he was not hereby justified, but might be found faulty by the severer judgment of his Lord; how shall we appear, with all our crimes and evil habits round about us?

But the matter is still of more concernment. The Pharisees believed that they were innocent, if they abstained from criminal actions, such as were punishable by the judge; and many Christians think all is well with them, if they abstain from such sins as have a name in the table of their laws. But, because some sins are secret and not discernible to man; others are public

but not punished, because they were without external mischiefs, and only provocations against God; men think that in their concernments they have no place. Such are jeering, and many instances of wantonness and revelling, doing petty spites, and rudeness, and churlishness, lying, and pride; and some are very like virtues, as too much gentleness and slackness in government, or too great severity and rigor of animadversion or bitterness in reproof of sinners. But when the day of judgment comes, these shall be called to a severe account; for the Judge is omniscient, and knows all things; and His tribunal takes cognizance of all causes, and hath a coercive for all.

Then shall men that belong not to the portion of life have three sorts of accusers.

1st. Christ, Himself, who is their Judge.

2d. Their own conscience, whom they have injured and blotted with characters of death and foul dishonor.

3d. The devil, their enemy, whom they served.

Christ shall be their accuser—and the accusation will be nothing else but a plain representation of those artifices and assistances, those bonds and invitations, those constrainings and importunities which our dear Lord used to us, to make it almost impossible to lie in sin, and necessary to be saved. For God did not only give His Son for an example, and the Son gave

Himself a price for us, but both gave the Holy Spirit to assist us in mighty graces; and we are to be happy hereafter, if we suffer God to make us happy here; and things are so ordered, that a man must take more pains to perish than to be happy. And as our conscience will then represent all our sins to us, so the Judge will represent all His Father's kindnesses, as Nathan did to David, when he was to make the justice of the Divine sentence appear against him.

Our conscience shall be our accuser—we shall be condemned for the evils that we have done, and shall then remember; God, by His power, wiping away the dust from the tables of our memory, and taking off the consideration, and the voluntary neglect, and rude shufflings of our cases of conscience. For all things are laid up safely; and though we draw a curtain of a cobweb over them, and sew fig-leaves before our shame, yet God shall draw away the curtain, and forgetfulness shall be no more.

The devils will be our accusers—and they will do it with malicious and evil purposes; and therefore God, who delights that His mercy should triumph, and His goodness prevail over all the malice of men and devils, hath appointed One whose office is to reprove the accuser, and to resist the enemy—to be a defender of their cause who belong to God.

The devil shall accuse the brethren, that is,

the saints and servants of God, and shall tell concerning their follies and infirmities, the sins of their youth, and the weakness of their age—the imperfect grace and the long schedule of omissions of duty—those things which themselves, by strict examination, find themselves guilty of, and have confessed.

But the Holy Spirit, that maketh intercession for us, shall then also interpose, and against all these things shall oppose the passion of our blessed Lord; and upon all their defects shall cast the robe of His righteousness; and the sins of their youth shall not prevail so much as the repentance of their age; and their omissions be excused by probable intervening causes, and their little escapes shall appear single and in disunion, because they were always kept asunder by penitential prayers and sighings; and their seldom returns of sin by their daily watchfulness; and their often infirmities by the sincerity of their souls; and their scruples by their zeal; and their passions by their love: and all by the mercies of God and the sacrifice which their Judge offered, and the Holy Spirit made effective by daily graces and assistances. These, therefore, infallibly go to the portion of the right hand, because the Lord our God shall answer for them.

“But as for the wicked, it is not so with them;” for cannot the accuser truly say to the

Judge concerning such persons : "They were thine by creation, but mine by their own choice. Thou didst redeem them indeed, but they sold themselves to me for a trifle, or for an unsatisfying interest. Thou diedst for them, but they obeyed my commandments. I gave them nothing—I promised them nothing but the pleasure of a night, or the joys of madness, or the delights of a disease. I never hanged upon the cross three long hours for them, nor endured the labors of a poor life thirty-three years together for their interest; only when they were Thine by the merit of Thy death, they quickly became mine by the demerit of their ingratitude; and when Thou hadst clothed their soul with Thy robe, and adorned them by Thy graces, we stripped them naked as their shame, and only put on a robe of darkness; and they thought themselves secure, and went dancing to their grave, like a drunkard to a fight, or a fly unto a candle; and, therefore, they that did partake with us in our faults, must divide with us in our portion and fearful interest!"

I shall only add what the patriarch of Alexandria told an old religious person in his hermitage. Having asked him what he found in that desert, he was answered only this: "To judge and condemn myself perpetually; that is the employment of my solitude." The patriarch answered: "There is no other way." By ac-

cusing ourselves we shall make the devil's malice useless, and our own consciences clear, and be reconciled to the Judge by the severities of an early repentance, and then we need to fear no accusers.

PRAYER.

O Lord our King, Lord of the whole earth, Judge of all the world, from whom cometh both pardon and punishment, have mercy upon me now, at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment. Sanctify me with Thy grace that I may rejoice in the remembrance of Thy holiness; and in the Day of great terror, when a fire shall go forth from thy presence to burn up Thy enemies on every side, preserve me from eternal darkness, and grant me the light of Thy Countenance, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” MATT. iv. 1.

No sooner had the voice of God pronounced Jesus to be the well-beloved Son of God, but the devil thought it of great concernment to tempt Him, with all his malice and his art; and that is the condition of all those, whom God's grace hath separated from the common expectations and societies of the world: and therefore the son of Sirach gave good advice: “My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation.” For not only the spirits of darkness are exasperated at the declension of their own kingdom, but also the nature of those graces which holy persons exercise in their lives is apt to be interrupted by weariness, to grow insipid by tediousness of labor, to be omitted by the diversions of society and secular occasions; so that to acquire every new degree of virtue, to continue the holy fires of zeal in their just proportion, and to reject the invitations of the world, which are the proper em-

ployment of the sons of God, is a perpetual difficulty; and every possibility of prevaricating the strictness of a duty, is a temptation and insecurity to them who have begun to serve God in hard battles.

The Holy Spirit did drive Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And though we are bound to pray instantly, that we fall into no temptation, yet if, by Divine permission, we be engaged in an action or course of life that is full of temptation and empty of comfort, let us apprehend it as a designation of that way in which we must glorify God; but no argument of disfavor; since our dearest Lord, the most Holy Jesus, who could have driven the devil away by the breath of His mouth, yet was, by the Spirit of His Father, permitted to a trial and molestation by the spirits of darkness. And this is St. James's counsel: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye enter into divers temptations; knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience."

As soon as it was permitted to the devil to tempt our Lord, he, like fire, had no power to suspend his act, but was as entirely determined by the fulness of his malice as a natural agent by the appetites of nature; that we may know to whom we owe the happiness of all those hours and days of peace, in which we sit under the trees of paradise and see no serpent encir-

cling the branches, and presenting us with fair fruit to ruin us. It is the mercy of God we have the quietness of a minute; for if the devil's chain were taken off he would make our very beds a torment, our tables to be a snare, and every sense should have an object of delight and danger. But the Holy Jesus having been assaulted by the devil, and felt his malice by the experiments of humanity, is become so merciful a High Priest, and so sensible of our sufferings and danger, by the apprehensions of compassions, that He hath put a hook into the nostrils of Leviathan; and although the relics of seven nations be in our borders, and the fringes of our country, yet we live as safe as did the Israelites, upon whom sometimes an inroad and invasion was made, and sometimes they had rest forty years; and when the storm came, some remedy was found out by His grace, by whose permission the tempest was stirred up. And we find many persons, who, in seven years, meet not with a violent temptation to a crime, but their battles are against impediments and retardations of improvement. For God impedes the devil's rage, and infatuates his counsels; He diverts his malice and defeats his purposes; He suffers him to walk in solitary places, and yet fetters him, that he cannot disturb the peace of a child; He hath given him mighty power, and yet a young maiden that resists him shall make him flee

away ; He gave him power over the winds, and made him prince of the air ; and yet the breath of a holy prayer can drive him as far as the utmost sea ; and it is by the grace and mercy of God, put into the power of every Christian, to do that which God, through Jesus Christ, will accept to salvation ; and neither men nor devils shall hinder it, unless we list ourselves.

PRAYER.

O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Giver of all grace, the Author of all ghostly strength, hear, I beseech, my prayers and supplications, and deliver me from all temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Let me never want Thy help in my needs, nor Thy comfort in the day of danger and calamity ; but so strengthen me with Thy grace, that I may fight a good fight, and conquer, and finally be crowned with a crown of righteousness, through the mercies of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

FIRST MONDAY IN LENT.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.” 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

“It is the beginning of wisdom to know a man’s own weaknesses and failings in things of greatest necessity;” and we have here so many objects to furnish out this knowledge, that we find it with the longest and latest, before it be obtained. A man does not begin to know himself till he be old, and then he is well stricken in death. A man’s heart being at first like a plain table—unspotted, indeed, but then there is nothing legible in it. As soon as ever we ripen towards the imperfect uses of our reason, we write upon this table such crooked characters, such imperfect configurations, and stain it with so many blots and vicious inspersions, that there is nothing worth the reading in our hearts for a great while; and when education and ripeness, reason and experience, Christian philosophy and the grace of God, have made fair impressions, and written the law in our hearts with the finger of God’s Holy Spirit, we blot out this handwrit-

ing of God's ordinances, or mingle it with false principles and interlinings of our own; we disorder the method of God, or deface the truth of God.

Our hearts are blind, wilfully blind. We are false ourselves, and dare not trust God. We love to be deceived, and are angry if we be told so. We love to seem virtuous, and yet hate to be so. We believe things, not for their reasons and proper arguments, but as they serve our turns, be they true or false. We are busy in the faults of others, and negligent of our own. We live the life of spies, striving to know others, and to be unknown ourselves; and if I should gather the abuses, and impieties, and deceptions of the heart into one table, I fear they would seem remediless, and beyond the cure of watchfulness and religion.

Indeed, they are great and many; but the grace of God is greater; and "if iniquity abounds," then "doth grace superabound," and that is our comfort and our medicine. But let us watch our heart at every turn—let us suspect it as an enemy: let us "judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord;" for our examination of ourselves will prevent the horrors of the eternal scrutiny; our condemnation of our sins will prevent God's condemnation of us for them; and when we examine so as to judge, and so condemn our sins that we approve

ourselves to God and our own consciences—then we have examined rightly.

Some sins are so notorious, that they go before unto judgment and condemnation, and they need no examining; and whatsoever is not done against our wills, cannot be besides our knowledge, and so cannot need examination, but remembering only. And, therefore, I do not call upon the drunkard to examine himself concerning temperance; or the oppressor concerning his cruel covetousness; or the customary swearer concerning his profaneness. No man needs much inquiry to know whether a man be alive or dead when he hath lost a vital part. But this caution is given to the returning sinner, to the repenting man; to him that weeps for his sins, and leaves what was the shame of his face and the reproach of his heart.

For we are quickly apt to think we are washed enough; and having remembered our falls, we groan in method, and weep at certain times; we bid ourselves be sorrowful, and tune our heart-strings to the accent and key of the present solemnity; and as sorrow enters in a dress and imagery when we bid her, so she goes away when the scene is done. Here, here it is that we are to examine—whether shows do make a real change; whether shadows can be substances and whether to begin a good work

splendidly can effect all the purposes of its designation.

And, in this examination, take no accounts of yourself by your thoughts and resolutions in the days of religion and solemnity; but examine how it is with you in the days of ordinary conversation, and in the circumstances of secular employments. For he that puts on fine clothes for one day or two, must not suppose himself to be that prince which he only personates. We dress ourselves upon a day of religion, and then we cannot endure to think on sin; and, if we do, we sigh; and when we sigh, we pray, and suppose that if we might die upon that day, it would be a good day's work, for we could not die in a better time. But let us not deceive ourselves. That is our picture that is like us every day in the week; and if you wear the same habits of virtue every day in the week as you put on upon a Communion day, you have more reason to be satisfied than by all the extempore piety and solemn religion, that rises at the sound of a bell, and keeps her time by the calendar of the Church more than by the laws of God.

Try, also, whether your resolutions are likely to hold; but here you must not rely upon words, but place yourself in the scene and circumstances of your temptation, and try whether you be likely to hold out, when sin comes with

all the offers of advantage. You resolve against all intemperate anger, and you deny the importunity of many trifling occurrences; but consider, if you be provoked, and if you be despised, can your flesh and blood endure it then? It is nothing to despise a cheap sin and a common temptation, but art thou strong enough to overcome the strongest argument that thy sin hath?

Examine thyself here wisely and severely; but only by what is likely to fall upon you actually. Do not ask yourself whether you would endure the rack for God, or the application of burning basins to the eyes, or the torment of a slow fire, or whether you had rather go to hell than commit a sin; this is too fantastic a trial. And when God—it may be—knowing your weakness, will never put you to it really, do you not tempt yourself by fancy and an afflictive representment. He that tries himself further than he hath need of, is like Palæmon's shepherd, who, fearing the foot-bridge was not strong enough—to try it, loaded it so long, till, by his unequal trial, he broke that which would have borne a bigger burden than he had to carry over it. Some things will better suffer a long usage than an unequal trial.

But when any man hath thus examined himself, by whatsoever signs he is usually made confident, let him be sure to make abatements of

his confidence, if he have found that he hath failed already, in despite of all his arts and all his purposes.

He that hath broken his word with me, when it was in his power to keep it, hath destroyed my confidence in him; and if we have failed of our promises to God for many times, though we have great reason to rejoice in God's long-suffering and infinite patience, yet, by any signs which can be given, we have no reason to trust ourselves.

Above all, let us betake ourselves, in our examinations, to the solid and material practices of a religious life. Many times we have seeming peace, when our open enemies are changed into false friends, and we think ourselves holy persons, because we are quit of open crimes, and yet we are dying with spiritual. It is an easy thing to reprove a murderer, and to chide a foolish drunkard; to make a liar blush, and a thief to run away. But you may be secretly proud, when no man shall dare tell you so; and have a secret envy, and yet keep company with the best and most religious persons. A little examination will serve your turn to know whether you have committed adultery, or be a swearer; but to know whether your intentions be holy, whether you love the praise of men more than the praise of God, whether religious or secular interest be the dearer, whether there be

any hypocrisy or secret malice in your heart, hath something of more secret consideration.

These things must be examined; not that it can be thought that a man can ever be without fault, but that he must cherish none; he must leave none unexamined; he must discover as much as he can, and crucify all that he can discover. He that prays often, and reproaches him that does not; and gives alms, and secretly undervalues him that cannot; or is of a right opinion, but curses him that is of the wrong; or leaves his ambitious pursuits and vain-glorious purposes, but sits at home and is idle; is like a man who stands by a fire in a wide and a cold room: he scorches on one side, and freezes on the other; whereas the habits of virtue are like a great mantle, and the man is well and warm all over. And when from crimes which bring shame, a man falls into spiritual crimes, which most men let alone, he causes no joy before the angels; and because he does not examine wisely and judge severely, he is discerned by God, and shall be judged, when to be "judged," means all one with being condemned.

PRAYER.

O Eternal and most Glorious God, who dwellest on high, and yet humblest Thyself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth. Thou

hast searched me, O Lord, and known me; Thou understandest my thoughts afar off, and art acquainted with all my ways. Be pleased to impart unto Thy servant a ray of thy heavenly light; open mine eyes that I may see the wondrous things of Thy law. Set all my sins before my face, that I may speedily, and earnestly, and perfectly, repent and forsake them all. Give me a sight of my infirmitics, that I may watch against them; discover to me all my evil principles, that I may reform them; and whatsoever is wanting in me, whereby I may please Thee and perfect my duty, I beg of Thee to reveal that also unto me; so that approving my actions to my conscience, and my conscience to Thy law, I may be approved by Thee in the great day of examination of all the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FIRST TUESDAY IN LENT.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” MATT. xxii. 37.

THE first commandment Christ often repeated and enforced, as being the basis of all religion. “Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord;” and “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart; and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” This is the first commandment; that is, this comprehends all that which is moral and eternal in the first table of the decalogue.

Love is the greatest thing that God can give us: for Himself is love; and it is the greatest thing we can give to God; for it will also give ourselves, and carry with it all that is ours. The Apostle calls it the bond of perfection; it is the old, and it is the new, and it is the great commandment. It does the work of all other graces, without any instrument but its own immediate virtue. For love does all things which may please the beloved person; it performs all

his commandments; it does all the intimations and secret significations of his pleasure; it gives away all things, that so it may advance the interest of the beloved person; it suffers all things that are imposed by its beloved, or that can happen for his sake, or that intervene in his service, cheerfully, sweetly, willingly. Love is also impatient of any thing that may displace the beloved person; it contracts the same relations, and marries the same friendships and the same hatreds: and all affection to a sin is perfectly inconsistent with the love of God; for that allows not to itself any infirmity which it strives not to master; aiming at what it cannot yet reach; desiring to be of an angelical purity, and of a perfect innocence, and a seraphical fervor, and fears every image of offence. This is the curiosity and niceness of Divine love; this is the fear of God, and is the daughter and production of love.

The consideration of God's goodness and bounty, the experience of those profitable and excellent emanations from Him, may be, and most commonly are, the first motive of our love; and if besides these we consider the immensity and vastness of the love of God, in giving us His Son, in forgiving our sins, in adopting us to glory, and ten thousand times ten thousand little accidents and instances, happening in the doing every of these; it is not possible but, for

so great love, we should give love again; for God, we should give man; for felicity, we should part with our misery.

It was love that preserved the noblest of God's creatures here below. Poor Adam being banished and undone, went and lived a sad life in the mountains of India, and turned his face and his prayers towards Paradise. Thither he sent his sighs; to that place he directed his devotions; there was his heart now, where his felicity sometimes had been. But he knew not how to return thither, for God was his enemy; and by many of His attributes opposed Himself against him. In the midst of these sadnesses, God remembered His own creature, and pitied it. His justice bowed down to His mercy; and all His power passed into mercy; and His omniscience converted into care and watchfulness, into providence and observation, for man's avail; and Heaven gave its influence for man, and rained showers for our food and drink; and the attributes and acts of God sat at the foot of mercy, and all that mercy descended upon the head of man.

Thus it was that God punished us, and visited the sin of Adam upon his posterity. He threatened we should die, and so we did—but not as we deserved. We waited for death, and stood sentenced, and are daily summoned by sicknesses and uneasiness; and every day is a new reprieve,

and brings a new favor—certain as the revolution of the sun upon that day; and at last, when we must die by the irreversible decree, that death is changed into a sleep, and that sleep is in the bosom of Christ, and there dwells all peace and security, and it shall pass forth into glories and felicities.

The consideration of these Divine excellences and mercies must be infinitely sufficient to produce in us love to God, inviting us to give Him a whole and undivided affection, having love for nothing else, but such things which He allows, and which He commands or loves Himself.

“This is love, that we keep His commandments.”

But the difficulty and question of this duty lies in the intention. For it is not enough to serve God with every capacity, passion, and faculty; but it must be every degree of every faculty; all the latitude of our will, all the whole intention of our passions, all the possibility and energy of our senses and understanding; which, because it is to be understood according to that moderate sentence and account which God requires of us, let us observe—that the intention of the love to which we are obliged, requires not the degree which is absolutely the greatest, and simply the most perfect. For there are degrees of grace, every one of which is pleasing to God, and is a state of reconciliation and atonement.

Two talents shall be rewarded, and so shall five, both in their proportions. David prayed "seven times a day," and Daniel prayed "three times;" and both were beloved of God. And our blessed Lord Himself, who never failed of any degree of His obligations, yet at some time prayed with more zeal and fervor than at other times, as a little before His passion. Since, then, at all times He did not do actions of that degree, which is absolutely the greatest, it is evident that God's goodness is so great, as to be content with such a love which parts no share between Him and sin; and leaves all the rest under such a liberty, as is only encouraged by those extraordinary rewards and crowns proportioned to heroic endeavors.

The advice which, in this case, is safest to be followed, is, that we employ our greatest industry that we fall not into sin, and actions of a forbidden nature; and then strive, by parts, and steps, and with much wariness in attempering our zeal, to superadd degrees of eminence, and observation of the more perfect instances of sanctity.

Again.—Our love to God consists, not in any one determinate degree, but hath such a latitude as best agrees with the condition of men, who are of variable natures, and different affections and capacities. For some are of malleable natures, others are morose; some are of healthful

and temperate constitutions, others are full of fancy, full of appetite; some have excellent leisure and opportunities of retirement, others are busy in an active life, and cannot with advantage attend to the choice of the better part; some are peaceable and timorous, and some are in all instances serene; others are of tumultuous and unquiet spirits; and these become opportunities of temptation on one side, and on the other, occasions of a virtue; but every variety of circumstance hath influence upon morality, and therefore their duties are altered, according to the infinite alteration of accidents and possibilities.

Lastly.—Our love to God must be totally exclusive of any affection to sin. We must prefer God as the object of our hope; we must choose to obey Him rather than man; and we must do violence to our strongest passions, when they once contest against a Divine commandment.

If our passions are thus regulated, let them be fixed upon any lawful object whatsoever if, at the same time, we prefer heaven and heavenly things; that is, would rather choose to lose our temporal love than our eternal hopes; then—although we feel the transportation of an earthly love towards a wife, or child, or friend, actually more pungent and sensible than passions of religion are—they are less perfect, but they are not criminal.

Only this.—We must ever have a disposition, and a mind prepared to quit our sensitive and pleasant objects, rather than quit a grace or commit a sin.

The state of the love of God is that which we actually call the state of grace.

When Christ reigns in us, and sin does not reign, but the spirit is quickened, and the lusts are mortified; when we are habitually virtuous, and do acts of piety, temperance, and justice—frequently, easily, cheerfully, and with a successive, constant, moral, and humane industry, according to the talent which God hath intrusted to us in the banks of nature and grace—then we are in the love of God—then we love Him with all our heart.

PRAYER.

O Lord, my God! Fountain of all true and holy love; who hast made me, and preserved me, and sanctified me, that I might love Thee. Give to Thy servant such a love, that whatsoever in Thy service may happen contrary to flesh and blood, I may not feel it; that when I labor, I may not be weary; when I am despised, I may not regard it; that humility may be my sanctuary, and mortification of my passions the exercise of my days; and the service of my God the joy of my soul; that loss to me may be

gain, so I win Christ; and death itself the entrance of an eternal life, when I may live with Him, my Strength and my Refuge, my God and everlasting Hope, the blessed Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ. Amen.

SECOND WEDNESDAY IN LENT.

PRAYER.

“Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”

MATT. xxi. 22.

PRAYER is the great secret of our religion; the effect, and the exercise, and the beginning, and the promoter of all graces, and the perfection and consummation of many. And since prayer can obtain every thing, it can open the windows of heaven, and shut the gates of hell—it can put a holy constraint upon God, and detain an angel till he leave a blessing—it can open the treasures of rain, and soften the iron ribs of rocks, till they melt into tears and a flowing river—prayer can unclasp the girdles of the north, saying to a mountain of ice, “Be thou removed hence, and cast into the bottom of the sea;”—it can arrest the sun in the midst of his course, and send the swift-winged winds upon our errand; and all those strange things, and secret decrees, and unrevealed transactions, which are above the clouds, and far beyond the regions of the stars, shall combine in ministry and advantage for the praying man;—it cannot

be but we should feel less evil and much more good than we do if our prayers were right.

But the state of things is thus—it is an easy duty, and there are many promises, and we do it often, and yet we prevail but little. Is it not a strange thing that our friends die round about us, and in every family some great evil often happens, and a Church shall suffer persecution for many years together without remedy, and we cannot rescue the life of a servant from his fatal grave;—and still we pray, and do not change the course of Providence in a single instance many times, whether the instance be of little or great concernment?

What is the matter? We patiently suffer our prayers to be rejected, and comfort ourselves by saying, that it may be, the thing is not fit for us; or to be denied, is better. This is very true, but not always when we are denied; for it is not always in mercy, but in anger; very often we are denied, because our duty is ill-performed. For if our prayers were right, the Providence of God would often find out ways to reconcile His great ends with our great desires; and we might be saved hereafter, and yet delivered here besides; and sometimes we should have heaven and prosperity too, and the cross should be sweetened, and the days of affliction should, for our sakes, be shortened. Let us rectify our prayers, and try what the

event will be; it is worth so much, at least. Now, in this there are several lines of duty, by which we can well examine ourselves.

Examine whether or no the form of your prayer be the rule of your life. Whosoever prays to God while he is in a state or in the affection to sin, his prayer is an abomination to God. God can never accept an unholy prayer, and a wicked man can never send forth any other. The waters pass through impure aqueducts and channels of brimstone; and, therefore, may end in brimstone and fire, but never in forgiveness and the blessing of an eternal charity.

But many times good men pray, and their prayer is not a sin: but yet it returns empty; because, although the man may be, yet the prayer is not, in proper disposition.

Indifferency and easiness of desire is a great enemy to the good man's prayer; for although God doth very frequently give us beyond the matter of our desires, yet He does not often give us great things beyond the spirit of our desires—beyond the quickness, vivacity, and fervor of our minds. For there is but one thing in the world that God hates besides sin—that is, indifference and lukewarmness; which although it hath not in it the direct nature of sin, yet it hath this testimony from God that it is loathsome and abominable. The reason of

it is, because lukewarmness, or an indifferent spirit, is an undervaluing of God and religion. He that is lukewarm always, understands the better way, and seldom pursues it; he hath so much reason as is sufficient, but he will not obey it; his will does not follow the dictates of his understanding, and therefore it is unnatural. It is like the fantastic fires of the night, where there is light and no heat; and therefore may pass on to the real fires of hell, where there is heat and no light; and therefore though an act of lukewarmness is only an indecency and no sin, yet a state of lukewarmness is criminal.

If our prayers be for temporal things, I shall not need stir up your affections to be passionate for their purchase. We desire them greedily, we run after them intemperately, we are kept from them with huge impatience, we are delayed with infinite regrets. But then for spiritual things, for the interest of our souls, and the affairs of the kingdom, we pray to God with just such a zeal as a condemned man desires his executioner quickly to put him out of his pain, by taking away his life. And yet the things of religion and the Spirit are the only things that ought to be desired vehemently and pursued passionately—they are the purchases of Christ's blood, and the effect of His continued intercession; the fruits of His bloody sacrifice, and the gifts of His healing and saving

mercy; and if we can have fondnesses for things indifferent or dangerous, our prayers upbraid our spirits when we beg coldly and tamely for those things for which we ought to die; which are more precious than the globes of kings, and weightier than imperial sceptres; richer than the spoils of the sea or the treasures of the Indian hills.

Christ prayed with "loud cryings," and St. Paul made mention of his scholars in his prayers night and day. Let not your offices and the custom of praying put thee in mind of thy need, but let thy need draw thee to thy holy offices. Desire what you pray for; for certain it is, you will pray passionately if you desire fervently. Prayers are but the body of the bird; desires are its angel's wings.

Under the title of lukewarmness and tepidity may be comprised also these cautions: that a good man's prayers are sometimes hindered by inadvertency, sometimes by want of perseverance. For inadvertency, or want of attendance to the sense and intention of our prayers, is certainly an effect of lukewarmness, and a certain companion and appendage to human infirmity; and is only so remedied as our prayers are made zealous, and our infirmities pass into the strengths of the Spirit. But concerning perseverance—the consideration is something distinct. For when our prayer is for a

great matter and a great necessity strictly attended to, yet it is without fruit, because the desire lasts not, and the prayer lives like the repentance of Simon Magus, or the trembling of Felix, or the Jews' devotion for seven days of unleavened bread during the passover or the feast of tabernacles. There are many that pray against a temptation for a month together, and, so long as the prayer is fervent, the man consents not all that while; but when the month is gone, and the prayer is removed or become less active, then the temptation returns and prevails. But let us take heed; for whatsoever temptation we can be troubled withal by our natural temper, or by the condition of our life, so long as we have capacity to feel it, so long we are in danger, and must "watch thereunto with prayer" and continual diligence. And when your temptations let you alone, let not your God alone; but lay up prayers and the blessings of a constant devotion against the day of trial.

The prayer of a good man is also hindered from obtaining its effects by a violent anger, and a violent storm in the spirit of him that prays. Prayer is the peace of our spirit, the stillness of our thoughts, the evenness of recollection, the seat of meditation, the rest of our cares, and the calm of our tempest: prayer is the issue of a quiet mind, of untroubled thoughts; it is the daughter of charity and the

sister of meekness ; and he that prays to God with an angry, that is, with a troubled and discomposed spirit, is like him that sets up his closet in the out-quarters of an army, and chooses a frontier garrison to be wise in. Anger is a perfect alienation of the mind from prayer, and therefore is contrary to that attention which presents our prayers in a right line to God.

For so I have seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven and climb above the clouds ; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest than it could recover by the libration and frequent weighing of his wings, till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over ; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing, as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed sometimes through the air about his ministries here below. So is the prayer of a good man, when his affairs have required business, and his business was matter of discipline, and his discipline was to pass upon a sinning person, or had a design of charity, his duty met with infirmities of a man, and anger was its instrument ; and the instrument became

stronger than the prime agent, and raised a tempest and overruled the man. And then his prayer was broken, and his thoughts were troubled, and his words went up towards a cloud, and his thoughts pulled them back again, and made them without intention: and the good man sighs for his infirmity, but must be content to lose the prayer; and he must recover it when his anger is removed, and his spirit is becalmed—made even as the brow of Jesus, and smooth like the heart of God—and then it ascends to heaven upon the wings of the Holy Dove, and dwells with God, till it returns, like the useful bee, laden with a blessing and the dew of heaven.

Lastly.—The prayer of faith only is available. He is the right supplicant, but a very rare one, that hath no diffidence in his heart—that comes close up to our Saviour's rule: "Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Yet the Lord will not cast them off who do not resolutely promise success unto themselves in the instant of their present supplications, but bear it thus between faith and doubting: "Whether I shall succeed in this or that, I am not confident; but of this I am most assured—that I shall be the better for my prayers."

Only as a beginning, attribute unto God that He is Almighty, and can do above all that we

can ask or think; and remember, so much faith, so much efficacy—so much confidence, so much comfort in prayer.

PRAYER.

O Holy and Eternal God, who hast commanded us to pray unto Thee in all our necessities, and to give thanks unto Thee for all our instances of joy and blessing, give unto me, Thy servant, the spirit of prayer and supplication. Sanctify my heart, that I may be gracious in Thine eyes; grant me the humility of a servant, that I may have the hope and confidence of a son. May my thoughts be sober and collected; and may Thy Holy Spirit enkindle in me great fervor and unwearied industry; that my prayers, being united to the intercession of Thy Blessed Son, and hallowed by His merits, may ascend thither where Thy glory dwells, and from whence eternal benediction descends upon the Church.

Grant this, O Merciful Lord! for His sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

SECOND THURSDAY IN LENT.

CONVERSATION.

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying.” EPHES. iv. 29.

By the use of the tongue, God hath distinguished us from beasts; and by the well or ill-using it, we are distinguished from one another. And though silence be as innocent as death, harmless as a rose's breath to a distant passenger, yet it is rather the state of death than life; while only speaking is the instrument of spiritual charity, and is a glorification of God; and, therefore, since nature hath taught us to speak, and God requires it, and our thankfulness obliges us, and our necessities engage us; it concerns us to take care that nature be changed into grace, necessity into choice; that while we speak the greatness of God, and minister to the needs of our neighbor, and do the works of life and religion—of society and prudence—we may be fitted to bear a part in the songs of angels, when they shall rejoice at the feast of the marriage supper of the Lamb.

We are all naturally lovers of speech, more

or less; and because there is no rule or just measure for the quantity, and it is as lawful, and sometimes as prudent, to tell a long story as a short, and two as well as one, and sometimes ten as well as two; all such discourses are to take their estimate by the matter and the end, and can only be altered by their circumstances and appendages. Yet, though no man can say, that much speaking is a sin, yet sin goes along with it, and is an ingredient in the whole composition. For it is impossible but a long and frequent discourse must be served with many passions, and they are not always innocent. For he that loves to talk much, must scrape materials together to furnish out the scenes and long orations; and some men furnish out their dialogues with the lives of others; either they detract or censure, or they flatter themselves, and tell their own stories with friendly circumstances; and the man entertains his friend with his own panegyric: or the discourse looks one way and rows another, and more mind the design than its own truth.

And hence it comes, that at every corner of the mouth a folly peeps out, or a mischief creeps in. A little pride and a great deal of vanity will soon escape, while the man minds the sequel of his talk, and not that ugliness of humor, which the severe man that stood by did observe, and was ashamed of. Do not many men talk

themselves into anger, screwing themselves up with dialogues of fancy, till they forget the company and themselves? And some men hate to be contradicted or interrupted: and some men being a little conscious, and not striving to amend by silence, they make it worse by discourse. A long story of themselves—a tedious praise of another, collaterally, to do themselves advantage—unseasonable repetition of that which neither profits nor delights—scorn and reproach begun upon questions which concern neither of the litigants—strivings for what is past, and for what shall never be: these are the events of the loose and unwary tongue, which are like flies and gnats upon the margin of a pool: they do not sting like an asp, or bite deep as a bear; yet they can vex a man into a fever and impatience, and make him incapable of rest and counsel.

There is no way for the cure of this evil, but the direct obeying of a counsel and submitting to the precept, and fearing the Divine threatenings; always remembering, that “of every word a man speaks, he shall give account at the day of judgment.”

I pray God show us all a mercy in that day, and forgive us the sins of the tongue. Amen.

We have seen the vanities and evil fruits of the easy talker; but above all the abuses which ever dishonored the tongues of men, nothing

more deserves the whip of an exterminating angel, or the stings of scorpions, than profane jesting. He that makes a jest of the words of Scripture, or of holy things, plays with thunder, and kisses the mouth of a cannon just as it belches fire and death. Some men use to read Scripture on their knees, and many with their heads uncovered, and all good men with fear and trembling, with reverence and grave attention. "Search the Scriptures, for therein ye hope to have life eternal." And "all Scripture is written by inspiration of God, and is fit for instruction, for reproof, for exhortation, for doctrine," not for jesting; but he that makes that use of it, had better part with his eyes in jest and give his heart to make a tennis ball.

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." First, we are taught how to restrain our tongues, and then we are called to employ them in religion. "We must speak that which is good, that it may minister grace;" that is, favor, complaisance, cheerfulness, and be acceptable and pleasant "to the hearer." Our conversation must be as far from sullenness as it ought to be from lightness, and a cheerful spirit is the best convoy for religion. And though sadness does in some cases become a Christian, as being an index of a pious mind, yet it serves but one

end, being useful in the only instance of repentance; and hath done its greatest works, not when it weeps and sighs, but when it hates and grows careful against sin. And if friendly mirth can refresh the spirit, and take it off from the vile temptation of peevish, despairing, uncomplying melancholy, it must needs be innocent and commendable, and we may as well be refreshed by a clean and a brisk discourse as by the air of Campanian wines; and our faces and our heads may as well be animated and look pleasant with wit and friendly intercourse, as with the fat of the balsam-tree; and such a conversation no wise man ever did or ought to reprove.

We must speak "that which is good." All they, therefore, who will comply with God's method of graciousness, and the necessities of their brethren, must endeavor by all means, and in all their own measures and capacities, to lay up treasures of notices, and instructions in their brother's soul: that by some argument or other, they may be met withal, and taken in every corner of their conversation.

Our conversation must also be "apt to comfort" the disconsolate, and than this, men in present can feel no greater charity. For, since half the duty of a Christian in this life consists in the exercise of passive graces; and the infinite variety of Providence, and the dissatisfaction

and emptiness that are in things themselves, do call us to the trial and exercise of patience, even in the days of sunshine;—and much more in the violent storms that shake our dwellings, and make our hearts tremble;—God hath sent some angels into the world, whose office it is to refresh the sorrows of the poor, and to lighten the eyes of the disconsolate. He hath made some creatures whose powers are chiefly ordained to comfort; wine and oil and society, cordials and variety; and time itself is checkered with black and white: stay but till to-morrow, and your present sorrow will be weary, and will lie down to rest.

But this is not all. The third Person of the Holy Trinity is known to us by the name and dignity of the “Holy Ghost the Comforter,” and God glories in the appellative that He is the “Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;” and therefore, to minister in the office, is to become like God, and to imitate the charities of heaven.

And certain it is, that there is nothing greater, for which God made our tongues, next to reciting His praises than to minister comfort to a weary soul. And what greater measure can we have, than that we should bring joy to our brother, who with his dreary eyes looks to heaven and round about, and cannot find so much rest as to lay his eyelids close together: than that thy tongue should be tuned with heavenly accents,

and make the weary soul to listen for light and ease ; and when he perceives that there is such a thing in the world as comfort and joy,—to begin to break out from the prison of his sorrow, at the door of sighs and tears, and by little and little melt into showers and refreshment ?

This is glory to thy voice, and employment fit for the brightest angel.

But so have I seen the sun kiss the frozen earth, which was bound up with the images of death, and the colder breath of the north ; and then the waters break from their inclosures, and melt with joy, and run in useful channels ; and the flies do rise again from their little graves in walls, and dance awhile in the air, to tell that there is joy within, and that the great mother of creatures will open the stock of her new refreshments, become useful to mankind, and sing praises to her Redeemer. So is the heart of a sorrowful man under the discourses of a wise comforter. He breaks from the despairs of the grave, and the fetters and chains of sorrow ; he blesses God, and he blesses thee, and he feels his life returning. For to be miserable is death, but nothing is life but to be comforted ; and God is pleased with no music from below so much as in the thanksgiving-songs of relieved widows—of supported orphans—of rejoicing, and comforted, and thankful persons.

It is a fearful thing to see a man despairing.

None knows the sorrow and the intolerable anguish but himself; and so are all the loads of a wounded spirit—when the staff of a man's broken fortune bows his head to the ground, and sinks like an osier under the violence of a mighty tempest. But therefore, in proportion to this, I may tell the excellency of the employment, and the duty of that charity, which bears the dying and languishing soul from the fringes of hell to the seat of the brightest stars, where God's Face shines, and reflects comforts forever and ever.

This is indeed discoursing to the edification of our needs, and the greatest and most holy charity.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, who hearest the prayers of all those that call upon Thee; sanctify, I beseech Thee, my heart and my lips, that my words may be holy and profitable, and my conversation an incentive to the ways of peace and righteousness. Deliver me from turbulence and anger, and grant that in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, I may be kept from all slander and evil speaking, so that I may never draw down upon me the sharp arrows of Thy vengeance, and the burning coals of Thy wrath: but that in the eternal retribution of the saints, Thou mayest deal with Thy servant according to Thy loving mercy, through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

SECOND FRIDAY IN LENT.

REVERENCE FOR HOLY DAYS AND HOLY PLACES.

“Ye shall keep My sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the Lord.” LEVIT. xix. 30.

So long as the law of the Sabbath was bound upon God's people, so long God would have that to be the solemn manner of confessing His goodness, His omnipotence, and His wisdom. But when—the priesthood being changed—there was a change also of the law, the great duty remained unalterable in changed circumstances. We are eternally bound to confess God Almighty to be the Maker of heaven and earth, but the manner of confessing it is changed from a Jewish rite to a Christian duty. We profess it in our creed, we confess it in our lives, and we do also, upon great reason, comply with the Jewish manner of confessing the creation, so far as it is instrumental to a real duty; for we keep one day in seven, and so confess the manner and circumstance of the creation, and we rest also that we may tend holy duties.

But we truly represent God's rest when we confess and rejoice in God's works and God's

glory. This the Christian Church does upon every day; but especially upon the Lord's day, which she hath set apart for this and all other offices of religion, being determined to this day by the resurrection of her dearest Lord: it being the first day of joy the Church ever had. And now, upon the Lord's day, we are not tied to the rest of the Sabbath, but to all the work of the Sabbath; and we are to abstain from bodily labor, not because it is a direct duty to us, as it was to the Jews, but because it is necessary in order to our duty, that we attend to the offices of religion. He who keeps the day most strictly, most religiously, he keeps it best and most consonant to the design of the Church, and the ends of religion, and the interests of his soul. Deeds of charity, visiting sick persons, hospitality to our poor neighbors, friendliness and civility to all, any act of direct religion to God, or of ease and remission to servants, or whatsoever else is good in manners, or in piety, or in mercy, are acts of religion proper to the day; and although those who labor hard in the week must be eased on the Lord's day, yet let their refreshments be innocent, and charitable, and of good report, and not exclusive of the duties of religion. We must, however, preserve our Christian liberty, and not be entangled in a yoke of bondage; for even a good action may become a snare to us, if we make it an occasion of scruple,

binding loads upon the conscience, not with the bands of God, but of men, and of fancy ; or of opinion and tyranny.

The Lord's day, being the remembrance of a great blessing, must be a day of joy, festivity, spiritual rejoicing, and thanksgiving. Let us not, therefore, fail to be present at the public hours and places of prayer, entering early and cheerfully. God hath put His Name into all places appointed for solemn worship. "In all places where I record My Name, I will come unto thee and bless thee;" and God's Name is not a distinct thing from Himself—not an idea; the expression therefore cannot be understood to any other purpose, but that in such places He gives special blessings and graces, or that in those places He appoints His Name, that is Himself, especially to be invocated.

In consecrated places God Himself is present to be invoked; that is, there He is most delighted to hear the prayers we make unto Him. For all the expressions of Scripture, of God's house, the tabernacle of God, God's dwellings, putting His Name there, His sanctuary—are resolved into that saying of God to Solomon, "I have sanctified the house which thou hast built;" that is, the house which thou hast designed for My worship, I have designed for you blessing; what you have dedicated, I have accepted; what you have consecrated, I have hallowed.

Let us consider, also, that holy places being the residence of God's Name upon earth, God hath sent His agents to possess them in person for Him. Churches and oratories are regions and courts of angels; and they are there, not only to minister to the saints, but, also, they possess them in the right of God.

St. Paul makes use of the argument to press women to modesty and humility in churches, "because of the angels." And upon the same stock, St. Chrysostom chides the people of his diocese for walking, and laughing, and prating in churches. "The church is not a shop of manufactures or merchandise, but the place of angels and of archangels—the court of God, and the image or representment of heaven itself."

For if we consider that Christianity is something more than ordinary—that there are mysteries in our religion, and in none else—and that God's angels are "ministering spirits for our good;" either we must think very low of Christianity, or that greater things are in it than the presence of angels in our churches. And yet, if there were no more, we should do well to behave ourselves there with the thoughts and apprehensions of heaven about us; always remembering that our business there is an errand of religion, and God is the object of our worshippings; and therefore, although by our

weakness we are fixed in the lowness of men, yet because God's infinity is our object, it were very happy if our actions did bear some few degrees of a proportionable and commensurate address.

“Reverence My sanctuary,” are the words of God to His people. And what God loves in an especial manner, it is most fit we should esteem accordingly. God loves the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. And it was no unhandsome expression of reverencing God's sanctuary that pious people ever used in bestowing costly and fair ornaments upon it; for so all the Christians did: as soon as themselves came from contempt and scorn, they raised Christian oratories to an equal portion of their honor; and by this way they thought they did honor to God.

Not that a rich house, or a costly offertory, is better in respect of God; for to Him all is alike; and be the offer never so contemptible, it is a rich devotion that gives the best we have. If all the wealth of the Levant were united into a present, it were short of God's infinity; yet such an offertory, or any best we have, makes demonstration, that if we had an offering infinitely better we should give it, to express our love, and our belief of God's infinite merit and perfection.

And, indeed, since God gives to us more than

enough, beyond our necessities—much for our conveniency, much for ease, much for repute, for content, for pleasure, for ornament,—we should deal unworthily with God Almighty, if we limit and restrain our returns to Him, by confining them within the narrow bounds of mere necessity.

God hath nowhere expressed that He accepts of a cheaper offering but when we are not able to give Him better. When the people brought offerings more than enough for the tabernacle, Moses restrained their forwardness, by saying, “it was enough;” but yet commended the disposition highly, and wished it might be perpetual. But God chid the people when they let His house lie waste, without reparation of its decaying beauty; and therefore sent famines upon the land, and a curse into their estate, because they would not, by giving a portion to religion, sanctify and secure the rest.

For I consider that those riches and beauties, in churches and religious solemnities, which add nothing to God, add much devotion to us, and much honor and efficacy to devotion. For since impression is made upon the soul by the intervening of corporal things, our religion and our devotion of the soul receives the addition of many degrees by such instruments. And it is strange, that we should bestow such great expenses to make our own houses convenient

and delectable, that we may entertain ourselves with complacency, and yet think that religion is not worth the ornament, nor our fancies fit to be carried into the choice and prosecution of religious actions, with sweetness, entertainments, and fair propositions. If we say that God is not the better for a rich house, or a costly service; we may also remember that neither are we the better for rich clothes: and the sheep will keep us as modest, as warm, and as clean as the silk-worm. And if we reply that they help to the esteem and reputation of our persons, and the distinction of them from the vulgar; how great a shame is it if we study, by great expenses, to get reputation and accidental advantages to ourselves, and not by the same means to purchase reverence and esteem to religion!

As in princes' courts the reverence to princes is quickened and increased by an outward state and glory, so also it is in the service of God. And when I consider that saying of St. Gregory, that the church is heaven within the tabernacle—heaven dwelling among the sons of men; and remember that God hath studded all the firmament, and paved it with stars, because He loves to have His house beauteous, and highly representative of His glory; I see no reason why we should not “in earth do the works of heaven.”

But the best manner to reverence the sanctuary, is by the continuation of such actions which gave it the first title of holiness. "Holiness becometh Thine house forever," saith David. The best ornament and beauty of a church is a holy priest and a sanctified people.

Every small sin is an unwelcome guest, and is a spot in those feasts of charity which entertain us often in God's house.

But there are some (and all great crimes are such) which desecrate the place, stop the ascent of our prayers, obstruct the current of God's blessing, turn religion into bitterness, and devotion into gall. He that shows not the mercies of alms, of forgiveness and comfort, is forbidden to hope for comfort, relief, or forgiveness from the hands of God. A pure mind is the best manner of worship, and the impurity of a crime is the greatest contradiction to the honor and religion of holy places.

And, therefore, let us imitate the precedent of the most religious of kings: "I will wash my hands in innocence, O Lord, and so will I go to Thine altar;" always remembering those final words of St. Paul, "He that defiles a temple, him will God destroy."

PRAYER.

O Eternal God, who dwellest not in temples made with hands, and yet art pleased to mani-

fest Thy presence amongst the sons of men; make my body and soul to be a holy temple, purified for the habitation of Thy Holy Spirit. Cast out of it, O Lord! all worldly affections, all covetous desires; let it be a place of prayer and holy meditation; of pure intentions, and zealous desires of pleasing Thee: so that, loving Thee above all the world, and worshipping Thee continually in humblest adoration, I may be prepared to glorify Thee to all eternity in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SECOND SATURDAY IN LENT.

OBEDIENCE.

“To obey is better than sacrifice.” 1 SAM. xv. 22.

THERE are certain excellences, either of habit or consideration, which spiritual persons use to call general ways; being a dispersed influence into all the parts of good life. Such are the consideration of the Divine Presence, the example of Jesus, right intention; and such also is the virtue of obedience, which perfectly unites our actions to God, and conforms us to the Divine Will, which gives quietness and tranquillity to the spirit, and is an antepast of paradise, where their jubilee is the perpetual joys of obedience, and their doing is the enjoying of the Divine pleasure.

But, by obedience, I do not here mean the exterior execution of the work; but the sacrifice of our proper will to God—a choosing the duty, because God commands it. This was the obedience the holy Jesus paid to His heavenly Father—so voluntary, that it was meet to Him to do His Father’s will: and we also shall best know that our will is in the obedience, by our

prompt undertakings, by our cheerful managings, by our swift execution; for all degrees of delay are degrees of unwillingness. And, therefore, he who deliberates beyond his first opportunity brings fire and wood, but wants a lamp for the sacrifice; and, unless he offer up his Isaac, his beloved will, he hath no ministry prepared for God's acceptance.

But besides the willingness to do the acts of express command, the readiness to do the intimation and tacit significations of God's pleasure is the best testimony in the world that our will is in the obedience. And, therefore, God hath furnished us with instances of uncommanded piety, to be a touchstone of our obedience. He that does but his endeavor about the express commands, hath a bridle in his mouth, and is restrained by violence; but a willing spirit is like a greedy eye, devours all it sees, and hopes to make some proportionable returns and compensations of duty for his infirmity, by taking in the intimations of God's pleasure.

But God requires that our obedience should have another excellency to make it a becoming present to the Divine acceptance; it must be universal. We must do all that lies before us, all that is in our hand. A right heart alone will not do; or, rather, the heart is not right when the hand is wrong. It is strange that this should be needful to be pressed among Chris-

tians; but so it is. Upon a pretence that we must serve God with the mind, some are such fools as to think that it is enough to have a good meaning. And because we must serve God in the spirit, therefore they will not serve God with their bodies; and because they are called upon to have the power and life of godliness, they abominate all external works as mere forms; and because the true fast is to abstain from sin, therefore they will not abstain from meat and drink even when they are commanded; which is just as if a Pharisee, being taught the circumcision of the heart, should refuse to circumcise his flesh; and as if a Christian, being instructed in the excellences of spiritual communion, should wholly neglect the sacramental.

Let us give no indulgence to ourselves to recede from a rule in any matter whatsoever; for the veriest minute of obedience is worth our attention, as being by God esteemed the trial of our obedience in a greater affair; and he that will prevaricate when the matter is trifling, and, by consequence, the temptations to it weak and impotent and soon confuted, will think he may better be excused when the temptations are violent and importunate; as it commonly happens in affairs of greater importance. And it is no small temptation of the devil, soliciting of us not to be curious of scruples and grains, nor to disturb our peace for lighter disobediences; per-

suading us that something must be indulged to public manners, something to the civilities of society, something to nature: for although smaller disobediences expressed in slight misbecoming actions, when they come by surprise, are not esteemed as instruments of separation from God's love; yet, when they come by design, and are acted with knowledge and deliberation, the malice of the agent heightens the smallness of the act, and makes up the iniquity.

He that extends his recreation an hour beyond the limits of Christian prudence is accountable to God for that improvidence and waste of time; but he that shall misspend a day, and, because that sin is not scandalous, shall throw away a week, still adding to the former account upon the first stock, will at last be answerable for a habit of idleness, and will have contracted a vain and impertinent spirit.

Lastly.—It concerns the niceness and prudence of obedience to God, to stand at farther distance from a vice than we usually attend to. If you will be secure, remove your tent—dwell farther off. Christ's commandments extend our duty, not only to what is named and what is not named of the same nature and design, but that we abstain from all such things as are like to sin. I cannot say that this dress, or this garment, or this standing for place, is the direct sin of pride; but I am sure it looks like it in some

persons; at least, the letting it alone is much better, and is very like humility. And certain it is, that he is dull of hearing who understands not the voice of God, unless it be clamorous in an express, and a loud commandment; proclaimed with trumpets and clarions upon Mount Sinai: but a willing and an obedient ear understands the still voice of Christ, and is ready to obey His meaning at half a word; and that is the righteousness evangelical.

The Christian that resolves to do every thing that is lawful will many times run into danger and inconvenience, because the utmost extremity of lawful is so near to that which is unlawful, that he will often pass into unlawful undiscerningly.

Virtues and vices have not, in all their instances, a great landmark set between—like warlike nations, separate by prodigious walls, vast seas, and portentous hills; but they are oftentimes like the bounds of a parish—men are fain to cut a cross upon the turf, and make little marks and annual perambulations for memorials. So it is in lawful and unlawful; by a little mistake a man may be greatly ruined.

He that will do all he thinks he may lawfully had need have an infallible guide always by him, who should, without error, be able to answer all cases of conscience which will happen every day in a life so careless and insecure.

Beside all this, he that thus stands on his terms with God, and so carefully husbands his duty, and thinks to make so good a market of his obedience that he will quit nothing which he thinks he may lawfully keep, shall never be exemplar in his life, and shall never grow in grace, and therefore shall never enter into glory.

But now, because I ought not to conceal any thing from you that must secure our title to the kingdom of heaven, there is this to be added—that in keeping of God's commandments, every degree of internal duty is under the commandment, and therefore, whatever we do, we must do it as well as we can. Now he that does his duty with the biggest affection he can, will also do all that he can; and he can never know that he hath done what is commanded, unless he does all that is in his power.

A Christian is to take his measures of duty according to the rate of his contrition and his love, his religion and his fear, his danger and his expectation. And let him measure wisely;—his sorrow pouring in, and his fears thrusting it down, and it were very well if his love also would make it run over.

For deceive not yourselves, there is no measure but this: so much good as a man does, or so much as he would do, if he could; so much of religion and so much of repentance he hath, and no more.

PRAYER.

O Holy and most Merciful Saviour, who wast obedient even to the death of the cross, teach me to show forth my thankfulness by obeying Thee, and walking in Thy laws. Let me not follow my own imaginations ; but may my heart humble itself to the wisdom of Thy commandments. Grant me to be indifferent in my desires, and submissive to the will of those whom Thou hast set over me ; so that, resigning myself to Thy good pleasure, Thou mayest hear me when the storms of trouble fall upon me, and bring me, through the merits of Thine own obedience, to the glories of Thy eternal kingdom. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

THE FIRST TEMPTATION.

“And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”

MATT. iv. 3.

THE devil's first temptation of our Blessed Lord was upon the instances and first necessities of nature. Christ was hungry, and the devil invited Him to break His fast upon the expense of a miracle, by turning the stones into bread. But the answer Jesus made was such as taught us, that since the ordinary providence of God is sufficient for our support, extraordinary ways of satisfying necessities are not to be undertaken; but God must be relied upon, His time attended, His manner entertained, and His measure thankfully received. Jesus refused to be relieved, and denied to manifest the Divinity of His person, rather than He would do an act which might be expounded a disreputation of God's Providence. And therefore it is an improvident care, and impious security, to take evil courses and use vile instruments to furnish our table and provide for our necessities.

God will certainly give us bread; and till He

does, we can live in the light of His countenance, by the refreshment of His promises ; for if God gives not provisions into our granaries, He can feed us out of His own—that is, out of the repositories of charity. If the flesh-pots be removed, He can also alter the appetite ; and when our stock is spent, He can also lessen the necessity ; or if that continues, He can drown the sense of it in a deluge of patience and resignation. Every word of God's mouth can create a grace, and every grace can supply two necessities, both of the body and the spirit ; by the comforts of this to support that, that they may bear each other's burdens and alleviate the pressure.

But the devil is always prompting us to change our stones into bread, our sadnesses into sensual comfort, our drynesses into inundations of fancy and exterior sweetnesses. For he knows that the ascetic tables of mortification and the stones of the desert are more healthful than the fulnesses of voluptuousness and the corn of the valleys. He cannot endure we should live a life of self-denial. If he can get us but to satisfy our senses, and a little more freely to please our natural desires, he then hath a fair field for the battle ; but so long as we force him to fight in hedges and morasses, encircling and crowding up his strengths into disadvantages, by our stone walls—our hard-

nesses of discipline and rudenesses of mortification; we can with more facilities repel his flatteries, and relieve fewer incommodities of spirit.

But thus the devil will abuse us by the impotency of our natural desires; and therefore let us go to God for satisfaction of our wishes. God can, and does, when it is good for us, change our stones into bread; for He is a Father so merciful, that, "if we ask Him a fish, He will not give us a scorpion;" "if we ask Him bread, He will not give us a stone;" but will satisfy all our desires by ministrations of the Spirit;—making stones to become our meat, and tears our drink; which, although they are unpleasant and harsh to natural appetites, yet, by the operation and influences of God's Holy Spirit, they are made instruments of health, and life, and salvation.

PRAYER.

O Almighty Father of men and angels, who hast, of Thy great bounty, provided plentifully for all mankind, that we may praise Thee, and rejoice in Thy mercies; be gracious unto Thy servant yet more, and teach me to hunger after the food of angels, and account it meat, and drink, and pleasure to do Thy will, so that in the strength of Thy grace I may walk in the

paths of Thy commandments all the days of my life, and finally be made a partaker of my Redeemer's glory through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SECOND MONDAY IN LENT

TEMPER.

“Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” EPHES. iv. 26.

“THOU shalt do no murder.” So it was said to them of old time. He that kills shall be guilty of judgment; that is, he is to die by the sentence of the judge. To this Christ makes an appendix: “But I say unto you, He that is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.” This addition of our blessed Saviour, as all the other, which are severer explications of the law than the Jews admitted, was directed against the vain and imperfect opinion of the lawyers, who thought to be justified by their external works; supposing, if they were innocent in matter of fact, God would require no more of them than man did.

But our blessed Saviour tells them that such an innocence is not enough. God requires more than exterior piety, placing justice not in legal innocency, or not being condemned in judgment of the law and human judicature; but in the

righteousness of the spirit also: for the first acquits us before man, but by this we shall be held upright in judgment before the Judge of all the world. And, therefore, besides abstinence from murder or actual wounds, Christ forbids all “anger without cause against our brother;” that is, against any man.

By which not the first motions are forbidden,—the twinklings of the eye, as the philosophers call them; for it is impossible to prevent them, unless we could give ourselves a new nature, any more than we can refuse to wink with our eye when a sudden blow is offered at it. But by frequent and habitual mortification, and by continual watchfulness, and standing in readiness against all inadvertencies, we shall lessen the inclination, and account fewer sudden irruptions. A wise and meek person should not kindle at all, but after violent and great collision; and then, if like a flint he sends a spark out, it must as soon be extinguished as it shows, and cool as soon as sparkle.

The causes of allowable anger are, when we see God dishonored, or a sin committed, or any irregularity or fault in matter of government; a fault against the laws of a family or good manners, disobedience or stubbornness. In such cases we may “be angry.” But then we may also sin, if we exceed in time, or measure of degree.

For although to be angry at the presence of certain objects is natural, and therefore is indifferent, because He that is an essential enemy to sin never made sin essential to a man; yet, unless it be also transient, and pass off at the command of reason and religion, it quickly becomes criminal. The meaning is, that it be no more but a transient passion, not permanent at all; but that the anger against the man pass into indignation against the crime, and pity of the person, till the pity grows up into endeavors to help him.

The measure of the degree is to be estimated by human prudence, that it exceed not the value of the cause. Moses' anger, though for God and religion, was reprov'd, because it went forth into a violent and troubled expression, and showed the degree to be inordinate. For it is in this passion as in lightning, which if it only breaks the cloud and makes a noise, shows a tempest and disturbance in nature, but the hurt is none; but if it seizes upon a man, or dwells upon a house, or breaks a tree, it becomes a judgment and a curse.

He who is angry with a servant's unwariness or inadvertency, or the remissness of a child's spirit and application to his studies, or on any sudden displeasure, it is not in any sense guilty of prevaricating the sixth commandment, unless, besides the object, he add an inequality of

degree, or unhandsome circumstance or adjunct. But since to reprove a sinning brother is, at the best, but an unwelcome and invidious employment, though it may also be understood to be full of charity; yet, therefore, we must not make it to be hateful by adding reproach, scorn, violent expressions, scurrility, derision, or bitter invectives. When our dearest Lord reprov'd St. Peter, He look'd upon him when the sign was given with the crowing of the cock, and so chid him into a shower of penitential tears.

The sum is this: there are no other bounds to hallow, or to allow and legitimate anger; but that, 1st, the cause be religion, or matter of government: 2d, that the degree of the anger, in prudent accounts, be no bigger than the cause: 3d, that if it goes forth, it be not expressed in any action of uncharitableness, or unseasonable violence: 4th, whether it goes forth or abides at home, it must not dwell long anywhere; nor abide in the form of a burning coal, but at the most of a thin flame, thence passing into air, salutary and gentle, fit to breathe but not to blast.

The remedies against anger, which are prescribed by masters of spiritual life, are partly taken from rules of prudence, partly from piety, and more precise rules of religion. Do not easily entertain, or at all encourage, or willingly hear, or promptly believe, tale-bearers and re-

porters of other men's faults: for oftentimes we are set on fire by an *ignis fatuus*, a false flame, and an empty story. Find out reasons of excuse, to alleviate and lessen the ignorances of a friend, or carelessnesses of a servant. Extirpate petty curiosities of apparel, lodging, diet, and learn to be indifferent in circumstances; and if you be apt to be transported with such little things, do some great thing, that shall cut off their frequent intervening. A gentle answer is an excellent hinderance to the progresses of anger, whether in thyself or others. For anger is like the waves of a troubled sea: when it is corrected with a soft reply, as with a little strand, it retires, and leaves nothing behind it but froth and shells; no permanent mischief.

It is certain, peace was so designed by the Holy Jesus that He framed all His laws in compliance to that design; and whosoever obeys these laws bears with the infirmities of his relatives and society, seeks with sweetness to remedy what is ill, and to prevent what it may produce.

Let us be careful therefore to stifle little things, that as fast as they spring they be cut down and trod upon; for if they be suffered to grow by numbers, they make the spirit peevish and the society troublesome. In the frequent little accidents of a family, a man's reason cannot always be awake; and when his discourses are imperfect, and a trifling trouble makes him yet more

restless, he is soon betrayed to the violence of passion. Let us not therefore tempt each other's affections when they are in that state of danger, and at all times let us be sure to abstain from all those things which by experience or observation we find to be contrary to each other. They that govern elephants never appear before them in white; and the masters of bulls keep from them all garments of blood and scarlet, as knowing that they will be impatient of civil usage and discipline when their natures are provoked by their proper antipathies.

But in the way of more strict religion, it is advised, that he who would cure his anger should pray often.

It is St. Austin's counsel to the Bishop Auxilius, that, like the Apostles in a storm, we should awaken Christ, and call to Him for aid, lest we shipwreck in so violent passion and impetuous disturbance.

Propound to thyself the example of meek and patient persons, remembering always that there is a family of meek saints, of which Moses is the precedent; a family of patient saints under the conduct of Job. Every one in the mountain of the Lord shall be gathered to his own tribe, to his own family, in the great day of jubilee: and the angry shall perish with the effects of anger; and peevish persons shall be vexed with the disquietness of an eternal worm, and sting of a vex-

atious conscience, if they suffer here the transportations and saddest effects of an unmortified, habitual, and prevailing anger.

He that lives charitably, whose employment is religion, whose affections are fear and love, that man can long and pray for the hastening of the coming of the day of the Lord. For the portion of the good at that day shall be so great, that after all the labor of love and enduring affronts, and the continual cares of our whole duration and abode here, it rewards it all and gives infinitely more.

It is a day of recompenses, in which all our sorrows shall be turned into joy—the cross into a crown; loss, and affronts, and inconveniences, into sceptres, and hymns, and rejoicings, and hallelujahs; and such good things which are fit for us to hope, but too great for us to discourse of while we see “as in a glass darkly” and imperfectly.

PRAYER.

O Almighty Judge of men and angels, whose anger is the minister of justice, not lightly arising, but falling heavily; give to Thy servant a meek and gentle spirit, that I may be slow to anger, and easy to mercy and forgiveness. Let me not be moved with every trifling mistake in the conversation and intercourse of others; but may my

anger ever be upon a just cause, measured with moderation, and expressed with charity. Teach me always to be ready to confess my own errors, apt to make amends, and desirous to be reconciled. Let no sickness or disappointment, no employment or weariness, render me ungentle or unthankful to them that minister to me; but in all things make me like unto my Saviour—humble, merciful, and meek; that so I may escape Thy anger which I have deserved, and may dwell in Thy love, and be Thy child and servant forever; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SECOND TUESDAY IN LENT.

SELF-DENIAL.

“ But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.”
1 COR. ix. 27.

FROM the beginning of days man hath been so cross to the Divine commandments, that in many cases there can be no reason given why a man should choose some ways, or do some actions, but only because they are forbidden. I shall not need to instance in particulars, when the whole life of man is a perpetual contradiction; and the state of disobedience is called the “contradictions of sinners.” Even the man in the Gospel, that had two sons, they both crossed him, even he that obeyed him, and he that obeyed him not: for the one said he would, and did not; the other said he would not, and did. And so do we: we promise fair, and do nothing; and they that do best are such as come out of darkness into light,—such as said, “they would not,” and at last have better be-thought themselves. There are some enemies whom God hath commanded us not to love, and those we dote on; we cherish and feast them,

and as St. Paul, in another case, "upon our uncomely parts we bestow more abundant comeliness." For whereas our body itself is a servant to our soul, we make it an heir of all things, and treat it here already as if it were in majority; and make that which at the best was but a weak friend, to become a strong enemy. And hence proceed the vices of the worst, and the follies and imperfections of the best. The spirit is either in slavery or in weakness; and when the flesh is not strong to mischief, it is weak to goodness; and, even to the Apostles, our Blessed Lord said, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Our natural weakness appears best in two things, even in the two great instances of temptations, pleasure and pain; in both which the flesh is destroyed, if it be not helped by a mighty grace, as certainly as the canes do bow their heads before the breath of a mighty wind.

But it is no better in any thing else; for nature is weak in all its strengths, and in its fights, at home and abroad, in its actions and passions. We love some things violently, and hate others unreasonably; any thing can fright us when we would be confident, and nothing can scare us when we ought to fear; the breaking of a glass puts us into a supreme anger, and we are dull and indifferent as a stoic when we see God dishonored. We passionately desire

our preservation, and yet we violently destroy ourselves and will not be hindered. We cannot deny a friend when he tempts us to sin and death, and yet we daily deny God when He passionately invites us to life and health.

Even when the state is changed, in the beginning of the state of grace, we find a long weakness upon us, because we are long before we begin, and the flesh was powerful and its habits strong. If we mean to pray, the flesh thrusts in thoughts of the world; and our tongue speaks one thing, and our hearts mean another; and we are hardly brought to say our prayers, or to undertake a fasting day, or to celebrate a Communion: and if we remember that all these holy actions should be done, and that we have many opportunities of doing them all, and yet do them very seldom, and then very coldly, it will be found at the foot of the account, that our flesh and our natural weakness prevail oftener than our spiritual strengths.

The spirit is also abated and interrupted by the flesh, because the flesh pretends it is not able to do those ministries which are appointed in order to religion. We are not able to fast; or, if we watch, it breeds gouts and catarrhs; or, we cannot suffer pain; and sorrow breeds death; and therefore our repentances must be more gentle, and we must support ourselves in all our calamities; for we cannot bear our

crosses without a freer refreshment, and this freedom passes on to a license; and many melancholy persons drown their sorrows in sin and forgetfulness, as if sin were more tolerable than sorrow, and the anger of God an easier load than a temporal care. Here the flesh betrays its weakness and its follies.

And what shall we do to secure our duty, and to be delivered of ourselves, that the body of death, which we bear about us, may not destroy the life of the spirit?

In order to which, I shall consider that since it is our flesh and blood that is the principle of mischief, we must not think to have it cured by washings and light medicaments. A fight and actual war against all the temptations and offers of self-indulgence, in all evil instances and degrees, consists, besides prayer, in using all arts and industry of fortifying the spirit, and making it severe, manly, and Christian. For sobriety is the bridle of the passions, and temperance is the bit and curb of that bridle; and fasting, though—when considered in itself, without relation to spiritual ends,—it is a duty nowhere enjoined or counselled; yet Christianity hath to do with it, as it may be made an instrument of the spirit by subduing the lusts of the flesh, or removing any hindrances of religion.

In the pursuance of this discipline of the body,

the doctors of the Church and guides of souls have not unusefully prescribed other annexes and circumstances; as that all the other acts of deportment be symbolical to it. If we fast that we may pray the better, let us remove all secular thoughts for that time; for it is in vain to alleviate our spirits of the burden of meat and drink, and to depress them with the loads of care. If for repentance we fast, let us be most curious that we do nothing contrary to the design of repentance, knowing that a sin is more contrary to repentance than fasting is to sin. And let all our actions also pursue the same design, helping one instrument with another, and being so zealous for the grace, that we take in all the aids we can to secure the duty. For to fast from flesh and to eat delicate fish; not to eat meat, but to drink rich wines freely; to be sensual in the objects of our other appetites, and restrained only in one; to have no dinner, and that day to run on hunting or to play at cards; are not handsome instances of sorrow, or devotion, or self-denial.

And let us be careful in all instances, that we yield not to the weakness of the flesh, nor listen to its fair pretences; for the flesh can do more than it says—we can do more than we think we can; and if we do some violence to the flesh, for the interest of our spirit, we shall make our flesh useful, and the spirit strong. Let us however

be careful that our fast be reasonable, serious, and apt to the end of our designs ; let it not destroy the body, or retard the spirit, or violate our health, or impede us in any part of our necessary duty. Let us do it like honest persons and just, without artifices and hypocrisy ; but let us also do it like wise persons, that it be neither in itself unreasonable, nor by accident become criminal.

And as “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that we should live soberly in this present world,” let us also accustom ourselves to cut off all superfluity in the provisions of our life ; for our desires will enlarge beyond the present possession, so long as all the things of this world are unsatisfying.

Let us look upon pleasures, not upon that side that is next the sun, or where they look beautifully ; that is, as they come towards us to be enjoyed ; for then they paint, and smile, and dress themselves up in tinsel and glass, gems and counterfeit imagery : but when they begin to go off, then let us behold them in their nakedness and weariness.

Let us often consider and contemplate the joys of heaven, that, when they have filled our desires which are the sails of the soul, we may steer only thither, and never more look back to Sodom. For when our souls dwell above, and look down upon the pleasures of the world, they

seem like things at a distance, little and contemptible; and men running after the satisfaction of their appetites seem foolish as fishes, thousands of them running after a rotten worm that covers a deadly hook; or at the best but like children, with great noise pursuing a bubble rising from a walnut-shell, which ends sooner than the noise.

Above all, let us watch every thing of ourselves as of suspected persons, and magnify the grace of God, and be humbled for our stock and spring of follies. And let us look up to Him who is the Fountain of grace and spiritual strength; and pray that God would give us what we ask, and what we ask not. For we want more helps than we understand, and we are nearer to evil than we perceive; and we bear sin and death about us, and are in love with it; and nothing comes from us but false principles, and weak discourses, and startings from our holy purposes, and care of our bodies and of our palates. These are the employments of our lives: but if we design to live happily, and in a better place, it must be otherwise with us; we must become new creatures; and have new strengths, which we can only derive from God, whose grace is sufficient for us, and strong enough to prevail over all our follies and infirmities.

PRAYER.

O Holy and Eternal Saviour, who didst for our sake fast forty days and forty nights, and hast left to us Thy example, and Thy prediction, that, in the days of Thy absence from us, we, Thy servants, and children of Thy bride-chamber, should fast; teach me to do this act of discipline, so that it may become an act of religion. Enable me to deny my appetites, and accustom myself to the yoke, that I may have no desires but of Thee; and that the outward man may by degrees resign itself to the entire dominion of the soul, and may pass from vanity to piety, from weakness to ghostly strength, from darkness to light, until both body and soul shall reign with Thee in the glories of eternity, O Holy and Eternal Saviour. Amen.

THIRD WEDNESDAY IN LENT.

CHRISTIAN SIMPLICITY.

“ Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”

Matt. x. part of verse 16.

OUR Blessed Saviour having prefaced concerning prudence, adds to the integrity of the precept, and for the conduct of our religion, that we be simple as well as prudent, innocent as well as wary. A true simplicity is that which leaves to man arms defensive, his castles and strong forts; but takes away his swords and spears, his anger and his malice, his peevishness and spite. It wants craft or deceit, but wants no prudence or caution; and that is truly Christian simplicity, or the sincerity of an honest, and ingenuous, and a fearless person: and it is a rare band, not only of societies and contracts, but also of friendships and advantages of mankind.

The first office of a Christian simplicity consists in our religion and manners; that they be open and honest, public and justifiable, the same at home and abroad. For besides the ingenuousness and honesty of this, there is an indispensable and infinite necessity it should be so; because whoever is a hypocrite in his religion

mocks God, presenting to him the outside and reserving the inward for His enemy; which is either a denying God to be the searcher of our hearts, or else an open defiance of His omniscience and His justice.

It may sometimes concern a man to seem religious; but it always concerns us to be religious; and we may reasonably think, that if the colors of religion so well do advantage to us, the substance and reality would do it much more. For if the face of religion could do a good turn, which the heart and substance does destroy, then religion itself were the greatest hypocrite in the world, and promises a blessing which it never can perform.

No: we shall be sure to feel the blessings of both the worlds, if we serve in the offices of religion, devoutly and charitably, before men and before God: doing before men things that are truly pleasing to God; turning our heart outward and our face inwards, that is, conversing with men as in the presence of God; and in our private devotions towards God, being as holy and devout as if we prayed in public, and in the corners of the streets. A sincere religion requires that we do nothing for ostentation, but every thing for conscience. We may be obliged in conscience to publish our manner of lives; but then it must be not that we may have a popular noise for a reward, but that God may

be glorified by our public worshippings, and others edified by our good examples.

Another thing to be added, as an instance to the simplicity of religion, is, that we never deny our religion, or lie concerning our faith, nor tell our propositions and articles deceitfully, nor instruct others with fraud; but that when we teach them, we do it honestly, justly, and severely; not always to speak all, but never to speak otherwise than it is, nor to hide a truth from them, whose souls are concerned in it that it be known.

Religion hath strength enough of its own to support itself; it needs not a devil for its advocate; it is the breath of God, and as it is purer than the beams of the morning, so it is stronger than a tempest, or the combination of all the winds, though united by the prince that ruleth in the air. And he that tells a lie for his religion, or goes about by fraud and imposture to gain proselytes, either dares not trust his cause or dares not trust God.

True religion is open in its articles, honest in its prosecutions, just in its conduct, innocent when it is accused, ignorant of falsehood, sure in its truth, simple in its sayings. It can dissemble nothing of itself; it cannot tell or do a lie; but it can become a sacrifice. A good man can quit his life, but never his integrity.

Christian simplicity relates also to promises

and acts of grace and favor; and its caution is, that all promises be simple, ingenuous, agreeable to the intention of the promiser, truly and effectually expressed, and never going less in the performance than in the promises and words of the expression. All promises of kindness and civilities are tied to pass into performance, though they may oblige to some small inconvenience, yet never to a great one: as "I will visit you to-morrow morning, because I promised you, and, therefore I will come, although I have not slept my full sleep;" but if I be in a fever, or have reason to fear one, I am discharged. For the nature of such promises bears upon them no bigger burden than can be expounded by reasonable civilities, and the common expectation of kind, and the ordinary performances of just men.

Promises in matters of justice or in matters of grace must be so ingenuously expressed that no condition is to be reserved or supposed in them to warrant their non-performance, but impossibility, or, that which is next to it, an intolerable inconvenience. But it is not against Christian simplicity to express our promises in such words, which we know the interested man will understand to other purpose than I intend, so it be not less that I mean than he hopes for.

When our blessed Saviour told His disciples that "they should sit upon twelve thrones,"

they presently thought they had His bond for a kingdom, and dreamed of wealth and honor, power and a splendid court; and Christ knew they did, but did not disentangle His promise from the enfolded and intricate sense, of which His words were naturally capable; but He performed His promise to better purposes than they hoped for. They were presidents in the conduct of souls, princes of God's people, the chief in sufferings, stood nearest to the cross, had an elder brother's portion in the kingdom of grace, were the founders of churches, and dispensers of the mysteries of the kingdom, and ministers of the Spirit of God; and "their names were written in heaven." And this was infinitely better than to groan and waste under a head pressed with a golden crown and pungent cares; and to eat alone, and to walk in a crowd, and to be vexed with all the public and many of the private evils of the people, which is the sum total of an earthly kingdom.

This is God's dealing with mankind: He promises more than we could hope for; and when He hath done that, He gives us more than He hath promised. And so also must we, imitating that example, and transcribing that copy of Divine truth, always remembering that "His promises are yea and amen."

Lastly, Christian simplicity teaches openness and ingenuousness in contracts, and matters of

buying and selling, covenants, and associations. A man may be deceived by deeds and open actions, as well as words; and therefore it concerns our duty, that no man, by an action or purpose done to make his brother believe a lie, abuse his persuasion and his interest. In all cases of bargaining, although the actions of themselves may receive naturally another sense, yet I am bound to follow that signification which may not abuse my brother or pollute my own honesty. If I exchange a thing which he understands not, and is by error led into this mistake, and I delude him and amuse his eye, by me he is made worse.

And as our actions must be of a sincere and determined signification in contract, so must our words, in which the rule of the old Roman honesty was this: "every one that speaks is to speak but once;" that is, "but one thing," because commonly that is truth; truth being but one, but error and falsehood infinitely various and changeable.

Neither is it lawful so much as to conceal the secret and undiscernible faults of the merchandise; in all cases it must be confessed in the price or in the words. And certain it is that ingenuousness is the sweetest and easiest way, while he that secures his own profit, and regards not the interest of another, is more greedy of a full purse than a holy conscience.

Men, by simplicity, converse as do the angels; they do their own work, and secure their proper interest, and serve the public and do glory to God. He is a good man with whom a blind man may safely converse: to whom, in respect of his fair treatings, the darkness and light are both alike. And let us remember that the rewards of craft are but a little money, and a great deal of dishonor, and much suspicion, and proportionable scorn. But the crown of justice is a fair life, and a clear reputation, and an inheritance there where justice dwells since she left the earth, even "in the kingdom of the Just," who shall call us to judgment for every word, and render to every man according to his works.

And what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when the Lord taketh away his soul?

PRAYER.

O Lord my God, let Thy mercy, I beseech Thee, preserve me in holiness and innocency, that I may lead an uncorrupt life, with humility, and truth, and justice. Let me never break my trust, nor invade my neighbor's right, but grant me so to do good unto all men, and especially to them that fear the Lord, that I may

always remain in Thy favor, and at the end of my weary pilgrimage, may take my rest upon Thy holy hill, and dwell in Thy tabernacle, where Thou reignest in glory, God Eternal, world without end. Amen.



THIRD THURSDAY IN LENT.

SLANDER AND FLATTERY.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.”

Exod. xx. 16.

“LIFE and death are in the hand of the tongue,” said the Hebrew proverb; and slander, which is the direct murder of the tongue, was esteemed so vile a thing, that when Jezebel commanded the elders of Israel to suborn false witnesses against Naboth, she gave them instructions to “take two men, sons of Belial;” none else were fit for the employment. This was it that humbled Joseph in fetters, and “the iron entered into his soul;” but it crushed him not so much as the false tongue of his revengeful mistress, “until his cause was known, and the word of the Lord tried him.” This was it that slew Abimelech, and endangered David; that thrust Jeremy into the dungeon, and carried our Lord to His cross; and therefore against the dangers of a slandering tongue, all laws have so cautiously armed themselves, that, besides the severest prohibitions of God, often recorded in both Testaments, God hath chosen it to be one

of His appellatives, to be the defender of them whose innocency and defenceless state make them most apt to be undone by this evil spirit; I mean widows, the poor, and the oppressed.

“A false tongue or a foul lie against a man’s reputation,” said Cicero, “is like a poisoned arrow;” it makes the wound deadly, and every scratch to be incurable. It lies in the face of heaven, and abuses the ears of justice; it oppresses the innocent, and is secretly revenged of virtue; it defeats all the charity of laws, and arms the supreme power, and makes it strike the innocent; it makes frequent appeals to be made to Heaven, and causes an oath, instead of being the end of strife, to be the beginning of mischief; it calls the name and testimony of God to seal an injury; it feeds and nourishes cruel anger, but mocks justice, and makes mercy weep herself into pity, and mourn because she cannot help the innocent. Let no calumny, therefore, no slandering, detracting communication, proceed out of your mouth.

The first sort of this is that which the Apostle calls *whispering*, which signifies to abuse our neighbor secretly, by telling a private story of him. These are those which the Holy Scriptures note by the disgraceful name of “talebearers.” “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among the people;” for “there are six things which God hates (saith Solomon),

yea, the seventh is an abomination unto Him;" and that is a whisperer, or talebearer, that "soweth contention amongst brethren." The dearest friendships in the world cannot be secure where such whisperers are attended to; and no man's interest or reputation, no man's peace or safety, can abide where this nurse of jealousy, like the earwig, creeps in at the ear, and makes a diseased noise and a scandalous murmur.

But such tongues as these, where they dare, and where they can safely, love to speak louder; and then it is detraction—when men, under the color of friendship, will certainly wound the reputation of a man, while by speaking some things of him fairly, he shall, without suspicion, be believed when he speaks evil of him. Such was he that Horace speaks of: "Capitolinus is my friend, and we have long lived together, and obliged each other by mutual endearments, and I am glad he is acquitted by the criminal judges; yet I confess I wonder how he should escape—but will say no more, because he is my friend." This is that which the Apostle calls "a crafty and deceitful way of hurting," and renders a man's tongue crafty and venomous as the tongue of a serpent, that bites even though he be charmed.

The devil is an accuser of the brethren, and the calumniating, slandering, and undervaluing,

detracting tongue does his work. But there is a third sort of filthy communication by which he does more mischief; by which he undoes souls; by which he is worse than "an accuser." For though he accuses maliciously and aggravates bitterly, and, with all his power, endeavors to represent the separate souls to God as polluted and unfit to come into His presence; yet this malice is ineffective, because the scenes are acted before the wise Judge of men and angels, who cannot be abused; before our Father, and our Lord, who knows whereof we be made, and remembereth that we are but dust: before our Saviour and our Elder Brother, who hath felt our infirmities, and knows how to pity, to excuse, and to answer for us. But though this accusation of us cannot hurt them who will not hurt themselves, yet this malice is prevailing when the spirit of *flattery* is let loose upon us. This is the most contrary thing to charity in the whole world; and St. Paul noted it in his character of charity: "Charity vaunteth not itself;" so we translate it, but certainly not exactly, for it signifieth "easiness," complying foolishly, and flattering. "Charity *flattereth* not."

For if to call a man "fool and vicious," be so high an injury, we may thence esteem what a great calamity it is to be so: and, therefore, he that makes him so, or takes a course he shall not become other, is the vilest enemy to his

person and his felicity. And this is the mischief that is done by flattery: it is a design against the wisdom, against the repentance, against the growth and promotion of a man's soul.

For this, indeed, is a calamity that undoes many. We so love our peace, and sit so easily upon our own good opinions, and are so apt to flatter ourselves, and lean upon our own false support, that we cannot endure to be disturbed or awakened from our pleasing lethargy. For we care not to be safe, but to be secure; not to escape hell, but to live pleasantly. We are not solicitous of the event, but of the way thither; and it is sufficient if we be persuaded all is well. In the mean time we are careless whether indeed it be so or no, and therefore we give pensions to fools to cozen us of felicity.

But this evil puts on several shapes, which we must discover, that they may not cozen us without our observation. For all men are not capable of an open flattery; and, therefore, some will dress their hypocrisy and illusion so that you may feel the pleasure, and but secretly the compliance and tenderness to serve the ends of your folly.

Some will dispraise themselves, that their friend may think better of himself, or less severely of his fault. Others will reprove their friend for a trifle, but with a purpose to let him

understand that this is all; for the honest man would have told his friend if it had been worse.

Some flatter by imitation; others pretend rusticity and downright plainness, and upon the confidence of that, humor their friend's vice, and flatter his ruin. They pretend they love not to dissemble, and therefore they cannot hide their thoughts; let their friend take it how he will, they must commend that which is commendable; and so, man, that is willing to die quietly, is content with the honest-heartiness and downright simplicity of him, that with an artificial rudeness dressed the flattery.

Some will laugh and make a sport of a vice, as if damnation were a thing to be laughed at, and the everlasting ruin of his friend were a very good jest.

Thus the evil spirit puts on shapes enough: none to affright the man, but all to destroy him; and yet it is filthy enough, when it is invested with its own character.

I have this one thing only to insert, and then the caution will be sufficient; viz., that we do not think all praise given to our friend to be flattery, though it be in his presence. For sometimes praise is the best conveyance for a precept, and it may nourish up an infant virtue and make it grow up towards perfection, and its proper measures and records.

It is not the office of a friend always to be

sour, or at any time morose; but free, open, and ingenuous, candid and humane; not denying to please, but ever refusing to abuse or corrupt. Only since self-love is the serpent's milk that feeds this viper, flattery, we should do well to choke it with its mother's milk; I mean, learn to love ourselves more, for then we should never endure to be flattered. For he that, because he loves himself loves to be flattered, does, because he loves himself, love to entertain a man to abuse him, to mock him, and to destroy him finally. But he that loves himself truly, will suffer fire, will endure to be burnt, so he may be purified;—put to pain so he may be restored to health. For, “of all sauces” (said Evenus), sharpness, severity, and “fire,” are the best.

PRAYER.

O Almighty God, whose goodness endureth daily, extend Thy gracious favor towards me Thy servant, and keep me from the wickedness of a false tongue, from the sins of malice and flattery; that being nourished by Thy grace, and watered with the dew of Divine Blessing, I may abound in peace, and bring forth the fruits of tender mercy; and by the

aid of Thy Heavenly Spirit, and for the merits of my Merciful Redeemer, may attain to Thy everlasting kingdom, there to reign with Thee who reignest eternally, one God, world without end. Amen.

THIRD FRIDAY IN LENT.

COVETOUSNESS.

“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” ST. LUKE xii. 15.

UNLESS the Spirit of God rule in our hearts, we are none of Christ’s; but He rules not where the works of the flesh are frequently, or maliciously, or voluntarily entertained. All the works of the flesh, and whatsoever leads to them; all that is contrary to the Spirit, and does either grieve or extinguish Him,—must therefore be rescinded, and utterly taken away. Concerning which, Christ and His Apostles have left us catalogues as lights and watch-towers, to point out the rocks and quicksands where our danger is.

Among them may be mentioned covetousness—or inordinate, unreasonable desires. For the word does not only signify the designing and contrivances of unjust ways of purchasing, which is not often separated from covetous desires; but the very thirst, or greediness; the secret and impatient desires of having abun-

dance. It will not be hard to discern and to reprove this sin of desires in them that are guilty of it, though they will not think or confess what is, or what is not, abundance. For there is not easily to be found a greater testimony of covetousness, that the error concerning the measure of our possessions. He that is not easy to call that abundance, which by good and severe men is thought so, desires more than he should. When any thing is over and above the needs of our life, that is too much; and to desire that, is covetousness, saith St. Luke. "Take heed and keep yourselves from covetousness: for our life consisteth not in abundance."

"Covetousness," the Apostle says, "is idolatry;" that is, it is an admiring money for itself, not for its use. It relies upon money, and loves it more than it loves God and religion; and it is "the root of all evil." It teaches men to be cruel and crafty, industrious in evil, full of care and malice. It grinds the face of the poor, and undoes those who specially belong to God's protection. "For he," saith St. Hierom, "defrauds the poor of their right, who detains from them beyond his own necessary, prudent, and convenient supplies." This is intended to be a retrenchment of all vain expenses, costly feasts, rich clothes, pompous retinue, and such excrescences of expense which of themselves serve no end of piety or just policy; but by wise and

temperate persons are esteemed unnecessary, and without which the dignity and just value of the person may still be retained. Whatsoever is vainly spent was the portion of the poor; whatsoever lies in our repository, useless and superfluous, is the poor man's inheritance; and certainly there is not any greater baseness than to suffer a man to perish, or be in extreme want of that which God gave me for him, and beyond my own needs.

But in taking this estimate concerning our excrescences, we are to proceed according to the rules of prudence, not making determinations in grains and scruples, but in the greater actions and accountable proportions of our estates. And if any man, seeing great necessities of indigent and calamitous persons, shall give beyond his ability, he had the Philippians for his precedent, and he hath God engaged for his payment, and a greater share in heaven for his reward. Only this: as we are to provide for ourselves, so also for our family and the relatives of our charge; not only with a provision of the present day's entertainment, but also for all nearer, probable, and expected events—such as are portions for our children and dowries for our daughters. This must not be extended to care and reservations for all possible and far distant events; but so much is to be permitted to the Divine Providence as our present duty

gives leave. He that is in debt is not excused from giving alms till his debts are paid, but only from giving away such portions which should and would pay them, and such which he intended should do it. There are crumbs from the table, and the gleanings of the harvest, and the scatterings of the vintage, which in all estates are the portions of the poor—which, being collected by the hand of Providence and united wisely, may become considerable to the poor, and are the necessary duties of charity. And let us ever remember, that if we increase in our estate, we also should increase in charity; that in this also may be verified what is written: “He that hath much had nothing over, and he that had little had no lack.”

If question be made concerning the persons who are to be the objects of our alms, our rule is plain and easy; for nothing is required in the person capable of alms, but that he be in misery and want, and unable to relieve himself. “If any one will not work,” saith St. Paul, “neither let him eat;” for we must be careful that our charity, which is intended to minister to poor men’s needs, do not minister to idleness and the love of beggary, and a wandering, useless, and unprofitable life. But abating this, there is no other consideration that can exempt any needy person from participation of your charity; not though he be your enemy, not though he be an

unbeliever, not though he be a vicious person—provided only the mere necessities be supplied. This I the rather insert, that the pride and supercilious austerities of some persons become not to them an instrument of excuse from ministering to needy persons, upon pretence their sins brought them into that condition. For though the causes of our calamities are many times great secrets of Providence, yet suppose the poverty of the man was the effect of his prodigality, or other baseness, it matters not, as to our duty, how he came into it, but where he is; lest we also be denied a visit in our sicknesses, and a comfort in our sorrow, or a counsel in our doubts, or aid in any distress, upon pretence that such sadness was procured by our sins; and ten to one but it was so.

The manner of giving alms is an office of Christian prudence; for in what instances we are to exemplify our charity, we must be determined by our own powers and others' needs. The Scripture reckons entertaining strangers, visiting the sick, going to prisons, feeding and clothing the hungry and naked: to which, by the exigence of the poor and the analogy of charity, many others are to be added. For he that does his alms, and resolves that in no case he will suffer inconvenience for his brother—whose case, it may be, is intolerable—should do well to remember that God, in some cases,

requires a greater charity; and, it may be, we shall be called to die for the good of our brother. And when we are such good husbands in our religion, that we will serve all our conveniences before the great needs of a hungry and afflicted brother, God oftentimes takes from us that which with so much curiosity we would preserve, and then we lose our money, and our reward too.

And oh! what fools are they who, for one point of earth, lose so many leagues of heaven!—who, for short pleasures, lose things immense and durable. If all the earth were of gold, and all the rivers of balsam, and all the rocks of precious stones, wouldst thou not say that this is a great treasure? Know, that a treasure, which exceeds gold as far as gold doth dirt—balsam, water—or precious stones, pebbles—remains as a reward for the just.

How poor and narrow a heart must that Christian have who confines his love to things present, sweating and toiling for a small part of the goods of this world, which itself is so little!

Let not us, who are to die to-morrow, afflict ourselves for that which may perish sooner than we. Let us not toil to enjoy that which we are shortly to leave; but let us lay up our treasures in heaven,—that Kingdom of the Blessed, where the riches, joys, and comforts are eternal and can never be taken from us.

My soul, O Lord my God, thirsteth after

Thee. I will behold Thy face in righteousness; for in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. Whatsoever I can wish for, is present with Thee; whatsoever can be desired, is in Thee in abundance. Thou shalt make me drink of the river of Thy pleasures; for with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light I shall see light.

PRAYER.

O Almighty God, Eternal Treasure of all good, who fillest all things living with plenteousness; teach me, in Thy mercy, so to seek the kingdom of God and its righteousness, that I may live in this world like a stranger, with affections set upon heaven. Let Thy Providence be my store-house, and my own necessity the limit of my desires. Give me a heart, compassionate to the poor, and liberal to the needy; and let my striving be to gain Thy favor, to do good to others, to give to them that want; and to receive from Thee pardon and support, perseverance and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THIRD SATURDAY IN LENT.

GROWTH IN GRACE.

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” 2 PETER iii. 18.

OF old, men looked upon themselves as they stood by the examples and precedents of martyrs. They compared their piety to the life of St. Paul, and estimated their zeal by flames of the Boanerges. Religion began all their actions, and prayer consecrated them, and they ended in charity, and were not polluted with design. They despised the world heartily, and pursued after heaven greedily; they knew no ends but to serve God, and to be saved. Till Satan—full of envy to see such excellent days—mingled covetousness and ambition within the throngs and conventions of the Church; and then mutual confidence grew less, and so charity was lessened; till at last it came to that pass where now it is—that we should think religion in a good condition, if that men did offer up to God but the actions of an ordinary, even, and just life, without the scandal and alloys of a great impiety.

But because such is the nature of things, that either they grow towards perfection or decline towards dissolution, there is no proper way to secure it but by setting its growth forward. For religion hath no station or natural periods; if it does not grow better it grows much worse; not that it always returns the man into scandalous sins, but that it fixes him in a state of indifference and lukewarmness; and he is more averse to a state of improvement, and dies in an ignorant and unrelenting condition.

“But grow in grace;”—that is the remedy, and that would make us all wise and happy; blessed in this world, and sure of heaven.

The first part of this duty is, to make religion to be the business of our lives; for this is the great instrument which will naturally produce our growth in grace and the perfection of a Christian. For a man cannot, after a state of sin, be instantly a saint; the work of heaven is not done by a flash of lightning, or a dash of affectionate rain, or a few tears of a relenting pity. God and His Church have appointed holy intervals, and have taken portions of our time for religion, that we may be called off from the world, and remember the end of our creation, and do honor to God, and think of heaven with hearty purposes and peremptory designs to get thither. But as we must not neglect those times which God hath reserved for His service,

or the Church hath prudently decreed, nor yet act religion upon such days with forms and outsides, to comply with customs or to seem religious, so we must take care that all the other portions of our time be hallowed with little retirements of our thoughts, and short conversations with God, and all along be hallowed with holy intention; that "whether we eat or drink, sleep or wake, we may do all to the glory of God."

Remember that God sent you into the world for religion. We are but to pass through our pleasant fields, or our hard labors; but to lodge a little while in our fair palaces, or our meaner cottages; but to bait in the way, at our full tables or our spare diet. But then only man does his proper employment when he prays and does charity, and mortifies his unruly appetites, and restrains his violent passions, and becomes like to God, and imitates His holy Son. Then he is dressing himself for eternity, where he must dwell or abide, either in an excellent, beatifical country, or in a prison of amazement and eternal horror. Without much time, and a wary life, and a diligent circumspection, we cannot mortify our sins, or do the first works of grace. I pray God we be not found to have grown, like the sinews of old age, from strength to remissness; from thence to dissolution, and infirmity, and death.

The second step of our growth in grace is, when virtues grow habitual, apt, and easy, in our manners and dispositions. Some persons there are who dare not sin; they dare not omit their hours of prayer, and they are restless in their spirits till they have done; but they go to it as to an execution; they stay from it as long as they can, and they drive, like Pharaoh's chariots with the wheels off, sadly and heavily. But he that is grown in grace, and hath made religion habitual to his spirit, is not at ease but when he is doing the works of the new man; he rests in religion, and comforts his sorrows with thinking of his prayers; and in all crosses of the world he is patient, because his joy is at hand to refresh him when he lists, for he cares not so he may serve God; and if you make him poor here, he is rich there, and he counts that to be his proper service—his work, his recreation, his reward.

He also is well grown in the state of grace, who is more patient of a sharp reproof than of a secret flattery; who admits the reprover's sermon or discourse without a private regret; and hath no secret murmurs or unwillingness to the humiliation, but is only ashamed that he should deserve it. But if to this he adds, that he voluntarily confesses his own fault, then it is certain he is not only a professed and hearty enemy against sin, but a zealous, and a prudent, and

an active person against all its interests; and never counts himself at ease but while he rests upon the banks of Sion, or at the gates of the temple. He reckons it no objection to be abased in the face of man, so he may be gracious in the eyes of God; and that is a sign of a good grace and a holy wisdom—that man is “grown in the grace of God and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” I did the rather insist upon this particular, because it is a consideration of huge concernment, and yet much neglected in all its instances and degrees.

He that is grown in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, esteems no sin to be little or contemptible—none fit to be cherished or indulged to. It is a sign of a tender conscience and a reformed spirit, when it is sensible of every alteration; when an idle word is troublesome; when a wandering thought puts the whole spirit upon its guard; when too free a merriment is wiped off with a sigh, and a sad thought, and a holy prayer. A man's spirit is naturally careless of baser and uncostly materials; but if a man be to work in gold, then he will save the dust of his filings, and suffer not a grain to perish; and when a man hath laid his foundation in precious stones, he will not build vile matter, stubble, and dirt upon it. So it is in the spirit of a man; if he have built upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and is grown up to a

good stature in Christ, he will not easily dishonor his building, or lose his labors, by an incurious entertainment of vanities and little instances of sin.

No man is grown in grace, but he that is ready for every work—that chooses not his employment—that refuses no imposition from God, or his superior. As to be universal in our obedience is necessary to the being in a state of grace, so readily to change employment from the better to the worse, from useful to seemingly unprofitable, is a good character of a well-grown Christian. Can you be willing to all that God is willing, and suffer all that He chooses, as willingly as if you had chosen your own fortune? In the same degree in which you can conform to God, in the same you have approached towards that perfection, whither we must, by degrees, arrive, in our journey towards heaven.

Concerning all which I have a caution or two to interpose:—The growth of grace is to be estimated as other moral things are, not according to the growth of things natural. Grace does not grow by observation; and a man cannot call himself to account for the growth of every day, or week, or month. In the greater portions of our life, in which we have had many occasions to exercise and improve our virtues, we may call ourselves to account; but it is a snare to our consciences to be examined in the growth

of grace in every short revolution of solemn duty, as against every communion or great festival. And, in considering our growth in grace, let us take more care to consider matters that concern justice and charity, than that concern the virtue of religion; because in this there may be much, in the other there cannot be easily any illusion. That is a good religion that believes, and trusts, and hopes in God, through Jesus Christ; and for His sake does all justice and all charity that he can; and our Blessed Lord gives no other description of love to God, but obedience and keeping His commandments.

He that, by the proper significations of a growing grace, does not understand his own condition, must be content to work on, without consideration of particulars. He must pray earnestly, and watch diligently, and consult with prudent guides, and ask of God great measures of His Spirit.

And if he understands not his present good condition, yet if he be not wanting in hearty purposes, he shall then find that he is grown in grace, when he springs up in the resurrection of the just, and shall be engrafted upon a tree of paradise, which beareth fruit forever;—glory to God, rejoicing to saints and angels, and eternal felicity to his own pious, though undiscerning, soul.

PRAYER.

O Eternal God, Lord of heaven and earth, Father of men and angels! I do adore Thy infinite goodness, by which Thou hast dealt with us; not with the dominion of a Lord, but with the gentleness of a Father. Oh! let the remembrance of Thy loving-kindness be so imprinted in my heart, that I may fear more, and love more every day; hating sin, crucifying all its affections and desires; and so pressing forward to the mark of my high calling in Christ Jesus, that, for His sake, Thou mayest be pleased to pardon, to sanctify, and to preserve Thy servant forever. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

THE SECOND TEMPTATION.

“Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.” MATT. iv. 5, 6.

THE devil, perceiving Jesus to be a person of greater eminence and perfection than to be moved by sensual and low desires, made a second assault by a temptation something more spiritual, and tempted him to presumption and indiscreet confidence, that God might secure him by the ministry of angels, and so prove His being the Son of God. But this was an invitation to no purpose, save only that it gave occasion to this truth—that God’s providence secures all his sons in the way of nature, and while they are doing their duty; but loves not to be tempted to acts unreasonable and unnecessary.

God will protect His servants in or from all evils happening without their knowledge, or against their will; but not from evils of their own procuring. For the caresses of God’s love

to His saints and servants are security against all but themselves. The devil and all the world offer to do them mischief; but then they shall be safe, because they are innocent. If they once offer to do the same to themselves, they lose their protection because they lost their prudence and their charity. And here it will concern us to take heed that our ends be none in eminency above others. For those, who by their eminent employment are set upon a pinnacle of the temple, have need to take care that the devil tempt not them to a precipice. A fall from so great a height will break the bones in pieces; and yet there also the station is less firm, the posture most uneasy, and the devil busy and desirous to thrust us headlong. A life common and ordinary, without affectation or singularity, is the most prudent and safe. Every great change, every violence of fortune, all eminences whatsoever, whether of person, or accident, or circumstance, puts us to a new trouble, requires a distinct care, creates new dangers, marks us out the object of envy, makes our standing more insecure, and our fall more contemptible and ridiculous. But an even life spent with as much rigor of duty to God as ought to be; in taking upon ourselves ordinary offices, in frequenting public assemblies, performing offices of civility, receiving all the rites of an established religion, complying with na-

tional customs and hereditary solemnities of a people; in nothing disquieting public peace, or dissolving the ligaments of charity, or breaking laws, and the great relations of the world, out of fancy and singularity, is the best way to live holily, and safely, and happily; safer from sin and envy, and more removed from trouble and temptation.

St. Hierom observes well, that the devil, intending mischief to our blessed Saviour, invited Him "to cast Himself down." He may persuade us to a fall, but cannot precipitate us without our own act. And it is an infinite mercy in God, that the devil, who is of malice infinite, is of so restrained and limited a power, that he can do us no ghostly disadvantage, but by persuading us to do it ourselves. For, let the temptation be never so strong, every Christian man hath assistances sufficient to support him, so as that, without his own yielding, no temptation is stronger than that grace which God offers him: for, if it were, it were not so much as a sin of infirmity; it were no sin at all.

PRAYER.

O Holy Saviour, who didst fulfil all righteousness, and live a life of evenness and obedience, submitting Thyself to all rites and laws of Divine ordinance; give me grace to live in the

fellowship of Thy Holy Church—a life of piety, and without singularity. Strengthen me with the influence of Thy Sacraments and rites; enable me to serve Thee with a never-failing love in the actions of a holy life; and grant that I may ever continue a child of God, and at length be made a partaker of Thy immortal inheritance, for Thy mercy's sake, and for the honor of Thy name, which is, and shall be, adored forever. Amen.

THIRD MONDAY IN LENT.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE.

“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.” 1 PETER ii. 21.

It is reported in the Bohemian story, that St. Wenceslaus, their king, one winter night going to his devotions, in a remote church, barefooted in the snow and sharpness of unequal and pointed ice, his servant Podavious, who waited upon his master's piety, and endeavored to imitate his affections, began to faint through the violence of the snow and cold, till the king commanded him to follow him, and set his feet in the same footsteps which his feet should mark for him. The servant did so, and either fancied a cure or found one; for he followed his prince, helped forward with shame and zeal to his imitation, and by the forming footsteps for him in the snow. In the same manner does the Blessed Jesus; for, since our way is troublesome, obscure, full of objection and danger, apt to be mistaken and to affright our industry, He commands us to mark His footsteps, to tread where His feet have stood; and not only invites us

forward by the argument of His example, but He hath trodden down much of the difficulty, and made the way easier and fit for our feet. For He knows our infirmities, and Himself hath felt their experience in all things but in the neighborhoods of sin; and therefore He hath proportioned a way and a path to our strengths and capacities, and, like Jacob, hath marched softly, and in evenness with the children and the cattle, to entertain us by the comforts of His company, and the influences of a perpetual guide.

“Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,” was a precept of the Apostle. The similitude declares the duty: as a garment is composed and made of the same fashion with the body, and is applied to each part in its true figure and commensuration, so should we put on Christ, and imitate the whole body of His sanctity, and express Him in our lives, that God, seeing our impresses, may know whose image and superscription we bear; and we may be acknowledged for sons, when we have the air and features and resemblance of our Elder Brother. For we, who believe that Jesus was perfect God and perfect man, do also believe, that one minute of His intolerable passion, and every action of His, might have been satisfactory, and enough for the expiation and reconciliation of ten thousand worlds, and God might, upon a

less effusion of blood, and a shorter life of merit, if He had pleased, have accepted human nature to pardon and favor. But that the holy Jesus hath added so many excellent instances of holiness, and so many degrees of passion, and so many kinds of virtue is, that He might become an example to us, and reconcile our wills to Him, as well as our persons to His Heavenly Father.

And, indeed, it will prove but a sad consideration, that one drop of blood might be enough to obtain our pardon, and the treasures of His blood running out till the fountain itself was dry, shall not be enough to procure our conformity to Him; that at a smaller expense God might pardon us, and at a greater we will not imitate Him. The least of our wills cost Christ as much as the greatest of our sins. And therefore He calls himself “the Way, the Truth, and the Life;” that as he redeems our souls from death to life, by becoming Life to our persons, so He is the Truth to our understandings, and the Way to our will and affections, enlightening that, and leading these in the paths of a happy eternity.

The imitation of the life of Jesus is a duty of that excellency and perfection, that we are helped in it, not only by the assistance of a good and a great example—which possibly might be too great, and scare our endeavors and attempts—

but also by its easiness, compliance, and proportion to us; for Jesus, in his whole life, conversed with men with a modest virtue, which, like a well-kindled fire fitted with just materials, casts a constant heat. His piety was even, constant, unblamable, complying with civil society, without prodigious instances of actions greater than the imitation of men. For if we observe our Blessed Saviour in the whole story of His life, although He was without sin, yet the instances of His piety were the actions of a very holy but of an ordinary life; and we may observe this difference in the story of Jesus from ecclesiastical writings of certain beatified persons, whose lives are told rather to amaze us, and to create scruples, than to lead us in the evenness and serenity of a holy conscience. Such are the prodigious penances of Simeon Stylites, the abstinence of the religious, who retired into the mountain Nitria, but especially the stories of later saints in the midst of a declining piety and aged Christendom.

But we must know that not every thing which Christ did is imitable by us; for some excellent acts of His were demonstrations of divinity. Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights; but the manner of our fastings hath been in all ages limited to the term of an artificial day. We never heard that Jesus laughed, and but once that He rejoiced in spirit; but the declensions

of our natures cannot bear the weight of a perpetual grave deportment, without the intervals of refreshment and free alacrity.

The instances are not many; and we may establish this for a rule and limit of our imitations: whatsoever He commanded, and whatsoever He did, of precise morality or in pursuance of the laws of nature, in that we are to trace His footsteps: and in these His laws and His practice differ but as a map and a guide, a law and a judge, a rule and a precedent. Jesus's going up to Jerusalem to the feasts, and His observation of the sabbaths, teach us our duty in celebration of festivals constituted by a competent and just authority. For that which gave excellency to the observation of Mosaical rites was an evangelical duty; and the piety of obedience did not only consecrate the observations of Levi, but taught us our duty in the constitutions of Christianity.

And as the Holy Jesus did some things which we are not to imitate, so we also are to do some things which we cannot learn from His example. For there are some of our duties which presuppose a state of sin; and some suppose a promptness to it. Such are all the parts and actions of repentance, the duties of mortification and self-denial. Some states of life also there are which Jesus never led; such are those of temporal governors, kings, and judges; in the

course of which lives many cases do occur, which need a precedent, and the vivacity of an excellent example; especially, since all the rules which they have, have not prevented the subtlety of the many inventions which men have found out, nor made provision for all contingencies. Such persons, in all their special needs, are to govern their actions by analogy to the holiness of Jesus; considering what might become a person professing the discipline of so holy a Master, and what He would have done in the like case; taking our heights by the excellence of His innocency and charity.

But now, from these particulars, we shall best account to what the duty of the imitation of Jesus does amount; for it signifies, that "we should walk as He walked," tread in His steps; with our hand upon the Guide and our eye upon His rule; that we should do glory to Him, as He did to His Father; and that whatsoever we do, we should be careful that it do Him honor; there being no better imitation of Him than in such actions as do Him pleasure, however He hath expressed the precedent. He that gives alms to the poor, takes Jesus by the hand; he that patiently endures injuries and affronts, helps Him to bear His cross; he that comforts his brother in affliction, gives a kiss of peace to Jesus; he that bathes his own and his neighbor's sins in tears of penance and compassion,

washes his Master's feet. We lead Jesus into the recesses of our heart by holy meditations; and we enter into His heart, when we express Him in our actions: for so the Apostle says, "He that is in Christ, walks as He also walked." He that considers with what effusions of love Jesus prayed, what fervors and assiduity, what subordination to His Father, and conformity to the Divine pleasure, were in all His devotions—is taught and excited to holy and religious prayers. The rare sweetness of His deportment in all temptations and violences of His passion, His charity to His enemies, His sharp reprehensions to the Scribes and Pharisees, His ingenuousness towards all men, are living and effectual sermons to teach us patience, and humility, and zeal, and candid simplicity, and justice, in all our actions.

Let us therefore press after Jesus, as Elisha did after his master, with an inseparable prosecution, even whithersoever He goes; that, according to the reasonableness and proportion expressed in St. Paul's advice, "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we may also bear the image of the heavenly." When St. Laurence was in the midst of torments, he made this to be the matter of his joy and eucharist, that he was admitted to the gates through which Jesus had entered; and, therefore, thrice happy are they who walk in His courts all their days. And it is yet a nearer union and vicinity to im-

print His life in our souls, and express it in our exterior converse; and this is done by him only who despises all those gilded vanities which He despised, that fears none of those sadnesses which He suffered, that practises those doctrines which He taught, and hopes for the accomplishment of all His promises.

And this is truest religion, and the most solemn adoration.

PRAYER.

O Gracious and Eternal Saviour, whose sanctity shineth gloriously in every part of Thy life, grant that my will and my affections may be so conformed to Thy precepts, that I may express Thy image in all the parts of a holy life. Help me to imitate Thy devotion in prayer, Thy conformity to God, Thy zeal and meekness, Thy patience and charity, that I may grow up with the increase of God, till I come to the full measure of the stature of Christ, and at last in Thy light may see light, O blessed and holy Saviour, Jesus. Amen.

THIRD TUESDAY IN LENT.

CHRISTIAN FORGIVENESS.

“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” Col. iii. 13.

LONG-SUFFERING.—In this one word are contained all the treasures of the Divine goodness: here is the length and extension of His mercy. God is provoked every day, by the obstinacy of the Jews, and the folly of the heathens, and the negligence and vices of Christians; and He that can behold no impurity is received in all places with stained souls, and the actions and issues of misbelief and an evil conscience; and men continue ten years, and twenty, and thirty, in a course of sinning, and they grow old with the vices of their youth; and yet God forbears to kill them, and to consign them to an eternity of horrid pains, still expecting they should repent and be saved. God also excuses a sinner oftentimes, and takes a little thing for an excuse. He forgets our sin, and puts it out of His remembrance. He makes penitence to be as pure as innocence to all the effects of pardon and glory,

and He pardons even before we ask; for He that bids us ask for pardon, hath in design and purpose done the thing already. He hath done all that belongs to God; that is, all that concerns the pardon. There it lies ready; it is recorded in the book of life; it wants nothing but being exemplified, and taken forth; and the Holy Spirit stands ready to consign and pass the privy signet, that we may exhibit it to devils and evil men when they tempt us to despair or sin.

Moreover, God pardons the greatest sinners, and has left them upon record; such were St. Paul a persecutor, and St. Peter that forswore his Master; Mary Magdalene with seven devils, and the thief upon the cross; and God proclaimed in a cloud before the face of all Israel, and made it to be His name: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious:" "He is ready to forgive," and upon this stock thrives the interest of our great hope, the hope of a blessed immortality.

And because it is infinitely reasonable, that he that needs a great pardon should not stick at the giving a little; and he that desires to be like God should do like Him; therefore in this, as in all other things, we must follow God's example: for in this alone He else will follow ours. If we will forgive, He will; if we will not, neither will He; for He makes His spear as long, and His

anger as lasting, as we do ours. "He that revengeth," saith the famous Bensirach, "shall find vengeance of the Lord, and He will surely keep his sins in remembrance. Forgive thy neighbor the hurt that he hath done unto thee; so shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest. One man keepeth anger against another; and doth he seek healing from the Lord? He showeth no mercy to any man that is like himself; and doth he ask forgiveness for his own sins? If he that is but flesh, nourish hatred, who will entreat for pardon of his sins?" The duty is plain, and the reason urgent; the commandment express, and the threatening terrible, and the promises excellent. For concerning every one of our brethren it is equally true, that he is an excellent creation, that he is thy brother, that he is heir of the same hopes, born to the same inheritance, descended of the same father, nursed by the Church, which is his mother and thine; that there is in him God's image, drawn by the same hand, described in the same lines. God hath made many decrees for him, and the angels minister to him, and Christ died for him, and his soul is very precious in the eyes of God, and why shouldst thou despise, and why shouldst thou stand out against all this?

The wise man says, "That for some things there will be no returning again;" a blow, indeed, or an evil word, may be pardoned; but

for "upbraiding and pride, and disclosing secrets, and a treacherous wound, every friend will depart, and never return again." But even these also, and greater than these, must be pardoned, unless we would prescribe a limit to God's mercy, in the remission of our own sins. He will pardon every sin of ours, for the pardon of which we can rightly pray; but yet we must pray for it, and hope it upon no measures, but those of our forgiveness.

Every man that hath received injuries, be they ever so great, must have a mind perfectly free from all intentions of revenge, in any instance whatever.

He must so forgive as never to upbraid the crime any more, and so pardon as that he endeavor to make his enemy to be his friend.

Yet more, he that would be truly charitable in his forgiveness must so pardon his enemy that he restore him to the same state of love and friendship as before. This is urged by St. Bernard, as the great imitation of the Divine mercy. God hath so freely, so entirely pardoned our sins, that He neither condemns by revenging, nor confounds by upbraiding, nor loves less by imputing. He revenges not at all; He never upbraids; and when He hath once pardoned, He never imputes it to any evil purposes any more.

I should be thought severe if I should say

that "the true forgiveness and reconciliation does imply a greater kindness after than before;" but such is the effect of repentance, and so is the nature of love. But this depends not upon the injured person alone, but upon the return and repentance of him that did it. For no man is the better with God for having sinned against Him; and no man, for having injured his brother, can be the better beloved by him. But if the sinner double his care in his repentance, and if the offending man increase his kindness, justice, and endearments, in his return to friendship, then it is the duty of charity so to pardon, so to restore as the man deserves. And this is that which our blessed Saviour says: "If he shall return, and say, 'I repent,' thou shalt forgive him." For those very enemies that cease not still to persecute with evil we must pray; we must bless them; we must speak as much good of them as occasion and justice do require: but for them that repent, and ask pardon, and make amends as they can, the proper office of thy charity is to pity thy brother's infirmity, to accept his sorrow, to remove suspicion from him, to entertain no jealousies of him, but, in all things, trust him where charity is not imprudent.

For it is not always safe to employ a person that hath deceived my trust and done me wrong. If he offended by pride, by anger, by covetous-

ness, it is not enough that he say, "Sir, forgive me, I will make you amends." It is enough to make you pardon him, and perfectly to be reconciled to him; but, unless his repentance hath destroyed his covetousness, his anger, or his pride, the evil principle remains, and he will injure thee again. Therefore, to trust or employ him in such instances, in which he formerly did injure thee, is not prudent nor safe. Only be careful that you do not mistake jealousy for prudence, and so lose the rewards of charity; lest, when we think ourselves wise, we become fools.

But if we ask how long, and how often, must we proceed in our forgiveness, and accept of the repentance of injurious persons, we need no answer, but the words of our blessed Saviour: "If thy brother trespass against thee, seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying 'I repent,' thou shalt forgive him." And, though he that sins frequently, and repents frequently, gives great reason to believe that his repentances are but pretended, and that such repentances before God signify nothing; yet that is nothing to us. It may be they are rendered ineffectual by the relapse, and that they were good for the present, as Ahab's was: but whether they be or be not, yet if he be not ashamed to repent so often, we must think it no imprudence to forgive. And

if any man think it hard so often to be tried to accept his repentance, let him understand that it is because himself hath not yet summed up his own accounts, nor beheld with amazement the vast number of his sins. He that hath, in deepest apprehension, placed himself before the dreadful tribunal of God, or felt the smart of conscience, or hath been affrighted with the fears of hell, will not be ready to afflict his brother for a trifle, because he considers his own dangers of perishing for a sum which can never be paid, if it never be forgiven.

And because we are now upon the title of charity, I am to add, that, if the criminal does not come for pardon, the offended person must offer peace. By so doing we imitate God, whom, though we have so often, so infinitely offended, yet He thought thoughts of peace, and sent to us ambassadors of peace and ministers of reconciliation: and it is no shame to thee to offer peace to thy offending brother, when thy God did so to thee, who was greatly provoked by thee, and could as greatly have been revenged. Peter Comestor tells us of an old tradition of the ancients, that, "forty years before the day of judgment, the bow which God placed in the clouds shall not be seen at all:" meaning that since the rainbow was placed there, as a sign of mercy and reconcilment—when the sacrament of mercy and peace shall

disappear—then God will come to judge the world in fire, and an intolerable tempest, in which all the uncharitable, unforgiving persons, shall forever be confounded.

Remember always what the Holy Jesus hath done for thee. I shall represent it in the words of St. Bernard: “O Blessed Jesus, we have heard strange things of Thee—all the world tells us such things of Thee, that must need make us run after Thee. They say that Thou despisest not the poor, nor refusest the returning sinner. We are told that Thou didst pardon the thief, when he confessed his sin, and confessed Thee: and Mary Magdalen, when she wept; and didst accept the Syrophœnician when she prayed; and wouldst not give sentence of condemnation upon the woman taken in adultery, even because she looked sadly, and was truly ashamed. Thou didst not reject him that sat at the receipt of custom, nor the humble publican, nor them that persecuted Thy disciples, no, nor them that crucified Thee. These are Thy precious ointments, apt, with their sweetness, to allure all the world after Thee, and with their virtue to heal them. After Thee and Thy sweet odors, O blessed Jesu, we will run.” Happy is he that says so, and does so; transcribing His example into our conversation; for we can no way please Him but by being like him: and in

the blessings of Christ, the uncharitable and revenging man shall never have a portion.

PRAYER.

O Blessed Saviour, who of Thine infinite pity didst descend from heaven to earth that Thou mightest reconcile us to Thy Father, and hast commanded us to love them that hate us, and to pray for them that are our enemies; grant that the spirit of love and of forgiveness may triumph in me over all anger and malice and revenge, that I may be the child of God, and in the day of restitution of all things may receive the portion of the charitable, even the rewards of Thy Right Hand: through Thy merits and Thy mercy, O Holy and Gracious Saviour Amen.

FOURTH WEDNESDAY IN LENT.

GRATITUDE FOR DAILY MERCIES.

“Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.” PSALM cvii. 43.

MAN having destroyed that which God delighted in, that is, the beauty of his soul—fell into an evil portion; and, being seized upon by the Divine justice, grew miserable, and condemned to an incurable sorrow. But he who thus stood condemned and undone, under all the other attributes of God, was saved and rescued by His mercy; that it may be evident that God's mercy is above all His works, and above all ours—greater than the creation, and greater than our sins.

We looked for a judge, and behold a Saviour! We feared an accuser, and behold an Advocate! We sat down in sorrow, and rise in joy. And all that God restored to us after the forfeiture of Adam, grew to be a double kindness; it became the expression of a bounty which knew not how to repent—a graciousness that was not to be altered, though we were.

God's mercies, or the mercies of His giving,

came first upon us, by mending our nature; for Christ hath done us more grace and advantage than we lost in Adam. Man's living soul is changed into a quickening spirit, and Christ hath carried him his human nature above the seats of angels, to the place whither "Lucifer, the son of the morning," aspired to ascend, but in his attempt, fell into hell.

And, whereas, in this life our constitution is weak, and our bodies apt to imperfection, and evil accidents—God hath in His infinite mercy provided for every condition, rare suppletories of comfort and usefulness, to make recompense for those natural defects, which were apt to make our persons otherwise contemptible, and our conditions intolerable. God gives to blind men better memories; want of children He recompenses with freedom from care; he that wants one eye hath the force and vigorousness of both united in that which is left him; and whenever any man is afflicted with sorrow, his reason and his religion, himself and all his friends, run in to comfort him; and he may, if he will observe wisely, find so many circumstances of ease and remission, so many designs of providence, and studied favors, that in the whole sum of affairs, it often happens that a single cross is a double blessing; and that even in a temporal sense, "it is better to go to the house of mourning" than of joys.

God hath sent no greater evil into the world than that, "in the sweat of our brows we shall eat our bread;" and in the difficulty and agony, in the sorrows and contention of our souls, we shall "work out our salvation."

But this labor and sweat of our brows is so far from being a curse, that without it, our very bread would not be so great a blessing. Is it not labor that makes the garlic and the pulse, the sycamore and the cresses, to be savory and pleasant, as the flesh of the roebuck, or the milk of the kine? If it were not for labor, men neither could relish so pleasantly, nor sleep so soundly, nor be so healthful nor so useful, so strong nor so patient. And besides these advantages, the mercies of God have found out proper and natural remedies for labor;—nights to cure the sweat of the day—sleep to ease our watchfulness—rest to alleviate our burdens—and days of religion to procure our rest; and things are so ordered, that labor is become a duty, and is therefore necessary; not only because we need it for making provisions for our life, but even to ease the labor of our rest; there being no greater tediousness of spirit in the world than want of employment and an inactive life.

But then for the other part of the severe law, that we must work out our spiritual interest with the labors of our spirit: this hath also in

it a great ingredient of mercy, or rather is nothing else than a heap of mercy in its entire constitution. For if it were not for this, we had nothing of our own to present to God, for nothing can distinguish man from man, in order to beatitude, but choice, and election; and nothing can ennoble choice but love, and nothing can exercise love but difficulty. And therefore, whenever any of you are tempted violently, or grow weary in your spirits with resisting the petulancy of temptation, you may be cured, if you will please to remember and rejoice, that now you have something of your own to give to God—something that He will be pleased to accept—something that He hath given thee, that thou mayest give it Him.

As an appendage to this instance of Divine mercy, we are to account that God brings good out of evil; which is that solemn triumph which mercy makes over justice, when it rides upon a cloud, and crowns its darkness with a robe of glorious light. It is a sad calamity to see a kingdom spoiled, and a church afflicted; religion made a cause of trouble, and the best men persecuted; government confounded, and laws ashamed. And what shall make recompense for this heap of sorrows whenever God shall send such swords of fire? Even the mercies of God, which shall then be made public; for men shall grow wiser and more holy, and

be taught patience by their suffering, and charity by their persecution, and at last, the secret worm that lay at the root of the plant shall be drawn forth and quite extinguished. Do not think the Judge condemns you, when He chides you; nor think to read thy final sentence by the first half of His words. Stand still, and see how it will be in the whole event of things. Let God speak His mind out; for it may be, this sad beginning is but an art to bring in the blessing.

Let us also consider that God, having secured us from the evils of nature, and represented Himself to be our Father, which is the greatest expression of an unalterable kindness, He next makes provision for us to supply all those necessities which Himself hath made. Is not all the earth our orchard and our granary, our vineyard and our garden of pleasure? and all the face of heaven is a repository for fruitful showers and fair refreshments. When God made provisions for His other creatures, He gave it of one kind, and with variety no greater than the changes of day and night; but man hath all the food of beasts, and all the beasts themselves that are fit for food, and the food of angels, and the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth. And in the covering our sin and clothing our nakedness, God passed from fig-leaves to the skins of beasts, from leather to

wool, from thence to the warmth of furs and the coolness of silks; and God uses us as Joseph did his brother Benjamin; we have many changes of raiment, and our mess is five times bigger than the provision made for our brothers of the creation. Is it not a great thing, also, that God hath made such strange provisions for our health? It was a huge diligence and care of the Divine mercy that discovered to man such infinite differences of plants, and the strange effects of accidental mixtures, which the art of man could not suspect; being bound up in the secret sanctuary of hidden causes and secret natures, and being laid open by the concurrence of twenty or thirty little accidents, all which were ordered by God as certainly as are the first principles of nature, or the descent of sons from the fathers in the most noble families.

And if God is so merciful in making fair provisions for our less noble part, in order to the transition towards our country, we may expect that the mercies of God have rare arts to secure to us His designed bounty in order to that which ought to be our portion forever. And here I consider, that it is an infinite mercy of the Almighty Father of Mercies, that He hath appointed to us such a religion, that leads us to a huge felicity through pleasant ways. The very charity, and love, and mercy, that is commanded in our religion, is in itself a great excellency,

not only in order to heaven, but to the comforts of the earth too. He that sent charity and friendships into the world, intended charity to do its effect both upon the loving and beloved person. Every man rejoices twice when he hath a partner of his joy, for a friend shares my sorrow, and makes it but a moiety; but he swells my joy, and makes it double.

And upon this account I may also reckon the little streams of comfort which God hath made to issue from that religion to which God hath obliged us; such as are the glories of converting souls, of rescuing a sinner from hell, of a miserable man from the grave,—the honor and nobleness of being a good man,—the noble confidence and bravery of innocence, the ease of patience,—the quiet of contentedness,—the rest of peacefulness,—the worthiness of forgiving others,—the greatness of spirit that is in despising riches,—and the sweetness of spirit that is in meekness and humility. These are Christian graces in every sense; favors of God, and issues of His bounty and His mercy. And God hath made them necessary; He hath obliged us to have them, under pain of damnation; He hath made it so sure to us to become happy, even in this world, that if we will not, He hath threatened to destroy us. You see the largeness of this treasure, but we can see no end. God's own words, describing mercy in all those dimensions,

can alone signify to us its greatness and infinity. His mercy "is great," His mercies "are many," His mercy "reacheth unto the heavens," it "fills heaven and earth," it is "above all His works," "it endureth forever."

The result of this consideration is, that as we fear the Divine judgments, so we adore and love His goodness, and let the golden chains of the Divine mercy tie us to a noble prosecution of our duty and the interests of religion. For he is the worst of men whom kindness cannot soften, nor endearment oblige, whom gratitude cannot tie faster than the bands of life and death. Fear is stronger than death, and love is more prevalent than fear, and kindness is the greatest endearment of love; and yet, to an ingenuous person, gratitude is greater than all these, and obliges to a solemn duty, when love fails, and fear is dull and inactive, and death itself is despised.

Let us take heed, for mercy is like a rainbow, which God set in the clouds to remember mankind. It shines here as long as it is not hindered; but we must never look for it after it is night, and it shines not in the other world.

If we refuse mercy here, we shall have justice to eternity.

PRAYER.

O most merciful God, whose mercies are high as the heavens, great and many as the moments of eternity; fill my soul, I beseech Thee, with great apprehensions of Thy unspeakable blessings, that my thankfulness may be as great as my needs of mercy are. Let Thy loving-kindness endure forever and ever upon me, and because I cannot praise Thee according to Thy excellence, take my soul, in due time, into the land of everlasting praises, that I may spend a whole eternity in ascribing to Thy name praise, and honor, and dominion. Grant this for Jesus Christ's sake, our Lord and only Saviour. Amen.

FOURTH THURSDAY IN LENT.

WATCHFULNESS.

“ Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” MARK xiv. 38.

GOD, who is the Fountain of good, did choose rather to bring good out of evil than not to suffer any evil to be. He has disposed us in such a condition that our virtues must be difficult, and our dangers proportionable; in order that our labor might be great, and our dangers pass into security and honor. It is every man's case, and we are so sure to be tempted, that in the deepest peace and silence of the spirit oftentimes is our greatest danger. Not to be tempted is sometimes our most subtle temptation. We must not, therefore, wonder that oftentimes it so happens that nothing will remove a temptation; no diligence, no advices, no labor, no prayers;—not because these are ineffectual, but because it is most fit the temptation should abide. For certain it is, unless we first be cut and hewn in the mountains, we shall not be fixed in the temple of God.

St. Cyprian often observes, and makes much

of the discourse, that the devil, when he intends a battery, first views the strength and situation of the place. His sense, drawn out of the cloud of an allegory, is this: The devil first considers the constitution and temper of the person he is to tempt, and where he observes his natural inclination apt for a vice, he presents him with objects, and opportunity, and arguments fitting to his disposition. It were good, therefore, that we were conscious of our own weaknesses, and by special acts fortify that part where we are exposed to danger. We are sure enough to meet a storm there, and we also are likely to perish in it, unless we correct those natural dispositions, and reduce them to the evenness of virtue, or the affections and moderations of a good nature.

But the devil also observes all our exterior accidents, occasions, and opportunities of action. He sees what company we keep; he observes what degree of love we have to our wives, what affection to our children, how prevalent their persuasions, and to what degrees of determination they move us by their importunity.

The devil tempted Adam by his wife. It was her hand made the fruit beauteous to Adam. "She saw it fair," of itself, "and so she ate;" but Adam was not moved by that argument; but, "The woman gave it me and I did eat." She gave vivacity to the temptation, and efficacy

to the argument. Here, therefore, it is our safest course, not to let our fondnesses convert into a snare, but to make a retrenchment of all those excrescences of affections which, like wild and irregular suckers, draw away nourishment from the trunk.

We also have ends and designs of our own—some great purpose, upon which the greatest part of our life turns. It may be, we are to raise a family, to recover a sunk estate; or else ambition, honor, or a great employment is the great hinge of all our greater actions; and some men are apt to make haste to be rich, or are to pass through a great many difficulties to be honorable: and here the devil will swell the hopes and obstruct the passages; making the way to the purchase of our purposes so full of employment and variety, that the multitude of transactions may increase the danger and multiply the sin.

To prevent the infinite inconveniences that thrust themselves into the common and great roads of life, the best course is to cut our great channel into little rivulets, making our ends the more, that we may be indifferent to any—proposing nothing great, that our desires may be little. Thus, if we propound to ourselves an honest employment or a great retirement; a work of charity abroad, or of devotion at home: if we miss in our first setting forth, we return to

shore, where we can negotiate with content, it being alike to us either to traffic abroad with more gain, or trade at home with more safety. But when we once grow great in our desires, fixing too earnestly upon one object, we either grow impatient, or take ill courses and use unlawful means. We have seen the even and temperate lives of indifferent persons continue in many degrees of innocence; but the temptation of busy designs is too great, even for the best of dispositions.

A further principle of temptation is, an opinion of prosecuting actions of civility, compliance, and society, to the neglect of a point of piety and stricter duty. Good natures—persons of humane and sweeter dispositions—are too apt to dash on this rock of offence; and therefore, when we mingle in affairs, it will concern our safety to watch, lest multitude of talk, goodness, the delight of company, and facility of nature, do by degrees draw us away from our guards and retirement of spirit. For if we give way so far as we think it tolerable, we instantly and undiscernibly pass into unlawful and criminal.

In all the instances of this great evil, the very stating the question right is above half the victory; for it is a question between mistaken civility and certain duty. God and man are the parties interested; and to counterpoise the influence of the sight of man, which being in a visible

communication, it is not in some natures to neglect, there are all the excellences of God, the severities of His judgment, and the sweetness and invitation of His mercies; besides the prudence, wisdom, and satisfaction to the spirit, when we wisely neglect temptations, in compliance with the purposes of God and our own felicities.

There are moreover some diseases more proper to the particular state of religion. To young beginners in religion, the devil represents the difficulties of religion, and propounds the greater examples of holy persons, and affrights them with those mountains of piety; that, by believing no piety less than the greatest can be good, they may despair of those heights and retire into the securities and indifferences of a careless life. But this is to be cured by those instruments of piety, which in special are incentives of the love of God; and particularly by consideration of the Divine goodness; "Who knows whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but dust," and will require of us no more, than according to our powers and present capacities. But most commonly young beginners are zealous and high, and the devil uses to prompt them on; not that he loves the piety and the progress, but that he would engage the person in imprudences. We shall observe new penitents too often undertaking great austerities, making vows, and casting bands upon their lib-

erty, and snares upon their persons: but the observation of the final accidents of these men hath given proof of the indiscretion of such beginnings; the vow does not secure the piety, but the weariness of the duty tempts to the breaking of the vow.

I shall not need further to observe such temptations which are direct invitations to sin; such as are security, too much confidence, pride, and vanity: but it remains that I speak of such general antidotes as are preventions, and good advices in general.

Holy Scripture, which is admirable and curious, in the cautions and securities of virtue, does not determine its precepts in precise commands; but also blocks up all the ways and avenues of vice, commanding us "To make a covenant with our eyes;" to "Set a watch before our mouths;" to "Keep the door of our lips;" that sin may not come so near as to be repulsed.

Possibly indeed, without fault, we may be engaged in a temptation, but then we must be diligent to resist the first beginnings.

If the temptation be to thoughts of impurity, let the resistance be by flight; for all considerations of such subjects make the soul entertain the fancy. Even the pulling pitch from our clothes defiles the fingers, and chaste souls do, even to death, resent the least image of impurity.

In other cases the following considerations have the best and most universal influence in subduing temptation.

First. "Consideration of the presence of God," who is witness of all our actions and a revenger of all impiety. They who are servants of the eyes of God, and walk as in the Divine presence, perceive the same restraints in darkness, and closets, and grots, as in the light and midst of theatres; since the Divine presence hath made all places holy, and we desecrate the ground whereon we stand supported by the arm of God, and enlightened by His eye when we sin in so sacred a presence.

Meditation upon death is a second great instrument against temptation; "My soul is always in Thy hand, therefore do I keep Thy commandments," said David. He looked upon himself as a dying person, and that restrained all his inordinations, and so he prayed—"Lord, teach me to number my days that I may apply my heart unto wisdom." And therefore the Egyptians used to serve up a skeleton to their feasts, that the vapors of wine might be restrained with that bunch of myrrh, and the vanities of their eyes chastised by that sad object. For when a man stands perpetually at the door of eternity, and every day is building of his sepulchre, and every night one day of our life is gone and passed into the possession of

death, it will concern us to take care that the door leading to hell do not open upon us, that we be not crushed to ruin by the stones of our grave, and that our death become not a consignment of us to a sad eternity.

But before, and in, and after all this, the Blessed Jesus propounds prayer as a remedy against temptations: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." For, besides that prayer is the great instrument of obtaining victory by the grace of God, the very praying against a temptation, if it be hearty, fervent, and devout, is a denying of it, and part of the victory. If temptation sets upon thee, do thou set upon God; for He is as soon overcome as thou art, as soon moved to good as thou art to evil. Only, remember, that when Israel fought against Amalek, Moses' prayer and Moses' hand secured the victory; his prayer grew ineffectual when his hands were slack; to remonstrate to us that we must co-operate with the grace of God, praying devoutly, and watching carefully, and observing prudently, and laboring with diligence and assiduity.

PRAYER.

O Blessed and most Holy Saviour, Fountain of grace and comfort, grant me to be so careful and watchful over my ways, that I may never

provoke Thee to anger, nor cause Thee to turn Thy face from me. Support me in all my needs, and teach me to seek Thee in all my trials; that I may walk in Thy footsteps, guided by Thy hand, and enlightened by Thy favor, and may at last dwell with Thee in the regions of light and eternal glory, where I shall enjoy the blessedness of Thy presence forever, O Holy and most Merciful Saviour. Amen.

FOURTH FRIDAY IN LENT.

CAREFUL EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

EPHES. v. 16.

ALL philosophers which have thought of the nature of Time, and with much subtlety have disputed what it was, at length come to conclude that they knew not what it is: the most they can reach unto is, that no Time is long; and that can only be called Time which is present, the which is but a moment.

We have only a moment in our power, and a moment which is lost in the very instant in which we think to grasp it. Let us cast our eyes upon our life past; let us consider what is become of our infancy, childhood, and youth: they are now dead to us. In the same manner shall those ages of our life which are to come die also; and with reason, therefore, may this life be called the shadow of death, since, under the shadow of life, death steals upon us.

Guerricus, a most famous divine, hearing the

fifth chapter of Genesis read, wherein are recounted the sons and descendants of Adam, in these terms: "The whole life of Adam was nine hundred and thirty years, and he died; the life of his son, Seth, was nine hundred and twelve years, and he died," and so of the rest; began to think with himself, that if such and so great men, after so long time ended in death, it was not safe to lose more time in this world, but so to secure his life, that losing it here, he might find it hereafter.

For although we were certain to live yet a hundred years longer, we ought not to spare one minute from the gaining of eternity.

But since all our life we are dying, and this minute in which I now write death divides with me, and hath got the surer part and more certain possession, and no man is sure that he shall not die suddenly; therefore, if heaven be worth securing, it were fit that we should reckon every day the vespers of death, and that, according to the usual rites of religion, it be begun and spent with religious offices. It will become also not only a duty, but a great providence, to lay aside, for the services of God and the businesses of the Spirit, as much as we can; because God rewards our minutes with long and eternal happiness; and the greater portion of our time we give to God, the more we treasure up for ourselves, and "no man is a better mer-

chant than he that lays out his time upon God and his money upon the poor."

But that we need not fear this instrument to be a snare to us, or that the duty must end in scruple, vexation, and eternal fears, we must remember that the life of every man may be so ordered (and indeed must), that it may be a perpetual serving of God. The greatest trouble and most busy trade and worldly incumbrances, when they are necessary, or charitable, or profitable in order to any of those ends which we are bound to serve, whether public or private, being a doing of God's work.

He that hath the fewest businesses of the world, is called upon to spend more time in the dressing of his soul; and he that hath the most affairs, may so order them, that they shall be a service of God; while, at certain periods, they are blessed with prayers and actions of religion, and all day long are hallowed by a holy intention.

For this grace is so excellent that it sanctifies the most common action of our life. By it every action of nature becomes religious, and every meal is an act of worship and shall have its reward in its proportion as well as an act of prayer. Blessed be that goodness and grace of God, which out of infinite desire to glorify and save mankind, would make the very works of nature capable of becoming acts of virtue, that all our lifetime we may do Him service.

We must remember that we have a great work to do, many enemies to conquer, many evils to prevent, much danger to run through, many difficulties to be mastered, many necessities to serve, and much good to do; besides the needs of nature and of relation, our private and our public cares, and duties of the world, which necessity and the providence of God have adopted into the family of religion. And idleness is the greatest prodigality in the world; it throws away that which is invaluable in respect of its present use, and irreparable when it is past, being to be recovered by no power of art or nature. Wherefore let every man that hath a calling be diligent in pursuance of its employment—and let all the intervals or void spaces of time be employed in prayers, readings, meditating, works of nature, recreation, charity, friendliness, and neighborhood. Never undertake any trifling employment merely to pass the time away: but remember that the time thou triflest away was given thee to repent in, to pray for pardon of sins, to work out thy salvation, to do the work of grace, to lay up against the day of judgment a treasure of good works that thy time may be crowned with eternity.

In the midst of the works of thy calling often retire to God in short prayers and ejaculations; for so thou reconcil'st the outward work and

thy inward calling, the Church and the commonwealth, the employment of the body and the interest of thy soul. Set apart some portions of every day for more solemn devotion and religious employment, which be severe in observing; and when the clock strikes, or however else you shall measure the day, it is good to say a short ejaculation, that the parts and returns of devotion may be the measure of your time: and also, do so in all the breaches of thy sleep, that those spaces, which have in them no direct business of the world, may be filled with religion.

As much as may be, cut off all impertinent and useless employments of your life, unnecessary visits, long waitings upon great personages, where neither duty, nor necessity, nor charity obliges us; all vain meetings, all laborious trifles, and whatsoever spends much time to no real, civil, religious, or charitable purpose.

Let not your recreations be lavish spenders of your time; but choose such which are healthful, short, transient, recreative, and apt to refresh you; but at no hand dwell upon them, or make them your great employment: for he that spendeth his time in sports, and calls it recreation, is like him whose garment is all made of fringes, and his meat nothing but sauces; they are healthless, chargeable, and useless.

Lastly. Do not the work of God negligently

and idly, for of that time only thou mayest be most confident that it is gained, which is prudently and zealously spent in God's service. The proud and the covetous are to expect flames and scorpions, pains and smart; yet the lazy and the imperfect, the harmless sleeper and the idle worker, shall have the loss of all his hopes, and the dishonor of the loss; and in the sum of affairs, it will be no great difference whether we have loss or pain; because there can be no greater pain imaginable than to lose the sight of God to eternal ages. And, indeed, if we consider how many years are wholly spent before we come to the use of reason; how many years more, before that reason is useful to us to any great purposes; how imperfect our discourse is made by our evil education, false principles, ill company, bad examples, and want of experience; that little portion of hours that is left for the practices of piety and religious walking with God, is so short and trifling, that were not the goodness of God infinitely great it might seem unreasonable or impossible for us to expect of Him eternal joys in heaven, even after the well spending of those few minutes which are left for God and God's service.

And what an eternal repentance will follow thee if thou makest not use of the occasion of time, for the purchasing of the kingdom of heaven! especially when thou shalt see that

with so little ado thou mightest have gained that everlasting glory, which, to satisfy a short pleasure, thou hast lost forever.

PRAYER.

O Eternal God! who hast created me to do Thy work, and to serve Thee in this generation, give me grace to glorify Thy name by the discharge of all my duties; take from me all slothfulness, grant me a diligent and active spirit, and enable me so to improve the talent intrusted to me by thee, that at the coming of my Lord, I may enter into His joy even for Thy mercy's sake, and the sake of my Blessed Redeemer. Amen.

FOURTH SATURDAY IN LENT.

FAITH.

“Without faith it is impossible to please Him.” HEB. xi. 6.

IF we consider upon what easy terms most of us now are Christians, we may possibly suspect that either faith hath but little excellence in it, or we but little faith, or that we are mistaken generally in its definition. For we are born of Christian parents, made Christians at ten days old; from thence we are taught to say our Catechism as we are taught to speak, when we have no reason to judge, no arguments to contest against a proposition in case we be catechised into false doctrine; and all that is put into us we believe without choice, as children use not to choose their language. And as our children are made Christians, just so are thousands made Mahometans with the same necessity, the same facility. So that thus far there is little thanks due to us for believing the Christian creed; which puts us evidently upon this consideration, that Christian faith, that glorious duty which gives to Christians a great degree of approximation to God by Jesus Christ,

must have a great proportion of that ingredient which makes actions good or bad, that is, of choice and effect. For the faith of a Christian hath more in it of the will than of the understanding. Men believe the Resurrection, but it is because they are taught it in their childhood, and they inquire no further in their age. And we find they commonly live at such a rate as if they did neither believe nor care whether it were so or no. Before this faith can enable them to resist a temptation, they must derive their assent from principles of another nature. They must believe the doctrine, because it is said to come from God; and rely upon it, because it brings to God; trust it, because it is good; acknowledge it certain, because it is excellent; that there may be an act of the will in it as well as of the understanding, and as much love in it as discourse.

And for others who can inquire better, their inquiries must be modest and humble; they must not disbelieve an article in Christianity, which is not proved like a conclusion in geometry; they must not be witty to object, and curious to inquire beyond their limit. For some are so ingeniously miserable, that they will never believe a proposition in divinity if any thing can be said against it; they will be credulous enough in all the affairs of their life, but impenetrable by a sermon of the Gospel; they will believe the

word of a man and the promise of their neighbor, but a promise of Scripture signifies nothing, unless it can be proved like a proposition in the metaphysics. If Sempronius tells them a story, it is sufficient if he be a just man and the narrative be probable ; but though religion be taught by many excellent men, who gave their lives for a testimony, this shall not pass for truth till there is no objection left to stand against it. The reason of these things is plain : they do not love the thing ; their interest is against it ; they have no joy in religion ; they are not willing or desirous that the things shall appear true. When love is the principle, the thing is easy to the understanding, the objections are nothing, the arguments are good, and the preachers are in the right.

A humble, willing, and docile mind, and the consideration of the Divine Omnipotence and infinite Wisdom, and our own ignorance, are great instruments of curing all doubting, and silencing the murmurs of infidelity. For true faith is full of ingenuousness and hearty simplicity, free from suspicion, wise and confident. No man carries his bed into the field to watch how his corn grows, but believes upon the general order of Providence and nature, and at harvest finds himself not deceived.

In time of temptation, therefore, be not busy to dispute, but throw yourself upon God ; and

contend not with Him, but in prayer, which hath a particular promise in this thing; and be sure to esteem all changes of belief, which offer themselves in the time of your greatest weakness (contrary to the persuasions of your best understanding), to be temptations, and reject them accordingly.

Moreover, the faith of a Christian hath in it a fulness of confidence and relying upon God, a trusting in, and a real expectation of, the event of all the promises of the Gospel. We all profess that God is Almighty, that all His promises are certain, and yet, when it comes to a pinch, we find that man to be more confident that hath ten thousand pounds in his purse, than he that reads God's promises over ten thousand times. "Men of a common spirit," saith St. Chrysostom, "of an ordinary sanctity, will not steal, or kill, or lie, or commit adultery; but it requires a rare faith, and a sublimity of pious affections, to believe that God will work a deliverance, which to me seems impossible."

And indeed St. Chrysostom hit upon the right. He had need be a good man, and love God well that puts his trust in Him; for those we love we are most apt to trust. So that if you are willing, even in death, to confess not only the articles, but in affliction and death to trust the promises; if, in the lowest nakedness of poverty, you can cherish yourselves with the

expectation of God's promises, being as confident of food and raiment, and deliverance or support, when all is in God's hand, as you are when it is in your own; if you can be cheerful in a storm, smile when the world frowns, be content in the midst of spiritual desertions and anguish of spirit, expecting all should work together for the best, according to the promise; if you can strengthen yourselves in God when you are weakest, believe when you see no hope, and entertain no jealousies or suspicions of God, though you see nothing to make you confident—then, and then only you have faith.

Lastly. Faith in the threatenings and commandments of God must be the actual principle and effective of a good life.

Let us consider the power and efficacy of worldly belief. If a man believes that there is gold to be had in Peru for fetching, or pearls and riches in India for the exchange of trifles, he instantly, if he be in a capacity, leaves the wife of his bosom, and the pretty delights of children and his own security, and ventures into the dangers of waters and unknown seas, thirst and hunger, pirates and shipwrecks; and hath within him a principle strong enough to answer all objections, because he believes that riches are desirable, and by such means likely to be had. And if we did as verily believe that in Heaven those great felicities, which transcend

all our apprehensions, are certainly to be obtained by leaving our vices and lower desires, what can hinder us but we should at least do as much for obtaining those great felicities as for the lesser if the belief were equal? For if any man thinks he may have them without holiness, and justice, and charity, then he wants faith. Who can pretend to be a Christian and yet not believe those words of St. Paul, "Follow after peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see God?" And yet if we do believe it, what do we think will become of us, who neither "follow peace nor holiness," but follow our anger and pursue our lust? Our Blessed Saviour told us, that "With what measures we mete to others, it shall be measured to us again;" but who almost believes this and considers what it means? Will you be content that God should despise you as you despise your brother? that He should be as soon angry with you as you are with him? that He should strike you as hastily, and as seldom pardon you, and never bear with your infirmities, and as seldom interpret fairly what you say or do, and be revenged as frequently as you would be? And what think we of these sayings: "Into the heavenly Jerusalem there shall in nowise enter any thing that defileth or profaneth; neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." Do men believe God, and yet, doing these

things, hope to be saved for all these terrible sayings?

Let us remember that he only by his faith can be saved, who, by his faith, lives a life of grace, whose faith is to him a magazine of holy principles, whose faith endears obedience, and is the nurse of a holy hope and the mother of a never-failing charity. He shall be saved by his faith, who by his faith is more than conqueror, who resists the devil and makes him fly, and gives laws to his passions, and makes them obedient; who, by his faith, overcomes the world and removes mountains—the mountains of pride and vanity, ambition and secular designs; he, whose faith opens the blind man's eyes, and makes him to see the things of God; and cures the lame hypocrite and makes him to walk uprightly. “For these signs shall follow them that believe,” said our blessed Saviour; and by these, as by the wedding garment, we are fitted for the heavenly Supper of the King.

PRAYER.

O Lord God of infinite mercy, who hast sent Thy Holy Son into the world to redeem us from intolerable misery; let my faith, I beseech Thee, be the parent of a good life, a strong shield to repel the fiery darts of the devil; and grant that

I may be supported by its strength in all temptations, and refreshed by its comforts in all my sorrows, till from the imperfections of this life it may arrive to the consummation of an eternal and never-ceasing love, through Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith, to whom with Thee, O Lord God, Father of heaven and earth, and with Thy Holy Spirit be all glory, and love, and obedience, and dominion, now and forever. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

THE THIRD TEMPTATION.

“Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.”
MATTHEW iv. 8, 9.

By this time the devil began to perceive that Jesus was the Son of God, and designed to be the King of all the world; and therefore resolved, for the last assault, to proffer Him the kingdoms of the world; thinking ambition more likely to ruin Him because he knew it was that which prevailed upon himself, and all those fallen stars, the angels of darkness. That the devil told a lie is most likely, when he said he had power to dispose the kingdoms of the world; for, by proper inherent right, God alone disposes all governments; but it is also certain that the devil is capable of a delegate employment, in some great mutation of states; and many probabilities have been observed by wise personages, persuading that the grandeur of the Roman Empire was permitted to the power and managing of the devil; in order that the greatness of that

government, being in all appearance full of advantage to Satan's kingdom, and employed for the disimprovement of the weak beginnings of Christianity, might give demonstration that Christianity came from God; since the great permissions of power made to the devil, and acted with all art and malice in defiance of the religion, could produce no other effect upon it but that it made it grow greater.

The Lamb of God that heard Satan with patience tempt Him to do Himself a mischief and to throw Himself headlong, could by no means endure it when he tempted to a direct dishonoring of God. Our own injuries are opportunities of patience; but when the glory of God and His immediate honor is the question, then is the occasion and precise minute for the flames of a clear, shining, and unconsuming zeal. But the care of God's glory had so filled and employed all the faculties of Jesus, that he took no notice of the offer; and it were well also that we had fewer opinions of the lustre of worldly dignities, or at least that we, in imitation of our blessed Master, should refuse to accept all the world, when it is to be bought of the devil, at the expense of a deadly sin. For that government cannot be very honorable that makes us slaves to the worst of tyrants; and all those who, by injury and usurpation, possess and invade others' rights, would do well

to consider that a kingdom is too dearly paid for, if the condition be first to worship the devil.

When the devil could do no good, he departed for a season. If he could ever have spied a time of returning, he wanted not will nor malice to observe and to use it; and although Jesus was a person without danger, yet I doubt not but the Holy Ghost described that circumstance that we should not have the securities of a deep peace, when we have had the success of conquerors. For a surprise is most full of horror, and of more certain ruin; so that we have no security but a perpetual observation. That, together with the grace of God (who takes care of all His servants, and will drive away the tempter when He pleases, and help us always when we need), is as great an argument for our confidence, and encouragement to our prayers and address to God, as it is safety to our person and honor to our victory. And let us account it our honor, that the trials of temptation, which is the greatest sadness of our condition, are hallowed by the temptation of Jesus, and our condition assured by His assistances, and the assistances procured by our prayers most easily, upon the advantage of His sufferings and compassion. And we may observe, that poverty, predestination, and ambition are the three quivers from which the devil drew his arrows, which (as the most likely to prevail) he shot against

Christ. But now he shot in vain, and gave proof that he might be overcome. Our Captain hath conquered for Himself and us.

PRAYER.

O Almighty God, Father and Lord of all the creatures, who hast disposed all things as may best glorify Thy wisdom, teach me humbly to submit to Thy Providence, and to be content in all changes of person and condition. Grant me to be temperate in prosperity, and meek and patient in adversity; let me have no fondness for the vanities and possessions of this world, but may I lay up my hopes in heaven, and the consolations of the day of redemption, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOURTH MONDAY IN LENT.

HUMILITY.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

PHILIPPIANS ii. 5.

GOD descended from heaven to earth, from riches to poverty, from essential innocence to the disreputation of a sinner, from a master to a servant, to learn us that we should esteem ourselves but just as we are,—low, sinful, miserable, needy, and unworthy. And to this purpose St. Bernard hath an affectionate and devout consideration, saying, “That some of the angels as soon as they were created, had an ambition to become like God, and to aspire into the throne which God had appointed to the Holy Jesus in eternal ages. When God created man, presently the devil rubbed his leprosy upon him, and he would needs be like God too, and Satan promised him that he should. But man had the fate of Gehazi, he would needs have the talents and garments of Lucifer, and he had also his plague—he lost paradise for his pride.” And now, what might befit the Son of God to do,

seeing man so lost, and God so jealous of His honor? I see (saith He) that by occasion of Me, the Father loses His creatures, for they have all aspired to be like Me, and are fallen into the greatest infelicities; behold, I will go towards man in such a form, that whosoever from henceforth would become like Me, shall be so, and be a gainer by it. And for this cause the Son of God came from heaven, and made Himself a poor humble person, and by all the actions of His life commented upon the present discourse: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

Blessed be that mercy and bounty which moved Almighty God to condescend to that so great appetite we had of being like Him; for now we may be like unto God; but it must be by humility, of which He hath given us an example powerful as miracles, and great as our own pride and misery.

This act consists not in declamations and forms of satire against ourselves, saying, I am a miserable sinful creature; I am proud, or covetous, or ignorant; for many men say so, who are not willing to be thought so. Neither is humility a virtue made up of wearing old clothes, or doing mean or servile employments by voluntary undertaking, or of sullen gestures, or artifices of lowly expressions; for these may become snares to invite and catch at honor. But it consists in

a true understanding of our own condition and a separating our own nothing from the good we have received, and giving to God all the glory, and taking to ourselves all the shame and dishonor due to our sinful condition. Humility is of greater difficulty in persons pious, full of gifts, and eminent in graces, who being fellow-workers together with God, sometimes grow tacitly and without notice given to confide in themselves; and ascribe too much of the good action to their own choice and diligence; and take up their crowns, which lie at the foot of the throne, and set them upon their own heads. For a sinner to desire to be esteemed a sinner, is no more humility than it is for the son of a ploughman to confess his father: but indeed it is hard for a man to be cried up for a saint, to walk upon the spire of glory, and to have no adherence or impure mixtures of vanity grow upon the outside of his heart. But the true stating our own question, and knowing ourselves, must needs represent us set in the midst of infinite imperfections, laden with sins, fond of trifles, full of ingratitude, and all such things, which in every man else we look upon as scars and deformities; and if we would esteem them with the same severity in ourselves, it would make us charitable in our censures, compassionate and gentle to others, and, in all accidents and chances to ourselves, to be content and thankful, as knowing the worst of poverty

and inconvenience to be a mercy, and a splendid fortune, in respect of our demerits.

I have read, that when the Duke of Candia had voluntarily entered into the incommodities of a religious poverty and retirement, he was one day spied, and pitied by a lord of Italy, who out of tenderness wished him to be more careful and nutritive of his person. The good duke answered: "Sir, be not troubled, and think not that I am ill provided of conveniences; for I send a harbinger before, who makes my lodgings ready, and takes care I am royally entertained." The lord asked him, who was his harbinger. He answered: "The knowledge of myself, and the consideration of what I deserve for my sins, which is eternal torments; and when, with this knowledge, I arrive at my lodging, how unprovided soever I find it, methinks it is ever better than I deserve." In order to considering and reducing to practice these thoughts, we should let no day pass without some sad recollection of somewhat which may put us to confusion, and mean opinion of ourselves; we should make confessions of our sins often to God, and consider what all that evil amounts to, which we thus charge on ourselves. Look not upon thy sins as scattered in the course of a long life; now an intemperate anger, then too full a meal; now idle talking, and another time, impatience; but unite them into one continued

representation, and remember that he, whose life seems fair, by reason that his faults are scattered at large distances in the several parts of his life, yet, if all his errors and follies were articulated against him, the man would seem vicious and miserable.

Learn also to bear contumelies evenly and sweetly; for "Christ's humble man desires not to be honored by others." And he, who with some regret and impatience hears himself scorned or undervalued, hath not acquired the grace of humility; which Serapion, in Cassian, noted to a young person, who perpetually accused himself with the greatest semblance of humility, but was impatient when Serapion reproved him: "Did you hope that I would have praised your humility, and have reputed you for a saint? It is a strange perverseness to desire others to esteem highly of you for that in which to yourself you seem most unworthy."

Again: Christ's humble man is not greedy of praise. When it is presented to him, he takes no pleasure in it; and if it be easy to want praise when it is denied, yet it is harder to be delighted with it when it is offered.

"But as silver is tried in the melter, and gold in the crucible, so is a man tried by the mouth of him that praises him;" that is, he is either clarified from his dross, by looking on the praise as a homily to teach, and an instrument to invite

his duty ; or else, if he be already pure, he is strengthened in the sobriety of his spirit, and retires himself closer into the strengths and securities of humility.

“Christ’s humble man is careful likewise never to speak any thing that may redound to his own praise,” unless it be with a design of charity or duty. A good name may give us an opportunity of persuading others to their duty ; but although it is lawful to desire it in order to suit good ends, whither it may serve, yet a great name, and a pompous honor, and secular greatness, hath more danger in it to ourselves, than commonly it can have of benefit to others, and ordinary persons may not safely desire it : To which I add this consideration, that the contempt of honor, and the instant pursuit of humility, is more effective of the ghostly benefit of others, than honors and great dignities can be, unless it be rarely and very accidentally.

Never therefore be ashamed of thy birth, or thy parents, or thy trade, or thy present employment, for the meanness or poverty of any of them, and when there is an occasion to speak of them ; such an occasion as would invite you to speak of any thing that pleases you, omit it not, but speak as readily and indifferently of thy meanness as of thy greatness.

Neither, when thou art disgraced or slighted, please thyself with supposing thou didst deserve

praise, though they understood thee not: and think not the advancement of thy brother a lessening of thy worth, but entertain their good and glory with delight, and at no hand disparage them, or lessen the report.

A humble man thinks himself, in some sense or other, the worst in every company, where he comes; one is more learned, another is more prudent, a third more honorable, or more charitable, or less proud. He observes their good, and reflects only upon his own vileness; he considers, that the evils done by others are out of much infirmity or ignorance, but his own sins are against a clearer light: or he remembers, that his old sins before his conversion were greater in the nature of the thing, or in certain circumstances, than the sins of other men. So St. Paul reckoned himself the chiefest of sinners because formerly he had acted the chiefest sin of persecuting the Church of God.

And if we need any incentives to the practice of this grace, I can say no more, but that humility is truth, and pride is a lie; that the one glorifies God, the other dishonors Him; humility makes men like angels, pride makes angels to become devils; that humility is the way to glory, pride to ruin and confusion; humility makes saints on earth, pride undoes them; humility beatifies the saints in heaven, and "the elders throw their crowns at the foot of the throne;"

pride disgraces a man among all the societies of earth. God loves one, and Satan solicits the cause of the other, and there is no one grace in which Christ propounded Himself imitable so signally as in this of meekness and humility; for the enforcing of which He undertook the condition of a servant, and a life of poverty and a death of disgrace, and washed the feet of His disciples, and even of Judas himself, that His action might be turned into a sermon to preach this duty, and to make it as eternal as His own story.

PRAYER.

O Holy and most Gracious Saviour, who by Thy example and Thy precept didst command us to be meek and humble in imitation of Thy great humility, be pleased to give me the grace as Thou hast given me the commandment. Mortify in me all proud thoughts and vain opinions of myself. Let me not boast myself for what I have received; and for what is my own, teach me to be ashamed and humbled. Let me go before my brethren in nothing but striving to do them honor, and Thee glory; never seeking my own praise; never delighting in it when it is offered; that, despising myself, I may be accepted by thee, in

the honors with which Thou shalt crown Thy humble and despised servants, in the kingdom of eternal glory. Grant this for Thy mercy and Thy merit's sake, O Holy and Blessed Saviour. Amen.

FOURTH TUESDAY IN LENT.

CHRISTIAN COMFORT.

“That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.” EPHESIANS ii. 7.

THE first time that the word comfort is found in Scripture, is upon the birth of Noah; his father says, This son shall comfort us. So, when God did give Christ to be made man, He did, as it were, say unto us, “This Son shall comfort you, for His name is Jesus, and He shall save His people from their sins.” He that gave us Him, hath given us all things with Him; and even now “We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance;” as the blossoms of the spring do not only promise, but are God’s earnest to represent the fruits which will wax ripe in autumn.

For when our Saviour left the world, and ascended into heaven—for many reasons; one was “to give gifts unto men,” which gifts, though very many, are all united in their fountain—the Holy Ghost. Of which legacy, Christ gave warning before His death. “I will pray the

Father, and He shall give you another comforter, that He may abide with you forever. This Comforter, the Everlasting Spirit—to speak after the phrase of man—is the proxy of Christ; His representative in our hearts. And so it was fulfilled; for when the Spirit descended in great abundance upon the church, St. Peter says, “This is that which is come to pass.” “Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; Thou shalt make me full of joy with Thy countenance.” And for the evidence of it, it is said, “The churches were edified, walking in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.” Which text begets this note, that Christian solace consists in two things, which we may call the root and the fruit. The root is the Holy Ghost taking up His tabernacle in us; so that “our body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost which is in us:” and to walk by it, in the fear of God, is the fruit of sanctification in all manner of obedience.

Here I shall find work to heal the broken in heart, who look upon the fruits of their lives with no content in themselves, but are un-solaced, and cast down, because neither in number nor in weight have they brought in that which the Lord required. They look on their ways, and they find them crooked: they look on their heart, and they find it is not constant to good purposes. To whom I rejoin: if this

proceed from penitence, from quick sense of sin, from humility, which is opposite to a self-justifying, they have cause to praise God that they are thus affected. Let them look narrowly if this gold (for it may prove no worse) be current, when it is brought to the touchstone; then they may lift up their eyes, and look cheerfully towards Christ; for it is no flattery to say, they are under His grace and mercy. Deal clearly, that you are astonished at your frailties, because you think you can never work enough, never shun sin enough; and though your conscience condemn you, God will afford you equity against the rigor of conscience: for He that searcheth the heart, "knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." We are conceived in sin, and it is so intimate unto us, that we have no promise to be so spiritualized in this life, that we shall not often trespass. "God hath included all in sin, all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all." But it is one thing to fall into sin, another thing to run into it—one thing to be carried away by the passions of it, another to covet, another thing to abide in it without repentance. And great odds between those that are given over to please themselves in filthiness, and between them that labor and desire to please God, though many times they attain not to perfect that willingness.

"Do you often accuse yourself of a weak

faith in secret unto God?" I like it for a good symptom; for a hypocrite doth not use to accuse himself. "And do you bewail your want to the Lord, because you would have it better supplied?" that is a good sign too, for it is the same as to thirst for the living God. Remember, and be assured, that you could not miss Christ so much, unless Christ were in you. Because God loves you, He seems to leave you, and withdraws out of the way for a time, because He would be found; and makes you desire to seek him, that you may hold Him the surer to you when you enjoy Him. Do you look dejectedly upon your faith, because you apprehend it is not full of life in the root, nor laden with fruit in godly practice? Woe be to them that are not sensible of those infirmities. It is one of the best lessons in the New Testament, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," but it is one of the hardest. God gives a measure of faith to all in the covenant that call upon him; but we have this gift in earthen vessels, and taint it with the affections of our carnal mind. The best faith is weak and wavering, short-sighted, riseth and falleth like a tune in music; therefore to encourage a perplexed mind, hearken to Isaiah: "Say to them that are of a sorrowful heart, Be strong, fear not." For though it be but an infant faith, it is a true faith; as an infant is a true man in the essence

of a man, though not a man in growth; perfect in the real being, though not in the degrees wherein we must strive to grow up more and more. Will the righteous God require more of a sick and feeble servant than his best endeavors? Will not Christ accept from us the same that he did from Mary that broke the box of ointment over his head: "She hath done what she could?" Let a contrite heart, that would fain be righteous, remember the prayer of Nehemiah: "Let thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name;" or the protestation of St. Paul: "We trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly." "Well," says a forlorn sinner, "my sins may not be out of possibility of mercy; but it is almost as bad that they are in an unlikelihood to mercy, for they are very heinous." As unto that confession that your trespasses are very heinous, conceive so of them and spare not: true repentance thinks no sin to be a little one. But be it so really; yet Aaron was not free from idolatry—nor David from adultery—nor Peter from abjuration of Christ—nor Paul from persecuting the Church—nor Mary Magdalen from indefinite scandal, who yet all obtained mercy; for a pattern to them, who hereafter should believe in Christ to everlasting life. They were called Novatians who blotted out the beginning of the eighth

chapter of St. John's gospel, because the story tells us, that Christ dismissed the woman taken in adultery with a gracious gentleness. Why should not His procedure in judgment be like His doctrine?

It is easy to get the favor of a gracious and a gentle nature among the sons and daughters of men; and the most generous are the most reconcilable. Then what possibility, nay, what readiness may we find to be reconciled to God, "merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth?"

The means which the Father hath appointed are excellent, into which "the angels desire to look"—to give us redemption and forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ, according to the riches of His grace. We have trespassed against our God, but there is hope concerning this thing. "Forgiveness of sins" is put into our creed. He that doth not believe it, hath no creed nor Christianity in him. And so, also, it is put into our prayer. And He that taught us to pray, "Forgive us our sins," hath taught us this comfort, that sins are pardonable.

"Be merciful unto my sin, for it is great," says David. This is not the way to deal with mortal judges when we stand at their bar; but this is the way to obtain propitiation from our God: "Heal me, for I am sore wounded; cure me, for I am very sick; be merciful to my sin,

for it is very great." In the immense value of the price of the blood of Christ, there is redemption for every sinner that repents and believes.

Oh, lose not a syllable of such comfort in this discomfortable world! No sins can superabound His grace, if we do not sin presumptuously,—because grace abounds.

PRAYER.

O Lord, my Saviour, whose mercy is infinite, and whose wrath endureth but the twinkling of an eye, pity my infirmities, and keep my life from them that go down into hell; and when my soul is vexed with sadness, turn my heaviness into joy, by teaching me to rejoice in Thee, who art become our mighty Saviour, and most merciful Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

FIFTH WEDNESDAY IN LENT.

CHRISTIAN JOY.

“Rejoice in the Lord alway ; and again I say, Rejoice.”

PHILIPPIANS iv. 4.

THE Gospel is called “Spirit,” because it consists of spiritual promises and spiritual precepts, and makes all men that embrace it truly, to be spiritual men ; and therefore St. Paul adds an epithet beyond this, calling it “a quickening Spirit ;” that is, it puts life into spirits, which the law could not. “Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.”

“In the Spirit ;” that is, in the power of the Spirit. As persons encompassed with guards are in their power, under their command, moved at their dispose, so are men who are in the Spirit. They believe as He teaches ; they work as He enables ; they choose what He calls good ; they are friends of His friends ; and they hate with His hatred ; with this only difference, that persons in custody are forced to do what their keepers please, and nothing is free but their wills ; but they that are under the command of the

Spirit, do all things which the Spirit commands, but do them cheerfully, and their will is now the prisoner; but it is where it ought to be, and where it desires to be, and it cannot easily choose any thing else, because it is extremely in love with this; as the saints and angels in their state of beatific vision cannot choose but love God; and yet the liberty of their choice is not lessened, because the object fills all the capacities of the will and the understanding. No man will complain that his temples are restrained, and his head is prisoner, when it is encircled with a crown; and when the Son of God hath made us free, and hath only subjected us to the service and dominion of the Spirit, we are free as princes within the circle of their diadem; our chains are bracelets, and the law is a law of liberty, and "His service is perfect freedom;" and the more we are subjects, the more we shall reign as kings; and the faster we run, the easier is our burden; and Christ's yoke is like feathers to a bird; not loads, but helps to motion;—without them the body falls.

A man that hath tasted of God's Spirit can instantly discern the madness that is in rage, the folly and disease that are in envy, the dishonor that is in breaking our faith and telling a lie; and understands things truly as they are—that is, that charity is the greatest nobleness in the world; that religion hath in it the greatest

pleasures; that temperance is the best security of health; that humility is the surest way to honor. And all these relishes are nothing but antepasts of heaven, where the laborers in God's vineyard shall worship eternally; where St. Peter and St. Paul do wear their crowns of righteousness, and the patient persons shall be rewarded with Job, and the meek persons with Christ and Moses, and all with God. The very expectation of which is so delicious an entertainment of all our reasonable appetites that a spiritual man can no more be removed or enticed from the love of God and of religion, than the moon from her orb, or a mother from loving the son of her joys and of her sorrows.

I have read of a spiritual person who saw Heaven, but in a dream, but such as made a great impression on him; and when he awaked he knew not his cell, nor could tell how night and day were distinguished, nor could discern oil from wine, but called out for his vision again. And this lasted till he was told of his duty and matter of obedience, and the fear of a sin had disencharmed him, and caused him to take care lest he lose the substance out of greediness to possess the shadow. And if it were given to any of us to see paradise or the third heaven (as it was to St. Paul), could it be that ever we should love any thing but Christ, or follow any guide but the Spirit, or desire any

thing but Heaven, or understand any thing to be pleasant but what shall lead thither? Now what a vision can do, that the Spirit doth certainly to them that entertain Him. They that have Him really, and not in pretence only, are certainly great despisers of the things of this world. For the Spirit makes us to "esteem all things as loss so that we may gain Christ." No gain then is pleasant but godliness, no ambition but longings after Heaven, no revenge but against ourselves for sinning, nothing but God and Christ. As the King of Sodom said unto Abraham, "Secure but the souls to us, and take our goods."

St. John spake a hard saying, but by the Spirit of manifestation we are all taught to understand it: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God." Every sin is against a good man's nature; he is ill at ease when he hath missed his usual prayers; he is amazed if he have fallen into an error; he is infinitely ashamed of his imprudence; he remembers a sin as he thinks of an enemy, or the horrors of a midnight apparition; for all his capacities, his understanding, and his choosing faculties are filled up with the love and the desires of God. And this is the great benefit of the Spirit which God hath

given to us as an antidote against worldly pleasures.

But the Spirit of God is also given to all who truly belong to Christ as an antidote against sorrows, against impatience, against the evil accidents of the world, and against the oppression and sinking of our spirits under the cross. There is a certain joy and spiritual rejoicing that accompanies them in whom the Holy Ghost doth dwell, a joy in the midst of sorrow: a joy given to allay the sorrows of secular troubles, and to alleviate the burden of persecution. This St. Paul notes to this purpose: "And ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." Worldly afflictions and spiritual joy may very well dwell together; and if God did not supply us out of His storehouses, the sorrow of this world would be more and unmixed, and the troubles of persecution would be too great for natural confidences. For who shall make him recompense that lost his life in a duel, and by what instruments shall we comfort a man who is sick, and poor, and disgraced, and vicious, and despairs of any thing hereafter? That man's condition proclaims what it is to want the Spirit of God, "the Spirit of Comfort." Now this Spirit of comfort is the hope and confidence, the certain

expectation of partaking, in the inheritance of Jesus; this is the faith and patience of the saints; this is the refreshment of all wearied travellers, the cordial of all languishing sinners, the support of the scrupulous, the guide of the doubtful, the anchor of timorous and fluctuating souls, the confidence and the staff of the penitent. He that is deprived of his whole estate for a good conscience, by the Spirit he meets this comfort, that he shall find it again with advantage in the day of restitution: and this comfort was so manifest in the first days of Christianity, that it was no unfrequent thing to see holy persons court a martyrdom, with a fondness as great as is our impatience and timorousness in every persecution.

The man that is in a great joy cares not for any trouble that is less than his joy; and God hath taken so great care to secure this to us, that He hath turned it into a precept: "Rejoice evermore;" and "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice." But this rejoicing must be only in the hope that is laid up for us. For although God sometimes makes a cup of sensible comfort to overflow the spirit of a man, and thereby loves to refresh his sorrows; yet this is from a secret principle not regularly given, not to be waited for, not to be prayed for, and it may fail us if we think upon it; but the hope of life eternal can never fail us, and

the joy of that is great enough to make us suffer any thing, or to do any thing.

To death, to bands, to poverty, to banishment, to tribunals—any whither in hope of life eternal!

As long as this anchor holds we may suffer a storm, but cannot suffer shipwreck. And I desire you to observe how good a God we serve, and how excellent a religion He has taught, when one of His great precepts is that we should “rejoice and be exceeding glad.” God hath given us the spirit of rejoicing; not a sullen melancholy spirit; not the spirit of bondage, or of a slave, but the Spirit of His Son; consigning us by a holy conscience to joys unspeakable and full of glory.

PRAYER.

O God, whose mercy reacheth unto the heavens, and Thy righteousness unto the clouds, teach me to abhor every thing that is evil, and to set myself in every good way; that my trust being under the shadow of Thy wings, I may rejoice in Thy loving-kindness all the days of my life; and at last may be satisfied with the plenteousness of Thy house, and in the light of Thy countenance may see everlasting light, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FIFTH THURSDAY IN LENT.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.” HEB. vi. 1.

WHEN Hystaspes asked Cyrus the Persian why he preferred Chrysantas before him, since he did obey all his commands; the prince answered: “Chrysantas does not stay till he is called; and does not only what is commanded, but what is best, what he knows is most pleasing.” So does every perfect man, according to the degrees of his love and his perfection. “The righteousness of a perfect man consists not in legal innocence, but in love and voluntary obedience.” This is that charity which is the glory of Christianity, the crown of all other graces. “The servant that must be called upon at every step, is but an unprofitable and unworthy person:” to do only what we are commanded will never bring us to the portion and inheritance of sons. We must do this cheerfully, and we must do more: ever contend to please God with doing that which is the righteousness of God, striving for perfection till perfection itself becomes perfect: still obey-

ing that law of sons, "Love the Lord with all thy heart," till our charity itself is crowned. Every person therefore that is in the state of grace, and designs to do his duty, must think of what is before him, not what is past; of the stages that are not yet run, not of those little portions of his course he hath already finished. For so did the contenders in the Olympic games—never look behind but contend forwards: and from hence St. Paul gives the rule I have now described. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling. Let therefore as many as be perfect, be thus minded." Christian perfection is always growing; it stands not till it arrives at the crowning of him that runs. And if St. Paul, who had done so much, and suffered so much, was not very confident, but that if he did look back he might also fall back; what shall we say, whose perfection is so little, so infant and imperfect, that we are come forwards but a little, and have great spaces still to measure?

Every man therefore that is, or desires to be perfect, must endeavor to make up the imperfection or meanness of his services, by a great, a prompt, an obedient, and a loving mind. There is a sort of working, and there are some such

servants which our Lord uses, with the usages of sons, not of slaves or servants. "He will gird Himself and serve them;" "He will call them friends, and not servants." These are such as serve, as St. Paul expresses it, "in the simplicity of their heart; not with eye service;" but honestly, heartily, zealously and affectionately.

To be good according to the rigor of the law, to do what we are forced to do, and to go towards evil or danger as far as we can—these are no good signs of a filial spirit, this is not Christian perfection. God forbids unmercifulness: he that is not unmerciful keeps the commandment; but he that, besides his abstinence from unmercifulness according to the commandment, shall open his hand and his heart, and give plentifully to the poor,—this man shall have a reward; he is among those servants whom his "Lord will make to sit down, and himself will serve him." God commands us to pray. He obeys this, that constantly and devoutly keeps his morning and evening sacrifice, offering devoutly twice à day. He that prays thrice a day does better; and he that prays seven times a day hath done no work of supererrogation, but does what he does in pursuance of the commandment.

All the difference is in the manner of doing what is commanded; for no man can do more than he is commanded. But some do it better,

some less perfectly; but all is comprehended under this commandment of loving God with all our hearts. Again, when St. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to give a free contribution to the poor saints at Jerusalem, he invites to do it nobly and cheerfully, not as of constraint; for God's commandment named not the sum, neither can the degree of affection be named; but yet God demands all our affection. And so, in all doubts, to take the surest side; to determine always for religion, when without sin we might have determined for interest; to do all our duty by the measures of love and of the Spirit, are instances of this filial obedience, and are rewarded by a persuasion and confidence of God's love to us, enabling us to call Him Father as well as Lord.

Let no man, therefore, propound to himself a limit of duty, saying he will go so far, and no farther. For the commandment is infinite; and though every good man obeys it all the way of his holy conversation, yet it shall not be finished till his life is done. When the object is infinite, true love is not at rest till it hath possessed what is infinite.

Neither let any man boast himself in the most glorious services and performances of religion. For "humility without external works is more pleasing to God than pride, though standing upon heaps of excellent actions." "Boast not if thou hast well obeyed," said one; "the sun and the

moon do so," and shall never be rewarded. When ourselves and all our faculties are from God, He hath power to demand all our services without reward; and therefore, if he will reward us, it must wholly be a gift to us that He will so crown our services. But He does not only give us all our being and all our faculties, but makes them also irriguous with the dew of His divine grace; sending His only Son to call us to repentance, and to die to obtain for us pardon, and resurrection, and eternal life; sending His Holy Spirit by rare arguments, and aids external and internal, to help us in our spiritual contentions and difficulties: while, besides these considerations, many sins are forgiven to us, and the service of a whole life cannot make recompense for the intimate favor of receiving pardon.

This is so much the more material, if we consider that the littleness of our services (if other things were away) could not countervail the least moment of eternity; and the poor countryman might as well have demanded of Cyrus to give him a province for his handful of river-water, as we can expect of God to give us Heaven as a reward of our good works.

But although this rule, relying upon such great and convincing grounds, can abolish all proud expectations of reward from God as a debtor for our good works, yet it ought not to destroy our modest confidence and our rejoic-

ings in God, who by His gracious promises hath not only obliged Himself to help us if we pray to Him, but to reward us if we work. For "our God is merciful, He rewardeth every man according to his work," so said David; according to the nature and graciousness of the work, not according to their value and proper worthiness; not that they deserve it, but because God for the communication of His goodness was pleased to promise it. "God promised freely, and pays freely." "If, therefore, thou wilt obtain grace and favor, make no mention of thy deservings. And yet let not this slacken thy work, but reinforce it, and enlarge thy industry, since thou hast a gracious Lord," who of His own mere goodness will so plentifully reward it. Spiritual persons, therefore, and the nearest relations to God, stand by Him but so long as they dwell low and safe in humility, and rise high in nothing but in labors, and zeal of souls and devotion.

And to that fervor and zeal, it is required that we be constant and persevering. "Be faithful unto death," said the Spirit of God to the angel of the Church of Smyrna, "and I will give thee a crown of life." This fire must never go out, but it must be like the fire of Heaven, it must shine like the stars. Though sometimes covered with a cloud, or obscured by a greater light, yet they dwell forever in their orbs, and walk in their circles, and observe their circumstances,

but go not out by day nor night, and set not when kings die, nor are extinguished when nations change their government. So must the zeal of the Christian be—a constant incentive to his duty; and though sometimes his hand is drawn back by violence or need, and his prayers shortened by the importunities of business, and some parts omitted by necessities and just compliances, yet still the fire is kept alive; it burns within when the light breaks not forth, and is eternal as the orb of fire, or the embers of the altar of incense. I shall only add what an old spiritual person told a novice in religion, asking him the cause why he so often suffered tediousness in his religious offices: “Young man, thou hast not seen the glories which are laid up for the zealous and devout, nor yet beheld the flames which are prepared for the lukewarm and the haters of strict devotion.” The Jews tell that Adam, having seen the beauties and tasted the delicacies of Paradise, repented and mourned upon the Indian mountains for three hundred years together; and we, who have a great share in the cause of his sorrows, can by nothing be invited to a persevering, a great, and a passionate religion, more than by remembering what he lost, and what is laid up for them whose hearts are burning lamps, and are all on fire with Divine love; whose flames are fanned with the wings of the Holy Dove; and whose spirits shine

and burn with that fire which the Holy Jesus came to enkindle upon the earth.

PRAYER.

O Blessed Lord God, whose words are light and life to the obedient and believing soul, let Thy grace so purify my heart that I may be undefiled in Thy way, keeping Thy testimonies, and serving Thee with my whole heart; that my ways being made direct without wandering into by-paths, I may at length attain to the country of my inheritance, the land of glorious and eternal promises, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FIFTH FRIDAY IN LENT.

THE FIRST BEATITUDE.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.” MATT. v. 3.

THE eight beatitudes, which are the duty of a Christian, and the rule of our spirit, and the special discipline of Christ, seem like so many paradoxes and impossibilities reduced to reason ; and are indeed virtues made excellent by rewards, by the sublimity of grace and the mercies of God, hallowing and crowning those habits which are despised by the world, and are esteemed the conditions of lower and less considerable people. They are states of suffering rather than states of life : for the great employment of a Christian being to bear the cross, Christ laid the pedestal so low, that the rewards were like rich mines interred in the deeps and inaccessible retirements, and did choose to build our felicities upon the torrents and violences of affliction and sorrow. Without these graces we cannot get to Heaven ; and without sorrow and sad accidents we cannot exercise these graces.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is

the kingdom of heaven." Poverty of spirit is in respect of secular affluence and abundance, or in respect of great opinion and high thoughts. That the first is one of the meanings of this text is certain, because St. Luke, repeating this beatitude, delivers it plainly: "Blessed are the poor;" and to it he opposes riches. And our blessed Saviour speaks so suspiciously of riches and rich men, that he represents the condition to be full of danger and temptation; and, if we consider our vocation, St. Paul informs us, that "not many mighty, not many noble, are called;" but "God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith." How "hard it is for a rich man to enter into Heaven," our great Master hath taught us, by saying, "It is more easy for a camel to pass through a needle's eye." And the reason is, because of the infinite temptation which riches minister to our spirits; it being such an opportunity of vices, that nothing remains to countermand the act but a strong, resolute, unaltered, and habitual purpose, and pure love of virtue; while poverty is the sister of a good mind, and ministers aid to wisdom, industry to our spirit, severity to our thoughts, soberness to counsels, and modesty to our desires.

But it is not a mere poverty of possession which entitles us to the blessing, but a poverty of spirit; that is, a contentedness in every state,

an aptness to renounce all when we are obliged in duty, a refusing to continue a possession when we must for it quit a virtue or a noble action, a divorce of our affections from those gilded vanities, and a generous contempt of the world. Poverty of spirit accounts riches to be the servants of God first, and then of ourselves, being sent by God, and to return when He pleases, and all the while they are with us to do His business. It is a looking upon riches and things of the earth, as they do who look upon it from Heaven, to whom it appears little and unprofitable. And because the residence of this blessed poverty is in the mind, it follows that all that humility of mind which depauperates the spirit, making it less worldly and more spiritual, is the duty here enjoined. For if a man throws away his gold, as did Crates the Theban, or the proud philosopher Diogenes, and yet leaves a spirit, high, airy, fantastical, and vain, pleasing himself, and with complacency reflecting upon his own act, his poverty is but a circumstance of pride, and the opportunity of an imaginary and secular greatness. Ananias and Sapphira renounced the world by selling their possessions; but because they were not "poor in spirit," but still retained affections to the world, therefore they "kept back part of the price," and lost their hopes. The church of Laodicea was possessed with a spirit of pride,

and flattered themselves in imaginary riches; they were not poor in spirit, but they were poor in possession and condition. These wanted humility, the other wanted a generous contempt of worldly things; and both were destitute of this grace.

If we consider that God sent his only-begotten and beloved Son into the world, in all the dresses of poverty and contempt; that person must needs be vain, who thinks God will love him better than He loved His own Son, or that He will express His love any other or gentler way, than to make him partaker of the fortune of His eldest Son.

For in the birth of Christ are concentrated the prodigies of greatness and goodness, of wisdom and charity, of meekness and humility. As God, Christ's throne was in the Heaven, and He filled all things by His immensity; as man, He was imprisoned in an uneasy cradle. As God, He was seated upon a super-exalted throne; as man, exposed to the lowest estate of uneasiness and need. As God, He was encircled with millions of angels; as man, in the company of beasts. As God, He was the Eternal Word of the Father—eternal, sustained by Himself, all-sufficient, and without need: and yet He submitted Himself to a condition imperfect, inglorious, indigent, and necessitous.

This consideration is apt and natural to pro-

duce great affections of love, duty, and obedience, desire of union and conformity to His sacred person, life, actions, and laws; from hence taking patterns of imitation, becoming His disciples, and strictly observing the rules of His holy institution,—“sitting at the feet” of this our greatest Master.

They that would be poor in spirit must therefore cast off all inordinate affection to riches; that is, in heart and spirit: they must quit the possession of all riches, and actually do so when God requires it, when the retaining riches loses a virtue. They must be well pleased with the whole economy of God, His providence and dispensation of all things, being contented in all estates; employing that wealth which God hath given in actions of justice and religion; being thankful to God in all temporal losses, not distrusting God, or being solicitous and fearful of want in the future. They must also put off the spirit of vanity, pride, and fantastic complacency in themselves, thinking lowly or meanly of whatsoever they are to do: they must prefer others before themselves, contentedly receive affronts, deny their own will in all instances of subordination to superiors, and their own judgment in matters of difficulty and question, permitting themselves and their affairs to the advice of wiser men, and the decision of those who are trusted with the cure of

their souls : above all, they must empty themselves of themselves, and throw themselves wholly upon God, relying upon His providence, trusting His promises, craving His grace, and depending upon His strength for all actions, and deliverances, and duties.

The reward promised is “the kingdom of heaven. Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s pleasure to give you a kingdom.”

In this life, indeed, the servants of God must live under the cross. “He that will be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me,” said our glorious Lord and Master. And the prophetic precept we see verified by the experience of every day. For here the violent oppress the meek ; and they who are charitable receive injuries. The Apostles who preached Christ crucified were themselves persecuted, and put to violent deaths ; and Christianity itself for three hundred years was the public hatred ; and how many millions of sighs does God every day record, while the oppressed and the poor pray unto Him, worship Him, speak great things of His holy name, beg for help that they may become gracious in His eyes, and are so ; and yet never sing in all their life, but when they sing God’s praises out of duty, with a sad heart and a hopeful spirit, living only upon the future, and sustained only by the hope of to-morrow’s

event; knowing they shall never be happy till “the new heavens and the new earth” appear.

Yet this is not to be so understood as if the servants of God have not many refreshments, and great comforts, and the perpetual festivities of a holy conscience. But God, who intends vast portions of felicity to His children, does not reckon those little joys into the account of the portion of His elect. The good things which they have in this world are not little, if we account the joys of religion, and the peace of conscience among things valuable; but their good, and their prepared portion shall be hereafter. As for the evil which they must suffer and overcome, it is such a portion of this life as our blessed Saviour had; injuries and temptations, poverty and labor, humility and patience. It is well; it is very well;—and who can long for, or expect better here; when his Lord and Saviour had a state of things so very much worse than the worst of our calamities? Bad as it is, it is to be chosen rather than a better. It is Jacob’s ladder upon which the Saints and the King of Saints did descend, and at last descend to heaven itself. It is a sharp, but it is a short way to bliss. For it is remarkable in the parable of Dives and Lazarus that the poor man, the afflicted Saint, died first, Dives being permitted to his purple and fine linen, to his delicious fare, and (which he

most of all needed) to a space of repentance ; but in the mean time, the poor man was rescued from his sad portion in this life, and carried into Abraham's bosom. The storm was quickly over with the poor man, and the angel of God brought the good man's soul to a safe port, where he should be disturbed no more : and so saith the Spirit, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." For to them, death hath not only lost his sting, but brings a coronet in his hand, which will invest and adorn the heads of Saints, till the day come in which the crown of righteousness shall be brought forth to give them the investiture of an everlasting kingdom.

PRAYER.

O Blessed Saviour, Thou only Redeemer of our souls, who by Thy death and Passion, hast delivered us from the place of hell ; give me grace to put my whole trust in Thee, and in the riches of Thy mercy and loving-kindness ; teach me to despise the world and worldly things, and to lay up my treasure in heaven, by charity and actions of religion, that while I live here I may have my conversation in heaven, and finally be received into everlasting habitations, there to enjoy the light of Thy presence, who livest and reignest Eternal God, world without end. Amen.

FIFTH SATURDAY IN LENT.

THE SECOND BEATITUDE.

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”

MATT. v. 4.

“BLESSED are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” “Tribulation worketh patience;” and therefore, “we glory in it,” saith St. Paul; and as men do well, and suffer evil, so they are dear to God; and whom He loves most He afflicts most, and does this with a design of the greatest mercy in the world.

The state of the Gospel is a state of sufferings, not of temporal prosperities. All that Christ came for, was, or was mingled with, sufferings; for all those little joys which God sent, either to recreate His person, or to illustrate His office, were abated, or attended with afflictions: God being more careful to establish in Him the covenant of sufferings, than to refresh His sorrows. Presently after the angels had finished their hallelujahs, He was forced to fly to save His life; and the air became full of shrieks of the desolate mothers of Bethlehem for their dying babes: God had no sooner made Him illustrious

with a voice from heaven, and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Him in the waters of Baptism, but He was delivered over to be tempted and assaulted in the wilderness. His transfiguration was a bright ray of glory; but then also He entered into a cloud, and was told a sad story what He was to suffer at Jerusalem. And upon Palm Sunday—when He rode triumphantly into Jerusalem, and was adorned with the acclamations of a King and a God—He wet the palms with His tears, sweeter than the drops of manna, or the little pearls of heaven that descended upon Mount Hermon; weeping, in the midst of this triumph over obstinate, perishing, and malicious Jerusalem.

But I need not tell, that Jesus, beloved of God, was a suffering person; that which concerns this question most, is, that He made for us a covenant of suffering. His doctrines were such as expressly enjoin and suppose sufferings and a state of affliction; His very promises were sufferings; His beatitudes were sufferings; His rewards, and His arguments to invite men to follow Him, were only taken from sufferings in this life, and the reward of sufferings hereafter. For, if we sum up the commandments of Christ, we shall find humility—mortification—self-denial—repentance—renouncing the world—mourning—taking up the Cross—dying for Him—patience—and poverty—to stand in the chiefest

rank of Christian virtues, and in the direct order to heaven. "He that will be My disciple must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." If we will serve the King of sufferings—whose crown was of thorns, whose sceptre was a reed of scorn, whose imperial robe was a scarlet mockery, whose throne was the cross—we must serve Him in sufferings, in poverty of spirit, in humility and mortification.

For Christ—who began, and lived, and died in sorrows, perceiving His own sufferings to succeed so well, and that, "for suffering death, He was crowned with immortality"—resolved to take all His disciples and servants to the fellowship of the same suffering, that they might have a participation of His glory; knowing that God had opened no gate of heaven but "the narrow gate" to which the cross was the way. And since Christ, now being our High Priest in heaven, intercedes for us, by representing His Passion, that even in glory He might still preserve the mercies of His past sufferings, for which the Father did so delight in Him; He also designs to present us to God, dressed in the same robe, and treated in the same manner, and honored with "the marks of the Lord Jesus:" "He hath predestinated us to be conformable to the image of His Son." And if, under a head crowned with thorns, we bring to God members circled with roses, and softness,

and delicacy, triumphant members in the militant church, God will reject us; He will not know us who are so unlike our Elder Brother.

And, indeed, it is so glorious a thing to be like Christ, to be dressed like the Prince of the Catholic Church, who was a man of sufferings, and to whom a prosperous and unafflicted person is very unlike, that in all ages the servants of God have put on the armor of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left: that is, in the sufferings of persecution, or the labors of mortification; by toleration or self-denial; by actual martyrdom or by aptness and disposition towards it; by dying for Christ or suffering for Him; by being willing to part with all when He calls for it, and by parting with what we can for the relief of His poor members. For know this—there is no state in the Church so serene, no days so prosperous, in which God does not give to His servants the powers and opportunities of suffering for Him. Not only they that die for Christ, but they that die according to His laws, shall find some lives to part with, and many ways to suffer for Christ. To kill and crucify the old man and his lusts, to mortify a beloved sin, to suffer affronts patiently, to displease men rather than God, to be at enmity with the world that you may preserve friendship with God, to take pains in the cause of religion, the “labor of love,” and the crossing

of your anger, peevishness and morosity: these are the daily sufferings of a Christian; and if we perform them well, will have the same reward, and an equal smart, and greater labor, than the plain suffering the hangman's sword.

“Judgment must begin at God's house,” and enters first upon the sons and heirs of the kingdom; and if it be not by the direct persecution of tyrants, it will be by the direct persecution of the devil, or infirmities of our own flesh. And if God was fain to multiply miracles to make Christ capable of being a “man of sorrows;” shall we think He will work miracles to make us delicate? He promised us a glorious portion hereafter, to which, if all the sufferings of the world were put together they are not to be compared; and shall we, with Dives, choose our portion of “good things in this life?” If Christ suffered so many things only that He might give us glory, shall it be strange that we shall suffer who are to receive His glory? How little is the faith, and how much less is the patience of Christians, if they shall think much to suffer sorrow, since they so clearly see with the eye of faith the great things which are laid up for them that are “faithful unto the death.” The sufferings of the saints are the sum of Christian philosophy: they are sent to wean us from the vanities and affections of this world, and to create in us strong desires of heaven; while God

causes us to be here treated rudely, that we may long to be in our country, where God shall be our portion and angels our companions, and Christ our perpetual feast, and never-ceasing joy shall be our conditions and entertainment. "O death, how bitter art thou to a man that is at ease and rest in his possessions!" But he that is uneasy in his body and unquiet in his possessions, vexed in his person, discomposed in his designs, who finds no pleasure, no rest here, will be glad to fix his heart where only he shall have what he can desire, and what can make him happy.

And let us remember, the worst of evils that happen to the godly is better, temporally better, than the greatest external felicity of the wicked. Not only in the end of affairs, and at sunset, but all the day long, the godly man is happy, and the ungodly and the sinner are very miserable. For the godly man is timorous, and yet safe; tossed by the seas, and yet safe at anchor; impaired by evil accidents, and righted by Divine comforts; made sad with a black cloud, and refreshed with a more gentle influence; abused by the world, and yet an heir of heaven; hated by men and beloved of God. He quits a convenient lodging-room, and purchases a glorious country; is forsaken by his friends, but never by a good conscience; he fares hardly, and sleeps sweetly; he flies from his enemies, but

hath no distracting fears; he is full of thought, but of no amazement; it is his business to be troubled, and his portion to be comforted; he hath nothing to afflict him but the loss of that which might be his danger, but can never be his good; and in the recompense of this, he hath God for his Father, Christ for his Captain, the Holy Ghost for his Supporter; so that he shall have all the good which God can give him, and of all that good he hath the Holy Trinity for an earnest, and a gage for his maintenance at the present, and his portion to all eternity.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, who dwellest in the heavens, and in whose Name standeth our help; have mercy upon me in all my trials, in contempt, in poverty, in temptation and sorrow. Let me never be distrustful of Thy Providence; but make me willing to follow after my merciful Saviour, who suffered the contradiction of sinners, and left sorrow and afflictions entailed upon His Church; and grant that, by suffering with Him here, I may at last reign with Him in glory, for the sake of His infinite merits. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

CHRIST'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.

“And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.” LUKE ix. 51.

HE that hath observed the story of the life of Jesus cannot but see it, all the way, to be strewed with thorns and sharp-pointed stones; and although by the kisses of His feet they became precious and salutary, yet they procured to Him sorrow and disease. It was “meat and drink to Him to do His Father’s will,” but it was “bread of affliction, and rivers of tears to drink;” and for these He thirsted like the earth after the cool stream. For so great was His perfection, so exact the conformity of His will, so absolute the subordination of His inferior faculties to the infinite love of God, that He never considered the taste, but the goodness; never distinguished sweet from bitter, but duty and piety always prepared His table. And now, knowing that His time, determined by the Father, was nigh, He hastened up to Jerusalem. “He went before” His disciples, saith St. Mark,

“and they followed Him trembling and amazed;” and yet, before that, when His brethren observed He had a design of publication of Himself, He suffered them “to go before Him,” and went up, as it were, in secret. For so are we invited to martyrdom and suffering in a Christian cause, by so great an example. The Holy Jesus is gone before us, and it were a holy contention to strive whose zeal were forwardest in the designs of humiliation and self-denial; but it were also well, if, in doing ourselves secular advantage, and promoting our worldly interest, we should follow Him who was ever more distant from receiving honors than from receiving a painful death.

Those affections, which dwell in sadness and are married to grief, and lie at the foot of the cross, and trace the sad steps of Jesus, have the wisdom of recollection, the temper of sobriety, and are the best imitations of Jesus and securities against the levities of a dispersed and a vain spirit.

This was intimated by many of the disciples of Jesus in the days of the Spirit, and, when they had tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; for then we find many ambitious of martyrdom, and that laid stratagems and designs, by unusual deaths, to get a crown. And if these lesser stars shine so brightly, and burn so warmly, what heat of

love may we suppose to have been in the Sun of Righteousness? If they went fast towards the crown of martyrdom, yet we know that the Holy Jesus went before them all. No wonder that "He cometh forth as a bridegroom from his chamber, and rejoiceth as a giant to run his course."

When the disciples had overtaken Jesus, He began to them a sad homily upon the old text of suffering, which He had well-nigh for a year together preached upon; but, because it was an unpleasing lesson, so contradictory to those interests, upon the hopes of which they had entertained themselves, and spent all their desires, they could by no means understand it. But it concerned Christ to speak so plainly, that His disciples, by what was to happen within five or six days, might not be scandalized, or believe it happened to Jesus without His knowledge and voluntary entertainment. He told them therefore of His sufferings, to be accomplished in this journey to Jerusalem. And here the disciples showed themselves to be but men full of passion and indiscreet affection; and the bold Galilean, St. Peter, took the boldness to dissuade his Master from so great an infelicity, and met with a reprehension so great, that neither the scribes nor the Pharisees, nor Herod himself, ever met with its parallel. Jesus called him Satan; meaning that no greater

contradiction can be offered to the designs of God and His holy Son than to dissuade us from suffering.

And if we understood how great are the advantages of a suffering condition, we should think all our daggers gilt, and our pavements strewed with roses, and our halters silken, and the rack an instrument of pleasure, and be most impatient of those temptations which seduce us into ease, and divorce us from the cross; as being opposite to our greatest hopes and most perfect desires. But still this humor of St. Peter's imperfection abides among us. He that breaks off the yoke of obedience, and unties the bands of discipline, and preaches a cheap religion, and presents Heaven in the midst of flowers, and strews carpets softer than the Asian luxury, in the way, and sets the songs of Zion to the tunes of Persian and lighter airs, and offers great liberty of living, and bondage under affection and sins, and reconciles Eternity with the present enjoyment, he shall have his schools filled with disciples: but he that preaches the cross and the severities of Christianity, and the strictnesses of a holy life, shall have the lot of his Blessed Lord; he shall be thought ill of and deserted.

For men, in all ages, will be tampering with shadows and toys. The Apostles at no hand could endure to hear that Christ's "kingdom

was not of this world," and that their Master should die a sad and shameful death; and yet, after Christ's time, when His disciples had taken up the cross, and were marching the King's highway of sorrow, the Gospel grew in persecutions; and as Christ's blood did cement the corner-stones and the first foundations, so the blood and sweat, the groans and sighings, the afflictions and mortifications, of saints and martyrs did make the superstructure, and must at last finish the building.

PRAYER.

O Merciful Saviour, who for our sakes didst give Thyself to be betrayed, tormented, spit upon, crucified, and to die that Thou mightest purchase for us redemption from the sting of death, the miseries of hell, and the malice and power of the devil; grant that those victories which Thou hast obtained, may procure for me peace and righteousness, and a crown of glory in the heavens, where Thou livest and reignest in the great congregation of saints and angels, one God, world without end. Amen.

FIFTH MONDAY IN LENT.

THE THIRD BEATITUDE.

“Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth.”

MATT. v. 5.

“BLESSED are the meek : for they shall possess the earth :” that is, the gentler and softer spirits, persons not turbulent or unquiet, not clamorous or impatient, not querulous or discontented, not nice or curious ; but men who submit to God, and know no choice of fortune or employment or success, but what God chooses for them, having peace at home, because nothing from without does discompose their spirit. In some, meekness is an indifference to any exterior accident, a being reconciled to all conditions and instances of Providence, a reducing ourselves to such an evenness and interior satisfaction, that there is the same conformity of spirit and fortune, by complying with my fortune, as if my fortune did comply with my spirit. And therefore, in the order of beatitudes, meekness is set between mourning and desire, that it might attemper those actions by indifference, which are apt to the transportation of passion. The reward ex-

pressed, is “a possession of the earth;” that is, a possession of all which is excellent here below, to consign him to a future glory, as Canaan was a type of Heaven. For meekness is the best cement and combining of friendship; it is a great endearment of us to our company. It is an ornament to have “a meek and quiet spirit,” a prevention of quarrels, and pacifier of wrath; it purchaseth peace, and is itself a quietness of spirit: it is the greatest affront to all injuries in the world; for it returns them upon the injurious, and makes them useless, ineffective, and innocent; and is an antidote against all the evil consequents of anger and adversity.

When the case of Christianity was at stake, and the devil was to lose his kingdom, he stirred up, and, as well as he could, he made active all the power of Rome, and all the learning of the Greeks, and all the malice of barbarous people, and all the prejudice and the obstinacy of the Jews, against this doctrine and institution. Yet Christianity,—without violence or armies, without resistance and self-preservation, without challenging of privileges or fighting against tyranny,—with its humility and meekness, with toleration and patience, with obedience and charity, with praying and dying, did insensibly turn the world into Christian, and persecution into victory. And so have I seen the sun, with a little ray of distant light, challenge all the power of darkness; and

without violence and noise, climbing up the hill, hath made night to retire, that its memory was lost in the joys of the morning. But if we will certainly understand what is the reward of meekness, we may best know it by understanding the duty. And the acts of this Divine grace are—to submit to all the instances of Divine providence, not repining at any accident which God hath chosen for us. To pursue the employment of our calling in which we are placed, not despising the meanness of any work, though never so disproportionable to our abilities. To correct all malice, wrath, evil-speaking, and inordinations of anger, whether in respect of the object or the degree. At no hand to entertain any thoughts of revenge or retaliation of evil. To be affable and courteous in our deportment towards all persons of our society and intercourse. Not to censure or reproach the weakness of our neighbor, but support his burden, cover and cure his infirmities. To excuse what may be excused, lessening severity, and being gentle in reprehension. To be patient in afflictions, and thankful under the cross. To endure reproof, with shame at ourselves for deserving it, and thankfulness to the charitable physician that offers the remedy. To be modest and fairly mannered towards our superiors, obeying, reverencing, speaking honorably of, and doing honor to aged persons, and all whom God hath set over us, according to their

several capacities. To be humble in our exterior addresses and behavior in churches and all holy places. To be temperate in government, lest we provoke to wrath those whose interest of person and religion we are to defend or promote. To do our endeavor to expiate any injury we did by confessing the fact, and offering satisfaction and asking forgiveness; but above all to learn our duty from Him that gave it in commandment. "Learn of Me, for I am meek," said the Holy Jesus. To Him was promised, that "the uttermost parts of the earth should be His inheritance;" yet He died first and went to heaven before it was verified to Him in any sense, but only of content and desire, and joy in suffering, and in all variety of accident. And thus also if we are meek, we may receive the inheritance of the earth. For although the Christian hears the promise of "the inheritance of the earth," yet he must place his eye, and fix his heart upon heaven, which by looking downward also upon this promise, as in a vessel of limpid water, he may see by reflection, without looking upwards by a direct intuition. It is heaven that is designed by this promise, as well as by any of the rest; though this grace takes in also the refreshments of the earth by a suppletory design. "Here we have no abiding city," and therefore no inheritance; this is not our country, and therefore here cannot be our portion, unless we

choose, as did the prodigal, to go into a strange country, and spend our portion with riotous living, and forfeit our Father's blessing.

The devil, carrying our blessed Saviour to a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of all the world; but, besides that they were offered upon ill conditions, they were not eligible by Him upon any. And neither are they to be chosen by us for our inheritance and portion evangelical: for the Gospel is founded upon "better promises," and therefore, the hopes of a Christian ought not to determine upon anything less than heaven. And as a man, in all countries, can see more of heaven than of the earth he dwells on; so also he may in this promise. For now is revealed to us "a new heaven and a new earth, a habitation made without hands, eternal in the heavens." And he understands nothing of the excellence of the Christian religion, whose affections dwell below, and are satisfied with a portion of dirt and corruption. "If we be risen with Christ, let us seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. But if a Christian desires to take possession of this earth in his way, as his inheritance, or portion, he hath reason to fear it will be his all. We have but one inheritance, one country; and here we are strangers and pilgrims. True it is, Christ promised to him that should lose any interest for His sake,

the restitution of "a hundred-fold in this world;" but whatsoever that be, it is to be enjoyed "with persecution."

And, although when a meek man hath earthly possessions, by his grace he is taught to use them, and how to part with them; yet if he hath them not, by the virtue here commanded, he is not suffered to use any thing violent towards the acquiring them, not so much as a violent passion, or a stormy imagination, for then he loses his meekness, and whatever he gets can be none of the reward of this grace. He that fights for temporals (unless by some other duty he be obliged), loses his title. By striving incompetently for the reward, he cuts off that hand by which alone he can receive it. For unless he be indeed meek, he hath no right to what he calls "the inheritance of the earth;" and he that is not content to want the inheritance of the earth when God requires him, is not meek.

So that if this beatitude be understood in a temporal sense, it is an offer of a reward upon a condition we shall be without it, and be content too: for, in every sense of the word, meekness implies a just satisfaction of the spirit, and acquiescence in every estate or contingency whatsoever, though we have no possessions but of a good conscience, no bread but that of carefulness, no support but from the Holy Spirit,

and a providence ministering to our natural necessities by an extemporary provision. And certain it is, the meekest of Christ's servants, the Apostles and the primitive Christians, had no other verification of the promise but this, that "rejoicing in tribulation, and knowing how to want, as well as how to abound, through many tribulations they entered into the kingdom of heaven."

PRAYER.

O Holy and most Merciful Saviour, who didst triumph over sin and death; subdue also I beseech Thee the pride of my heart, and bring me under thy yoke; that I may in all things obey Thy laws. Teach me to submit myself to my superiors, and to be a servant of my brethren in their necessities, esteeming myself inferior to all men by a deep sense of my own unworthiness; and grant that having conformed to Thy example here, I may be admitted to thy glorious inheritance hereafter, O Holy and Eternal Saviour. Amen.

FIFTH TUESDAY IN LENT.

THE FOURTH BEATTITUDE.

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” MATT. v. 6.

“BLESSED are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” This grace is the greatest indication of spiritual health; when our appetite is right, strong, and regular, when we are desirous of spiritual nourishment, when we long for manna, and “follow Christ for the bread which came down from heaven.” Now there are two sorts of holy repast which are the proper objects of our desires: the redemption and pardon of us by Christ’s merits is the bread of life for which we must hunger; and the refreshment of the Spirit, who is the spring and comfort of purity, is that drink which we must thirst after. Some, to hunger and thirst, best fancy the analogy and proportion of the two sacraments, the waters of baptism and the food of the eucharist; some the bread of the patin and the wine of the chalice. But it is certain they signify one desire, expressed by the most impatient and necessary of our

appetites, hungering and thirsting. And the object is, whatsoever is the beginning or the way, or the end of righteousness, that is, the mercies of God, the pardon of Jesus, the graces of the Spirit, a holy life, a holy death, and a blessed eternity.

If, therefore, we understand our danger, and deeply resent the evil of our infirmities and sinful state; if we confess ourselves miserable, and long for remedy, and would have it upon any terms; if we be hungry at our very heart, and would fain have food and physic, health and spiritual advantages, then we shall perceive the blessings and fruits of our holy desires according to those words of David: "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor, and His ear hath hearkened to the preparation of their heart."

"Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden," saith Christ. These are the welcome guests, for so saith God, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." For "He hath filled the hungry with good things," said the holy Virgin Mother; Christ is food and refreshment to none else, for "the full He hath sent empty away."

Now let us, by the aids of memory and fancy, consider the children of Israel in the wilderness, in a barren and dry land where no water was, marching in dust and fire, not wet with the dew

of heaven ; their whole state of abode and travel a little image of the day of judgment when the elements shall melt with fervent heat.

These men, walking in fire, dry with heat, and scorched with thirst, and made yet more thirsty by calling upon God for water ; suppose, I say, these thirsty souls hearing Moses to promise that he will smite the rock, and that a river should break forth from thence : observe how presently they ran to the foot of the springing-stone, impatient of delay, crying out that “the water did not move, like light, all at once :” and then suppose the pleasure of their drink, the unsatiableness of their desire, the immensity of their appetite—they took in as much as they could, and they desired much more.

That thirst is a signification of our duty ; and happy indeed is that soul which comes to the springs of salvation, “as the hart to the water-brook,” panting and thirsty, weary of sin, and hating vanity, and reaching out the heart and hands to Christ. For they only can be confident that their desires are right, who feel sharpnesses and zeal in their acts of love. For in every action of religion, God expects such a warmth and a holy fire to go along, that it may be able to enkindle the wood upon the altar, and consume the sacrifice. Earnestness and vivacity, quickness and delight, perfect choice in the service and a delight in the prosecution, are all

that the spirit of a man can yield towards his religion; and though a lukewarm religion is better than none at all—and if it be in motion, God hates it not for its imperfection; yet if it stands still and rests there, it is a state against the designs and against the perfections of God.

Whatsoever evil returns we meet in our prayers, when we ask for good things, is wholly by reason of our cold desires. If our desires were strong and fervent, our minds would in the same proportion be present. We see it by a certain and regular experience; what we love passionately, we perpetually think on, and it returns upon us, whether we will or no. And in a great fear, the apprehension cannot be shaken off; and therefore if our desires of holy things were strong and earnest, we should most certainly attend our prayers. It is a more violent affection to other things, that carries us off from this; and therefore if we love passionately, what we ask for daily, we should ask with hearty desires, and an earnest appetite, and a present spirit. And however it be very easy to have our thoughts wander, yet it is our indifference and lukewarmness that make it so natural: and you may observe it, that so long as the light shines bright, and the fires of devotion and desires flame out, so long the mind of a man stands close to the altar, and waits upon the sacrifice; but as the fires die, and desires decay, so the

mind steals away, and walks abroad to see the little images of beauty and pleasure, which it beholds in the falling stars and little glowworms of the world.

There is, however, in this case, one help to our confidence. For although no man is fervent as he ought to be, but he that delights in the service of God, yet this delight is not to be understood as if it were always required that we should feel an actual cheerfulness, and sensible joy. This happens sometimes when God pleases to entice, or reward a man's spirit, with little antepasts of Heaven; but such a delight only is necessary, and a duty, that we always proceed in the work of grace with a firm choice and unabated election; our joy must be a joy of hope; that is, a going forward upon such a persuasion, as sees the joys of God laid up for the children of men.

For the blessing and reward of this grace is fulness or satisfaction; which relates immediately to Heaven, because nothing here below can satisfy us. The grace of God is our viaticum, and entertains us by the way; but its nature is to increase, not to satisfy the appetites; not because the grace is empty and unprofitable as are the things of the world, but because it is excellent, but yet in order to greater perfection. It invites the appetite by its present goodness, but it leaves it unsatisfied, because it is not yet

arrived at glory. And yet the present imperfection in respect of all the good of this world's possession is rest and satisfaction, and is imperfect only in respect of its future complement and perfection; and our hunger continues, and our needs return, because all we have is but an antepast. But the glories of eternity are also the proper objects of our desires: that is the reward of God's grace; this is "the crown of righteousness."

"As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; and after I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it."

PRAYER.

O Lord God of our fathers, who leddest Thy people through the wilderness, for their sakes turning rocks into a springing well, and making the sea and the river to become dry land; be pleased to lead me through the desert of this world with the light of Thy Holy Spirit: and from the rock, which for our sakes Thou didst smite with Thy heavy rod—the rock Christ Jesus—let water and blood stream forth to cleanse and refresh me. Strengthen me with the bread that came down from heaven, even the flesh of Thy dear Son; and grant that, being nourished by that heavenly food, I may steadfastly walk in the way of Thy commandments;

and when, through infirmity, I fall away, let Thy gentle correction call me home, and guide me to the border of Thy sanctuary, and the mountain where Thou reignest over all creatures, one God, world without end. Amen.

SIXTH WEDNESDAY IN LENT.

THE FIFTH BEATITUDE.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”

MATT. v. 7.

“BLESSED are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” Mercy is the greatest mark and token of the holy and elect persons in the world. “Put ye on, my beloved, as the elect of God, the bowels of mercy, holy and precious.” For mercy is an attribute, in the manifestation of which, as all our happiness consists, so God takes greatest complacency and delights in it above all His other works. “He punishes to the third and fourth generations, but shows mercy unto thousands.” Therefore the Jews say, that Michael flies with one wing and Gabriel with two: meaning, that the pacifying angel, the minister of mercy, flies swift; but the exterminating angel, the messenger of wrath, is slow. And we are called to our approximation to God by the practice of this grace: we are made “partakers of the Divine nature,” by being “merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful.”

The Stoic philosophers affirm it to be the duty of a wise man to succor and help the necessities of indigent and miserable persons; but at no hand to pity them, or suffer any trouble or compassion in our affections: for they intended that a wise person should be dispassionate, unmoved, and without disturbance in every accident and object and concernment. But the Blessed Jesus, who came to reconcile us to His Father, and purchase us an entire possession, did intend to redeem us from sin, and make our passions obedient and apt to be commanded, even and moderate in temporal affairs, but high and active in some instances of spiritual concernment; and in all instances that the Spirit go along with the grace: that we must be as merciful in our compassions, as compassionate in our exterior expressions and actions.

Christian mercy must be a mercy of the whole man—the heart must be merciful, and the hand operating in “the labor of love;” and it must be extended to all persons of all capacities, according as their necessity requires, and our ability permits, and our endearments and other obligations dispose of, and determine the order. Clemens Alexandrinus affirms of the Pharisees, that they hoped to be “justified by abstinence from things forbidden;” but if we will be “sons of the kingdom,” we must, besides this, love our brother and do good to him; and glorify God

by a holy religion, in the communion of saints, in faith and sacraments, in alms and counsel, in forgiveness and assistances. Many persons think themselves fairly assoiled, because they are not of scandalous lives; in the mean time, like the Laodiceans, they are "naked and poor;" they have no catalogue of good things registered in heaven, no treasures in the repositories of the poor; neither have the poor often prayed concerning them, "Lord, remember Thy servants for this thing at the day of judgment." God, who made all things by His power, does preserve them by His love; but although it be true, that God loves us first, He will not continue to love us, or proceed in the methods of His kindness, unless we become like unto Him in love. By our love and charity God will pardon us, and He will comfort us, and He will judge us, and He will save us; and it can never be well with us till love, that governs Heaven itself, be the prince of all our actions and our passions. "By this we know we are translated from death to life, by our love unto our brethren;" that is the testimonial of our comfort. "I was hungry, and ye fed me; I was hungry, and ye fed me not:" these are the tables of our final judgment. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments;" that is the measure of our obedience. "In that ye have done kindness to one of these little ones, ye have done it unto

Me :” that is the installing of the saints in their thrones of glory. “If thou bringest a gift to the altar, leave it there; go and be reconciled to thy brother :” that is the great instrument of our being accepted. And to sum up all, “Love is the fulfilling of the law.”

I do not examine this duty by our alms alone; for although they are an excellent instrument of life, yet there are some who are bountiful to the poor, and not charitable to their neighbor; and many keep a sin alive, and make account to pay for it. They will not be kind to their brethren, unless they be also at the same time unkind to God. I have understood concerning divers vicious persons, that none have been so free in their donatives and offerings to religion and the priest as they: and the hospitals that have been built, and the highways mended, at the price of souls, are too many for Christendom to boast of, in behalf of charity. But as others have charity without faith, so these have charity without hope: “For every one that hath this hope,” that is, the hope of receiving the glorious things of God promised in the Gospel, “purifies himself even as God is pure.”

You can best tell whether you have charity to your brother by your willingness to do him real benefit. There is no greater charity in the world than to save a soul, nothing that

pleases God better, nothing that can be in our hands greater or more noble, nothing that can be a more lasting and delightful honor, than that a perishing soul,—snatched from the flames of an intolerable hell, and borne to Heaven upon the wings of piety and mercy, by the ministry of angels, and the graces of the Holy Spirit,—shall to eternal ages bless God and bless thee; Him, for the Author and Finisher of salvation, and thee for the minister and charitable instrument. That bright star must needs look pleasantly upon thy face forever, which was by thy hand placed there, and, had it not been for thy ministry, might have been a sooty coal in the regions of sorrow. Now, in order to this, God hath given us all some powers and ministers by which we may promote religion and the great interest of souls—counsels and prayers, preaching and writing, passionate desires and fair examples, going before others in the way of godliness, and bearing the torch before them, that they may see the way and walk in it. This is a charity that is prepared more or less for every one; and, by the way, we should do well to consider what we have done towards it. For as it will be a strange arrest at the day of judgment to Dives, that he fed high and suffered Lazarus to starve, and every garment that lies by thee and perishes, while thy naked brother does so too for want of it, shall be a bill of in-

dictment against thy unmerciful soul; so it will be in every instance. In what thou couldst profit thy brother and didst not, thou art accountable. And then tell over the times in which thou hast prayed for the conversion of thy sinning brother; and compare the times together, and observe whether thou hast not tempted him, or betrayed him to sin, or encouraged him in it; or didst not hinder him when thou mightest; or—more frequently than thou hast—humbly, and charitably, and zealously bowed thy head, and thy heart and knees to God to redeem that poor soul from hell, whither thou seest him descending with as much indifference as a stone into the bottom of the well. Remember the zeal of the Apostles. They prayed for all men; they wept to God for the hardness of men's hearts; they became all things to all men that they might gain some; they travelled through deeps and deserts; they endured the heat of the Sirian star, and the violence of Euroclydon, winds and tempests, seas and prisons, mockings and scourgings, fastings and poverty, labor and watching; they endured every man and wronged no man; they would do any thing good and suffer any evil, if they had but hopes to prevail upon a soul; they persuaded men meekly, they entreated them humbly, they convinced them powerfully; they watched for their good, but meddled not with

their interest ; and this is the Christian zeal of meekness, of patience, of charity.

The merciful shall obtain mercy ; mercy to help them in time of need ; mercy from God, who will not only give them the great mercies of pardon and eternity, but also dispose the hearts of others to pity and supply their needs, as they have done to others. For the present, there is nothing more noble than to be beneficial to others, and to “lift up the poor out of the mire,” and rescue them from misery ; it is to do the work of God. And for the future, nothing is a greater title to a mercy, at the day of judgment, than to have shown mercy to our necessitous brother ; it being expressed to be the only rule and instance in which Christ means to judge the world, in their mercy and charity, or their unmercifulness respectively : “I was hungry and ye fed Me,” or ye fed Me not ; and so we stand or fall in the great and eternal scrutiny. And it was the prayer of St. Paul (Onesiphorus showed kindness to the great Apostle), “The Lord show him a mercy in that day.”

For a cup of charity, though but full “of cold water, shall not lose its reward.”

PRAYER.

O Blessed Saviour, Redeemer of the world, whose property is always to have mercy ; make

me, I beseech Thee, Thy servant, and give me testimony that I am translated from death to life, by charity and love to all my brethren. Teach me to have a care of my actions that I may eschew evil, and a zeal of Thy name that I may do good. Make me pitiful and compassionate over the necessities of the poor, the sinful, and the needy; and give me grace and power to help them and relieve their miseries; so that, being merciful as my heavenly Father is merciful, I may receive such blessings as Thou hast appointed for the charitable, even comfort in all my troubles, and pardon of all my sins, through Thy mercies and blessed charity, O most merciful Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

SIXTH THURSDAY IN LENT.

THE SIXTH BEATITUDE.

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

MATT. v. 8.

“BLESSED are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” This purity of heart includes purity of hands; “Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle? even he that is of clean hands and a pure heart;” that is, he that hath not given his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbor. It signifies justice of action and candor of spirit, innocence of manners and sincerity of purpose; a heart free from all carnal affections, not only in the matter of natural impurity, but also spiritual and immaterial:—such as are heresies, which are therefore impurities, because they mingle secular interest or prejudice with persuasions in religion;—“a good conscience,” that is, a conscience either innocent or penitent; and “faith unfeigned,” which excludes hypocrisy, timorous and half persuasions, neutrality and indifferency in matters of salvation. Chastity is the purity of the body—simplicity is the purity of the spirit; both are the sanctification of the whole

man, for the entertainment of the spirit of purity and the spirit of truth.

When the heathen offered a sacrifice to their false gods, they would make a severe search to see if there were any crookedness or spot, any uncleanness or deformity in their sacrifice. And in like manner we must bring to God a soul pure and spotless; lest God, espying a soul humbly lying before the altar, and finding it to be polluted with the reproaches of a sin, He turns away His head, and hates the sacrifice. For God—who taught the sons of Israel in figures and shadows, and required of the Levitical priests to come to God clean and whole, straight, and with perfect bodies—meant to tell us, that this bodily precept, in a carnal law, does in a spiritual religion signify a spiritual purity. God is never called a lover of bodies, but the great lover of souls; and he that comes to redeem our souls from sin and death, from shame and reproach, would have our souls brought to Him as He loves them. An unclean soul is a deformity in the eyes of God; it is indeed spiritually discerned, but God hath no other eyes but what are spirits and flames of fire.

There are indeed, in this valley of tears, but few so happy souls as to triumph over all infirmities—we know of none; and if God hath any such on earth, they are peculiar jewels, kept in undiscerned cabinets; yet all that in-

tend to serve God heartily must aim at a return to that state of innocence, to the possibility of which Christ hath as certainly recovered us, as we lost it by our own follies and the sin of Adam.

In the matters of choice, in voluntary and deliberate actions, we must resolve not to sin at all. In these things we must be more than conquerors. But he that would be advanced beyond the power and necessity of sinning, must also take great caution concerning his thoughts and secret desires. "Suffer not your thoughts to grow up," for they usually come, as St. Basil says, "suddenly and easily, and without business;" but take heed that you nurse them not. Consider, that when sin is in the thought, it is easily suppressed, and if it be stopped there, it can go no further; and what great mountain of labor is it, then, to abstain from our sin? Cannot the thoughts of the heart be turned aside by doing business, by going into company, by reading, or by sleeping? A man may divert his thoughts by shaking of his head, by thinking any thing else, by thinking nothing. Every man that loves God understands this, and more than this, to be true; and he that will not chastise his thoughts to please God, how should it be expected he will part with his goods, or cut off a hand, or give his life for God? Christianity, let us remember, is not so much a Divine

institution as a Divine temper and frame of mind, and a man's heart may be in heaven long before he sets his feet upon the golden threshold.

The powers of sin seem insuperable to none but to them that have not faith. Hear what St. John saith: "My little children, ye are of God, and have overcome the evil one; for the Spirit that is in you is greater than that which is in the world." Christ's strength shall be perfected in our weakness, and His grace will be sufficient for us; and He will, of His own good pleasure, work in us to will and to do thoroughly and fully, being sanctified throughout to the glory of His Holy Name, and the eternal salvation of our souls.

For a freedom from the cares of covetousness, the shame of uncleanness, the fear of discovery, and the stings of an evil conscience, which are the portions of the several impurities forbidden by this grace, will at length consign us to the reward of purity, the vision beatifical.

If we are "pure as God is pure, we shall" also "see Him as He is." "When we awake up after His likeness we shall behold His presence." There shall we see God as He is, with all His infinite perfections, and the perfections of all creatures which are eminently contained in the Deity.

How admirable were that spectacle, where were represented all that are, or have been,

pleasant or admirable in the world! and how happy were he on whom all these were bestowed, together with a thousand years of life, wherein to enjoy them: yet all these were nothing in respect of the beatifical vision of God, in whom those, and all the perfections that either are or have been, or possibly can be, are contained. Whatever else is great and delightful in the world, together with all the pleasure and perfections that all the men of the world have obtained, or shall obtain, to the world's end, if they should give all these to one person, it would have no comparison, and would seem a loathsome thing, being compared to the delight which will be enjoyed in seeing God for all eternity. Grievings do more easily bereave us of the sense of pleasures than pleasures do of pain; yet such is the greatness of that sovereign joy in Heaven, that it alone is sufficient to drown all the grief and torments, both in earth and hell; and there is no pain in the world able to diminish the least part of it.

Let us, therefore, rejoice, who are Christians, unto whom so great blessings are promised. Let this hope comfort us, this joy refresh us; and let us now begin to enjoy that here which we trust hereafter to possess; for upon this we ought to place all our thoughts, turning our eyes from all the goods and delights of the earth. From hence I will shut up the windows

of my senses; the things of earth seeming unto me unworthy to be looked upon after the contemplation of the heavenly, in the hope whereof I will only rejoice.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, Holy and Eternal Father, who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; look with pity upon Thy servant, and grant that no impure thoughts may pollute the soul which Thou hast sanctified; no unclean words pollute the tongue which Thou hast formed to sing Thy praise. Seal up my senses from all vain objects, occupy them wholly with religion, and enable me so to possess my body in holiness, that I may lay it down with hope, and receive it again in a joyful resurrection, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SIXTH FRIDAY IN LENT.

THE SEVENTH BEATITUDE.

“Blessed are the peacemakers : for they shall be called the children of God.” MATT. v. 9.

“BLESSED are the peacemakers : for they shall be called the children of God.” The wisdom of God is first pure, and then peaceable ; that is the order of the beatitudes. As soon as Jesus was born, the angels sang a hymn : “Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good-will towards men ;” signifying the two great errands upon which Christ was dispatched in his legation from heaven to earth. He is “the Prince of Peace.” “Follow peace with all men, without which no man ever shall see God.”

The reward is no less than the adoption and inheritance of sons. For the sons of peace are the sons of God, and have a title to the inheritance of sons ; to be heirs with God, and co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom of peace, and essential and never-failing charity.

If, therefore, we live quietly and serenely in our families and neighborhood ; if we endeavor by all means to reconcile disagreeing persons,

and by affability and fair deportment to win the love of our neighbors; if, in trials of right, we try to find out the most charitable expedient to determine it; if we are free and ingenuous in reprehensions and fair expostulations with persons who we conceive have wronged us; if we are modest in our arguings, disputings, and demands; if we abstain from affronts, submit to our superiors, speak not evil of dignities, nor undervalue their persons, nor publish their faults; and are careful not to busy ourselves in other men's affairs; then "the peace of God will rest upon us."

Whatsoever does gender strife, the Apostle commands us to avoid; even zeal, therefore, must be modified by the rules of prudence and the allay of charity, that we quarrel not for opinions, nor lose charity for a pretence of an article of faith. Be more careful to establish a truth than to reprove an error, and remember that Christian religion loves not tricks nor artifices of wonder; but, like the natural and amiable simplicity of Jesus, by plain and easy propositions, leads us in wise paths to a place where sin and strife shall never enter: while controversy is the food of contention, a spiritual lawsuit, and it can never be ended. For as long as a word can be spoken against a word, and a thing be opposite to a thing; as long as places are hard and men are ignorant, or knowing but

in part, so long will the saw of contention be drawn from side to side. "The kingdom of God consists in wisdom and righteousness, in peace and holiness, in meekness and gentleness, in abstinence from evil and doing good to others;" in these things let us place our labors, and nothing else but such as these;—things which promote public peace and public good: things that can give no offence to the wise and to the virtuous: for these things are profitable to men and pleasing to God. Neither let us trouble ourselves that all the world is not amended according to our pattern. See that you be perfect at home, that all be rightly reformed there; as for reformation of the Church, God will never call you to an account. Some things cannot be reformed, and very many need not, for all thy peevish dreams; and after all, it is twenty to one but thou art mistaken, and thy superior is in the right, and if thou wert not proud thou wouldst think so too. It is better to let things alone, than to be troublesome to our superiors by an impertinent wrangling after reformation. Christianity is a soft and gentle institution; it was brought into the world to soften the asperities of human nature, and to cure the barbarities of evil men and the contentions of the passionate; and if it were not that there are many who are men of much religion and little godliness, it would not be that there should be so many quarrels in

and concerning that religion, which is wholly made up of truth and peace, and was sent among us to reconcile the hearts of men, when they were tempted to uncharitableness by any other unhappy argument. Let us go to the truth itself, to Christ—and he will tell us an easy way of ending our quarrels: for we shall find Christianity to be the easiest and the hardest thing in the world: it is like a secret in arithmetic, infinitely hard till it be found out by a right operation; and then it is so plain, we wonder we did not understand it earlier.

Our evil life is the cause of our controversies and ignorances in religion and of the things of God. Let God declare His mind never so plainly, if men will not lay aside the evil principle that is within, their open love to their secret sin, they may kill an apostle, and yet be so ignorant as to “think they do God good service;” they may disturb kingdoms, and break the peace of a well-ordered church, and rise up against their fathers, and be cruel to their brethren; and stir up the people to sedition, and all this with a hard heart and a tender conscience, with humble carriage and a proud spirit.

Many ways have been attempted to reconcile the differences of the Church in matters of religion, and all the counsels of men have yet proved ineffective. Let us now try God’s method; let us betake ourselves to live holily, and then the Spirit

of truth will lead us into all truth. It can be no good religion, whose principles destroy any duty of religion. Any thing that is proud, any thing that is peevish or scornful, any thing that is uncharitable, is against that "form of sound doctrine" which the Apostle speaks of. Neither is there any godliness in spending our time and our talk, our heart and our spirits, about the garments and outsides of religion: it is but an ill sign of holiness when a man is busy in troubling himself and his superior in little scruples and fantastic opinions, about things not concerning the life of religion, or the pleasure of God, or the excellences of the Spirit.

Whoever shall oppose you, and the truth you walk by, may better be confuted by your lives than by your disputations. Passionate men are to be taught the first elements of religion; and let men pretend as much learning as they please, they must begin again at Christ's cross: they must learn true mortification and crucifixion of their anger and desires, before they can be good scholars in Christ's school. It was an excellent proverb of the Jews: "The Holy Ghost never dwells in the house of passion. Truth enters into the heart of man when it is empty, and clean, and still; but when the mind is shaken with passion as with a storm, you can never hear the voice of the charmer, though he charm very wisely." So long as we know God only in

the ways of man—by contentious learning, by arguing and disputing—we see nothing but the shadow of Him : but when we know Him with the eyes of holiness, and the intuition of gracious experiences, with a quiet spirit and the peace of enjoyment ; then the mysteries of godliness shall be opened unto us, and be clear as the windows of the morning.

There is a sort of God's dear servants who walk in perfectness, who "perfect holiness in the fear of God." And they have a degree of charity and divine knowledge more than we can discourse of, brighter than the sun, and indelicient as the light of Heaven. Christ is this "brightness of God" manifested in the hearts of His dearest servants.

But I shall say no more of this ; for it is to be felt, and not to be talked of ; and they that never touched it with their fingers may secretly, perhaps, laugh at it in their heart, and be never the wiser. All that I shall now say is, that a good man is united unto God, as a flame touches a flame, and combines into splendor and to glory. So is the spirit of a man united into Christ by the Spirit of God. These are the friends of God, and they best know God's mind, and they only that are so know how much such men do know.

This is the highest round of the ladder, and the angels stand upon it. They dwell in love and contemplation ; they worship and obey, but dis-

pute not; and our quarrels and impertinent wranglings about religion are nothing else but the want of the measure of this state.

For our light is like a candle; every wind of vain doctrine blows it out, or spends the wax and makes the light tremulous; but the lights of Heaven are fixed and bright, and shine forever.

PRAYER.

O Almighty and most Gracious Father, who art the Fountain of peace, and the Source of all unity; I pray unto Thee for peace, for love, and for Thy salvation. Let a holy peace forever dwell in my own conscience; and vouchsafe to me, and to all Christian people, to be of one heart and one voice, the same faith and an eternal charity; and grant that, delighting in Thee alone, we may be guided into the way of peace; and at the last find rest in the inheritance of Thy saints, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SIXTH SATURDAY IN LENT.

THE EIGHTH BEATITUDE.

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake :
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” MATT. v. 10.

“BLESSED are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This, being the hardest command in the whole discipline of Jesus, is fortified with a double blessedness ; for it follows immediately, “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you ;” meaning, that all persecution for a cause of righteousness, though the affliction be instanced only in reproachful language, shall be a title to the blessedness. Any suffering for any good and harmless action is a degree of martyrdom : it being the greatest testimony in the world of the greatest love, to quit that for God which hath possessed our most natural, regular, and orderly affections. It is a preferring God’s cause before our own interest ; it is a loving of virtue without secular ends ; it is the crown of faith, the confidence of hope, and our greatest charity. “Do this and live,” was the covenant of the law ; but in the Gospel, it is

“Suffer this and live.” “He that forsaketh house and land, friends and life, for My sake, is My disciple.” And without the suffering of saints, where were the exaltation of the cross, the conformity of the members to Christ their Head, the coronets of martyrs? Where the trial of our faith; or the exercise of long-suffering? Where the opportunities to give God the greatest love? which cannot be but by dying and suffering for Him.

For that a man's nature is capable of suffering is its best advantage. By the sufferings of our Lord and Brother we were all rescued from the portion of devils; and by our sufferings we have a capacity of serving God beyond that of angels; who indeed can sing God's praises with a sweeter note, and obey Him with a more unabated will, and execute His commands with a swifter wing and a greater power: but they cannot die for God, they can lose no lands for him; and He that did so for all us, and commanded us to do so for Him, is ascended far above all angels, and is Heir of a greater glory.

They however that suffer any thing for Christ, and are ready to die for Him, let them be careful to do nothing against Him. For certainly they think too highly of martyrdom, who believe it able to excuse all the evils of a wicked life. A man may “give his body to be burned, and yet have no charity:” and he that dies

without charity, dies without God; for "God is love." Many things may make a man willing to die in a good cause—public reputation, hope of reward, gallantry of spirit, a confident resolution, and a masculine courage; or a man may be vexed into a stubborn and unrelenting suffering: but nothing can make a man live well, but the grace and the love of God. He, therefore, that suffers in a good cause, let him be sure to walk worthy of that honor to which God hath called him. Let him first deny his sins, and then "deny himself;" and then he may "take up his cross and follow Christ," ever remembering, that no man pleases God in his death who hath walked perversely in his life.

He that suffers in a cause of God must also be indifferent what the instance be, so that he may serve God. Let us choose God, and let God choose all the rest for us; it being indifferent to us, whether by poverty or shame, by a lingering or a sudden death, by the hands of a tyrant prince or the despised hands of a base usurper or a rebel, we receive the crown, and do honor to God and to religion. And in no case let us be forward to prognosticate evil to our enemies; but let us solace ourselves in the assurance of the Divine justice, by general considerations, and in particular pray for them that are our persecutors. It is not always certain that God will be angry with every man by

whose hand affliction comes upon us; and let us not therefore decree judgments from Heaven, in cases where we have no word from Heaven; and thunder from our tribunals, where no voice of God hath declared the sentence. But in such cases, where there is an evident tyranny and injustice, let us do like the Good Samaritan who dressed the wounded man, but never pursued the thief. Let us do charity to the afflicted, and bear the cross with nobleness, and “look up to Jesus, who endured the cross and despised the shame;” but let us not take upon us the office of God, who will “judge the nations righteously,” and when He hath delivered up our bodies will rescue our souls “from the hands of unrighteous judges.”

Do not trouble yourself by thinking how much you are afflicted, but consider how much you make of it: for reflex-acts upon the suffering itself can lead to nothing but to pride or to impatience, to temptation or apostasy. Look not back upon him that strikes thee, but upward to God that supports thee, and forward to the crown that is set before thee; and then consider, if the loss of thy estate hath taught thee to despise the world: and if thy uneasy prison sets thy soul at liberty and knocks off the fetters of a worse captivity. “Thy will be done” is our daily prayer, and that is of a passive signification; “Thy will be done” upon us; and if from

thence also we translate it into an active sense, and by suffering evils increase our aptnesses to do well, we have done the work of Christians and shall receive the rewards of martyrs.

And when God hath brought thee into Christ's school, and entered thee into a state of sufferings, remember the advantages of that state. Consider how unsavory the things of the world appear to thee when thou art under the arrest of death; remember with what comforts the Spirit of God assists thy spirit; set down in thy heart, all those intercourses which happen between God and thy own soul, the sweetnesses of religion, thy longings after Heaven, and all the things of God. And if God restores thee to thy estate, be not therefore less in love with Heaven, nor more in love with the world. Let thy spirit be now as humble as before it was broken, that thou mayest say with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, for thereby I have learned thy commandments." We may every one live to have need of these rules; and I do not at all think it safe to pray against it, but to be armed for it.

"If the righteous scarcely be saved," says the Apostle, "where shall the wicked and the sinner appear?" These words are taken out of the Proverbs, according to the translation of the Septuagint. "If the righteous scarcely be safe"—the words imply that he is safe; but by interme-

dial difficulties; he is safe in the midst of his persecutions. And so have I often seen young and unskilful persons sitting in a little boat, when every little wave sporting about the sides of the vessel, and every motion and dancing of the barge, seemed a danger, and made them cling fast upon their fellows; and yet all the while they were as safe as if they sat under a tree, while a gentle wind shook the leaves into a refreshment and a cooling shade. And the unskilful, inexperienced Christian shrieks out whenever his vessel shakes, thinking it always a danger, that the watery pavement is not stable and resident like a rock. And yet, all his danger is in himself—none at all from without: for he is indeed moving upon the waters, but fastened to a rock. Faith is his foundation, and hope is his anchor, and death is his harbor, and Christ is his pilot, and Heaven is his country; and all the evils of poverty or affronts, of tribunals and evil judges, of fears and sadder apprehensions, are but like the loud wind blowing from the right point—they make a noise, and drive faster to the harbor. And if we do not leave the ship, and leap into the sea; quit the interests of religion, and run to the securities of the world; cut our cables, and dissolve our hopes; grow impatient, and hug a wave and die in its embraces; we are as safe at sea—safer in the storm which God sends us, than in a calm when we are be-

friended with the world. And yet, after all this, the good man "escapes but hardly" here; but it will be well enough hereafter. When the Christian's last pit is digged, when he is descended to his grave and hath finished his state of sorrows and sufferings; then God opens the rivers of life and never-ceasing felicities. And this is that which God promised to his people: "I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."

So much as moments are exceeded by eternity, and the sighing of a man by the joys of an angel, and a salutary frown by the light of God's countenance, and a few groans by the infinite and eternal hallelujahs; so much are the sorrows of the godly to be undervalued in respect of what is deposited for them in the treasures of Eternity. Their sorrows can die, but so cannot their joys. And if the blessed martyrs and confessors were asked concerning their past sufferings and their present rest, and the joys of their certain expectation, you should hear them glory in nothing but in the mercies of God and "in the cross of the Lord Jesus." Every chain is a ray of light, and every prison is a palace, and every loss is the purchase of a kingdom, and every affront in the cause of God is an eternal honor, and every day of sorrow is a thousand years of comfort multiplied with a never-ceasing

numeration; days without nights, joys without sorrow, sanctity without sin, charity without stain, possession without fear, society without envying, communication of joys without lessening—and they shall dwell in a blessed country, where an enemy never entered, and from whence a friend never went away.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, who hast placed us in this world like strangers and pilgrims, far from our country and from rest; have mercy, I humbly beseech Thee, upon me and upon Thy whole Church. Chasten us with Thy gentleness when we sin against Thee; be unto us a refuge in trouble when we call upon Thee; give us patience in the time of adversity; and grant that in the multitude of sorrows Thy comforts may refresh us, and Thy mercies relieve us, and Thy Hand lead us, for the sake of our Redeemer, to the land of glorious promises, there to reign with Thee, who livest and governest all things, world without end. Amen.

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER.

CHRIST'S ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM.

“ And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him ; and He sat upon him.” MARK xi. 7.

OUR blessed Lord, five days before His Passion, sent His disciples to a village to borrow an ass, that He might ride in triumph to Jerusalem. He had none of His own ; but yet He, who was so dear to God, could not want what was to supply His needs. And, in like manner, it may be, God hath laid up our portion in the repositories of other men, and means to furnish us from their granaries, and that their wardrobe shall clothe us. And if we would give God leave to make provisions for us in the ways of His own choosing, and not estimate our wants by our manner of receiving, being contented that God, by any of His own ways, will minister it to us, we should find our cares eased, and our thankfulness engaged, and all our moderate desires contented, by the satisfaction of our needs.

And now begins that great triumph, in which the Holy Jesus was pleased to exalt His office, and to abase His person. He rode, like a poor

man, upon an ass, a beast of burden and the lowest value, and yet it was not His own; and in that equipage He received the acclamations due to a mighty prince, to the Son of the eternal King; telling us that the smallness of fortune, and the rudeness of exterior habiliments, are sometimes the outsides of a great glory; and that when God means to glorify or do honor to a person, He needs no help from secular advantages.

He hides great riches in renunciation of the world, and makes great honor break forth from the clouds of humility; and victory to arise from yielding, and peace to be the reward of him that suffers all the hostilities of men and devils. For Jesus, in this great humility of His, gave a great proof that He was the Messiah, and the King of Sion; because no other king entered into those gates riding upon an ass, and received the honor of "Hosannah," in that unlikelihood and contradiction of unequal circumstances.

The blessed Jesus had never but two days of triumph in His life: the one was on His transfiguration upon Mount Tabor, the other this His riding into the holy city. But, that it may appear how little were His joys and present exterior complacencies, in the day of His transfiguration, Moses and Elias appeared to Him, telling Him what great things He was to suffer;

and in this day of His riding into Jerusalem, He wet the palms with a dew sweeter than the moistures upon Mount Hermon, or the drops of manna. For, to allay the little warmth of a springing joy, He let down a shower of tears, weeping over undone Jerusalem in the day of His triumph; leaving it disputable whether He felt more joy or sorrow in the acts of love. For He triumphed to consider that the redemption of the world was so near, and wept bitterly that men would not be redeemed. His joy was great to consider that Himself was to suffer so great sadness for our good; and His sorrow was very great to consider that we would not entertain that good that He brought and laid before us by His Passion. And thus Jesus—like a rainbow, half made of the glories of light and half of the moisture of a cloud, half triumph and half sorrow—entered into that town, where He had done much good to others, and to Himself received nothing but affronts. Yet His tenderness increased upon Him; and that very journey, which was Christ's last solemn visit for their recovery, He doubled all the instruments of His mercy and their conversion. He rode in triumph; the children sang Hosannah to Him; He cured many diseased persons; He wept for them, and pitied them, and sighed out the intimations of a prayer, and stayed all day there looking about Him towards evening; and no

man would invite Him home, but He was forced to go to Bethany, where He was sure of a hospitable entertainment. I think no Christian that reads this but will be full of indignation at the whole city; who, for malice or for fear, would not, or durst not, receive their Saviour into their houses. And yet, we do worse; for now that He is become our Lord, with mightier demonstrations of His eternal power, we suffer Him to look round about us for months and years together, and possibly never entertain Him, till our house is ready to rush upon our heads, and we are going to unusual and stranger habitations. And yet, in the midst of a populous and mutinous city, this great King had some good subjects; persons that threw away their own garments and laid them at the feet of our Lord; that, being divested of their own, they might be re-invested with a robe of His righteousness, wearing that till it were changed into a stole of glory.

But I consider that the blessed Jesus had affections, not less than infinite, towards all mankind; and He who wept upon Jerusalem—who had done so great to despise Him, and within five days, were to fill up the measure of their iniquities, and do an act which all ages of the world could never repeat in the same instance—did also, in the number of his tears, reckon our sins, as sad considerations and incentives of His sor-

row. And it would well become us to consider what great evil we do, when our actions are such as for which our blessed Lord did weep. He who was seated in the bosom of felicity: yet He moistened his fresh laurels upon the day of His triumph with tears of love and bitter alloy. His day of triumph was a day of sorrow; and if we would weep for our sins, that instance of sorrow would be a day of triumph and jubilee.

PRAYER.

O Holy Saviour, Eternal King of Sion, who with great humility and infinite love didst enter the holy city; enter into, I beseech Thee, and take possession of my soul, and enable me by Thy aid to triumph over my sins, and lay my victories at Thy feet, and at last follow Thee into the heavenly Jerusalem, with palms in my hand, and joy in my heart, and praises on my lips, rejoicing in Thee through a glorious eternity, O Holy and Eternal Saviour. Amen.

MONDAY BEFORE EASTER.

THE SUPPER AT BETHANY.

“Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.” JOHN xii. 3.

FROM Jerusalem the Holy Jesus went to Bethany, where He had another manner of reception than at the holy city. There He supped: for His goodly day of triumph had been a fasting day; and there Mary Magdalen, who had spent one box of precious ointment upon His feet, as a sacrifice of eucharist for her conversion, bestowed another, in thankfulness for the restitution of her brother Lazarus to life, and consigned her Lord to His burial. It was an unaccustomed and large profusion, and Judas, an Apostle, one of our Lord's own family, pretended it had been a better religion to have given it to the poor. But it was malice, and the spirit either of envy or avarice in him that passed the sentence; and the event of that man gave the interpretation of his present purpose. But Jesus entertained the sincerity of that miraculous love, and Mary Magdalen found her Lord to be her portion and

her advocate; and so hereafter when the devil, the great accuser of God's saints, shall object against the piety and religion of holy persons, a cup of cold water shall be accepted unto reward; and an action, done with great zeal and an intense love be acquitted from all its adherent imperfections; Christ receiving them unto Himself, and being like the altar of incense, hallowing the very smoke and raising it into a flame, and entertaining it into the embraces of the firmament, and the bosom of Heaven.

For Christ our Lord has made, and blessed, and preserved, and sanctified us in order that we might love Him. When our sins had separated between us and our God, His love and His passion, His holiness and His obedience, reconciled us. He had the smart, but we the ease; His were the sufferings, but ours the mercy; he felt the load of stripes, but from thence a holy balm did flow upon us; He felt the thorns, but we shall bear the crown; and after He had paid the price we got the purchase. And now hath He put upon our hearts the sweetest and easiest yoke of love, to enable us to bear His burden.

Abraham excelled in faith, Job in patience, Isaac in fidelity, Jacob in simplicity, Joseph in chastity, David in religion, Josiah in zeal, and Manasses in repentance; but Christ Himself con-

versed with man, and taught him love. When the trembling Christian shall say, "Woe is me! for I am a great sinner; woe is me! for I am polluted, and of unclean lips;" let him remember that Mary Magdalen, the first time she came to her Lord, was a suspected sinner, and a guest unbidden; and though a thousand years of tears and sorrow, the purity of angels, the love of saints, and the humiliation of the greatest penitent, are not sufficient to make us worthy to dwell with Him; yet was He pleased to receive the weary sinner, the overburdened, conscience, the afflicted, polluted soul, into His care and conduct, His custody and cure.

For the Blessed Saviour, who did, for our sakes, take upon Him our weaknesses and our sufferings; who was hungry after the temptation of the devil—weary and thirsty in his discourse with the woman of Samaria; who did weep over Lazarus—was afflicted in the garden—nailed on the cross—pierced with a spear—wrapped in linen, and laid in the grave; so became a merciful High Priest, and pitiful to our infirmities. And when our faith is pure, and our love unfeigned, and we weep truly for our sins, though but with a shower no bigger than the drops of pity; if the degrees be great, Christ will accept it into glory; if it be little, He will accept it into grace and make it bigger.

Great and infinite indeed are His glories;

infinite and glorious are His mercies! For Heaven itself does wholly minister to our salvation. God takes care of us, God loves us, God will not suffer us to perish; and yet more, the Son of God, who died for us, was so ready in His mercy, that He did pardon us even before we were redeemed.

For what is the secret of the mystery, that the Eternal Son of God should take upon Him our nature, and die our death, and suffer for our sins, and do our work, and enable us to do our own? He that did this is God. He, "who thought it no robbery to be equal with God;" He came to satisfy Himself, to pay to Himself the price for His own creatures. And when He did this for us that He might pardon us, was He at that instant angry with us? Was this an effect of His anger or of His love, that God sent His Son to work out our pardon and salvation? Indeed, we were angry with God, at enmity with the Prince of life; but He was reconciled to us so far, as that He then did the greatest thing in the world for us: for nothing could be greater than that God the Son of God should die for us. Here was reconciliation before pardon; and God, that came to die for us, did love us first before He came.

This was hasty love. But it went further yet. For God pardoned us before we sinned. When He foresaw our sin, even mine and yours, He

sent His Son to die for us. Our pardon was wrought and effected by Christ's death above eighteen hundred years ago; and for the sins of to-morrow, and the infirmities of the next day, Christ is already dead, already risen from the dead, and does now make intercession and atonement.

For, as if God could not stay from redeeming us, He promised the Redeemer to Adam in the beginning of the world's sin; and Christ was "the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world;" and the covenant of the Gospel, though it was not made with man, yet it was from the beginning performed by God as to His part, as to the ministration of pardon; and though God laid His hand, and drew a veil of types and secrecy before the manifestation of His mercies, yet He did the work of redemption, and saved us by the covenant of faith, and the righteousness of believing, and the mercies of repentance, the graces of pardon, and the blood of the slain Lamb, even from the fall of Adam to this very day; and will do till Christ's second coming. He, therefore, who has given unto us His Son, will He not with Him give us all things else which are needful in order to His glory and our salvation? He who dwelleth in every sanctified soul, and taketh it for His own; who giveth occasion and createth good things, and produc-

eth affections, and stirreth up the appetite, will He not also satisfy all holy desire?

Oh! let us pray Him to give us such a love, that we may love Him as well as any of His servants loved Him, and that He may love us with that love which He beareth to the sons of His house. For the love of Christ troubles none, but is entertained by all that feel it with joy and exultation. It gives liberty, and drives away fear; it feels no labor, but suffers all; it eases the weary, and strengthens the weak; it comforts them that mourn, and feeds the hungry; it is still more desired, and is ever more desirable: and it will bring us to live in conformity to the will, and die in the favor, of our God; and rest in hope, and rise in glory, to the participation of the blessings of a blissful immortality, through the mercies of God in our Lord Jesus Christ, our dearest Saviour, and ever glorious and most mighty Redeemer.

PRAYER.

O Blessed Redeemer, Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world; have mercy upon me, a miserable sinner. Unworthy though I am, yet Thy love never fails. Oh! may Thy infinite Arm of mercy be reached unto me; Thy holy Death, Thy Cross and Passion be in-

terposed between Thy judgments and my soul. Lord! I have been dead in trespasses and sins, but Thou art my resurrection and my life. Henceforth grant me the purity of an angel, the love of a seraph, and so establish my heart in Thee, that giving to Thy service all my days and all my powers, I may be beloved of Thee with an eternal love, and may dwell one day in Thy courts, even all the long day of Eternity, for Thy infinite merit's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

THE HUMILITY OF CHRIST.

“Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.” LUKE xxii. 27.

THE holy Jesus went now to eat His last Paschal supper, and to finish the work of His legation, and to fulfil that part of the law of Moses in every of its smallest and most minute particularities, in which also the actions were significant of spiritual duties: which He may transfer from the letter to the spirit in our own instances, that, as Jesus ate the Paschal lamb with a staff in His hand, with His loins girt, with sandals on His feet, in great haste, with unleavened bread, and with bitter herbs; so we also should do all our services according to the signification of these symbols, leaning upon the cross of Jesus for a staff, and bearing the rod of His government; with loins girt with angelical chastity, with shoes on our feet, that so we may guard and have custody over our affections, and “be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace;” eating in haste, as becomes

persons "hungering and thirsting after righteousness;" doing the work of the Lord zealously and fervently, without the leaven of malice and secular interest, with bitter herbs of self-denial, and mortification of our sensual and inordinate desires.

When the holy Jesus had finished His last Mosaic rite, He descended to give example of the first-fruits of evangelical graces. "He rose from supper, laid aside His garment," like a servant, and, with all the circumstances of an humble ministry, "washed the feet of His disciples," beginning at the first, St. Peter, until He came to Judas the traitor, that we might in one scheme, see a rare conjunction of charity and humility, of self-denial and indifferency, represented by a person glorious and great, their Lord and Master, sad and troubled. And He chose to wash their feet rather than their head, that He might have an opportunity of a more humble posture, and a more apt signification of His charity. Thus God lays every thing aside that He may serve His servants: Heaven stoops to earth, and one abyss calls upon another, and the miseries of man, which were next to infinite, are excelled by a mercy equal to the immensity of God.

St. Peter was troubled that the Hands of the Lord should wash His servants' feet—those Hands which had opened the eyes of the blind,

and cured lepers, and healed all diseases, and when lift up to heaven were omnipotent, and could restore life to dead and buried persons. But it was no more than was necessary, for they had but lately been earnest in dispute for precedency, and this was not to be cured but by some prodigy of example and miracle of humility. And it seems, it is a great thing that man should come to have just and equal thoughts of himself, since God used such powerful arts to transmit this lesson and engrave it in the spirits of men, even descending from heaven to earth to teach it us.

For when men had violated the natural law and broken that which was written; when they had forgotten the Divine judgment manifested in the deluge upon the old world, in fire from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah, in many plagues upon the Egyptians, in the slaughters of the Philistines; and when the wrath of God did hang over all the world for their iniquity; our Lord Jesus Christ, who in all things did minister to His God and Father, both in the creation of the world and in the excellent providence of it, resolved to become man. He, who is the Lawgiver, would be subject to laws; He that is the High Priest would be made a sacrifice; and the Great Shepherd of our souls would be a lamb and be slain for us. Thus He, who is the Maker of all that are born, was con-

ceived in the womb of a Virgin; He that is void of all flesh was incarnate and made flesh; He was born in time, who was begotten from eternity.

He conversed piously with men, and instructed them with His holy laws and doctrine; He cured every disease and every infirmity; He did signs and wonders among the people; He slept, and ate, and drank, who feeds all the living with food, and fills them with His blessing; He declared God's name to them who knew it not; He enlightened our ignorances; He enkindled godliness, and fulfilled His Father's will, and finished all which He gave Him to do.

All this when He had done, He was taken by the hands of wicked men, by the treachery of false priests and an ungodly people, and by the permission of His heavenly Father, suffered many things of reproach. He was delivered to Pilate, who judged Him that is the Judge of quick and dead, and condemned Him who is the Saviour of all others.

Then He who is incapable of suffering, was crucified; and He died who is of an immortal nature, that by His death and Passion He might free them for whom He came, and might dissolve the bands of the devil, and deliver men from all His crafty malices.

Oh, consider now if it be not infinite impiety to despise the riches of such goodness. Remem-

ber that vast descent from the glorious bosom of the Father to the womb of a poor maiden, to the form of a servant, to the miseries of a sinner, to a life of labor, to a state of poverty, to a death of malefactors, to the grave of death. Think if it were not a good desire, and yet but reasonable, that we should be as humble in the midst of our greatest imperfections and basest sins, as Christ was in the midst of His fulness of the Spirit; for, if this example fails, we are eternally lost in the mists of vanity, and enter into the condition of those angels whom pride transformed and spoiled into the condition of devils.

Let us, therefore, being mindful of these things which Christ did and suffered for us, say, as did a good man of old: O Lord, Thou hast overcome my pride, Thine example hath mastered me. I deliver myself up into Thy hands, never to receive liberty or exaltation but in the condition of Thy humble servant.

For so, in Him shall we be taught, by His strength enabled, by His grace prevented, by His Spirit conducted, by His death pardoned, by His resurrection justified, and by His intercession defended from all our enemies, and set forward on the way of holiness and life eternal.

PRAYER.

Merciful Saviour, who wert pleased to descend into a state of great misery, to reconcile us to Thy Father, and didst with deep characters engrave humility into the spirits of Thy disciples; teach me, I beseech Thee, to imitate Thy excellences and conform to Thy sufferings; give me the mourning and sadness of a true penitent; make me meek, patient, and resigned, in all accidents and changes of Thy providence; let me be willing to be the servant of all men, feeling for their necessities, and aiding them in their sorrows; and grant that, despising the world and its vanities, I may at length attain the crown of righteousness, and reign with Thee, O merciful Saviour, who art my hope and my life, my glory and exceeding great reward. Amen.

WEDNESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

THE HOLY COMMUNION.

“As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come.” 1 Cor. xi. 26.

WHEN St. Joseph and the blessed Virgin-Mother had for a time lost their most Holy Son, they sought him in the villages and the high-ways, in the retinues of their kindred, and the caravans of the Galilean pilgrims; but there they found Him not. At last, almost despairing, faint and sick with travel and fear, with desires and tedious expectations, they came into the Temple to pray to God for conduct and success; knowing and believing assuredly, that if they could find God, they should not long miss to find the Holy Jesus. And their faith deceived them not: for they sought God; and found Him, that was God and man, in the midst and circle of the doctors. But, being surprised with trouble and wonder, they began a little to expostulate with the Divine Child, why He would be absent so long, and leave them (as it must needs be when He is absent from us) in sorrow and uncertain thoughts. This question

brought forth an answer which will be forever useful to all: "How is it that ye have so fondly looked for me, as if I were used to wander in unknown paths, without skill and without a guide? Did ye not know that I ought to be in My Father's House?" That is, there, where God is worshipped, where He loves to dwell, where He communicates His blessing and holy influences: there, and there only, we are sure to meet our dearest Lord. For God hath a house below as well as above. Here is His dwelling, and here are His provisions; hither God sends His Son, and here His Son manifests Himself.

And now, that we may know where to find Him, we must be sure to look after Him. He hath told us where He would be, behind what pillar, and under what cloud, and present in what sacrament; and we must not look for Him in the highways of ambition and pride, of wealth and sensual pleasure. These things are not found in the House of His Father, neither may they come near His dwelling. But if we seek for Christ, we shall find Him in the methods of virtue, and the paths of God's commandments; in the houses of prayer, and the offices of religion; in the persons of the poor, and the retirements of an afflicted soul; in our penitential sorrows, and in the time of trouble; in pulpits, and upon altars; in the word, and in the sacra-

ments. If we come hither as we ought, we are sure to find our Beloved—Him whom our soul longeth after.

Sure enough Christ is here; but He is not here in every manner, and therefore is not to be found by every inquirer, nor touched by every hand, nor received by all comers, nor entertained by every guest. He that receives Christ must have a proper, that is a spiritual, instrument, a purified heart, consecrated life, and a hallowed mouth; for a disproportionate instrument makes the effect impossible, both in nature and morality. Can a man bind a thought with chains, or carry imaginations in the palm of his hand? Can the beauty of the peacock's train, or the ostrich-plume, be delicious to the palate and the throat? Does the hand intermeddle with the joys of the heart? or darkness, that hides the naked, make him warm? Does the body live as does the spirit? Or, can the body of Christ be like to common food?

Indeed, the sun shines upon the good and bad; and the vines give wine to the drunkard as well as to the sober man: pirates have fair winds and a calm sea at the same time when the just and peaceful merchantman hath them. But although the things of the world are common to good and bad, yet sacraments and spiritual joys, the food of the soul and the blessing of Christ, are the peculiar right of saints. The

rites of our religion are to be handled by the measures of religion, and the things of God by the rules of the Spirit; and, therefore, whoever will partake of God's secrets must first look into his own: he must first pare off whatsoever is amiss, and not without holiness approach to the Holiest of Holies; nor eat of this sacrifice with a defiled hand, nor come to this feast without a nuptial garment. The Holy Communion, or Supper of the Lord, is the most sacred and mysterious congregation of secret and holy things and duties in our religion. And since all societies of Christians pretend to the greatest esteem of this, above all the rites or external parts and ministries of religion, it cannot be otherwise but that they will all speak honorable things of it, and suppose holy things to be in it, and great blessings, one way or other, to come by it: and all the innumerable differences which are in the discourses and consequent practices relating to it proceed from some common truths, and universal notions, and mysterious or inexplicable words, and tend all to reverential thoughts and pious treatment of these rites and holy offices.

But he that desires to enter furthest into the secrets of this mystery, and to understand more than others, can better learn by love than by inquiry. "He that keepeth the law of the Lord getteth the understanding thereof," saith the wise Bensirach. If he will prepare himself dili-

gently, and carefully observe the dispensations of the Spirit, and receive it humbly, and treat it with great reverence, and dwell in the communion of saints, and pass through the mystery with great devotion and purest simplicity, and converse with the purities of the sacrament frequently, and with holy intention—this man shall understand more by his experience, than the greatest clerks can by all their subtleties.

For all comforts conspire to meet in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In it the story of the love of our dearest Lord is written in largest characters; who not only was at that instant busy in doing man the greatest good, even then when man was contriving His death and His dishonor; but tried to represent His bitter Passion to us, without any circumstances of horror, in symbols of pleasure and delight; that we may "taste and see how gracious the Lord is," who would not transmit the record of His Passion to us in any thing that might trouble us.

The Body and Blood of our Saviour, which He gave for the life of the world, these are the repast of this Supper, and these we truly partake. For there is not only the visible reception of the outward signs, but an invisible reception of the thing signified. There is far more than a shadow, than a type, than a figure. Christ did not only propose a sign at that hour, but also He

gave us a Gift, and that Gift really and effectually is Himself. For that which is promised, and faith takes it, and hath it, is not fiction, fancy, opinion, falsity, but substance and verity; and spiritual union is the most true and real union that can be.

Happy indeed is that man that sits at the table of angels, that puts his hand into the dish with the King of all the creatures, and feeds upon the Eternal Son of God, joining things below with things above; heaven with earth, life with death; that "mortality might be swallowed up of life," and sin be destroyed by the inhabitation of its greatest conqueror.

And now I need not enumerate any particulars; since the Spirit of God hath ascertained us, that Christ enters into our hearts and takes possession, and abides there; that we are made temples and celestial mansions; that we are all one with our Judge, and with our Redeemer; that our Creator is bound unto His creatures with bonds of charity, which nothing can dissolve, unless our own hands break them; that man is united with God, and our weakness is fortified by His strength, and our miseries wrapped up in the golden leaves of glory.

Take, therefore, and eat, in remembrance of Christ. Take, and fear not, as Peter did, saying, "Depart from me, Lord; for I am a sinful

man." It is the Lord's delight to seek and to save that which was lost. Take, and take heed you let not go your hold. Take, but not to hold the pleasures of the world and your sinful lusts in your grasp together. Pine not away with the consumption of an evil conscience, but eat, and be strong in the Lord and in His mercy; eat, to show the Lord's death.

For Christ could have said, "This is My body slain; This is My body crucified:" but He had rather say, "This is My body broken for yours;" to show the great injuries of His sufferings. To keep them in fresh and frequent meditation, the Lord hath given us a palpable and signal token; a blessing twice, and twenty times given, because it is given that it may never be forgotten. They that love others, would live in the memory of those they love. It is because Christ loves us entirely, that He would be remembered of us. And no friend will say to another, "Remember me when I am gone;" but that he means reciprocally to remember his friend to whom he spake it. If you will remember Christ, He will remember you. And the thief on the cross will teach you, that it is good to continue in His memory. "Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

Consider the noble works of the Lord, especially this great work—how He suffered for us

unto death. Remember seriously this one thing as you ought; and God will let you forget nothing that will do you good.

Remember it: not only casting your eyes back to the large histories of it in the Gospels, as if that would suffice; but zealously, practically—and then every thing else will come to mind to perfect holiness. For to consider how much Christ loved us, by how much He suffered for us, will make us look upon sin with horror, which begat such torment and ignominy to the innocent Lamb of God. It will comfort our weak faith, that He who hath done so great things for us will not abandon us, and having subdued our enemies, will not let them renew the battle to overcome us. It will encourage us to lay down our life for Him, who hath laid down His life for us.

“My meditation of Him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.” He hath drunk up the cup of sorrow, that I might drink of nothing but the cup of salvation.

PRAYER.

O Blessed and Eternal Saviour, who gavest Thyself a sacrifice for our sins, and hast become one with us, that we may live the same life, and be partakers of Thy resurrection and immortality; grant, I beseech Thee, that Thy holy

sacrament may be to me life and health, a defence and shield, a means of sanctification and spiritual growth; that receiving the Body of my dearest Lord, I may be one with His mystical Body, united with indissoluble bonds of a strong faith, and a holy hope, and a never-failing charity, and may at length pass from feeding upon Thee spiritually to beholding Thy face eternally, through Thy mercy, O Blessed and Eternal Saviour. Amen.

THURSDAY BEFORE EASTER.

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

“And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” LUKE xxii. 44.

THE farewell sermon of our Blessed Lord, begun when Judas was gone out, was rarely mixed of sadness and joys. For in it He discoursed of the glorification of God in His Son, of those glories which the Father had prepared for Him; and of His sudden departure, to a place whither His disciples could not come yet, but afterwards they should: meaning, first to death, and then to glory.” He commanded them to love one another; and foretold to Peter (who made confident protests that he would die with his Master), “that before the cock should crow twice, he should deny Him thrice.” He comforted them with the comforts of faith; and then, arming them against future persecutions, and giving them divers holy precepts, He gave them His blessing, and prayed for them; and, having sung a hymn, “went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, unto the Mount

of Olives, to a village called Gethsemane, where there was a garden, into which He entered to pray together with His disciples." "And taking Peter, James, and John apart with Him, about a stone's cast" from the rest, "He began to be exceeding sorrowful," and sad, "even unto death."

For now He saw the ingredients of His bitter draught pouring into the chalice, and the sight was full of horror and amazement. From an evil heart, and a prevaricating spirit, all our sins arise; and in the spirit of Christ began His sorrow, where He truly felt the full value and demerit of sin, which we think not worthy of a tear or a hearty sigh: but He groaned and fell under the burden. And it were highly to be wished, that, in the midst of our caresses and levities of society, in our festivities and triumphal merriments, when we laugh at folly and rejoice in sin, we would remember, that for those very merriments our Blessed Lord felt a bitter sorrow; and not one vain and sinful laughter but cost the Holy Jesus a sharp pang and throes of passion.

"And He fell on His face, and prayed: O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me."

God heard His prayer, but would not answer Him in kind; but when His prayer was full, and His sorrow come to a great measure, He sent His angel to comfort Him.

It was a great season for the angel's coming, because it was a great necessity which was incumbent upon our Lord; for His sadness and His agony was so great, mingled and compounded of sorrow and zeal, fear and desire, innocent nature and perfect grace, that He "sweat drops" as great as if the blood had started through little undiscerned fontinels, and outrun the streams and rivers of His Cross.

What collateral designs and tacit significations might be designed by this mysterious sweat, I know not. Certainly it was a sad beginning of a most dolorous passion. We have read of some persons, that the grief and fear of one night hath put a cover of snow upon their heads, as if the labors of thirty years had been extracted, and the quintessence drank off in the passion of that night. But if nature had been capable of a greater or more prodigious impress of passion than a bloody sweat, it must needs have happened in this agony of the Holy Jesus, in which He undertook a grief great enough to make up the imperfect contrition of all the saints, and to satisfy for the impenitencies of all the world.

And here, let us consider, that it was to us Christ made this largess of His goodness; to us, to whom He made Himself a brother, paying the scores of our sin and shame. If we could consider this sadly, it might make us better to

understand our madness and folly in refusing to be sorrowful, and to leave our sins, and to make amends by a holy life. It cost our dearest Lord the price of His dearest blood, many a thousand groans, millions of prayers and sighs, that we might be admitted to repentance: and surely it must be an infinite impiety to despise the riches of such a goodness; such a glorious favor as is the issue of Christ's prayers in heaven, and of all His labors, His sorrows, and His sufferings on earth.

For all that Christ suffered was to glorify His Father by bringing souls to God; and it must needs be an infinite condemnation, that Christ, thy Lord and Judge, should be tormented for nothing; that thou wouldest not accept felicity and pardon, when He purchased them at so dear a price. How shalt thou one day look upon Him that fainted and died for love of thee, and thou didst scorn His miraculous mercies? How shall we dare to behold that lovely Face that brought salvation to us, and we turned away and fell in love with death, and kissed deformity and sins? All the pains and passions, the sorrows and the groans, of Jesus, shall be laid upon thy score, if thou hast refused the mercies and designs of all their holy ends and purposes.

For things are so ordered, and so great a value set upon our souls, since they are the images of God and redeemed by the blood of the Holy

Lamb, that the salvation of our souls is reckoned as a part of Christ's reward—a part of the glorification of His humanity. Every sinner that repents causes joy to Christ, and the joy is so great that it runs over and whets the fair brows and beauteous locks of cherubim and seraphim, and all the angels have a part of that banquet. Then it is that our blessed Lord feels the acceptation of His holy sacrifice, the graciousness of His person, the return of His prayers. And what man is there so vile that will refuse to bring joy to his Lord, by doing himself the greatest good in the world? They who refuse to do this are said to “crucify the Lord of life again, and put Him to an open shame;” that is, they, as much as in them lies, bring Christ from His glorious joys to the labors of His life, and the shame of His death; they advance His enemies and refuse to advance the kingdom of their Lord; they put themselves in that state in which they were when Christ came to die for them; and now that He is in a state that He may rejoice over them (for He hath done all His share towards it), every wicked man takes his head from the blessing, and rather chooses that the devil should rejoice in his destruction than that his Lord should triumph in his felicity.

O consider, therefore, deeply, what Christ hath done for thy soul; what glories He laid aside, with what meanness He was invested,

what pains He suffered, what rare arts He used to save thee; and remember, that the guilt of eternal damnation, which we have all incurred, was a great and intolerable evil, and unavoidable if such miracles of mercy had not been wrought to take it quite away.

A greater love than this could not be; and a less love than this could not have rescued us.

PRAYER.

O Holy Saviour, who for our sakes didst suffer immeasurable anguish and pain, that Thou mightest purchase for us blessings upon earth, and an eternal inheritance in Heaven; dispose me, I beseech Thee, by contrition, and by love, to receive the benefit of Thy Passion. Pity me, O Lord; pity me. Turn Thy merciful eyes towards me, O most merciful Redeemer; for my sins are great, like unto Thy Passion; full of sorrow and shame, and a burden too great for me to bear. O teach me to hate the cause of Thy agony, and to love Thee to the uttermost extent of my affections; and grant, that in this life, suffering the sorrows of a sad repentance in the union and merits of Thy Passion, I may die with Thee, and rest with Thee, and rise again with Thee, and live with Thee forever in the possession of Thy glories; O most merciful and gracious Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

‘ And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.’ LUKE xxiii. 33.

WHEN the sentence of death pronounced against our blessed Lord was to be put in execution, the soldiers pulled off the robe of mockery, the scarlet mantle, which in jest they put upon Him, and put on His own garments. But they took not off the crown of thorns; for so it became the King of suffering not to lay aside His imperial thorns, till they were changed into diadems of glory.

And now was Abel led forth by his brother to be slain; a gay spectacle to satisfy impious eyes. Sin laughed to see the King of heaven and earth, and the great lover of souls, instead of the sceptre of His kingdom, to bear a tree of cursing and shame. But Piety wept tears of pity, and knew they would melt into joy, when she should behold that cross, which loaded the shoulders of her Lord, afterwards set upon the sceptres, and be engraved and signed upon the foreheads of kings.

It cannot be thought, but the ministers of Jewish malice used all the circumstances of affliction, which, in any case, were accustomed towards malefactors, and persons to be crucified; and therefore it was, that in some old figures, we see our Blessed Lord described with a label appendant to the fringe of His garment set full of nails and pointed iron; for so sometimes they afflicted persons condemned to that kind of death. The accidents of His journey, and their malice, so crushed his wounded tender body, that they were forced to lay the load of the cross upon a Cyrenian, fearing that He should die with less shame and smart than they intended Him. And so He was pleased to take man unto His aid, not only to represent His own need, and the dolorousness of His Passion, but to consign the duty unto man, that we must enter into a fellowship of Christ's sufferings, taking up the cross of martyrdom when God requires us, enduring affronts, being patient under affliction, loving them that hate us, and being benefactors to our enemies, mortifying our desires, breaking our own will, not seeking ourselves, being entirely resigned to God. These are the cross and the nails, and the spear, and the whip, and all the instruments of a Christian's passion. And we may consider that every man in this world shall, in some sense or other, bear a cross. Few men escape it, and it is not well

with them that do : but they only bear it well that follow Christ, and tread in His steps, and bear it for His sake, and walk as He walked.

By the precept of "bearing the cross," we are not tied to pull evil upon ourselves, that we may imitate our Lord in nothing but in being afflicted, but it is required that "we bear our own cross;" so said our dearest Lord. For when the cross of Christ is laid upon us, and we are called to martyrdom, then it is our own, because God made it to be our portion; and when, by the necessities of our spirit, and the rebellion of our body, we need exterior mortifications and acts of self-denial, then also it is our own cross, because our needs have made it so; and so it is when God sends us sickness, or any other calamity which calls for our sufferance, and patience and equanimity. For, "therefore Christ hath suffered for us," saith St. Peter, "leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps," who bore His cross as long as He could; and when He could no longer, He murmured not, but sank under it; and then He was content to receive such aid, not which He chose Himself, but such as was assigned Him.

Jesus was led out of the gates of Jerusalem, that He might become the sacrifice for persons without the pale, even for all the world: and the daughters of Jerusalem followed Him with pious tears till they came to Calvary—a place

difficult in the ascent, eminent and apt for the publication of shame, a hill of death and dead bones, polluted and impure—and there beheld Him stripped naked who clothes the fields with flowers and all the world with robes, and the whole globe with the canopy of heaven. And so must we be despoiled of all our exterior adherences, that we may pass through the regions of duty and divine love to a society of blessed spirits and an immortal and beatified estate. There they nailed Jesus with four nails, and fixed His cross in the ground,—which, with its fall into the place of its station, gave infinite torture, by so violent a concussion of the body of our Lord, which rested upon nothing but four great wounds,—where he was designed to suffer a long and lingering torment. For crucifixion, as it was a pain sharp and passionate, so it was not of quick effect towards taking away the life.

And now behold the Priest and the Sacrifice of all the world laid upon the Altar of the Cross, bleeding and tortured, and dying to reconcile His Father to us. And he was arrayed with ornaments more glorious than those of Aaron. The crown of thorns was His mitre, the cross His pastoral staff, the nails piercing His hands were instead of rings, the ancient ornaments of priests; but as this object calls for our devotion, our love, and eucharist to our dearest Lord, so it must needs irreconcile us to sin, which, in the

eyes of all the world, brought so great shame and pain and amazement upon the Son of God.

In the midst of two thieves, three long hours the Holy Jesus hung, clothed with pain, agony, and dishonor—all of them so eminent and vast that He, who could not but hope, whose soul was enchased with divinity, and dwelt in the bosom of God, and in the cabinet of the mysterious Trinity, yet had a cloud of misery so thick and black drawn before Him, that He complained as if God had forsaken Him. But this was the “pillar of the cloud” which conducted Israel into Canaan. And as God behind the cloud supported the Holy Jesus, and stood ready to receive Him into the union of His glories; so His soul, in that great desertion, had internal comforts, proceeding from consideration of all those excellent persons which should be adopted into the fellowship of His sufferings, which should imitate His graces, which should communicate His glories. And we follow this cloud to our country, having Christ for our guide; and though He trod the way leaning upon the cross, which like the staff of Egypt pierced His hands; yet it is to us a comfort and support, pleasant to our spirits as the sweetest canes, strong as the pillars of the earth, and made apt for our use by having been borne and made smooth by the hands of our Elder Brother.

In the midst of all His torments, Jesus only

made one prayer of sorrow, to represent His sad condition to His Father; but no accent of murmur, no syllable of anger, against His enemies. Instead of that, He sent up a holy, charitable, and effective prayer for their forgiveness, and by that prayer, obtained of God that, within fifty-five days, eight thousand of His enemies were converted. And, by this instance, our Blessed Lord consigned that duty to us, which, in His sermons, He had preached, that we should forgive our enemies, and pray for them; and by so doing, ourselves are freed from the stings of anger, and the storms of a revengeful spirit; and we oftentimes procure servants to God, friends to ourselves, and heirs to the kingdom of heaven.

Of the two thieves who were crucified together with our Lord, the one blasphemed; the other had, at that time, the greatest piety in the world, except that of the blessed Virgin, and particularly had such a faith, that all the ages of the Church could never show the like. For when he saw Christ "in the same condemnation" with himself, crucified by the Romans, accused and scorned by the Jews, forsaken by His own Apostles, a dying distressed man doing at that time no miracles to attest His divinity or innocence; yet then he confessed Him to be a Lord, and a King, and his Saviour; he prayed to Him, he hoped in Him, and pitied Him; showing an excellent patience in this sad condition. And

in this I consider that, besides the excellency of some of these acts, and the goodness of all, the like occasion for so exemplary a faith can never occur; and until all these things shall, in these circumstances, meet in any one man, he must not hope for so safe an exit, after an evil life, upon the confidence of this example.

By the cross of Christ stood the holy Virgin-Mother, upon whom old Simeon's prophecy was now verified; for now she felt "a sword passing through her very soul." She stood sad, silent, and with a modest grief, deep as the waters of the abyss, but smooth as the face of a pool; full of love, and patience, and sorrow, and hope. Now she was put to it, to make use of all those excellent discourses her Holy Son had used to build up her spirit, and fortify against this day. Now she felt the blessings and strength of faith, and she passed from the griefs of the Passion to the expectation of the Resurrection; and she rested in this death as in a sad remedy, for she knew it reconciled God with all the world.

But her hope drew a veil before her sorrow; and though her grief was great enough to swallow her up, yet her love was greater, and did swallow up her grief. But the sun also had a veil upon his face, and taught us to draw a curtain before the Passion, which would be the most artificial expression of its greatness; while, by silence and wonder, we confess it great beyond

our expression, or, what is all one, great as the burden and baseness of our sins.

And with this veil drawn before the face of Jesus, let us suppose Him at the gates of Paradise, calling with His last words in a loud voice, to have them opened, that "the King of glory might come in."

PRAYER.

Almighty and Eternal God, the Fountain of all virtue, the Support of all holy hopes, the Author of pardon, of life, and of salvation; Thou art the Comforter of all that call upon Thee; Thou hast concluded all under sin, that Thou mightest have mercy upon all.

Look upon me, O God, and have pity upon me, lying in my misery, and shame, and sin, in the fear and guilt of Thy wrath, in the shadow of death and the gates of hell. Very great are my sins, yet infinitely less than Thy mercies, which Thou hast revealed to all penitent and returning sinners in Jesus Christ.

O let the cry of Thy Son's blood, who offers an eternal sacrifice to Thee, speak on my behalf. My conscience does accuse me, and Thy Holy Spirit is grieved by me; but Christ, my Saviour, died for me, and Thou pitiest me; and Thy Holy Spirit still calls upon me. O draw me unto Thee by the endearments of Thy mercies, by the love of Thy Son, and the grace of Thy Spirit.

I am not worthy, O Lord; I am not worthy to come into Thy presence. My sins, O Blessed Saviour, joined in confederation with the high priests, in treachery with Judas, in injustice with Pilate, in malice with the people.

My sins and the Jews crucified Thee; my hypocrisy was the kiss that betrayed Thee; my covetous and ambitious desires were the thorns that pricked Thy sacred Head; my vanity was the knee that mocked Thee; my anger and malice, my peevishness and revenge, were the gall which Thou didst taste; my bitter words were the vinegar which Thou didst drink; and my scarlet sins made for thee a purple robe of mockery and derision: and where shall I, miserable sinner, appear, who have put my Lord to death, and exposed Him to an open shame?

Where should I appear, but before my Saviour, who died for them that have murdered Him, who hath loved them that hated Him, who is the Saviour of His enemies, and the Life of the dead, the Redemption of captives, and the Advocate for sinners, and all that we do need, and all that we can desire.

Grant, that in Thy wounds I may find my safety; in Thy stripes, my cure; in Thy pain, my peace; in Thy cross, my victory; in Thy resurrection, my triumph; and a crown of righteousness in the glories of Thy Eternal Kingdom. Amen, Amen.

EASTER EVEN.

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

“To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” LUKE xxiii. 43.

OUR blessed Saviour told the converted thief, that he should “that day be with Him in paradise.” Now, without peradventure, Christ spake so as He was to be understood: meaning by “Paradise,” that which the schools and pulpits of the Rabbins did usually speak of it. By paradise, till the time of Esdras, it is certain, the Jews only meant the blessed garden in which God placed Adam and Eve; but in the time of Esdras, and so downward, when they spake distinctly of things to happen after this life, they called the state of souls, expecting the resurrection of their bodies, by the name of “the garden of Eden.” Hence came that form of comprecation and blessing to the soul of an Israelite, “Let his soul be in the garden of Eden.” And in their solemn prayers, at the time of their death, they were wont to say, “Let his soul rest; and let his sleep be in peace, until the Comforter shall come, and open

the gates of paradise unto him :” expressly distinguishing paradise from the state of the resurrection.

But although the state of separation may now also be, and is by St. John called paradise, yet the spirits of good men are not said “to be with Abraham,” but “to be with Christ.” So St. Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;” and St. Paul said, “I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ;” and upon this account (and it is not at all unreasonable), the Church hath conjectured that the state of separate souls, since the glorification of our Lord, is much bettered and advanced, and their comforts greater. For, concerning the patriarchs, prophets, and holy men of God, St. Paul affirms expressly, that “the fathers received not the promises :” God having provided some better things for us, that they, without us, should not be made perfect. Their condition was a state of imperfection : they were placed in paradise, “in Abraham’s bosom :” but they sat in the regions of darkness, expecting that great promise made to Adam and the patriarchs—the promise of the Messias. But when He that was promised came, He preached to the “spirits in prison,” and “communicated to them the mysteries of the Gospel,” and taught them to look up to the glories purchased by His Passion; and made the term of their expectation be His second

coming, and the objects of their hope the glories of the beatific vision.

For while the friends and disciples of the holy Jesus, having devoutly composed his body to burial, laid it in a sepulchre hewn from a rock in a garden (which, saith Euthymius, was therefore done, to represent that we were by this death returned to paradise, and the gardens of pleasures and divine favors, from whence, by the sin of Adam, man was expelled), in the dark and undiscerned mansions there was a scene of the greatest joy and greatest horror represented, which yet was known since the first falling of the morning stars. Those holy souls, whom the prophet Zechariah calls "prisoners of hope," lying in the lake where there is no water, that is, no constant stream of joy to refresh their present condition (yet supported with certain showers and gracious visitations from God), now that they saw their Redeemer come to change their condition, and to improve it into the neighborhood of glory and clearer revelations, must needs have had the joy of redeemed captives, of men forgiven after the sentence of death, of men satisfied after a tedious expectation, enjoying and seeing their Lord, whom, for so many ages, they had expected.

But the accursed spirits saw the darkness of their prison shine with a new light, and their empire invaded, and their retirements of horror

discovered, and wondered how a man durst venture thither ; or, if He were God, how He should come to die.

For as it is intimated in a parable, that between good and evil spirits, even in the state of separation, there is distance of place ; certain it is there is great distance of condition ; and now, as the holy souls in their regions of light are full of love, joy, hope, and longing for the coming of the great day ; so the accursed do expect it with an insupportable amazement.

But “blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ;” for the souls of saints are with Christ. And although our dead are like persons banished from this world, yet they are not expelled from God : they are “in the hands of Christ ;” they are “in His presence ;” they are, or shall be clothed with a house of God’s making ; “they rest from their labors ;” “all tears are wiped from their eyes,” and all discontents from their spirits ; and, in the state of separation, before the soul be re-invested with her new house, their spirits are with God, so secured, and so blessed, and so sealed up for glory, that this state of interval and imperfection is, in respect of its certain event and end, infinitely more desirable than all the riches, and all the pleasures, and all the vanities, and all the kingdoms of this world. To which I add this consideration, that our souls have the same condition that Christ’s soul had in

the state of separation, because He took on Him all our nature and all our condition; and it is certain Christ's soul, in the three days of his separation, did exercise acts of life, of joy, and triumph, and did not sleep, but visited the souls of the fathers, trampled upon the pride of devils, and satisfied those longing souls which were prisoners of hope. And from all this we may conclude, that the souls of all the servants of Christ are alive, and therefore do the actions of life, and proper to their state; and therefore it is highly probable that the soul works clearer, and understands brighter, and discourses wiser, and rejoices louder, and loves nobler, and desires purer, and hopes stronger, than it can do here.

For the godly indeed descend into their graves, and shall no more be reckoned among the living, and they have no concernment in all that is done under the sun; but we must not so live as if our dead were perished, but so as pressing forward to the most intimate participation of the communion of saints.

Remember that we shall converse together again; let us therefore never do any thing of reference, to them, which we shall be ashamed of in that day when all secrets shall be discovered, and when we shall meet again in the presence of God.

For certain it is, that though our dead friends' affection to us is not to be estimated according

to our low conception, yet it is not less, but much more than ever it was; it is greater in degree, and of another kind; and, although we have liberty to contract new relations, yet I do not find we have liberty to cast off the old, as if there were no such thing as immortality of souls. It is true they envy not, and they lie in a bosom where there can be no murmur; but we should do well to consider that although they are to us like "water spilt;" yet to God they are as water fallen in the sea, safe and united in His comprehension and inclosures; and that God watcheth concerning all their interest, and will in His time both discover and recompense.

The condition of the saints that sleep is moreover well intimated by their being said to be under the altar; that is, under the protection of Christ, under the powers and benefits of His priesthood, by which He makes continual intercession both for them and for us. This place some of the old doctors understood too literally, and from hence they believed that the souls of departed saints were under their material altars. But, better than this, their state is described by St. John in these words: "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him night and day in His temple; and He that sits upon the throne shall dwell among them."

With which general words, as being modest bounds to our inquiries, enough to tell us it is

rarely well, but enough also to chastise all curious questions, let us remain content; and labor with faith and patience, with hope and charity, to be made worthy to partake of those comforts, after which, when we have long inquired, when at last we come to try what they are, we shall find them much better and much otherwise than we imagine.

And now, let us awhile consider that God is our God when we die, if we be His servants while we live; and therefore we may die with confidence if we die with a good conscience. We have no cause of fear, if we have just grounds to hope for pardon. The Turks have a saying, that the Christians do not believe themselves when they talk such glorious things of Heaven and the state of separation; for, if they did, they would not be so afraid to die. But they do not so well consider that Christians believe all this well enough; but they believe better than they live; and therefore they believe and tremble, because they do not live after the rate of going to Heaven.

It is no wonder to see men so unwilling to die, to be afraid to make their will, to be impatient of the thought of death. He that is fit to die must have long dwelt with it, must handle it on all sides, must feel whether the sting be taken out: he must examine whether "he be in Christ;" that is, whether he be a new crea-

ture. And, indeed, I do not so much wonder that any man fears to die, as when I see a careless and a wicked person descend to his grave with as much indifference as he goes to sleep—that is, with no other trouble than that he leaves the world, but he does not fear to die; and yet, upon the instant of his dissolution, he goes into the common receptacle of souls, where nothing can be addressed to him but the consequence of what he brings along with him, and he shall presently know whether he be saved or damned.

If we could now place ourselves, by holy meditation, in the circumstances of that condition, and consider what we should then think, it could not be but we must grow wiser on a sudden, despise the world, betake ourselves to a strict religion, reject all vanities of spirit, and “be sober and watch unto prayer.”

Now it is well with us, and we may yet secure it shall be well with us forever; but within an hour it may be otherwise with any of us all, who do not instantly take courses of security. But he that does not, would, in such a change, soon come to wish that he might exchange his state with the meanest, with the miserablest, of all mankind; with galley-slaves and miners, with men condemned to tortures for a good conscience.

In the day of felling timber, the shrub and

the bramble are better than the tallest fir, or the goodliest cedar: and a poor saint, whose soul is in the hand of Jesus, placed under the altar, over which our High Priest, like the cherubim over the propitiatory, intercedes perpetually for the hastening of His glory, is better than the greatest tyrant, who, if he dies, is undone forever. For, in the interval, there shall be rest and comfort to the one; and torment and amazement to the other: and the day of judgment will come, and it shall appear to all the world, that they, whose joys were not in this world, were not, "of all men, most miserable;" because their joys and their life were hid with Christ in God, and at the resurrection of the just shall be brought forth, and be illustrious, beyond all the beauties of the world.

We have heard Moses and the prophets, let us also hear the dead. Being dead, they yet do speak, and call upon us to live well, and to live quickly, to watch perpetually, and to work assiduously; for we shall descend into the same shadows of death.

"Thou must leave thy rich land, and thy well-built house, and thy pleasing wife; and, of all the trees of thy orchard or thy wood, nothing shall attend thee to the grave, but oak for thy coffin, and cypress for thy funeral." It shall not then be inquired how long thou hast lived, but how well. None below shall be con-

cerned, whether thou wert rich or poor; but all the spirits of light and darkness shall be busy in the scrutiny of thy life. For the good angels would fain carry thy soul to Christ; and if they do, the devils will follow, and accuse thee there; and when thou appearest before the Righteous Judge, what will become of thee, unless Christ be thy Advocate, and God be merciful and appeased, and the angels be thy guards, and a holy conscience be thy comfort?

There will to every one of us come a time when we shall with great passion and great interest inquire, how have I spent my days; how have I laid out my money; how have I employed my time; how have I served God; and how repented me of my sins? And upon our answer to these questions depends a happy or an unhappy eternity.

Blessed indeed are they, that through Paradise pass into the Kingdom, who from their highest hope pass to the greatest charity, from the state of a blessed separation to the mercies and gentle sentence of the "Day of Judgment," which St. Paul prayed to God to grant Onesiphorus, and more explicitly for the Thessalonians—"that their whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus."

And I pray God to grant the same to me, and all faithful people whatsoever.

PRAYER.

O Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of the just made perfect; look upon me Thy servant, whose life is vanity, and whose days pass away like a tale that is told. Give me, O my God, Thy Spirit of wisdom and peace to guide me in the ways of righteousness; that, being holy in my life, I may be blessed in my death; and my soul may be borne by Thy ministering spirits to the mansions of rest, to lie in the bosom of my Lord, till by the trump of God I shall be awakened in the resurrection of the just, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

EASTER DAY.

THE RESURRECTION.

“ Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.” 1 Cor. xv. 20.

THE condition of man in this world is so limited and depressed, so relative and imperfect, that the best things he does he does weakly; and the best things he hath are imperfections in their very constitution. Our very liberty of choosing good and evil supposes weakness of reason and weakness of love; and our hope, though it is the resurrection of the soul in this world from sorrow and her saddest pressures, and like the twilight to the day and the harbinger of joy; still it is but a conjugation of infirmities, and because it is uneasy here, thrusts us forward towards the light and glories of the resurrection.

For as death is the end of our lives, so is the resurrection the end of our hopes; and as we die daily, so we daily hope.

For God, knowing that the biggest endearment of religion, the sanction of private justice,

the band of piety and holy courage—does wholly derive from the article of the resurrection,—was pleased not only to make it credible, but easy and familiar to us; and nature alone is a sufficient preacher of this mystery. Night and day; the sun returning to the same point of east; every change of species in the same matter; generation and corruption; the eagle renewing her youth, and the snake her skin; the silkworm and the swallows; the care of posterity, and the care of an immortal name; winter and summer; the fall and spring; the faith of believers and the philosophy of the reasonable;—all join in its verification: and every night we so converse with the image of death, that every morning we find an argument of the resurrection.

Sleep and death have but one mother, and they have one name in common. Charnel-houses are but “cemeteries” or sleeping-places; and they that die are fallen asleep, and the resurrection is but an awakening and standing up from sleep. In sleep our senses are as fast bound by nature as our joints are by the grave-clothes; and, unless an angel of God waken us every morning, we must confess ourselves as unable to converse with men as we are now afraid to die and to converse with spirits.

But, however, death itself is no more; it is but a darkness and a shadow, a rest and a for-

getfulness. What is there more in death? What is there less in sleep? For do we not see by experience that nothing of equal loudness does awaken us sooner than a man's voice, especially if we be called by name? and thus also it shall be in the resurrection. Christ, Himself, shall "descend with a mighty shout; and all that are in the grave shall hear His voice." We shall be awakened by the voice of Man, because we are only fallen asleep by the decree of God; and, when the cock and the lark call us up to prayer and labor, the first thing we see is an argument of our resurrection from the dead.

Here, therefore, are the great hinges of all religion. Christ is already risen from the dead, and we also shall rise in God's time and our order. Christ is the first-fruits; He is already risen: for He alone could not be held by death. "Free among the dead." Death was sin's eldest daughter, and the grave-clothes were her first mantle; but Christ was Conqueror over both. And as His resurrection and exaltation were the reward of His perfect obedience and purest holiness; so now, calling us to an imitation of the same obedience and the same perfect holiness, He prepares a way for us to the same resurrection. But there is one thing more in it yet: "Every man in his own order; first Christ, and then they that are Christ's." But what

shall become of them that are not Christ's? Why, there is an order for them too: first they that are Christ's, and then they that are not His.

There is a first and a second resurrection even after this life. Blessed and holy is he that hath his part in "the first resurrection; for upon such the second death shall have no power." As for the recalling the wicked from their graves, it is no otherwise, in the sense of the Spirit, to be called a resurrection, than taking a criminal from the prison to the bar is a giving of liberty. The wicked shall see Christ, that they may "look on Him whom they have pierced;" and they shall hear the voice of God passing on them the intolerable sentence: they shall come from their graves, that they may go into hell; and live again that they may die forever. So have we seen a poor condemned criminal, the weight of whose sorrows sitting heavily upon his soul hath benumbed him into a deep sleep, till he hath forgotten his groans and laid aside his deep sighings; but on a sudden comes the messenger of death, and unbinds the poppy garland, scatters the heavy cloud that encircles his miserable head, and makes him return to acts of life, that he may quickly descend into death and be no more. So is every sinner that lies down in shame, and makes his grave with the wicked: he shall indeed rise again, and be called upon

by the voice of the Archangel; but then he shall descend into sorrows greater than the reason and the patience of a man, weeping and shrieking louder than the groans of the miserable children in the Valley of Hinnom. These indeed are sad stories, but true as the voice of God and the sermons of the Holy Jesus. They are God's words, and God's decrees; and I wish that all who profess belief of these would consider sadly what they mean. If ye believe the article of the resurrection, then you know that in your body you shall receive what you did in the body, whether it be good or bad. It matters not now very much whether our bodies be beauteous or deformed; for if we glorify God in our bodies, God shall make our bodies glorious. It matters not much, whether we live in ease and pleasure, or eat nothing but bitter herbs. The body that lies in dust and ashes, that goes stooping and feeble, that lodges at the foot of the cross, and dwells in discipline, shall be feasted at the eternal supper of the Lamb.

For God, when He restores the soul to the body, will raise the body to such a perfection, that it shall be an organ fit to praise Him upon. Then also shall the soul be brought forth by angels, from her incomparable and easy bed, from her rest in Christ's holy bosom, and be made perfect in her being, and in all her operations.

Then shall she see already all the records of this world, all the register of her own memory. For all that we did in this life is laid up in our memories; and as soon as ever God shall but tune our instrument, and draw the curtains, and but light up the candle of immortality, there we shall find it all, there we shall see all, and the whole world shall see all; then we shall be made fit to converse with God after the manner of spirits; we shall be like to angels.

We hope that from our beds of darkness we shall rise into regions of light, and shall become like unto God; and what this can infer is very obvious. If it be hard to believe a resurrection from one death, let us not be dead in trespasses and sins. Let us betake ourselves to an early and an entire piety; that when, by this first resurrection we have made the way plain before our face, we may with confidence expect a happy resurrection from our graves.

“If, when we were enemies,” saith St. Paul, “we were reconciled by His death; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life;” plainly declaring, that it is a harder and more wonderful thing for a wicked man to become the friend of God, than for one that is so, to be carried up to heaven and partake of His glory.

But he who partakes of the death of Christ, by mortification, and of His resurrection by

holiness of life and a holy faith, shall, according to the expression of the prophet Isaiah, "enter into his chamber of death," when Nature and God's decree "shall shut the doors upon him, and there he shall be hidden for a little moment." But then shall they that dwell in dust awake and sing: with Christ's dead body shall they arise; the servants of His family; the heirs of His kingdom; and the partakers of His glory. Amen.

PRAYER.

O most Holy, most Glorious Saviour and Redeemer, who, for our sakes, didst descend from the glories of God to the labors of the earth, and didst pass from a painful life to an ignominious death, from the bitterness of death to the darkness of the grave, and by Thy Divine power didst raise Thyself from death to life again; I give Thee thanks for Thy infinite love to me and to all mankind; I acknowledge Thee to be my Lord, and confess Thee to be my God; I adore Thy majesty, and rejoice in Thy mercies; and I humbly pray Thee to enable me, with Thy Spirit, to believe all Thy doctrines, and to obey all Thy commandments; that after a holy and religious life spent in doing honor to Thy Holy Name, I may be a partaker of Thy glorious

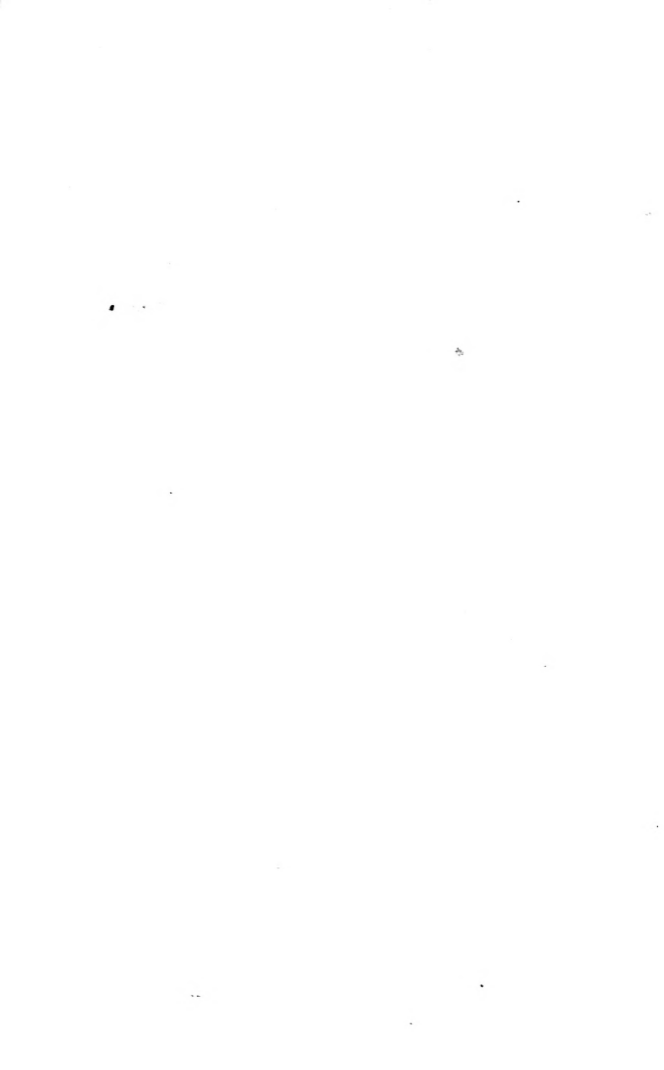
resurrection, passing from death to life, from the darkneses of the grave to the light of Heaven, from an imperfect duty to the perfection of holiness; in the fruition of the joys of God, in Thy Eternal Kingdom; O most Holy, most Glorious Saviour, and Redeemer. Amen.

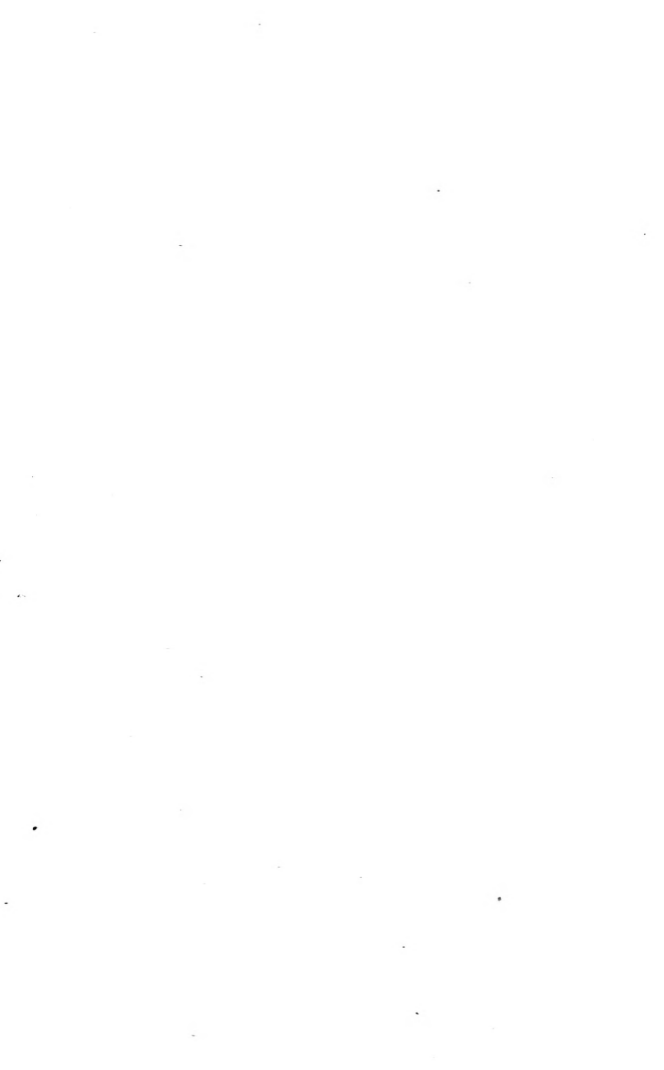
THE END.

INDEX.

	PAGE
BEATITUDE, The First.....	234
——, The Second.....	242
——, The Third.....	254
——, The Fourth.....	261
——, The Fifth.....	268
——, The Sixth.....	276
——, The Seventh.....	282
——, The Eighth.....	289
Careful Employment of Time.....	184
Christian Comfort.....	212
—— Forgiveness.....	157
—— Joy.....	219
—— Perfection.....	226
—— Simplicity.....	114
Christ's Entrance into Jerusalem.....	297
—— Journey to Jerusalem.....	249
Communion, The Holy.....	315
Conversation.....	70
Covetousness.....	130
Crucifixion, The.....	330
Death.....	23
Faith.....	191
Garden of Gethsemane, The.....	324
Godly Fear.....	16
Gratitude for Daily Mercies.....	166

	PAGE
Growth in Grace	137
Humility	203
—— of Christ, The	309
Intermediate State, The	339
Judgment Day, The	31
Life of Christ our Example, The	149
Love of God, The	53
Obedience	87
Prayer	61
Repentance	7
Resurrection, The	350
Reverence for Holy Days, &c.	78
Self-Denial	106
Self-Examination	45
Slander and Flattery	122
Supper at Bethany, The	302
Temper	98
Temptation of Christ, The	41
——, The First	94
——, The Second	145
——, The Third	199
Watchfulness	175





158

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01002 6336